

SATIRICAL DOMESTICITY

The Japanese House and Identity

by

Chen Huihua

A0047647W

B.A (Architecture)

National University of Singapore, 2012

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Architecture in

partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

at the

National University of Singapore

September 2012

Signature of Author:

Department of Architecture

Certified by:

Dr. Lilian Chee
Dissertation Supervisor

SATIRICAL DOMESTICITY

The Japanese House and Identity

by

Chen Huihua

A0047647W

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Architecture
on 17 September 2012 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

ABSTRACT

“New Innocence” classifies a unique and emerging trend in Japanese architecture produced by Toyo Ito, SANAA, Sou Fujimoto and Junya Ishigami. By re-appropriating the context of Japanese domesticity, a Japanese house under this category is essentially defined by three main aspects, namely, *kawaii* appearance, as well as conceptual and human-centric emphases in design.

This paper hypothesises that Ishigami’s satirical installations manifested in his designs of Japanese houses are in the guise of faux-naïf rather than that of innocence and naivety. This may be compared to Japanese culture where criticism is often conveyed through subtle expressions and indirect methods of delivery. There is a need to construct a comparable criticality with reference to the critique and commentary of Japanese architecture. Through a careful definition and fleshing out of the term “New Innocence”, this paper seeks to find out how the society’s obsession with its *kawaii* paradigm informs us of its architecture and consequently, alter one’s preconceived perceptions of the everyday. Following that, it aims to define a form of architecture that is locally derived by locating satirical domesticity as an archetype to put forward a social critique that evokes less antagonism among the public.

The methodology employs interdisciplinary studies, which include social science, phenomenology and visual culture, to critique the emerging trend of Japanese architecture. The metaphoric application of satire on Ishigami’s works is forwarded and argued on firsthand interviews and studies of parallel works by the architect’s contemporaries. The results reveal a tendency towards the initial hypothesis in which *kawaii* appearances are employed to disguise a social statement. At the same time, they illustrate a nationalistic pride on the larger scale of Japanese domesticity.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Lilian Chee

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere thanks to

Dr. Lilian Chee,

for guiding me through this journey with her invaluable advice and insights. I am most grateful for her assistance at times when I encountered difficulties in pursuing my research.

Jocelyn, Iyan, Htin and Terence,

for being a source of motivation and for sharing constructive comments.

Hsiang Iu, Brendon and Mei Ling,

for advising and inspiring me at the early stage of my research.

Helen, Huiyun and Nobuko,

for helping me with much of the translation process and encouraging me along the way.

Ong & Ong and the Department of Architecture,

for giving me the opportunity to explore my research interest and to pursue it in enthusiasm.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	II
CONTENTS	III
TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS	IV
PROLOGUE	1
1 “A NEW INNOCENCE”	8
EXPERIMENTING WITH THE CONCEPTUAL	8
ANTHROPOLOGICAL DWELLING	10
FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY	12
2 LIGHT MEETS DARK	15
HOUSE OF SHADOWS	15
JAPANESE SATIRE	21
3 A SATIRICAL PERSPECTIVE	27
CRITICAL DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE	27
SATIRICAL DOMESTICITY	30
EPILOGUE	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY	42
APPENDICES	45

KEY TERMS

Conceptual, Domesticity, Experimental, Japanese House, “New Innocence”, Satire

WORD COUNT

10, 958

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

i <i>Exhibition Project for Pao: a Dwelling for Tokyo Nomad Women</i> Furniture	5
Source: Toyo Ito and Andrea Maffei (eds), <i>Toyo Ito: Works Projects Writings</i> (London: Phaidon Press, 2006).	
ii <i>Flower House</i> Plan	5
Source: Agustin Rubio, <i>SANAA Houses: Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa</i> (New York: Actar, 2007).	
iii <i>withDrawing Room</i> Dining episode	17
Source: 'Capp Street Project Archive', http://libraries.cca.edu/capp/index.html , (accessed 16 August 2012).	
iv <i>Slow House</i> Mediated prized view	17
Source: Aaron Betsky, Michael Hays, Laurie Anderson, Jordan Crandall, Edward Dimendberg, RoseLee Goldberg and Ashley Schafer (eds), <i>Scanning: the Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio</i> (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003).	
v <i>Appliance House</i> Exterior elevation of flank wall	20
Source: Ben Nicholson, <i>Appliance House</i> (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990).	
vi <i>Mr. DOB</i>	23
Source: 'Rubell Family Collection/ Contemporary Arts Foundation', http://rfc.museum/ , (accessed 16 August 2012).	
vii <i>Jellyfish Eyes</i>	23
Source: 'Takashi Murakami', http://www.artnet.com/ , (accessed 16 August 2012).	
viii <i>Little Gardens</i>	35
Source: 'Brutus Magazine', http://fukuhen.lammfromm.jp/ , (accessed 16 August 2012).	
ix <i>Row House</i>	35
Source: Junya Ishigami, <i>Small Images</i> (Tokyo: INAX-Shuppan, 2008).	
x <i>Sky</i>	36
Source: Kohmura Masao	
xi <i>House & Office</i>	36
Source: Chinatsu Kuma (ed.), 'Junya Ishigami: How small? How vast? How architecture grows' (Tokyo: Shiseido Corporate Culture Department, 2010).	
xii <i>Japan Pavilion</i> Drawings on the interior wall surface	37
Source: 'Venice Architecture Biennale 08: Japanese Pavilion', http://www.designboom.com/eng/ , (accessed 16 August 2012).	

PROLOGUE

Japan is not a concrete reality that imposes on us in our day to day dealings, but is a factor that creeps in, colouring here and there our interpretations of 'environment'.¹

Extrapolating from the above, Japan's urban landscape brings together a perceptual experience and its architectural representations. The latter is intertwined with everyday life such that it influences one's perception of the surroundings. In our contemporary age today, these representations "colouring" the image of Japanese cities are conceived from architectural experimentations conducted regularly. In this respect, the latest experimental trend that has kept a small group of Japanese architects preoccupied in recent years takes on the form of an amusing appearance.

In 2011, the Harvard Graduate School of Design organised a series of lectures titled *A New Innocence: Emerging Trends in Japanese Architecture*. It brought together a group of contemporary Japanese architects, namely, Junya Ishigami, Sou Fujimoto, SANAA and Toyo Ito. As their title suggests, the works produced by these architects were reminiscent of "innocence, naïveté, or childlike playfulness".² They were mainly conceptual projects that considered the user's daily habits during the design processes. An interview with Fujimoto further revealed that the characterisation of this emerging architectural trend is one that is based on a universal understanding shared by an international community and an attempt at renewing dated perceptions dictated by conventions.³

However, instead of attributing childlike characteristics to the works of "New Innocence", they are in fact closer to its culturally-specific description of *kawaii*. To an outsider, the works of "New Innocence" allude to naivety and have begun to find their place in the seemingly haphazard cities of Japan, thereby establishing it as another conceptual trend among others that have already

¹ Chris Fawcett, *New Japanese House: Ritual and Anti-Ritual Patterns of Dwelling* (New York: Icon, 1981), p. 12.

² Eric Howeler, 'A New Innocence: Emerging Trends in Japanese Architecture', Eric Howeler (ed.), *GSD Platform 4* (New York: Actar, 2011), p. 94.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

come and gone. At the same time, there is an awareness of such characteristic designs in Japan, which have earned themselves the name of “Naïve Architecture”.⁴ Is “*kawaii*” synonymous with “innocence” and “naïve”? As opposed to the general understanding of this term as “cute”, it is more apt to define *kawaii* as friendly and benign in this discussion.⁵

Armed with an understanding of the idiosyncrasies of Japanese society, one can trace and attribute the concept of *kawaii* to its ongoing subculture of “Superflat”. “Superflat” is a brainchild of Takashi Murakami, conceived as flattened depictions, line art and animation. The *kawaii* images of this postmodern art movement may well be amenable to Japanese tastes as it has since been developed into a popular local subculture. It has also established a synonymy between *kawaii* and amusing. Previously, it would be inappropriate to describe Japanese architecture as *kawaii*; however, it is an adjective that has gained popularity in recent years.⁶ This paper would argue that there is no coincidence that both Japanese architecture and its thriving subculture share the idea of *kawaii*; instead, the latter has indubitably influenced contemporary architects towards the direction of Naïve Architecture in Japan.

In order to further examine the possible relationships between “New Innocence” and Naïve Architecture, the latter needs to be clarified. Naïve Architecture in the Japanese context differs from its Western definition where it was first coined in 1969. The latter refers to Ferdinand Cheval’s Palais Idéal, which was recognised as an “*exemple unique au monde d’architecture naïve*”⁷ or an “example unique to the world of naïve architecture”.⁸ As opposed to categorising buildings designed by individuals without art training, the former refers to works that appear *kawaii*.⁹ Accordingly, existing research material on Naïve Architecture in Japan serves as a framework to examine the works and methodology of “New Innocence” in this paper. Furthermore, the given title, which begs the question on the distinction between the definition of “New Innocence” and that of the “Old”, will offer a reading of the former beyond the apparent.

⁴ Tomoharu Makabe and Norihito Nakatani, ‘Naïve Architecture from Cutting-edge Japan’, *Journal of Architecture and Building Science*, v. 125 n. 1601 (March 2010), pp. 7-8, 10-12.

⁵ Interview between author and Junya Ishigami (Tokyo, 6 August 2012).

⁶ Makabe and Nakatani, ‘Naïve Architecture from Cutting-edge Japan’, p. 10.

⁷ Christian Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1994), pp. 74-8.

⁸ ‘Reverso’, <http://www.reverso.net>, (accessed 1 December 2012).

⁹ Makabe and Nakatani, ‘Naïve Architecture from Cutting-edge Japan’, p. 10.

Besides their *kawaii* appearances, a significant portion of the projects in the Harvard lectures were highly fictional and conceptual. These present-day conceptual models and installations are essentially rooted in the works of Metabolism, a movement active during the 1960s. The line dividing conceptual projects and reality has become less definite as architects find it easier for fictional designs of a singular house to take form as compared to something on an urban scale. As a result, Japanese domestic architecture has transformed into an experimental platform for testing conceptual designs. In comparison, even though they are derived from a conceptual process, the works of “New Innocence” seek to revisit the idea of anthropological dwelling by calling for the perceptual and cognitive participation of their users. The connection between domestic architecture and human-centric design is thus re-established by highlighting the active role played by its users in the contemporary Japanese house.

Furthermore, it is no coincidence that Ito, SANAA and Ishigami fall under this same categorisation. The mentors' values would have influenced their students during the earlier years of their career. Ito's exploration of the synthesis between conceptual design and human-centric model was passed down to his student, Kazuyo Sejima, before she started her own practice in 1987.¹⁰ Finally, this thread of influence found its way to Ishigami when he was working in SANAA. Nevertheless, at each stage in time, each individual has carved his or her own niche area despite sharing the same principles that have been passed down through this genealogy. This paper evaluates Ishigami's works and the extent of their radicalisation as his departure from the original source of influence provides insights to such an emerging trend of criticality. It evaluates his works beyond their obvious *kawaii* exteriors to uncover his critique of Japanese idiosyncrasies.

In his early career, Ito began pursuing an architecture that synthesises conceptual design and human-centric model. As opposed to the Modernist notion of an anthropometric scale in architecture, Ito proposes a “new body image” that aligns the traditional model with the contemporary context.¹¹ This new human-centric model adjusts to the changes in its environment but retains its central role in architecture. Similarly, revolutionary conceptual designs housing this new human-centric model necessitate experimentation to test its fit. Ito's early works, for instance

¹⁰ Junya Ishigami, *Small Images* (Tokyo: INAX-Shuppan, 2008), pp. 71-2.

¹¹ Toyo Ito, ‘Shedding the Modern Body Image’, Takeshi Ishido and Satoru Komaki (eds), *Contemporary Japanese Houses 1985-2005* (Tokyo: TOTO Shuppan, 2005), p. 453.

Exhibition Project for Pao: a Dwelling for Tokyo Nomad Women hinted at such experiments.¹² Ito presents a house that a contemporary user seeks and enjoys. He conceived the unconventional house as an extension of one's clothing utilising a thin membrane to clothe the dwelling space.¹³ This contemporary dwelling space, which is intended for a single Japanese woman leading an itinerant lifestyle, is incomplete without the consideration of the user. Her daily rituals are manifested in three pieces of furniture, namely, for dressing up, refreshments and information.

