

This massive book is a novel about architecture. Conceived by Rem Koolhaas – author of *Delirious New York* – and Bruce Mau – designer of Zone – as a free-fall in the space of the typographic imagination, the book's title, **Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large**, is also its framework: projects and essays are arranged according to scale. The book combines essays, manifestoes, diaries, fairy tales, travelogues, a cycle of meditations on the contemporary city, with work produced by Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture over the past twenty years. This accumulation of words and images illuminates the condition of architecture today – its splendors and miseries – exploring and revealing the corrosive impact of politics, context, the economy, globalization – the world.

**S
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010

S, M, L, XL

O.M.A.
Rem Koolhaas
and **Bruce Mau**

010 Publishers

For this operation, Arata Isozaki invited one Japanese architect (Osamu Ishiyama) and five non-Japanese architects (Oscar Tusquets, Christian de Portzamparc, Mark Mack, Steven Holl, and OMA) to define a superblock with freestanding perimeter buildings for a client – Fukuoka Jisho – that wanted to introduce a "new urban lifestyle" in Japan. The only "Japanese" aspect of his master plan: 120-meter-high twin towers (architect: Isozaki) projected at the center of the otherwise five-story-maximum development.

九大留学生会館



Arata Isozaki
磯崎 新
⑦



Oscar Tusquets
オスカー・トウスケ
①



Christian de Portzamparc
クリスチャン・ド・ホルザンバルク
②



Osamu Ishiyama
石山 修武
③



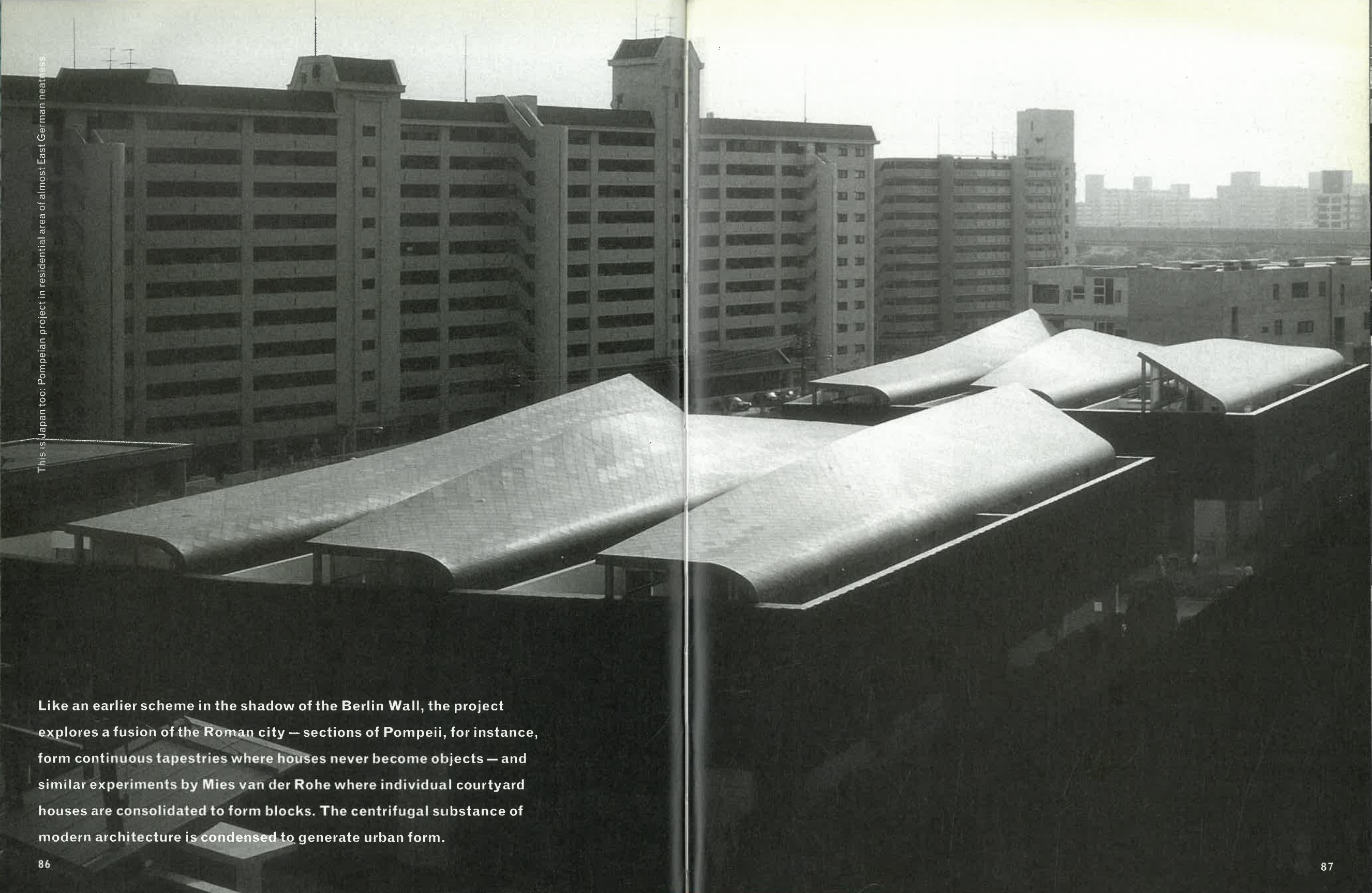
Steven Holl
スティーブン・ホール
⑥



Rem Koolhaas
レム・クールハース
⑤



Mark Mack
マーク・マック
④



Like an earlier scheme in the shadow of the Berlin Wall, the project explores a fusion of the Roman city — sections of Pompeii, for instance, form continuous tapestries where houses never become objects — and similar experiments by Mies van der Rohe where individual courtyard houses are consolidated to form blocks. The centrifugal substance of modern architecture is condensed to generate urban form.

LEARNING JAPANESE

Rotterdam

Desperate phone call to Tokyo.

Our instructions for first Japanese exhibition: display models freestanding in space.

Their layout according to incoming fax: all models up against the wall.

Never-before-seen Japanese man steps out of our elevator.

Hand him the phone; he saves the day; immediate employment: Fuminori Hoshino.

Tokyo

Japan, 7 days later.

First impression: the vastness and shamelessness of its ugliness.

Being on intimate terms with the utilitarian is major strength: no frills, ever.

Europe, and even America, try (with more or less success) to create situations where everything is as "good" as possible; Japan lives (serenely?) with drastic segregation between the sublime, the ugly, and the utterly without qualities.

Dominance of the last 2 categories makes mere presence of the first stunning: when beauty "happens," it is absolutely surprising.

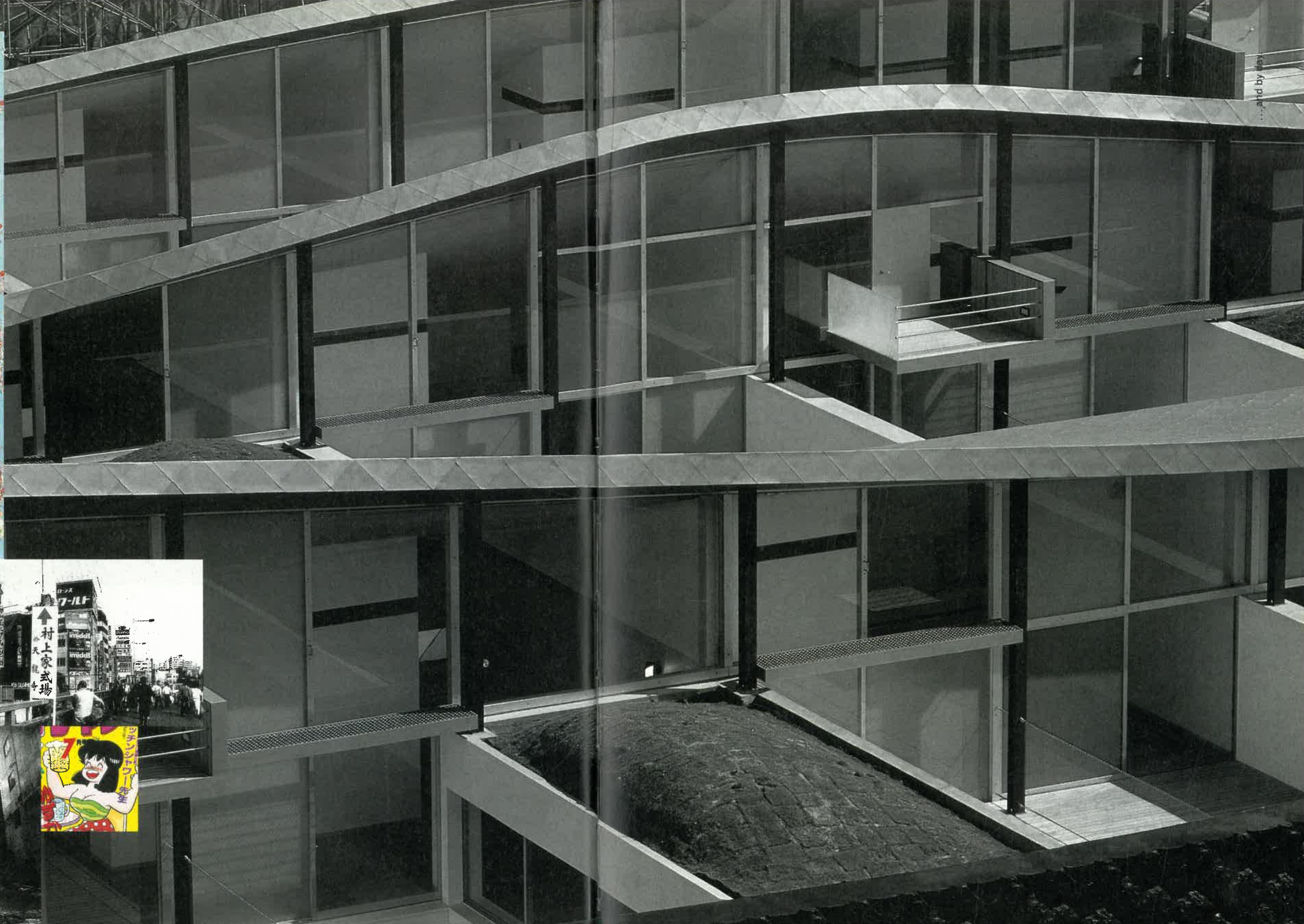
Schedule

Japanese schedule: written prison that blocks freedom, excludes improvisation, eliminates possibility, voids time, plans non-event.

