

The New York Times

The Japanese Artist Turning Fruits and Vegetables Into Sculpture

Ikebana's most irreverent practitioner, the 80-year-old Kosen Ohtsubo, finds beauty in the banal.



This piece, "Cabbage Tree" (2020), created from cabbage leaves wrapped around a gnarled log that Kosen Ohtsubo purchased from a neighbor, was made exclusively for T. It was photographed at the Zama shrine, in Kanagawa, Japan, the original structure of which stood for at least six centuries before being rebuilt in 1927 after a fire.

Photo by Mari Maeda & Yuji Oboshi. Styled by Hanae Uwajima

On a January afternoon, in his stained-wood-floored studio in the Tokyo suburb of Tokorozawa, the artist Kosen Ohtsubo fingered a large cabbage leaf, its edges a bit too curled and droopy for a salad. "It's about three days old," he said. "Great material."

Wilted cabbage doesn't usually come to mind when one thinks of ikebana, the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging with origins in the sixth century. But for close to five decades, Ohtsubo has been one of ikebana's most unorthodox practitioners, his work a subversion of the spare formality and elegant materials that are the hallmarks of the form. "I want to explode the idea of beautiful ikebana," said Ohtsubo, who uses blooms and branches as he sees fit but is just as likely to work with hunks of watermelon, scraps of garbage or piles of daikon — Japanese radishes the size and shape of plump forearms. He once created a piece by throwing tomatoes at a wall.

"In a way, rebellion is my signature," said Ohtsubo, 80. "I have always felt I was fighting against something." And yet, he's not purely interested in rebellion for its own sake — Ohtsubo's impulses are at heart egalitarian. He was a student in the Ryusei school of ikebana, which gained renown in the Meiji era and is known for its relatively freestyle approach — practitioners are encouraged to experiment with materials and work outside of the classical three-branch form, in which each stalk represents either heaven, earth or humankind. The artist, who is a jazz fan (Albert Ayler's 1965 "Spiritual Unity" is a favorite), appreciated this improvisational philosophy. Still, he disliked that the default materials were what he considered to be elitist: traditional flowers like irises or lilies, or the branches of pine or plum trees. "There is this generally held idea that expensive branches make the piece," he said. "So if you don't have money, you can't create beautiful work."



The artist's "*I Am Taking a Bath Like This*" (1984).
Courtesy of the artist and Empty Gallery



His "*Mr. O's Breakfast*" (1973).
Courtesy of the artist and Empty Gallery

Vegetables, of course, are prosaic and cheap. They aren't meant to be looked at so much as consumed, and if you wait long enough, they begin to smell. This fact, especially, tended to bother more traditional masters when they first encountered Ohtsubo's work at exhibitions, but he believes that the vegetable's potential for visceral decay only adds to its artistic promise. Take the cabbage: "Its entire form and fragrance really changes over the course of just a few days," he said. In fact, his philosophy fulfills two of ikebana's core aims: to express the impermanence of beauty and to showcase beauty that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. What's more, vegetables tether humans to the natural world. Many of them come from the ground, after all, while elegant branches are pulled, Ohtsubo says, from "the top of the mountain."

Born in 1939 in Ashio Dozan, which is in the central Tochigi Prefecture and was the site of a notoriously polluting 19th-century copper mine, Ohtsubo was the middle son of the village's deputy mayor. Often, he was left alone to wander the mountains surrounding the village, once getting so lost that he ended up spending the night at an inn before finding his way home. "Back in those days, everyone had four or five children, and if you weren't the eldest son, you weren't really treasured," he said. When a local woman offered ikebana lessons, he decided to enroll. "There were a lot of beautiful girls in the class," said Ohtsubo, who wears eyeglasses with Playboy Bunnies imprinted on the temples.

In 1960, he moved to Tokyo and studied under the Ryusei master Kasen Yoshimura. But Ohtsubo feared he'd be unable to make a living as an artist. He enrolled as an engineering student at Tokyo Denki University, but the pull of ikebana was too strong. And so he returned to the Tokyo Ryusei school, joining the staff as an apprentice. Right away, Ohtsubo was back to breaking convention, sourcing materials from farms, groceries and dumpsters, and even inserting himself into his work, which leaned increasingly toward contemporary art: For "*I Am Taking a Bath Like This*" (1984), he photographed himself sitting in a tub filled with kakitsubata (Japanese iris) leaves. He's been looking for new and unexpected ways into his medium ever since. One day, while watching his wife make cabbage rolls, he thought, "This is ikebana," and created a large, spade-shaped sculpture covered in boiled cabbage.



An untitled work by Ohtsubo (1989). Courtesy of the artist and Empty Gallery



Ohtsubo's "Rock'n'Roll Radish Tower I" (1989). Courtesy of the artist and Empty Gallery

"Ohtsubo was the first of his kind," said Haruyoshi Nishikawa, the editor in chief of Nihon Jhosei Shimbun, a newspaper that specializes in stories about ikebana and the Japanese tea ceremony. "He has created his own ikebana, and that has greatly inspired people." The Hong Kong-based Empty Gallery is currently planning to stage a show of Ohtsubo's new and recreated works, and will also feature some of them at future art fairs.

In the meantime, Ohtsubo is still working and still teaching, even if he's often disappointed by his students' timidity. "So many of them simply conform to their surroundings and obediently carry out their lives," he said. "It's as if there's some big master monitoring young people's activities and saying, 'Don't do anything stupid.'" I asked if he'd heard of the conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan's recent artwork "Comedian" — of a banana pinned to the wall with duct tape. He hadn't, but grinned when I showed him a picture. "Oh, interesting," Ohtsubo said. "The banana is one of the materials I want to try."



大坪光泉 大根デス・コティック/Kosen Ohtsubo DAIKON DEATHCO 1994
大根、スチール棚、他「表現としてのいけばな」展出品作

と葉のついた木瓜で面白い枝ぶりの筆架けを作り、筆を立てかけて楽しんだ子供時代の回想である。主人公は回想とともに目の木瓜を見つめ、「見詰めていると次第に気が遠くなって、いい気持ちになる。又詩興が浮かぶ」として詩作する。そして「寝ながら木瓜を観て、世の中を忘れていく感じがよく出た」と、詩の出来ばえを喜ぶ。

この漱石的「非人情」の旅の一場面が、どれだけ漱石の実験を基にしているかは知らない。漱石と交友のあった文人花の西川一草亭は、漱石の記述した木瓜は野生のものではないと語っているので、あくまでフィクションとして読むべきなのであろう。それはそれとして、この場面には、木瓜の花や枝ぶりをめぐって小説が書かれ、画家が登場し、

子供時代の花遊びが思いだされ、詩興が浮かび、それらが響き合うことで優れた精神世界が磁場のように生まれている。

この一場面の叙述を、かなり強引に、木瓜という植物に向かい合った言葉とるように受けとめてみたい。「いけばな」そのものではなくとも、「いけばな的なもの」が漱石の叙述に生きているように思えてならない。いけばなの中に、いけばなの制度をこえて、文学にも美術にも響き合う、そして人の心に響く精神世界があるとすれば、私は、そうした精神世界に触れたいと思うし、そこではもはやアイデンティティの議論は無用なのである。

みずたに たかし (美術評論家)

1947年愛知県犬山市生まれ。同志社大学文学部卒。名古屋造形芸術短大助教授。現代美術を中心に批評活動をおこなっているが、近年、いけばなを視野にいれた批評を開始。『日本女性新聞』にて「前衛いけばな試論」を連載中。また、『東山荘現代美術展』「表現としてのいけばな展」など、展覧会企画も多い。

The Contemporary and Avant-Garde of Ikebana

Takashi Mizutani

It was in the mid-1980s when the school of "gendai ikebana" (contemporary Japanese flower arrangement) first made its appearance. The art community had begun to grow more active at the time when contemporary ikebana was introduced, and as a result of this introduction, I began to gain a new perspective on the art. There after, I became very interested in the relationship between gendai ikebana and contemporary art, and began to consider works which combined the two.

As for me, it should come as no surprise that I know absolutely nothing of the so-called "Ryu-ha"(schools) of ikebana. I have attended flower exhibitions held at department stores on occasion after receiving an invitation, but was seldom really able to fully appreciate the beauty of flower arrangements themselves. Instead, I usually end up feeling overwhelmed by the enormous number of arrangements squeezed together into such confined spaces, my eyes overcome by the dazzling explosion of flowers. Moreover, trying to deal with the crowds of exhibitors and other attendees always leaves me with a feeling of dissatisfaction at not having been able to view the exhibits at my own pace. Although I am sure that this is probably not the case with every ikebana exhibition held, it seems to me that exhibitions like the one that I have described above shed a negative light on ikebana as a whole.

Ikebana artists find themselves at times faced with problems that originate from within the ikebana community itself. Those of us who are unfamiliar with the ikebana community's system may wonder why the artists continue to deal with these hardships instead of deciding to abandon the community. The most obvious answer would be because no other alternative forum for ikebana exists outside of the current system. Unlike the fine arts, which have always been supported by schools and art museums, the flower arrangement community lacks such a reliable foundation; sales of ikebana works are rare, given their short "lifespans", and a network of galleries which deal in ikebana has yet to be developed. Furthermore, although ikebana is gradually coming to be

recognized by fine art galleries on a broader scale, there still exists a subtle psychological barrier which prevents ikebana from being accepted into the mainstream. It will be necessary for us to observe the activities of ikebana artists after having achieved an understanding of the extreme disparity that lies between conditions existing inside and outside the system which regulates the world of Japanese flower arrangement.

The Avant-Garde Ikebana Movement

It was after the publishing of Masanobu Kudo's "Nihon Ikebana Bunka-shi" (lit. "A Cultural History of Japanese Ikebana"; Dohosha Publishing Co., Ltd.), sometime after 1955, that the world of ikebana began to take on a new light. As the book describes, "The three prominent ikebana schools of Ikenobo, Ohara, and Sogetsu began to compete with each other during the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, each making investments of capital and sponsoring large-scale individual and school exhibitions at department stores, beginning with Tokyo and Osaka." This competition, in effect, triggered a boom in the number of newly-recruited ikebana pupils. Although the original purpose of the competition was to raise the level of public consciousness regarding ikebana, the three schools ended up preoccupied with determining the best way to accept the flood of newcomers into the ikebana community, and in correspondence to this trend, how to broaden the scope of training programs for new instructors."

The period which preceded the broad expansion of the ikebana community was one defined by revolutionary experimentation. During the early 1950's, for a period of not more than five years, the materials and forms used in ikebana were to undergo a complete metamorphosis. Artists' positions, and the "iemoto" (master) system, which was controlled by masters in each respective school, were exposed to sharp criticism, and the taboos which had existed within the ikebana world until that time were broken one by one. The new form of ikebana which was born out of this era is referred to as "avant-garde ikebana", and the revolution which made its creation possible is known as the "avant-garde ikebana

movement". Regardless of their strict definitions, both the works and the movement are extremely interesting.

From this period on, the kinds of materials used in flower arrangements underwent vigorous changes; the use of wisteria and withered branches in flower arrangements became widespread, and some artists went so far as to include "konbu" (kelp) in their works. A wide variety of materials used for vessels were introduced as well, such as stone, plaster of Paris, and iron, and these materials gradually found their way into the arrangements themselves; at some point, works constructed purely of carved wood or of iron came into existence as techniques for coloration. During just a short period of time, the types of materials incorporated into ikebana arrangements changed drastically. The image of ikebana as "flowers and plants placed in vessels" was shattered, and it was when the different styles of art broke free of their traditional restrictions that artists clearly became conscious of "form" as it applies to the art of flower arrangement. Although works that came out of this period are recognized to display avant-garde influences from the world of fine art, most of these effects can, of course, be attributed to the use of a certain kind of "material" and "form" which are unique to the art of ikebana. It would be safe to say that influences from the world of avant-garde fine art were sparsely scattered; however, if one were to focus on only a small number of ikebana artists, it would appear that this sparse influence was a result of the search for a unique form of ikebana.

Lost Articles from the Avant-Garde Era

During this period, several tides of change were in motion at once; one of these movements was led by two school grand masters known as Sofu Teshigahara and Ho'un Ohara. Sofu, in particular, was known to have pushed for reform in the ikebana community since before the war began, and to have continued serving as a source of unfailing leadership even in the avant-garde era. Artists other than the well-known school masters began to make names for themselves during this period as well. Bunpo Nakayama, who, like Sofu Teshigahara, was an

ikebana artist active in the reformation of ikebana since before the war, together with others like Toyotake Abe, a leading figure of the Ohara School, joined the movement for change within the community. This movement, which, according to past examples, should have been limited to only a few masters and leaders of the avant-garde era, instead gained a large number of followers in a very short amount of time.

Another tide of change evident during this era was the one generated by artists who were in their twenties at the time. Ko'en Shigemori, Hiroshi Teshigahara, Takatoshi Shimoda, and Masanobu Kudo joined forces to establish a group known as Shinseidai Shudan (lit. "New Generation Group"), which pursued "tema-sei" ikebana (theme ikebana)—a style that reflected left-wing political awareness; it was a trend that combined both political and stylistic experimentation. As a result of economical recovery and development in the wake of World War II, however, this style of flower arrangement was to be absorbed into the "zokei" (concentrating on form) avant-garde school, possibly because of the gradual decrease in political awareness.

Yet a third movement toward change was led by the artists of Hakutosha, a group presided over by Mirei Shigemori. Known for his research in the fields of "tei'en" (landscape gardening), "sado" (the tea ceremony), and "kado" (flower arrangement), and for his pioneering achievements in the criticism of ikebana, Mirei played an important role in both the classical study of ikebana and in its modernization as well. He was also a staunch critic of the existing "school system" that governed the flower arrangement community. I believe that, in considering the movement toward avant-garde ikebana (in the strictest sense of its definition), one cannot ignore the most important role served by Hakutosha under Mirei's direction; one of the Hakutosha artists, a man by the name of Yukio Nakagawa, had by this time already achieved a level of recognition equal to that of Sofu Teshigahara's.