Ito's exploration of conceptual designs resurfaces in SANAA's projects, which take on a *kawaii* appearance. They are typically an abstraction of diagrammatic forms with an appealing image. Stan Allen, a practicing architect and theorist, argues for the preceding importance of the architects' critical attitude, in which "diagrammatic" architecture is in fact reflecting the fictitious character of contemporary living.¹⁴ In response to the imagination and fabrication in many Japanese cities, SANAA's contribution is to abstract this notion of artificiality, and intentionally reify it as an architectural form. The *Flower House* illustrates how this reification of fictitious quality is evidently expressed in its plan, form and representation.¹⁵ It appears to be an abstraction of a five-petal flower, ostensibly how this project is named. Despite its apparent detachment from reality and the imaginative conception of idea, *Flower House* is not an alienating design. Its appeal is attributed to its *kawaii* appearance that connects the architectural design with its user. This observation is maintained by Ishigami, who reveals that *kawaii* is one of Sejima's design judgements, frequently passed during the design process of her works.¹⁶

¹² *Exhibition Project for Pao: a Dwelling for Tokyo Nomad Women*, 1985, Seibu department store, Tokyo.

¹³ El Croquis, (ed.), *Toyo Ito 1986-1995*, *El Croquis 71* (Madrid: El Croquis, 1995), p. 36.

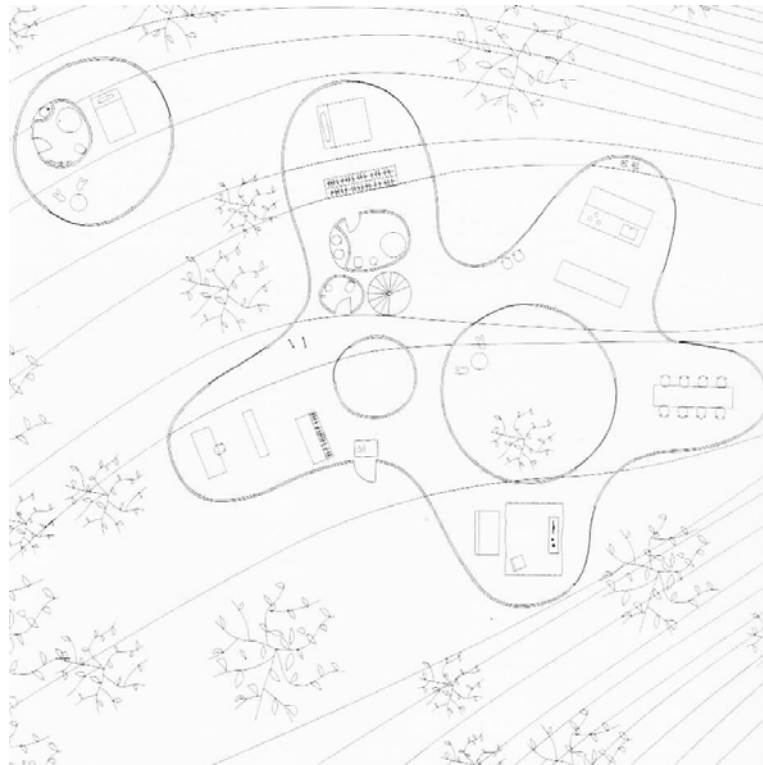
¹⁴ Stan Allen, 'SANAA's Dirty Realism', Florian Idenburg and Princeton University, School of Architecture (eds), *The SANAA Studios 2006-2008: Learning from Japan: Single Story Urbanism* (New York: Lars Müller Publishers, 2009), p. 65.

¹⁵ *Flower House*, 2007, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.

¹⁶ Junya Ishigami, *Another Scale of Architecture*, (Kyoto: Seigensha, 2011), p. 281.



i Exhibition Project for Pao: a Dwelling for Tokyo Nomad Women | Furniture



ii Flower House | Plan

It follows that SANAA's visions and aesthetics have influenced Fujimoto since he was a student. The play between fiction and reality is evident in Fujimoto's works as well in his attempt to hybridise the formal conceptualisation and the human existential meaning in the houses he designs. The architect's projection of Japanese domestic architecture necessitates the return to the primordial where an understanding of basic human habitation is fundamental for its conception.¹⁷ Two examples, *Primitive Future House* and *House in Hokkaido* examine cave-like and tree-like living patterns respectively.¹⁸ These two works involve the study of the relationship between the user and his/her basic dwelling. Inspired by the intuitiveness of human habitation, Fujimoto's "forms derived from memory" are fundamentally a collective image shared by his society.¹⁹ This further implies that Fujimoto's contribution to the definition of "New Innocence" is derived from a primitive retrospective with an image that his society is able to identify with. Hence, Fujimoto's projects are primarily to establish a common sentiment that his society shares, rather than a reconstruction of the past in today's context.

Likewise, Ishigami's design approach has been influenced by SANAA during the former's apprenticeship in the latter's office. The *kawaii* and fictional characteristics in Ishigami's architectural designs are reminiscent of SANAA's. While they are manifested in his works of conceptual models and temporary installations, Ishigami treats these as *architecture* in themselves.²⁰ With a keen sense of scale, the architect manipulates the scale of architecture with ease and dexterity to produce works ranging from miniature models to life-sized architectural installations. The exhibition of Ishigami's architectural designs in the form of models and installations allow them to border ambiguously between fiction and reality, thereby broadening the critical understanding of architectural models and applications of socio-cultural influences in Japanese domesticity. In this dissertation, references to such exhibitions include Ishigami's entry for the 2008 Venice Biennale and *How small? How vast? How architecture grows* (2010), which explores the potential of architecture by challenging its scale.²¹ In these instances, Ishigami adopts scale and proportion as a conceptual approach to question the user's familiarity and

¹⁷ Sou Fujimoto, *Primitive Future* (Tokyo: INAX-Shuppan, 2008), pp. 20-1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁰ Ishigami, *Small Images* p. 7.

²¹ *How small? How vast? How architecture grows*, 2010, Shiseido Gallery, Tokyo.

consequent unthinking of blasé attitude to things and environment around him/her. Just as his intent is to reveal that the familiar everyday accoutrements are not what they appear to be, is there more than meets the eye in Ishigami's *kawaii* works?

Rather than categorising Ishigami's designs as Naïve Architecture or "New Innocence" strictly, in this paper, I will argue that it is more appropriate to define them as satirical works. While one can find amusement in the architect's works at a superficial level lending it to their *kawaii* appearances, many of them entail an underlying criticism of existing ideas and realities. Put differently, these works are faux-naïf, which means that they seek to appear simple and unsophisticated.²² In view of the fact that critical modes tend to be inherently negative and thus potentially separate the "elitist" architects from the general public, could satirical domesticity herald a form of Japanese architecture, which engenders an archetype of criticism more appealing to the people?

Quintessentially, Ishigami's designs are *kawaii* in appearance, at the same time; they are mainly formal conceptualisations that are centred on human use and perceptions. This paper seeks to argue that the architect's satirical installations manifested in his designs of Japanese houses are in the guise of faux-naïf rather than that of innocence and naivety. By defining a critical architecture that is appropriate to the Japanese context, satirical domesticity enables the Japanese house to participate in a wider critical, social and cultural discourse.

This paper aims to discuss the above hypothesis through a critical assessment of the works by Ishigami. These works operate within the context of Japanese domesticity, and involve the scales of the house and nation. The methodology employs interdisciplinary studies, which include social science, phenomenology and visual culture, to critique the emerging trend of Japanese architecture. It draws on theories advocated by Robin Dripps, Martin Heidegger, Peter Eisenman and Henri Lefebvre, which offer different ways of understanding dwelling and domesticity as a site of critical discourse. Additionally, the metaphoric application of satire on Ishigami's works is examined through firsthand interviews with the architect, accompanied by studies of parallel works by the architect's contemporaries. Finally, a discussion on its larger contribution, which ultimately locates domesticity in the discursive realm of critical architecture, is attempted.

²² 'Collins Dictionary', <http://www.collinsdictionary.com>, (accessed 1 December 2012).

1 “A NEW INNOCENCE”

EXPERIMENTING WITH THE CONCEPTUAL

“New Innocence” can be comprehended as one that synthesises a conceptual form entailing experimentation and anthropocentric design. In the case of the former, the experimentation of conceptual models that characterises this emerging architectural trend has its precedence in the Metabolist movement of the late 1950s. The Japanese visionaries saw a need to conceive revolutionary architecture and urbanism, which consequently gave rise to futuristic architecture at the scale of cities that emulated organic growth. Evidences show that this method of experimenting with conceptual ideas has been passed down through the generations of architects from one of the founders of Metabolism, Kiyonori Kikutake to Ito. Ito’s early works, for example *Exhibition Project for Pao*, were influenced by Kikutake when the former was apprenticing with the latter between 1965 and 1969.²³ Large-scaled conceptual projects characteristic of Metabolism’s output eventually gave way to smaller singular houses as the latter allowed for a more indefinite direction.²⁴ The era of purely fictional projects had given way to conceptual works, now applied to the Japanese house as a favoured site of experimentation. Japanese architects are able to continue with the formal experimentation embodied in the Metabolism projects while simultaneously asserting that such design remains an idiosyncratic but indispensable means of defining Japanese culture.²⁵ Through these domestic prototypes, fiction began to install itself in reality whereby experimental works are built and realised for residential purposes.

The appropriation of domestic architecture as an experimental site for “New Innocence” is reminiscent of similar experimental situation preceding this fashion. For instance, conceptual designs for houses call to mind Peter Eisenman’s “Cardboard Architecture”. Eisenman reasons

²³ Florian Idenburg, ‘Relations’, Florian Idenburg and Princeton University, School of Architecture (eds), *The SANAA Studios 2006-2008: Learning from Japan: Single Story Urbanism* (New York: Lars Müller Publishers, 2009), pp. 68-71.

²⁴ Fawcett, *New Japanese House* p. 18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

that any external attachment contaminates the reading of an architecture form.²⁶ Such external attachment is deemed to be subjective as it relies on one's inherent knowledge and cultural preconceptions.²⁷ Therefore, in order for architecture to be universal, he advocates the process of conceptualisation, which complements the deliberate removal of all external influences. The experimentation with *House I* to *House X* is employed to demonstrate that individuals from varied backgrounds are able to read and comprehend Eisenman's domestic architecture as it depends on an architectural syntax for its formal information.²⁸ It does not fit into existing architectural styles that demand referencing cultures and subjective perceptions. On the other hand, comparable studies undertaken by Diller and Scofidio reveal that the domestic realm is not entirely discrete or separated from external associations, such as social structures and propriety. Hence, Eisenman's autonomous architecture may be a futile experiment in attempting to detach all external influences from the architectural designs of houses.

In essence, Eisenman's Cardboard Architecture is an explicit rejection of the human-centric model and visceral understanding of habitation. The idea of anthropocentrism with its roots in many Western dwellings is not unknown to Eisenman and its deliberate omission of any associated meaning to a house is central to the beliefs behind the architect's works. In fact, his development of an autonomous architecture is a critical reaction to the idealisation of Man and the human-centric designs prevalent during the modernist movement.²⁹ Despite the exclusivity of formal conceptualisation in Cardboard Architecture, there is a common objective shared by Cardboard Architecture and "New Innocence", whereby both groups seek to negotiate the boundary that divides the conceptual and the real. However, the similarity stops here as the works of "New Innocence" demonstrate that an anthropological focus is crucial to the making of a house, while Eisenman's experimental houses are life-sized models that disregard their users and their daily routines in which they are housed.

²⁶ Gerard van Zeijl, 'The Architecture of Dwelling: A History of a (ir)rational Bulwark', Hans Cornelissen (ed.), *Dwelling as a Figure of Thought* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2005), p. 117.

²⁷ Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier, *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 117.

²⁸ Thomas Patin, 'From Deep Structure to an Architecture in Suspense: Peter Eisenman, Structuralism and Deconstruction', *Journal of Architectural Education*, v. 47 n. 2 (Nov 1993), p. 92.

²⁹ Van Zeijl, 'The Architecture of Dwelling', p. 117.

As opposed to Eisenman's explicit rejection of subjective perceptions, "New Innocence" positions the user at the centre of domestic architecture. In his research of postmodern Japanese houses, Chris Fawcett maintains that apart from the enduring feature of a physical house, the "adjustable aspect connoting 'mine'" is equally crucial.³⁰ In response to architecture deriving from formal operations, such as those in Eisenman's and Metabolism's experiments, the environment of alienation created has prompted contemporary architects to revisit the human-centric model. To revisit it means to renew the relationship between the house and its user by giving it a new meaning that is relevant to the present day. The contemporary Japanese house does not represent an idealisation of Man; rather, it celebrates the subjective perceptions and activities of its users based on their responses to external influences on the domestic realm. The flexible aspect of a house suggests that one's subjectivity would otherwise be stifled through universal standardisation.

Besides its physical construct, the capacity to support human activity plays a significant role in the making of a house. In her critique of Vitruvius's hut, Robin Dripps argues that a house is a "constructed manifestation of the rituals of dwelling".³¹ This implies that facilitating the user's way of life is prioritised above the physical aspect of a house. But how often is this applicable to conceptual models, which emphasise formal legibility? Furthermore, experimental models scaled to accommodate human dimensions fail to qualify as a dwelling space. Dripps further explicates that the indispensability of domestic architecture is its intimate connection to the "acknowledged structure of the everyday".³² In other words, the habitual routines performed by the users are a key component of a house. This recurring pattern of daily activities is the act of dwelling integral to one's perception of domesticity. Fundamentally, the house has served its purpose only when its user performs his/her role in its domestic realm.