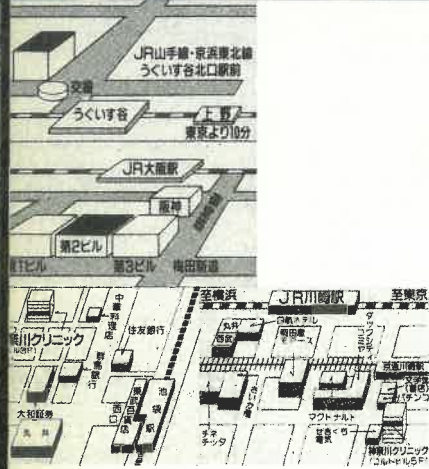


Living rooms emerging by night ...





...and by las



Instead of obligations embedded in generic free time, free time in Japan is exceptional condition excavated from general condition of obligation.

Only free time that day — midnight: run around Imperial Palace; darkness; fall; deep wound. Trail of blood back to hotel.

Ambulance crew entirely covered in what seem man-sized condoms, medical riot gear (foreigner's blood considered dangerous).

Medical care: traditional.

First Tokyo visit: untraditional; horizontal, immobile. Think about it.

Blue

Fukuoka: young pink Chicago around a blue bay. (But all colors are blue in Japan.)

Eastern extremity of axis that runs via Seoul and Moscow to Lille, and eventually even to London, maybe.

Like almost everywhere, the south considered essence of attractiveness: better climate, less history, more freedom.

Atlanta, Munich, Marseille: people, activities, programs — disconnected from specifics of place — gravitate toward zone of maximum *niceness*. In Japan, that is Fukuoka.

Stacked highway, stainless steel "blindness," smell of oysters.

Site: flat; distant mountains; residential area of almost East German neatness near invisible sea; could be anywhere.

OMA, Mack, Ishiyama: Japanese density?





We

"We in Japan ...": obsessive refrain over endless business dinners.

It announces:

1. probable failure of any project of communication;
 2. formal declaration of lack of interest in "other side";
 3. immutable "we" vs. unstable "they";
 4. self-administered blanket-amnesty for any future transgression;
 5. beginning of strategic skirmish assuring quick advantage over other side, paralyzed by touristic eagerness;
 6. first application of web of politeness to immobilize enemy;
- Japan equals England in surgical manners, also in insular self-love.

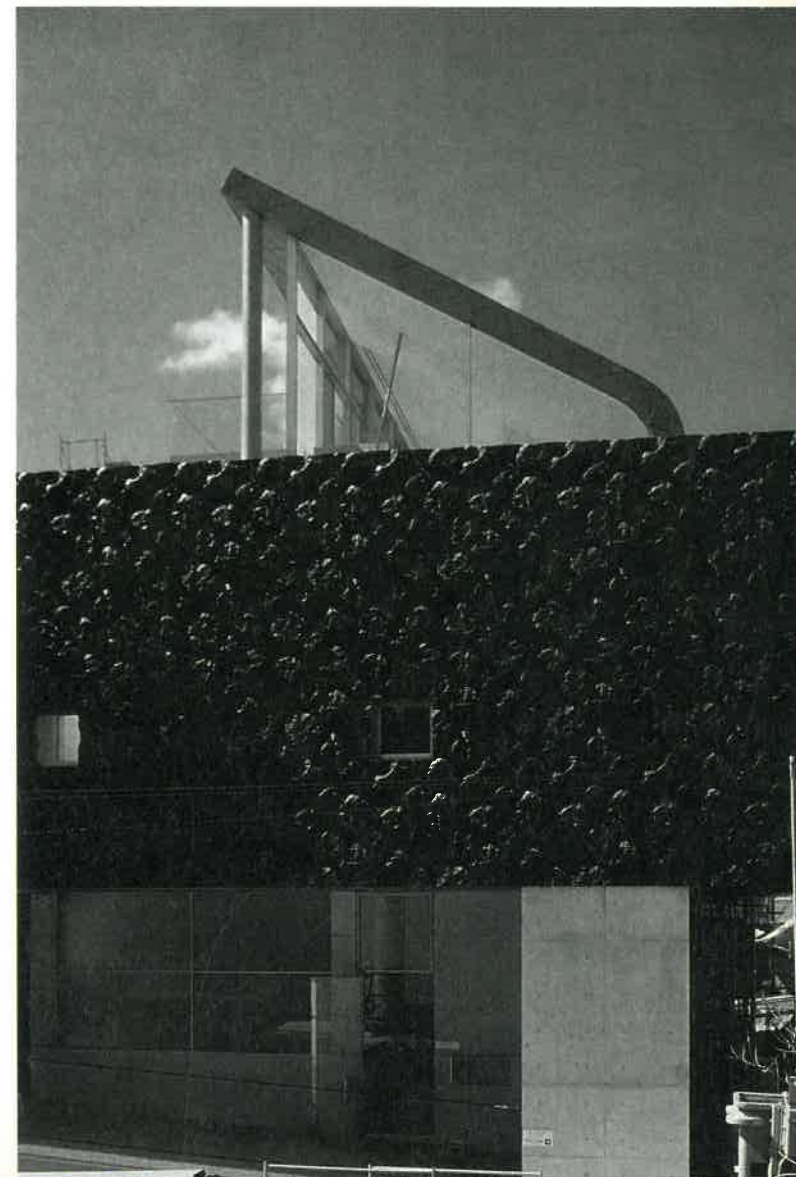
"We" is the ghostwriter behind every Japanese "I."

Meal

Ground behind rectangular counter for ±12 customers is, in fact, basin. Chefs wearing rubber boots flick, at imperceptible signal of patron, specific fish — or at least water-based beings (cold-blooded aquatic craniate vertebrates) — through air toward rectangular window in tiled wall. Behind window — facing customers — a cook (is there a better name for a profession that is about elegant killing? culinary henchman?) follows, with a very sharp knife, the last part of arc described by still violently flapping sea creature, dismembers and rearranges it as festive, still-contracting artwork before it lands on plate, center of impeccable dish.

Sections of fish strung together by dismembered arch of spine transferred to table.

Levitating black concrete socle ...





Film of watery
blood drips
from window
back to basin,
which, as each meal proceeds,
turns slightly redder.

Breakfast

Uminonakamichi Beach Hotel,
end of peninsula prominently
protruding into ocean.

Nobody
swims in the sea;
it's always "out of season"
(even at 100°).

Breakfast: the impossible beauty
of its honeymooning couples,
more poignant still
in their lack
of visible intimacy.

It is always too cool to use the pool.

Ceremony

Opening of new Hyatt Hotel merged
(or is it spliced?)
with ceremony
for the 1992 Architectural Institute prize
for "best building in Japan":
lake-sized pool, laser show,
5,000 best friends (of the developers).

Tables of raw fish create Martian landscapes,
from pink to deep
red.

Suddenly on island in pool:
moving speech
by 3-man committee.

My interpretation: award grants access
to genetic material of Japanese architecture.
More modern version of "keys to the city":
"keys to the chromosomes."

From now on we can be
Japanese *Imagineers*.