As mentioned above, three noticeable movements for

reform had materialized within the ikebana community, although a certain level of mutual entanglement prevented all three from succeeding to create an independent foundation for themselves. As a result, the avant-garde movements were subsequently swept away in the current of broad-scale expansion. Recognizing that these movements had met with complete failure, adherents either seceded from the community, went into isolation, or returned to the fold of the "school system". The avant-garde movement did, however, leave behind one large trace of its existence before fading away: a form of ikebana known by the terms "avant-garde", "zokei", or "objet d'art". It is because of the existence of this style of ikebana—a form that had grown so apart from traditional flower arrangement that it was able to remain independent—which today challenges us to define what the real definition of "ikebana" is.

The "Identity" of Ikebana and Fine Art

Several years ago, the "Hyogen-toshite-no-Ikebana" ("Ikebana As a Form of Expression") Exhibition was held in Nagoya with the cooperation of various members of the ikebana community. This was an exhibition of contemporary ikebana that included artists who had gained recognition during the 1970s and 1980s, such as Kosen Otsubo, Shogo Kariyazaki, Jun Sakata, Kaho Donen, and Rihito Nagai. The main topic of discussion at the related symposium concerned the identity of ikebana, how it should be defined, and especially how its relationship with fine art should be perceived. There was a wide variety of works on exhibit, some incorporating plants and others not; nevertheless, the growing intimacy between contemporary ikebana and contemporary fine art was easily recognizable. The sentiment among many members of the art world who attended the event suggested that the use of the word "ikebana" in the title of the exhibition was unnecessary, and that without it the works would have been observed in the perspective of fine art. I will not go into the differences between avant-garde and contemporary styles in this article, but I will say that the style of ikebana which has survived since the avant-garde era has not been altered in any way.

I believe that it is necessary to reconsider one's perspective if one chooses to consider ikebana in terms of its relationship with fine art. Although the real "identity" of ikebana is an often elusive one, the same does not usually apply to the world of fine art. This disparity allows for the possibility of a form of art that is free of self-consciousness. The world of fine art is premised upon Western standards, thus forcing other forms of art, such as calligraphy, crafts, ikebana, and the art of the tea ceremony, to spin away from the core and develop independently; I believe that this phenomenon eventually made it possible for Japan's contemporary art world to become more centralized. On the negative side, however, I believe that this departure from Western art in effect caused the art world of Japan to lose a certain amount of vitality and robustness, and that it may be time to consider its restructure.

Let me use a work created by Otsubo Kosen using vegetables as an example. Here is a work that effectively betrays the orthodox beauty of ikebana; not only does it succeed in turning the image of orthodox ikebana completely around, it also conveys a unique sense of its relation to nature. As the years pass by, the relationship that links people, flowers, and plants together continues to grow weaker, and only vegetables have been able to remain on intimate terms with human beings. When people consume vegetables, this process transports the relationship between humans and plants into a daily dimension of coexistence, and the act of eating a vegetable is basically a manifestation of physiological desires to which pleasure and fear become inherent. It is this intimacy, and occasional tension, that exists between humans and nature which is what Otsubo aims for, and as a result, the observer senses the energy of ikebana that emanates from the work.

The use of materials to give not only form, but an impression of life to the work lends a sense of beauty to other forms of art as well. Not a simple beauty, like that of a flower, but a beauty created by the harmony found in the coexistence between human beings and living plants. We must reexamine the traditional culture of

Japan to confirm whether or not the ability to coexist with, to feel, and to understand living plants exists. If so, then the continued nurturing of this ability will be necessary in order to provide the key to unlock future possibilities.

Beyond the "System"

A scene from one of Soseki Natsume's novels entitled "Kusa-makura" ("The Wayfarer") has the main character of the story, a painter, sprawled outside before a Japanese quince bush, thinking back on his childhood years. He recalls the pleasant time he spent lining up his writing brushes on a rack he had built himself using a curiously shaped quince branch to which the flowers and leaves were still attached. He looks at the quince bush as he reminisces, writing poems and thinking to himself, "The more I gaze upon this bush, the further away my mind seems to travel. Such a pleasant feeling—it gives me poetic inspiration." Pleased with the results of his poetry, the artist exclaims, "The feeling it gave me to lie down and gaze up at the quince, forgetting all about the world around me, came out well in my verses!"

I am not sure to what extent the above scene, taken from this Soseki-esque (=unyielding) journey, is actually based on Soseki's own personal experiences. According to one of his personal friends, the literary scholar Issote Nishikawa, the Japanese quince of which Natsume speaks in his story does not grow in the wild, and,

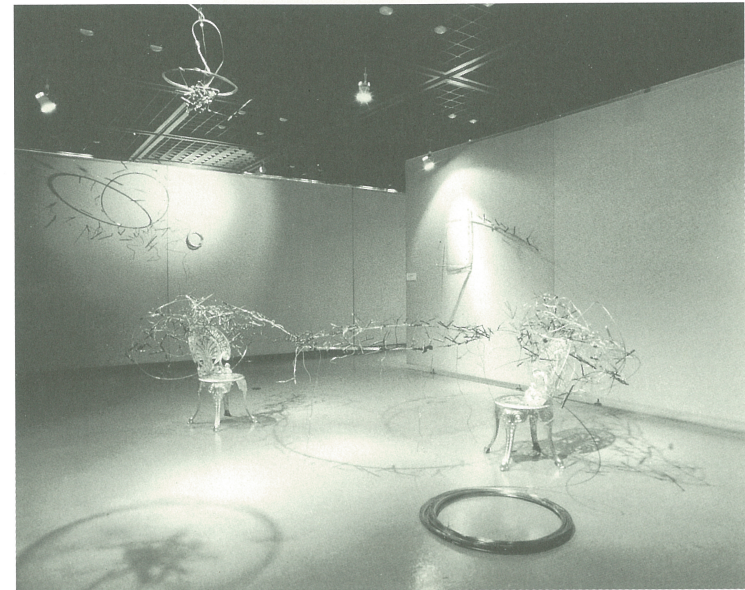
therefore, the story should be considered fiction. Nevertheless, the scene is centered around the Japanese quince bush, the main character is introduced, childhood memories of playing with flowers are recalled, and poetic inspiration is given; like a magnetic field, a wonderful and spiritual world is born from the interaction between these components.

I would like to accept the description contained within this single scene as a suitable-albeit forced-account of the Japanese quince. I cannot help but to believe that Natsume's description, while not necessarily resembling the art of ikebana itself, still possesses many of the qualities that ikebana stands for. If there really does exist a spiritual world which surpasses the boundaries of the ikebana "system", and which resounds in the sphere of literature, art, and the human mind, I wish to experience it. In such a world, I should think debates over identity are irrelevant.

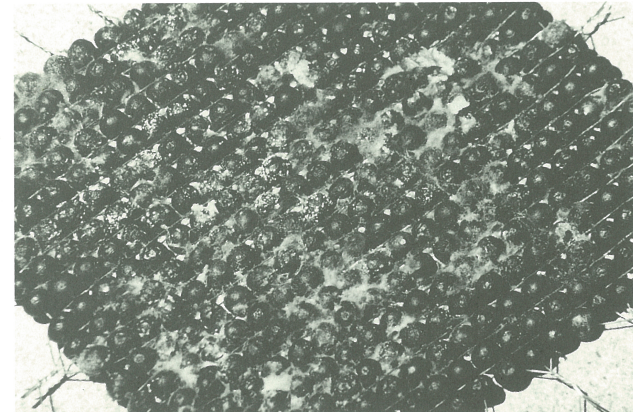
Translator: Kevin L. Schauer

Takashi Mizutani (Fine Arts Critic)

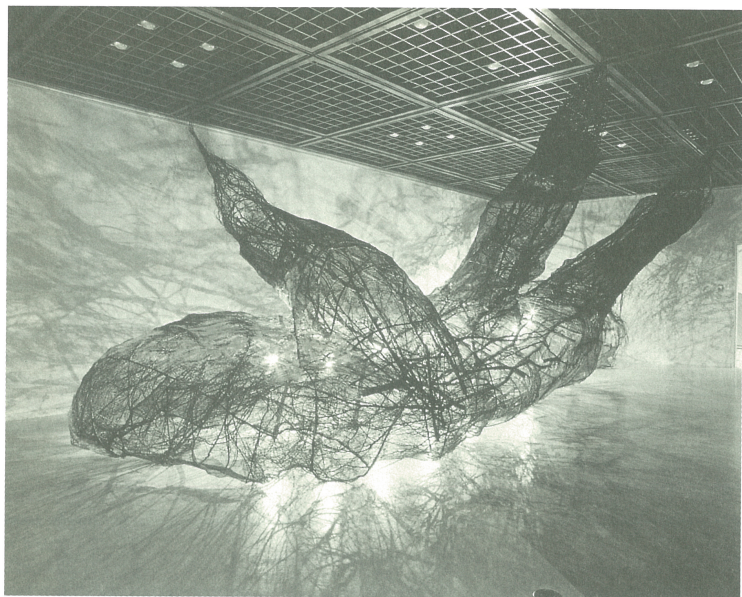
Born in Inuyama City, Aichi Prefecture, in 1947. Graduated Doshisha University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, and went on to serve as assistant professor at Nagoya College of Creative Art & Design. His criticisms in the past have focused mainly on contemporary fine art. Recently, however, he has begun to include ikebana as well, and currently submits articles for the "Avant-Garde Ikebana Essay" corner, which appears regularly in the Nihon Josei Shinbun (lit. "Japanese Women's Newspaper"). He also participates in numerous exhibitions, including the "Tozanso Gendai Bijutsu-ten" (Tozanso Modern Art Exhibition) and the "Hyogen-toshite-no-Ikebana-ten" (Ikebana As a Form of Expression).



長井理一 無題/Rihito Nagai Untitled
針金、フォーク、ガラス、枝、他、1994、「表現としてのいけばな」展出品作



道念華邦 無題/Kaho Donen Untitled いいぎりの実、他、1994、「表現としてのいけばな」展出品作



日向洋一 植物に語らせるもの / Youichi Hinata ケヤキ, 寒冷紗, 電球, 1994. 「表現としてのいけばな」 展出品作



◀ 假屋崎省吾 / Shogo Kariyazaki LEAF-1994
 マグノリア, リーフ, 竹ひご, 鉄オブジェ, 1994.
 「表現としてのいけばな」 展出品作

大坪光泉 Kosen Ohtsubo ▶
 おしよせる白菜 / Waves of Chinese cabbage,
 ハクサイ, アクリル板 / Chinese cabbage, Acrylic board,
 180×100×5, 1992.



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Kosen Ohtsubo, Honorable Master and Teacher of Ryusei-Ha
 “Anti-Artist-in-Residence”

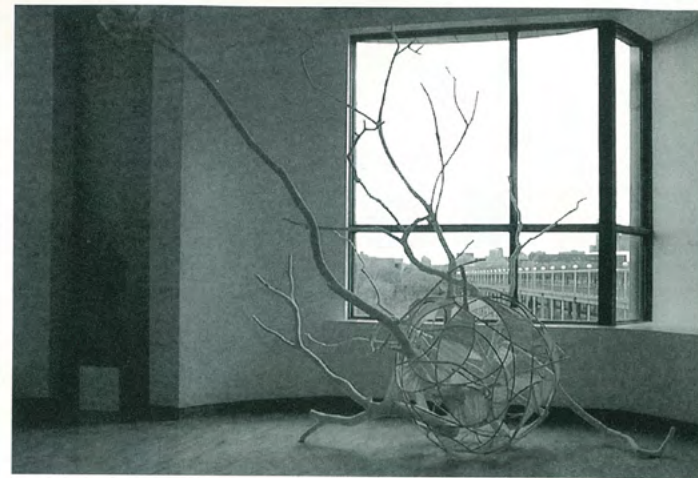
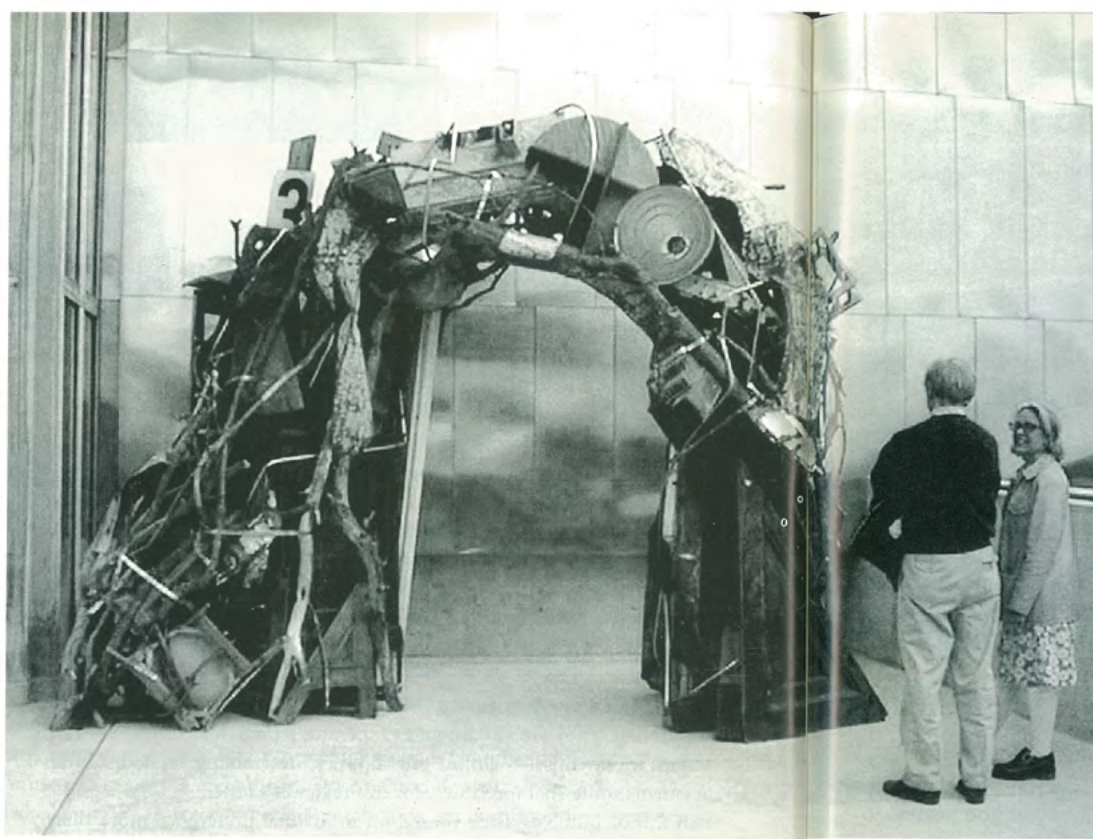
The Weisman Art Museum, May 5 through June 2, 1997



Kosen Ohtsubo

It's deconstructionist ikebana, ikebana as improvisational jazz, ikebana reeking of the past, ikebana stripped down of emotions, ikebana as junk. That's how one might describe the ikebana sculpture that Weisman Art Museum artist-in-residence Kosen Ohtsubo has created for the museum.

