

20 YEARS OF ARCHITECTURAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN TWO CULTURES. LITHUANIA – JAPAN ARCHITECTURAL EVENT “EAST-EAST”

The concept of the Lithuania-Japan architectural event “East-East” was conceived and its implementation coordinated by Dainius Kamaitis, a Lithuanian diplomat and former ambassador to Japan (2006-2011). He paved the way for the bilateral exchange in the field of architecture by approaching both sides with a proposal to establish partnership and professional ties that had not existed before.

The idea of architectural collaboration between two countries was successfully implemented in Kaunas in cooperation with the Kaunas City Municipality and the Kaunas Branch of the Architects Association of Lithuania in 2002. As the event enjoyed a considerable acclaim on both sides, following new initiatives by D. Kamaitis, subsequent architectural forums were implemented in Vilnius and Tokyo, in 2009 and 2011, accordingly. The last event “East-East 4” took place in Kaunas in 2013 as a part of Kaunas Architecture Festival KAFe2013. All these events received full support from the Architects Association of Lithuania and Japan Institute of Architects. The events were also widely supported with public participation and media coverage.

The name of the project “East-East” is derived from the concept that Lithuania is located in the east of Europe, while Japan lies in the east of Asia. The concept implies mutual understanding, close cooperation and harmony. As agreed, all “East-East” project events had identical logical structure comprised from (1) Architectural Exhibition; (2) Public Forum/Seminar; and (3) Students Workshop; 10 architects and 10 architecture students from Japan, and 10 architects and 10 architecture students from Lithuania involved in the event.

The perspective of “Japan – Lithuania” is both an integral and dominating focus of this project. All events of the project moving around the principal idea of studying differences observed not only in traditions and cultural and geographic features of the two countries taking part in the project. Rather, its main goal is to look more closely at ideas around which mutual understanding can be built.

By searching for joint ideas and points of reference in approaching the task of producing culturally-shaped and contextualized architectural design, this project create practical conditions where professional knowledge and skills will be transferred, and experience and architectural design traditions will be shared among students and professionals not only coming from different schools and cultures, but also generations.

Working in multi-lingual, multi-cultural conditions has become not only a fashion, but a principal goal of modern life. By designing culturally-enhancing working conditions this project allow not only to study differences between diverse architectural schools, traditions and culture, but also to observe how these architectural traditions, values and ideas have become an integral part of those different continents and regions (as observed, for example, in their political histories, memories, and social and cultural imaginaries coded not only in the shapes and forms of buildings, but also in city and landscape planning).

The principal motive and logic for such comparison is quite simple – by accepting and understanding all diversities and sensitivities of traditions and social and cultural imaginaries the unity can be built; otherwise – a misbalance, a misunderstanding will occur.

The 1st aim of the Project moves around the idea of maintenance and further development of professional partnerships and knowledge networks between architectural design schools and associations of professionals and teachers of architecture in Lithuania and Japan.

The 2nd aim of the Project moves around the vision that it is crucially important to share expert knowledge and ideas of responsible and ethical architecture and design.

The international teams of participants take part in a number of joint events (workshops, exhibitions, debates, lectures) specifically designed to disclose all controversies and particularities of contemporary architectural design.

Project partners strongly believe that search for joint points of reference, for culturally enhancing ideas, for ideas of responsible living and knowledge-sharing are especially needed for the times when it has become so very clear (as never before) that sustainable and ethical living is a must rather than just a fashion.

Thus sharing locally-learned practices, sharing ideas and applying knowledge in international and geographically distant contexts is believed as very needed in this respect – therefore, the other objective of this project is also to make the exchanges between localism and globalization a reality; it seeks to show how local knowledge can acquire new features in a new, culturally and geographically different context; it also aims to demonstrate what new ideas can be learned from such an experience and how these ideas can be lifted to transnational levels.

All activities planned within this project offer cross-cultural platforms of knowledge-sharing and knowledge-building. Especially important and engaging are Students Workshops – these could be envisioned not only as events of high educational quality; they offer much more: international partnerships among students, experts and professionals, schools of architecture and design in different countries (Lithuania and Japan), and interactions between professionals and ordinary people.

