

6. EPILOGUE; Unity Architecture in the New Universal (Post COVID-19)

The three exhibitions in Finland and Germany, alongside a collection of related texts, would be scheduled for the spring of 2020 (while I was still living in Finland). Additionally, the exhibition planned for the Embassy of Finland in Tokyo, Japan, had always been envisioned as a homecoming exhibition that would conceptually pull all three together. However, due to the unprecedented global pandemic, which also hit in the spring of 2020, the Finnish and German exhibitions were postponed for more than a year. Furthermore, the exhibition in Tokyo—which was originally the homecoming exhibition — was actually held before the other three exhibitions. Notably, the impact of the pandemic-induced postponement turned what would have been a “homecoming” exhibit into a “departure” exhibit.

In other words, the reality that there are situations and scenarios beyond our control was revealed by an enigmatic virus. The first thing I had to do was to start all over again by accepting that reality.

The exhibition was produced after the catalogues for the upcoming international exhibitions in Finland and Germany, just as the pandemic repositioned Tokyo’ s exhibition in the exact opposite context from being the homecoming exhibition to being the departure exhibition. In other words, “twists and turns” of time arose between the exhibitions and this exhibition, which describes the same exhibit from the different contexts (i.e., three different countries and four cities, including Tokyo).

However, this seems to me to be exactly the same mechanism of national romanticism that I had come to grasp while living in Finland. Namely, that I could sublimate the pressure into my own expressions, while simultaneously experiencing (and learning to accept) one of the greatest external pressures in human history: the COVID-19 pandemic. Presumably, many people had experienced a similar situation in the midst of their own, unique conditions.

If we think about it in this way, then it will also be important to consider how, in the future, society can positively transform the reception of external pressure (like those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic) into its own expression.

On this note, this exhibition aims to discover ways in which we can open up national romanticism to expand into a “third place” , and thereby show the beauty of design and architecture—something which has often been considered ineffable (or, for some, considered not to be modern because of its non-linguistic nature)—as an indispensable logic in society.

Nonetheless, the postponements resulting from the pandemic have provided the opportunity to review the ideas foundational to the three exhibitions and each of their catalogues. I was also able to do that during my stay in Finland, and to do so from an outside perspective.

Furthermore, the postponements gave me enough time to think about the naming of the overall flow weaving through each of the three exhibitions’ themes. The main current of thought is the practice of *Synesthesia Scenery* (the theme of the Weimar venue) by the theory of *Crossover-Architecture* (the theme of the Berlin venue) in the field of *Nation of Sorrow* (the theme of the Helsinki venue). Furthermore, within the interconnected themes, I saw a faint beauty while reconstructing the plan that had been broken by the external pressures caused by the virus. The beauty was the logic itself, which fueled the reasons for redrafting the plan.

In this way, I was also able to see what I saw in others in myself. I gained access to this insight by looking in from the outside. I had already explored the concept of *Unity Architecture* before I had moved to Finland. However, before I went to Helsinki, the English concept was still vague in my own mind, and I actually could not yet properly express the concept in Japanese—my own, native language. The opportunity to reconsider what I had been thinking about when I had been abroad, once I was back in my own country again and communicating daily in my own native language, made me think of “a string of architecture” as a Japanese translation for *Unity Architecture*.

What this experience helped me realize, is that language has so much to do with how the meaning of words is actually created beyond their dictionary definitions.

When I talk to Finnish people, I often come across the concept of *Sisu*, by which they mean “spiritual stamina” . *Sisu* is like a heart that won’ t break—no matter how much pressure it gets from the outside. It’ s not just a spirit of primal strength. As a foreigner, I also felt that *Sisu* has a mechanism similar to the state of romanticism, which also endures a state of continuous oppression until the very end. It never fails

to take firm root under the surface. Of course, one of the main reasons I felt this way is that there is a commonality between the traditional nationalism of the Finnish people and that of the Japanese. Another reason could also be that the Finnish language could be classified as part of the Ural-Altaic language family, which also includes the Japanese language.

“*Unity Architecture*”—which means “A String of Architecture” in Japanese—includes many things and links them together just as they are. This seems to be the most important approach to architecture in the post-COVID-19 era—an era in which we must begin architecture by accepting external pressures. In the future, I would like to build a part of Unity Architecture with even more people involved.

September 2021
TAISHI WATANABE