For his revolutionary breed of sculpture, Mr. Ohtsubo uses improvisational elements as much as possible to give it what he calls “a looser feel.” To achieve this effect he often listens to American jazz to massage his brain and give him a creative jolt. This method must work, for Mr. Ohtsubo goes far beyond the traditional realm of flower arrangements. Indeed, most ikebana artists, Mr. Ohtsubo included, would argue that ikebana is not “flower arrangement” as much as a highly cultured style of sculpture that uses “ready-made” materials like flowers as a medium. And true to the tradition,



For his exhibition, Ohtsubo has received a lot of help from the community. While he designed and oversaw the installation of the art works, they were executed by local ikebana artists, as well as students and staff of the University of Minnesota. All the steel iron frames used in his work were built by students in the art school. Some of the ikebana teachers who helped were Nan Gianoli of Hudson, a teacher of the Sogetsu School, and Mary Rivett of Lakeland, a Sogetsu student.

Ohtsubo uses ready-made materials — only, they don't come from flower shops but from swamps or junk yards.

One of his works, titled “Rock-'n'Roll Culture Gate of Minnesota,” lies beyond the confines of the museum where passersby can have an unwitting “artistic experience.” The 12-foot archway looks like a haphazard collection of bits and pieces of tree branches, old chairs, tables, fluorescent light fixtures, and parts of an ancient stove, all of which have been nailed, bound, taped and screwed together. The junk came from All State Salvage in St. Paul. The tree branches were collected in Minnetonka.

To the uninitiated, it may look like a heap of junk woven around a metal frame. But if the piece looks

random, Mr. Ohtsubo's ideas hardly are. There is a “message” to his “madness,” if you will. It harkens back to the early 1900s Dada Art of Marchel

Duchamp, who started using objects manufactured and discarded in various arrangements to make both a political statement, as well as explore the unique forms derived from discarded junk. Dada is seen as the forerunner of Pop art, of which Andy Warhol's painting of a can of

Coca Cola is the most memorable.

Mr. Ohtsubo likes to use other people's castaways because through them he feels a certain link to the former owners. Each piece of junk recalls days of its functionality, “the traces of its people in the past,” as Mr. Ohtsubo says. “In the traces are a sense of sorrow. Always this sense of sorrow, of emotion, is

On May 22, Mr. Ohtsubo presented a lecture as part of the artist/critic series entitled “What About Beauty?”



attached. It's like a collaboration between me and the people in the past age. And I use material that has once been used to go beyond my personality."

In contrast, Mr. Ohtsubo tries to strip his organic materials of emotions. For instance, in a piece called "Memories of Distant Trees of Minnetonka" he wraps tree branches with gauze. The emotions, he explains, are attached to the "skin" of the trees, and by covering them up, he erases vestigial traces of such meaning. The sprawling work takes up half the space within the Weisman's Doly Fitterman Gallery. All the materials he used for this piece are native to Minnesota, and were created with branches of fallen trees from a swamp in Minnetonka. It is an eerie, almost ghostlike work, remotely reminiscent of free-style ikebana.

Mr. Ohtsubo is the Honorable Master Teacher of Ruysen-Ha School of Ikebana. He is best known in Japan for his use of vegetables in exhibitions — after they have been left to decompose for a few days. He especially enjoys the rotten smell of his

radish. He's thumbing his nose at the traditional, rigidly hierarchal world of ikebana, which he sees as highbrow, elitist and feudalistic.

"There are not many people who can feel the delicate shade of taste," Mr. Ohtsubo commented to

On Mother's Day, Mr. Ohtsubo created a display that was billed as a Mother's Day tribute, but Mr. Ohtsubo said that it was not exactly about mothers. "It is a big universe and motherhood is the universe itself," he said.

Takashi Mizutani, an assistant professor of Nagoya Junior College of Art and Design. "Can those people who cannot feel it never understand ikebana or art? It should not be that way . . . There should be some kind of ikebana which can attract those people."

Mr. Ohtsubo is not alone in his sentiments. He is part of a group of Japanese ikebana artists

who is exploring the relationships between humanity and plants, striving to discover what aspects of humanity can be communicated through ikebana principles and methods.

Through his work, the Honorable Master Mr. Ohtsubo is attempting to deconstruct, to redefine and reconstruct the institution of ikebana — while engaging us in ways that are new, surprising, refreshing — or rotten, as the case may be.

草月70

創流70周年 SOGETSU 70th ANNIVERSARY



SOGETSU SCHOOL

Hiroshi Teshigahara

Iemoto/President

Akane Teshigahara

Vice President

Sogetsu School: 2-21, Akasaka 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107, Japan
Please phone 03-3408-1151 for further information.

domus

Architettura Design Arte Comunicazione Architecture Design Art Communication

Giugno June 1997 **794** Lire 15.000

I WALK IN

I SEE YOU

I WATCH YOU

I SCAN YOU

I WAIT FOR YOU

domus 1997.6

Hiroshi Nakao

Testo di Hiroshi Nakao
 Fotografie di Nacása & Partners inc.

Casa con studio per un artista dell'ikebana, Tokorozawa, Giappone

Progetto: Hiroshi Nakao
 Architetto associato: Hiroko Serizawa
 Impresa di costruzione: Manzzo Koumusho

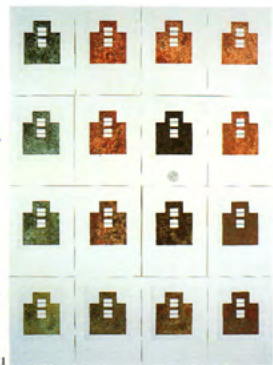
Text by Hiroshi Nakao
 Photographs by Nacása & Partners inc.

House with studio for an Ikebana artist, Tokorozawa, Japan

Project: Hiroshi Nakao
 Associate architect: Hiroko Serizawa
 General contractor: Manzzo Koumusho

Il programma di Hiroshi Nakao è radicale dal punto di vista estetico e pieno di fascino: i suoi oggetti e le sue case sono ambienti scultorei o sculture abitabili. Nakao introduce nell'architettura un radicalismo completamente nuovo per la sua coerenza artistica. I suoi oggetti sono messaggi strani da un altro mondo, con cui Nakao ci parla del "lato oscuro" della trascendenza cosmologica. In quanto provocazione estrema, la sua architettura è arte pura, che colpisce sul piano corporeo e sensoriale. L'oggetto architettonico diventa un feticcio, diventa forte, misterioso, arcano. Raramente finora in architettura è stata formulata e realizzata un'ossessione così ermetica.

Hiroshi Nakao's programme is aesthetically radical and fascinating. His objects and houses are sculptural spaces and sculptures to be lived in. Nakao brings artistic rationale into architecture with an entirely new radicality. Hermetic objects, strange messages from another world, Nakao portrays the "dark side" of cosmological transcendence. An extreme challenge, his architecture is pure art; it is physical and sensuously exciting. The architectural object has become a fetish - strong, mysterious, cryptic. Seldom before has such an intense obsession been formulated in architectural terms and built.



- 1 Una serie di litografie eseguite dall'artista riproduce i cambiamenti cromatici dei prospetti.
- 2 Il fronte sud. L'esterno è rivestito da lamine di acciaio che, per effetto degli agenti atmosferici, cambiano colore variando dal nero al rosso.
- 3 La casa occupa un lotto posizionato in modo obliquo rispetto alla ferrovia.

- 1 A series of lithographs by the artist reproduces the colour changes on the elevations.
- 2 South elevation. The exterior is clad in steel laminas that vary in colour from black to red due to the effects of weather conditions in the course of time.
- 3 The house occupies a site set obliquely to the railway.



Profonde narici che annusano l'odore del mondo. (Jean Cassou)

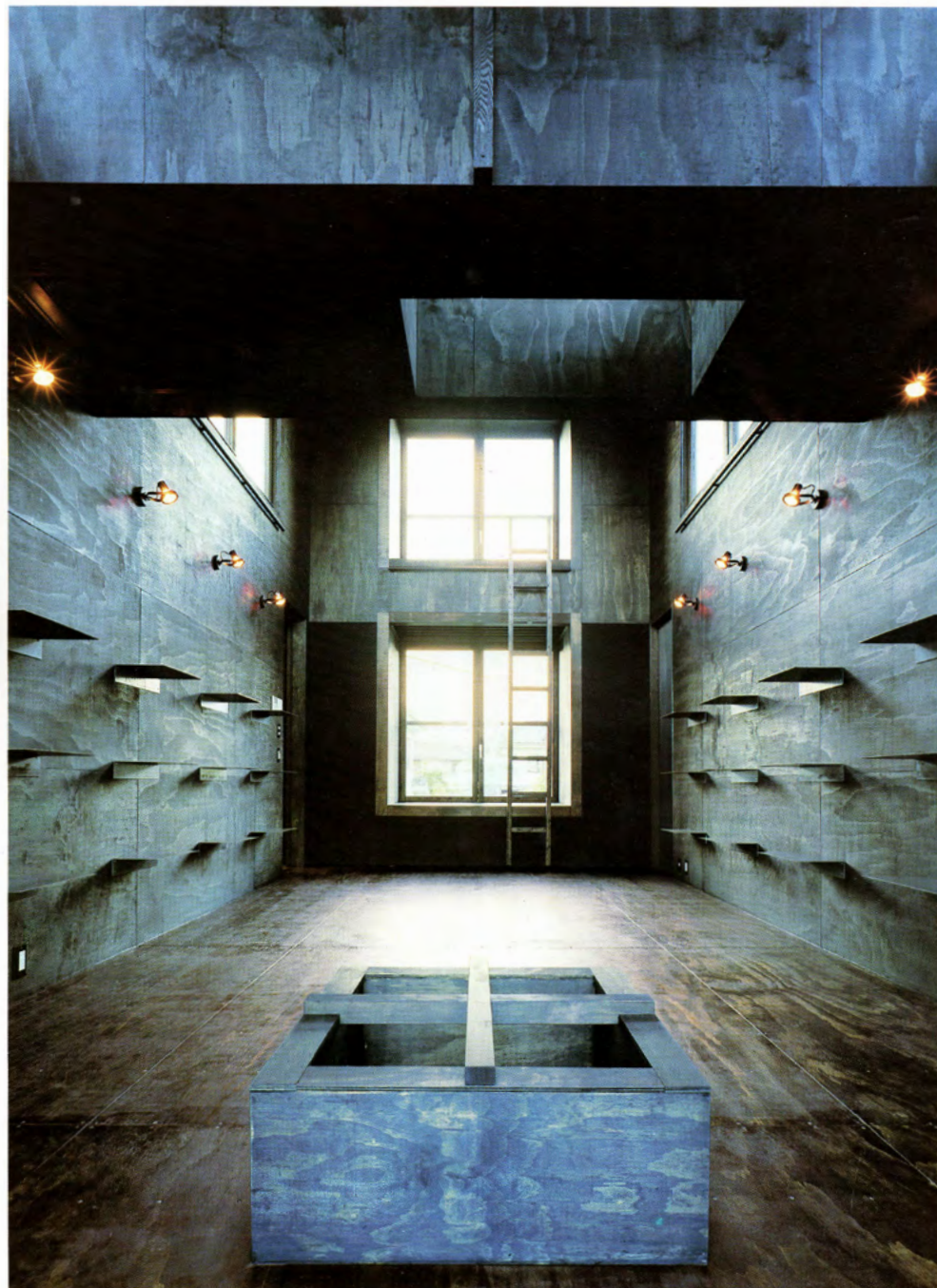
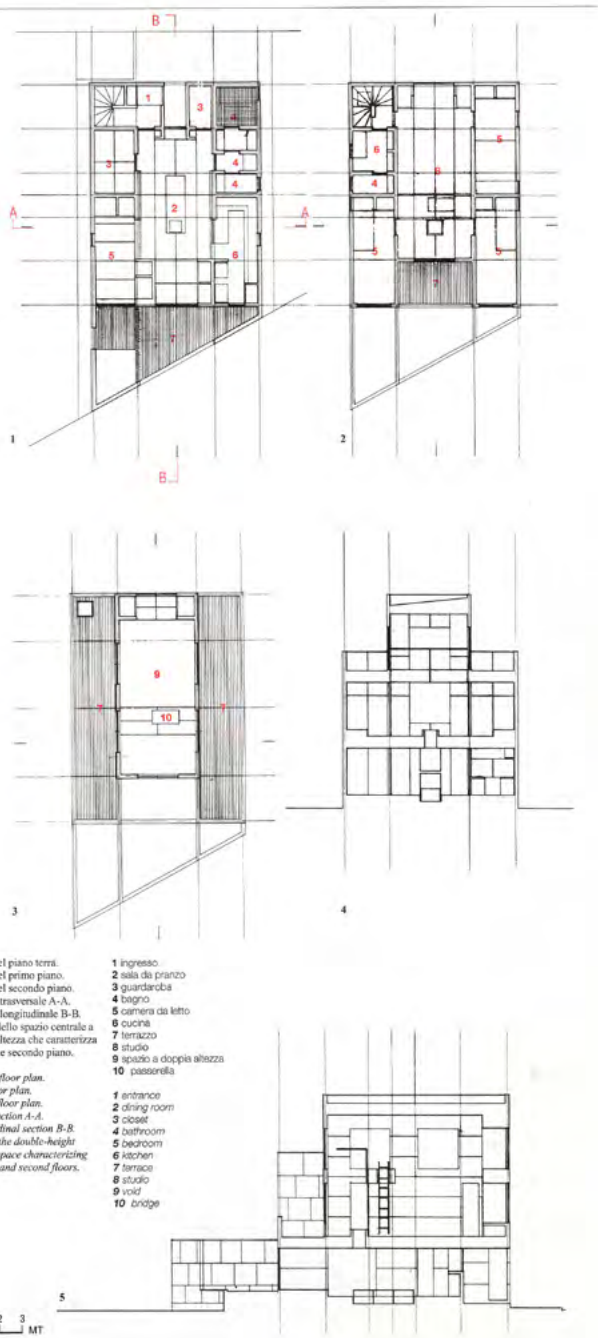
Una casa è una 'tomba', è un esterno inserito nel mondo, trasformato in interno e chiuso. In poche parole è una tomba alla rovescia. I muri esterni sono avvolti nell'acciaio che cambia colore in modo spettacolare, dal nero al rosso, secondo la profondità dell'erosione. Poi, con la medesima finezza, torna lentamente al nero. Una casa sta nelle pieghe dei corsi e ricorsi del nero. Tutto lo spazio interno è a macchie di nero. Dall'immagine di diaframma che racchiude il mondo il nero si ritrae temporaneamente e fa tacere ogni sostanza. E noi non facciamo che sederci e osservare. Aspettiamo ciò che ne aspira la memoria profonda e lo fa risuonare come un tuono: la luce. Un ciclo infinito di dissolvenze mette in rilievo il profilo della materia (la carne) o lo confonde, rinnovandolo a ogni transizione. Una casa organizza la dinamica della memoria e dell'oblio. Lo spazio, al centro, è rilevato o compresso. È l'emergere di una profondità orizzontale e verticale. In esso i nostri corpi che galleggiano e si restringono afferrano una nuova gravità e nuovi ritmi. Una casa organizza il movimento dello stare eretti o sdraiati. Memoria-oblio, eretti-sdraiati. Una casa, in poche parole, è una tomba che richiama alla mente la vita. È una scatola nera che cerca di suscitare la vita.

