

MYD Makoto
Yamaguchi
Design

Introduction

Crystallization of Architecture

Ki no Tsurayuki is a renowned poet and the founder of Japanese culture in the Heian period (AD794-1185). The methods employed by the ancient poet bear a close resemblance to those in Makoto Yamaguchi's architectural work in this contemporary world, despite the difference in genre, and even time, leaping across a thousand years. They are so similar that it seems as if Makoto Yamaguchi has been possessed by the ancient poet. So, who was Ki no Tsurayuki?

At the end of the 9th century, the Japanese imperial court suspended its missions to Tang China and entered a period of isolation from the outer world. Just over a decade later, Ki no Tsurayuki compiled the *Kokin Wakashu*, a collection of waka poems. This practically marks the time when aristocrats ceased to wear gold, silver, precious stones, or any other kind of jewelry.

In *The Tale of Genji*, the world's oldest novel written in the mid-Heian period, the protagonist Hikaru Genji (who can be described as a Japanese version of Casanova) has a brief affair with an unattractive woman called Suetsumuhana (Safflower Princess). The author makes a point of describing her wearing a fur coat imported from China, as an item representative of the unattractive princess. Although fur coats had once been gorgeous, they were already out of fashion by then. The word *Karameku* (which literally means "like Tang China") changed its meaning from "the latest in fashion" to "pretentious".

The Sampitsu, or the three famous calligraphers of the early Heian period, were masters of calligraphy of a strong and firm three-dimensional continental style, but this trend later changed to the two-dimensional, glamorous and delicate Japanese style, demonstrated by the Sanseki, the three great calligraphers of the later Heian period.

The common factor in all of these changes is that they were all actually a result of the impact of the *Kokin Wakashu*, the first collection of poems by imperial command, compiled by Ki no Tsurayuki, or that they were secondary phenomena originating from the *Kokin Wakashu*.

The *Kokin Wakashu* poems conceal some significant intellect-oriented Japanese aesthetic ideas. The Chinese style phrases (*tsuiku*), which originated on the continent and consists of opposites, were converted into word associations (*engo*), connecting similar words by extension. *Kakekotoba*, which are words with two meanings were used more frequently. While the plum and peony flowers, representative of China, are described as contrasting flowers with completely different shapes and blooming periods, *ume* the plum flowers and *sakura* cherry blossom in Japan were described as two things that exist in parallel but with different characteristics, despite being extremely similar to each other. In the *Tsurayuki-shu* (a collection of poems by Ki no Tsurayuki) in particular, the reflection on the water is depicted as a parallel representation of the other virtual world; or there, time is rigorously transformed to space. In other words, the independence of consciousness from the material world is depicted as a symbol of Japan gaining independence from the continental culture.

ume plum flowers



In this way, the Kokin Wakashu goes beyond the previous Man'yōshū (the oldest collection of Japanese poetry), which employs simple emotional expressions based on specific depictions of tangible nature and maintains an interdependent relationship between the poet and reader. The Kokin Wakashu shows the crystallization into an independent space projected by language in consciousness.

Nevertheless, these Heian waka poems, which can also be described as the cream of culture, deteriorated three centuries later with the rise of new forces, the samurai, who discontinued this aesthetic philosophy. Later in the Edo period, or the last era of the samurai, Motoori Norinaga misinterpreted the Kokin Wakashu as something quite the opposite of its essence, as the understanding of the emotional world known as *mono no aware* (the awareness of impermanence), hence making it into something extremely flat and dull. In the following Meiji period, Masaoka Shiki, who was the leading force in promoting the Japanese modern spirit, completely rejected the value of the Kokin Wakashu, as artificial literature, unaccompanied by actual experience. Now in the 21st century, where the virtual has gained definitive meaning, the Kokin Wakashu has for the first time in literary history, entered an era where its true value may be revealed.

Architecture is about designing space. But for Makoto Yamaguchi, that is not the ultimate objective. What Makoto Yamaguchi aims for is a pure space that unfolds as the architectural space projects it onto our consciousness. Converting contrasts into similarities; confronting reflections with actual images; connecting two things together, while at the same time or at another time dividing one thing into two; or having two things exist in a parallel manner – these are methods evocative of Ki no Tsurayuki in various ways, and the process of using these means leads to another timeless parallel space of consciousness which reveals itself on top of the original architectural space. It is the crystallization of space, floating out above architecture, so much so that architecture is no longer simply architecture. It is the fresh resurrection of the tradition of Heian Japan where Ki no Tsurayuki managed to achieve the crystallization of an independent space through language.

