

# JAPANESE TRADITION IN THE WORK OF TADAO ANDO

METHOD & ANALYSIS  
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The Japanese traditional architecture has developed during time. There are three main stages in the development.

The first one is the Shinden Style (8th-12th centuries). This style is very much influenced by the Chinese official temple architecture, because of the introduction of Buddhism. The main characteristics are a more or less symmetrical plan layout, with a main central hall, surrounded by verandas and connected by covered corridors to the other buildings. The whole complex contains several courtyards and is connected by a gate to the outer world.

The Shoin style (12th-16th centuries) developed out of the Shinden style. This style is characterized by a less formal plan layout, reflecting the Japanese taste and a preference for asymmetry. The most important building of a complex is not necessarily situated in the centre, but mostly in a corner. With the Zen tradition there is an important attention for the relation between mind and body, between rational and the mystic. The buildings now are more divided in a public and a more private section. There is always a room for reflection, based on the size of the Tatami mats, connected with a garden to bring men in harmony with the natural elements. The introduction of the tea ceremony started a return to simplicity and naturalness, by drinking tea in a separate room, so one can come to meditation.

After the ceremonial Shoin style the more open minded Sukuiya style (16th-19th centuries) developed. In fact Sukuiya can't hardly be mentioned a style because it integrates elements of the previous styles in a personal way (it is not only important to drink tea, but to have to reflect how the owner drinks the tea). The main goal was no longer to copy form, but to innovate them to a individual lifestyle. There is more attention to personal creativity that reflects a new individual consciousness. This is visible in a free plan layout without a focuspoint. Released of any obligation or religion the Sukuiya style reflects the quintessence of the Japanese architecture with a preference of natural and the raw things. Esthetic values are visible in the natural beauty of the materials and not to hide them by using ornaments.

In this way Tadao Ando continues the Sukuiya style by using the characteristic traditional Japanese elements, and changes them to his own idea of what the essence is of the tradition and what the source is of the elements. By using modern materials he innovates the tradition and makes it personal, so that his buildings are becoming a brand mark of his oeuvre.

1969 OSAKA STATION OSAKA, JAPAN	1976 ROW HOUSE OSAKA, JAPAN	1981/83 ROKKO HOUSING I HYOGO, JAPAN	1987 THEATER ON THE WATER OSAKA, JAPAN	1989 SUNTORY MUSEUM & PLAZA OSAKA, JAPAN	1989 JAPAN PAVILION EXPO 92 SEVILLE, SPAIN	1991 NARIWA MUSEUM KAWAKAMI, JAPAN	1995 THE THEATER ON THE ROCK UTSUMONIYA, JAPAN	1997 MODERN ART MUSEUM FORT WORTH, USA	2000 ARMANI/TEATRO MILAN, ITALY	2003 HOUSE IN MALIBU MALIBU, USA
1972 HIRAOKA HOUSE TAKARAZUKA, JAPAN		1985 CHURCH ON THE WATER HOKKAIDO, JAPAN	1988 NAOSHIMA CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM KAGAWA, JAPAN			1993 MUSEUM OF LITERATURE II HIMEJI, JAPAN	1996 PENTHOUSE IN MANHATTAN NEW YORK, USA		2002 IWAKI MUSEUM IWAKI, JAPAN	2005 PALAZZO GRASSI VENICE, ITALY
1971 TOMISHIMA HOUSE OSAKA, JAPAN		1983 NAKAYAMA HOUSE NARA, JAPAN	1987 CHILDREN'S MUSEUM HIMEJI, JAPAN	1988 TSHIKO HOUSE OSAKA, JAPAN	1989 WATER TEMPLE HYOGO, JAPAN	1991 LEE HOUSE FUNABASHI, JAPAN	1995 YAGI HOUSE NISHINOMIYA, JAPAN		2001 GROUND ZERO PROJECT NEW YORK	2003 CHAPEL IN SEATTLE OSAKA, JAPAN