Creare vuoti Non so bene quando sia cominciato. È una tendenza recente oppure si è sviluppata nel corso di un lungo periodo? È una caratteristica specifica della nostra "età dell'immagine" oppure è nata in epoca barocca, quando lo spazio urbano cominciò a configurarsi in termini di facciate continue, che ne esprimevano l'idea di potere? In ogni modo oggi pare in atto una corsa a ridurre qualunque fenomeno a forme bidimensionali, planari. Alla fine del Settecento E.A. Abbott scrisse il romanzo scientifico *Flatlandia*. Il mondo che vi è descritto non possiede la dimensione verticale; tutto è piatto, e quindi ogni veduta è composta esclusivamente da linee rette. La luce si distribuisce senza distinzioni di tempo e di spazio. Forse il mondo piatto di questa acuta invenzione letteraria si è realizzato appieno solo ora, nella nostra epoca. In ogni fenomeno l'occhio non ha alternativa allo scorrere con continuità sulle superfici piane di un anello di Möbius che non ha ondulazioni, non ha interno e non ha esterno.

Eppure oggi si delinea visibilmente anche una contro-tendenza. Come si potrà mai impedire all'architettura di cadere nell'ossessione avanguardistica costretta a girare, cambiando di segno, intorno alla superficie dell'anello, o nella reazione che cerca di ritornare a una situazione di stabilità tagliando l'anello al centro? Dovrebbe essere possibile adottare qualcosa di simile all'atteggiamento operativo di Mies, nel senso in cui, all'epoca di massima voga del modernismo, rifiutò sia di celebrare sia di rifiutare la "nuova era" perché si trattava "di un pardo dato di fatto, che in quanto tale non si accompagna ad alcun giudizio di valore essenziale".

Un'altra strategia, magari provvisoria, potrebbe consistere nell'applicare una pressione a specifici punti della superficie del mondo. Soluzione architettonica, implicherebbe in questi punti la creazione di un vuoto. In vista di questo obiettivo troverebbe applicazione la profonda originalità tipica dell'architettura, consistente nel trasformare esterni in interni. Una similitudine suggestiva potrebbe essere il gesto di un bambino che, in un supermercato, girasse attorno alle pile di frutta e di pane punzecchiando i prodotti con un dito. Sarebbe affascinante vedere i risultati di questo tipo di impulsi parzialmente fisiologici: essere presente nel supermercato proprio nel momento di sensualità in cui il senso della vista si lascia indietro l'immagine precedente per passare alla successiva. Questa discrepanza potrebbe essere registrata dai suoni erotici e dai contatti tattili che si verificano quando il dito preme sulla superficie dell'alimento. La luce, che rende tutto uniforme, quando l'architettura crea dei vuoti svanisce lentamente nel profondo.

Stendere una mano nel mondo significa contemporaneità.





1, 2 Vedute della sala da pranzo situata al piano terra.
3 Scorcio della passerella da cui si accede alle terrazze esterne; si può salire al secondo piano solo attraverso una scala a pioli rimovibile.

1, 2 Views of the dining room situated on the ground floor.
3 Perspective view of the walkway affording access to the external terraces; the second floor can be reached only by a removable rung staircase.

Scenting the world odor deep nostrils (Jean Cassou)

A house is a 'grave'. It is an outside injected into the world, turned indoors and closed. In short, it is a grave in reverse. Its outer walls are wrapped in steel which changes color dramatically, from black to red, as erosion sets in. Then ever so subtly, it returns slowly to black. A house is engulfed in the occurrence and recurrence of black. All interior space is stained with black. From a membrane image sealing in the world, black temporarily retreats and silences all substance. And we just sit and wait. We wait for that which sucks up its deep memory and makes it rumble: light.

A ceaseless cycle of fade-ins and fade-outs highlights the contours of matter (flesh) or muddies them, renovating at each passing. A house organizes the dynamic of memory and oblivion. Space, in its center, is either raised or compressed. It is the emergence of both vertical and horizontal depth. In it, our floating and shrinking bodies grasp a new gravity and rhythm. A house arranges the movement of standing and lying.



Memory – Oblivion, Standing – Lying. A house, in short, is a grave. It is a grave that calls to mind, life. It is a black box that seeks to arouse life.

Creating hollows I am not sure when it actually started. Is it a recent trend, or has it been gradually developing over a long period of time? Is it a special feature of our "age of imagery", or did it arise in the Baroque period when urban space began to be configured in terms of continuous facades expressing its idea of power? At any rate, now there seems to be a rush to reduce all sorts of phenomena to two-dimensional, planar forms. At the end of the nineteenth century E.A. Abbott wrote his scientific fantasy novel *Flatland*. The world described therein does not possess the vertical dimension; everything is flat, and consequently all views are composed exclusively of straight lines. Here light is distributed uniformly irrespective of time and place. It may be that the flat world of this ingenious fiction, which had considerable influence on avant-garde artists at the beginning of the twentieth century, has

only really come into its own now in our time. At all events, one's eye no alternative but to slide smoothly along the flat surfaces of the curious ring of the Möbius-strip which has no undulations, and no inside and outside.

Not unconditionally perhaps, but there is a distinct counter tendency emerging now too. How on earth can architecture be prevented from falling into the avant-garde obsession which must continue to run around the surface of the loop, changing the mark, and reaction which tries to return to a stable form by cutting the center of the ring.

It should be possible to adopt something like the active stance of Mies in the sense in which, during the heyday of modernism, he refused to either affirm or reject the "new age" because it was "a simple established fact, which therefore is not accompanied by any essential value judgments." Another approach, provisional perhaps, could be to apply pressure to specific points on the surface of our world. An architectural solutions, it

would involve creating hollows at these points. That profound originality peculiar to architecture of transforming exteriors into interiors would be deployed to this end. A suggestive simile might be the activity of a child going around the piles of fruit and bread products in a supermarket and poking them with his finger. It would be fascinating to see the results of these kinds of purely physiological drives: to be present in the supermarket precisely at the sensual moment when the visual sense leaves behind the previous image, passing onto the next one. This discrepancy would be registered by the erotic sounds and tactile contacts occurring when the finger presses into the surfaces of the food. The light which uniformizes everything fades slowly into the depths when architecture creates hollows.

Extending a hand out into the world is simultaneously an extending of that hand into the inside. (Franz Kafka)

Project takes learning online

Chanyaporn Chanjaraen
For The Daily

One of Christina Jacobson's class assignments requires the College of Liberal Arts sophomore to find the most effective way to get in touch with her state representative: e-mail or snail mail.

From what she has learned in her American Government and Politics class, e-mail works best.

Jacobson's class is participating in the Internet Learning Alternative Project. The project, run by the University's Digital Media Center, is an example of how the University is integrating the Internet into the teaching-learning process.

The University aims for all 9,000 courses the school offers to have their own Web page by the year 2001, said Shih-Pau Yen, director of Academic & Distributed Computer Services. The office, together with the University Libraries, helps staff and supports the Digital Media Center.

Since winter quarter, three courses at the University have been a part of the Internet Learning Alternatives Project. They are: Introduction to World History, American Government and Politics and Beginning Russian.

Two of the classes have about 230 students enrolled, while the Russian class has only 15 students at the Twin Cities campus and five more at the Morris campus.

Art in progress



Photo/John Lovretta

Weisman artist-in-residence Kosen Ohtsubo, along with a group of volunteers, works on Monday afternoon on one of three installation pieces for the Weisman Art Museum. The artwork is the ninth in a series titled "What About Beauty?" and will be completed for viewing on Thursday evening.

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Star Tribune Photo by David Brewster

Art blooms at Weisman

Japanese master flower arranger Kosen Ohtsubo created a display Sunday at the University of Minnesota's Weisman Art Museum. It was billed as a Mother's Day tribute, but Ohtsubo, Weisman artist in residence for the month of May, said the piece was not exactly about mothers. "It is a big universal," he said, "and motherhood is the universe itself." Ohtsubo prefers to use natural elements in his arrangements. He said he was looking for some Minnesota vegetables to use in a display, "but in May, it's hopeless." He plans to create two or three large displays at the museum this month. He said he might use a lot of dead branches.

Japanese art form finds beauty in plants

Joe Carlson



Weisman Art Museum artist-in-residence Kosen Ohtsubo is an avant-garde Ikebana artist who goes beyond the traditional realm of flower arrangements. Ohtsubo used materials native to Minnesota to create his work displayed in the Weisman:

"Memories of Distant Trees of Minnetonka."

The piece was created with branches of fallen trees from a swamp in Minnetonka.

By wrapping dead tree limbs in white gauze, Japanese Ikebana sculptor Kosen Ohtsubo isolates the essential organic forms of the branches and calls attention to their earthly origins in the process.

"Natural branches are emotional because they have skin," Ohtsubo said. "I want to erase the emotion from the branches ... and this gauze is like an eraser."

This sculpture, titled "Memories of Distant Trees of Minnetonka," is now on display along with three others in the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum until June 2.

Ohtsubo is in town both to exhibit his work at the museum and to give a lecture about the relationship between Ikebana sculpture and natural beauty.

The lecture, which will take place at 7 p.m. Thursday in room 375 of the Science Classroom Building, is the ninth part of an ongoing lecture series called "What About Beauty?" sponsored by the McKnight Arts and Humanities Endowment and the University.

Ikebana is a style of sculpture that uses living, "ready-made" materials like flowers as a medium, Ohtsubo said. The form originated in Japan about 500 years ago. But Ohtsubo creates a revolutionary breed of Ikebana sculpture, using materials that are not only dead, but often were never living in the first place. Even the places that he collects potential sculpture materials from are unorthodox.

"We went to salvage yards," said Mary Kalish, curatorial assistant for the museum who accompanied Ohtsubo in the gathering of

materials. "He liked the idea that things that people have thrown away still have value."

All of the materials in the three exhibits at the Weisman are indigenous to Minnesota. Pieces of junk, like old furniture and fluorescent light holders, were collected from All State Salvage in St. Paul. His other major material, tree branches, was collected in Minnetonka.

He explained that his art is part of a second wave of avant-garde Ikebana concerned with the environmental crisis facing the world today.

"Twenty years ago, one flower was beautiful in itself," Ohtsubo said. "But now we have to think of the earth at the same time."

Ohtsubo said that although he begins sculpting with a rough idea of what he wants to create, his vision rarely matches the way the sculpture turns out.

In fact, he said he uses improvisational elements in his work as much as possible to give them a looser feel. He sometimes listens to American free jazz to spark his creative energy.

"Sometimes my mind grows

stiff," Ohtsubo said, "too stiff to find a good idea. The jazz music gives me a massage on my mind."

Ohtsubo has not been working in solitude while in Minnesota. Not only has he been giving lectures and demonstrations in the art school, but he has also been receiving help from student volunteers in constructing the pieces in the Weisman.

For example, every piece that Ohtsubo has done here uses a steel or iron frame. Those frames were built by students in the art school.