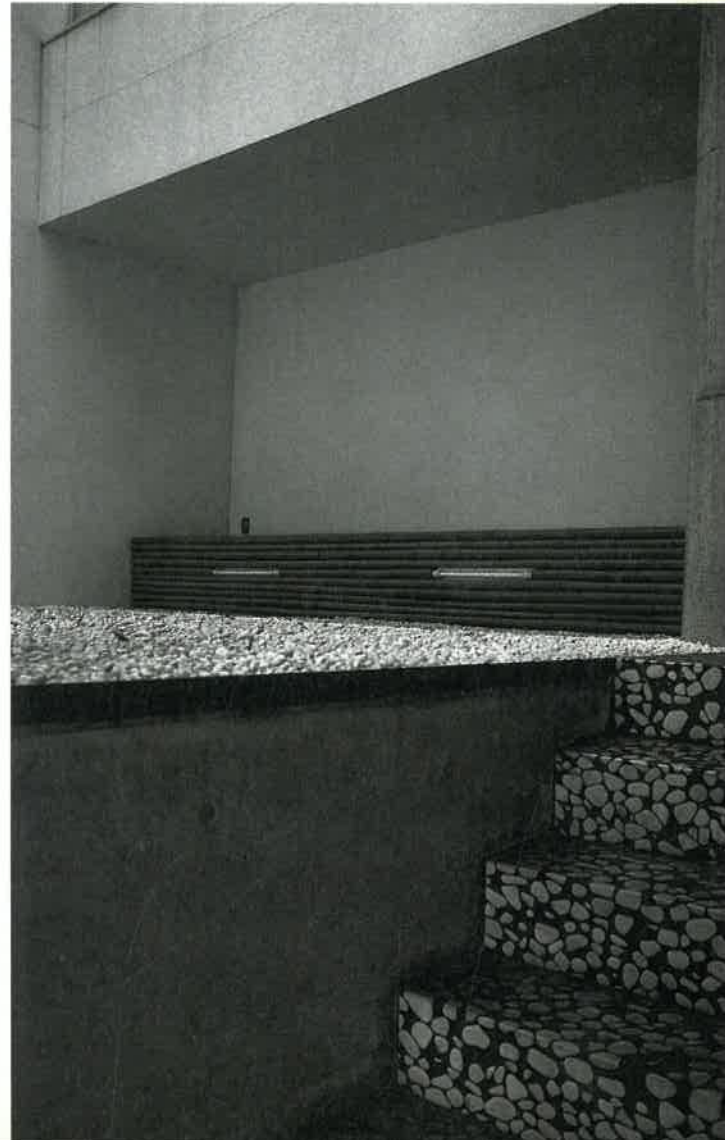
Night roofline ...



Haiku
(for Mr. Toh)

Japanese client
gulp of melted snow
in Superdry desert

First steps into the vertical patio house ...





Memo

Memo from Toyo Ito: Purely in terms of design, I find myself comparing you to a mechanical baseball pitching machine, the kind you see so often on Japanese batting practice ranges, where the ball is controlled perfectly without the emotional or spiritual agitation of a real pitcher. This leaves me with an impression of freshness that I have not often seen among architects in Europe, or anywhere else for that matter.

Soul

Toyo
Thank you
for comparing me
to a "mechanical baseball pitching machine."
Only from a Japanese
such a compliment
would not be an
insult.
Maybe there is
a certain efficiency in my character,
but in Europe
it is very dangerous
to admit
that you don't have a soul.

Party

Next party, club:
drink to new role—gene raider—
with glass full of living
fish (over 500);
no noticeable movement
beyond stomach.

Sudden intrusion of (naked under kimonos?)
barefoot singers roaring
Japanese a cappella— holy music.
For the Japanese, usually camouflaged
as neutral beings,
revealing virility is a decision
coming out of the blue.

Enters foot masseur/reader,
growling.
One foot quickly exposed;
inserts metal object in previously unsuspected
(nonexistent?) folds.
Calloused hands explore delicate surfaces.
"Excellent circulation,"



Across courtyard: transparencies, opacities, reflections ...



"good sex,"
chirps — for this assessment at least —
bilingual chorus of hostesses.

Toes wrenched, heel twisted.
Deconstruction?
(Derrida, *lui-même*, seemingly ignoring
event from 3.5-meter distance.)

Ito drunk — we all are — movingly
sings medieval, or at least 600-year-old
ballad. Envy accessibility of distant history,
or maybe Middle Ages not yet over in Nihon.

Abruptly: time to go.
One foot "unread." Next day,
serious asymmetry:
walk on one heavenly foot;
the other sad, regular.

Censorship

Japanese pornography 99% about
female resistance
overwhelmed
by repetitive insistence of male.

First commandment of Japanese censorship:
pubic hair and genitals may not be shown.
This generates intellectual issue:
invention/development of possible substitutes,
and sexual program:
larger sensual impact through elimination
of responsible parts.

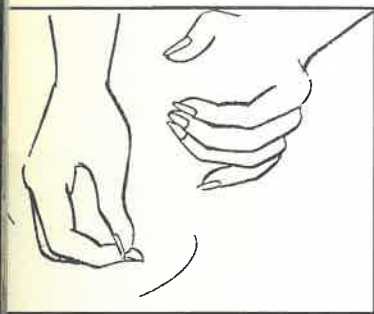
First stylization is reduction
of color scheme:
black (hair), yellow (skin), lilac with,
in the beginning, white
(panties); for some reason,
the *frisson* of racial mixing leaves
Japanese cold
(rare arena of doubt?).

Four techniques regulate living with(out) sex.
(Ways of both transcending and maintaining
taboos.)



Outside living room ...





1. Excision

Most radical in print:
surgical elimination of offensive elements
from image; in drawn material attention is pulled
irresistibly to white areas;
in photos to black absences.
Transfer of importance from the defined
to the residual:
"open regions" inserted in areas of high specificity
subject to continuous, heightened speculation.
In unstable material (i.e., video and film)
this tactic would be almost technically
impossible: a kind of reverse animation of elimination.

2. Cover

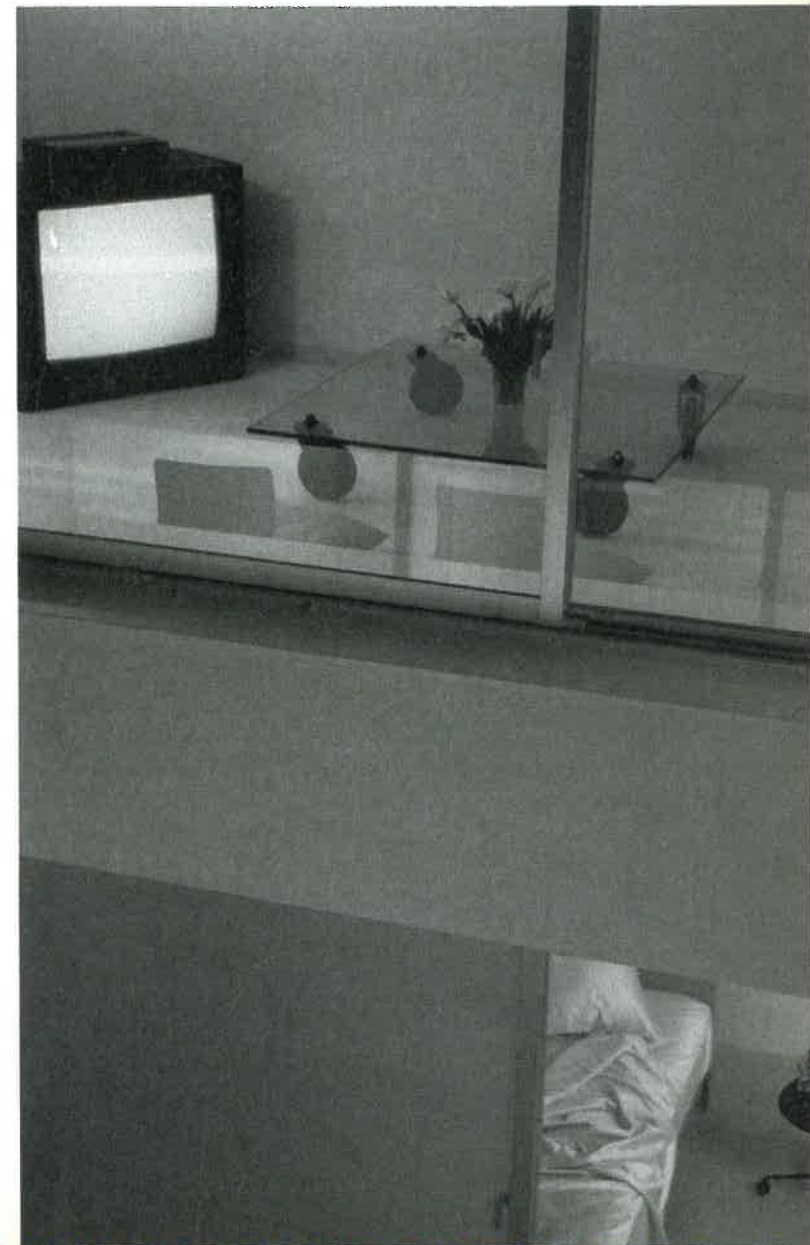
"Everything" implied through (more or less flimsy)
material; can bring its own suspense
through, for instance, wetness or form changes;
this low-tech, classical strategy is so effective
that Japanese lovers often stay
marooned indefinitely in state
of semi-undress.

3. Burnout

When nakedness is achieved on video,
camera may linger
on inoffensive part of body,
whose motions convey activity beyond the frame;
in long shots
bodies organized to shield actual points
of engagement; explicitness means "hole"
(of light)—a miniature bouncing "sun"—
burned into image, always there
where the action is,
giving the potentially sordid an almost
exalted dimension. (Buddhism?)
Me, her, and the sun.

