

In contemporary Japan, where unemployment, particularly among the young, has become chronic, and inequality and poverty grow worse every day, the high-growth economy of the postwar era is now a historical event that belongs to the distant past. There are several world-renowned works of architecture that emerged in tandem with economic growth in modern Japan. But the brilliant achievements of Japanese modern architecture have already been summed in *In the Real World*, an exhibition held in the Japan Pavilion at the last Venice Biennale, and many architectural works that emerged at the height of the growth period are now subjects for historians.

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Various phenomena act as an index of our times, such as the popularization of the Internet and other developments that have dramatically altered the information environment. But neoliberalism, rooted in the principle of competition, has deeply eroded every corner of the social framework, despite the fact that it does not appear to be an immediate threat like war, terrorism or environmental pollution caused by radioactive materials.

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With the additional sense of loss that arose in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which occurred on March 11, 2011, Japanese society is currently on the verge of a huge turning point. How is our architecture changing to fit this new era? Where exactly is our architecture headed? Whether it concerns the beautiful ornamentation of the medium or the drastic modification of an existing framework, many of the things we focus on here are not visible on a superficial level in the works. This is in part due to our emphasis on the links between people, things, and people and things – in other words, the primary theme of this exhibition is the importance of creating and changing *en*.

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This exhibition does not attempt to formulate a vehicle, such as those seen in Modernism, which set out to convey some kind of big story or slogan. Instead, it examines a variety of aspects related to individual struggles in the fight against conditions and issues that we are currently confronting. Though this fight, being waged on the front lines to ensure that we can survive these difficult conditions, may be in its infancy, the group of works presented in this exhibition, which focuses on a variety of *en*, has the latent potential to serve as a basis for social change.