

PRE-DIPLOMA REPORT
GRAHAM MARK BENNETT



BEYOND SUBJECT - BEYOND OBJECT
A HOT SPRING IN (LOCATION TO BE CHOSEN)

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AN EXPLANATION OF THE WORK

AIMS OF SEMESTER

TO OVERCOME A DIVISION

There are many dichotomies in western thought. The principle aim of my semester is to overcome one of them: the division of the subject and the object. I mean by this the division of the human (subject) and the matter of their surroundings that so often presents itself in the form of objects.

In the overcoming of this dichotomy, there are surely many possibilities. The main attitude to it that I will take is the following: this work will attack the division from both ends. It will be a work that is both anti-subject, and anti-object, in ways that will be later more fully explained.

In a more concrete sense, this aim of my project may be expressed in the following way, though it is far from complete: there will be an attempt to go beyond such things as the human as a self-identity charged being, or the human as perceiver; beyond the 'object-room', the 'object-picture' on the wall, the 'object building' that contrasts with its surroundings; and perhaps such things as the clear separation of functions, the clear separation of past and present; and more. The details of the work will necessarily depend upon its development, and trajectory.

TO FIND THE POTENTIAL WITHIN THIS

Another key aim of this semester is to find the potential that exists in such an approach. If the division human-subject and their surroundings as objects is overcome, what is then left? This will be discovered, and lessons from it taken.

TO MANIFEST QUALITIES OF THIS WITHIN A FINAL ARCHITECTURAL WORK

The final main aim of this work is the manifestation of this theme in a clear architectural work. This will be a synthesis of my research and will aid the communication of this through its obviousness and presence.

NOTE ON THE POTENTIAL OF THE WORK

EARLY FEELING FOR

At the beginning of writing this pre-diploma report, I had an idea of what the result of this work might be, of the effect that such a work might produce. This came about partly through research into sources that have inspired this work and partly through personal intuition. I was struck by a word used in eastern meditative practices – Samadhi. This word describes a state-of-being achieved at the culminating point of meditation in which there is experienced a feeling of loss of self, and of becoming one with the universe in a very profound sense. Timelessness, is also a part of this experience. I thought that perhaps the result of a non-object architecture, or a non-subject experience, might be a similar wider connection to things, in a profounder sense and on a different level.

DEVELOPED FEELING FOR

At a more developed stage; having looked more into the inspirations behind this work, and considered more deeply the effect that may be produced; I have come to learn or appreciate two things. The first is that in some way my early ideas are in a way extremely naïve: I will not be able to know the result of such an architecture until I have created it, and I should be open to it being something different than I expect. Thus an added aim to my work, is to better know and understand its effects.

A second appreciation is that this is a theme that has been worked on by others, who each use their own language, or see things in a particular way. This language has given me an inkling, though this may too be wrong, of what to expect. I have a feeling that the result may somehow be an experience that is more sensual, intimate, loose in a sense, relational, or nuanced; and there may be presences rather than objects.

UNCERTAINTY

Again I will not know before the work is completed, which itself may only be a stage to something further. But the period of writing this report involves necessarily a lot of expectation, and imagining. And I think it is important to express something of the thoughts that have followed from this.

NOTE ON THE GENERAL METHOD OR APPROACH TO BE PURSUED

NON-SUBJECT

In the process of meditation there is a preparation. The preparation is multifold, and of course may differ from practitioner to practitioner, or from one school of meditation to another. However, it is an important part of reaching Samadhi. Part of the preparation involves a loss of self that may be described in a sense as a loss of subjectivity. Preparations may involve such things as a giving up of possessions, cleansing of the body, cutting of the hair, numbing of the body through yoga, training and concentration on the suppression of individual thoughts in the mind, and so on. There may also be a space that is charged, that is prepared somehow to be one with the practice. It may be reserved for that purpose; it may be ritually cleansed, or incense may be lit to mark the movement to another state within that space. All of this involves a loss of self, a loss of subject, and as that is in part my goal. I take therefore an interest in such things and consider them to be potential methods for the accomplishing of my goal.