4. Digitization

Within the otherwise normal image appear
gridded zones
of varying size, each square a color:
black, café-au-lait, pink
in ever-shifting relationships; more subtle Mondrians.
Sometimes, a momentary constellation
suggests "the idea" of identifiable parts.



Japanese room under green dome, bedroom ...

The fault line between
the gridded censorship cloud
and the conventional image, where
the traditional world—expressions, intensities,
suspense, love (?), desperation—
yields to digitization, is a potent metaphor
for this *fin de siècle*: prototype
of possible traffic between
real and virtual
worlds, and utopian model, maybe,
of their eventual coexistence.

Emerging from the pure abstraction
of the censored zone:
jets of sperm—
white squares that turn into small blobs
and land on real flesh.

Contest

Communication in Japan becomes
transparent pleasure once
it is realized
that all communication is confrontational—
endlessly extended arm wrestling.

Baths

In Japan, naked Western men seem
like hippopotami in mud:
large, clumsy,
headed for extinction. That must be
why Japanese men take them there:
to die
without dignity.

Dinner

Geisha system: pre-, present-, post-geishas.
Pre-geisha: wonderful Japanese Grace Kelly—
sensual, demure, provocatively
innocent; no makeup, dressed
in a monkish sackcloth.
All attention goes out to her
at beginning of the banquet
even though she is always in the distance
(maybe because she is always in the
distance),
coming and disappearing, where?



Down to Japanese room, up to green mountain . . .



Present-geisha: it is never clear
whose torture is worse, hers or yours.
She always seems the same age:
a theoretical 39.
White face cracked with anxiety,
hair a brittle helmet.
Please, no please, please, no please!

Yet, they may suddenly stand on their heads,
their hair voluptuous on the ground,
kimono dropping, real thighs, calves,
singing Western ballads
upside down:
extremes necessary to keep attention of
increasingly drunken *sans*?

Yielding, at the end of the meal, to Oedipal
pull of post-geisha:
some kind of witch—gray spiky hair
of a madwoman, almost no teeth; telling
hilarious stories, apparently
outrageous jokes—“*ach so, ach so*”—
crude elderly Ophelia
doubled over
with laughter, slapping her thighs ...
mother as one of the boys, finally.

Meeting

We had been 6 times to Japan,
each time for 7 days;
each day we had “meetings”:
25 people together from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M.;
at each meeting: 200–400 points.
#1: please choose between 2 grays
for the bathroom;
#113: foundations don't work.
Mosaic tiles before the foundation:
Japanese inability
to define hierarchy?
Or deliberate scrambling
to keep foreigner on high alert?

More exciting hypothesis:
for Japanese
no point
ever unimportant.



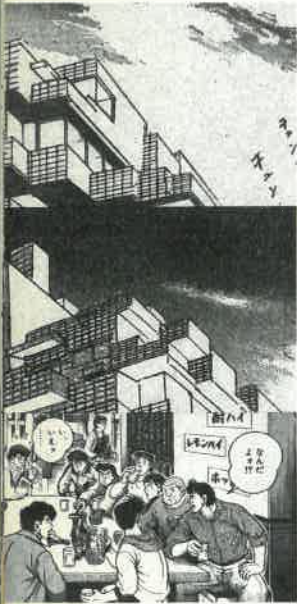
Explains maddening attention to detail,
but also density of incredible quality.

As for the size of the meeting:
first thought: irrational, inefficient
to meet with entire organizations—
but after a meeting
everyone knows;
no distortions, deviations, destruction.

Now we have our own “Japanese meetings”
in Rotterdam:
endless table, schedule for everyone, no free time.
Nobody leaves the room before
all 300 decisions are made.

We all love it.

1993



TOWER FACE NOT TO
FRONT FACT THIS LINE

20M

20M

The project consists of 24 individual houses, each three stories high, packed together to form two blocks. Each house is penetrated by a private vertical courtyard that introduces light and space into the center.

On the lower level a concourse leads to individual front doors; beyond each door lies a patio with white pebbles. A continuous staircase leads to individual rooms on the second floor and living area on the third — a suite of living, dining, open-air, and "Japanese" rooms where screens and curtains generate different configurations.

A closed cyclopic wall wraps around the exterior of the blocks so that they can eventually serve as socles for Isozaki's future towers. The roofs of the domed Japanese cells are covered with grass. "Escaping" from the walls are the floating rooflines of the living-room floors. They resonate with the mountains that define a bowl around the city.

Each house offers a variety of spatial conditions and tectonic contrasts: enclosed vs. exploding, intimate vs. open, public vs. private, high vs. low, dark vs. light, concrete vs. abstract.

Sometimes during design process, towers (scrapers) (architect Isozaki) appear in the backyard; as they become taller, we become lower, displaced socles.

7-78

3M 3M

4M

12M

4M

1.9M

1.9M

1.9M

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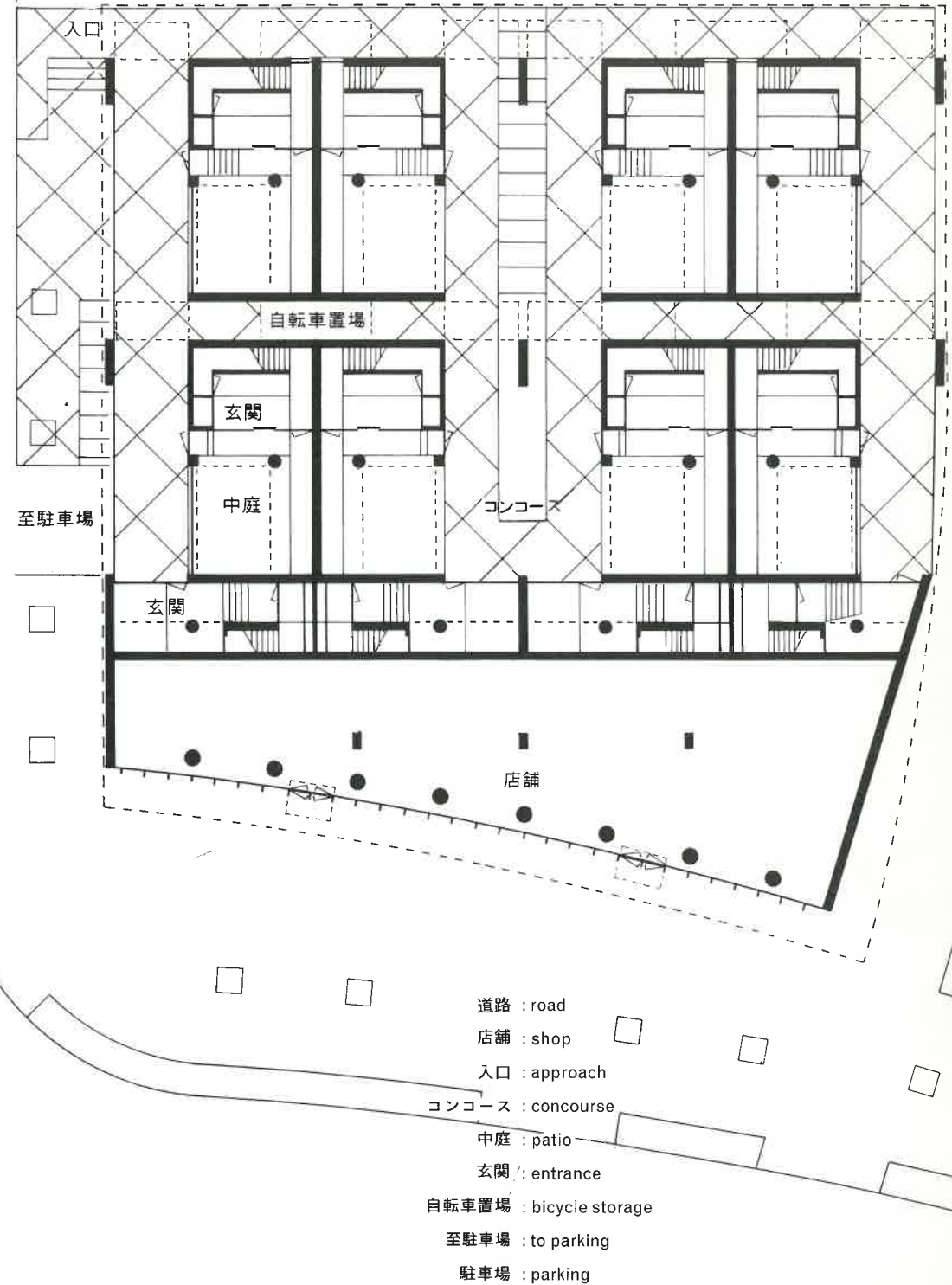
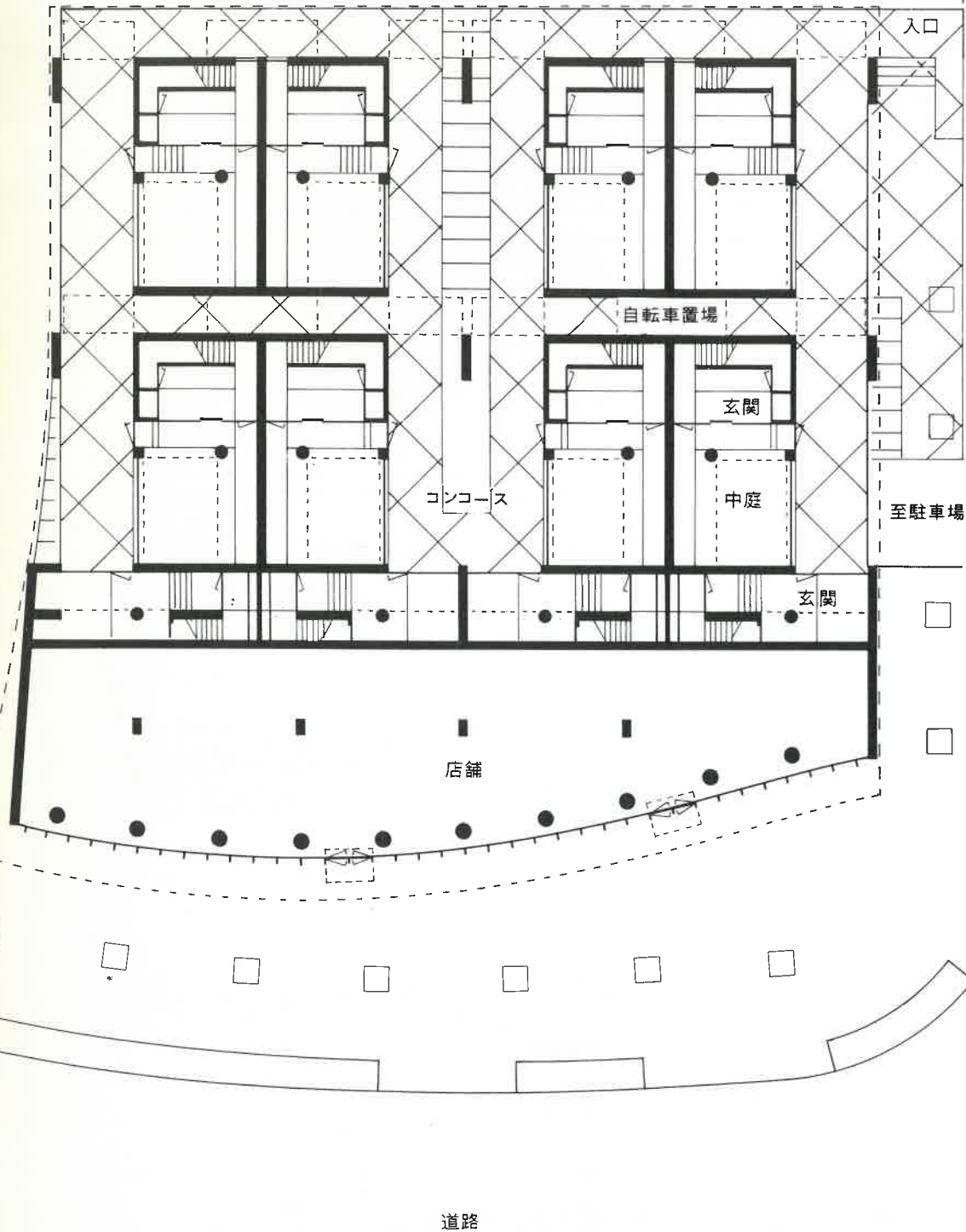
1.9M