In addition, the focus on human habitation in the works of "New Innocence" is parallel to the Heideggerian notion of dwelling. It relates the essence of dwelling to human existence. To

³⁰ Fawcett, *New Japanese House* p. 46.

³¹ Robin Dripps, *The First House: Myth, Paradigm, and the Task of Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 12.

³² Dripps, *The First House* p. 26.

Heidegger, there is little distinction between building and dwelling.³³ It follows that to be human, is to dwell.³⁴ A house accommodates human habitation as well as human existence. Heidegger's avoidance of "house" can be reasoned based on the term's restricted programmatic importance, whilst "dwelling" is more sophisticated in meaning. Similarly, Japanese domestic architecture draws strongly on existential theory. Fawcett argues that there is little distinction between "to live" and "to be".³⁵ Responding to the proliferation of conceptual models and experimental prototypes, the architects of "New Innocence" see a need to revisit the essence of dwelling in designing for a contemporary house. The anthropological reference in Japanese houses is threatened as the rising demands for experimental designs today are insidiously prioritised over individual needs. The works of "New Innocence" thereby suggest opportunities for dwelling that is contextually relevant.

Essentially, "New Innocence" shows that rather than being a hindrance to the reading of domestic architecture, as maintained by Eisenman, one's preconceptions of a house are potentialities to be revealed and challenged in response to an adjusting context. Integral to human habitation is the performance of one's cognitive ability. The tendency to develop "perceptual and conceptual structures through which the human being brings order to the world" is implicit in dwelling.³⁶ In the following section, the user's perceptions of the everyday will be discussed in greater detail in relation to Japanese domesticity. Previously deemed mutually-exclusive, a formalistic concept and a human-centric intent are now integrated for new experimental effects. Either conceptual approach or human-centric design has its fair share of strengths and limitations in domestic architecture, which make them complementary themes adding a qualitative value to the design's quantitative aspect.³⁷

³³ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 148.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³⁵ Fawcett, *New Japanese House* p. 54.

³⁶ Dripps, *The First House* p. 47.

³⁷ Stan Allen, 'SANAA's Dirty Realism', p. 67.

With the synthesis of conceptual form entailing experimentation and human-centric design, the works of “New Innocence” attempt to renew one’s perception of the everyday. The capability of Japanese house includes a renewal of dated paradigms that serves to hinder its user in performing his/her active role. It can be observed as a phenomenon whereby Japanese urbanites today are seemingly detached from their immediate surroundings. This phenomenon is encapsulated by Guy Debord’s critique of contemporary architecture, which states that “the perceptible world is replaced by a set of images that are superior to the world yet at the same time impose themselves as *eminently* perceptible.”³⁸ In the case of Japan, this set of images depicts Japanese popular culture – contemporary art, fashion and design, among other spectacles in this consumerist society. Major Japanese cities are bombarded by sensationalism on a daily basis, so much so that the people have cultivated an appetite for new spectacles. These spectacles perform an active role in the urban environment, while subjecting the observer to a passive role, as a consumer of such visual performances. In contrast, the domestic realm where one returns to becomes another important point of reference. However, habitual events and common accoutrements in the house are also subsumed into the presumed banalities of the everyday. At the same time, the user retreats further into his/her passive role while anticipating something of novelty and intrigue to be presented. In response to this phenomenon, the architects of “New Innocence” are incited to address the pressing need for perception renewal through their designs. Florian Idenburg, a project architect at SANAA, reviews that SANAA’s works seek to engage the user primarily in the process of perceiving and thinking.³⁹ Through developing new ways of perceiving the everyday, new relationships can be drawn between the user and the familiar, thereby instating the user as an active participant and centre of the house.

Various techniques are devised and tested to renew one’s preconceived perceptions. At the same time, they are heavily reliant on the concepts behind the workings of the everyday. While a house is associated with the everyday, which is essentially a point of reference and a cyclical ritual

³⁸ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p. 36.

³⁹ Idenburg, ‘Relations’, p. 77.

according to Henri Lefebvre, one's perception of the everyday can be adjusted.⁴⁰ According to Lefebvre, the everyday is the "common sense referent and point of reference".⁴¹ A house and its associated accoutrements are often related to the familiar in part due to the absence of other common denominators. Domesticity becomes the only constant amidst fluctuating situations in a consumerist society. Additionally, the everyday is also characterised by its repetitiveness.⁴² The actions of domestic rituals become monotonous as they repeat themselves over and over again. The routine by which they are performed imposes its regularity and predictability, thus rendering what is familiar also as ordinary. Following this, one's perception of the ordinary deteriorates to banal as the cycle perpetuates further. Finally, the banal may be deemed obsolete with its replacement ultimately restarting a new cycle of decay. Lefebvre asserts that there is no easy solution to break free from the recurring cycle.⁴³ The works of "New Innocence" may offer a compromise with Lefebvre's assertion. Even though they are predominantly leveraged on the everyday, the works of "New Innocence" suggest a possibility in which the ordinary is rendered unfamiliar once more. Thus, they are able to bypass the thresholds where things veer towards the banal and the obsolete. No doubt that the everyday remains to be a reference point and a cyclical routine. It also creates an opportunity to renew one's preconceived perceptions of the ordinary. The rediscovery of domesticity would thus instate its active role in the formation of dwelling as a meaningful act instead of being irrevocably passive and detached from the constant flux of contemporary life.

In essence, the juxtaposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary is crucial. Without the everyday as a reference, there would be no basis to compare against what is exceptional.⁴⁴ Likewise, without the occasional surprises, the everyday would appear insufferably monotonous. In highlighting the issue of the everyday, I will examine two different approaches to produce a shift in the dated paradigm of domesticity. Both employ the use of installations in sensitising the viewers to the everyday phenomenon and have incorporated the domestic setting for their experimental purposes. The first involves a study of Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio's works, which

⁴⁰ Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness", Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (eds), *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 35-6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Dripps, *The First House* p. 26.

employ the reciprocal relationship of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* to reveal possible sinister undertones in the house. Through various visceral installations, they attempt to demonstrate that there is a darker perspective on things one may easily dismiss as ordinary and familiar. On the other hand, Ishigami's works illustrate an entirely different approach from that of Diller and Scofidio's. They provide a counterpoint to Diller and Scofidio's since they exude a degree of amusement to achieve a similar intention. Conversely, Diller and Scofidio's darker perspective on domesticity may offer a different interpretation of Ishigami's *kawaii* designs.

HOUSE OF SHADOWS

The studies of domesticity done by Ishigami and Diller and Scofidio demonstrate their capacity to renew one's preconceived perceptions of the everyday. At the same time, they reveal the supposition of autonomous architectural theory as advocated by Eisenman, whose projects attempt to remove the subjective influences from the designs. It follows that these works by Ishigami and Diller and Scofidio aim to reconcile formal conceptualisation with a human-centric focus, thus facilitating a renewal of the core concerns surrounding the domestic environment as it exists in today's socio-cultural climate. The difference between these two groups of architects lies in the tone of the message engendered in their respective works. By classifying Ishigami's *kawaii* works as light-heartedness, it posits that Diller and Scofidio's projects are perceived to evoke dark associations.

Diller and Scofidio attempt to alter one's implacable perceptions and conceptions of domesticity by offering an antagonistic perspective of the house as somewhere unfamiliar. The architects took advantage of the immediate connection between the everyday and familiarity by further building upon this relationship and developing it into its mirror image. If the house is based on the concept of *heimlich*, which assures the user comfort and security within its confines, this equal but opposite idea of *unheimlich* would remind one of unfamiliarity and concealment. David Morley argues that the notion of *unheimlich* is in fact derived from the familiarity of the everyday, which reconfigures itself and it subsequently manifests in its opposite.⁴⁵ Yet, the house does not consist of mutually-exclusive binary elements. *Heimlich* and *unheimlich* are two concepts contained simultaneously within the envelope of the house. Rather than being contradicting relations; they can be better understood as mutually-dependent reversals that may be likened to a möbius strip.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 79-80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Besides being a realm of the known, a house has the ability to disguise both the tangible and intangible. The house, which in reality is more porous than desired by its users, allows exchanges to take place between public and private domains. Influences from the external environment, for example social norms and propriety, seep into the household gradually. By re-enacting the external interventions and revisiting the foreign accoutrements, the unfamiliar that was once obtrusive would be subsumed by the deceptively smooth surface of the everyday. In effect, the house stands for the idea of concealment given that “*unheimlich* is the hidden core of *heimlich*”.⁴⁷ Inevitably, both the notion of *unheimlich* and its very invisibility elicit one’s suspicion and apprehension. They are indispensable for one to delve deep beneath the over-familiar yet deceptive skin of the everyday. By casting a negative light on what was preconceived to be benign, a heightened sense of awareness prompts one to evaluate the possible insidious workings in the house. In the same way, several projects designed by Diller and Scofidio evoke a sense of unfamiliarity, even to the extent of being completely disconcerting, in an attempt to uncover the veil of banality and to reveal the controlling mechanisms of the domestic realm.

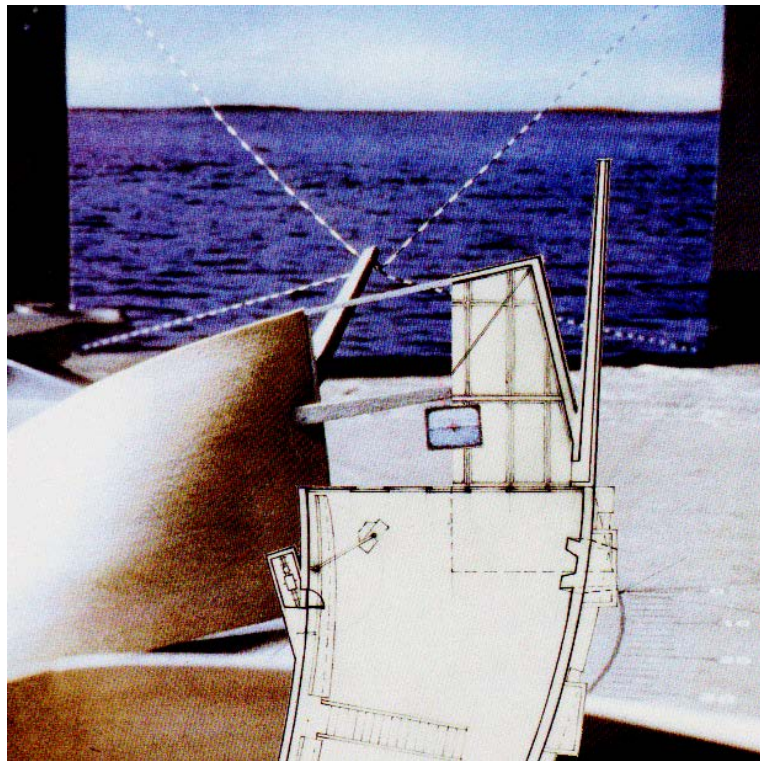
Additionally, Diller and Scofidio’s projects highlight the importance of subjective external references in the design process of domestic architecture. As opposed to isolating these influences in their entirety from the drawing board, which is arguably a futile attempt, they serve the function of modifying one’s preconceived perceptions of domesticity. The architects attempt to renew one’s perceptions by demonstrating the concept of *unheimlich* through the use of external references. This negative register is resonated specifically in technology in *Slow House* and societal conventions in *withDrawing Room*. Architectural theorist Michael Hays, reasoned that these external references are important in playing the role of “scanning” by “disclosing the extrinsic, ideological structures that contaminate and complicate the intrinsic”.⁴⁸ They are instrumental in renewing one’s preconceived perceptions in the architects’ works, albeit sinister manipulations. Following this, the employment of external references within the operation of *unheimlich* will be examined in greater detail by referencing two projects, namely, *withDrawing Room* and *Slow House*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁸ Michael Hays, ‘Scanners’, Aaron Betsky, Michael Hays, Laurie Anderson, Jordan Crandall, Edward Dimendberg, RoseLee Goldberg and Ashley Schafer (eds), *Scanning: the Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003), p. 130.



iii *withDrawing Room* | Dining episode



iv *Slow House* | Mediated prized view

Diller and Scofidio's Capp Street project (1987), titled *withDrawing Room*, is a domestic space highlighting social conventions that are derived from the external environment.⁴⁹ They have become entrenched in the workings of the everyday such that they upset the performance of daily rituals when reconfigured in *withDrawing Room*. Through mapping the dialectic between public and private domains, the architects present an alternative paradigm to the house. The first episode involves an experimental site of raised dining table and chairs. The markings on the table inform one of the positioning of dining wares and cutlery coinciding with social etiquette. Its conventional function of facilitating indulgence and interaction becomes disrupted when it is elevated beyond reach. Another episode in *withDrawing Room* explores the bed as a site conventionally for daily rest, recovery from illnesses and sexual union. Rather than facilitating these acts commonly associated with the space and its accoutrements, the bed is bisected along its longer axis and swung outwards. This unsettling reconfiguration prompts one to reconsider the presumed security of the bed where one is least guarding. The dark undertone in both episodes further emphasises the disruption to cyclical re-enactment of the everyday, thereby undermining one's point of reference about domesticity. Ultimately, Diller and Scofidio attempt to alter one's preconceived perceptions of the everyday, which in this case, sleeping and dining are made strange and questionable through the experimentation of habitual dislocation.