Of course, such procedures are not limited to practices of meditation, and as will be seen, the program I have chosen for this work is not one of meditation. I mention it, because it has inspired me, and because I think it is communicative, and useful.

NON-OBJECT

On the other side, there is a potential giving up of the object. Modernism has been much criticized it would seem, particularly by writers of the east, for its fetishism of the object; even going so far as to objectify time in the symbol of the human in motion of the detached staircases of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris (Corbusier). But Objectivism is not an approach linked only to Modernism, and indeed, exactly which style of architecture is most interested in this, is of little interest to me. What is however interesting, I feel, is that the opposite is possible, the non-object; and that to actively seek it is also possible; and that this may in itself lead to the discovery of a different kind of being, that is hopefully something more than a simple vagueness.

METHOD

Thus the method involved in this project is to come at it from both sides, to search for both the non-object, and the non-subject, and to find a place in the grey zone that exists somewhere between. This approach, or rather the two aspects of this approach, suit different aspects of the working out of an architectural project, as will be seen in the later text.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT TO BE UNDERTAKEN

IN GENERAL TERMS

In the following research project there will be both the chosen theme, non-object - non-subject; and also a specific program.

It is my belief that these two factors, theme and program, will be complimentary. The research of the theme could of course be a work in itself, but the addition of a program will help me to look more seriously into it, to 'ground the project', and it will help me I believe in communicating the project to others.

A challenge that will result from this is, of course, the integration of a researched phenomenon in a real project, and this will be a veritable challenge for me.

THE RUNNING' OF THE WORK

Before The Start of The Semester

Before the start of the semester there has already been a choice of program. This will be that of a hot spring. The grounds for this choice are that there lies within the nature of this program a similar potential for a progressive loss of self as there does in the rituals involved with meditative practices. There is an undressing, a cleansing, an immersion of self into another material – water - and so on. There are many possibilities to be explored.

As will be later mentioned, the author or architect who inspired my work was originally Kengo Kuma, and it was particularly one book of his, *Anti-Object*, that did so. However in this book, and to my knowledge at that time, there was no connection between Kengo Kuma and any sort of hot spring project. I have been fortunate in the time following this choice to discover that Kengo Kuma has in fact himself completed two such hot spring projects, and I take this as validation of the choice that I have taken in my work – though it remains to be seen how he has handled them.

During The Winter Break

During the winter break there will be a choice made on the location of my hot spring project. This choice has so far been considered of less importance than understanding the essence and approach of the work that I will take this semester. Each site will have its own potentials and restrictions, and I am not aiming to find the best site, but rather one with reasonable sensed potentials.

Also during the winter break, I will undertake an analysis of the two hot spring projects by Kengo Kuma. I will consider them both in terms of their anti-object attitudes and their anti-subject attitudes regarding the spatial/ritual progression in the spaces. I will also be open to things I may not yet have seen, or considered as important in this project.

During The Semester

During the semester I will carry out the following investigations and developments.

OBJECT, NON-OBJECT

Firstly there will be a general, loose exploration of the idea of object and non-object in terms of models and drawings. I will describe these in writing, both their altitudes/positions/ relations and I will attempt to describe their effects. I will attempt to extract the essential findings from this phase. It is my belief that this phase, though brief, will inform and lay the ground for the later work.

SITE QUALITIES

Then I will attempt to identify and analyze the qualities of the site that I feel can be of interest in the development of such a project. This may include factors such as materials, energies, the history of the site, the terrain, and so on.

There will then be an extraction of what I feel to be the essential potentials in the site for a work aiming at both a loss of self, and anti-object properties.

This may possibly include such factors as the possibility for concealment, or energies that are non-object like.

PROGRAM – IN TERMS OF ITS ESSENTIAL NATURE

In an initial stage the program will be investigated according to its potential nature. For example, is it a place to be, or to pass through? Is it to be a singular or a group experience? Is it to be a unique or a repeated experience? And how long can the experience be expected to last?

There will then be the extraction of potentials found in this, with a focus on building a narrative that is strengthening to the idea of 'Samadhi'.

FUNCTION

There will be a mapping of the functional requirements and relations of such a program.

