

# TOWADA

0:42	It must have been the time I first visited the site of the art center. Compared to Tokyo, Towada had this incredible clarity and transparency that felt really refreshing.
0:56	As I continued to visit as part of the design process, I came to realize that Towada really is beautiful throughout all four seasons.
1:05	I didn't want to create a building where you couldn't tell where you were. I thought it would be nice to build somewhere you could feel the allure of the city from inside the museum.
1:13	Of course, I had these ideas before starting to design the building, but in Towada, I approached the design with more confidence and conviction.
1:36	When first talking with the City of Towada, what I remember most was their wish to revive the entirety of Kancho gai Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare. Originally a bustling street filled with government buildings and public institutions, the city had a grand design to rejuvenate it beyond that role to become an "avenue of art."
2:05	The museum was envisioned as a central part of this project, and I had always thought of creating a building that would integrate well with—or become part of—the street itself.
2:27	The idea was that as you walk along the street, the building would appear amidst the vacant lots, making you think of the entire street as a museum. The building is really just one part of the museum, one of the exhibition rooms. I wanted to create a connection with art that goes beyond the physical boundaries of the site, a connection between people and art that you can feel just by walking down the street without ever stepping foot inside.
3:09	On the one hand, there are artworks directly opposite and diagonal to the museum in plain view, so you can see them from the street without coming inside. So I also thought about creating a building that wouldn't feel out of place in that context. There were a number of commissioned artworks, some sitting out in the open along the street, while others happened to be covered or masked.
3:37	I envisioned a museum that fit seamlessly into the continuity of the street, providing a meaningful place as an integral part of the street as a whole.
3:51	Consequently, to avoid the confusion of multiple rooms within a single large structure, we decided it would be better to give each piece of art its own structure, which would then unfold along the street.
4:09	Some of the artwork was exposed, while others were covered, resulting in architecture that felt like a collective.

4:41	For artworks that benefit from ample natural light, we decided to make something resembling a showroom window along the road, visible to passersby as if they were going window shopping. I thought if someone found what they saw interesting, then they would come inside. For video art, on the other hand, I thought it would be interesting to give them a sense of something hidden deep within the city.
5:09	Moreover, from inside the museum, I believed it was important not just to view the art but also to be able to look out onto the street.
5:21	Rather than just an experience confined to the museum itself, I think you feel a change in the atmosphere as you walk down the street from the shopping arcade. As you make your way, you enter this building and then go to the next building via a corridor. I wanted this corridor to be open, allowing you to feel the city and the seasons of Towada.
5:45	When you enter the first exhibition room, you naturally feel the presence of the second and then the third exhibition rooms, suggesting an organic unity that goes beyond the physical boundaries of the site. However, at least for this room, which features artwork by Michael Lin, by facing it diagonally forward and making the inside visible, it seems to intuitively suggest, "Okay, let's go there next." I wondered whether it would be more obvious if the facade was deliberately turned outward at an angle to distinguish it from the fire station next door.
6:21	The term "architecture" might be something of a misnomer here. We happened to put a roof over the art, but that was just incidental. Ultimately, the goal was to put art out on the street. In my mind, art is a symbol of freedom.
6:48	Some artworks want to stand along the street, and some want to rebel against it. With such variety, I think we come to appreciate human freedom and the freedom of imagination.
7:04	In that sense, I preferred freedom over having everything aligned in a grid. While some elements harmonize within the grid, others clearly attempt to break away from it.
7:23	It becomes a bit complex from an architectural standpoint because the site is rectangular. I had the dual desire to conform to the site while also wanting to stand apart.
7:34	Both desires emerge every time I design something.
7:37	And this is the result of trying to achieve both. To prevent large forms from dominating from behind, the overall structure is taller in the center and lower around the edges. There was a conscious effort to reduce any imposing presence towards the back. I was very concerned with maintaining an overall sculptural coherence.
8:12	The fact that the city itself was built on a grid holds significant meaning and turns the entire city into a piece of historical heritage. I found the sense of space to be very comfortable, without everything being packed into the building, the gaps creating a sort of transparency.

<p>8:28</p>	<p>In that sense, it might be okay if the museum doesn't crowd its entire space with programming. Placing art in abandoned vacant lots sort of turns the negative into a positive. Spaces that we currently think of as vacant might become the next center of the urban space. Of course, buildings are still very much central today, but there's a sense that both could be the center. I found that to be an interesting aspect of architecture, or urban planning.</p>
<p>9:25</p>	<p>This flies in the face of what I said earlier about the importance of presence in architecture, but to anyone looking, this building is clearly not a place where you go to pay taxes. And it's not a place to drop off a postcard. So what kind of place is it?</p>
<p>9:46</p>	<p>I mentioned "just covering the art," but you wouldn't just toss an unwrapped birthday present to someone, would you? You'd wrap it nicely. It's the same with shrines.</p>
<p>9:57</p>	<p>Initially, a shrine is just something with a roof, but that alone isn't enough. So, an under-eave is added in front, and then it is raised further, creating the familiar form. Even without knowing anything about it, you recognize that it's a special place.</p>
<p>10:15</p>	<p>In essence, to praise and celebrate the contents is the foundational archetype of architectural design.</p>
<p>10:31</p>	<p>It's just a cover, but that doesn't mean that anything will do. Fundamentally, it's the same with housing. A house built with the mindset that what's inside doesn't matter won't be good, will it? The same applies to museums.</p>
<p>11:01</p>	<p>I find quite pleasing the notion that art can exist at street corners, not confined within the museum grounds, and that this can be intuitively understood.</p>
<p>11:10</p>	<p>We started with a commitment to white, but in the end, it's not about the white cube—art can also belong in the home. Even more fundamentally, it doesn't necessarily need to be the work of artists. I sense that, eventually, it could evolve into a format where it's no longer necessary to invite famous artists.</p>
<p>11:50</p>	<p>Ultimately, what I might be trying to say is that art and life are continuous, inherently part of the same world.</p>