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"definition"

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▲ワークショップの様子

URBAN DESIGN LAB. MAGAZINE

TOKYO — THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF "RYUGAKUSEI"

Things occasionally seem something completely new from a different angle and so are cities. We had a workshop with four members of our lab's "Ryugakusei", who took part in the "Urban Design Studio 2022", to

discuss the words and pictures that they think represent the city of Tokyo. Now, let's reexamine Tokyo from an original and fresh perspective through the filter of foreign students.



— So, the first part is “Tokyo is ○○”. Luka, you wrote Tokyo is “universe”, right?

Luka: Yes, Tokyo to me is a universe, because one can find anything here. Also, to me, it seems endless. Spatially it also resembles a universe full of planets. The different urban cores and neighbourhoods have their very distinct personalities that makes them feel like their own worlds.

Basia: yeah, I feel the same way. For me, Tokyo is a city made up of a bunch of smaller cities, which is opposed to European towns where the development was started from a singular spot, and later sprawled out onto the mid-town and subsequently suburbs. Travelling through Tokyo, you can observe equal intensity of built-up in multiple points of the city – more than one center. One would imagine Shibuya to be the ‘agora’ of Tokyo, but there are umpteen smaller or bigger focus points. Coincidentally these are oftentimes located around the train stations, making it convenient to supply of residents and tourists. On the other hand, looking back at European cities, the centralized development with an activity core and suburb areas, sometimes presents a not very attractive image in the further areas in of the city – the fringe can become rundown, haphazardly planned and left to fend for itself. Whereas in Japanese case, the city has to offer an evenly

spread-out urban tissue, with equally attractive ‘centre’ and midtowns.

— It’s interesting that you two mentioned the word “core”. I guess your opinions reflect the structural differences between Japanese and European cities. So now, let’s look at Sun’s Tokyo.

Sun: I think Tokyo is a city that old shrines hidden in the modern architecture. One of the most striking features of this city is the way in which ancient shrines and temples are often tucked away amidst the hustle and bustle of the city’s modern buildings and skyscrapers. This creates a unique contrast and sense of history that can be seen throughout the city. This is different from China because Chinese historic architecture is often concentrated in specific areas.

— Right, you can see a lot of mixtures of new and old buildings in

many areas in Tokyo. But I didn’t know that in China, both areas are more separated. Is the situation the same in Europe?

Luka: Yes. Preservation laws are obviously very strict. It decides specifically what types of buildings you can build or not so that it wouldn’t spoil the cityscape.

— I get it, thank you. So last but not least, what’s your opinion about Tokyo, Dai?

Dai: I think of Tokyo as a trance, a place where there are many mixtures, cut-offs, and dreams. I’ve been in Tokyo for over four months now, but I’m still often surprised by the fact that I’m currently living in Tokyo, as if it’s not real. Tokyo has all kinds of people and things,

it is inclusive but also has strong contrasts. I would like to represent Tokyo with the colors of buildings like gray/earth, the same building materials that make up skyscrapers or low, rustic, crumbling houses, which are all part of Tokyo. For me Tokyo and Shanghai are the same type of cities, just at different stages of development. The big city doesn’t make me feel depressed either, it’s just a different state of living. Tokyo has been trying to become a city where more people can live decently and happily, but lower salaries and higher costs of living have made it difficult to achieve the goal.

— Thank you, your answer “trance” well represents the contrast between the two dimensions of Tokyo.

PART 1 "WORDS"



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THE DIFFERENT URBAN CORES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS HAVE THEIR VERY DISTINCT PERSONALITIES THAT MAKES THEM FEEL LIKE THEIR OWN WORLDS.

LUKA



— So now let's move onto the picture part. I asked you all to bring pictures for two topics—pics that represent Tokyo and pics that represent your studio site. So first, let's take a look at Luka's pictures.

Luka: Ok, I chose two pictures to represent Tokyo. The first one (upper left) is the initial, or "tourist" experience. It was taken from [Miyashita Park](#) towards the centre of Shibuya. The picture contains the skyscrapers, the railway, but also a lantern decorated yokocho of small bars in the shadow of the high-rises. I think this townscape might represent Tokyo to someone that doesn't live here. Areas like Shibuya and Shinjuku have a strong personality that takes up space in a person's memory as an image of Tokyo. However, the second picture (upper right) that I chose represents Tokyo to me, now that I had the chance to live here as a "resident". It shows a [street in Komaba, Meguro](#), near where I live. I think most of Tokyo looks more similar to this. Calm, narrow, human scale, where pedestrian and car traffic can share the same street without the need for pavements. A train station which is still visible in the background represents the good railway connectivity. The real ordinary life happens here. And the picture (bottom) I chose for my site is representative of [the minimum housing](#) projects that we have analysed in our studio. It shows a typical lot division to place as many detached homes as possible in previously one bigger lot. This site showcases the level of density that is created due to buyer demand and developer ingenuity.

PART 2

"PICTURES"

— Thank you so much. Since Luka and Dai were in the same group at the studio, can you show us your pics next, Dai?