The next project, *Slow House*, employs technology as a subjective external reference in the conceptualisation of its design. The project is an experiment on the domesticated perception on vacation mediated by technology.⁵⁰ It seeks to make the viewer aware of the fact that the house is influenced by a general view that lauds surveillance technologies as safeguards of the users' interests. In the project, the user is first orchestrated along the curved passage of the house leading up to a prized view at its destination. However, upon arrival with an expectation of a rewarding view to celebrate vacation, the viewer is confronted with an anticlimactic view of the ocean through the image of a monitor screen. This discrepancy between the real and mediated is even more apparent when the latter is out of register with the camera capture. Diller and Scofidio's sinister twist in this project is encapsulated in the ironic obstruction of the real image

⁴⁹ *WithDrawing Room*, 1987. 65 Capp Street, San Francisco.

⁵⁰ Jordan Crandall, 'Landing', Aaron Betsky, Michael Hays, Laurie Anderson, Jordan Crandall, Edward Dimendberg, RoseLee Goldberg and Ashley Schafer (eds), *Scanning: the Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003), p. 112.

with a technological intervention. This irony reveals one's contemporary obsession with technology and underlines its darker role in the setting of this house. While acknowledging the inseparable role technology plays in the domestic realm today, it provokes one to reconsider its effects on domesticity. By subjecting the viewer to unease and discomfort, the architects are able to reveal the secrecy of *unheimlich*, which they claim to be latent in domestic space.

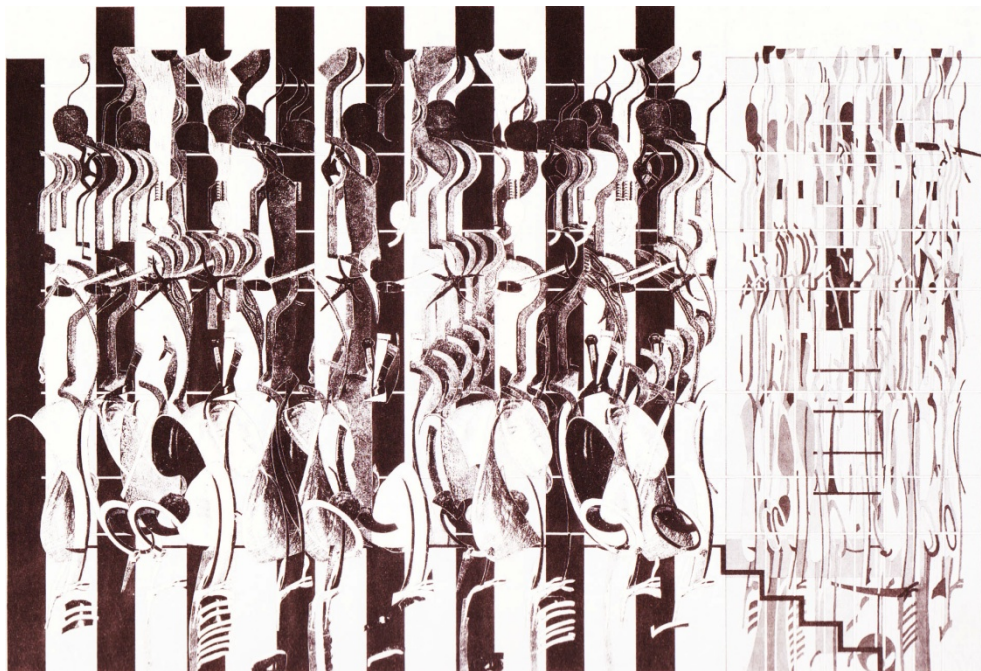
These two projects by Diller and Scofidio, *withDrawing Room* and *Slow House*, show that architecture is insidiously manipulated by its society. This idea is reiterated in Ben Nicholson's *Appliance House*, which metaphorically represents architecture as "the fabrication of cultural containers".⁵¹ It is modelled as a collage of various cultural consequences ranging from consumerism to technology. Its façade pieces together fragmented images of household furniture and appliances, which are pooled together as though they are unwanted materials or by-products of society. *Appliance House* expresses the preoccupations of this larger sphere and in turn mirrors the aesthetics its society has given it. Similarly, Diller and Scofidio's projects are products of society shaped by its subjective references. The boundary that separates a private space from the public is not clearly defined due to the complex relationships between these two spheres. Hence, autonomous architecture is but an idealistic pursuit in attempting to create two distinct and mutually-exclusive spheres.

Essentially, both *withDrawing Room* and *Slow House* have pushed unconventionality into the sinister end in order to make explicit the hidden structures of the house. These structures were imposed by society and formerly external to domesticity, but here, they have been assimilated into the everyday framework and purposefully "normalised" as part of the house and one's rituals. Diller and Scofidio attempt to renew these preconceived perceptions of the everyday by asserting their antagonistic position towards banal domestic life. Their stance is manifested in the perverse and the disturbing, thereby agitating the otherwise implacable perceptual frameworks normally associated with the domestic environment.

On the other hand, the success in conveying a message across, or initiating a perceptual change, need not necessarily hinge on the dark and sinister. The house and its external influences are not inherently menacing as Diller and Scofidio have portrayed them to be. Peter King, whose

⁵¹ Ben Nicholson, *Appliance House* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), p. 86.

research focuses on social thought and housing, reasoned that the domestic realm's neutrality is reflected in the implacability of the house and its accoutrements, which "can only respond and cannot themselves activate a relation with the user".⁵² The architects have but illustrated one of the many associations between the user and the house, of which they employ a dark overtone. Conversely, the lighter register of amusement in Ishigami's designs of Japanese houses will serve as a counterpoint to Diller and Scofidio's perspective.



v *Appliance House* | Exterior elevation of flank wall

⁵² Peter King, *In Dwelling: Implacability, Exclusion and Acceptance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 7.

Ishigami's architectural designs are fundamentally satirical, that is to say, they suggest amusement on the surface but concealed beneath this appearance, is a more solemn social statement that should not be overlooked. In the previous section, Diller and Scofidio's works have exposed a darker hidden agenda in the domestic realm through their exploration of *unheimlich*. Similarly, there could be an undetected perspective on Ishigami's designs of Japanese houses when they are read no more than skin-deep. Essentially, satire in this discussion is understood to be dark humour, where "humour" refers to amusement, and "dark" refers to an underlying criticism that is often insinuated rather than explicitly spelled out. The metaphoric application of satire on Ishigami's works is examined through the socio-cultural climate of Japan from its contemporary art to its historically-derived concept of subtle criticism. The architect's works are akin to Japanese contemporary art culture, specifically Takashi Murakami's "Superflat", as their seemingly *kawaii* works entail an implicit social criticism. Furthermore, this idea of concealment or subtlety in forwarding a criticism is ingrained in Japanese history when political cartoon gained popularity with its society.

Indeed, Ishigami's architectural designs can be read in parallel to those of Murakami's, which essentially define contemporary Japanese subculture today. Besides its visual aesthetics establishing Japanese graphic art, animation and pop culture as flattened two-dimensional figures, "Superflat" was conceived to engage a spectrum of issues concerning contemporary Japanese society.⁵³ Similarities drawn from the works by Ishigami's mentors, namely, Ito and Sejima may also be traced to "Superflat" art, which developed rapidly since its inception in the post-war period. In order to understand "Superflat", and in turn to analyse Ishigami's projects, the former artworks have to be examined at two levels – their appearances and their implied meaning(s).

Visually, it involves a Japanese understanding of *kawaii* and humour. The definition of *kawaii* is understood to be approachable or less intimidating in this context.⁵⁴ Hence, its depiction is generically appealing with its friendly demeanour, rivalling its Western counterpart, Mickey

⁵³ Michael Darling, 'Plumbing the Depths of Superflatness', *Art Journal*, v. 60 n. 3 (Autumn 2001), p. 77.

⁵⁴ Interview between author and Norihito Nakatani (Tokyo, 9 August 2012).

Mouse.⁵⁵ Furthermore, large round eyes characteristic of *kawaii* children become the target of exaggeration.⁵⁶ They are drawn magnified such that they dominate the facial features to give an amusing appearance as seen in *Mr. DOB*. This satirical technique of exaggeration, which blows things out of proportions to the extent of ridiculous impracticality, makes a caricature hilarious and non-aggressive at the same time. On top of this, Murakami highlights the ludicrous embellishment by isolating the eyes and propagating them in a graphic art design in *Jellyfish Eyes*. Such exaggeration and absurdity does not stop at the eyes; instead, it finds its way to other body parts, hairstyles and accessories. Most importantly, “Superflat” has publicised the interchangeable relations between *kawaii* and amusement, a motif which is also present in Ishigami’s works.

As opposed to mainstream cartoon largely intended as comic relief, Murakami’s creations were far from flat characters. Michael Darling, a curator and critic of Murakami’s art, argues that in order to comprehend “Superflat” in its entirety, one has to scrutinise his works from several perspectives.⁵⁷ One example of Murakami’s “three-dimensional” characters is *Mr. DOB*. He is a reflection of the artist’s critical stance of the Japanese society, of which he is representing a more critical and conscious citizen. This is implied in its name that was derived from *dobozite* or *dobojite*, which is a Japanese slang for “why”.⁵⁸ This attitude of continual questioning and self-reflection was what Murakami found to be lacking in his own society. Given that art is a universal visual language, the artist hoped to communicate and goad his readers to examine the invisible forces that society was subjected to.⁵⁹ In the same manner as how *Mr. DOB* represented an inquisitive mind; at the individual level, one is encouraged to consistently ask the question “why?” so that the collective body may strive towards a more critical and conscious society.

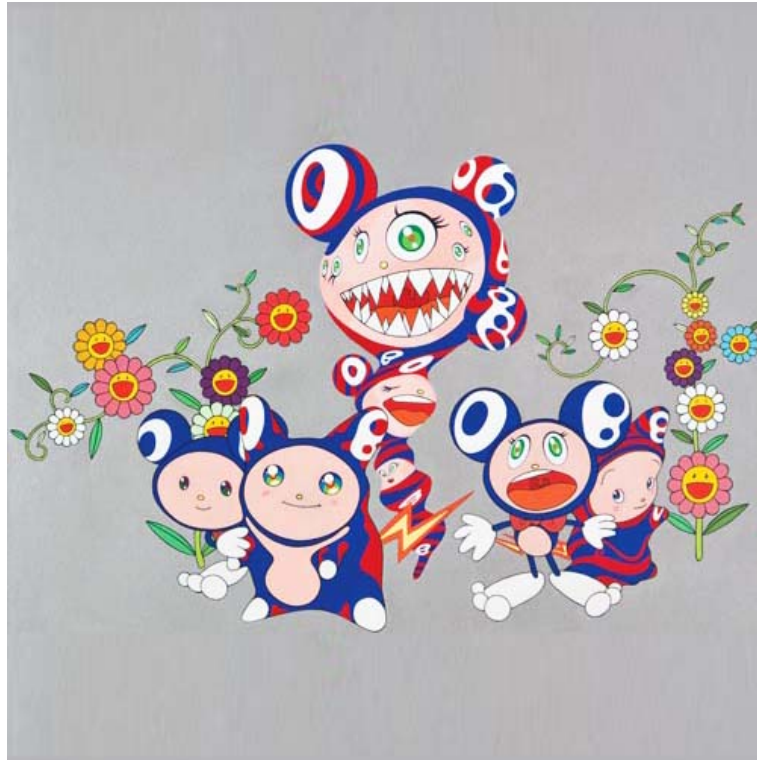
⁵⁵ Michael Darling, ‘Past+Present=Future’, Takashi Murakami (ed.), *Takashi Murakami: Summon Monsters? Open the Door? Heal? Or Die?* (Tokyo: Hiropon Factory, 2005), p. 66.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

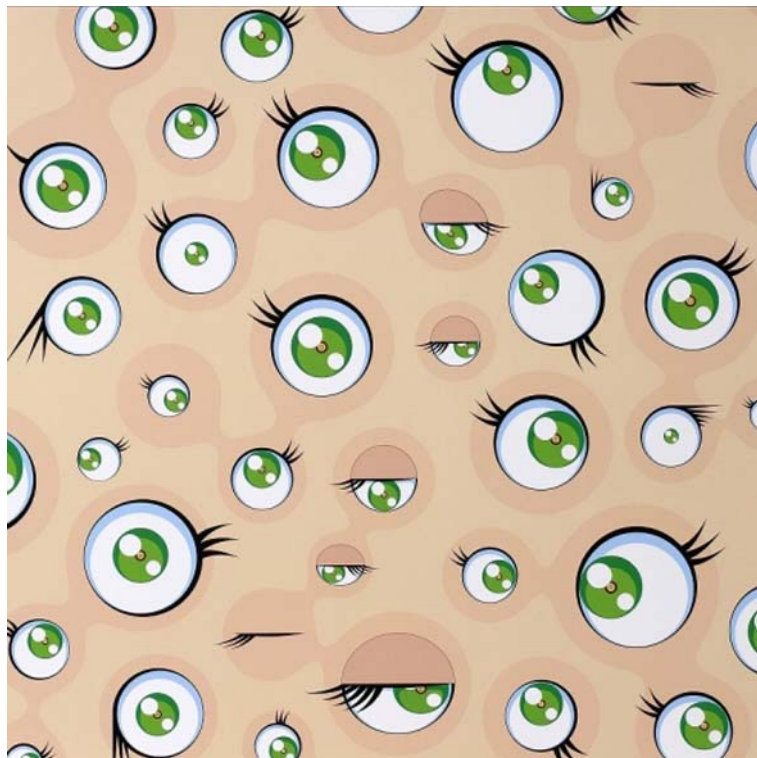
⁵⁷ Darling, ‘Plumbing the Depths of Superflatness’, p. 77.