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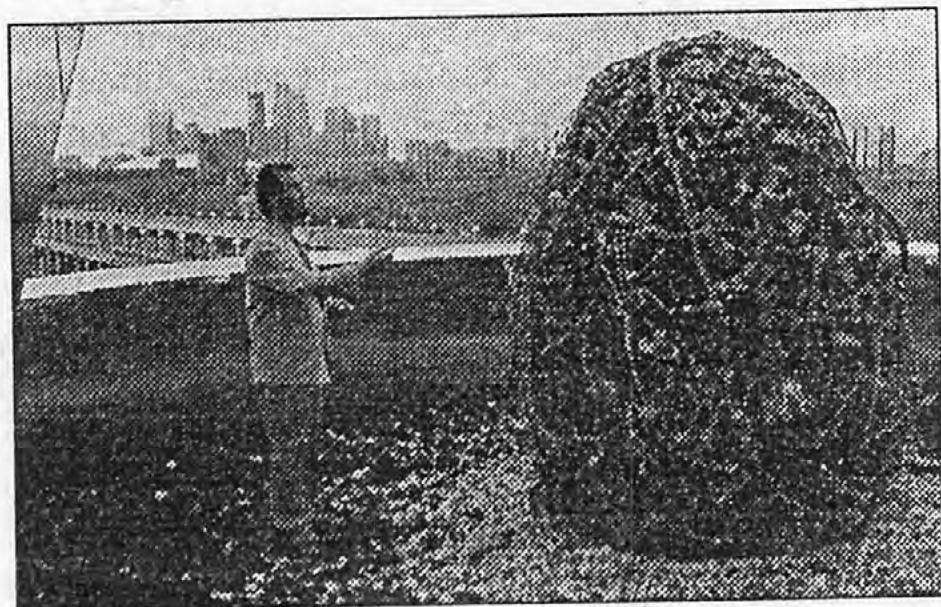
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mount these in the back of the gallery. Free. 10
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Contemporary Art, 400 First Ave. N., Mpls.;
344-1700. (Schmitt) **THROUGH JULY 5**

KOSEN OHTSUBO Ohtsubo groups dead wood
and junkyard remains in the beautiful shapes of
ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging,
and this apparent paradox stresses his concern for
an environment in crisis. After a month scav-
enging Minnesota, he has deployed peeling metal
sheets and an old fluorescent light holder as a
sacred gate; he has also made huge tree limbs
erupt from steel skeletons of globes, and wrapped
them in white gauze—sinuous forms that have
haunting similarities to medical amputations.

街を一望する美術館
テラスに巨大リニガを作り花を捧げる



I might still go for orchids as a party decoration,
but Ohtsubo's creations do provoke a new look
upon natural forms. Free (also an ikebana work-
shop, \$20, Wednesday, 5/28, 7 p.m.). Weisman
Art Museum, 333 E. River Rd., Mpls; 625-9494.
(Dell'Orto) **THROUGH END OF JUNE**

ART IN SPACE: THE SEQUEL Three Jerome Art
Commission pieces turn the normally cheery
Intermedia Arts into a dungeon of darkness.
Rollin Marquette's "Closet" is an obsessive exper-
iment gone wrong: Meticulously arranged, shat-

ハフフルなイバサイターナショナルおぼこんかん手伝う。 手前右の人は100kgぐらい

Marquardt, Taylor Miller, and Robert Olson, all of Stillwater.



Submitted photo

Art knows no boundaries

Two St. Croix Valley women work with Kozen Ohtsubo on one of three designs being installed at the Weisman Museum of the University of Minnesota. From left, Nan Gianoli of Hudson, a teacher of the Sogetsu School, Mary Rivett of Lakeland, a Sogetsu student and Ohtsubo, an honorable master teacher at the Ryusei Ikebana Center in Tokyo are pictured. Ohtsubo is the current "Artist in Residence" at the Weisman. He designed and is overseeing installation of the works, which are being executed by local Ikebana artists, and students and staff of the U of M. Ikebana is the ancient Japanese art which utilizes living materials to create both traditional and contemporary "flower arrangements." The public is invited to meet Ohtsubo on Thursday, May 22 at the Weisman, when he will present a lecture as part of the artist/critic series entitled "What About Beauty?" There will be an opening reception from 5-7 p.m., also open to the public.

Bayport's Hesley Jensen represented at convention

Hesley Jensen Unit 491 American Legion Auxiliary of Bayport was represented by delegates Helen Halberg, Blanche Coppa and Margaret Lonergan at the Third District Convention held in Chaska May 16-18. Donna Beck, District President, Rosemount, presided. Thirty-five units were represented by 135 members.

Past District Presidents and Commanders Banquet was held Friday evening, and Saturday evening the newly elected officers were installed by Blanche Coppa: District President, Laila Schroeder, Shakopee; First

deafening roar. The son of a Stillwater couple and his maintenance team peak into a last minute frenzy, checking fluids and fuel levels, and double and triple-checking the preflight checklist.

As the helicopter's drone begins to fade, so does the tension on Air Force Senior Airman Curtis E. Miller's face. In this fast-paced, hectic and often secret world of special operations, events and military actions half a world away can be shaped by his actions.

Miller, 22, son of Thomas E. and Vicki H. Miller of 10911 69th St. N., Stillwater, is a helicopter maintenance technician with the 16th Helicopter Generation Squadron and 55th Aircraft Maintenance Unit tasked with the job of keeping Air Force Special Operations Command's aircraft ready to fly anywhere in the world at a moment's notice.

Special Operation Command's multifaceted mission involves supporting major U.S. military operations where rapid and highly mobile tactics are required to assist ground, air and naval forces in meeting objectives in hostile situations such as Operation Just Cause in Panama, and Desert Storm, as well as current U.S. operations in Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Deploying with their aircrew on many of the missions, Miller said his maintenance and repair efforts are even more critical because every helicopter has to be available to support the frequently intense flight schedules.

"My present duties are as an MH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter crew chief. Although I only work on this aircraft here, I'm also trained to work on other helicopters such as the MH-53J Pave Low, H-1 Huey and the H-3 Jolly Green Giant. My duties include inspecting aircraft systems, maintaining the airframe's systems, servicing and providing aircraft maintenance at a temporary duty location," said Miller, a 1992 Stillwater Senior High School graduate.

Increased involvement in world conflicts and downsizing of the U.S. military have contributed to special



JOE ROSSI/PIONEER PRESS

WITH MOTHERS IN MIND

ABOVE: Participants in the 9-11 age bracket take off in the Komen kids 400 meter fun run, held Sunday morning at Southdale in Edina. The race was part of the 5th annual Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure/Twin Cities, which included a 5K women's wheel/race, a 5K men's wheel/race, a 5K co-ed walk, a 1-mile family walk and the Komen kids fun run. More than 13,500 people were expected to participate in the event, the mission of which was to help eliminate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease by advancing research, education, screening and treatment. Since its beginning, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation has raised more than \$65 million and is the largest private fundraising organization in the United States dedicated solely to breast cancer.

RIGHT: Japanese Ikebana master Kosen Ohtsubo, serving as artist in residence in May at the Welsman Art Museum at the University of Minnesota, demonstrates the ancient art of Japanese flower arranging Sunday at the museum for Mother's Day.



BUZZ MAGNUSON/PIONEER PRESS

Pampered pooch prefers pageants with prestige



■ **Local Weimaraner sets record for show wins**

record books.

In the 18 months she's been on the show circuit, Fergie has earned 27 all breed best-in-show awards, exceeding the last national record of 16. In April she won the

East Side park to be rededicated in name of slain police officer

■ **James Sackett died in ambush in 1970**

WAYNE WANGSTAD STAFF WRITER

St. Paul police will join Mayor Norm Coleman and other officials today in rededicating an East Side park in honor of James Sackett, a young police officer who was slain after

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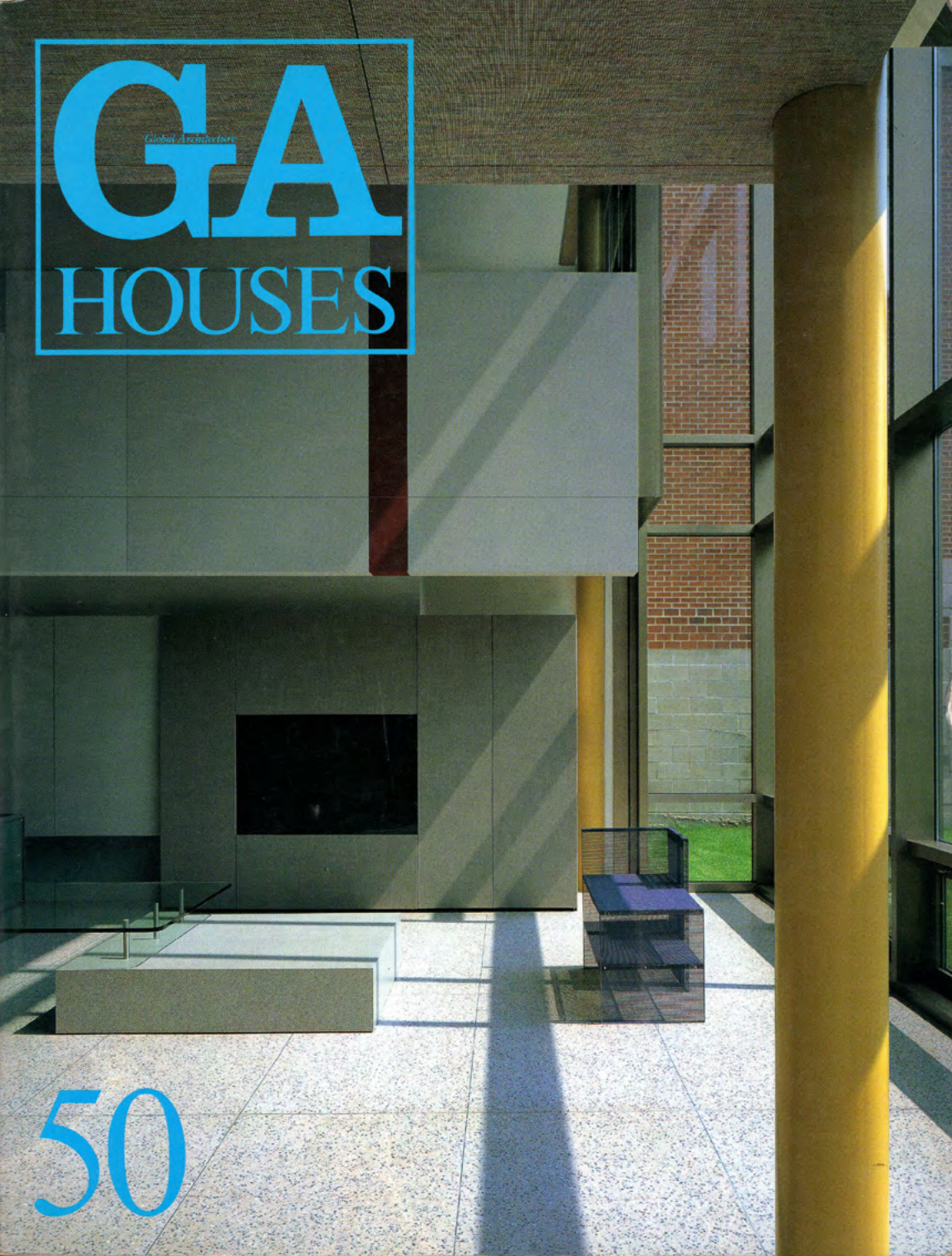
■ **Veterar**

BRIAN BONNEI

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GA Houses (Japanese) 1996.10.21



Studio and bridge connecting two terraces



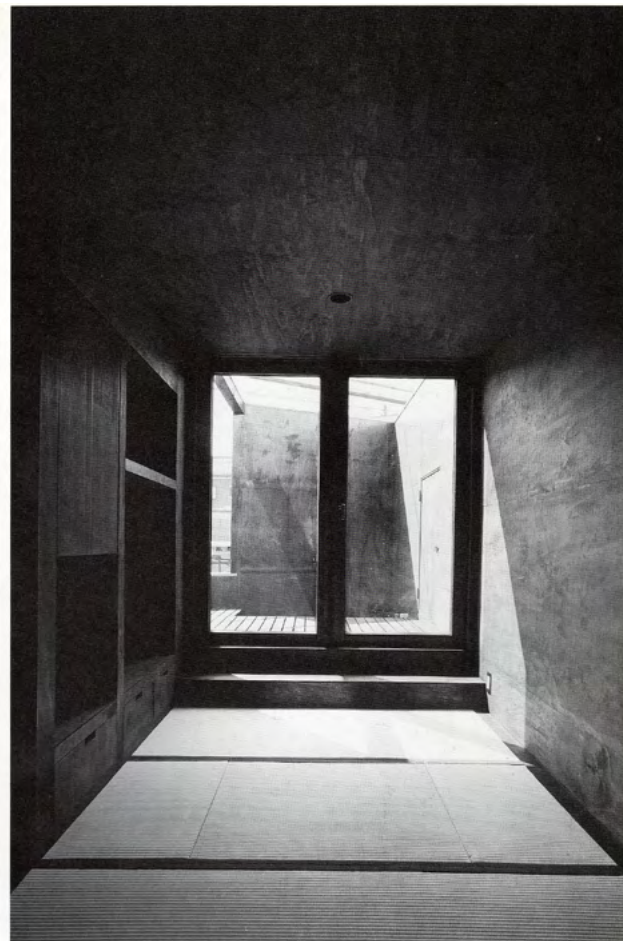
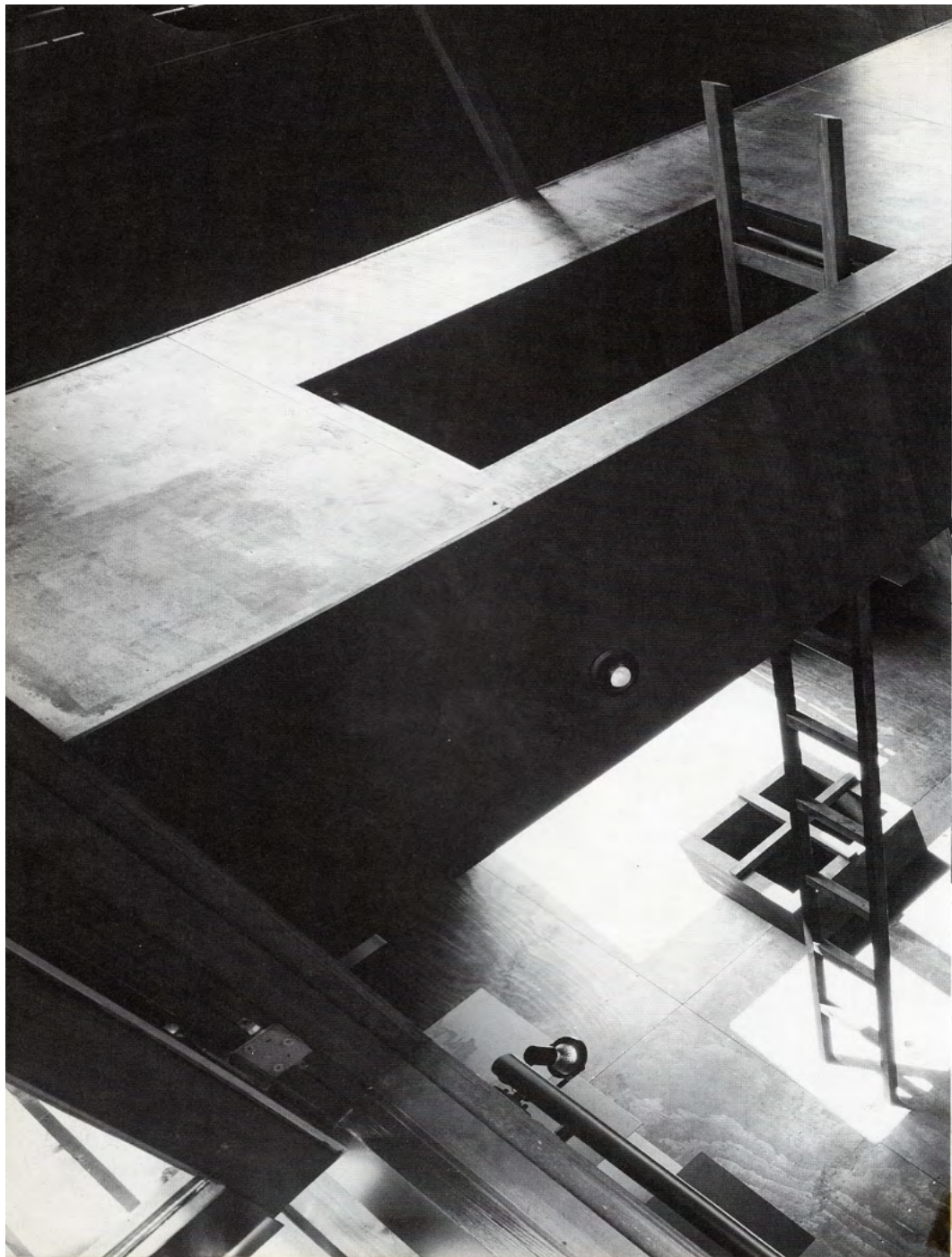
Dining room