ENCOUNTERS AND EXPERIENCES

There will then be an investigation into the potential latent in the encounters and experiences of such a project. Parts will be identified and they will be 'mapped'. These may be parts such as the first view or sound of water, or its effects; the place where one first touches/descends into the water; the place where one is first finally *in* water.

These will be assessed in regard to their potency for effect, so that it will be clearer for me to know where to make adjustments in the following stages.

ENCOUNTERS AND EXPERIENCES AS PART OF A PROGRESSION

The encounters and experiences will be laid out in terms of their natural occurrence. This will allow me to then investigate modifications of this in regard to changes in time and distance. Additions to these occurrences will also be investigated, such as the effect of a pool of water that one wades through which has no basis in function.

STRUCTURE

A then extremely important phase in the work is the consideration of structure, as up to this point the investigation will have considered possible experiences and other factors, but little of structure in any form.

GENERAL EXPLORATION

Initially there will be a general exploration of structure in terms of structural types, or inspired structures found (perhaps existing typologies) or conceived of during the previous work.

TESTING OF STRUCTURES

There will then be a testing of these structures, or of particular structures, against the factors that are at this point regarded as most fundamental or powerful within the project. This may include the relation of these structures to:-

Site – insertion/ arrival

Borders/thresholds

Spatial divisions, or mergings

Views, or energies

Furniture

Sculptural or painting insertion – though these are perhaps not so suitable in a hot spring – I leave the question open.

Light

Time (history)

Other found/discovered themes

CHOICE OF STRUCTURE

A single structural type will then be chosen for the remainder of the semesters work. This choice is an essential stage in the undertaking of the project. It is also a choice that in a sense must come early as there will need to be time left for its development. As it comes early, it may have to be a choice made as much on an intuitive feeling as on objective factors.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRUCTURE

The chosen structural type will then be developed in relation to the findings from the earlier phases. This is thus a *merged* phase. The same tested relations will be developed, program, site, and narratives now involved. Anti-object and anti-subject will remain at the core of the work at this stage, however it is foreseen that by this phase a greater understanding of the true potential of such approaches will have been reached. The development of a final work may therefore take a divergent path becoming in a sense a work of nuances, or relations. This remains to be seen, and is the reason for undertaking this investigation: to find out exactly what an architecture of non-object, non-subject, is or can be.

SCHEDULE

The aim behind my choice of schedule is to give sufficient time for the later work on development. Therefore the final half of the semester will be devoted to this, and the earlier work will be appropriated between the time remaining at the beginning of the semester. This appropriation will be drawn out more fully. The approach taken to the schedule after the beginning of the semester will be that completion deadlines are non-negotiable. This will give an urgency and an essentialism to the work that I feel will be of benefit in the early stages.

