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## ITAMI JUN: Architecture of Wind

# National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea



The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) is pleased to present *Itami Jun: Architecture of the Wind*, from January 28<sup>th</sup> to July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Held for the first time in Korea, this large-scale retrospective on the works by the Korean-Japanese architect Itami Jun sheds light on his architectural oeuvre of over 40 years, extending from his earlier works in Japan in the 1970s to his Jeju projects in his later years. This exhibition presents over 500 of Jun's architecture works as well as his paintings, calligraphy and personal belongings from his family collection and the Itami Jun archive donated to the museum in 2013.

Itami Jun spent his childhood in Shizuoka, Japan and entered the world of architecture by traveling and encountering many other artists. With profound insight into objects, he learned and expressed architecture with the physical senses of touch and drawing as his medium. In the homogeneous industrial society, Itami Jun sought to practice contemporary architecture with an anti-modern bent, emphasizing purity of architecture and material, and pursuing heavy primitive architecture with a sense of rawness in the material. Itami Jun's Jeju projects in his late years demonstrate the mature beauty of his architecture.

To Itami Jun, the windy island of Jeju is his second home next to Shizuoka. Itami Jun's work reached its zenith when his architecture meets the living power of nature on Jeju island: the wind. The projects he carried out in Jeju in 2000s, including Three Art Museums Water, Wind and Stone, Guest House PODO Hotel and the Church of Sky, demonstrate the beauty of architecture assimilated into nature. Embracing water, wind and stone, the Three Art Museums in the video *Another Water, Wind and Stone* (directed by Dawoon Jung and produced by Jong-shin Kim) convey the temporal aspect of architecture that responds to nature.

As the second thematic exhibition in the permanent architecture gallery at MMCA, Gwacheon following *Figurative Journal: Chung Guyon Archive* held in 2013, *Itami Jun: Architecture of the Wind* is the first exhibition of 2014 organized under the museum's policy to hold genre-specific exhibitions in time with the opening of MMCA, Seoul. This exhibition begins by talking about the 'origin' or the roots of consciousness in Itami Jun's work, and extends to his Jeju projects that embrace the ocean and reflect his sharp and rough works produced in Japan. The last space in the exhibition is a reproduction of Itami Jun's working space in Tokyo, put together by his daughter and architect Yoo Ehwa. The exhibition attempted to capture the sensibility of material and variation of light and darkness conveyed through Itami Jun's architecture. *Itami Jun: Architecture of the Wind* hopes to open up a discourse on architect Itami Jun who has so far not received the spotlight in the history of Korean architecture despite his thriving practice abroad and significant projects in Korea.

■ **Exhibition Overview**

- Title: *Itami Jun: Architecture of the Wind*
- Period: January 28, 2014 – July 27, 2014
- Venue: Gallery 5 at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Gwacheon (MMCA Gwacheon)
- Host: National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA)

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## ■ A Profile of Itami Jun

### **Itami Jun (1937~2011)**

1937 Born in Tokyo, Japan

1964 Graduated from University of Musashi Institute of Technology, B.Arch

1968 Established Itami Jun Architect a Research Institute

2002 Established Itami Jun Architect a Research Institute (Seoul Branch)

2007-2008 A member of The Japan Folk Craft Museum steering committee

2009-2011 Master Architect of Jeju Global Education City

### **Awards**

1979 Japan Shop Designer Association Prize

1981 Japan Sign Association Prize

2001 Awards of the Korea Institute of Architects

2005 The Order of Arts and Letters "Chevalier" from France

2006 Kim Swoo Geun Culture Award

2008 Awards of the Korea Institute of Architects

2010 Murano Togo Award

### **Selected Exhibitions**

1986 *The Black and White in Modern Times*, The Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan

1995 *Art and Architecture*, Fukuoka Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan

1997 *Space of Sumi/Space of Mizu*, Tokyo International Forum, Tokyo, Japan

1999 *Korean Architectural 100 Years*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, Seoul, Korea

2003 National Museum of Asian Arts-Guimet, Paris, France

2004 Aedes Berlin, Berlin, Germany

2006 The 2nd Architectural Biennale Beijing, The National Museum of China, Beijing, China

2007 Space Gallery, Seoul

2010 *Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Museum*, Guggenheim Museum, New York

2012 *Vestigial Impressions*, TOTO GALLERY MA, Tokyo, Japan

## ■ A Overall of the exhibition

### 1. Origin of Itami Jun's Works

Itami Jun's youth reflected a series of associations with the artists of the period. Unlike other young artists who presented high-tech architecture armed with rich skills at a time the Japanese economy was booming, Itami Jun shared his consciousness with the artists leading Mono-ha, while questioning the origin of existence. These thoughts, which "stand in the original position of the object itself and endlessly assimilate nature," are expressed in various works of art, including not only architecture, but paintings and calligraphy as well, forming the basis of Itami Jun's architectural sensibility. His inborn identity as a Zainichi Koreans (Korean in Japan) also served as momentum for him to endlessly examine the question of existence. He crossed the border between Japan and Korea and explored questions about art, culture, and space. The books he wrote and the antiques he collected as he explored Korea in the 1970s and 1980s show how Itami Jun experienced Korean identity through his eyes and hands.

