

ARCH 384: Competitions Elective, Final Essay

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Due : May 8, 2007

Precedents used for this project are not only inspirations for the architectural design of our competition submission, but also have aspects of sustainability. This essay will discuss Toyo Ito's Sendai Mediatheque, Foreign Office Architect's Yokohama International Port Terminal, as well as David Adjaye's Dirty House. Our competition design is a combination of some of the ideas embodied in those projects mentioned. Through the manipulation of walls, materials, and structure these buildings create a life within an enclosed environment. Each building chosen has a different program, but each is inspiring in the way the architecture supports each respective program. Sendai Mediatheque is a public centre for the arts, as well as a gathering space for social interaction, FOA's design is a port terminal, while Adjaye's work is a residence for two artists. Although each may be categorized into a specific typology, they simultaneously question the definition of their respective types.



¹ Much of the inspiration for this design came from Toyo Ito's Sendai Mediatheque, The program incorporates galleries, theatre, studios, workshops, and a library. Ito's design seems to give an ethereal feeling, as the glass façade transforms throughout the day. The floor to floor glass windows allow an uninterrupted experience of the surrounding environment. At night, the glass façade and the interior lighting create the effect of a lantern.





3.4 FOA's Yokohama Port Terminal in Japan was another influential work. The building's main feature is its wood floor.

The floor slants and curves to form a sloping, plastic landscape. This continuous feature from exterior to interior, in conjunction with the angled way the glass walls are installed, blurs the definition between the two environments. The angling of the glass wall entrances is a clear example of how structure can become sculpture.



5, 6



7.8 David Adjaye's "Dirty House" was also an important precedent in this project. In one respect, Adjaye's Dirty House might be seen as a complete opposite to that of the Sendai Mediatheque. Dirty House, with its mute, solid black façade, hides behind and within the house, another

life. Conversely, Ito's and FOA's designs seem to strive to bring this life from inside to out, and to blur the defining line between interior and exterior.



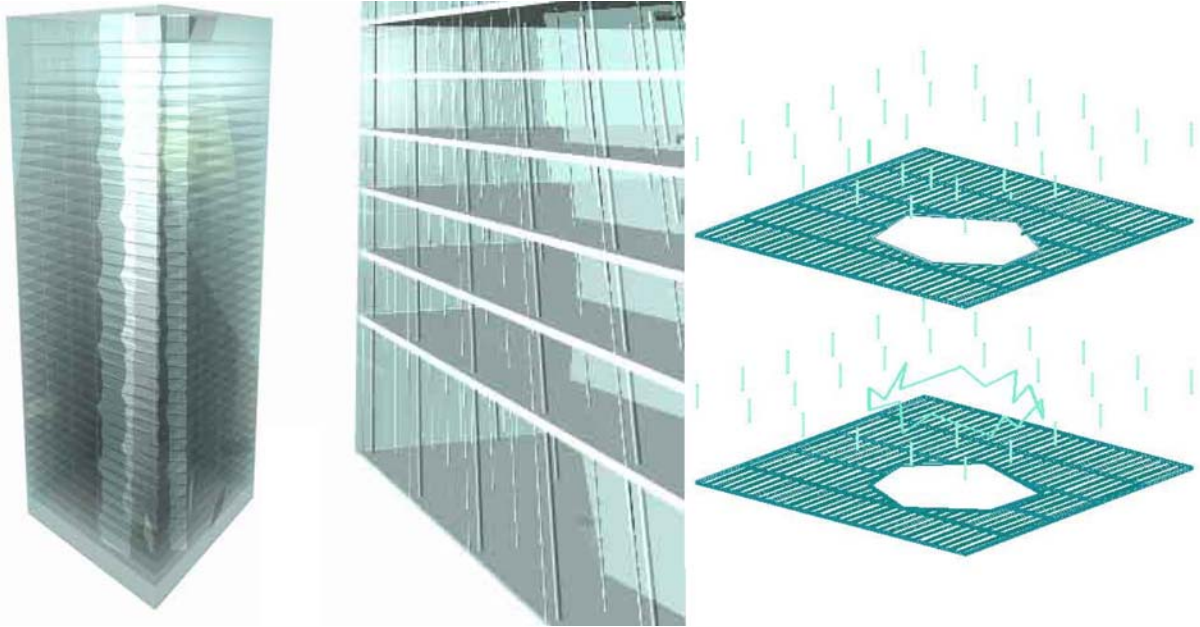
⁹ These buildings also carry certain sustainable aspects. In Sendai Mediatheque, the voids created by the circular placement of the tubular columns serve to provide ventilation throughout the building, as well as provide natural lighting into the space. (IMAGE)

There is a double-glass façade system along the south wall, in order to eliminate excessive use of energy to heat and cool the building ¹⁰. A cooling updraft can be created by the opening the vents in the double skin façade during summer months, while closing the vents will help trap heat within the two layers, thus insulating the building. FOA's design eliminates excessive heating and cooling by only conditioning the space within two meters off the ground. This is an intelligent way of conditioning the space, as these two meters will be the inhabited area. In addition, a great part of the exterior is composed of a green roof. In fact, there was enough green roof space incorporated into the design for the building to be designated as a municipal park in Yokohama.

