

# 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT Vision



21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT was designed by architect Tadao Ando. The museum structure, 80% of which is underground, is characterized by a large steel-plate roof which slopes to the ground.

Photo: Masaya Yoshimura

With its ever-changing program of temporary exhibitions, 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT in central Tokyo highlights the possibilities for future design.

## KUMIKO SATO

TOKYO Midtown in Minato Ward, Tokyo, is an urban space with multiple functions accommodating commercial facilities, cultural facilities, offices, hotels and residences within an area of about 68,900 square meters. Among these facilities, in Midtown Garden, is a building that looks like a bird spreading its wings. Called 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT, the building is open to the public as a space where people can enjoy seeing, understanding and experiencing design through exhibitions, workshops and discussion events.

In 2003, designer Issey Miyake contributed an essay entitled “Time to Create a Design Museum” to the *Asahi shimbun* newspaper. In response to his strong call for the possibilities of design, leading Japanese designers and companies sympathized and decided to establish a base for design culture within the grounds of Tokyo Midtown where an urban project using design as an important element

was underway.

In 2007, 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT was launched as the world’s first design “sight” without possessing permanent exhibits, directed by designers to showcase iconic contemporary works. Tadao Ando directed the architectural design. The building is characterized by its sloping roof, to all appearances formed from one sheet of folded steel – based on the concept of “A Piece of Cloth,” Issei Miyake’s basic working philosophy. The structure is about 80% underground so that the building does not obscure the

park’s spacious landscape and warmly welcomes people who enjoy walking across the promenade.

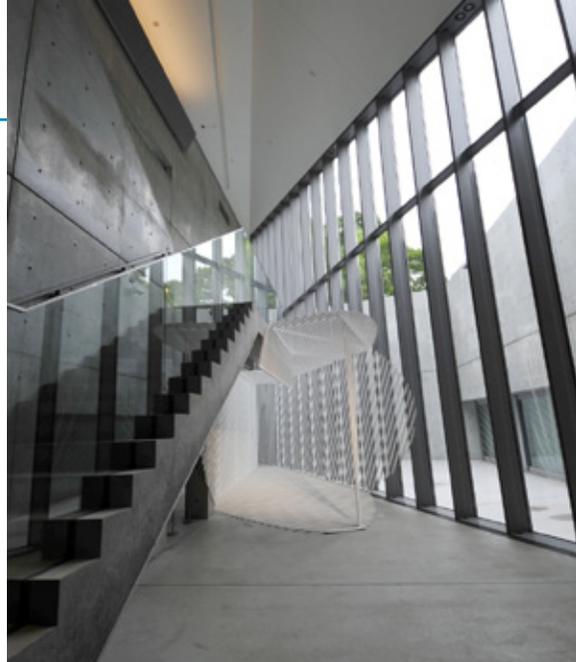
Noriko Kawakami, associate director of 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT, says, “21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT is a site as ‘sight.’ Perfect



Noriko Kawakami, associate director of 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT  
Photo: Yoshifusa Hashizume

vision is known as 20/20 vision in English. 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT was named with our intention that the venue would be one which offers vision beyond 20/20 showing what lies ahead and the opportunity to see things from a different angle.”

Without permanent exhibitions, 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT has exhibited thirty-five programs based on different themes each time. In addition to having Issey Miyake, graphic designer Taku Satoh and product designer Naoto Fukasawa as directors, 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT has invited other designers and artists, many engineers, craftsmen and experts in a wide range of fields from outside or collaborated with companies and educational institutes to address these many different themes. Kawakami says, “The basic concept behind 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT’s programs is to communicate the idea that design is a human-rooted activity as widely as possible. We hold program meetings every month. 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT directors pay attention to what is happening in the world, exchange opinions about



“sight” that approaches perspectives from the viewpoint of design. “In 2016, we held the 31st exhibition titled ‘DOBOKU: Civil Engineering.’ It focused on the civil engineering work that supports the urban infrastructure that we are hardly aware of in our daily lives. We hoped that visitors to 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT would enjoy discovering a new sight when they walked through the buildings on their way home,” says Kawakami. “We hope that 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT will be a place that induces visitors to start conversations compulsively and triggers thoughts about something new.”

The first exhibition of 2017, the tenth anniversary year, was titled “ATHLETE.” Former 400-meter hurdler Dai Tamesue participated as one of the exhibition directors in the program, which focused on the movement of athletes that improve physical function to their limit. “GRAND PROJECTS: HOW FAR WILL YOU GO?” is currently underway, and introduces creators who continue to take on grand challenges that seem to be impossible. From October 20, 2017, the program will focus on the “Wild: Untamed Mind,” inviting anthropologist Shinichi Nakazawa as an exhibition director.

21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT, which has stretched the perspectives of visitors for ten years since its launch, will start to take new steps toward the next decade by showing that people themselves have the power to surpass conventional wisdom and self-imposed limits. 7



“Doboku Actions ‘Connect: Shibuya Station (2013) model: inside the station”

Keisuke Tamura + Showa Women’s University Department of Environmental Science and Design Tamura Laboratory  
Photo: KEIZO KIOKU

what they have in mind and discuss what they want to convey through 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT.”

Past programs include themes that seem to have nothing to do with design, such as water, bones and prayer. This shows that 21\_21 DESIGN SIGHT is a