⁵⁸ Darling, ‘Past+Present=Future’, pp. 65-6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.



vi *Mr. DOB*



vii *Jellyfish Eyes*

However, Murakami's characters are in actuality faux-naif as they conceal a solemn social critique beneath their *kawaii* appearances. This guise is crucial in explaining faux-naif as a concept to understand the artist's satirical works. There lies an irony of childlikeness and cognitive maturity engendered in the workings of "Superflat" beneath this guise. While *Mr. DOB* positions a child as having the mind of an adult, it also suggests the adult as being juvenile. Thus, Midori Matsui maintained that such attitude is "contributing to the apparent 'poverty' of contemporary Japanese culture" as if its 'children' are reflective of Japanese society.⁶⁰ This irony of adulthood and cognitive deficiency suggests Murakami's employment of satire to criticise Japanese society at large and to inspire it towards some measure of criticality. Such a reaction was sparked off by the loss of identity in post-war Japan as the country subjugated its military and political convictions to the control of the United States. Matsui insisted that as a result, Japanese citizens did not hold a common goal and eventually succumbed to the invisible forces that shaped society without recognising them.⁶¹ Evaluating this phenomenon, Murakami deemed such attitude to be detrimental to the country as a whole, thus perceiving them as "children". This two-fold reading of his works goes to show that they are faux-naif, showcasing a *kawaii* image, while at the same time, construing criticism at the loss of self-consciousness and maturity.

Murakami has demonstrated that the strength of employing satire lies in its facility for exposing errors that society fails to discern through humour. In fact, satirical art works are historically derived from political drawings whose content was formerly aimed at eliciting propagandistic opinion. The humour engendered in these works enabled them to evade censorship. While the more direct political attacks were expurgated by the government.⁶² The need for concealment thus became elemental in empowering satirical works as weapons against the political system. Ironically, the disguise necessitated in these works reflected the fear within the artists. Through a mediated form of rebellion against the ones who was wielding power and control, they made themselves heard behind pieces of paper. Rather than a direct confrontation with their target, they preferred to rally the public through what was outwardly non-confrontational. This disguise in

⁶⁰ Midori Matsui, 'Murakami Matrix: Takashi Murakami's Instrumentalisation of Japanese Postmodern Culture', Takashi Murakami, Dick Hebdige and Midori Matsui (eds), *Murakami* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), p. 94.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶² Peter Duus, 'Weapons of the Weak, Weapons of the Strong – The Development of the Japanese Political Cartoon', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 60 n. 4 (November 2001), p. 968.

Japanese satire has since manifested itself in contemporary art today, such as “Superflat”, and targets a wider range of issues. No doubt, they are far from anonymous, but the idea of subtle criticism has been obstinately ingrained in the Japanese cultural context.

In spite of the evolution of Japanese satire from the Meiji era to present-day context, art as the medium of communication has not changed. In the past, political attacks were expressed through illustrations. Without a need to express antagonism to an oppressive government, political drawings have given way to satirical drawings that focus on other issues, such as contemporary lifestyles and motivations.⁶³ Today, these works are better known as *manga*. Employing art as a means of communication had proven to be effective in Japan where its people faced little difficulty deciphering the hidden message in satirical drawings.⁶⁴ It remains likely that contemporary Japanese readers are equally competent in construing the meaning behind the *kawaii* appearance of “Superflat” art.

Closely linked to the medium of communication, the social function of Japanese satire has remained relatively unchanged throughout this course of time. Previously, the intent to disseminate antagonistic viewpoints within its society required purposeful distortion of reality in their drawings. “Superflat” employs similar satirical technique in its works to convey the artist’s critique to the society. Despite its inaccuracy in the portrayal of real people and images, Hisako Okashi argues that the medium of art itself, which makes accessible alternative perspectives of everyday situations, meld the two – art and life – together; thus garnering acceptances amongst the general public.⁶⁵ Similarly, by utilising familiar aspects of Japanese culture, such as the *kawaii* paradigm, “Superflat” appeals to the masses as it is easy to identify with. Moreover, high accessibility to these works further explicates the hybridisation of high and low art as maintained by Darling in his critique of Murakami’s designs.⁶⁶ In this case, acceptance by the masses describes its tendency to the low art, which facilitates the social function of satire.

⁶³ Yuji Maeyama, ‘Owari ni – Fuushi no Kako to Sonogo’, Hisako Okoshi and Yuji Maeyama (eds), *Subtle Criticism: Caricature and Satire in Japan* (Saitama: Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, 1993), pp. 146-7.

⁶⁴ Duus, ‘Weapons of the Weak, Weapons of the Strong’, p. 968.

⁶⁵ Hisako Okoshi, ‘Hajime ni – Koukishin to Doku no Kiroku’, Hisako Okoshi and Yuji Maeyama (eds), *Subtle Criticism: Caricature and Satire in Japan* (Saitama: Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, 1993), p. 6.

⁶⁶ Darling, ‘Plumbing the Depths of Superflatness’, p. 77.

Developing this argument, Ishigami's architectural designs are posited to be satirical and appealing to the public. In the following chapter, the concepts discussed in relation to "Superflat" will be applied in the analyses of the architect's works. Also, an appreciation of Japanese subtle criticism is equally important in deepening our understanding of the architect's *kawaii* designs. They act as a social critique by targeting society's refractory and non-progressive preconceptions, while simultaneously employing an amusing appearance to delivery this message. Furthermore, Ishigami asserts that the theory of critical architecture derived from a Western context is inapplicable to Japan.⁶⁷ This in turn suggests that there needs to be a comparable criticality referencing the idiosyncratic Japanese society. In relation to the larger discourse of critical architecture, Ishigami's satirical works could indeed provide insights to one germane to the architect's local context.

⁶⁷ Interview between author and Junya Ishigami (Tokyo, 6 August 2012).

3 A SATIRICAL PERSPECTIVE

CRITICAL DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

Architects have maintained a negative attitude towards society ever since modernist architecture set out to change it. And they have worn their rejection by mainstream society like a badge of honour. But as long as architects fail to find more positive terms in which to speak to their society, they will go on creating an architecture of exclusion. And residential buildings offer us the easiest way out from this narrow path.⁶⁸

According to Ito, domestic architecture is most appropriate for architects to express their social critiques on the condition because they may be delivered in a more positive tone. He argues that architects often rationalise their designs based on their critiques of the society. However, this approach becomes a problem when it results in a social divide, given that there is a tendency towards negative criticism. One of the two factions created in this divide consists of architects who confer upon themselves the prerogative as elites of society to criticise what they deem as social ills. The remaining group is what constitutes the rest of the general public. Rather than condemning criticism in architecture, Ito advocates the use of a positive tone when putting forward a critique in a way that does not compromise its impact to deliver.⁶⁹ In this case, Ishigami's satirical designs may be the archetype of critical architecture that Japanese society is receptive to. In examining the architect's designs of the Japanese house, it will reveal how domestic architecture may be the most appropriate vehicle for reconciling the schism in society. This comparable study of critical architecture in Japanese context, which departs from one in a Western context, will also highlight the issue of national identity its society takes pride in. Finally, the chapter will round up with a discussion on the varying scales of domesticity, from house to nation, based on an analysis of Ishigami's works.

⁶⁸ Toyo Ito, 'A Body Image Beyond the Modern: Is There Residential Architecture Without Criticism?', Toyo Ito and Andrea Mattei (eds), *Toyo Ito: Works Projects Writings* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006), pp. 348-9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

Given that a house is intended for private use; to what extent should domestic architecture intervene in public discourse? The individualistic quality of a private house and the larger public interest are incongruent at various levels, each dealing with its particular concerns and problems. As much as a dichotomous perception about public and private spheres is concerned, earlier examination of Diller and Scofidio's projects have revealed that the domestic sphere is inseparable from its larger context. As opposed to a binary classification, there are overlaps between these two spheres. The presumed exclusivity of dwellings is further challenged by Dripps, who asserts the synonymy between "to live" and "to be among men".⁷⁰ This implies that there is a close-knit relationship between domesticity and the public sphere, and in turn, highlights the social significance of the former. In other words, to locate a house within a city establishes a mutual relationship between the two. Notwithstanding its private use, domestic architecture has a social significance as it stands unmediated as a signifier of its society.

On the other hand, the divide between architects and the public cannot be seamless owing to the role the former has to perform. Ironically, an architect's critique of his/her society is a public obligation that further reinforces this social divide. As a consequence, there will always be these two groups, namely, architects who critique, and the rest of society that is critiqued. Furthermore, this distinction between these two groups becomes even more apparent in the context of this discussion as Ito and Ishigami are primarily Japanese star architects, whose works are commissioned by the minority even within the upper-middle class. For this reason, Ishigami's architectural installations are invaluable as these are often held in venues that remove the fences of exclusivity. The erasure of this divide is less important than finding out what makes Japanese society more receptive to the social critiques. Forwarding this argument, the implications of Ishigami's works will be discussed in the next section.

Essentially, the effectiveness of delivering a social critique hinges on society's idiosyncrasies. In this case, an imported concept of critical architecture appears explicit and confrontational for Japanese society to accept. Through acknowledging characteristics of his society, such as its *kawaii* paradigm and subtle criticism, Ishigami is able to communicate with a wider audience without suffering a backlash. The architect's intention of creating *kawaii* designs is instrumental in

⁷⁰ Dripps, *The First House* p. 6.

increasing their readership and accessibility to the public.⁷¹ Their formal appearances are widely perceived to be affable in his society, thus, the social critiques engendered are easily accepted with little confrontation and resistance by the masses.⁷² Ishigami's designs could actually herald an appealing form of Japanese domestic architecture that engenders an archetype of criticism without dampening its intended effect.

⁷¹ Interview between author and Junya Ishigami (Tokyo, 6 August 2012).

⁷² Interview between author and Norihito Nakatani (Tokyo, 9 August 2012).

SATIRICAL DOMESTICITY

Ishigami's designs of Japanese houses are satirical as there is a more solemn social critique beneath their *kawaii* appearances. The external carapace suggesting amusement is less of a formal embellishment than a tool to deliver a social statement to the public. A preliminary understanding of Japanese culture and contemporary art reveal that the architect's works are faux-naïf. Although their outward appearances connote light-heartedness, in actual fact, they hide a darker critique. Responding to his society's refractory preconceptions, Ishigami attempts to remove these perceptual obstacles through his satirical works. These designs are conceived from various experiments through patterns, events and objects of the everyday to offer new lenses in observing something familiar in a new light. Through acknowledging Japan's societal idiosyncrasies, such as subtle criticism and the *kawaii* paradigm, the architect's works are able to appeal to a wider audience. In turn, satirical architecture becomes incorporated into the local socio-cultural trend.

Within the discourse of critical architecture, while Ishigami's designs take on the conventional role of reflecting an existing social phenomenon, satirical domesticity demonstrates a resistance against imported concepts and constructs albeit subtly and artfully. This comparable study of an archetypical critical architecture for Japan highlights a unique identity it strives to achieve in the contemporary context. Besides illustrating with the following examples that Ishigami's works are contextually-derived, I will also argue that that they are not transferable to a context foreign to Japan. The association to childlikeness when perceiving the architect's works are based on an outsider's perspective because of an incomplete understanding of the term "*kawaii*". This is reflected in the categorisation of Ishigami's works under the banner of "New Innocence" and Naïve Architecture, which in turn attribute childlike characteristics to his *kawaii* designs. In response to this, the architect clarifies that his works are not intended to suggest childlikeness; instead, they are meant to appeal to everyone.⁷³ In other words, rather than generalising Ishigami's works as "naïve" and "innocent", which in turn allude to "childlike" characteristics, they are more precisely characterised as "*kawaii*" in appearance.

