



The theme and exhibition content of Japanese Pavilion in the 11th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia are decided as follows:

EXTREME NATURE: Landscape of Ambiguous Spaces

Commissioner:

Taro Igarashi

(Architectural Critic/ Associate Professor of Tohoku University)

Exhibitors:

Junya Ishigami (Architect) / Hideaki Ohba (Botanist)

【Outline of the Biennale】

- Theme : Out There. Architecture Beyond Building
 Director : Aaron Betsky
 (Director of the Cincinnati Art Museum/ Former Director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI) of Rotterdam)
 Venues : Giardini di Castello, Arsenale, etc.
 Exhibition Dates : 14th September to 23rd November 2008 (10 a.m. - 6 p.m., daily)
 Preview : 11th to 13th September 2008 (10 a.m.-7 p.m.)
 Awarding Ceremony : 13th September 2008 (5 p.m.)
 Web site : <http://www.labiennale.org>

【Outline of the Japanese Participation】

- Organizer : The Japan Foundation
 Supported by : The Obayashi Foundation, Shiseido Co., Ltd.
 Cooperated by : Union Foundation for Ergodesign Culture, Gallery Koyanagi
 Web site : <http://www.jpf.go.jp/venezia-biennale/arc/>

【Official Catalog】

- Contemporary Architect's Concept Series 2 : Junya Ishigami (tentative title)
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Junya Ishigami has designed a group of small greenhouses around the Japanese Pavilion.

Ishigami, born in 1974, worked for the renowned architectural firm SANAA and is one of the most controversial young architects in Japan today. He continues to amaze the worlds of art and design as well as that of architecture with structures that are extreme but somehow appear natural, such as *table* of 2005, which was 9.5 meters long but only 3 mm thick, *balloon* of 2007, 14 meters high and weighing a ton, and the KAIT Studio of 2008 designed for the Kanagawa Institute of Technology, which has 305 columns arranged randomly like the stars in the sky. He has gone beyond the design style of SANAA to establish his own position on the cutting edge of contemporary Japanese architecture.

Ordinarily, it is impossible to show actual buildings in an exhibition of architecture. Models, images, or drawings are used as substitutes. The installation format, an alternative method of showing architectural forms, has a parasitical relationship to the existing structure. In the Japanese Pavilion, Ishigami takes a completely different approach in order to present new possibilities of architecture by constructing “buildings” at a scale of 1:1. These buildings, which are designed with precise structural calculations so they are just barely able to stand, suggest the future possibilities of architecture and therefore pose the basic question: What is architecture? They are extremely delicate greenhouses with an ephemeral physical presence that blend into the environment. Structural plans were prepared by Jun Sato.

In the previous International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, several countries have tended to focus on the architecture of the past, but this sort of international exhibition should not function like a museum. It should be an arena for presenting the architecture of the next generation. The great international expositions have always been stages for challenging experiments that have revolutionized the history of architecture since the first Great Exhibition of London in 1851, as exemplified by the Eiffel Tower and the Barcelona Pavilion.

The exhibitions at the Japanese Pavilion have attracted attention for their fin-de-siècle atmosphere and declarations of the end of architecture. These exhibitions have dealt with the effects of earthquakes, city of girls, and *otaku* culture. Now that we have entered a new century, however, it is time for the Japanese Pavilion to consider the beginnings of architecture rather than its end. The Crystal Palace, which housed the first great international exposition, adopted the structural technology of a greenhouse, so the exhibition in the Japanese Pavilion looks back to the origin of international expositions while suggesting possible beginnings for a new architecture.

Ishigami's greenhouses are not equipped with air control systems and are not sealed off from the outside by a strong barrier, so they do not create a perfect artificial environment. The weakness of the barrier results in an ambiguous mixing of elements from the internal and external environment. With the help of botanist Hideaki Ohba, Ishigami aims at presenting a variety of plant life that creates a slight disturbance in the landscape of the park. At first glance, the resulting landscape seems to be ordinary, but we believe this is an extremely progressive approach to the natural environment.

