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Tadao Ando
Modern Art Museum
Fort Worth, Texas, since 1997

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From the Wall of Negation to the Wall of Naming

The most spellbinding power of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth lies in its abrupt encounter between the glass and Ando's beloved concrete box. Tadao Ando's architecture has long been composed of bare concrete walls. From Row House in Sumiyoshi to the Rokko Housing series, his works, more than two hundred in number, have all consisted of concrete walls (with the exception of a few wooden buildings). The features have changed - sometimes showing the precisionism of a craftsman, sometimes the cognition of a scientist, sometimes the dynamism of a sculptor - but under Ando's hand, the concrete wall has reached a mastery that might be called Ando-style. Then, all of a sudden, this architecture of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth intervenes, full of tension and determination to break from the vectors of the past.

All in all, Ando's concrete walls assume an architectonization of intense negation; and he has achieved a power to attract people by the architectonic of negation. Furthermore, his architecture of the past might also be called an architecture of the negative. If so, then the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth might be the negation of negation by way of wrapping the negative walls with glass. This method seems to epitomize Ando's new line of experimentation. And the primary effect of the glass box, among its various significations, lies in its function of naming. By shifting from the concrete box to the glass box, and with the twofold wrapping of the concrete box by the glass box, Ando makes a profound material statement.

The Wall of Negativity

Ando's concrete boxes can be categorized into three types: walls of silence, walls of interdiction, and walls of negation. Furthermore, they can be said to correspond to the Lacanian concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. From this stance, we can uncover the unconscious of Ando's wall.

The first is the wall of silence, as seen in the façade of Row House in Sumiyoshi. This wall says nothing. Yet its silence itself assumes our theme. When this wall of silence appeared all of a sudden in down town Osaka, we greeted it with surprise and awe, for the primary feature of this wall appeared to be the expression of rage. The blank face - with extreme intensity is certainly uncanny, and serves to defamiliarize the pedestrian downtown landscape. At the same time, however, if we approach it calmly, the atmosphere of the wall appears to contain splendor, or the decency of Japanese virtue, or even sorrow. The concrete surface - as smooth as if it were polished - accepts our empathy like a Noh mask, and then begins to function as a mirror of our soul. As it reflects our mental state, the wall gradually assimilates into our consciousness.

Although the wall is dumb, we know well how it feels. For the wall reflects the mental picture of

those who gaze at it. By reflecting our mind, the wall builds a specular relationship with us. It does not state anything, but persists in listening to what we have to say. In this manner, the imaginary relationship between humans and objects is born.

But is the wall really dumb? It has no other choice but to be silent. Isn't that because it hides what cannot be spoken of - like, for instance, a secret? As Wittgenstein said, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." The specular relationship implies that although the wall is dumb, we know how it feels. But in this case, if the wall is silent, it must be for the sake of nondisclosure.

The authentic function of a wall is to define the spatial order of an architectural interior. That is to say that the rapport between humans and walls does not remain at the mirror stage but develops into the symbolic order. While the concrete wall has a beauty of flatness, it also contains severity, dread, and even cruelty. In this sense, it is the wall that orders, the wall that defines human relationships. In other words, the wall interdicts the tie between mother and child, and forms the symbolic order as the agency of the father's name. By introducing the severity of geometry into the imaginary relationship, the wall constructs the law that orders under the name of father, namely, that rules the family relationship. And, of course, toward the outside it functions as a barrier to control the exchange between family and community.

In this sense, the function of the wall is to interdict anarchic desire and order the human relationship by molding it into shape. As a result, an unfulfilled desire, or desire distorted by order, comes into existence. This appears as an emptiness, or Jack, around which the symbolic order is constructed. The real of the wall is not the substance of the wall, but the absence.