Sections
118



Downward view of studio



Bedroom on first floor

北側を幅の狭い道路、東西の両側を住宅に包囲され、南側は鉄道によって斜めに切断されている敷地に計画された、ある生け花作家とその家族のための住宅。スタジオを持つ。

諸室は、比較的面積を要する1階ダイニング・ルームと2階スタジオを中央に左右対称に振り分けて配置される。平面形式の採択は、諸条件に対する総合的判断に基づくとは言ってもないが、それはまた、この単純な形式が、ある種の幻想に反して空間を硬直化させなどしないし、断面での部分的隆起と沈降を促進するからでもある。

銅板張りの外壁は、その腐食作用により黒から赤へと、さらに再び黒へと長時間をかけ日々微細に変化し、一方、黒く染色された内部もまた、陽光に過敏に反応し、溶明と溶暗の交換を頻繁に行う。この

住宅において、黒は、何物かを消去するためでも、何物かと対比するための色でもない。それは、むしろ何かを、例えば光の吸い込み/染み出しであり、例えば物体(肉体)の輪郭の際立ち/滲みであるような何かを過剰に生産する。(中尾寛)

計画：住宅/スタジオ（生け花作家のための）/埼玉県熊谷市
用途：住宅/祖父+夫婦+子供2人
建築設計：中尾寛
設計協力：岸原浩子
施工：方造工務所
敷地面積：132㎡/住宅用地
建築面積：75㎡/建築率56.7%（許容60%）
延床面積：147㎡/容積率111.2%（許容200%）
建築規模：地上3階、最高高さ9.5m
主体構造：木造
主要仕上：外壁/コルチン銅板張り
内部/天井・壁・床とも構造用合板 OS仕上げ

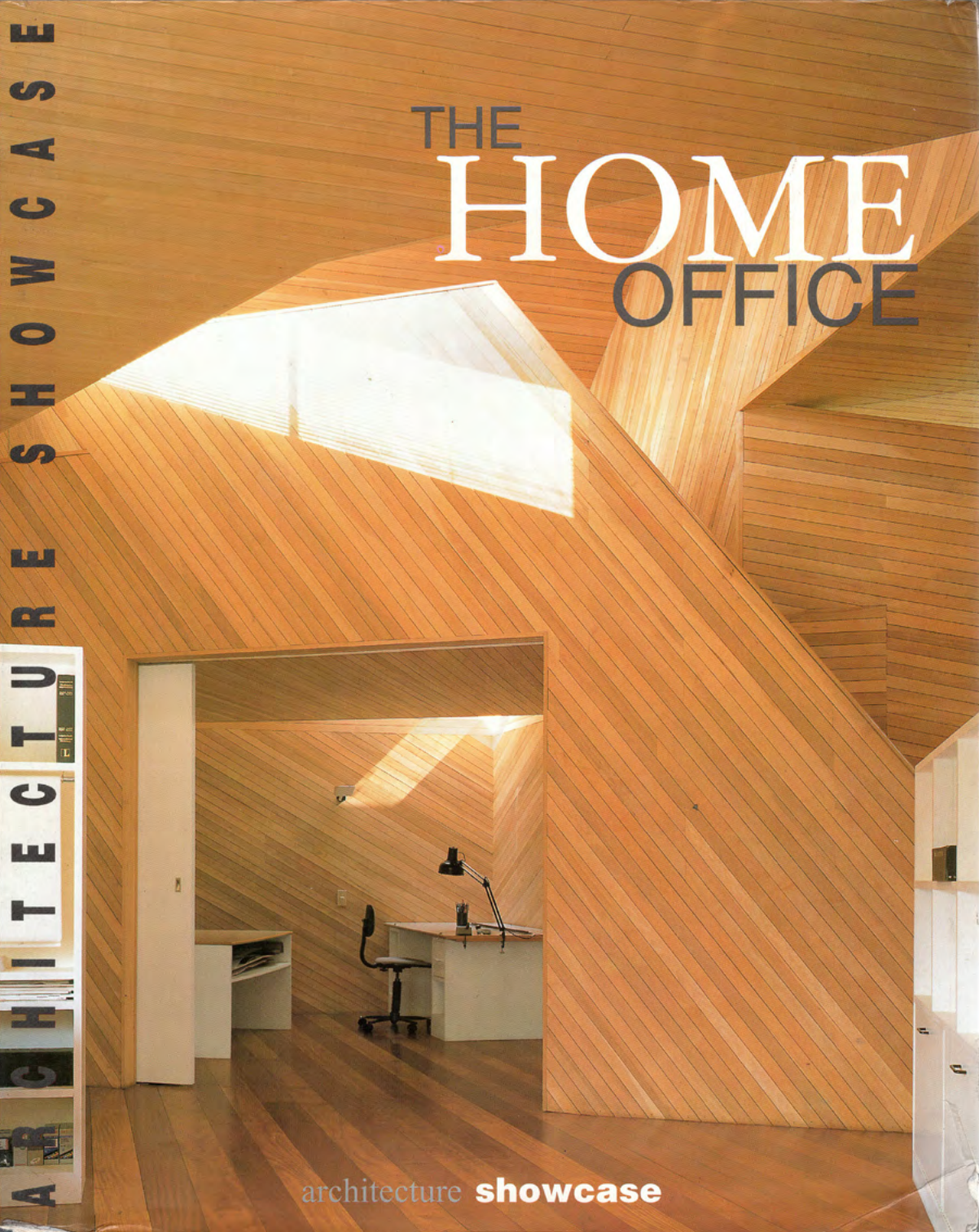


Ladder to third floor



ARCHITECTURE SHOWCASE

THE HOME OFFICE



architecture **showcase**



Hiroshi **Nakao**

Tokorozawa / JAPAN

HOUSE WITH STUDIO FOR A FLOWER ARTIST

Photographs: Nacása & Partners

A house is an exterior injected into the world, turned inward and sealed. In short, it is a grave in reverse.

The outer walls of the house shown here are wrapped in steel.

The site is a rectangle oriented north to south where the south edge has been sliced off diagonally by a railway line. The north side faces a narrow road, and the adjacent houses sit close to the property lines on the west and east sides.

The house is designed for a practitioner of flower arrangement and his three generation family made up of three adults and two children.

A studio with a 5.6 meter high ceiling is placed in the center of the second floor with bedrooms and other smaller rooms arranged symmetrically on either side.

The exterior is clad in corten steel that will darken naturally with age. All the interior surfaces are clad in structural plywood finished with charcoal-black oil stain. This technique plays down the texture and quality of the wood, and creates an abstract interior space. As erosion sets in, the walls change colour dramatically, from black to red. Then, ever so slow and subtly, they return to black. Thus the house is suspended between the recollection of black and its revival.

All the interiors are stained black. Materials so treated are rescued from the associations with which we have endowed them: they recede from the deadened character into which they have been cast by habit.

Then, in due course, light –not we, for we can only wait– summons up the buried memory of those materials, and life thus returns to them. The contours of matter are highlighted in turn by a ceaseless cycle of fade-ins and fade-outs, which is renewed with each passing.

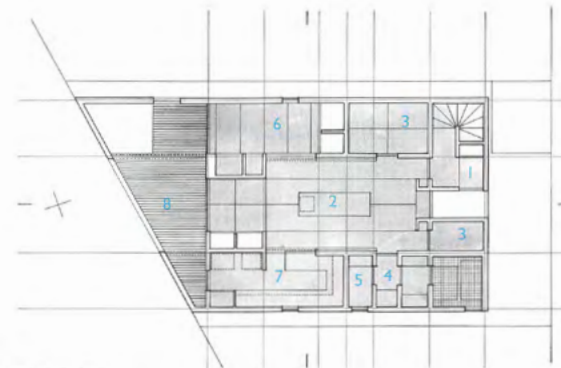
The house lends articulation to the dialogue between memory and oblivion. In the centre of the house, space is raised and compressed –the emergence of both vertical and horizontal depth.

Inside it, our bodies grasp a new gravity and rhythm. The house re-

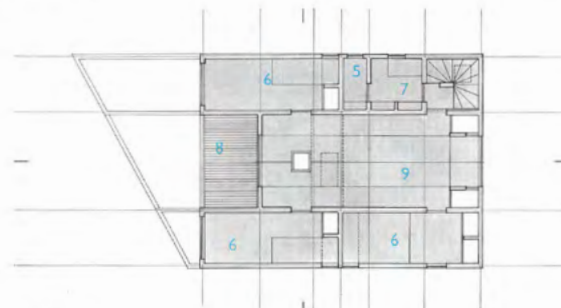


The exterior of the building has been clad with metal plates that, with the passing of time, change colour from black to an intense red and once more to black.

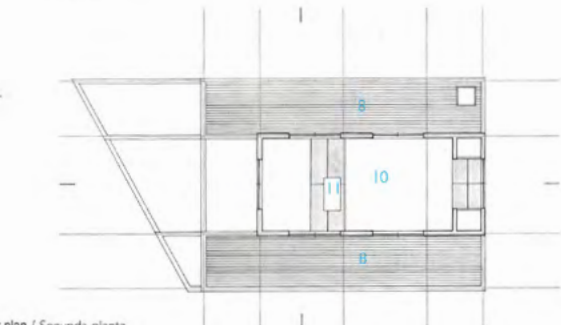
El exterior del edificio ha sido revestido con placas metálicas que, con el paso del tiempo, variarán de color pasando del negro al rojo intenso para volver de nuevo al negro.



Ground floor plan / Planta baja



First floor plan / Primera planta



Second floor plan / Segunda planta

- 1- entrance / vestíbulo
- 2- dining room / comedor
- 3- closet / ropero
- 4- bathroom / baño
- 5- toilet / aseo
- 6- bedroom / dormitorio
- 7- kitchen / cocina
- 8- terrace / terraza
- 9- studio / estudio
- 10- void / doble espacio
- 11- bridge / pasarela



arranges the movements of standing and lying: the house is a tomb where life comes to mind, a black cell in which life is conjured up.

Una casa es un exterior inyectado en el mundo, introspectiva y hermética. De alguna manera, es lo contrario a un sepulcro.

Los muros exteriores de esta vivienda están revestidos con una piel de acero.

El solar es un rectángulo orientado al norte-sur, donde el límite sur se ve cortado en sentido diagonal por la vía del ferrocarril.

El lado norte del edificio es una continuación del eje axial que traza la autopista, así como los muros de las construcciones vecinas, que se asientan junto a las líneas de propiedad en los lados oeste y este.

La vivienda fue diseñada para un artista floral y su familia, compuesta por tres generaciones: tres adultos y dos niños.

El estudio del maestro artesano, una enorme sala de 5,6 metros de altura, se ubica en el centro de la segunda planta, y a su alrededor se reparten los dormitorios y otras habitaciones más pequeñas de la casa, colocados simétricamente en torno al mismo.



The dwelling is located on a rectangular site with a north-south orientation. The south-facing end has been cut by the railway lines.

La vivienda se sitúa en un solar rectangular orientado en dirección norte-sur. El extremo orientado a sur se ve atravesado por las vías del ferrocarril.



El exterior está revestido de planchas de acero cortén, que se irán oscureciendo de forma natural con el paso del tiempo.

Por otra parte, todas las superficies interiores están compuestas por planchas de contrachapado de haya, que ha pasado por un proceso de tinto a base de aceite de carbón vegetal de color negro. Esta técnica juega con las texturas y las calidades de la madera, al tiempo que contribuye a crear un espacio interior abstracto.

Como respuesta a la erosión, el color de los muros cambia drásticamente del negro al rojo. A causa de este efecto, y de manera sutil, las paredes vuelven a ser de color negro, para impregnar todo el espacio de una atmósfera inquietante. De este modo, el proyecto se concentra, estéticamente, en el uso del color negro, de sus variaciones y su recuperación.

