

Columbia University:

Advanced Studio III: with Kenneth Frampton - Spring '96
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THESIS

At the studio advisors suggestion, it was decided to take on a design competition as a thesis project. The National Diet Library Design Competition program was complex and thorough. We found it to have ingredients that allowed us to deal with issues that were mutually of interest.

The series of forms are guided by several impulses to do with the reading of program & of place, and to do with an idea about the link between human activities & pre-existing traces in the geographical & cultural landscape. Emphasis was laid on a public route through the building, a theme that recalls Team Ten's theories, that of the building as street. The site lies along the main street, mostly with institutions along it. "The Main Street" is therefor not seen in conventional terms as a public center, although still being the core to the city. A city, whose facilities are to be symbolic of culture, science and research. The building is to connect green areas that are along an axis, almost parallel to the main street, in the west and Kansai Science City Commemorative Park, close to the site in the center and at Seika Main Street.

This new axis therefor creates a continuous "Greenway" that becomes the core to the building. The elemental experience is that of the space's compression & contraction as well as light & shadow, with visual connection to the building's different activities, should enhance the experience of moving through it. There was an attempt to make a relationship between figure & ground, and to relate the interface between nature & culture to the building at hand. The intent was to explore interplay between topography & tectonic form.

A. OUTLINE OF THE KANSAI-KAN OF THE NATIONAL DIET LIBRARY DESIGN COMPETITION

Objective of the competition

The Government of Japan is planning to construct the Kansai-Kan of the National Diet Library in Kansai Science City, which is currently under development in the Keihanna hills, in response to the increase in library materials and advances in library services.

Superior design proposals that are creative and feasible are being widely sought from both inside and outside Japan in the hopes that the Kansai-Kan will be an advanced, central national library, adapted to the 21st century and open to the world, as well as a facility symbolic of culture, science and research.

B. OUTLINE OF THE KANSAI-KAN

1. Basic Functions

The Kansai-Kan will include stacks, reading rooms and various research and workrooms. The facility as a whole will have the following functions.

- a) In conjunction with the present facility of the National Diet Library in Tokyo, it will preserve permanently an enormous volume of library materials that represent the common asset of the Japanese people.
- b) Using the latest technology, it will provide users both inside and outside Japan with library materials or information on those materials.
- c) It will contribute to the international circulation of document information on Asia.
- d) It will become a center for library cooperation and provide support for library activities of all kinds both inside and outside Japan.
- e) It will carry out research and development, training and exchanges related to library services.

2. Organization of Facilities

MAIN FACILITIES	FUNCTION
Stacks	Permanent preservation of enormous volume of library materials
Reading and service rooms	Reading of books, provision of documents information, etc.
Various work rooms	Media conversion, preparation of database, etc.
Other	Offices, machine rooms, etc.
Scale of facility	Approximately 59.500 square meters

4. Site

- a) Location: Seikacho, Soraku-gun, Kyoto Prefecture
Within the Seika-Nishikizu District in Kansai
Science City
- b) Area: approximately 37.500 square meters

POSITION

- CIAM in the 1960's
 - Connection to the site was sought in social & historical culture, giving rise to typological & morphological studies of the city, and to a greater attention to social problems.
 - An empirical tradition, for the most part of Nordic & Anglo-Saxon origin, favored the study of anthropological adaptation to the physical context, interpreting the context principally in its topographical & climatic aspects.
- The production of vast amounts of information in the late-capitalist era has devalued representation as a vehicle of communication, systems of signification, whether languages or value-systems, are increasingly being replaced by material and spatial organization, exchange and consensus.
- An approach of the production of space as the articulation of *global* processes with *local* specificity's, where global does not mean empty and local does not mean disconnected.
- A process in which specific domains and organizations are devoid of its limits, origins, destination or significance: decoded, unbounded *landscapes rather* than overcoded, delimited *places* - and yet precise, specific, concrete.
- To engage in economic, social and urban processes of greater complexity does not imply an inability to determine, but an ability to become more sophisticated; to respond with complex orders rather than linear determinations, to redefine the limits of our control.
- Material / Program / Movement

GOAL OF THE DESIGN

- A series of forms to be guided by several impulses to do with the reading of program & of place, and to do with an idea about the link between human activities & pre-existing traces in the geographical & cultural landscape.
- Whether tilted planes, floating horizontals, stratified sections or inflected fragments and relationships between figure and ground, roof forms of complex profile to channel compressed & expanding spaces over sculpted levels of ground, giving a sense of movement that has been arrested in mid flight.
- The underlying image to be a sort of *field of forces*, a network of social relationships, mapped out as so many nodes, focal points & routes.

- To be a certain picture of ritual, procession, ascent, mingling & interchange. If not the image, then the idea of a communal theater. A public route through the interior. "The building as Street"
- The elemental experience of being folded in the earth. Compression and contraction of space, as well as light and shadow, to eventually enhance the experience of moving.
- Texture & material to be calibrated to enhance the notion of transitions through veils.
- The generative image of architecture as social landscape, made up of interlocking platforms & layers of thin walls traversed by ramps & stairs.

CONTEXT & PLANT

- A *field of* relations to be discovered among elements, in which the design can introduce measured shifts in order to reveal the primary characters of the site, and to change the meaning of the contextual system: in short, the design to work toward a "re foundation" of the environment.
- Actions, an opportunity to express evaluations of physical characteristics & the cultural implications of pre-existing elements.
- A concrete transformation of the site, of reality, achieving the primary objectives of the design by means of discreet, precise gestures.
- Character of the interface established between nature & culture.
- Surface, structure & space, as a basis of the tectonic. Earthwork vs. Roofwork, the feeling of entering into an assembly, and reduction of the building as an object. The building into earth, the landscape as a fragmentary site.
- Architectural culture a production of culture itself.
- Typology reflects a way of life.