Partners of the project “East-East” are associations of professional architects both in Lithuania and Japan: Architects

Association of Lithuania and the Japan Institute of Architects.

Architects Association of Lithuania (founded in 1924) unites Lithuanian architects having diploma of architectural education and a status of an Art creator (assigned by the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania). Architecture students and retired architects can become associate members of the organization. The membership is not compulsory. Today AAL has 1081 members.

The main tasks of the AAL are to promote quality of architecture and living environment, to raise public awareness and participation in the process of urban development; to enhance collaboration between different participants of urban development (state, cities, various institutions, societies, and professionals); to represent Lithuanian architecture internationally and in a global context; to foster international collaboration among Lithuanian and foreign architects.

Together with Lithuanian governmental bodies (Environment, Culture ministries and other) and institutions, research institutions and NGOs, AAL participates in planning and implementation of various programs and strategies, related to the architecture field.

AAL organizes architectural competitions, awards, exhibitions, seminars, lectures, conferences and other events in Lithuania and abroad; consults governmental bodies and municipalities; deals with questions related with architectural ethics.

Working in close collaboration with the Architects Chamber of Lithuania, AAL participates in Lithuanian Architecture policy making providing recommendations for legislative basis.

The Japan Institute of Architects was established in 1987 by Kenzo Tange (formed in 1886). JIA aspires to act as an organization that contributes to society, and is thereby trusted by the nation's people. Today JIA has 4,626 members.

JIA implements various activities to disseminate and enlighten the nation's culture of architecture; gives awards to architectural design of excellence to communicate the value of a culture of architecture to the society, publishes excellent research books on the architectural design, proposes ideas to conserve and restore excellent modern architecture.

JIA conducts joint research and studies with specialists of various disciplines to investigate what constitutes architecture, town development, planning, structure, environmental engineering and landscape design.

JIA supports citizens' development projects and recovery efforts after earthquake, and other disasters. JIA extends support through an international network to the areas affected by the large earthquakes in Asia.

JIA assists architects in documentation and application of methodologies, etc. JIA extends vigorous support to young architects through educational and training activities.

JIA exchanges experience and information with other organizations on the subjects of sustainable cities and buildings, architectural education, and international issues. The world convention of UIA 2011 held in Tokyo.

20 YEARS OF COLOBORATION

As mentioned, the history of project development between the two countries dates back to the year 2002 when a joint workshop and Japan-Lithuania architectural exhibition took place in Kaunas. Three consecutive events of the same kind were organized in Vilnius (2009), Tokyo (2011) and in Kaunas (2013).

All these previously organized events and activities attracted over 200 professionals and students of architecture from Lithuania and Japan.

“East-East 1”: July-August, 2002, Kaunas, Lithuania

The first event was held between July 30 and August 1, 2002, in Kaunas, at Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery. The Japanese delegation was led by the 1993 Pritzker Prize (often referred to as the Nobel Prize of architecture) winner Fumihiko Maki, and included seven leading Japanese architects Taro Ashihara, Chiaki Arai, Tetsuo Furuichi, George Kunihiro, Koh Kitayama, Hidetoshi Ohnoand, and Kengo Kuma.

The keynote presentation by Fumihiko Maki who was awarded with the honorary membership of the Architects Association of Lithuania, aroused considerable public interest. On behalf of the host side, Linas Tuleikis, a former Chairman of the Kaunas Section of the Architects Association of Lithuania, gave a lecture on the contemporary Lithuanian architecture.

“East-East 1” Events and Activities:

- **Exhibition.** Joint exhibition of works by the Lithuanian and Japanese architects kicked off at the very outset of the event. It was honored by the very presence of Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania.
- **Seminar.** A public seminar was held on July 30–31. It was divided into the following five sessions: New program, New building type, New order, New material, and East meets East.