INSPIRATIONS FOR THIS PROJECT

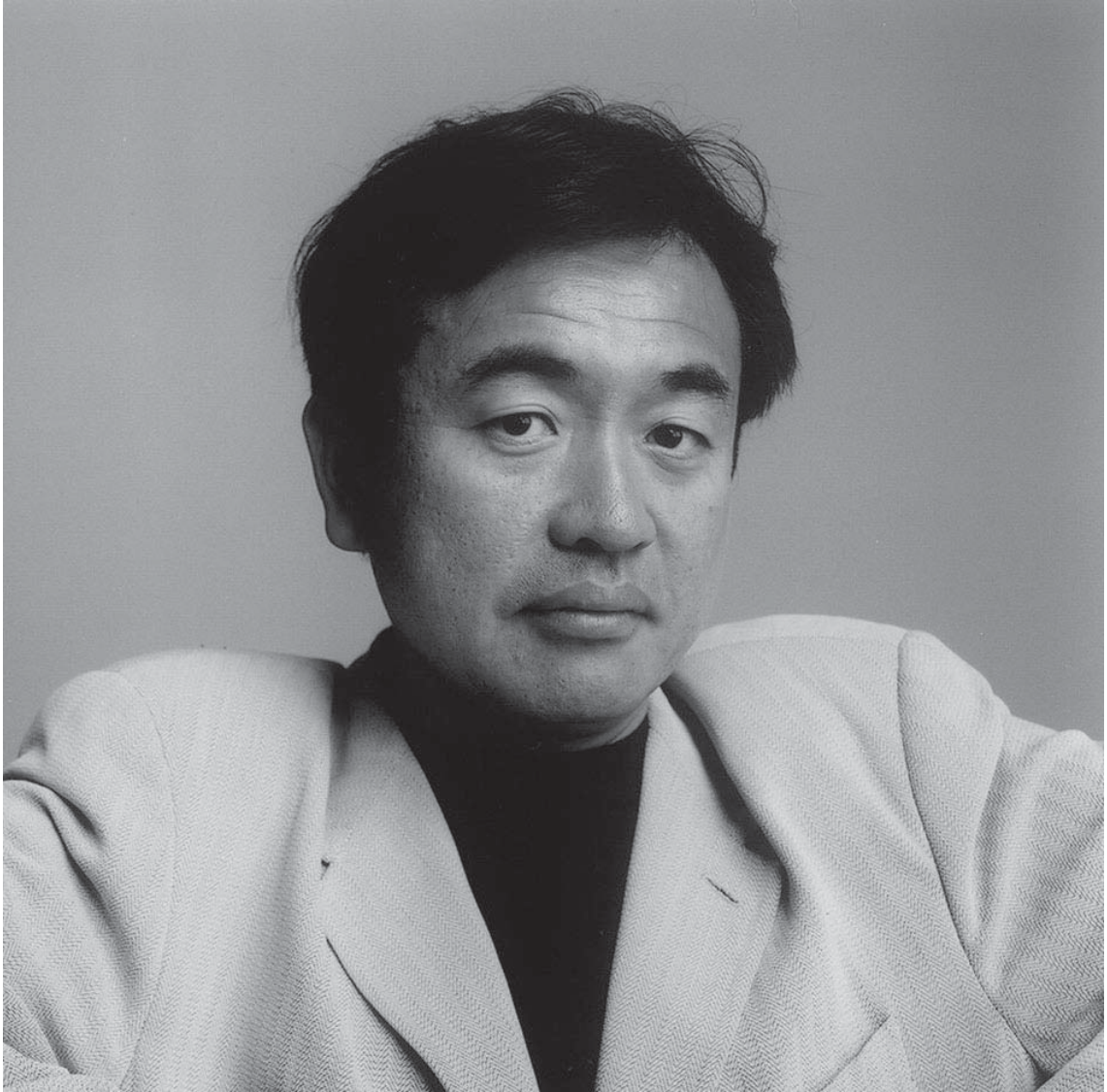
KENGO KUMA

As previously mentioned, one of the inspirations for this work is the architect Kengo Kuma. More particularly it was his work *Anti-Object* that, together with my own interests, instigated this work. The book itself is classified under architectural theory in the library of this school, but it is also – perhaps as much of architectural theory – a kind of manifesto: Kengo Kuma wrote this work with a desire to change the practice of architecture, a theme that I now take up.

In this book there are two principle parts that have been influential on my pre-diploma considerations. The first is the stated goal of his work, to aim for an architecture that achieves the ‘bridging of matter and consciousness’. This is notably a phrase he returns to time and again during this work, and it is key to its understanding. It is in a way an overcoming of the subject-object division. And its importance is the following: for the human who encounters an object, they are necessarily pushed into the role or place of a subject, and as such they will naturally be limited, both in terms of their relation to a wider context (both quantitatively, and qualitatively), and to the type of relation they have with *this* part of matter (qualitatively). Objects are thus both ‘*self-centered and coercive*’.

The second influential part Kengo Kuma’s overall method for overcoming this distanced and separated state of the human in regard to their surroundings. This is through the creation of the anti-object.

In regard to this term and to these thoughts I would add a qualification. It is not that Kengo Kuma claims that things are either objects or non-objects, but that rather there is a grey area, a continuum if you will, in which things assert themselves to a greater or lesser extent in their influence upon the human. Such a view, of a possible variation in the assertion of object or subject identities, is also taken up by my work, and the title of this pre-diploma report, beyond object, beyond subject, should be understood in that sense.



In his book, Kengo Kuma is also kind enough to name several of the techniques that he has used in order to overcome the 'problem of the object'. Among these techniques are those of 'erasing', 'minimizing' and 'breaking down into particles'.