Dai: OK, this (upper) is a picture I took in Shinjuku while traveling in 2019. For me Tokyo is such a place full of tall buildings, lights, billboards and consumer signals. It is a showcase of Tokyo's high level of development, and my first impression of Tokyo as a tourist. These (bottom) are pictures of our studio site in [Adachi and Arakawa wards](#). Through site visits, I learned about the preferences of middle-class and nuclear families living in Tokyo. Nowadays, people still prefer to live in the center of the city or in areas with easy access to the city center, but such areas are usually expensive in terms of land and housing. As a result, real estate developers have divided up land in such a way that individuals occupy smaller lots, lowering the price of housing while guaranteeing living space, and allowing more families to own single-family homes in better locations. But closer proximity to neighbors can involve a lot of questions about the ownership, management and use of public space, and the relationship between privacy and public space needs to be balanced. For example, many architects advocate the concept of sharing, but many people prefer to protect the space that belongs to



them, and the Japanese are also very concerned about privacy. This is the first time I thought about the issue from the perspective of a Tokyo resident rather than a tourist.

— Interesting, from Luka and Dai's points of view, I can clearly see that your impression about Tokyo has changed during your stay in this city. So next, let's see what Sun brought here.

Sun: Sure, these pictures (upper) show the symbols of Japan like the [Tokyo tower](#), [Tokyo Skytree](#) and [the temple](#). Visitors can explore these hidden gems and discover the rich cultural heritage of Tokyo, while also enjoying the many modern amenities and attractions that the city has to offer. And then this one (bottom) is about my studio site, [Kanda](#). Kanda is a historic area in Japan which has a history from the Edo period. This picture shows a very important shrine for the residents there. But it was hidden in the pencil buildings. At first, we even didn't find it. Although there are not so many traditional characteristic spaces remaining in Kanda, the community spirits still exist.

— Thank you. Your pictures show exactly what you've told us in the first part. So finally, it's your turn, Basia.

Basia: Thank you. This photo (upper left) was taken in [the Ueno district, overlooking the Shinobazuno Pond](#). In the far background we see the Shinobazu-

noike benten-do Temple. At this time, it struck me just how much greenery there is in Tokyo, and how every little non-occupied corner is utilized as a pocket park. This photo (upper right) was taken on [the top terrace of Sky Tree](#), during the Christmas period. In the background we see the Tokyo cityscape with a family, posing for a photo in a Christmas arranged scenery. I find interesting the contrast between the obvious Japanese landscape in the background and celebrating an American tradition in the foreground. For me it is a theme also seeping into the built-up of Japanese cities. There are lots of American/European-stylized restaurants and cafes, sometimes stuck in between very traditional Japanese architecture. Next, this one (bottom) is my studio site, [Kanda](#) – Photos represent the variety of architectural development of the site. On the one hand we have the "Shoutengai" street, which would pose as the activity core of the site, and a particularly promising direction for extension. On the other hand, we have so-called 'pencil buildings', a fill-in between the dense tissue, with extreme Floor area ratio. Every now and then we see an architectural marvel, left unattended for years, overgrown with greenery. Kanda strikes me as a district with a lot of potential for growth. Its non-uniformity in aesthetic standards can be a masterplan negligence for some or a unique feature for others.

SUN



BASIA



デザ研書初め企画～抱負を一字に込めて～

大学生になってからというもの筆で文字を書く機会がなくなったという人は多いと思う。小学生の頃にあれだけ練習した筆遣いも今や忘れかけてしまっているのではないか。そんな都市デザイン研究室のメンバーに漢字一文字で新年の抱負を書いてもらう機会を設けた。漢字の意味や字形から彼らの込めた思いを想像してみるのも面白いだろう。



COLUMN

POSTSCRIPT

ワークショップは自身にとって東京がどんな都市か、書初めは自身にとって今年がどんな一年（であってほしい）かという「定義」に関係すると考え、タイトルを“definition”とした。今月号はデザイン面で個性溢れる号となったが、いかがだっただろうか。「全体としての統一性と各自の個性のせめぎ合い」が2023年のマガジンの“definition”になるのかもしれない。（M1 伊藤）

WEB MAGAZINE

続きは都市デザイン研究室 HP で！

<https://ud.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ja/blog/>



喫煙所事例見学ツアー！

上野公園内袴腰広場の喫煙所の設計を依頼され、都内にある喫煙所の事例調査に行ってきました。場所に応じたデザインや喫煙者の居心地の良さへの様々な配慮が見られ、非常に参考になりました。（M1 橘）



青木先生とみなかみ調査

みなかみPJでは、今年から新たに着任された青木特任助教と現地調査を行いました。現地はすっかり雪景色で、何度も現地に行っている私達M1にとっても新鮮な現地調査となりました。（M1 長谷川）

BOOK OF THE MONTH



路地裏が文化を生む！

増淵敏之
青弓社
2012

推薦者
M1 平野

曲がり角での談笑、外階段での定例会。そんな路地裏での光景の尊さを言語化してくれる一冊。現代人の、作られた都市空間の隙間に自ら意味を与える力を信じ、人々にそうさせる空間とは何かを考えたい。あの街のあの店の、意外なルーツも見どころである。