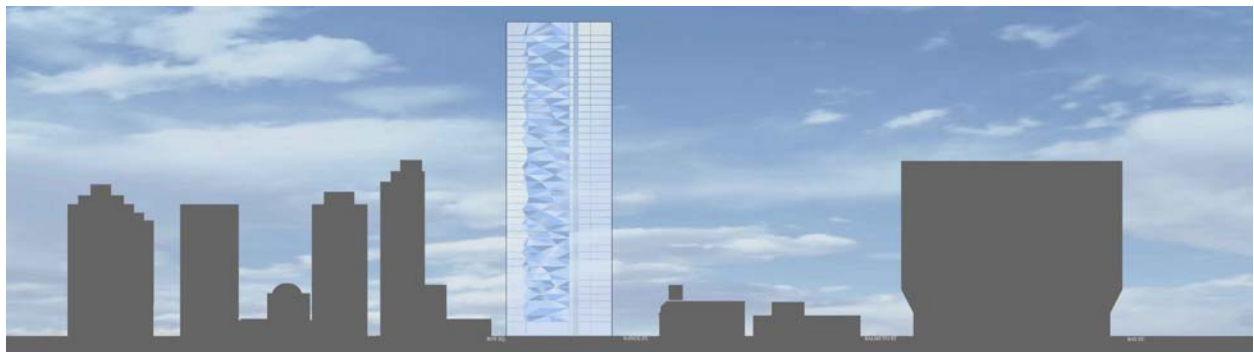


The design of the competition submission was for an office tower located at Yonge and Bloor in Toronto. This competition submission might be seen as a combination of those ideas previously mentioned.

The singular atrium is the connecting element between all the levels. It is essentially like a glass rectangular prism, with an irregular, crystalline void. The nature of the glass of the façade creates an ephemeral object. The simple rectangular prism form causes a sense of wonder, piquing a sense of curiosity to find what's within. Changing light conditions throughout the day allow glimpses and reflections of the steel structure of the atrium along the glass façade. Once inside, one would fully experience the sculptural quality of the atrium, and the grandeur and dynamic quality of



the space created by the slanting structural columns and the angled glass wrapped around the void. While physically vertically connecting a social environment, the void would also be used for ventilation and a main source of natural light from the glassed roof. This provides for a comfortable environment for the people occupying the program areas of the building. The building would house restaurants, cafes, but is largely used for office space. Throughout the building are pockets of double height gardens. These gardens are spaces for relaxation on a lunch break, for example, but would also act as function spaces, where special events might be held.



In one respect, our building is essentially a 30+ storey building, defined within the same boundaries as the towers surrounding the Yonge and Bloor site. If one were to imagine the CIBC building in its most basic form, it is essentially identical to our own tower. However, this would be too simple a

definition. Architecture can be defined by more than simply the number of walls and floor plates. Our design is more than a simple glass office tower. It differentiates itself by the interior space created by the architecture. It is a public space, connecting a social fabric; it is a landmark in the city; it is a product of cultural identity. Sendai Mediatheque, Yokohama Port Terminal, Dirty House each question the problem of typology. Each design separates itself from what might be considered as what a community centre, port terminal, or residence should appear and function. Sendai Mediatheque, with its multitude of programs, extends its use past the basics of what a community centre is; Yokohama International Port Terminal questions reasons why a port terminal should be built as standard rectilinear walls; Dirty House abandons the typology of the suburban home in its form and interior.

Our designs are an amalgamation of the architecture we admire. There are elegant poetic moments within each building that has resonance in our tower design. Like the Sendai Mediatheque, our design strove to be more than a simple office tower. We incorporated gardens, restaurants, retail, and cafes into the program. This is to enliven the Yonge and Bloor intersection in Toronto, which is becoming a dead zone at night. The street nightlife does not carry itself to this specific point in Toronto which, being a major street intersection holds great potential for development. By combining more elements into our building program, the design would help to bring people back to this place. It would become more than a cross road between two streets, surrounded by monstrous office towers (i.e. the CIBC building, IMMMAAGE). By developing restaurant and retail at this location, it would be a major step towards building the urban life Yonge and Bloor is now lacking. The actual architecture of the design very clearly takes inspiration from the beautiful, simple, mute form of Dirty House or Sendai Mediatheque, while seeking to provide people with a dynamic public space. Furthermore, the design also takes from one of the biggest concepts in architecture at the moment: sustainable design. Our tower does so by using a double skin glass façade system on the south side to act as insulation, thus reducing energy consumption, as well as providing green space

throughout as public space and to cleanse the air. The steel structure of the building, aside from the atrium, is a very simple system of beams and columns. This reduces construction costs and waste production. The large 9 meter spans between columns, made possible by the structural integrity of steel, allow for maximum flexibility for offices, which may change often.

The three buildings discussed, Ito's Sendai Mediatheque, FOA's Yokohama International Port Terminal, and Adjaye's Dirty House, all sought to redefine a typology. What is generally accepted as types of building today, although still relevant, have been transformed by the architecture of the three buildings. Our design competition tried to do the same. Taking inspiration from those three works, our tower design is more than a simple high rise office building. It is architecture that promotes sustainability and nurtures social interaction.

ENDNOTES

¹ Miyagi Prefecture, http://www.miyagitheme.jp/cd/main_data/photo_data/photo_sendai/sendai_mediatheque.jpg

² Le films d'ici, http://www.lesfilmsdici.fr/moteur/gimages/mediatheque_de_sendai1s.jpg

³ OIII, http://www.OIII.com/lud/pages/architecture/archgallery/foa_yokohama/pages/foa-yokohama_15.htm

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ OIII, http://www.OIII.com/lud/pages/architecture/archgallery/adjaye_dirty-house/index.htm

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Sendai Mediatheque, <http://www.galinsky.com/buildings/sendaimediatheque/index.htm>

¹⁰ Ibid.

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