⁷³ Interview between author and Junya Ishigami (Tokyo, 6 August 2012).

Firstly, *kawaii* is an apt description for Ishigami's works as they are ingeniously attenuated in scale. There is, in the architect's projects, a fascination for the miniature. In this case, the miniature is a "cultural product" of Japan's *kawaii* paradigm.⁷⁴ Three exhibits, namely, *Little Gardens*, *Houses H* and *Island Garden* are minute-scaled models, with some being no larger than the surface of a coin.⁷⁵ Parallel with Murakami's *kawaii* designs, these diminutive works are stripped of the capacity to intimidate. Additionally, by playing on the quality of ephemeral and fragility in them, the works caution and necessitate one to peer into the models and to re-adjust one's usual sense of dimension. This translates to an ability to involve the viewers' participation and to shorten the distance between the models and their viewers. This idea of miniaturisation extends to the 2008 publication of *Plants & Architecture*, a volume capturing Ishigami's conceptual designs. Although these designs are foreign even bordering on a parallel universe, the tiny illustrations in their humble paperback of dimensions 7.5 by 7.5 centimetres attracts readers to muse over them. Its purpose of being a reading material is effectively subsumed under its significance of being a cherished possession.

Coupled with the diminutive scale of Ishigami's exhibits, the allusion to *kawaii* is articulated in its intricacy and sensitivity. Typically in architectural models, standard furniture is placed in them to give viewers a sense of scale and a layout composition of the space. However, Ishigami begs to differ. He crafts details such as potted plants of various species, a wall festooned with creeping ivy, a standalone bathtub, a large bookcase filled with books, a stationary bicycle and laundry on clothes lines in *Row House*.⁷⁶ To top it off, human silhouettes performing domestic activities such as taking a bath or laundering clothes are added in. Neither is the model a perfect replica of a house that has been scaled down nor the details crafted in without discretion. For one can observe that the structures, such as the walls and floors of the house, are not to scale; more accurately, they are represented by thin pieces of cardboard stuck fast together. Against the muted colours of the house and its surroundings, the human figures rendered in black, stand out most significantly. They are made into flattened caricatures that reiterate a spoof-like representation consistent throughout the model. In spite of this, Ishigami is not dictating domestic

⁷⁴ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 55.

⁷⁵ Ishigami, *Small Images* pp. 64-73.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-9.

living, but rather, he is highlighting the value of the everyday, which many perceive as mundane and insignificant.⁷⁷ Hence, in order to bring attention to the everyday, intricate details are painstakingly fashioned in the architect's model. More importantly, this technique elevates their value from ordinary to extraordinary artefacts.

Secondly, just as how Murakami employs exaggeration in bodily features to add humour, Ishigami purposefully manipulates the scale of conventional standards producing a similar absurdity. The exaggeration in scale is reflected in *Sky*, showcased in the exhibition "Another Scale of Architecture".⁷⁸ The designs of high-rise residential building are showcased as an architectural installation transforming the exhibition space into one punctuated by regularly-spaced vertical stacks. These columns of apartment units are designed such that they are not limited by the aspect ratio of its width and height. Instead, they tower towards the atmosphere on a small footprint. *Sky* is scaled such that it extends to the full height of its exhibition space, with the tallest model looming overhead at four metres, at a scale of 1:3000.⁷⁹ If this is not ludicrous enough, one would simple have to scrutinise the model at close range to discover black dots representing human figures attached!

Through re-appropriating the concept of exaggeration, Ishigami's *House & Office* is read in relation to *Sky*. The former is a design of a vertically-stacked column of apartment units, which seeks to renew one's perception of conventional height. Although this project is relatively conceivable given that its site is with reference to an existing building, the absurdity entailed is no less effective. *House & Office* is a column of apartment units in an existing 21-storey building redesigned as one integrated space.⁸⁰ In response to changing factors, such as views to the exterior at every storey, Ishigami ensures that there are no repeated units in the same column. As opposed to duplicating the plan of each unit monotonously throughout, the opening in each floor slab is customised in relation to the one below and above it. Finally, varying designs of staircases are introduced into the column of units to connect them into a continuous space.

⁷⁷ Ishigami, *Another Scale of Architecture* p. 282.

⁷⁸ 'Another Scale of Architecture', 2010. Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Nagoya.

⁷⁹ Ishigami, *Another Scale of Architecture* p. 233.

⁸⁰ Ishigami, *Small Images* p. 137.

Living in an environment of an exaggerated scale inevitably transforms one's understanding of domesticity and its external relation. The architect describes this design as having internalised a mountain as a living condition.⁸¹ Precisely because of the illusionistic sense of scale incorporated, one is unable to grasp every nook and corner of the house in its entirety. The dynamism in spatial planning and customisable programming of each unit further complicates the reading of *House & Office*. Allocating functions to zones, for instance, has become an endless permutation and combination of routes and means. Oblivious to the real world, human caricatures go about their daily lives and appear to be at ease with the complex system they are living in. It is only through viewing the model from a third-person perspective that the exhibited lifestyle seems strange and amusing. This in turn prompts the viewer to reflect on one's own accustomed domestic lifestyle as if the viewer and the human caricature have switched places. Rather than dismissing the make-believe way of living as pure conjecture and exaggeration, the absurdity and humour injected prompt viewers to muse about their perception of domesticity, thereby develop new eyes to scrutinise existing conditions.

Thirdly, the combination of both attenuation and exaggeration of scale in Ishigami's work can be interpreted as a satirical technique. The Japan Pavilion at Venice Biennale 2008 designed by the architect captured the crux of this synthesis.⁸² A visitor to the pavilion would be expecting to see exhibition works similar to those in the other countries'. Instead, the viewer is confronted by emptiness upon entering it. Although this void is interrupted by several paper-thin chairs, there is essentially nothing else in the pavilion. More information is only available as one approaches its perimeter, where fine illustrations of plants and domestic spaces on the walls begin to reveal themselves. The extent of these intricate drawings is played up such that they cover every square inch of the interior surfaces of the wall and even on those of the *Paper Chairs*. Furthermore, on closer inspection, this amusement brought about from discovering something new transformed into an epiphany. These pencil drawings are drawn with such consistency that they seem to have been produced by one meticulous hand. The resulting overall impression was no longer one of amusement generated from a child's doodling, instead, it was a serious piece of work that demanded tenacity and an enduring capacity to signify and convey the architect's intent.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁸² The theme for Japan Pavilion in Venice Biennale 2008 was 'Extreme Nature: Landscape of Ambiguous Spaces'.

It is only apt to describe Ishigami's Japan Pavilion as faux-naïf as the zeal and rigour exuded from the architect's *kawaii* design have gone beyond simple innocence and naivety. To be precise, it is a proclamation of Ishigami's obsession. In order to make his proposition of nature in architecture indisputable, he deploys an army of students to exterminate any opposition. In truth, this drive is only possible with the concerted effort of numerous female students from Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Showa Women's University and Tohoku University, who had dedicated three full weeks solely on the drawing process.⁸³ From this time-consuming and backbreaking effort orchestrated by Ishigami, the larger share of which was channelled into articulating nature, from vast greenery to individual leaf blade on a tree. Challenging the obtrusiveness of man-made structures, domestic spaces are depicted with simple lineaments making the distinction between the interior and the exterior highly delicate. As opposed to the conventional means of representing architectural designs, through plans, elevations, sections and models; this Japanese house that the architect envisioned is presented as an inscription on the walls of the pavilion. It beckons one in, envelops the viewer and impresses upon his/her consciousness. At the end of the day, despite not being able to witness the tedious process involved, the impression left behind is no less effectual. To the viewer, the contrast between bold statements in the other pavilions and this white-washed pavilion makes the latter all the more indelible. Hence, it is a fallacy that Ishigami's works are naïve or innocent as the Japan Pavilion proves otherwise.

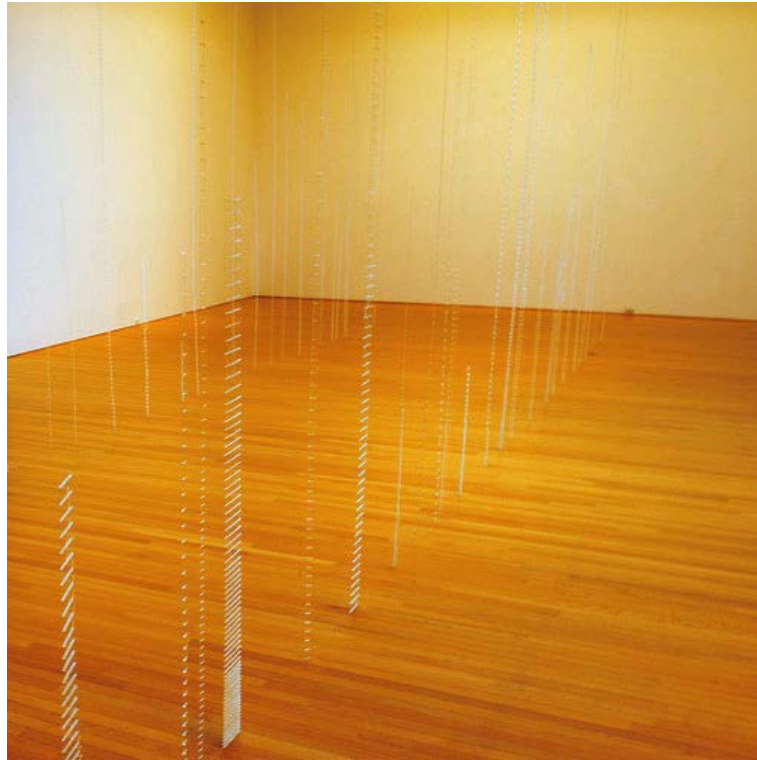
⁸³ Ishigami, *Another Scale of Architecture* p. 282.



viii *Little Gardens*



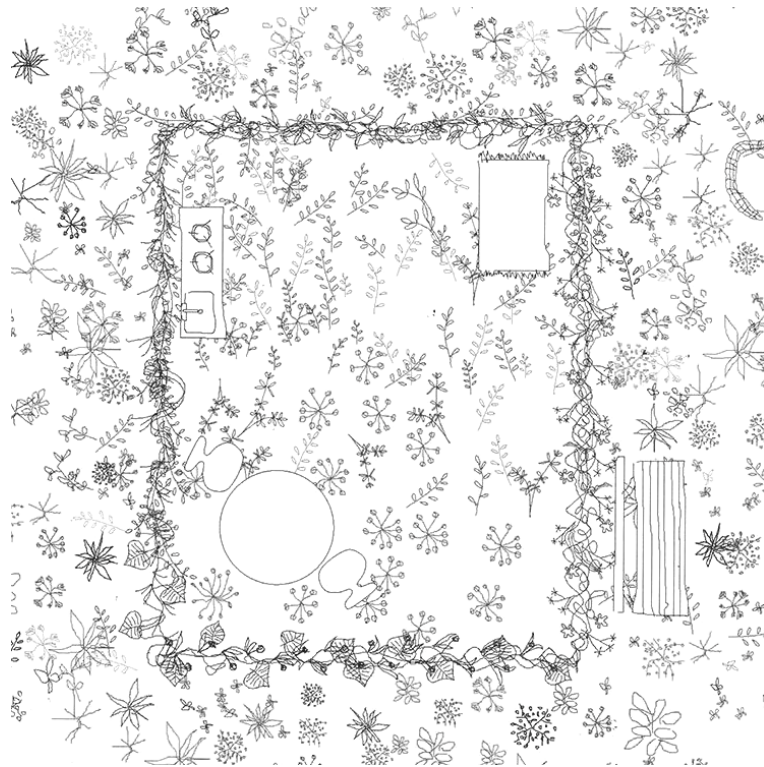
ix *Row House*



x Sky



xi House & Office



xii Japan Pavilion | Drawings on the interior wall surface

In parallel with Murakami's "Superflat", Ishigami's satirical works are demonstrative of *kawaii* appearances, exaggerated techniques and subtle statements. Within the discourse of Japanese domesticity, these works illustrate an attempt to renew dated preconceptions and paradigms concerning one's home. The notion of faux-naïf derived from its socio-cultural context becomes pivotal for this archetypical Japanese house. They engender a social critique that the general public is receptive to. A comparable study, which acknowledges the idiosyncrasies of Japan, thereby expands the discourse of critical architecture. The more important question becomes – what does the emphasis on societal idiosyncrasies reveal about the comparable study of Japanese critical architecture?

