

# HIROSAKI

0:46	Firstly, Hirosaki City hosted a competition
0:49	inviting architects to develop a design that looked to the future. The city presented a brief to pass on Hirosaki's modern industrial heritage to future generations by preserving the brick warehouse. In Japan, young architects seldom have opportunities to design art museums or participate in such open competitions. Despite the limited timeframe, I wondered if I could propose anything that looked to the future, and decided to give it my all, given that this was a rare opportunity.
1:21	People often mention the snow and cold, but for me, even though I was born in Tokyo, I've been to places like Hokkaido, Scandinavia, France, and Estonia. So, I was not at all surprised by the extreme cold. Rather, I was struck by how the city seemed to belong to another time as I was headed to my destination from Hirosaki Station.
1:48	It's the winding roads— they meander, like strange concentric circles. Even if you try to go straight, you find yourself wandering off the path. The city's layout makes it difficult to reach the center, and as a city that was once a castle town, it retains not only the intellectual heritage but also the essence of the architecture and atmosphere of that legacy. In places like Dotemachi, the city's main shopping area, the enduring character of the past is remarkably preserved, which was thrilling to me.
2:19	Because no matter how hard you try, there is really only so much one can build. As architects, no matter how much passion and effort we invest, our creations are inherently limited. The city is home to so much architecture spanning different periods, so when a single structure emerges, the city reacts. Such culturally endowed cities, capable of appreciating cultural value, quickly become vibrant centers that can spark reactions from every direction. It made me even more determined to work harder, and everything started to fall into place.

	<p>As for how to approach public architecture, the question arises: How can we generate public funds for the future? Although the museum is certainly intended for current citizens of Hirosaki, there was a desire to create a sense of public space enriched by time, one that links the Hirosaki citizenry, both past and future.</p> <p>The question is whether we can successfully inherit the legacy built by previous generations over the past century and, by preserving it, ensure it remains desirable for future generations to use. When I reframed this as a question, I resolved to safeguard what is essential to the extent possible while, of course, taking into account the building's purpose as a museum. I also adopted a "time-specific" approach to how I thought about things.</p> <p>Instead of having to increase the number of rooms, by staggering the times when the rooms are used, we would be able to meet the museum's requirements while preserving the original space's proportions and utilizing its existing dynamics, all without demolition. Given the remarkable capacity of humans to adapt, we made a proposal suggesting that by adapting to the existing spaces, we could significantly improve their usability. When an idea is presented, it sparks conversation, and through dialogue, the city seems to start understanding things better.</p> <p>I think that because there were people in city hall who appreciated the rich historical and cultural heritage of the city, it naturally led to our collaborative efforts.</p>
3:05	<p>Running workshops and showing support can also serve to increase public engagement. We decided to establish the library upstairs as a space for learning, where one can freely explore the museum and engage with art. After viewing an exhibition, you can walk into the library and encounter art books, which facilitates further learning and discovery. The space can also be used for workshops and talks.</p> <p>Building C was originally scheduled for demolition due to its severe deterioration. And even though it wasn't initially included in our renovation plans, I recognized the importance of maintaining it as a public space, so I proposed that it be preserved.</p>
4:37	<p>Usually, when it comes to renovations or refurbishments, the new elements tend to steal the spotlight.</p>
5:46	<p>I've thought long and hard about how to bring the old to the fore and make something less novel. Fortunately, I am based in France, where preservation and restoration techniques are exceptional. This is especially true in Italy. The depth of history that has been painstakingly preserved throughout the generations is truly remarkable.</p>
5:55	<p>It's an approach to architecture that I'm profoundly in awe of, which involves taking on tasks beyond our own capabilities and projects that cannot be completed in just one generation. This site, having served as a rice warehouse and later adapted for cidre production, is imbued with layers of time. Even as the usage of the warehouse changes, I have always envisioned creating a future that isn't entirely new but rather exists as one layer among various layers of time, where significant moments are interwoven like a patchwork.</p>
6:17	

7:08	<p>One of the requirements set by the City of Hirosaki for the competition was to design a retro-modern identity for the museum. We conducted archaeological work on this brick warehouse ourselves, delving into grasping a fundamental knowledge of the building before approaching the design. Through extensive research, we engaged in archaeological work to uncover the unseen, the forgotten, the things that have ceased to exist. During our research, we discovered that, inspired by the abundance of apples in Hirosaki, French cidre experts were invited to produce sake using their knowledge of cidre production. We had to consider what cultural and social messages we could share by transforming the collective memories made in Hirosaki into something for the future—by converting a warehouse with its aging roof and old bricks into a contemporary art museum. We immortalized the memories of apples and cidre on the roof, for example, crafting a distinct landscape. I thought that architecture could play a role in creating an original scenery through witnessing this roof. This then led me to propose the “continuation of memories” as a general concept.</p>
8:44	<p>As time passes, snow settles on the roof, unveiling the subtle stirrings of every movement, gradually capturing light at slightly different angles. I wanted to explore not only the aspect of the sediment of time, which is a strength of Japanese architecture but also the incorporation of movement as time passes.</p>
9:03	<p>Nowadays, exhibitions easily become media spectacles, but at their core, museums are built around collections, research, and preservation—occasionally opening their doors to the public. In the 19th century, owning a collection was central to the legitimacy of a museum. But the idea of creating a museum without a collection seemed like a bold move, raising the question of whether such a thing could truly be done. In this context, creating a structure where the museum is created first, followed by the art collection, represents a significant new model for regional museums in rural areas. This site-specific approach enables the accumulation of memories in a manner unique to this brick warehouse and offers artists the opportunity to showcase works exclusive to this space.</p> <p>In an era where global and local are interconnected, Hirosaki is linked to the rest of the world. The framework of the exhibition hall also incorporates structural elements from the Polonceau system, developed by an engineer who designed railway stations in France. The roof is constructed in the French style; meanwhile, the museum also features queen post trusses,</p>
10:21	<p>large-span structures characteristic of English wooden architecture. This brick warehouse in Hirosaki has a deep connection with these global traditions, and I hope that this project will help foster Hirosaki's connection with the world and help shape its future as a contemporary art museum.</p>
10:56	<p>The collaboration between these five museums offers something that cannot be achieved by a single museum alone. They are also geographically apart in a positive sense, so their regional characteristics differ, as do their food, lifestyles, and cityscapes. The times in which they were founded differ, as do the origins of each city. When museums in such cities collaborate, it allows for more than just simple communication or publicity; it fosters a genuine collaboration between art and architecture. Eventually, this could give way to residencies or concurrent exhibitions by artists, even the potential to swap artworks between museums. This potential for collaboration among five institutions is unique even by global standards, making it an intriguing initiative.</p>