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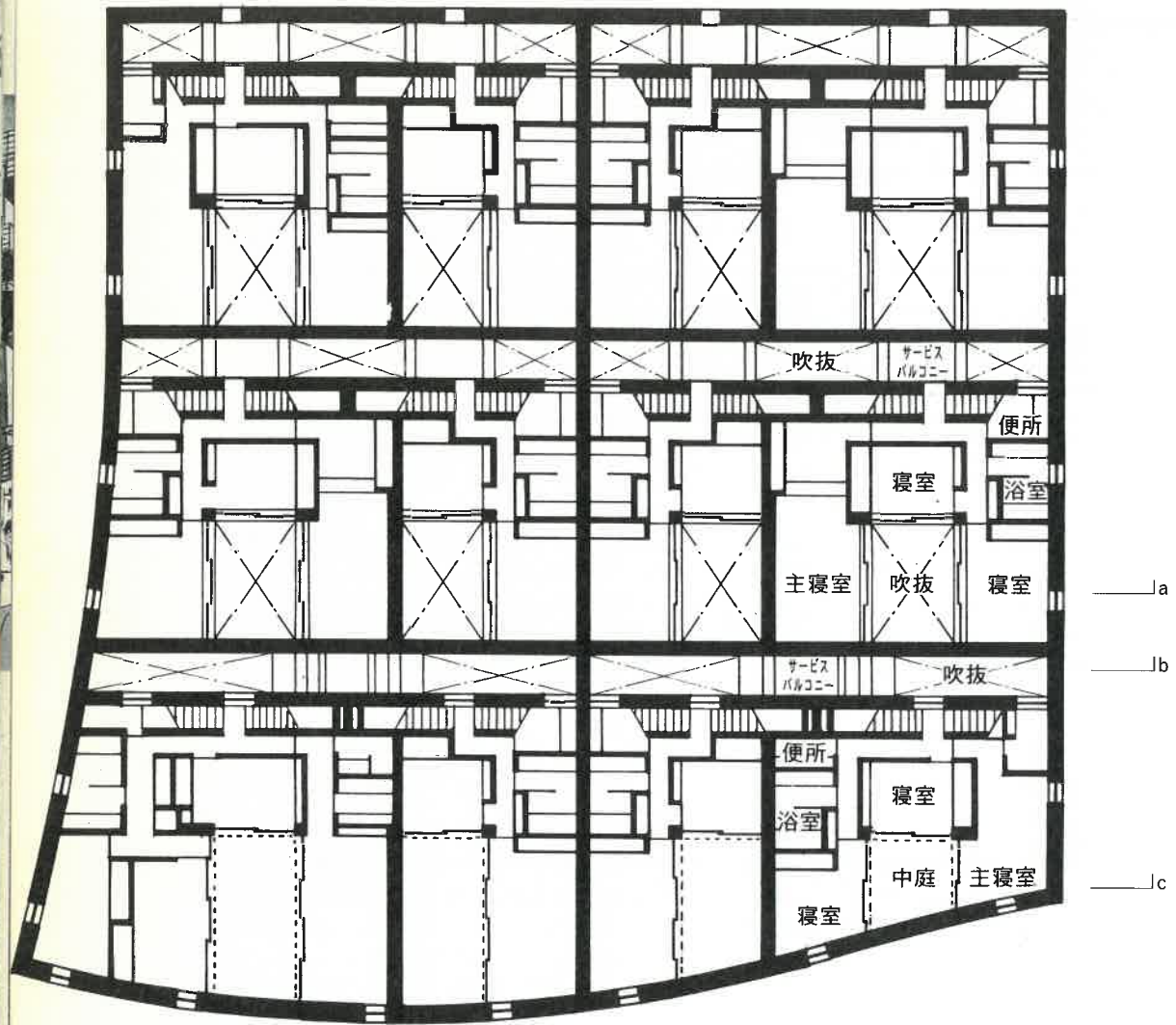
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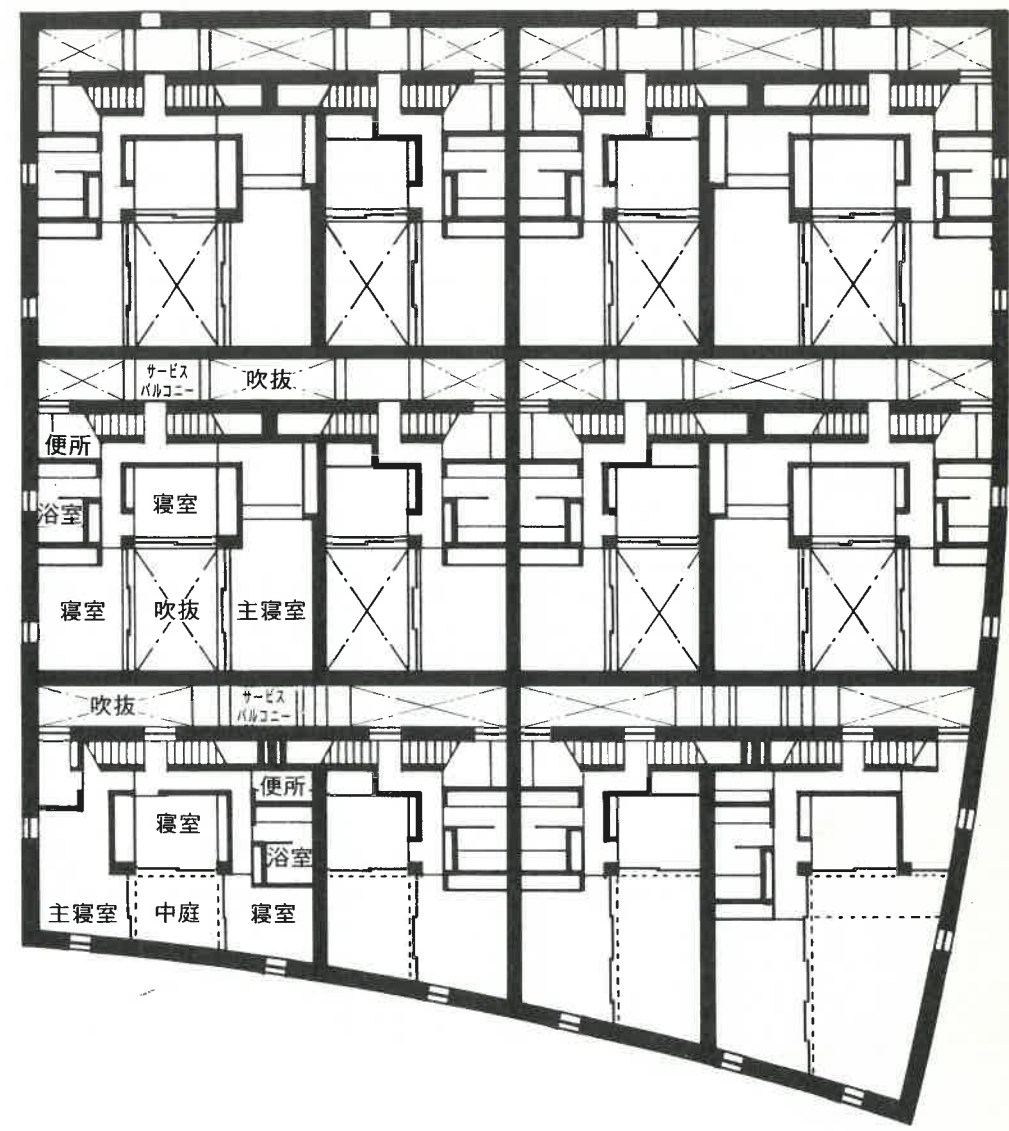
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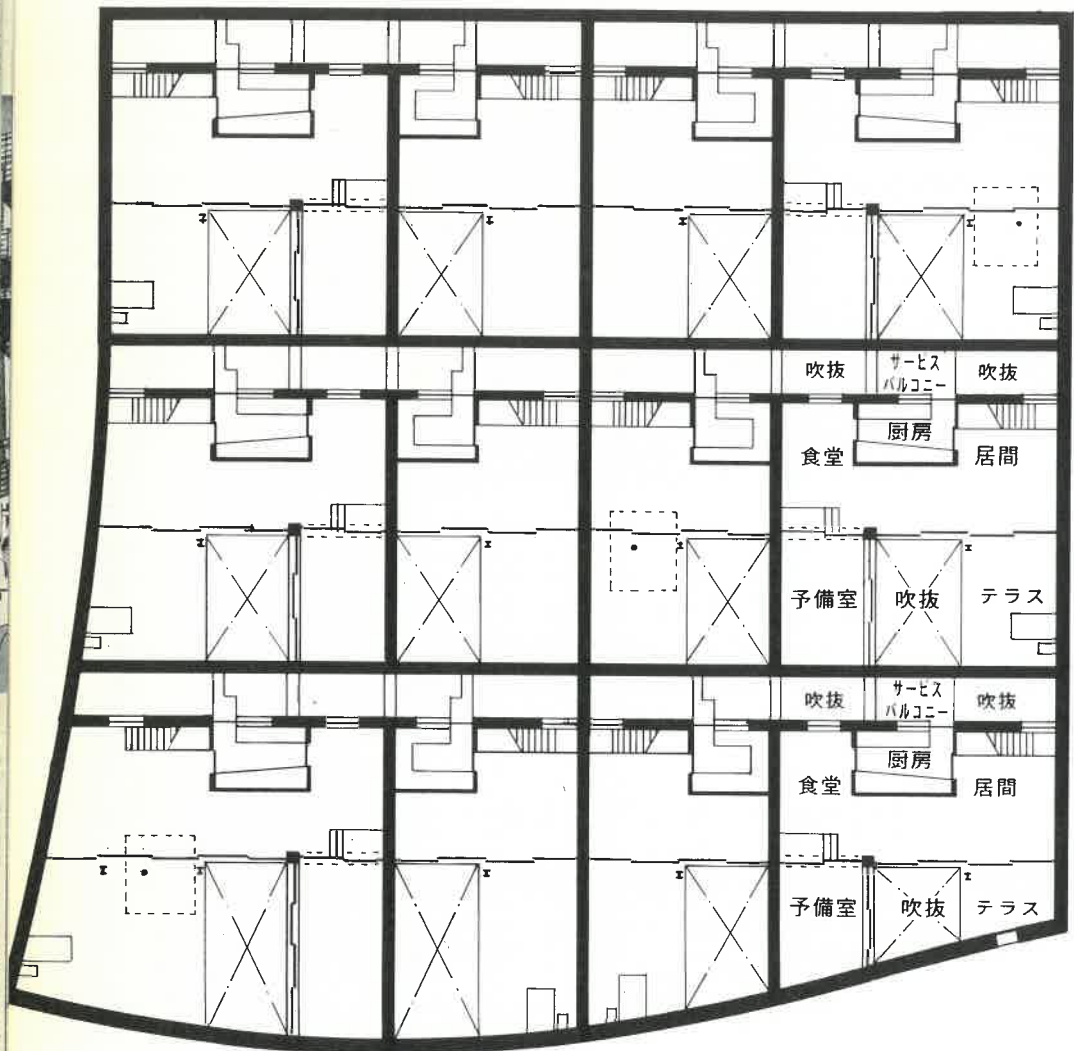