Each of these techniques, and others, is referred to in terms of its use in a particular architectural project. Thus one can assess the presence, or meaning of these terms in the following works:

Erasing – Kirosoan Observatory

Minimizing – Noh Stage in a Forest

Breaking down into particles – Stone Museum

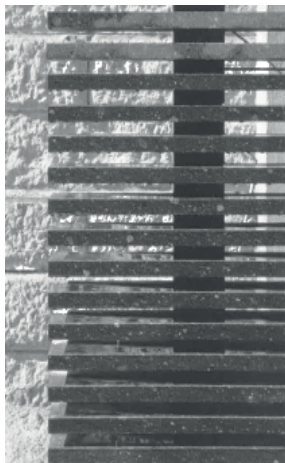
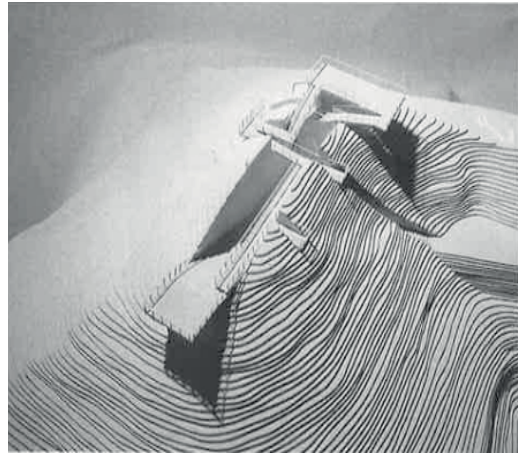
I make no attempt to explain the use of these techniques in these projects, these may be investigated by the reader on their own terms, but I would add that it appears that each of these projects contains in fact a blend of such techniques. It is perhaps that Kengo Kuma is only mentioning the one he feels he has relied upon strongest, or investigated most fully, in the working out of these projects.

As a further note on this book, I add that Kengo Kuma, as with the writers who follow, is critical of the western approach to architecture.

KENGO KUMA'S DIPLOMA PROJECT – A SPACE FOR MEDITATION

In the book *Anti-Object*, Kengo Kuma mentions his own diploma project: *A Space for Meditation*. Although I have been unable so far to find information on the exact nature of this project, one could imagine that it had at its beginnings an interest in the 'bridging' or harmonizing of matter and consciousness, as he terms it.

Similarly, I find it important that he has chosen a space for meditation for this work. The ideas of this process/ practice, and its transportation of the self away from the world of objects, being of interest to my work.



TWO HOT-SPRING PROJECTS

The two hot spring projects by Kengo Kuma are Ginzan Onsen, Fujiya, Japan, and Horai Onsen, Atami, Japan. The first of these is the rebuilding of a hotel at the site of a hot spring, and the second is merely the addition of a hot spring bathing area to an existing hotel. Both of these will be examined more thoroughly before the beginning of the diploma semester.

QUOTATIONS

Kuma expressing his goal, and naming of his approach anti-object:

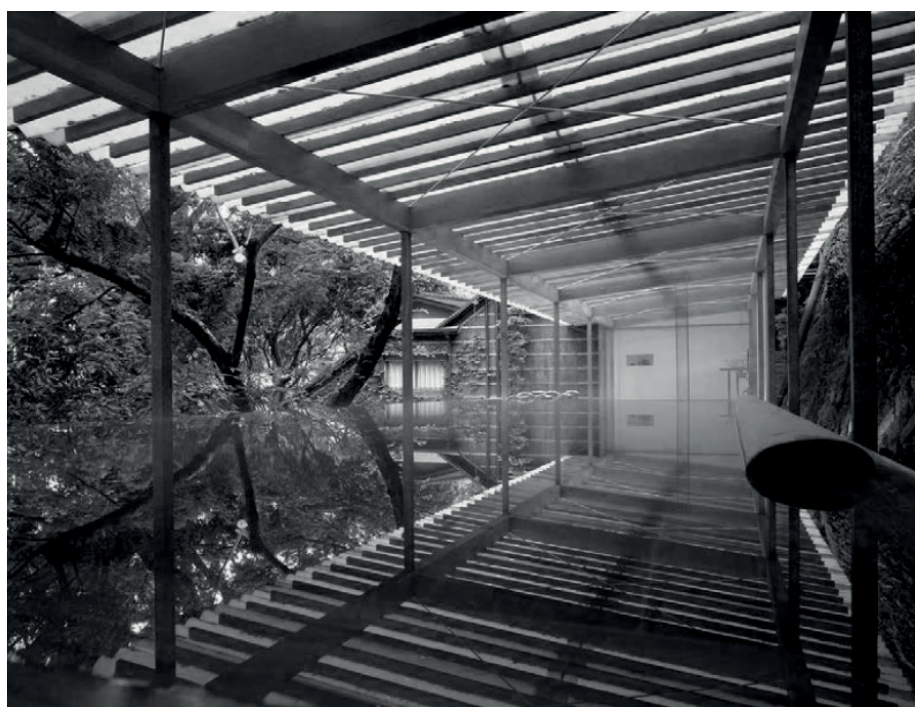
'We are composed of matter and live in the midst of matter. Our objective should not be to remove matter, but rather to search for a form of matter other than objects. What that form is called – architecture, gardens, computer technology – is not important. Until a new name is given to that form, I will call it the Anti-Object.'

On the definition of an object:

'To be precise, an object is a form of material existence distinct from its immediate environment.'

On the effect of object quality to experience:

'In a space dominated by objects, the subject remains to the end a subject. The space never takes on life and remains frozen, even if body and spirit are introduced into it.'



PLACEMENT OF THIS WORK IN A WIDER CONTEXT

KISHO KUROZAWA

After reading Kengo Kuma's book *Anti-Object* and laying out the framework of my diploma project, I came across the book *Rediscovering Japanese Space* by Kisho Kurozawa.

The main importance of this work to my understanding is that the interests displayed by Kengo Kuma are in fact a part of a greater Japanese, or possibly Eastern approach to architecture.

In this book, Kisho is very critical of the Western approach to architecture that he claims is obsessed/ characterized by the idea of dichotomies, that themselves stem from the dialectic tradition of Western thought. His aim, similar to that of Kengo's – the bridging of matter and consciousness – is to go beyond the idea of dichotomies.

A key concept to his work is that of Symbiosis: the working together of opposites. This idea is further developed into ideas of Diachronicity, the idea of temporal overlap (for example of past and present), and that of Synchronicity, spatially overlap (that can be seen in his dislike of clear divisions between rooms). It is also expanded into other areas such as the divisions between tradition and internationalism, mass and void, etc., all of which he claims are disturbing simplifications of something that in fact offers greater richness if thought of as a 'blend'.

A key example he uses to communicate this idea is that of Rikyu Grey (named after a Japanese tea master, famous also for his preferred 'colours' – shades of greenish grey), which I think is very communicative if one sees the spectrum of greys as representing Eastern architecture, and the West being seen in terms of black and white.

He refers to the image of a town at twilight to communicate the quality of this approach, the richness of the town increased by the blending of the background with the foreground and the dissolution of the distinctions between various parts.

QUOTATIONS

On the loss that results from dualistic thinking:

'In western culture, particularly in the currents of modern thought that are based on rationalism, it is considered important to clearly differentiate between any two distinct phenomena. But by dividing all existence in to either yes or no, interior or exterior, mind or body, the warmth that lies at the border between the two extremes is lost, sacrificed to rationality.'

On the warmth of spatial overlap:

'Peripheral areas and intermediating zones, places where no clear divisions can be drawn between opposing elements or distinct functions – such ambiguous spaces are ultimately the most human.'

On Rikyu Grey:

'Continuums crossing whole spectrums of values, allowing the coexistence of opposites; blurred boundaries between dimensions; and the acceptance of interchange-



able or reversible interpretations – all of these resolve into that conceptual grey zone reached through the medium of Rikyu grey.'

