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Project Japan: Metabolism Talks...



Synopsis

Back to the future: Visionary architecture in postwar Japan — “Once there was a nation that went to war, but after they conquered a continent their own country was destroyed by atom bombs... then the victors imposed democracy on the vanquished. For a group of apprentice architects, artists, and designers, led by a visionary, the dire situation of their country was not an obstacle but an inspiration to plan and think — although they were very different characters, the architects worked closely together to realize their dreams, staunchly supported by a super-creative bureaucracy and an activist state... after 15 years of incubation, they surprised the world with a new architecture — “Metabolism” that proposed a radical makeover of the entire land... Then newspapers, magazines, and TV turned the architects into heroes: thinkers and doers, thoroughly modern men — | Through sheer hard work, discipline, and the integration of all forms of creativity, their country, Japan, became a shining example... when the oil crisis initiated the end of the West, the architects of Japan spread out over the world to define the contours of a post-Western aesthetic....” — Rem Koolhaas / Hans Ulrich Obrist

Between 2005 and 2011, architect Rem Koolhaas and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist interviewed the surviving members of Metabolism — “the first non-western avant-garde, launched in Tokyo in 1960, in the midst of Japan’s postwar miracle. Project Japan features hundreds of never-before-seen images — “master plans from Manchuria to Tokyo, intimate snapshots of the Metabolists at work and play, architectural models, magazine excerpts, and astonishing sci-fi urban visions — “telling the 20th century history of Japan through its architecture, from the tabula rasa of a colonized Manchuria in the 1930s to a devastated Japan after the war, the establishment of Metabolism at the 1960 World Design Conference in Tokyo, to the rise of Kisho Kurokawa as the first celebrity architect, to the apotheosis of Metabolism at Expo ’70 in Osaka and its expansion into the Middle East and Africa in the 1970s. The result is a vivid documentary of the last moment when architecture was a public rather than a private affair. Oral history by Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist Extensive interviews with Arata Isozaki, Toshiko Kato, Kiyonori Kikutake, Noboru Kawazoe, Fumihiko Maki, Kisho Kurokawa, Kenji Ekuan, Atsushi Shimokobe, and Takako and Noritaka Tange Hundreds of never-before-seen images, architectural models, and magazine excerpts Layout by award-winning Dutch designer Irma Boom

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Customer Reviews

A great collected history of a truly radical movement caught into, and trying to steer, a rapidly changing society. This book is necessary for architects right now: The thorough archiving and indexing of an avant-garde movement reminds us that architects once fearlessly and courageously embraced the transformational qualities of architecture. It really makes you lament the absence of such a strong contemporary agenda to react to-I can't imagine all those pritzker prize winners actually consolidating their respective intelligence into a cohesive idea like the metabolists did. It's a massive and dense volume though-I haven't been able to finish it yet. It is very well illustrated and is bound to provide inspiration, almost too dense to go through all at once.

The Metabolist movement in Japan seemed consigned to the dustbin of history until resurrected in this amply illustrated book that gives the movement a greater width and breadth. Not surprising to see Rem Koolhaas behind the project, as his work owes a substantial debt to this movement. More importantly, Koolhaas provides wonderful interviews and insights on its leading proponents, including the dapper Kisho Kurokawa, who gave us such novel projects as the Nagakin Capsule Tower, downsizing units to less than 10 square meters (100 square feet). Of course, a movement like this could have only been spawned in Japan, which was looking for new ways to deal with the post-war housing shortage. Kenzo Tange was the godfather of the movement, and would have a major impact on international architectural design. The movement also gave us Arata Isozaki and Fumihiko Maki, among other leading architects. While the designs looked very futuristic at the time, they were based on traditional planning principles. I would have liked to see a bigger format like

Taschen has done on other topics, but the wealth of material will reward those interested in Metabolism.

an incredible, ambitious collection of all things metabolist- materials from every possible source from friends, lovers to colleagues from the past and present. a great handbook for aspiring and practicing architects to see how one generation succeeded in an architecture/ media/ policy/ masterplanning mash up that still holds as one of the most legendary group efforts to this day.

Everything that Taschen Publishes is fantastic! This is a beautifully designed volume on the subject of metabolist architecture. Anyone can pick up this book and get wrapped up in its illustrations and diagrams.

If its a topic of minimalism, micro-living, or have a great interest to Japanese architecture, this is the perfect book! I personally used this book to help me study and find inspiration for my thesis. And believe me, this book gave lots of inspiration, precedent studies/analysis, and helpful information that progressed my studies. Architects student or not, this books holds lots of historic information that both benefit a better understanding of the what has been done and what is being improved or used today. The Nagakin Capsule Hotel is just one of the buildings that initiated the whole micro-living and providing a better understanding of "time" and "space" really means to human proportions. I highly recommended it!

In this book we will found the rise of an entire city thru the designer's work. When the nuclear bombs dropped on the Japanese cities had to start building cities from scratch. This book describes the processes of designers to design solutions to this tragedy.

Going into this book I knew very little about the metabolist movement in architecture. I found that the format of quickly alternating interviews and history pieces kept me engaged and interested as a reader. Well-chosen photos and graphics illustrate the text tastefully. The interviews with metabolist architects were great, and managed to not only record the important history and facts about metabolist architecture, but also gave insight into the personal lives, career development, and group dynamic of these Japanese architects who all contributed to the movement in different ways. As a designer I can relate to the metabolist's desire for architecture to play a role in solving the many complex problems in a rapidly changing world. Only by working together to advance the architecture

profession in Japan were they able to achieve some level of success. With the focus today so much on the individuality of each famous designer, it is refreshing to read about this not-so-distant movement that happened because of a group of individuals working toward a common way of thinking. I have not come across any other books that describe the process of a movement taking shape quite like this book does. It goes to great lengths to provide as many viewpoints as possible from the people who were there when it happened. It is an architecture book that is also about how these architects interacted with their world to promote their vision. It feels like a large amount of respect and care went into the making of this book. Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist clearly knew that the metabolist movement in architecture has tremendous historical importance and a serious lack of recorded historical documentation. They did a wonderful job compiling and presenting all the information in this book!

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