Ishigami's satirical designs of Japanese houses highlight the contrast between the notions of "mine" and "other". This notion of "mine" is based on its social construct, which in turn informs us of its characteristic aesthetic style. The architect's works are designed to be a resistance to the proliferation of imported ideas in the urban landscape by playing up on the *kawaii* characteristics insofar as visual appearance is concerned. Furthermore, this idea that the architect's works are branded as a product of Japan draws strongly on Motoori Norinaga's nationalist notion that was conceived in the eighteenth century. It translates as the conception of a Japanese identity through the removal of Buddhist and Confucian ideologies in its ancient literature.⁸⁴ For instance, Motoori emphasised that there is a discrepancy in meaning arising from the re-appropriation of Chinese characters in the Japanese language.⁸⁵ In Motoori's opinion, this script was deemed as a contamination to his native language. By this comparison, Ishigami's designs of Japanese houses reflect Japan's cultural nationalism whereby there is a desire to make its distinctive voice heard from within the larger international body. Essentially, this stresses the difference between the domestic constituting "mine", and the "other" that falls beyond the categorisation of the former.

In addition, the presumed universality of a mutual feeling that *kawaii* designs are attempting to evoke needs to be fleshed out and examined. Norihito Nakatani, whose research focuses on architectural expression, claims that *kawaii* appearances of Ishigami's works are instrumental in representing an antithesis of conventional methods and processes in architecture.⁸⁶ As opposed to "strong" architecture that is derived from a logical process of designing, "weak" architecture stems from perceptions or a mutual feeling, such as *kawaii* in this case.⁸⁷ Nakatani posits that this antagonistic position against "strong" architecture is universal as it has led to an increase awareness of *kawaii* designs at an international level.⁸⁸ On the other hand, it needs to be highlighted that the perceptions pertaining to *kawaii* are not transferable to a context outside Japan. This idea of a mutual feeling, which assumes universality through intuition rather than abstraction of forms, is fundamentally subjective. For instance, the association of a *kawaii* design to childlikeness or innocence marks a clear distinction in perceiving Ishigami's works between a

⁸⁴ Interview between author and Norihito Nakatani (Tokyo, 9 August 2012).

⁸⁵ Michael Marra, (ed.), *The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga: A Hermeneutical Journey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 7.

⁸⁶ Interview between author and Norihito Nakatani (Tokyo, 9 August 2012).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

local and one who is unfamiliar with its socio-cultural context. Simply put, the architect's works are based on a common perception identified by Japanese society; it is not a universal concept intuitive to all. This reiterates the dichotomous relationship of "mine" and "other".

In drawing these parallels between the architect's designs and the idiosyncrasies of Japan's socio-cultural context, Ishigami's works explore the negotiated boundary of Japanese domesticity. It is a contested notion that seeks to recover the nation as a "hierarchy of houses" in its urban landscape without limiting it to the single-family dwelling unit.⁸⁹ Through re-appropriating domesticity in Ishigami's Japan Pavilion, the architect's satirical design consolidates Japanese domesticity on the scales of "house" and "nation". Identifying and developing Japan's idiosyncrasies become pivotal for the conception of the Japan Pavilion in order to achieve its objective as a representative in the Venice Biennale. This is a challenge since points of departure in defining what constitutes Japanese in our contemporary age have been drastically reduced as a result of continuous exchanges of ideas across borders. At the same time, deciding upon an accurate architectural expression for the Japan Pavilion remains a disputable issue. In skillfully conveying the architect's statement in a manner familiar to its society, the Japan Pavilion is able to connect with the nation it is representing. Ultimately, Japanese domesticity is not limited to individual houses; rather, it encompasses the society's peculiarities and a collective identity.

In conclusion, satirical domesticity is a Japanese concept of its house and identity. Through his faux-naif designs, Ishigami is able to deliver a subtle yet scathing social critique. It necessitates an astute assessment of Japanese social and cultural background in today's context. Two of its idiosyncrasies highlighted in the architect's works, namely the *kawaii* paradigm and subtle criticism, are skillfully adapted in a fashion similar to the prevailing Japanese contemporary art culture. In summation, Ishigami's satirical works serve to be a comparable study of Japanese critical architecture that is accepted by his society without a compromise with its intended effect.

⁸⁹ Fawcett, *New Japanese House* p. 41.

EPILOGUE

In studying the works of “New Innocence”, I seek to discover their potential in contributing to the discourse of critical architecture beyond a stylistic trend. At the beginning, similarities in the works designed by Ito, SANAA, Fujimoto and Ishigami are drawn to clarify the defining category given to them. They are essentially conceptual designs entailing experimentation with a human-focus, which emphasises on the user’s perception to complete the understanding of contemporary Japanese house. During the process of investigation, these works illustrate that subjective perceptions and external socio-cultural influences are instrumental elements in domestic architecture. Autonomous architecture has attempted to remove these factors as they prevent a universal reading, has only proven to fail. On the other hand, Diller and Scofidio and Ishigami demonstrate the use of these factors through manifesting them in the architects’ designs. In this case, Diller and Scofidio recognise the permeability of a house by highlighting the various external mechanisms that have seeped into the domestic realm. Likewise, Ishigami’s designs, which draw inspiration from his socio-cultural environment, acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of his contemporary context, specifically the *kawaii* paradigm and subtle criticism.

In employing external influences in their designs, Diller and Scofidio, and Ishigami aim to renew the user’s preconceived perceptions. These dated perceptual and conceptual structures of the everyday interfere with the performance of his/her active role in the house. At the same time, Ishigami’s works are a counterpoint to those of Diller and Scofidio in which the former’s *kawaii* image portrays light-heartedness, whereas the latter insinuates dark and sinister undertones. Diller and Scofidio’s works evoke a sense of unfamiliarity bordering on disconcerting, in order to reveal the insidious mechanisms imposed on the domestic realm. Conversely, the renewal of the user’s perception of banal everyday accoutrements and rituals need not hinge on the dark and sinister. Ishigami challenges Diller and Scofidio’s method of perception renewal by producing works that enjoy a higher readership and accessibility to the Japanese public.

Finally, Ishigami’s designs of Japanese houses offer a parallel study of critical architecture specific to its context. By drawing parallels between Ishigami’s designs and Japanese contemporary art “Superflat”, I have argued that the architect employs similar satirical techniques

to deliver social critiques through his works. In the same vein, the *kawaii* appearances and subtle criticisms engendered are strongly rooted in Japanese society and culture. I seek to clarify that Ishigami's *kawaii* designs, which are deemed to allude to childlike characteristics from an outsider's perspective, are in fact faux-naif. They are less associated with innocence and naivety than employing their *kawaii* appearances as a front to conceal the architect's social critique. This is crucial in conveying a social critique that is accessible to the Japanese public and one which will face minimal opposition from its society. Domestic architecture may also prove to be the most appropriate vehicle to reconcile the schism in society that divides the architects from the general public. On a smaller scale, satirical domesticity constitutes the Japanese house. On the larger scale, it intersects with Japanese identity and the notion of nationalism. Essentially, satirical domesticity consolidates the Japanese house and a collective identity, distinguishing both from another society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Michael Darling, 'Plumbing the Depths of Superflatness', *Art Journal*, v. 60 n. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 76-89.

Peter Duus, 'Weapons of the Weak, Weapons of the Strong – The Development of the Japanese Political Cartoon', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 60 n. 4 (November 2001), pp. 965-97.

Thomas Patin, 'From Deep Structure to an Architecture in Suspense: Peter Eisenman, Structuralism and Deconstruction', *Journal of Architectural Education*, v. 47 n. 2 (Nov 1993), pp. 88-100.

Tomoharu Makabe and Norihito Nakatani, 'Naïve Architecture from Cutting-edge Japan', *Journal of Architecture and Building Science*, v. 125 n. 1601 (March 2010), pp. 7-8, 10-12.

BOOKS

Ben Nicholson, *Appliance House* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990).

Chris Fawcett, *New Japanese House: Ritual and Anti-Ritual Patterns of Dwelling* (New York: Icon, 1981).

Christian Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1994).

David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000).

El Croquis, (ed.), *Toyo Ito 1986-1995, El Croquis 71* (Madrid: El Croquis, 1995).

Eric Howeler, 'A New Innocence: Emerging Trends in Japanese Architecture', Eric Howeler (ed.), *GSD Platform 4* (New York: Actar, 2011), pp. 94-7.

Florian Idenburg, 'Relations', Florian Idenburg and Princeton University, School of Architecture (eds), *The SANAA Studios 2006-2008: Learning from Japan: Single Story Urbanism* (New York: Lars Müller Publishers, 2009), pp. 68-80.

Gerard van Zeijl, 'The Architecture of Dwelling: A History of a (ir)rational Bulwark', Hans Cornelissen (ed.), *Dwelling as a Figure of Thought* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2005), pp. 103-28.

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness", Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (eds), *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 32-7.

Hisako Okoshi, 'Hajime ni – Koukishin to Doku no Kiroku', Hisako Okoshi and Yuji Maeyama (eds), *Subtle Criticism: Caricature and Satire in Japan* (Saitama: Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, 1993), pp. 6-7.

Jordan Crandall, 'Landing', Aaron Betsky, Michael Hays, Laurie Anderson, Jordan Crandall, Edward Dimendberg, RoseLee Goldberg and Ashley Schafer (eds), *Scanning: the Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003), pp. 111-28.

Junya Ishigami, *Another Scale of Architecture*, (Kyoto: Seigensha, 2011).

Junya Ishigami, *Small Images* (Tokyo: INAX-Shuppan, 2008).

Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Michael Darling, 'Past+Present=Future', Takashi Murakami (ed.), *Takashi Murakami: Summon Monsters? Open the Door? Heal? Or Die?* (Tokyo: Hiropon Factory, 2005), pp. 64-71.

Michael Hays, 'Scanners', Aaron Betsky, Michael Hays, Laurie Anderson, Jordan Crandall, Edward Dimendberg, RoseLee Goldberg and Ashley Schafer (eds), *Scanning: the Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003), pp. 129-36.

Michael Marra, (ed.), *The Poetics of Motoori Narinaga: A Hermeneutical Journey* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

Midori Matsui, 'Murakami Matrix: Takashi Murakami's Instrumentalisation of Japanese Postmodern Culture', Takashi Murakami, Dick Hebdige and Midori Matsui (eds), *Murakami* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), pp. 80-109.

Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier, *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

Peter King, *In Dwelling: Implacability, Exclusion and Acceptance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Robin Dripps, *The First House: Myth, Paradigm, and the Task of Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997).

Toyo Ito, 'A Body Image Beyond the Modern: Is There Residential Architecture Without Criticism?', Toyo Ito and Andrea Mattei (eds), *Toyo Ito: Works Projects Writings* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006), pp. 348-50.

Toyo Ito, 'Shedding the Modern Body Image', Takeshi Ishido and Satoru Komaki (eds), *Contemporary Japanese Houses 1985-2005* (Tokyo: TOTO Shuppan, 2005), pp. 449-53.

Sou Fujimoto, *Primitive Future* (Tokyo: INAX-Shuppan, 2008).

Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

Stan Allen, 'SANAA's Dirty Realism', Florian Idenburg and Princeton University, School of Architecture (eds), *The SANAA Studios 2006-2008: Learning from Japan: Single Story Urbanism* (New York: Lars Müller Publishers, 2009), pp. 58-67.

Yuji Maeyama, 'Owari ni – Fuushi no Kako to Sonogo', Hisako Okoshi and Yuji Maeyama (eds), *Subtle Criticism: Caricature and Satire in Japan* (Saitama: Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, 1993), pp. 146-7.

INTERNET

'Collins Dictionary', <http://www.collinsdictionary.com>, (accessed 1 December 2012).

'Reverso', <http://www.reverso.net>, (accessed 1 December 2012).

SELF-CONDUCTED INTERVIEW

Interview between author and Junya Ishigami (Tokyo, 6 August 2012).

Interview between author and Norihito Nakatani (Tokyo, 9 August 2012).

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW I

Interviewer: Author

Interviewee: Junya Ishigami (Practicing architect, Junya.Ishigami+Associates; Research Associate Professor, Sendai School of Design)

Location: Junya.Ishigami+Associates office, Roppongi, Tokyo

Date: 6 August 2012

Author: This interview is with reference to the series of lectures conducted at Harvard University Graduate School of Design in 2011. It was titled “A New Innocence: Emerging Trends in Japanese Architecture”. Some of the works you presented included *House & Office* and KAIT workshop. They remind me of childlike characteristics as they appear to be naïve and innocent, as suggested of the lecture title. Is it your intention to create *kawaii* works that suggest childlikeness?