## 1941

1979 KOSHINO HOUSE ASHIYA, JAPAN	1980 ISHII HOUSE HAMAMATSU, JAPAN	1985 CHAPEL ON MOUNT ROKKO KOBE, JAPAN	1989 FOREST OF TOMBS MUSEUM KAMOTO, JAPAN	1991 MUSEUM OF WOOD MIKATA, JAPAN	1994 LANGEN FOUNDATION NEUSS, GERMANY	1997 DAYLIGHT MUSEUM GAMO, JAPAN	2000 CALDER MUSEUM PHILADELPHIA, USA	2006 CHAPEL IN SEATTLE BELLEVUE, USA
	1982 IWASA HOUSE ASHIYA, JAPAN	1987 THEATER ON THE WATER YUFUTSU, JAPAN	1988 MUSEUM OF LITERATURE HYOGO, JAPAN	1990 CHIKATSU-ASUKA HISTORICAL MUSEUM OSAKA, JAPAN	1999 PICCADILLY GARDNS MANCHESTER, UK	2002 ROKKO HOUSING IV HYOGO, JAPAN		
	1980 FESTIVAL HAHA, JAPAN	1984 SASAKI HOUSE MINATO-KU, JAPAN	1987 CHURCH OF THE LIGHT IBARAKI, JAPAN	1989 WATER TEMPLE TSUNA, JAPAN	1998 KOHYO-JI TEMPLE EHIME, JAPAN	2001 NOMA KINDERGARTEN SHIZUOKA, JAPAN	2004 HSTYLE.COM TOKYO, JAPAN	2005 FF. PINAULT FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART ILE SEGUIN, FRANCE

## PRESENT

### Operations, showing the presence of the (sub)theme(s)

**Rowhouse - Osaka, Japan - 1976**

**Koshino House - Ashiya, Hyogo, Japan - Private residence**  
Built in 1980 - Added in 1983 - Site area 1141 m<sup>2</sup> - Floor area 294 m<sup>2</sup>

The Koshino House is located in Ashiya city, between Kobe and Osaka, at the foot of the Rokko mountains. Originally the house consisted of two parallel rectangular volumes, built in 1980. The volumes with the entrance contains a living room, a kitchen and two bedrooms. The other lower volume, on the downside of the hill contains a series of six identical rooms, of which the last two are Tatamirooms. Three years later a curved volume was added at the upper side of the house, which contains the master bedroom. The three volumes are connected to each other by a corridor that is situated under the ground and not visible from the outside. The approach is from above and gives the visitor a total view of the plan of the house.

**Spatial relations (Ching):**

**Topology (Steadman):**

**Parti (Clark & Pause):**  
Symmetry and balance

**Modern Art Museum - Fort Worth, USA - 1997**

**Langen Foundation - Hombrecht, Neuss, Germany - Museum**  
First plan 1994 - Built in 2004 - Site area 122 220 m<sup>2</sup> - Floor area 3050 m<sup>2</sup>

The museum is located near the Erft River between Düsseldorf and Cologne, on a former NATO base. The museum is part of a wider cultural park with several exhibition spaces created by sculpture Erwin Heerich. Marianne Langen asked Tadao Ando to design a museum for the collection of modern and Asian art, she and her husband collected. The goal was to create a building that is linked to the nature, like the pavilions from Erwin Heerich are. The museum consist a long concrete volume, surrounded by a wall of glass. This is the volume where the Asian art is exhibited. This volume is connected to a second, 45 degrees turned building, which is connected to a third, also 45 degrees turned volume. These two volumes are half buried in the ground and contains exhibition areas for the modern art. The second volume forms a u-shape with a monumental staircase. The approach is through a gate in a curved concrete wall that leads over a path to the entrance.

**Spatial relations (Ching):**

**Topology (Steadman):**

**Parti (Clark & Pause):**  
Symmetry and balance

## PERFORMANCE

Tadao Ando is very much aware of his Japanese roots. From his childhood on he tries to understand what this culture means for him. Therefore he travelled very much through Japan. After that he travelled to the west to reflect his consciousness. About this architecture he says, "I am interested in a dialogue with the architecture of the past. But it must be filtered through my own vision and my own experience. In his architecture he reinterprets the Japanese traditional architecture. We found the following subthemes of what this Japanese tradition is.