As an example that the attraction of that emptiness or Jack captures people, we play's development is dependent upon it. On the other hand, Row House in Sumiyoshi, a monumental masterpiece of postwar residential architecture, conceives of a mythified lack - that residents have to go to the bathroom carrying an umbrella when it rains. It embraces an ever unfilled emptiness, the Jack of a roof in the courtyard. This is nothing but a Jack, or perhaps even a trauma, of architecture that nevertheless organizes the order of life around the wound. Furthermore, this Jack as an unconscious of architecture comes into consciousness at the sudden resurgence of natural phenomena such as rain and wind. While this is very much a Japanese traditional method, the courtyard as a receptacle waiting to receive natural phenomena operates in the spatial order just as Godot operates in the performative order. By dividing human relationships, the wall rules man/woman as well as parent/child. In this precise sense, the wall is a system of order, namely, articulated language itself.

As such, Ando's wall embodies the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. Then, in Fort Worth, the concrete walls are enclosed in a glass box. What does the glass signify?

The Wall of Naming

The glass walls of the Modern Art Museum have at least three significations. The first derives from the implications of the glass box - the freezer effect: the literal transparency of the glass box assumes the effect of freezing the interior. Enclosed within a gigantic glass box, the architecture of concrete is instantaneously frozen as if it were an ice cube. The concrete box enclosed within the cuttingly sharp contours of glass looks like an excavated archeological artifact in a huge vitrine; a sample of contemporary architecture is exhibited within the glass showcase. This also contains a message: that an epoch - the one of the freshly excavated architecture on display - is over.

The glass box freezes not only space but also time, which is to say that it transforms an instant into an eternity by stopping time. In this frozen space is also embodied the classicist value of someone like Johann Joachim Winckelmann "noble simplicity and still grandeur."

The representation of frozen time by use of a glass case certainly calls to mind an analogy to the museum. And finally, the message of this architecture might be, "Will you please be quiet?" - as a

critique of the superficial plasticism that has blossomed with postmodernism.

The second effect of the glass lies in its power to shift from outside to inside and back again. Wrapped in a glass box, there is an inversion of inside and outside. A previously external wall becomes an internal wall when it is wrapped by the glass, and the courtyard contained in the concrete wall now turns into an interim space thus the abyssal nesting box structure in which inside and outside are inverted. In this manner, when a transparent membrane is added, the external wall becomes an object to be gazed at. The concrete wall that hitherto has had a power to repel a viewer's gaze now becomes something to be gazed at. As soon as the active and even offensive external wall is put in the glass box, it turns into an internal wall, an object of the fixed gaze like a framed painting. At the same time as it inverts internal and external spaces, the glass box also functions to invert the reciprocity of the gaze - from the gazer to the gazed at.

The glass box also plays a strong indicative function. The act of placing something in a glass box calls to mind Nietzsche's cry: *Ecce homo*. The transparent glass has the same function as the indicative pronoun "this," which functions deictically; that is, it indicates *no other than this*. As a result, the glory and solitude of the chosen - Ando's signature - is sealed inside the glass. The deictic function of the glass box lies in naming the enclosed object as a singularity. It is this function that gives architecture - the one-time event full of contingency - historicity and necessity.

Every architecture exists in a different place; nothing is the same as anything else. So many views of architecture are derived from this obvious fact. For instance, the nominalist stance claims that architecture is a concept empirically abstracted from individual architectures, while the realist stance insists that individual architectures are merely contingent appearances of the idea of Architecture. Unconcerned with architecture *in general*, Ando's architecture is consistently singular. The intense indicative function of the glass box manifests the fact that *no other than this* has been chosen. It is a ritual of naming, that is, a baptism. In the sense that it gives architecture a proper name, it assumes the function of naming. According to Saul Kripke, proper names are "rigid designators" that point to one and the same object in all possible worlds. This indicates the ground of necessity that, no matter how conditions are changed, this architecture has had no other way to be but this. Architecture is a consistently one time event full of contingency. Nevertheless, once a proper name has been assigned, it achieves the necessity of its existence.

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth makes a solitary specimen out of a modernity of concrete wrapped in a glass box. The gigantic glass wall's function of naming means that only a solitary, singular man can achieve the necessity of the irreplaceable *no other than this*. This is Ando's new signature, and his letter to the future in which the twentieth century is sealed.