- A broad and interesting discussion on the above topics evolved. The Japanese architects presented their ideas featuring their own practical applications, while their Lithuanian counterparts were more concerned with theoretical generalization.
- **Students workshop.** The workshop of students was held between July 27 and August 1 at Kaunas Art Institute of Vilnius Academy of Arts, dealing with the acute issue which Kaunas is facing in relation to adjacent rivers. During the Soviet period of the Lithuanian history, rapidly developing industry in Kaunas city left a significant trace in its urban fabric. After the restoration of independence, most of the bigger industrial plants built on the bank of Nemunas river were closed. The workshop groups were given the task to find effective points and propose a unique architectural concept which would facilitate the return of picturesque but desolated riverside areas back to the city. A group of 17 Japanese and 19 Lithuanian students of architecture were split into 6 mixed teams. The students represented the following higher education institutions: In Japan – Tokyo University of the Arts, Yokohama National University, Nihon University, University of Tokyo, Kokushikan University, Chiba Institute of Technology and Tokyo University of Science; In Lithuania – Kaunas University of Technology, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Kaunas Art Faculty of Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.

“East-East 2”: June-July, 2009 Vilnius, Lithuania

The second event took place in Vilnius and was held at Vilnius City Municipality and Contemporary Art Centre between June 30 and July 4, 2009. The renowned architect Riken Yamamoto led the Japanese delegation which included Taro Ashihara, George Kunihiro, Ken Yokogawa, Nobuaki Furuya, Takaharu Tezuka, Taira Nishizawa, Manabu Chiba and Hiroshi Sambuichi. At the opening of the event, Riken Yamamoto delivered the keynote lecture at Vilnius City Municipality.

“East-East 2” Events and Activities:

- **Exhibition.** Five Japanese architects Takaharu Tezuka, Taira Nishizawa, Manabu Chiba, Hiroshi Sambuichi and Shuhei Endo (the latter was not present at the event himself) exhibited their works under the title “New Wave of Japanese Architecture 2009” at Vilnius City Municipality.
- **Seminar.** On July 1, a public seminar was held at Contemporary Art Centre, featuring lectures by two speakers from each side, followed by a discussion. Discussion on architecture was continued on July 3 at the international conference “Architecture: a Part of Culture (?)” held at Vilnius Town Hall.
- **Students workshop.** Four mixed groups comprising 10 students each from Japan and Lithuania generated ideas aimed at the recovery of a problematic area. The point at issue – Park of Architecture, an area of about 58 hectares in one of the most beautiful locations in close proximity to Vilnius Old Town. The workshop was therefore tasked with proposing “hot spots” which would help in resurrecting the Park of Architecture and give new life to this socially degraded part of Vilnius city. The students represented the following higher institutions: In Japan – Waseda University, Tokai University, Kyoto Institute of Technology, Kokushikan University; In Lithuania – Kaunas University of Technology, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Kaunas Art Faculty of Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.

“East-East 3” Project: May-June, 2011 ,Tokyo, Japan

The third event was held in Tokyo at Japan Institute of Architects, Ginza TS Building and Gyoko-dori Underground Gallery, between May 31 and June 4, 2011. The Lithuanian delegation included ten leading architects Gražina Janulytė-Bernotienė, Gintaras Balčytis, Linas Tuleikis, Algimantas Kančas, Gintaras Čaikauskas, Linas Naujokaitis, Rolandas Palekas, Marius Šaliamoras, Donaldas Trainauskas, Gintautas Vieversys, and 10 students of architecture.

“East-East 3” Events and Activities:

- **Exhibition.** Japanese and Lithuanian architects exhibited their designs at Gyoko-dori Underground Gallery between June 1 and 29. It was a part of an exhibition “UIA2011 TOKYO 111 Days Before” which kicked off as a pre-event to the 24th World Congress of Architecture in Tokyo (UIA2011). The Lithuanian part of the exhibition included works by architectural firms, project teams and individual architects. Japanese participants displayed their own individual designs.
- **Seminar.** On June 4, a public seminar under the title “Billows Over the Architecture and Cities in the 21st century” was held at Japan Institute of Architects. It provided a platform to exchange ideas for a better future of architecture, emerging from the need to address the issues of climate change, population decrease in industrialized countries, economic conflict between the old developed countries and rising economies and safety of nuclear power. The seminar featured lectures by three speakers from each side.
- **Students workshop.** The workshop was held between May 31 and June 3 at Ginza TS Building. 10

Lithuanian and 11 Japanese students were split into four mixed groups and tasked with creating an attractive Ginza District in central Tokyo by means of new urban interventions. For that purpose, each group made research and design proposals on one of the four themes: Conservation and contemporary interpretation of historical buildings; Vertical circulation between small-sized commercial buildings; Facade/skin design of a humongous redeveloped building, and Open space utilization of public/private properties. The completed designs were presented at the seminar on June 4. The students represented the following higher institutions: In Japan – Meiji University, Keio University, Shibaura Institute of Technology, Tama Art University; In Lithuania – Kaunas University of Technology, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Kaunas Art Faculty of Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.