- 1. NORTH SOUTH ORIENTATION**  
With the source in the Japanese geomancy this principle is used for cities as well for buildings, by opening up to the south. The north side is more important than the south side. For complexes or buildings it is visible by situating the buildings in the north overlooking a garden in the south (Niwa).
- 2. COVERED AT THE BACK**  
The ideal arrangement of buildings is like an archbar, shaped out of the surrounding mountains and hills. Thereby the north side is protected in the back and opens up to the south. If there is no sloping land this can be achieved by situating surrounded buildings that close the north.
- 3. RESPECT FOR NATURE**  
Aware of the principle that there is a divine power in nature (kami) the Gods are embodied by natural energy. There is a great respect for nature. The buildings are always situated in respect with the existing nature and composed around the natural elements in order to disturb the natural elements as little as possible.
- 4. COMPOSITION OF SEVERAL BUILDINGS**  
A complex is composed by several buildings connected by covered corridors. The buildings are based on a geometric form surrounded with verandas (Moya). There is mostly a main building that is connected with subsidiary buildings.
- 5. NATURE IS INTEGRAL PART OF ARCHITECTURE**  
Between the buildings there are squares that connect the buildings with nature. In this squares the nature is always an abstract composition of a perfect ideal, so the awareness becomes more intensively.
- 6. OUTSIDE VERSUS INSIDE**  
There is a rigorous division between the outer world and the inner world. From the beginning of the Japanese architecture the complex of buildings is surrounded by a fence or wall. Before entering the place one have to pass the gate as a ultimate symbol of the division between the inside and the outside.
- 7. HORIZONTALLY DIVISION OF SPACES**  
Buildings are divided in a more private and a more public part (Ke-Hare). The further you get in the building the more private the space is. The division is always in relation with the grid of the construction.
- 8. KIWARI SYSTEM**  
In Japanese architecture there is an attempt with the Kiwari system to achieve aesthetic proportions for all parts of the building in relation with columns or pre-fabricated wooded components. The most important rooms in a building are covered with Tatami mats. The size of the mats is a modular system to bring the elements of the building in harmony. Despite the simple form there is a great attention for detail.
- 9. MATERIALS**  
There is a preference to use natural materials that reflects the aesthetic concept of Sabi (the patina that comes with age) and Wabi (things that are simple and natural). The essence of this concept is best captured in the tea ceremony.

## OPERATION

Architectural drawings and photographs illustrating the operation of buildings, including site plans, floor plans, and exterior views.

## FORM

Architectural drawings and photographs illustrating the form of buildings, including floor plans, sections, and exterior views.

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**Biography**  
Tadao Ando is born on the 13th of september 1941 in Osaka, Japan, as one half of a twin. He's raised by his grandmother (mother's side), and she has a great influence on him. Her character is very much based on traditional rationalism and the independence of the family.

As an autodidact he learns the carpenterscraftmanship of a local carpenter. He works here since he was 10, and works here 7 years. He uses this traditional Japanese craftsmanship for building wooden constructions where concrete can be put in. When he is 15 years old, Ando really gets introduced with architecture, when he somewhat accidentally, reads a book from Le Corbusier.

At the end of the 50's he starts traveling through Japan, where he visits a lot of temples, teahouses and shrines. After he has acquired enough knowledge about the Japanese architecture, he starts traveling from 1962 - 1969 to Africa, Europe and America. When he has also learned a lot about these types of architecture, he goes back to Japan and starts his own studio in 1969: "Tadao Ando Architects & Associates".

Ando build over 200 buildings now, but only a few of them are standing in Europe. In Japan, Ando was a real icon for years, but in Europe he breaks through during the 90s. In all his designs the Japanese (building)tradition is an important theme, and can be seen in for example terraces, glassverandas and inner gardens.

**Why did we chose him?**  
We chose Tadao Ando because his work has a clear appearance that catches you at first sight, but in the same time you notice that there is more than the simple, understandable form. His buildings lead you to a mystic sphere where you come aware of yourself and the relation with the space around you. However, the materials are very basic and massive; they have a great natural tectonic feeling. This duality makes his work interesting for us.

