THE SYMBOLIC ZONE

Progress [Tradition]
Harmony [Dissonance]
For All Mankind

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INTRODUCTION

The 1970 World Exposition in Osaka was the first Expo to be held by an Asian country, and until recently, was the largest and most attended Expo in history. While political and economic narratives of prosperity can most clearly be swept into a unified ideology of progressive Japanese society and culture, a closer examination of the dissonant voices: the state, the architects, the artists, and protesters involved in the Expo enables a new way of interpreting the relationships between public events, public space, symbolic art, and engagement with anti-sentimentalities.

Most prominently, the literal and figurative “trunk” of the Expo master plan, the ‘Symbolic Zone’, featured a plaza and space frame by the then well-known metabolist architect, Kenzo Tange, as well as the Expo’s protruding centerpiece, the ‘Tower of the Sun’ by artist Okamoto Taro. Okamoto’s Tower reinforced the Expo’s theme of “Progress and Harmony,” while adding contemplative gestures of the past, the present, and the future. While Okamoto’s Tower could be read as a material and spatial protest through Tange’s roof, the role of ambiguity and spatial open-endedness of Okamoto’s Tower, combined with its centrality, adjacent public space, and evocative gestures that both enticed and absorbed contradictory socio-political interpretations and personal narratives of pasts, presents, and futures. The multiple readings of Okamoto’s tower attracted protesters and engaged spectacles that worked to de-politicize and pluralistically filter contradictory views of the Expo at large.

Nonetheless, anti-Expo sentiment at the time was widespread. From the “Architects 1970 Action Committee” to the “Expo 1970 Destruction Joint-Struggle Group,” speculation and criticism of the multiple strands of intentionality undergirding the Expo often regarded the technological achievements as a means to “distract the nation from the renewal of the U.S. Japan Security Treaty” by “incorporating intellectual elites within the institution” (Koichi, p. 12). However, by geo-spatially re-tracing the temporal evolution
of ideologies and works of the various actors (the state, the artists, the architects, and the protesters) a perpetual theme of spatial violence and bodily protests evolve from the ideas and early artworks of Okamoto, to the naked group performances of the Zero Jigen, to a week-long occupy performance of Sato Hideo. While each iteration of spatial violence and reactionary protest build upon its predecessor, each is undeniably distanced from their political tones. The Symbolic Zone of the Expo, and more specifically, the Tower of the Sun, provided a platform for multiplicity of dissonant voices invested in nationalistic images of progress and harmony, suggesting that anti-sentimentalities and protests were key to a pluralistic image of progress and stability.

By using the act of reading and non-linearity of text, the organization of the paper attempts to extend our argument by representationally and performatively exploring themes central to its investigation. While the independent strands of thought at each scale (state, architecture, etc.) remain distinct, it is the mode of thinking encompassed by a larger co-existing framework that perpetuated protests, anti-sentiments, and reactionary views. While the act of reading one strand of thought should necessarily be disruptive, the more inward the actor--the more deeply complicated and ‘occupied’--the more forces acting upon and constricting ideology that in effect produce grounds for protest. While the paper interprets the scalar, temporal, and social systems at work in the 1970s Expo with regard to the Symbolic Zone, the ‘Map’ geo-spatially integrates urban space, event, and physical gestures of architecture and art.
The organization of the paper mixes the act of reading with mapping by performatively exploring themes central to its investigation. While the independent strands of thought at each scale (state, architecture, etc.) remain distinct, it is the mode of thinking encompassed by a larger co-existing framework that perpetuated protests, anti-sentiments, and reactionary views.
**Introduction: Expo 1970**

The 1970 World Exposition in Osaka was the first Expo to be stereotypical reading of high-growth Japan as "building a new infrastructure was to situate Osaka within a tighter web of regional boosterism, however, one of the main effects of all this for "city marketing" (Wesemael, 569). Despite a certain degree of Senri New Town, a planned community nearby the Expo site. The 1970 Expo's theme of "Progress and Harmony," while adding to previous efforts in the "genre," as it were: just as Noriko reveals centrality, adjacent public space, and evocative gestures that both..."...progress leading to an era of leisure, is this really a human beings can meet, shake hands, and accord minds. In the early 1940s, Tange participated in the Greater East

**Kenzo Tange**

Kenzo Tange was a...The "Tower of the Sun" and its five sun-shaped..."...social and economic architectures of Japan's own prosperity, even..."...reading, please visit: asp.html).

**Okamoto Taro**

Okamoto's avant-gardist sentiments were also reflected at...metaphoric art works that commented on the stifling nature..."...the?'s Tower of the Sun for the Japan World Exposition," pp. 81-101.