#### The Mono-ha Influence

As a young man who dreamed of becoming an artist, Itami Jun attended the Musashi Institute of Technology Department of Architecture over his family's objections. However, until he presented his first architectural work in 1970, he fostered his rich sensitivity and sensation as an artist by traveling and meeting various artists rather than through education. Associations with In-sik Kwak, who he referred to as his teacher, as well as Lee Ufan, Chang-ryul Kim, Nobuo Sekine, and Yoshifumi Hayashi greatly influenced him. The spirit of Mono-ha to reach the origin of existence by seeing objects and the world as they truly are, made a deep relationship on Itami Jun's consciousness of architecture.

#### Exploration of Korean Architecture and Antiques

For Itami Jun, Korea was an object of exploration to discover his full identity. The beauty of the Korean traditional space, pursuing the richness of the heart while seeking harmony with nature, influenced Itami Jun's architecture. Fascinated by Korean culture since he first visited in 1968, he was immersed in the purity and warmth of antiques and began to collect folk paintings, porcelain, and furniture. He left records of his collections as well as works he wrote about Joseon art, such as folk paintings, and also books about Korean architectural space. *Folk Painting of the Yi Dynasty of Korea* (1975) contains Itami Jun's prologue 'Stones and Birds' and 'Preface: Shine As If You Would Disappear,' as well as Lee Ufan's 'Paintings as a Structure: About Folk Paintings of the Yi Dynasty' and Hiroshi Mizuo's 'Interpretation of Folk Paintings: Focusing on Muneyoshi Yanagi's View of Folk Paintings'. Itami Jun also published *Architecture of the Yi Dynasty* (1981), *Architecture and Culture of Joseon* (1983), and *Space of Korea* (1985). *Architecture of the Yi Dynasty Space of Korea* were collaborative works created with photographer Joo Myung-duck. *Architecture and Art of Korea* (1988) was a republication of an investigative report from 1904 by Tadashi Sekino, for which Itami Jun carried out editorial supervision in collaboration with Takehiko Nishiyama. Itami Jun's youth reflected a series of associations with the artists of the period. Unlike other young artists who presented high-tech architecture armed with rich skills at a time the Japanese economy was booming, Itami Jun shared his consciousness with the artists leading Mono-ha, while questioning the origin of existence. These thoughts, which "stand in the original position of the object itself and endlessly assimilate nature," are expressed in various works of art, including not only architecture, but paintings and calligraphy as well, forming the basis of Itami Jun's architectural sensibility. His inborn identity as a Zainichi Koreans (Korean in Japan) also served as momentum for him to endlessly examine the question of existence. He crossed the border between Japan and Korea and explored questions about art, culture, and space. The books he wrote and the antiques he collected as he explored Korea in the 1970s and 1980s show how Itami Jun

experienced Korean identity through his eyes and hands.



Manhattan Series, Oil on canvas, 1994



Designed by Itami Jun

## 2. Phase 1: Exploration of Materials(1971-1988)

Itami Jun's earlier architectural works share the critical mind of Mono-ha. His efforts since his youth to seek the physical properties of material itself by exploring the relationship between matter and people are well reflected in his work. He "consciously contrasted materials like earth, stone, metal, glass, and wood, with concrete" in pursuit of harmony and conflict between them. He discovered beauty by arranging materials such as "metal reflected by light shining through glass." As he created a language for such rich materials, Itami Jun formatively embodied vivid "textures of objects" in architecture.

### Mother's House, 1971

Location: Shimizu, Shizuoka, Japan

Site Area: 180.80m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 102.10m<sup>2</sup>

This is the architectural debut of Itami Jun. The building has a living room with a fireplace at the center, surrounded by small rooms like a study and dining room. The semibasement and mezzanine space are overlaid, and the main space and subspace are opposite each other. The glass curve, the most important part of the exterior, reacts sensitively to the surrounding environment. The glass is sky blue, and becomes a shiny 'objet' at night, occasionally turning gold like the sun.

### India Ink House, 1975

Location: Roppongi, Tokyo, Japan

Site Area: 84.65m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 57.85m<sup>2</sup>

This is Itami Jun's first atelier. The house was built based on the image of a "ship drifting in the vast ocean of the city." The bright second floor resembles the hatch while the dark first floor resembles the bottom of the ship. Itami Jun tried to combine the concepts of house (*sa*) and hallway (*rang*) which were contemplated by the artist for this building. Each floor is a continuation of pathways that function also as space and vice versa. The black first floor and the white second floor are connected by stairs.

### The House of Marginal Space I, 1975

Location: Setagaya, Tokyo, Japan

Site Area: 221.86m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 45.12m<sup>2</sup>

Itami Jun felt that the essence of residential architecture lies in its interior space. This building is the house where he actually lived. You can see the artist's heart in the building: how he endlessly contemplated the words and behaviors of other people and tried to convey this attitude towards life in

his architecture

Onyang Museum, 1982

Location: Onyang, Korea

Site Area: 40,000.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 1,718.20m<sup>2</sup>

This work was motivated by a private home in Korea built from red bricks. Bricks are made of earth, a basic material of nature, piled high to create a building. The view of the building made of earth developed from his efforts to secure an independent space within the harsh effects of the natural environment and climate.