二階平面図 : second floor



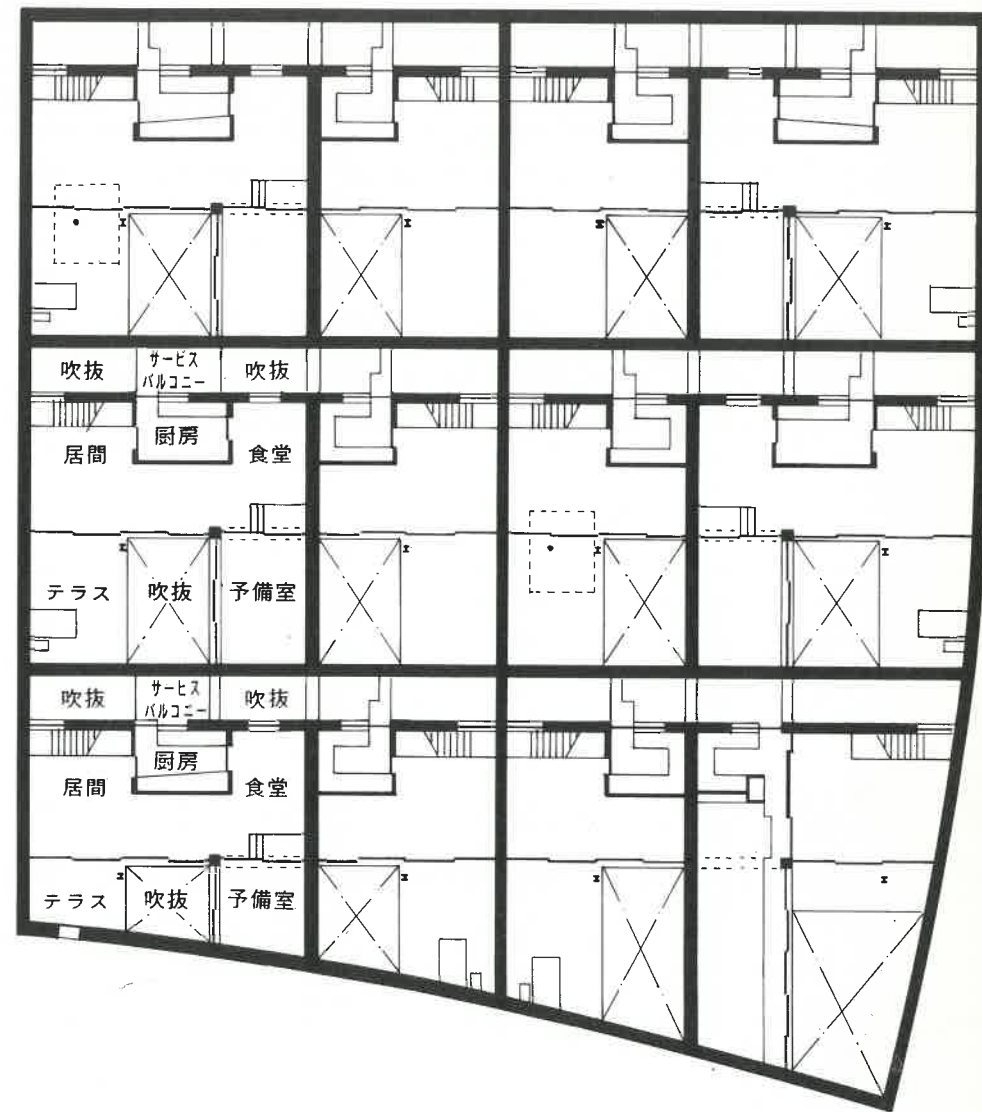
主寝室 : master bedroom
 寝室 : bedroom
 便所 : lavatory
 浴室 : bathroom
 吹抜 : void
 中庭 : patio
 サービスバルコニー : service balcony

d e f



—|a
—|b
—|c

三階平面図 : third floor



居間 : living room
 テラス : terrace
 食堂 : dining room
 厨房 : kitchen
 予備室 : extra room
 吹抜 : void
 サービスバルコニー : service balcony

0 | | | | | | | | | | 10m

day of the shipwreck — they could easily have survived without eating anything at all. This monumental expression of "loss of nerve" corresponds to the premature panic and loss of nerve about the Metropolis in the present moment of the 20th century.

