

TOPICS



Jun Aoki

floating spaces

Amusement parks and open fields might seem like an odd pair of terms to describe architectural styles, but when Jun Aoki uses them to describe his work the comparison starts to make sense. To Aoki, “amusement park” is a functional style of architecture, where the purpose of a site and the activity that will take place there are clear from the outset. For example, a roller coaster can’t be used as anything other than a roller coaster.

So what exactly is “open-field” architecture? Aoki explains: “When we were kids there were often open fields around the neighborhood. Perhaps they had been earmarked for some kind of construction, but then they were left vacant so that weeds grew all over them and they became these run-down spaces. These vacant fields made perfect playgrounds for us kids. Their function was not fixed, so they were spaces where people could interact freely. In creating structures I want to revive that ‘vacant-field’ mentality.”

Being in one of Aoki’s buildings certainly imparts a strange sense of freedom. This is true of the series of Louis Vuitton stores that have earned him a reputation known worldwide, public buildings, such as the Aomori Museum of Art, and the many



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ABOVE: Louis Vuitton New York. By transforming part of the cityscape, this structure has the effect of turning New York’s skyscrapers into a forest of crystals.

BELOW: The Aomori Museum of Art is a unique structure where contoured white shapes hang above geometrically divided surfaces.

private homes he has worked on. “It’s hard to put into words,” says Aoki, “but it’s akin to a kind of floating feeling.”

Aoki does not construct buildings on the basis of any fixed theory, principle or style. “The previous generation of architects based their work on a national ethos of rebuilding a devastated country in the wake of World War II. However now that we have achieved the goal of modernizing Japan, the issue for architecture is not how to create completely new things, but rather how to view reality.”

JUN AOKI Born in 1956, Aoki worked with Arata Isozaki and Associates before establishing his own architectural firm, Jun Aoki and Associates, in 1991. His best-known works include the Aomori Museum of Art as well as his Louis Vuitton stores in Omotesando, Nagoya, Ginza, Roppongi and New York.

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