

Kenzo Tange **1987 Laureate** **Ceremony Acceptance Speech**

It was more than a quarter century ago that I started talking about the importance of communication and information in modern society. I said that they would transcend the importance we place on production. In the 1970s, because of the energy crisis, our values—at least in Japan—shifted from material things to the non-physical, and even spiritual considerations.

That shift took place not just in architecture, but in daily life, as people tended to prefer the immaterial to the material. With de-emphasis on industrialization and the advent of the “information-communication society,” the fundamentally rational and functional philosophy of the preceding period changed, and people sought things that appeal to the emotions and the senses.

In architecture, the demand was no longer for box-like forms, but for buildings that have something to say to the human emotions. That new demand has had an effect on the designs of everything, from small window displays to streetscapes to buildings.

The term Post-Modernism is used to describe this trend in general. I feel, however, that in its actual presentation, Post-Modernism is no more than a mere eclectic mixture of aesthetic elements—modern and ancient, or Eastern and Western—that have already reached an impasse.

My belief is that at present Post-Modernism has not found, but must find a way out of that impasse. And since, I myself am seeking a clue, even a very small one that will shed a little light on an answer, I know the task is not easy.

I am aware of changes gradually taking place in my own designs as part of my thinking on this matter. The Tokyo Headquarters of the United Nations University and the new Tokyo Metropolitan Office Complex, reflect that process. In both instances, there is a powerful need for symbolism and that means the architecture must have something that appeals to the human heart. Nevertheless, the basic forms, spaces, and appearances must be logical. Designs of purely arbitrary nature cannot be expected to last long.

Technological considerations are of great importance to architecture and cities in the informational society. The development of so-called “intelligent buildings” is a natural consequence and today’s society will demand that whole districts and cities themselves become “intelligent” in the same way as the individual buildings.

We then will require, and expect, advanced technological equipment that, instead of finding expression in building exteriors, will be realized as part of concealed, interior functions.

Still another aspect of architecture and cities in our informational/communication society is inter-architectural relations. In the industrial society, strong emphasis on costs and intense demand for functional sufficiency of individual buildings meant that less thought was given to large functional units, including the building’s neighboring structures and surroundings.

I think it is difficult to determine which of the two is more important, but in a society that places great stress on communications, relationships with the surroundings probably deserve as much consideration as the functional sufficiency of the individual building.

I believe the development of a new architectural style will result from further study and work on the three elements that I have discussed: human, emotional, and sensual elements; technologically intelligent elements; and social-communicational structure of the space.

Kenzo Tange, 1987 Laureate (continued)

In my opinion, further consideration of those views will help us find a way out of the current impasse, and reveal to us the kinds of buildings and cities required by the informational society. We must attempt to discover a new style suitable for our time to express a system of consistent aesthetic elements from the three that I have mentioned, if we are to overcome the eclecticism of the present transitional architectural expressions.

I accept this award with humility because in some ways I am still in search of an answer to what buildings will best serve in what I call the information or communications society. And it is truly satisfying to receive this acknowledgement of a distinguished jury panel, especially in this excellent architectural space, I mean in this space by Louis Kahn, whose work I admire, and until his death, was one of my close friends.

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