

ACAC

0:30	I just happened to win the bid to design the Aomori Centre for Contemporary Art (ACAC).
0:38	When I first laid eyes on the proposed site of the ACAC, I marveled at the natural beauty of the setting. It's not a convenient place in terms of accessibility, as it's built in the mountains. Only something truly extraordinary would be able to draw visitors to such a secluded place.
0:57	With the site perched atop a remote mountain in Aomori, I wondered if we could find carpenters, plasterers, and engineers to build it. Yet, reflecting on Japan's storied history, I knew the expertise of Japan's builders is nothing short of exceptional.
1:17	Such craftsmanship promised to create an attractive art center and build spaces capable of stirring emotion in every corner of its construction.
1:53	With its expansive grounds, we considered how to design the approach to the center, which we chose to construct with timber framing. From spring through summer, this pathway is basked in sunlight from above, while in winter, it is blanketed in snow.
2:05	This interplay between the snow filtering through the trees and the intense summer rays suggests a realm of contrasts, where the architecture feels vibrant and alive in every season.
2:28	Two decades have passed, and surprisingly, nature's beauty has far surpassed our expectations, our sensitivity to its splendor undiminished. It's clear that such a creation is uniquely possible in the dialogue between the architecture and the forests—and amidst the snow.
3:03	Winters in Aomori are harsh, even within the Japanese climate. Japan is known for its distinct seasonal environment, a feature that sets it apart from other countries in Asia and around the globe. Its seasons differ from merely spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Upon seeing the site in Aomori, I envisioned creating a structure that would blend seamlessly with the forest's greenery without damaging it. And by constructing a pond in front, the art center, reflected in the water, could evoke the same beauty and emotional impact as the Byodoin Phoenix Hall in Uji, where the architecture is enhanced by its reflection, potentially evoking awe in the viewer.
3:57	When I think about what architecture really is, it strikes me as an experience that people carry with them forever as a kind of sensibility.
4:13	Much like how a piece of exquisite music resides in the listener's heart long after the notes have faded, so too does an architectural space linger in the minds of those who have spent time within its walls.

5:00	The main structure is circular in shape, and the exhibition space inside is challenging to use due to its unconventional shape. However, this led me to ponder how this was actually a kind of freedom, how it might inspire creators to innovate and make new creations in such a liberating environment.
5:22	People often wonder how I came to design architecture. Well, I feel a sense of freedom when creating architecture.
5:37	When I was in my second year of junior high school, a carpenter came to convert our single-story home into two stories. From the very beginning, he was fully engrossed in the project.
5:54	At the same time, I realized that working diligently to transform your vision into reality was a way to liberate the spirit.
6:05	Watching him work tirelessly, often skipping meals, convinced me that it must be a fascinating profession. That's what led me to pursue architectural design as a career.
6:24	Visiting temples like Todai-ji and Horyu-ji in Nara and contemplating how these structures were built only piqued my interest. As this interest grew—coupled with experiencing the architecture firsthand—I began to dream of crafting structures that would leave a lasting imprint on the soul. This ambition spurred me to journey far and wide in my early twenties.
6:54	As an artist-in-residence, the architecture offers up new sources of inspiration for the people staying there once it becomes wholly enveloped in snow. It allows them to discover a world unlike any they have experienced before, and I think this is what attracts many artists to stay at the residence. It allows them to work within a space that not only serves as a platform for showcasing their creations but is also enveloped by the natural world—a setting unlike many of them have ever experienced. I designed the ACAC with the integration of the seasons in mind. It immerses us in the snow during winter snow and the greenery through summer, and incorporating water features further embeds the structure into the continuum of history.
7:44	When building the ACAC, I often reflected on my junior high school self and the freedom, courage, and perseverance of the carpenter who worked for my family. I kept thinking about how much joy I found in architecture, how exciting it was to be allowed to build something so fascinating.
8:13	When I contemplate how we think about history—and seeing architecture as a space where ideas of freedom, courage, and legacy meet—my passion for creating buildings grows even stronger.
8:33	If someone is stirred by the sunlight streaming through the trees, perhaps I've contributed something meaningful to those who experience this place. By creating architecture unique to this place in Aomori, I aim to draw those devoted to study and research, with the hope that this structure will endure for decades to come.