Teppei Yamada-Scriba
Professor Emeritus of Comparative Poetry and Art History
Meiji University

sakura cherry blossom



Philosophy

Scenery is Literature.



We create scenery through architecture.

Scenery is something brought into focus by the heart, which captures natural phenomena and their beauty.

In a collection of poems compiled a thousand years ago, the poems describe the spirit of valuing the intangible, rather than the richness of visible material objects.

It is said that in ancient times, Japanese people did not adorn themselves with jewels, but expressed their nobility with subtle and sophisticated color combinations and delicate fragrances.

Their poems also refrained from focusing on a single theme such as the rain, wind, light, flowers, or time, and instead expressed in simple words scenery where everything exists in parallel.

As a continuation of the aesthetic ideas of Japanese poetry, we create scenery through architecture.

Villa / Gallery in Karuizawa

Project name: Villa / Gallery in Karuizawa
Structure: one story building, wood-frame construction, reinforced concrete shell foundation.
Location: Karuizawa, Gunma Prefecture, Japan
Site area: 1360.54 sqm
Total floor area: 68.46 sqm
Completion: 2003



Karuizawa is a resort town surrounded by the forest, well known as a bijou town for the summer retreat and favored by weekenders from Tokyo and the region. The Villa is located in the forest, perched on a steep slope wrapped by the snow in the winter and by the foliage in the summer, oriented to the south, looking out the magnificent views of mountains. The Villa is one story of a polygonal building for a couple of musicians. They wanted a flexible space that could work as a villa; as a gallery for contemporary art - mainly sculptures; as a salon for music concerts; and as a place to entertain friends. To fulfill the functions, the 'blank space' was required. The kitchen and the bathroom, which are needed for functioning as a house, are built into the floor. Use of materials are requested as all wooden materials should be invisible, and as glass, mirrors and polished stainless steels reflect the light. The light flows into the interior space where no obstacles are found. The impression of the space is uniquely expanded - the white space with a plenty of void.

House in Pakse

Project name: House in Pakse
Building type: Private house interior design
Structure: Reinforced concrete building of three stories
Location: Pakse, LAO.P.D.R
Lighting design: SIRIUS LIGHTING OFFICE
Total floor area: 1266.00 sqm
Completion: 2015



Pakse is the second largest city of Laos in Southeast Asia, and well known for its pristine natural environment. In particular, there are countless waterfalls, large and small, where the water cascades over rocky surfaces in the jungle-like forest, and these attract many tourists also from the surrounding countries. The project site overlooks the magnificent Mekong River, the longest river in Southeast Asia. The huge residence with symmetrical wings, simulating the palazzos of the Renaissance era, was planned by a Thai architect a few years before. One side of the building is three storeys high with a total floor area of approximately 1500sqm, and this was built for the daughter of the family. This project aimed to achieve a contemporary interior design for her without changing the exterior of the building.



2-8-17-1F, Minamiazabu, Minato-ku
Tokyo, 106-0047

www.ymgci.net
mail@ymgci.net
+81 (0)3 6436 0371

Makoto Yamaguchi

Born in 1972 in Chiba Prefecture, Japan, Makoto Yamaguchi started his career as an architect while attending the Tokyo University of the Arts master course. In 2001 when he acquired his Master of Architecture degree, he presented his very first project, and this subsequently attracted extensive media coverage and won several awards. This promising start led to larger projects and more clients, prompting him to establish the Makoto Yamaguchi Design in 2007. As an architect, Yamaguchi has always believed in engaging directly with his clients face to face to discuss each project, as it also helps speed up the decision-making process. His work approach is not only about satisfying client demands; he also takes the initiative to present proposals that anticipate the clients' specific needs.

He is a member of the following organizations:
The Japan Institute of Architects
Architectural Institute of Japan
Tokyo Society of Architects & Building Engineers Japan
Association of Artists Craftsman & Architects