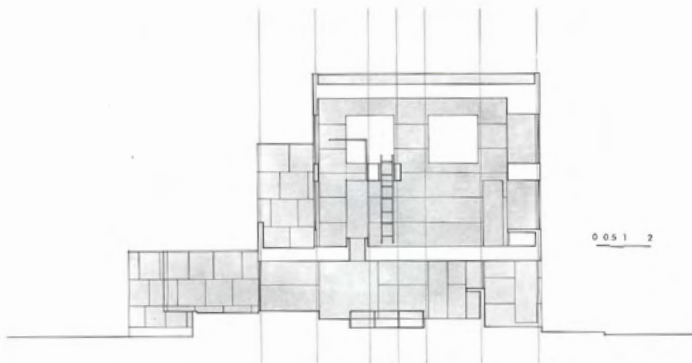
Todos los interiores son también de color negro oxidado. Los materiales así tratados han sido rescatados de las asociaciones a partir de las cuales se han conseguido: de este modo retroceden desde el carácter mortecino en el que han caído por hábito.

Otro de los métodos expresivos que el arquitecto utiliza para evocar la memoria de los materiales utilizados es a través de la luz. Los contornos se evidencian mediante un ciclo infinito de fundidos y desaparecidos, que se renuevan en cada momento del día y según la intensidad de luz que los bañe.

La casa se articula a partir de un diálogo con el pasado y el olvido. En el centro de la vivienda, el espacio se eleva y se comprime —marcando el cruce de líneas horizontales y verticales.

Una vez dentro, el usuario se atraído por una nueva gravedad y un nuevo ritmo.

El proyecto de esta vivienda recupera los movimientos horizontales y verticales, es un sepulcro donde la vida llega hasta la mente, una célula negra en la que la vida se conjura.

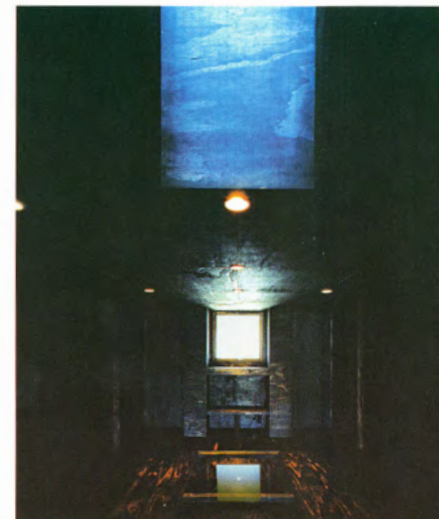


Longitudinal section / Sección longitudinal



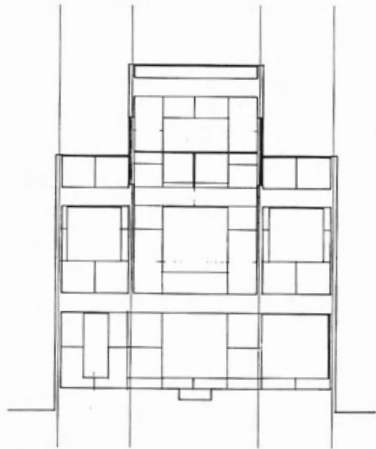
The 5.6 metre high study is located in the centre of the second floor, and the rest of the rooms are placed symmetrically in relation to it.

El estudio, de 5.6 metros de altura, se sitúa en el centro de la segunda planta, con el resto de las habitaciones colocadas simétricamente con respecto al mismo.



Aesthetically, the project is focused on the use of black, its variations and shades: corten steel exteriors that will darken naturally with age and stained plywood. This technique creates a very abstract volume and interior space.

El proyecto se concentra, estéticamente, en el uso del color negro, de sus variaciones y sus diversos matices: acero cortén en el exterior, que en su oxidación adquiere aquel color y contrachapado teñido en los interiores, lo que provoca un volumen y espacio interior inquietantes y abstractos.



Cross section / Sección transversal





MAZDA GALLERY

Automobile Capriccio

Organic Missile, a flower arrangement created by Ikebana artist Kosen Otsubo, and inspired by the speed of the car.

June '86



Ikebana Today

Ikebana, the art of creating complicated artistic forms using flowers and plants as material, is original to Japan. In China, for instance, flowers usually have been arranged merely to complement the vases. In the Western world they have traditionally been arranged in thoroughly elaborated forms, mostly symmetrical, and intended for decorative purposes rather than to symbolize abstract themes as is done in Ikebana.

Those who are well acquainted with traditional Japanese Ikebana, however, may have some difficulty conceding this arrangement of mine as Ikebana. In today's Japan, there are two major trends in the art of Ikebana: the "classic style" which works within the traditional patterns inherited over generations, and the "free style" that allows each individual to arrange the flowers freely, unbound by the traditional restrictions. Even within the schools of free style which emerged from attempts to break with tradition, however, we see that the styles of arrangement created initially by the founders as innovations have become in themselves "classics" and "standards."

creating new boundaries to free expression. As a result, we could say that the number of artists making really new and experimental attempts in Ikebana is actually quite small.

Referring to the classic style, it takes many years of hard study and patience to learn the traditional forms that have been transmitted over a long period, orally or in literature. Nevertheless, once you have achieved a level of being able to incorporate your own originality into the traditional forms you have learned, you appreciate the real fascination of the classic. In this way, we could say that the classic style always hides within it the potential for creating something really fresh and new from it, provided you have the capability.

Expressing the Feeling of Speed

In this arrangement, my intention was to express the speed of a car by using a shard of unseasoned wood to pierce a cluster of steel wires. For me the feeling of speed is the feeling of aliveness I experience everytime I make a rush against something and try to break through it. I enjoy very much, for instance, the feel of clearing my way through the wind when skating or skiing, although I personally don't drive, partly because I think I would be tempted to make dangerously high speeds.

This feeling of breaking through has similarities with the sensation people experience when creating an artwork, or, in my case, a flower arrangement. In any field of art, an artist can make a good work when he breaks through the current conventions and reaches a new stage. Therefore, in Ikebana too, good arrangements project a feeling of speed, I think. This feeling of speed is achieved only when

the shape and dynamic form of the branches and so forth used as the vehicle are exactly expressive of the dynamism of the movements of the artist's spirit.

Transmutation of the Natural

Ikebana is an art of creating a space by using plants, flowers and branches, as the medium. We can say that Ikebana is an attempt by the artist to transmute the small spaces caught between the flowers and branches, and make them *intimately his own*. For this purpose there is the process of deforming the material, which constitutes the main interest of Ikebana. In the contemporary field of Ikebana there is a tendency to rely too much on the original beauty of the natural form of the material, which sometimes results in artists paying large sums of money for natural branches featuring unique forms. I don't like to do this: using a branch the form of which is unique to begin with leaves no room for expressing your own originality. The creation of a good arrangement, through maximum use of your technique and artist's imagination to transform ordinary materials, is what we should strive for, I think.

Transitory Beauty

Using natural plants as material, a work of Ikebana lasts no more than four or five days. It isn't like other artworks that can be preserved over many years. But lasting long isn't necessarily a condition of real beauty, I believe. All things perish some day in this world. There is no difference in the artistic value between sculpture lasting for twenty years and an Ikebana lasting for only a few days. Even if it lasts only a day, a good work of Ikebana isn't at all fragile in the artistic sense.

Profile of Kosen Otsubo

Born in Tochigi Prefecture in 1939, Kosen Otsubo graduated from the Electronic Engineering Department of Tokyo Electric University in 1965. He began to study Ikebana in 1958, associating himself with the Ryusei-ha School. By 1982, he was holding individual exhibitions annually as well as participating in exhibitions of the Ryusei-ha School, and his individual style was well established. In Autumn of 1985, he was among three Japanese artists chosen to create exhibits for the Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Aalborg, Denmark. Mr. Otsubo is currently director of the teaching program of Ikebana in the Ryusei-ha School.

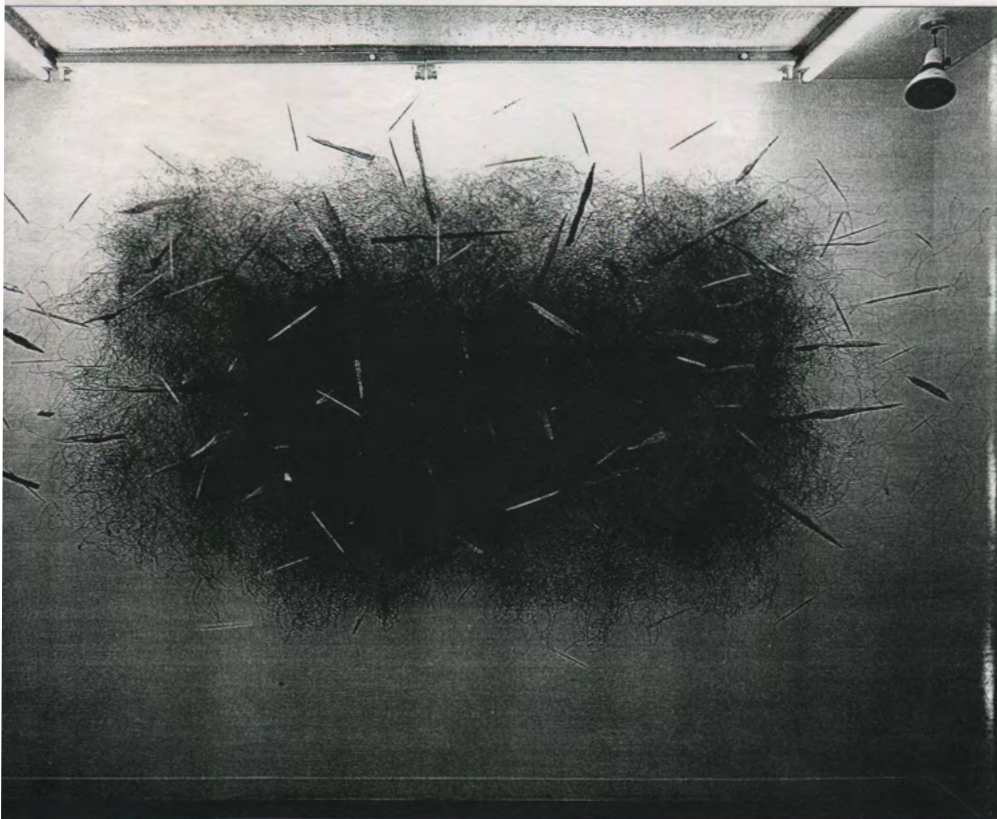


May '86

GALLERY

A Big Splash in Suburbia: Kosen Otsubo

by Rodney O'Brien



Kosen Otsubo's house, judged on its exterior alone, is a shriek. His entrance is plastered with a tumble of blues, yellows, and pinks that color in figures both large and fat, prancing and leaping in all directions. It has a magnetic pull that not only catches the eye but confirms that there is at least one nail in this excessively conformist society that refuses to be hammered in. The facade of Otsubo's house is the work of artist Yasuhiko Murakami. Otsubo asked Murakami to paint an image opposite in every way to the bland, tranquilized surroundings of suburban Tokorozawa.

One might immediately conclude that Tokorozawa is a place where contentment settles without fail every night. But Otsubo knows that behind the screening walls and bolted shutters, Tokorozawa is as much alive with human drama, struggle, and suffering—and a bit of scandal and crime—as any other place.

The cartoon-crazed front and side walls of his house are therefore a metaphorical attempt to shatter the street-level facade that results from an overwhelming pressure to conform.

Many of Otsubo's statements, which revolve around the theme that this society is in danger of overdosing on uniformity, show up in exhibitions at the Ryusei Ikebana School, where he is the director of the teaching program.

He also independently exhibits at rental galleries on the Ginza to an audience that appreciates emerging experimental and exploratory art. An exhibit in January at the Lunami Gallery featured pieces made from a whirlwind of wire. One work, shot through with spiky splinters of wood in poster-sharp colors, hugged a wall. In another piece, the wire dropped from the ceiling to almost floor level, with wintry dry twigs folded in and out of its density. This work was delicate and subtle, but, with its suggestion of pubic hair

also slightly erotic.

Otsubo is an *enfant terrible* whose wire slices veneer. His creations are an alternative to the stifling thousands of sterilized packages of art that manage to say almost nothing about the human condition, especially the slightly "dirty" aspects of life, as he likes to call them. Otsubostrips off some of the varnish of respectability that bleaches away so much expression in this society by exercising his street-level interest in all things, including art. He feels in no way bound by ikebana's rigid rules, and says if he were to force himself to remain within its vertical and hierarchical environment, he would never resolve a balance of "heart" and "mind."



Experimental, exploratory art (facing page); Otsubo in front of installation (above); cartoon-crazed house in the suburbs

formal ikebana arrangements.

At the Lunami exhibition, he experimented with just three aspects from the entire ikebana tradition. At this showing, he brought to the forefront his interest in the "air" around a work. Just as refined arrangements of ikebana have an aura, a diffusion that is subtle and often quintessential, so do his pieces. His "air" was evident between the various strands no matter how cluttered and entwined they became, and likewise between each separate work in the installation. Many artists who work with "air" or concepts of space are expressing the traditional notion of *ma*, the pause, the interval between.

Otsubo, however, is unhappy with the intellectual and pure tradition of *ma*. Instead, he chooses to expound upon the "air" of emotional environments. But, at the same time, he alluded to the organic nature of his work, particularly touching upon the expressiveness of the hand and the arm—the muscle power, as it were, in ikebana. With string or rope he might apply the same degree of movement, but the result would remain limp and powerless. With wire, however, his muscle power was transformed into a line exquisitely articulate, yet warm with sensibility. **■**

Rodney O'Brien is an Australian journalist who lives in Tokyo.

English Translation

20th Century Art in Japan

Era of Modern Ikebana - The flower of meta-ikebana

Pg.1

In 1973, "Ikebana Independent Exhibition" was exhibited, characterized by the absence of selection jury or for the artists to claim their schools. It was a radical move in the Ikebana world where the Iemoto-system has traditionally reigned the rules. In 1974, "Eight Ikebana Artists Exhibition" was formed by 8 artists including Kosen Ohtsubo, and they have curated the "Ikebana Open Competition" which continues on. It is called "modern Ikebana" after around 1970. One of the symbolical piece of this era is "Rubbish of the Ikebana Exhibition of Ryusei School 1/5" by Ohtsubo, created in 1971. It proposes plant rubbish as one of plant's forms and ironically provokes at the art of Ikebana.