On a type of eastern thought; and like Taut (a discussion of who follows), a focus on the relational:

'According to Consciousness Only thought, these two apparent opposites are only that: appearances. This is not a philosophy of being but a philosophy of relationship – not "in the beginning there was creation", but "in the beginning there were relations." Relation is a source of dynamic creation, from which a manifold variety of existences rise, appear, and take shape. This dynamic, varied, plural state is nothing other than the state of symbiosis. When we interpret this sort of symbiotic space, we can read it binomially as internal space or external space; but we can also read it as internal space, intermediary space, and external space. We can go further, too, and see a plurality and variety of degrees, including completely internal space, slightly external space, space resembling external space, and so forth. The internal and external do not exist from the start as self-defined entities.'

BRUNO TAUT

Bruno Taut is referred to in the book *Anti-Object* by Kengo Kuma. He is named as being in part the inspiration behind Kengo's interest in the Anti-Object.

Taut's view of architecture, I believe, is interesting. Instead of a typical interest in the parts that make something up, Taut expresses an interest in the relations between things.

Furthermore I mention Taut because it would seem that he has come to this view of architecture after having overcome himself the idea of opposites. I am curious as to whether that may in fact be what is left, in some sense, if one consciously endeavors to overcome the subject-object division. And I wonder what then would be the relationships that occur, what would be their quality, and level of profoundness upon the human... Also I think that if Taut has been so taken by then, then perhaps there is something there that is really worth investigating.

Taut is also the first that I have come across who begins to refer to the importance of relationships, or who has placed so much stress upon their importance.

QUOTATIONS

Kuma discussing Taut:

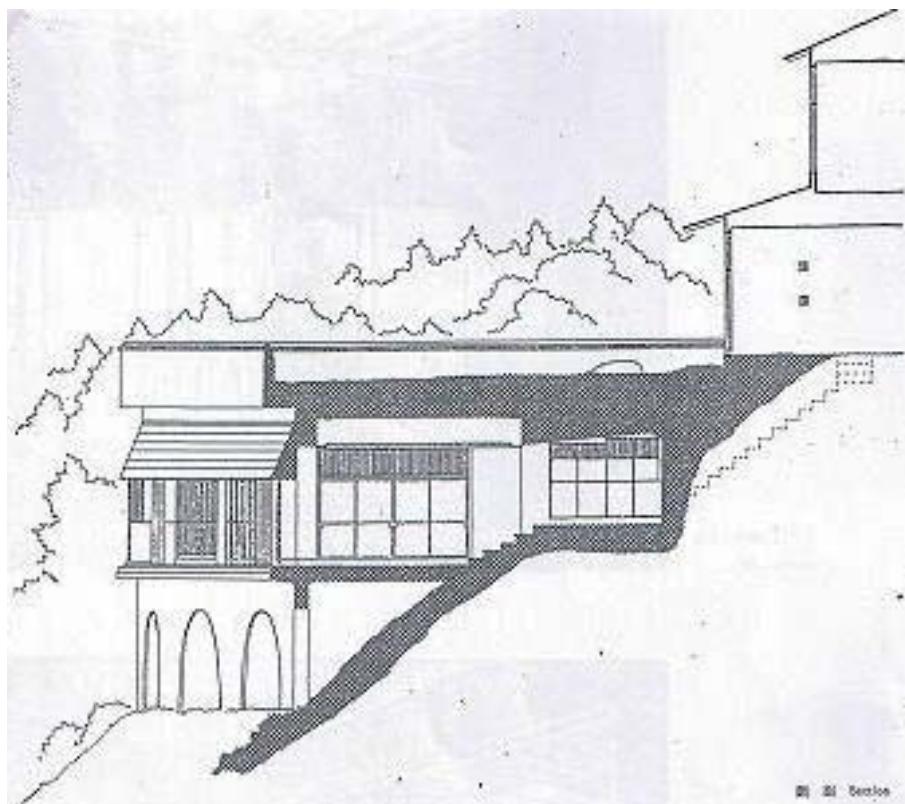
'Taut was referring first of all to the relationship between the subject and the garden. In fact he discusses the garden more than the architecture and even when he touches on this, he discusses it not as an object, but as a medium connecting the subject to the garden... This is an unusual view of architecture. Taut studiously disregards objects and considers just the connecting relationships.'

