

Architecture. Possible here? “Home-for-All”

Towns washed away by the March 2011 tsunami,  
people who lost their homes, friends and family.  
What can architecture do for them?

Since the advent of the modern era, architects have held individuality as the highest value,  
distinctive originality as the very basis of their profession.  
Ultimately, however, are not most “architectural statements” merely egotistical gestures  
on the part of the architect?  
Why and for whom are we architects making architecture?

We built a small communal “Home-for-All” in a disaster area as an attempt to reconsider  
the basic “by oneself, for oneself” stance of the architect.  
A Home-for-All to reawaken, embrace and engage memories of lost homes.  
A place for people in search of a home to gather, share meals and support,  
and thus rekindle a sense of community.

We made this house without any barrier between “professional” and “amateur”,  
no distinction between “builder” and “resident”.  
Every step of the process was done together with local people: we planned together,  
thinking things through as we created, creating things as we thought.  
Builders became residents, residents became builders.

Like a plant sprouting up amidst the rubble,  
our Home-for-All is an “architectural lifeform” rising toward the light.  
An “architecting” growth.  
Although only a temporary shelter,  
it embodies a strong symbolic message of aspiration to recovery and rebirth.  
Although made by architects, this “Home-for-All” makes no claim for individuality,  
nor insists on originality. Rather than cleave distinctions,  
the architects share in the awareness of the residents. Can individual efforts transcend  
individuality? Herein lies the key to overriding the solipsisms of the modern era.

This exhibit documenting the entire process behind making our “Home-for-All”.  
We invite all visitors to ask yourselves: “Just what is architecture?”

August 28, 2012 Toyo Ito  
(From the exhibition concept description  
at the entrance of the Venice Biennale Japan Pavilion)