CAPITALISM

Capitalism is in the crossing of every kind of formation, always and by nature neocapitalism.

CAREFREE

They are waiting on the bench; that is, they are there before me and I hesitate under a tree, watching them smile and laugh, before advancing to make myself known. Then I ask them what they would like to do. They shrug their shoulders, look at one another, smile, laugh, and say they do not care.

CATHEDRAL¹

The cathedral is inevitably the organizing element in any gothic city, and we therefore propose to start our visit there.

CATHEDRAL²

Well, I suppose these freeway-made this town ... and many others ... possible. They're the cathedrals of our time. There are names for the various kinds of freeway drivers. The "slingshotter" ... the "adventurer" ... the "marshmallow" ... the "nomad" ... the "weaver". It's fancy driving. Things that never had names before now are easily described. It makes conversation easy.

CATHEDRAL³

The microchip is a cathedral.

CAUGHT

The apartment blocks looked like skyscrapers that, at the moment of being blown up and fracturing in two or three places, had been caught and laid flat on their sides.

CAUTION

This appliance was constructed to process normal household quantities.

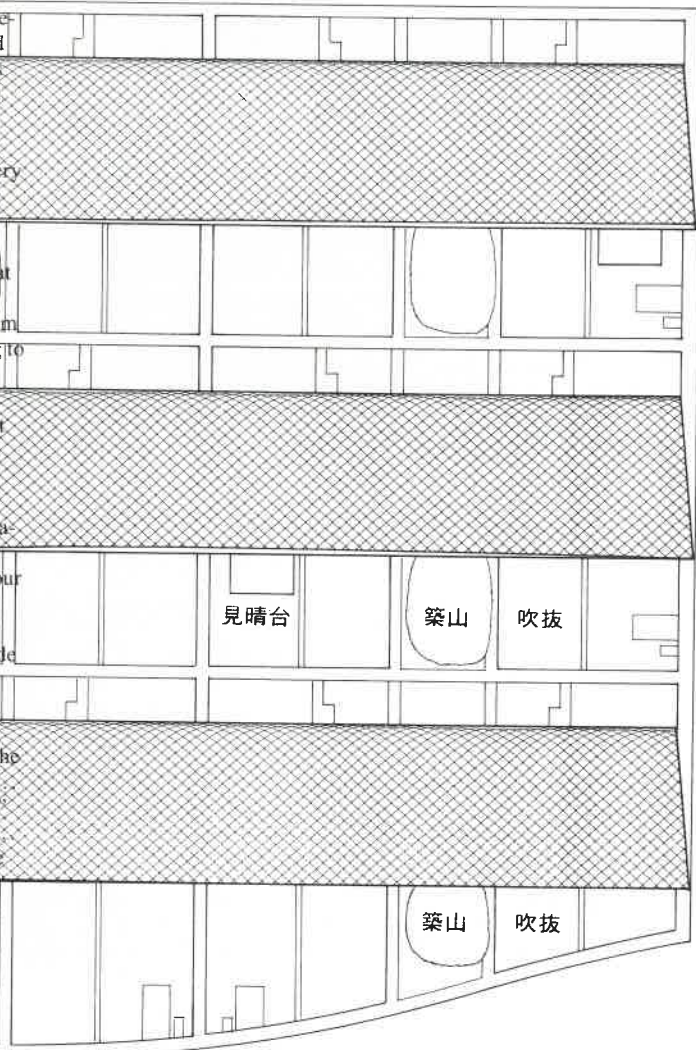
CHANCE¹

In a small town in Scotland they sell books with one blank page hidden someplace in the volume. If the reader opens to that page and it's three o'clock in the afternoon, he dies.

CHANCE²

If the universe is indeed spatially infinite, or if there are infinitely many universes, there would probably be some large regions