Taut on Katsura Imperial Villa:

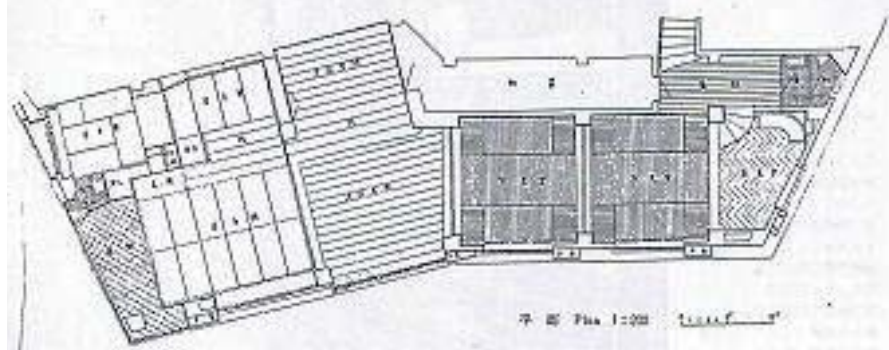
'The essence of this miracle is the style of relationships – that is of architecturalised interrelationships.'



Bruno Taut, The Higuya Residence: a structure that is positioned in the landscape so that it is never seen from the outside.



断面 Section



平面 Plan 1:200

日向別荘・邸宅 フルノー・クワド設計
 HIRUGA'S VILLA AT ATAMI Arch. Bruno Zevi

IMMANUEL KANT

For the sake of a completeness of sorts, I mention the place of the relation between subject and object as a central theme in much of philosophy. In this domain the work of Immanuel Kant may be found to be interesting, he seemingly has had a similar interest in 'bridging' the gap between the two.

QUOTATIONS

Kuma on Kant's work:

'He believed there was a fundamental divide between subject and object, between consciousness and matter – that had to be bridged by a universal form of human knowledge.'



FURTHER EXAMPLES

The scope of the object-subject division is of course not limited to those who explicitly write about it. I think there are interesting examples of a more merged approach in many examples, some of which are given below:

Frank Lloyd Wright, Fallingwater: the sound of the water is omnipresent, but the waterfall as object is not.

Frank Lloyd Wright, Taliesin East: the painting is not an object on a wall, but a part of its surroundings.



Sanaa, Louvre Lens: the trees behind are only partly visible, and thus are experienced more as energies, than objects.

Sanaa, Ferry Terminal: the joining of the land and sky is emphasized by the structure, but it's extent depasses the limits of a singular experience.



EXTERNAL TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE WORK

SUBMITTED MATERIAL

The submitted material will be broken down into two parts, the processual and the final.

PROCESSUAL

The processual will involve a presentation of the stages of analysis and identification, together with those of extraction of essential potentials. This will involve models, photographs, drawings and text. This will not be the inclusion of a process book that involves the spectrum of work done, but rather a crystallization of the key stages in that work. Here shall be emphasized the contrast between subject -non-subject, object – non-object in different relations where it exists, to lend clarity to the final work.

FINAL

The final work will be a realized architectural project. It will be presented by the following. A mapping of experiences and encounters (photographic and drawn). A visualization of the progressive loss of self. A visualization of nuanced energies, or the essential character of the anti-object (photographically). A scale model of the realized project, site drawings, plan drawings, sections through site, and building. Text which describes it as experience. An oral presentation of the process and result, will follow.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

I have divided the criteria for evaluation into those which I personally feel are most relevant to my project, and those which originate in the instructions for the pre-diploma report. Relevancy may be found in both.

MY CRITERIA

Presence of loss of self or loss of object status in the final work.

Closeness to the work: an understanding of what it does as effect.

Quality of communication of research.

GIVEN CRITERIA

Originality – though it is based on the work or approach of someone else, this work is somewhat a new approach, and quite developed from the range of teachings at the Oslo School of Architecture.

Cultural and Aesthetic value – If experiences: their qualities, counts among this, then I think it scores highly here.

Disciplinary Relevance - being as it is a project basing itself on an Eastern quality, and given that now is a period of transmission between East and West – the West still having a lot to learn, I think it scores quite highly here.