The inside of the Japanese Pavilion is nearly empty, revealing the beauty of its original space. The greenhouses scattered around it give the outside space the atmosphere of an interior landscape. The architecture is not given the definite qualities of a physical object and there is no dualistic relationship between inside and outside. Nor is perceived the outside space as a void. The architecture does not have an imposing façade that determines our view of the outside landscape. It is the interior space of the greenhouses, with their transparent volume, seemingly filled with ether, that makes us think of external space. Furniture is also placed on the grounds along with the greenhouses, suggesting the interior of a room. The Japanese Pavilion itself is made to appear as an artificial environment or an element of topography. The original outdoor space overlaps with the space that emerges between the ephemeral steel structures covered with glass, causing the appearance of a doubled, ambiguous space. The condition of space produced here makes us aware that everything in it – the plants inside and outside, the furniture, the architecture, the topography, and the environment – exists simultaneously.

Taro Igarashi



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Commissioner: Taro Igarashi

Born in Paris, France in 1967. Bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture, Engineering Department, the University of Tokyo with Doctor's degree in the history of architecture. Presently serving as associate professor of engineering in the graduate school of Tohoku University. Curator for Japan's Section in the Lisbon Architecture Triennale in 2007. Also writes architectural criticism.

Publications include *Superflat Architecture and Japanese Subculture* (Towards Total Scape, NAI Publishers, 2000); *Buddhism and Metabolism* (Kisho Kurokawa: Metabolism and Symbiosis, Jovis Verlag, 2005); *Revolution and Utopia since Modernism* (Archilab's Urban Experiments, Thames&Hudson, 2005); *Latecomers Living on an Utterly Flat Battlefield* (Archilab 2006: Nested In The City, HYX, 2006); *The "Post-bubble" Era and Architecture* (Touring Exhibition "Parallel Nippon: Contemporary Japanese Architecture 1996-2006", the Japan Foundation/Architectural Institute of Japan, 2007). In Japanese: *Gendai kenchiku ni kansuru 16 sho* (16 Chapters on Contemporary Architecture), Kodansha; *Shinpen - Shinshukyo to kyodai kenchiku* (New Edition: New Religion and Monumental Architecture), Chikuma Gakugei Bunko; *Utsukushii toshi, minikui toshi* (Beautiful City, Ugly City) and *Kabobi toshi* (Over-Protected Cities), Chuko Shinsho Rakure; *Gendai kenchiku no pasupekutibu* (Perspective on Contemporary Architecture), Kobunsha Shinsho; *Senso to kenchiku* (War and Architecture), Obunsha. Edited *Mienai Shinsai* (Invisible Earthquake), Misuzu Shobo.

Exhibitor: Junya Ishigami

Born in Kanagawa prefecture in 1974. Master's degree in architecture and planning, Graduate School of Fine Arts, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Worked in the architectural firm, Kazuyo Sejima and Associates from 2000 to 2004. Established junya.ishigami + associates in 2004. Designed the Lexus automobile exhibition space at Milano Salone in 2004, displaying his *low chair* and *round table*, which were acquired by the Pompidou Centre. Submitted *small garden of row house* to SD Review of 2005 and received the SD Prize. Submitted *table* to the Kirin Art Project of 2005 and received the Kirin Prize. *Table* shown at the Basel Art Fair by Gallery Koyanagi in 2006 and acquired by the Israel Museum. First prize in residential architecture project sponsored by the Tokyo Electric Power Company. Exhibited *balloon* and *little garden* in SPACE FOR YOUR FUTURE at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo in 2007. Designed KAIT Studio for the Kanagawa Institute of Technology in 2008.

Exhibitor: Hideaki Ohba

Born in Tokyo in 1943. Doctor of Science and Professor Emeritus, the University of Tokyo. A field botanist working especially in high-altitudes in the Himalaya and the Kunlun mountains, and arid zones in the Arabian Peninsula and the Sahara Desert. Also worked on botanical history and human interactions with plants, including botanical illustrations, materia medica, and global warming. His publications include *Himalayan Plants, vols. 1-4*, University of Tokyo Press, *Selected Writings of Hideaki Ohba, 1 & 2*, Yasaka Shobo, *Illustrated Handbook of Succulent Plants, vol. 4, Crassulaceae* (ed. Urs Eggli.), Springer, Berlin, and co-author of the Japanese edition of *Historia Plantarum, a facsimili ms. 459*, Biblioteca Casanatense, Roma, Iwanami Shoten, and a Japanese translation of H. Koopowitz and H. Kaye, *Plant Extinction: A Global Crisis*, Yasaka Shobo.