“East-East 4” Project: September, 2013, Kaunas, Lithuania

This project formed a significant part of Kaunas Architecture Festival (KAFe 2013) and was held in Kaunas at Žalgiris Arena between 23 and 28 of September, 2013. The Japanese delegation involved Ryue Nishizawa, Nobuaki Furuya, Kazuhiro Kojima, Kazuko Akamatsu, Koichi Yasuda, Akiko Miya, Manabu Chiba, Masahiro Harada, Toshikatsu Ienari and Takeshi Hosaka.

“East-East 4” Events and Activities:

- **Exhibition.** Ten Japanese architects Kazuyo Sejima+Ryue Nishizawa / SANNA, Nobuaki Furuya, Kazuhiro Kojima, Kazuko Akamatsu, Koichi Yasuda, Akiko Miya, Sou Fujimoto, Manabu Chiba, Masahiro Harada, Toshikatsu Ienari and Takeshi Hosaka and 19 architects groups from Lithuania exhibited their works together at Kaunas Žalgiris Arena.
- **Public presentations by Japanese architects.** The keynote presentation by Ryue Nishizawa aroused considerable public interest. During two days public lectures were held at at Kaunas Žalgiris Arena, featuring lectures by Japanese speakers, followed by a discussion.
- **Students workshop.** 11 Lithuanian and 7 Japanese architecture students attended the student’s creative workshop. 4 mixed groups of students generated ideas aimed at the recovery of a problematic area near the river. The point at issue – “Meeting Points. City and River”.

“East-East 5” Project: September, 2022, Kaunas, Lithuania

This project is the only project of Kaunas Architecture Festival (KAFe 2022) planned to take place in Kaunas in September 23-26, 2022 as a part of “Kaunas - European Capital of Culture 2022” events.

Architects George Kunihiro and Osamu Nishida will lead the Japanese delegation which includes Shinichi Kawakatsu, Kei Kaiho, Kenichi Teramoto, Suzuko Yamada, Shingo Masuda, Kozo Kadowaki, Eri Tsugawa, Tsuyoshi Tane and Yasutaka Yoshimura.

“East-East 5” Events and Activities:

- **Exhibition.** Ten Japanese architects Osamu Nishida, Shinichi Kawakatsu, Kei Kaiho, Kenichi Teramoto, Suzuko Yamada, Shingo Masuda, Kozo Kadowaki, Eri Tsugawa, Tsuyoshi Tane and Yasutaka Yoshimura and 19 architects and groups from Lithuania exhibited their works together in the former Central Post Office – one of the major highlights of Kaunas modernism. Opened in 1931, the building operated as a Post Office before closing down in 2019. Today, the building serves as a venue for Kaunas – European Capital of Culture events and patiently awaits transformation into the Centre of Architecture.
- **Architecture Forum - public presentations by Japanese and Lithuanian architects.** The keynote by leading Japanese architect Kengo Kuma was held at Kaunas Žalgiris Arena, followed by presentations of Japanese and Lithuanian speakers and a discussion.
- **Students workshop.** 8 Lithuanian and 10 Japanese architecture students attended the students’ creative workshop. 5 mixed groups of students generated ideas aimed at the recovery of a problematic “highscraper” building in Kaunas center. The workshop “A playground for Recovery” took place online in August 22-26 and was finalized in September 24-26 at Kaunas University of Technology department of Architecture. The final presentation of the completed works took place in the new library of Architecture department. The students represented the following higher institutions: In Lithuania – Kaunas University of Technology, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Kaunas Art Faculty of Vilnius Academy of Arts; in Japan – Tokyo University of Science, Shinshu University, Kyoto University, Meiji University, The University of Tokyo, Shibaura Institute of Technology, Waseda University, Hosei University.