

Preface

This year, during which the Venice Biennale's 12th International Architecture Exhibition will be held, marks exactly 50 years since the emergence of metabolism. This was the first influential manifesto regarding architecture and the city that had ever been transmitted from Japan to the world. The innovative concept called for the city to be metabolized by replacing its functional components as if it were a machine. But this megalomaniacal urban image hasn't come to pass. If one considers the tremendous change that Tokyo has undergone over the last half century, however, the ideas metabolism verbalized do seem to be quietly evolving.

Unlike the urban structures one finds in Europe that were created with a series of walls, Tokyo consists of an assemblage of independent buildings (grains). In other words, constant change is an inherent part of the system. In examining the unique aspects of this unceasing change, one realizes that the city of Tokyo is an incubator for new forms of architecture and urban architectural theories.

Following the huge crash of the capitalist economy in 2008, architecture lost its central urban role as an icon of financial power and a multitude of questions began to be raised concerning its ability to support our lives. Though the city is the site of economic activity, the majority of its space is taken up by living places. Whether Tokyo will take the lead in determining a new vision for the city is unclear. But in contrast to cities of the past that were shaped by tremendous administrative and financial power, Tokyo has the potential to create change in the city through the quiet accumulation of urban elements rooted in daily life.

Koh Kitayama