To analyse his work properly we chose a building from the beginning of his oeuvre and a later one, a private house and a public museum, a house in Japan and a building abroad, in Germany. It was interesting for us to analyse his work and his goals, and to notice which themes are reflected in his buildings.

**Quotes from Tadao Ando**  
When you look at Japanese traditional architecture, you have to look at Japanese culture and its relationship with nature. You can actually live in a harmonious, close contact with nature. This is very unique to Japan.

Without this spirit, modernist architecture can not fully exist. Since there is often a mismatch between the logic and the spirit of Modernism, I use architecture to reconcile the two.

**Conclusion & reflection**  
We can say that Tadao Ando has a very steady oeuvre. He still uses the principles that he has defined in the beginning, in his more recent work. He interprets the Japanese tradition in his own way and tries to come to the essence of the principles. A very important theme is the total integration between nature and the architecture. In the traditional architecture there are a few (sub)themes to achieve this, and which Tadao Ando also uses in a contemporary way. For him it is not necessary to use all these (sub)themes in every building. It is for instance not always possible to integrate the building with the surrounding area, while this is a very important goal. In this way the Chapel of water, where the physically surrounded nature plays an integral part of the architecture, is different from the Church of light, where this division of the outer and the inner world he uses very often. In the Langen Foundation it is achieved by a curved wall with a small gate that forms the entrance of the complex. By the Koshino House the division is less strictly, but is achieved by turning the house with the back to the street, to let the stressful things outside. He lets you walk a path before entering the building.

Also represented in almost all of his buildings is the connection between the building and the outside. The buildings are divided into several volumes, enclosing a garden or square. The nature is here, represented in an abstract, ideal way, by overlooking water, a field or a tree that stands on a square.

Nature is also represented by the use of light that gives an abstract awareness of nature. To make it more intensive, the light comes mostly from above, so you can feel the sky. This theme is very much represented in both the buildings we analysed. The staircase from the Langen Foundation especially plays that role.

Another important theme is the measuring system that gives the buildings harmony. Therefore he uses the size of the Tatami mats (900x1800mm). In the plan layout most buildings are based on a grid with the addition sum of this size. Also facades are based on this size. From the beginning till the present buildings he uses the same concrete facade elements with the size of the Tatami mats. The concrete elements also reflect the Japanese architecture preference for natural and raw materials.

Tadao Ando became very famous outside Japan after he designed the Japanese pavilion for the World exhibition in 1992 in Seville, Spain (Expo '92). But in fact this building is not quite representative for his oeuvre. It is more a mark how the Japanese people want the typical Japanese architecture be seen by other (western) people. This is not what Ando's work is about. He is trying to come to the source of what Japanese tradition is and wants to integrate the essence of the themes in a contemporary way. However, he is building after the pavilion with the same principles as before, so there is no break in his oeuvre. This became obvious by our analysis of the two buildings. The only thing that is changed is that most orders he has nowadays are abroad Japan. For these buildings he uses also the themes from the Japanese tradition. Probably these themes are not quite common by western people. The integration of nature by abstract light for example is hard to understand for western people. Maybe this is why he almost never builds a private house abroad Japan. For a museum or other public buildings this is different. Here the themes of the Japanese traditional architecture are used to create a more quiet place to focus on the art which stands there. The divided garden, the walking path and the closed and on specific open spaces are useful to let the outer world behind. From here you enter a relaxed, almost spiritual place.

The concrete elements and the use of geometric volumes has become a signature of Tadao Ando. He has used this theme in his whole oeuvre. We can say that he still uses the themes he defined in the beginning. The differences between the buildings are not necessarily changes from his preferences. Because Tadao Ando wants to build on a specific place every time, the differences are more a result of the different characteristics from the landscape where the building has to come.

Nowadays it looks like Ando is changing his works. However the forms are clear, they are less geometric. It also looks like he doesn't use the concrete elements anymore. Glass is now the material he uses most. Maybe the influences of the western world are responsible for this change. Because the plans aren't built yet (future), it is hard to say which of his themes will remain.

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