Ishigami: Firstly, I think that the title “New Innocence” is only correct to a certain extent; there are some parts that are wrong. I don’t agree with some parts of this title given. I accept that my designs are *kawaii*, but they are not innocent or naïve or childlike. I don’t want to design childlike architecture. The Japanese term, *kawaii*, is very complicated. It can mean friendly sometimes, or cool, and of course including cute. But in this case, I want to design architecture that is friendly. Architecture is about the fundamental meaning. It is something that I am exploring in my works.

Author: I understand that you do not make a distinction between architecture and architectural models. Essentially, you treat all your works as architecture when you design. I studied some of your works you have exhibited, such as those in *How small? How vast? How architecture grows*. In this exhibition, there is a project named *Little Gardens*, where you showed tiny dishes of plants. What does the use of miniature models mean in your designs?

Ishigami: We use other forms of representation in architecture besides models. The model is one of the ways we design. Each model has its own space or real space. For example, a cup can be a study model. I hope to discover new spaces by studying the real space of this cup. A person can imagine himself in this space. Then this space becomes a representation. But I am interested in the real space at this scale. We design models at 1:100, 1:3000 and so on, as they have different kinds of real spaces. We make 1:1 models too; again, they have different spaces for us to study. By studying these models of different scales, we can find different possibilities of designing architecture.

I think that there is no difference between designing for an exhibition and real architecture. An exhibition is just a different type of architecture. Exhibition space is one of the sites for

architecture. I always ask myself how I can think of architecture that is unique to each project and the possibilities in each of them.

Author: So can I say that your models are themselves final architecture as you intend them to be?

Ishigami: They are architecture.

Author: In studying your works, I find that they are mainly designs for houses. What do you find interesting in this type of architecture?

Ishigami: The surrounding environment for each project is important to develop an idea. Housing is one of the considerations influencing my designs. Housing is also the most important part of the urban environment. I grew up in Japan and it is natural for me to think of my home. I think that designing a house is natural in architecture. We have projects from overseas, in such cases; we will have to consider their relationships with the surroundings.

Author: This idea of responding to the context is similar to the idea of critical architecture, which reflects the condition of society. Is critical architecture relevant in Tokyo today?

Ishigami: The urban context of Japan is very complicated. Western architecture, for example in Europe, is mainly made up of historical buildings. It has a uniform fabric. This concept of critical architecture comes from a different context from Japan. This Western concept is not relevant to Japan because we have architecture of different types and forms. In Japan, it is more important to talk about the relationship of architecture. Architecture and people, architecture and the city, and different types of architecture. I think that our designs have a relationship with their environments.

Author: Finally, can I say that your *kawaii* designs have a relationship with Japanese people because they are able to understand them?

Ishigami: Yes, I want to design architecture that is accessible to all. It is friendly to everyone. Everyone has this same feeling towards our designs.

INTERVIEW II

Interviewer: Author

Interviewee: Norihito Nakatani (Professor, Department of Architecture, Waseda University;
Chief Editor of “Journal of Architecture in Building & Science”, Architectural Institute of Japan)

Location: Nakatani Norihito Lab, Waseda University, Shinjuku

Date: 9 August 2012

Author: This interview is with reference to the interview conducted between Norihito Nakatani-san and Tomoharu Makabe-san on Naïve Architecture.

In 2011, Toyo Ito, SANAA, Sou Fujimoto and Junya Ishigami gave a series of lectures at Harvard University Graduate School of Design, which was titled “A New Innocence: Emerging Trends in Japanese Architecture”. Some of the works presented included SANAA’s 21st century museum of contemporary art in Kanazawa and Ishigami’s KAIT workshop. Critiques have commented that the architecture remind one of childhood. Do you agree? And can these works be classified and discussed as Naïve Architectures?

Nakatani: Yes, I agree. I think that Naïve Architecture can be broken down into three components; namely, childlikeness, a special attitude unique to Japanese nationalism and an outsider or public art. On top of these, Naïve Architecture can be understood as a design that is intuitive rather than a complex process of rationalisation.

So childhood, as you have mentioned, I see it as a tendency to create weak architecture. Throughout history, there have been many strong and definite architectural designs that could be associated to the different styles. Whereas, Naïve Architecture is the opposite; it strives for a weak expression.

The second point, on the Japanese nationalism, is related to its formal expression. Naïve Architecture is a unique expression of Japan, reflecting its nationalist position today. Japanese Architecture is about constructivism; hence, it is grounded by an attitude or a theorem, which makes it easy to understand. I think that there are some similarities between these two, which makes Naïve Architecture an expression that is both unique and weak at the same time.

Thirdly, it is a form of low art. It is a common feeling of the Japanese people on how they view Naïve Architecture. I would say that it is something intuitive and unconscious that everyone shares.

Author: What do you mean by weak architecture or weak architectural expression?

Nakatani: Even though it a weakness, there is still a strong sense of aesthetics. Weak architecture refers to spaces that can be easily abandoned or demolished. For example, the Japanese teahouse, it is weak in the sense that it loses its relevance and thus removed.

There are similarities in this weakness of Naïve Architecture and traditional Japanese Architecture. The latter was about the picturesque and the house was typically situated near a mountain or a river. Architecture was always read in relation to its environment as it blended into the surrounding landscape. Naïve Architecture is similar as it is also influenced by these external factors.

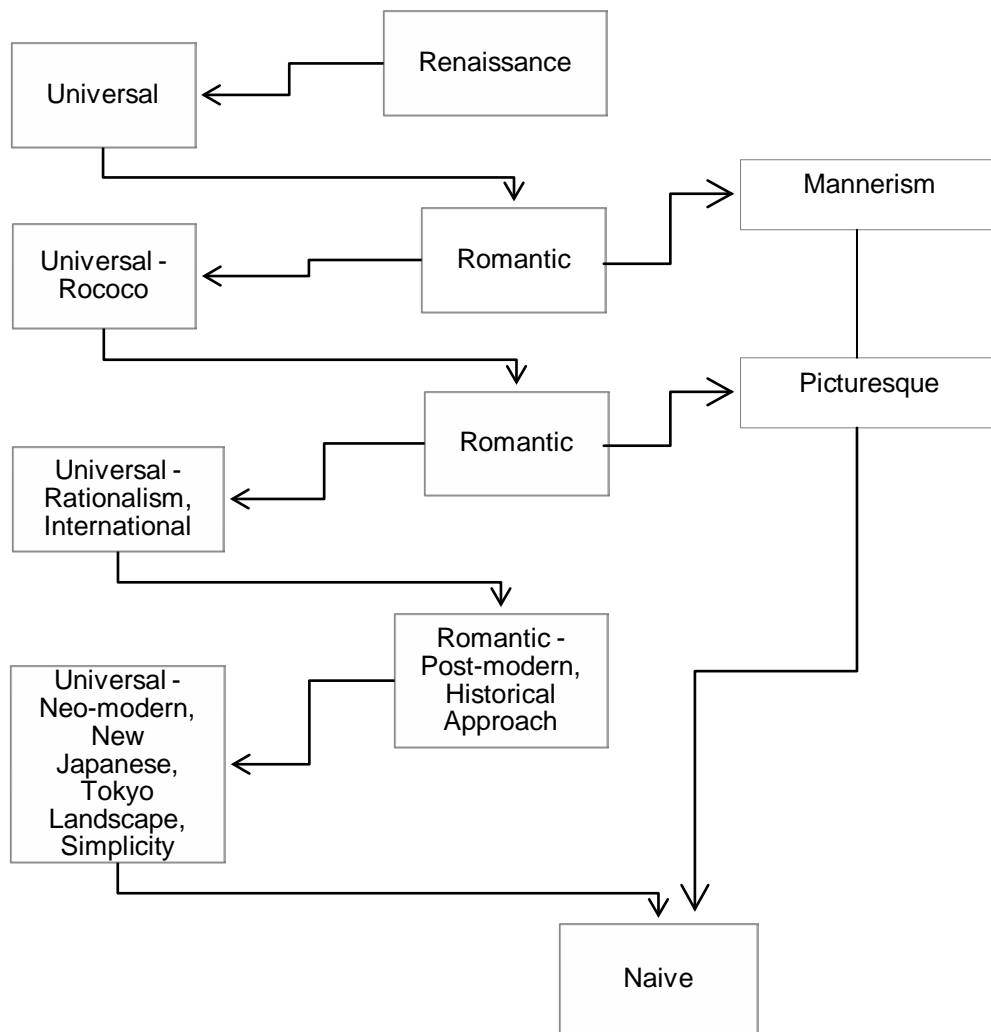
Author: My understanding is that Naïve Architecture is easily recognisable based on their forms. Some of these works are based on simple geometries, which are clearly not derived from the natural environment. Could it be with reference to an organic form such as SANAA's Rolex Learning Centre?

Nakatani: No, Naïve Architecture is not about an organic form. Rather, it shares some similarities with the Western theory and aesthetics of the Sublime. The Japanese uses this same concept like an aesthetics glue to bring the landscape and architecture together. In some cases, the architecture overwhelms its landscape. In other cases though, it is the reverse.

It is more important to recognise that this weakness is becoming a worldwide phenomenon. It is happening in many parts of the world. Naïve Architecture is a reaction against strong architecture, which is better suited for our time. We need an architecture that is based on feeling rather than logic and Naïve Architecture has this "weakness".

Author: Do you think Naïve Architecture will continue to develop or will it be just a passing trend for Japan?

Nakatani: It will carry on like a cycle or a wave. Architecture has been alternating between Universal and Romantic. The former is a universal concept, while the latter is specific. This is why I think that Naïve Architecture can similarly be both weak and unique.



Author: Can I say that Naïve Architecture is derived from the Japanese culture?

Nakatani: Norinaga Motoori gave a good analogy between Japanese nationalist aesthetics and those of the Chinese. Essentially, it means that Naïve Architecture is different from other countries' architecture. This goes back to the point about logic being foreign to the Japanese. He argued that "in China, there are poems but there are no songs. The poems are not there to help the government or for oneself. There is nothing more to it than reading what the heart reads. That is the essence of poems." It is sophisticated in meaning but basically we can infer from it that the Chinese nationalism is centred on "public-ness", whereas the Japanese nationalism is about a feeling, which is not logical. Similarly, Chinese architecture is strong because of its strong nationalism; on the other hand, Japanese architecture is weak because of its weak nationalism and Naïve Architecture is expressing this very idea.

Author: I noted that you have made comparisons to Western Architectural theories in the discussion of Naïve Architecture. However, since this is described as an emerging trend in

Japanese Architecture, I wonder if there are other local influences besides Japanese nationalism. In fact, I have come across descriptions of *kawaii* of Naïve Architecture and I believe this is characteristic of Japan in recent years. What are your views on this matter and what is the definition of *kawaii* in this context?

Nakatani: *Kawaii* means not so aggressive or intimidating. When describing a middle-aged person as *kawaii*, it means that this person is not so aggressive or even friendly. I agree that Naïve Architecture is trying to be *kawaii* and similarly in this context, it means that the architecture is not so intimidating.

There is a possibility that these concepts are intertwined. *Kawaii* is Japanese. It is part of the everyday here.

Author: Do you think that there could be some influences from Japanese contemporary art on Japanese architecture? You mentioned low art as one of the three elements of Naïve Architecture. I thought perhaps it has to do with the “Superflat” art or subculture in Japan.

Nakatani: Possible. Architecture has a social aspect; it has a tendency to social condition. It is a mirror of the existing situation rather than future prediction. I see where you are coming from. “Superflat” art reflects the *otaku* or nerds of this society. This condition is still relevant today and architecture is needed to reflect on this condition of Japan too. Low art does not discriminate against the public but high art does. This differentiation came about because of the exclusivity the upper class enjoys. Naïve Architecture melts easily with the people.

Author: Are you referring to critical architecture when you brought up this idea of architecture being a mirror of the society?

Nakatani: In my opinion, critical architecture in Japan was stronger in the past. However, it is much weaker today.

Author: I would like to refer to a book called *Nippon no fuushi*, Subtle Criticism: Caricature and Satire in Japan. It traces the Japanese form of criticism in history. Do you think this is still applicable in Japan today? Could this subtle form of criticism be engendered in Naïve Architecture?

Nakatani: *Nippon no fuushi* is a publication by the Museum of Modern Art in Saitama, documenting the art works and images from the Edo period. These works were produced by people, who were criticising the government or the political system. It was a suppressed form of opposition as Japanese are timid. It was only through drawings that these people could express their anger and frustration. There was hardly any form of verbal criticism. This was because of Japan’s defeat in the Second World War; the people became timid and did not dare to voice their opposition. It has not changed today.

Yes, I think that Naïve Architecture may be a form of Japanese criticism. We, Japanese, like criticisms that are not so strong or straightforward. We tend to conceal our criticisms or criticise softly. Naive Architecture is like its people in this case.

(Pause)

What do you think of me as a Japanese person?

Author: What do you mean and in what way? (Laugh)

Nakatani: A Japanese person has more than one personality. We are hard to understand sometimes.

Author: Is this something unique to the Japanese as well?

Nakatani: Yes, I think so.

