

Feel What Architecture Should Be!

Interview with

Sou FUJIMOTO



Source: Sou Fujimoto Architects (Photo David Vintiner)

Sou Fujimoto was born in Hokkaido in 1971.

Graduated from the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering at Tokyo University, he established *Sou Fujimoto Architects* in 2000. This year, he has won the 1st prize for "Pershing", one of the sites in the French competition called 'Réinventer Paris', following the victories in the Invited International Competition for the New Learning Center at Paris-Saclay's Ecole Polytechnique and the International Competition for the Second Folly of Montpellier in 2014. In 2013 he became the youngest architect to design the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in London.

His notable works include; "Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2013" (2013), "House NA" (2011), "Musashino Art University Museum & Library" (2010), "Final Wooden House" (2008), "House N" (2008) and many more.



House N

Source: Sou Fujimoto Architects (Photo Iwan Baan)

In your "N House" project we can see different dimensions of space, and the borders between inside and outside are almost wiped out. How important you see these "layers" of space, and in what way you believe they contribute to the design, but also to the usage of the space itself?

Fujimoto: I have always had doubts about streets and houses being separated by a single wall, and wondered that a graduation of rich domain accompanied by various senses of distance between streets and houses might be a possibility, such as: a place inside the house that is fairly near the street; a place that is a bit far from the street, and a place far off the street, in secure privacy.

When people get influenced by their living environment and then find new meanings in their ordinary living environment, I find such architecture that brings a loop of mutual interaction like that is wonderful. The clients of N House once told me that they had this feeling as if their life had become synchronized with the nature, and richer but simpler.

The spaces you create rather challenge the clients – the users, unlike just coddling them. What is your process of firstly thinking and then designing a certain project?

Fujimoto: Sometimes I draw while seeking for new ideas alone, but it is also very important to have a discussion with my staff as well. New ideas, which surpass my own ones can be borne by interacting with other people. I am always looking out for new ideas but they don't just come to my mind suddenly but they always come along and ahead of what we have been contemplating and accumulating.

What is the main goal you want to achieve with the outcome of your project – client satisfaction, your own or are you driven by an architectural concept and aesthetic?

Fujimoto: I am always trying to feel what architecture should be like in the future. It is something very fundamental, creating a new space that supports the activities of humans. I am also interested in how surrounding environments melt into each other.



House N
Source: Sou Fujimoto Architects (Photo Iwan Baan)

Speaking frankly, nature and man-made, interior and exterior, urban and architecture, landscape and furniture, amongst such relationships, I hope to discover a new architectural possibility.

The transparency and brightness of your projects is rather fascinating, even refreshing one might say. Where do you find your inspiration?

Fujimoto: I get inspirations from various things. But what I especially like is diverse kinds of architecture and cities around, and various amazing histories of architecture.

My creative way to think about architecture is in a sense quite simple. We have, for example, the project, the site condition and climate conditions and the cultural conditions, and of course, the given programmes and the given schedule and the budget. We have everything on the table.

At the very beginning we just have open discussions, where all the team members and I can bring the ideas,

sometimes small models, sometimes just the sketches and then we could open up the possibilities of the project, not just focusing on one direction from the beginning, but we like to see the several different possibilities from that project itself. And then gradually, through the discussions, we find out some new ideas or combine different ideas together.

Finally, one project could have one conclusion, but through the process we could have many different concepts starting from the point of future thinking, so that is quite exciting process for me. It's not just one straight way; we have many ideas through the whole process and inspiration can be found while going through these processes.

What would you suggest for young architects and researchers?

Fujimoto: Let's explore the future together!

Interview: MSc. Vasilija Abramovic ing.arch.



Mille Arbres

Source: Sou Fujimoto Architects (Photo SFA+OXO+MORPH)



L'Arbre Blanc
Source: Sou Fujimoto Architects (Photo SFA+NLA+OXO+RSI)