d e f



見晴台

築山

吹抜

—|a

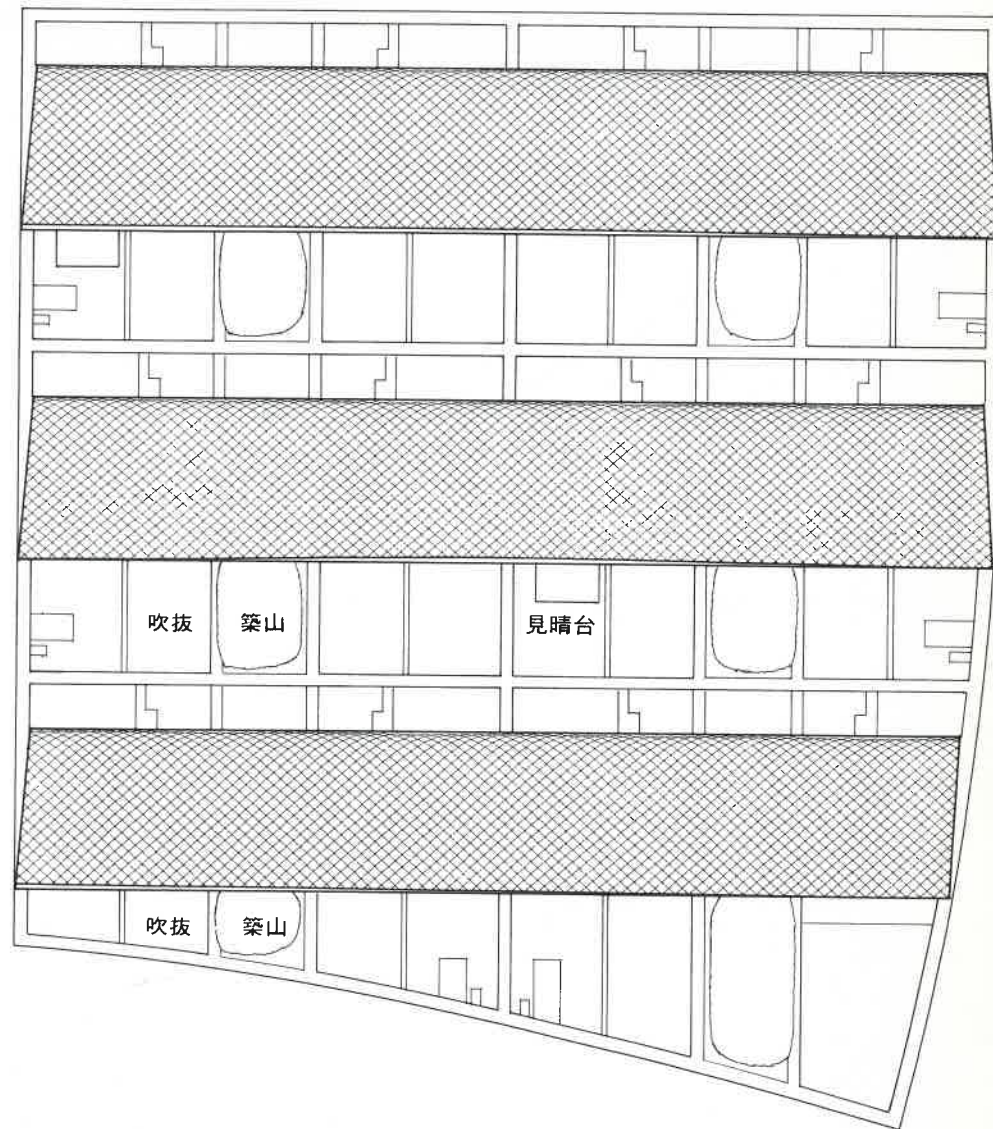
—|b

—|c

築山

吹抜

屋根伏図 : roof



吹抜

築山

見晴台

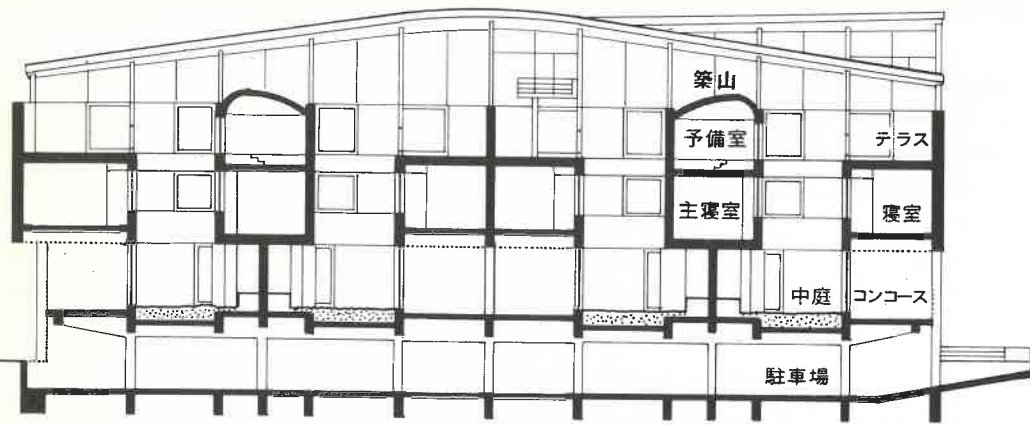
吹抜

築山

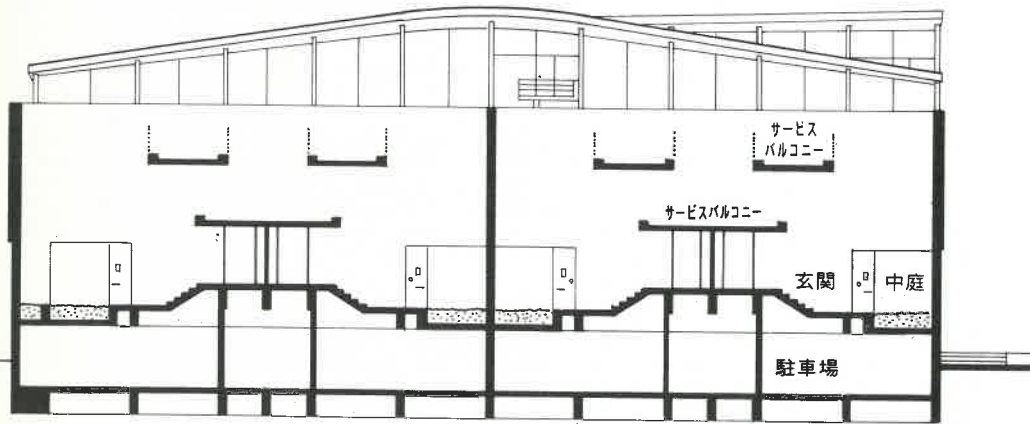
見晴台 : balcony

築山 : green dome

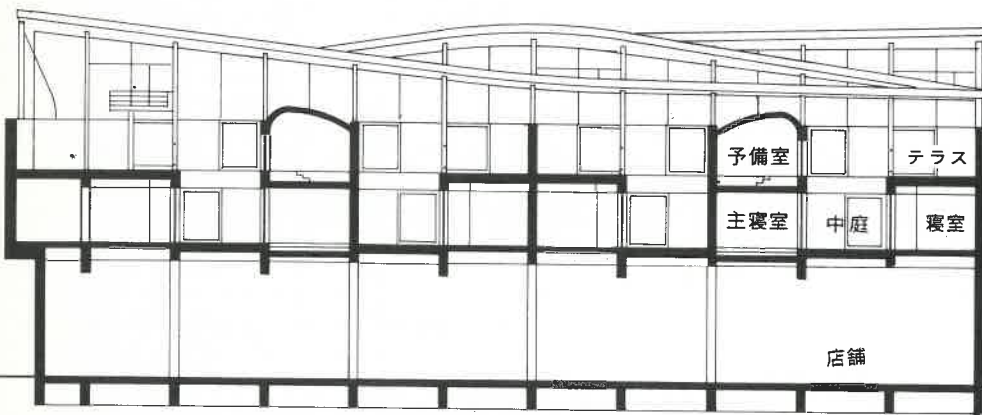
吹抜 : void



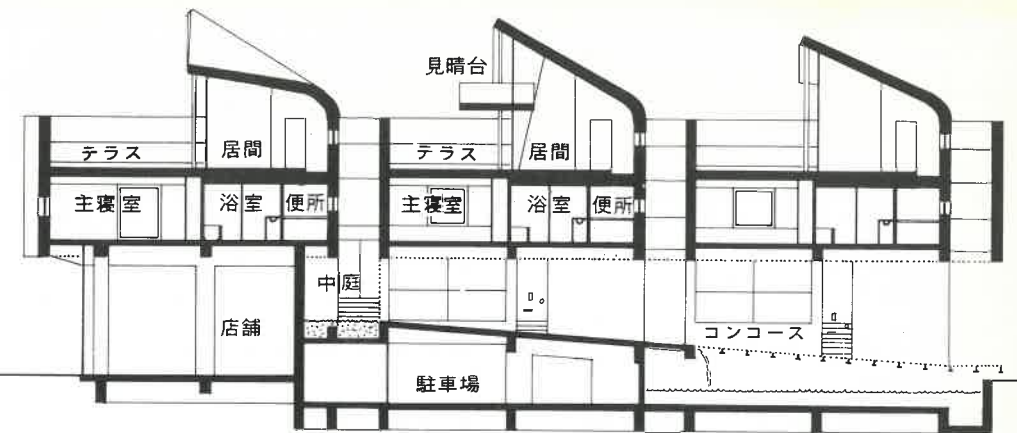
section a



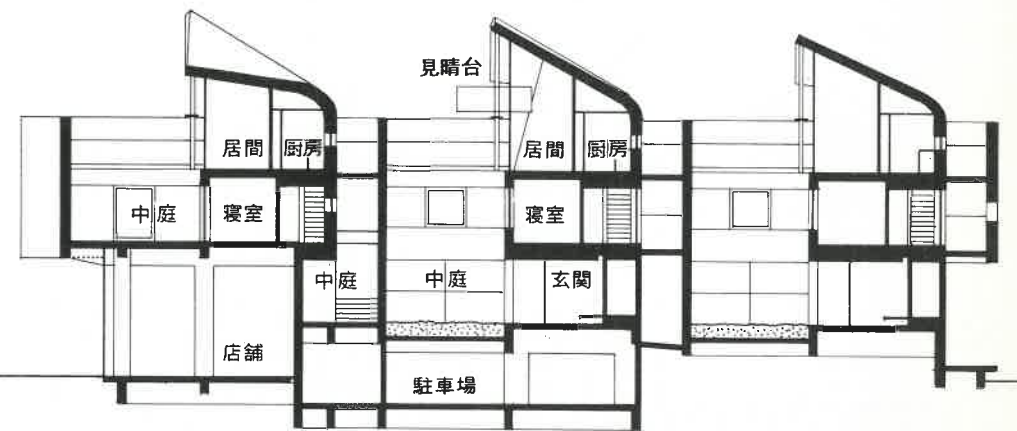
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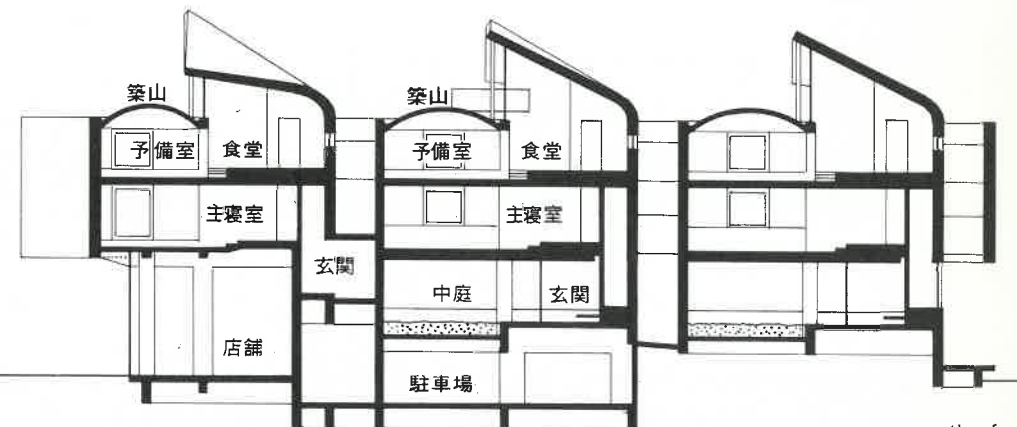
section c



section d



section e



section f

somewhere that started out in a smooth uniform manner. It is a bit like the well-known horde of monkeys hammering away on typewriters—most of what they write will be garbage, but very occasionally by pure chance they will type out one of Shakespeare's sonnets.

CHANCE³

Chance, the phosphorescent word that he will write on the black wall when I turn out my light tonight.

CHANNEL

By changing the channel he could change himself. He could go through phases, as garden plants went through phases, but he could change as rapidly as he wished by twisting the dial backward and forward. In some cases he could spread out into the screen without stopping, just as on TV people spread out into the screen. By turning the dial, Chance could bring others inside his eyelids. Thus he came to believe that it was he, Chance, and no one else, who made himself be.

CHAOS¹

In the steeply curving corridor of the centrifuge, the wind was howling past, carrying with it loose articles of clothing, pieces of paper, items of food from the galley, plates and cups—everything that had not been securely fastened down. Bowman had time for one glimpse of the racing chaos when the main lights flickered and died, and he was surrounded by screaming darkness.

CHAOS²

You cannot aspire to it, you can only be an instrument of it... The only relationship that architects can have with chaos is to take their rightful places in the army of those committed to prevent it, and fail. And it is only in failure, by accident, that chaos happens.

CHARACTERS

My Latin Quarter hat. God, we simply must dress the character. I want puce gloves. You were a student, weren't you? Of what in the other devil's name? Paysayenn. P.C.N., you know: physiqes, chimiques, et naturelles. Aha. Eating your groatsworth of mou en civet, flesh-pots of Egypt, elbowed by belching cabmen. Just say in the most natural tone: when I was in Paris, boul' Mich'.

