

AOMORI

0:15	First, I had to first think about what it means to make something in Aomori.
0:22	If you're going to make something in Aomori, you have to make sure it's compelling enough to warrant a journey there. Otherwise, there's no point for it to be there, right?
0:37	In that sense, it was significant that the site designated for the Aomori Museum of Art was next to the Sannai-Maruyama archaeological site from the Jomon period, a place of great pride for the people of Aomori.
0:54	So I realized at a very early stage that the museum would have to connect with the Sannai-Maruyama site in some way.
1:16	Yet, adopting a form that echoed the Jomon period proved impossible without resorting to imitation, so I thought a more neutral form, akin to a mere box, seemed adequate.
1:28	This led to the idea of digging trenches similar to an excavation site. The initial starting point was to see if we could really inspire the creation of a museum space using trenches. The idea was to cover these earthen trenches, which had been dug both horizontally and vertically into the ground, with a white object, which itself had an irregular bottom.
2:00	This interplay of forms dictated the rules of the museum's design. But it also raised the question of what we could achieve by constructing the entire museum adhering strictly to this single rule. The outcome, I believed, would undoubtedly resonate with artists. This approach produced many kinds of spaces—spaces with unusually high or low ceilings and very narrow vertical spaces, for instance.
2:31	It was all the result of these two uneven surfaces—the white object and the trenches—coming together, interlocking to create spaces that emerged by chance. Plus, if you think about it, having spaces of different sizes and proportions is beneficial for generating different types of artworks and facilitating different kinds of exhibitions.
2:52	Consequently, I thought this would ultimately align with the requirements for a museum. Given the fact that you don't usually find exposed earth walls or floors in a museum, I thought the idea might face some resistance at first. But the decision to build a museum in Aomori, especially next to the Sannai-Maruyama Jomon Site, convinced me that creating something of this nature would only be appropriate.
3:19	When bricks are cut at a 45-degree angle, they leave a gap at their intersecting corners—
3:34	a typically undesired effect considered a design faux pas and something you should never do.

3:39	In doing so, it makes the brickwork look fake.
3:44	But even though they look like fake bricks, viewing them from a different perspective shows just how thick they are and makes the viewer unsure.
3:50	I wanted to create a state of ambiguity, where it's unclear whether it's real or fake.
3:57	If it were made entirely of authentic, high-quality bricks, it would stand out as a temple of beauty, but there would be no room for artists to contribute.
4:14	My desire was to craft this ambivalent duality: something sturdy yet illusory, almost fake.
4:29	The exterior can be repainted white any number of times.
4:34	So, I'm not saying that I want the museum to be preserved in its finished state forever. I would rather see it evolve into something resembling patchwork.
4:45	This gradual transformation, I believe, suits the museum's ethos.
4:56	In this context, I deliberately chose to soften the presence of the brick, a material known for its strength.
5:08	Yet, this concept faced considerable criticism within the architectural world.
5:12	Many people even told me it was impossible. I knew I was suggesting the impossible, but I also knew it was just what this building needed. One characteristic of the Aomori Museum of Art is that there is pretty much no entrance hall,
5:33	a stark contrast to conventional museums up until that point.
5:37	But because we thought that the exhibition rooms were the most important part of the museum, we made the entrance very small.
5:51	The reason why I thought we needed commissioned works arose from the observation that temporary exhibitions tend to dominate museum programming in Japan. But the core of a museum should be its permanent collection—commissioned works that visitors can reliably expect to see at any time of year whenever there isn't a temporary exhibition.
6:15	That's how I realized just how important commissioning artwork was.
6:27	If the space housing <i>Aleko</i> were to lie at the heart of the museum's exhibition space, it would undoubtedly attract visitors who'd come just for this artwork. So I thought that room would serve best as a lobby, the ideal starting point for their journey through the museum. I thought it would be fitting that, from Aleko Hall, visitors' paths diverge into the various exhibition spaces.
7:06	The initial concept was inspired by the shape of a deer's antler,