OTSUBO, Kosen

Born in Tochigi. He's moved to Tokyo and joins the Ryusei-ha and had actively exhibited at galleries as well as in overseas museums such as in Denmark and US. Moved to China in 2005, returns to Japan in 1913. His legendary piece is "Rubbish of the Ikebana Exhibition of Ryusei School 1/5" which he recreated the rubbish of the Ryusei school. It presents his ironic view on Ikebana but it is the impact of the rubbish itself that is the core of the piece.

Humor and violence are seen in his early works, including "One Day" (1973) that shows the cruelty of Ikebana in which plants are mutilated and "Meri Meri"* ("Step On It"?) where sunflowers are squashed. He also creates works in which he sautéed flowers, used vegetables as his materials, and scattered flower petals and they all tell a significant difference in its shapes compared to that of avant-garde Ikebana.

Pg.2

The era of individuals and local scenes

The 80's of Ikebana is the era of individuals. The annual "Public Ikebana Exhibition" has proved to be a place where schools and power structure did not matter, and advanced the individual activities.

Since Ohtsubo had his solo exhibition in an art gallery in 1982, Ikebana exhibitions in art galleries has increased. They were more so a presentation towards the art-world instead towards the Ikebana-world, and the expression of Ikebana was beginning to search for a release to the outer world. It is said that the conservatism swing of the Ikebana world and it not regarding the expressionists' radical activities has pushed this outcome. Ikebana as "culture education" has flourished but its "expression" has began leaking.

Pg.3

A Transition period

After the "bubble" economy burst and younger generations' disinterest, "culture education" was estimated to be declining since 1990. However on the other side, as the sense of values diverse with post-modern situation, the prejudice towards Ikebana eased off and the society began taking interest in its way of "expression."

"The F Group"

A group formed by 13 Ikebana artists including Ohtsubo. It consists a diverse generations, including Takatoshi Simoda who has been active since early 1950's, and those who's began their practice in 1980's.

The modern Ikebana activities held since the 2000's are commonly held with the F group.

"Ikebana as an Expression"

An exhibition focused on the artists of '70s and '80s, artists included Ohtsubo. It aimed at presenting the similarity and the difference between Ikebana expression and art expression.

FLOWER POWER!

OHTSUBO DECONSTRUCTS IKEBANA AT THE WEISMAN

By Spencer Foxworth

In the gloom of one of last week's blustery cloud-covered mornings, a small congregation was erecting ... *something* just outside the front doors of the Weisman Art Museum. The workers nailed, bound, taped and screwed the bits and pieces of tree branches, old chairs, tables, fluorescent light fixtures, and part of an ancient oven onto what looked like the vomitus of a junkyard molded into a 12-foot archway.

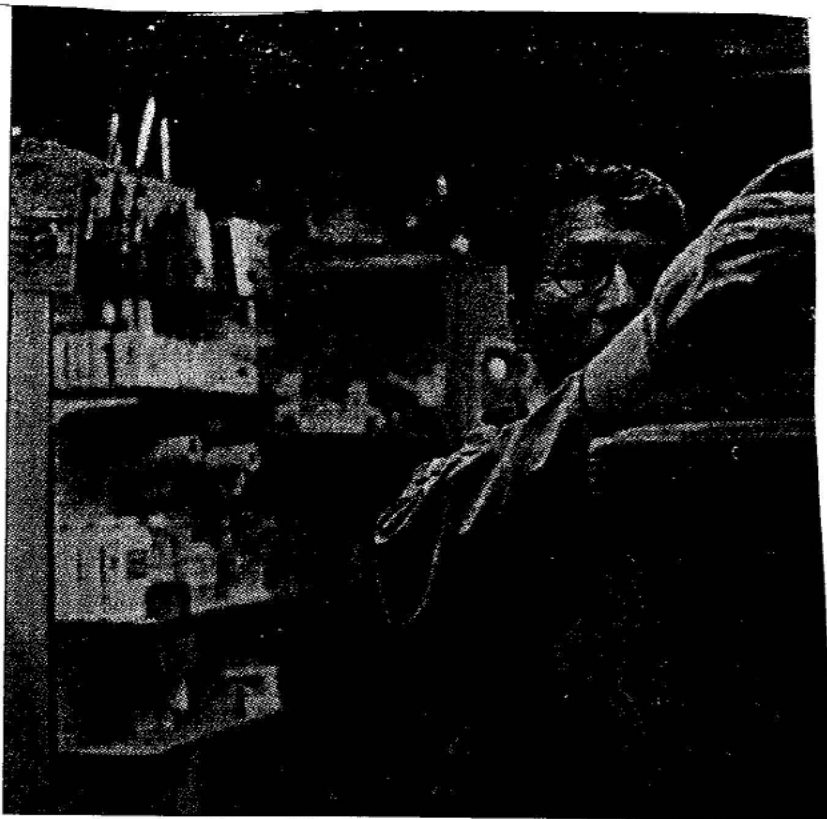
In the center of the milling workers, a Japanese man bent over a chunk of metal. Hammer in his hand, he was whacking diligently away at the metal, pounding until it gave way into a shape he could work with. Finally satisfied, the last echoes of clanging resounding off the museum's shiny walls and over the Mississippi River, he stood up and glanced over at the morass of junk and branches. Even from a distance, the faint smile playing across his face cut through the midmorning cloudy haze.

This arc de trash, now since completed, is called *Rock'n'Roll Culture Gate of Minnesota*, and along with two other pieces, it announces the arrival of an artist whose philosophies lie in between America's fascination with rebellion and Japan's fascination with tradition: Kosen Ohtsubo, Honorable Master Teacher of Tokyo's Ryusei-Ha School of Ikebana.

Ikebana (that's "eek-ay-bah-nah", not "icky-banna") is, of course, the delicate Japanese art of flower arranging, and to Ohtsubo it represents both a framework from which he creates ikebana-inspired artwork and an institution that, through his work, he struggles to deconstruct and redefine.

Rock'n'Roll Culture Gate of Minnesota is composed of one of America's most commonplace substances — trash — and lies beyond the confines of the museum where passersby, some with no intention of undergoing an artistic experience, stop and gawk at its beautiful ugliness.

And it is somehow beautiful in its vulgarity, as are many of



Kosen Ohtsubo visits salvage lots to find raw materials

Ohtsubo's works. It isn't just junk that's woven around the metal frame. The musty, pitted surfaces of each individual piece recall days of functionality, "the traces of its people in the past," as Ohtsubo says. "In the traces are a sense of sorrow. Always this sense of sorrow, of emotion, is attached. It's like a collaboration between me and the people in the past age. ... And I use material that has once been used to go beyond my personality."

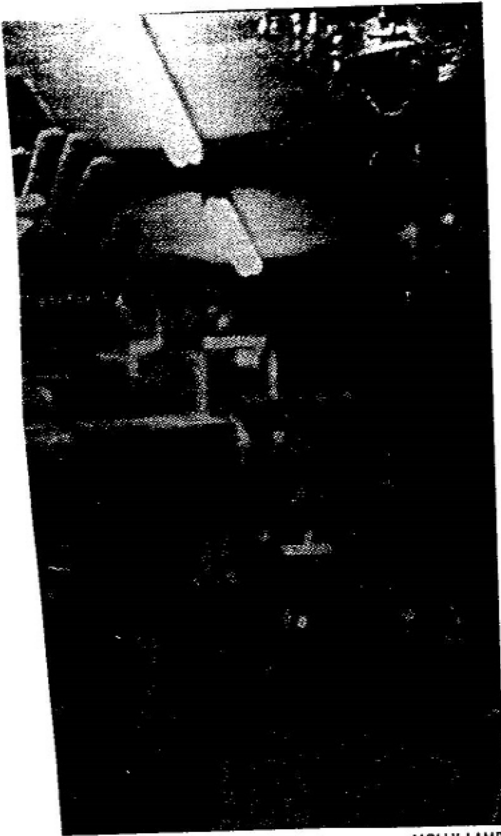
Other people's trash is only the most recent of Ohtsubo's treasures. In Japan, he's most known for his use of vegetables (one of his favorites are radishes). At exhibitions, he especially enjoys the rotten smell of his radish-art after a few days — a direct snub at the refined, elegant ethos governing traditional ikebana, and a representational spearhead of Ohtsubo's vision for ikebana's future.

For the past 600 or so years, one of ikebana's primary artistic concerns has been to connect humanity with nature; a traditional

ikebana artist attempts to do so within strict guidelines, using the finest plant materials and most refined methods. In theoretical terms, the subtle curve of a branch should evoke an intense emotional response in the viewer.

But — similar to, say, Mondrian's attempt to evoke emotion using the stripped-down elements of painting — Ohtsubo sees classical ikebana, with its strict symbology and its artistic community's highbrow attitudes, as elitist and feudalistic. In a dialogue conducted with Takashi Mizutani, assistant professor of Nagoya Junior College of Art and Design, Ohtsubo suggested that "there are not many people who can feel the delicate shade of taste ... Can those people who cannot feel it never understand ikebana or art? It should not be that way. ... There should be some kind of ikebana which can attract to those people."

Externally, his work doesn't look at all like the precisely composed branches and leaves of traditional ikebana; in fact, it's tricky to refer to Ohtsubo's works as ikebana, for they



MOLLY LAMB

ils for his work.

share only the loosest commonalities with the tradition. Certain elements of design are the same — concentration with negative space (the space between the branches), for example, and Ohtsubo's consideration of texture. He uses organic matter (branches, leaves, vines, vegetables) among inorganic matter (metal boxes, light bulbs, wire) to explore the relationships between humanity and plants. But the similarities between his work and traditional ikebana end there.

A piece like *Memories of Distant Trees of Minnetonka* takes up half the space within the Weisman's Dolly Fitterman Gallery; shrunken to 1/32 of its scale, the sprawling, gauze-wrapped tree branches *might* suggest a freer-style ikebana work, if it weren't so freakishly eerie. The branches resemble ghosts, outlines of themselves among similarly wrapped metal globes.

Memories is the flipside of *Rock'n'Roll*. Where the arch is jumbled with dense, chaotic junk, *Memories'* composition contains

Kosen Ohtsubo's installations are on display at the Weisman Art Museum for a limited time. Call 625-9494.

sparse visual elements of form, space and color. Where the arch is positively vibrating with brash energy, these branches loom silently. Their presence is palpable; Ohtsubo believes that everything contains a god, and if that's true, it's a stern god inside *Memories*.

Ohtsubo's third Weisman work, *Linga '97 Minneapolis*, is the least irreverent of these pieces toward the institution of ikebana. Inspired by trips to India where these ancient forms, created to honor the male Hindu deity Shiva, scatter the countryside, Ohtsubo intended his version to evoke contemplative stillness.

Atop a bed of ground-up rubber, the bundle of branches that make up *Linga '97 Minneapolis* perch on the Weisman's second-floor terrace, surveying the Mississippi River and the Minneapolis skyline. A bowl of multicolored flower petals rests nearby, and a sign invites viewers to scatter them as offerings to Shiva.

Linga '97 Minneapolis is the quietest of Ohtsubo's Weisman works, and — surprisingly — the one that lies closest to Ohtsubo's philosophy. It's a direct offering to a higher power, something that transcends Ohtsubo's political agenda to change ikebana; within even the most blatantly rebellious of his creations, the marriage between humanity and plant life evokes a sense of something beyond either.

In the case of *Rock'n'Roll Culture Gate of Minnesota*, that something is a sense of the past and the traces of people who once used the junk. In *Memories of Distant Trees of Minnetonka*, it's a sense of the subtle grace within a tree branch. And it's something that nearly everybody can understand, a language that speaks in purest essence of ikebana, using the quiet, humble expressions of plant life.

Renowned Ikebana Master in Month-Long Residency at Weisman

Japanese Ikebana artist Kosen Ohtsubo will be artist-in-residence at the Weisman Art Museum, beginning Monday, May 5, 1997. Ohtsubo is an Honorable Master Teacher at the Ryusei Ikebana Center in Tokyo where he teaches the art of Ikebana, flower arranging. Ohtsubo has been a disciple of Kasen Yoshimura, headmaster of the Ryusei Center, for more than three decades. While in residence at the Weisman, Ohtsubo will present several public programs, and will create an installation, entitled *Organic Matters*. He will also participate in teaching seminars in the department of art.

Ohtsubo is part of a group of Japanese Ikebana artists who are less concerned with traditional flower arrangements, but rather focus on the question of what plants mean to humankind and what aspects of humanity can be communicated through Ikebana principles and methods.

Lyndel King, Weisman director, commented: "I met Kosen Ohtsubo a few years ago in Tokyo,

I was amazed at his energy and artistic openness. It was surprising to me to see that he could create such radical and unique works of art within the context of an ancient tradition of flower arranging. From unconventional materials, primarily plant matter, he makes art that ranges from small tabletop displays to giant outdoor sculptures to performance. I think he will create a sensation here in Minnesota, by showing us how to fuse traditional artistic disciplines and new ideas."

Ohtsubo will create *Organic Matters* at the Weisman Art Museum assisted by students from the University's department of art and community volunteers.

The public is invited to meet this extraordinary artist at several programs scheduled during his residency. On Thursday, May 22, at 7 p.m., Ohtsubo will present a lecture as part of the artist/critic series entitled "What About Beauty?", co-sponsored by the McKnight Arts and Humanities Endowment and the department of art at the University of Minnesota. Announcements of other public programs will be sent to the Colleagues.

This residency and related programming have been made possible by a generous gift from Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., in memory of Frederick R. Weisman. Travel arrangements by Northwest Airlines, which provides daily non-stop service to Tokyo and Osaka.



Renowned Ikebana artist, Kosen Ohtsubo, will be featured in a month-long residency at the Weisman Art Museum during May. Ohtsubo will create an installation piece for the museum, entitled Organic Matters.