7:13	starting as a single point at the base before branching out in two, and then splitting again. I thought it would be better if it looked as though something organic had branched out.
7:23	I found the ambiguity of it quite fascinating and instructive.
7:34	Given the unconventional nature of the space, I felt compelled to make a bold statement with the signage.
7:46	The standard sizing felt insufficient—even weak—and I recognized that, in some respects, size itself could become a powerful means of expression.
8:01	The notion that just by manipulating scale and size one could craft a unique personality was surprisingly novel to me.
8:11	Once on site, I brought in a range of sizes, carefully considering what was too large, too small, and just right.
8:22	When I arrived at the construction site, I noticed that the structure, exterior walls, and interior walls were all out of alignment. You can see the steel framework is exposed, right?
8:32	It's designed to appear as though all the components are being assembled on-site.
8:39	With that in mind, I wanted to apply my signage as if adding an additional layer.
8:48	Doing this gave me a sense of Aoki-san's intent when building the museum, and I had a feeling I had a feeling he wouldn't be opposed to these big letters.
8:55	I got the sense he grasped my meaning, too; buildings are essentially a collection of layers—inner walls, outer walls, signage, among others—that all come together to create the final structure.
9:09	This idea of layering was a theme I wanted to explore. All the textual elements within the space—including minute details in the back office and the emergency button instructions in the elevators—were standardized using the same typeface. It made me think that such consistency could extend beyond practicality to shape the museum's aesthetic identity.
9:45	The typeface for directional signage, other signs, and the logo are all identical.
9:50	Initially, I wondered if it would actually be possible to achieve such a lack of hierarchy through visual identity.
10:03	Even the logo has a bit of that quality. Typically, a symbol uses a single shape to communicate, but here, a series of symbols together form an overall image. Instead of concentrating on a single powerful element, I crafted it hoping that the collective image it presents would become the identity of the museum.

11:05	Initially, I admired it as a marvelous piece of architecture. And then I also imagined it dissolving into the snowy winter landscape or juxtaposed with the lush greenery of summer. It occurred to me that the museum's appearance could transform with the seasons and its environment—I thought it could be an important element that could make the museum truly captivating.
11:38	The color scheme included the brown of the earthen walls designed by Mr. Aoki and the blue used in Mr. Kikuchi's signage, with the intent to find shades that would blend well with these elements. Additionally, I wanted to ensure that staff attire would be fun to wear, something that feels less like a uniform and more like something that adds joy to daily life.
12:06	Naturally, a museum is a space for its visitors. It's also there for the curators who orchestrate it. Yet, I believe its principal role is for the creators—the artists themselves.
12:26	I thought it was important for artists to be able to play around there.
12:30	Essentially, I thought it needed to be an environment that could spark the free flow of a wide range of ideas.
12:40	So, in that sense, I pondered the notion of designing the inside of the museum as an indoor meadow.
12:50	For example, in the UK, you have the Tate Modern, which was originally a power station and was only later repurposed as a museum.
13:04	MoMA PS1 in New York used to be an elementary school. Even a train station in Germany has been renovated as a museum.
13:13	These examples helped me discover that buildings never intended to be museums can serve their purpose as museums more successfully.
13:28	I thought that such spaces, having been created with a very specific purpose in mind, probably possess a certain power inherent to their design.
13:40	Essentially, I hypothesized that if there's an intent to create something in a certain way and that concept is aggressively pursued, it might be possible to turn a museum into a space similar to a meadow.
13:56	I used to refer to this concept as “overriding arbitrary rules.”
14:21	At present, these five museums in Aomori have formed a collaboration, each with unique attributes that make them remarkably distinct.
14:32	Tadao Ando's architecture has a residence function.

14:36	At the Hachinohe Art Museum, the emphasis is on workshops and learning programs, which offer a kind of functionality distinct from exhibitions.
14:45	The Towada Art Center features rooms that house artist-specific installations embedded within them.
14:51	The Hirosaki Museum of Contemporary Art leverages its location in an old brick warehouse, maintaining the integrity of the original structure.
14:58	So, in a way, maybe it was a good thing that we never started from the conventional definition of the “art museum” when we built the Aomori Museum of Art.