A Sketch of Onyang Museum, Pen on paper

Sculptor's Studio, 1985

Location: Tadotsu, Kagawa, Japan

Site Area: 394.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 95.00m<sup>2</sup>

This is Shiro Hayami's atelier, a sculptor known for his works with earth and stones. The house is built on a gentle mountain ridge with a view of the inland sea of Japan. The firm vertical stone walls and three-dimensional oval-shaped concrete mass create tension with the serene surroundings.

Chang Uc Chin Memorial Hall, 1986

Location: Yongin, Korea

Site Area: 418.93m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 125.68m<sup>2</sup>

This is Chang Uc Chin Memorial Hall located in Yongin. It used regional stones as the exterior material. The color and texture of the stones changes over time. Windows are minimized to increase heating efficiency, and an *ondol* heating system is used in the building. The *ondol* room used as a public space combines with Chang Uc Chin's atelier in a T-shape.

**3. Phase 2: Pursuit of Indigenesness(1988-1998)**

Since the 1980s, the architectural world of Japan primarily comprised lightweight buildings using glass and iron. Itami Jun pointed this out and emphasized that "if contemporary architecture lacks something intrinsic, it may be body temperature and the unpolished beauty of architecture." He fully pursued 'heavy architecture' by using natural materials like timber and bamboo, with a focus mostly on stone. He explained that he was compelled to "revive the old values of the land today by using native materials," trying to impart "meaning to the primitive form of architecture." In particular, Carved Tower, Church of Stone and the M Building, all made of stone powerfully reveal their existence with physical properties of their own. Each of Itami Jun's buildings, which focused on the past placed on the ground, suggests itself in the form of a sculpture.

Carved Tower, 1988

Location: Seoul, Korea

Site Area: 336.60m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 101.02m<sup>2</sup>

This building was designed as Itami Jun's studio and museum in Korea. Built with stones and soil dug from the earth, the building stands strong in an abstract pyramid shape in the varied urban environment that surrounds it. The rough and untamed texture of the material is created by recycling stones which were discarded as waste. The building, with a primitive shape suggesting praying towards the heavens, positions itself like a sculpture.



Carved Tower, 1988

### Izu Guest House, 1990

Location: Izu, Shizuoka, Japan

Site Area: 2,033.24m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 451.31m<sup>2</sup>

This building is surrounded by thick forests on all sides. The key to its design was to consider its firm shape, the peaceful residential area, and molding it to cope with strong winds. It stretches out north and south, standing on a slope, where one can feel the spirit of nature responding in all four seasons.

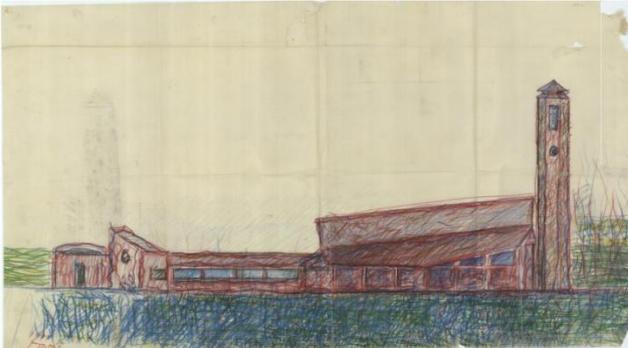
### Church of Stone, 1991

Location: Tomakomai, Hokkaido, Japan

Site Area: 219,265.19m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 518.05m<sup>2</sup>

In Tomakomai, Hokkaido where the 'Church of Stone' is located, the cold wave is intense and the winter scenery is so impoverished that it borders on pitiful. The building naturally endures that climate and landscape. A large structure with a firm base, it copes with the harshness of nature rather than being shaken by it. Embracing the architect's strong formative sense, the building draws out the sensation of the material itself and turns it into an abstraction, creating a holy space.



A Drawing of 'Church of Stone', 1991

### M Building, 1992

Location: Akasaka, Tokyo, Japan

Site Area: 161.51m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 105.51m<sup>2</sup>

This is an office building combining multi-purpose spaces with residential ones. Standing in the center of Tokyo, the building holds a warmth and unpolished beauty that is not usually seen in contemporary Japanese architecture. The façade faces the crowded streets of the city with a bold structure of piled granites. This natural façade overcomes the homogenized, horizontal flow, standing as a symbolic ‘column’ in the urban space.

#### Church of Wood (Leonard Bernstein Memorial Hall), 1996

Location: Tomakomai, Hokkaido, Japan

Site Area: 291,265.19m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 756.02m<sup>2</sup>

Also known as ‘Church of Wood’, in harmony with its surroundings, this building is an annex of the ‘Church of Stone’ built in 1991. It was built in collaboration with the Finnish construction company ‘Esco Rera’ to commemorate the late composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, and a little hall for chamber music was added. They reproduced and expanded the room where Bernstein stayed, in commemoration of the composer who had enjoyed Nidom forest.

#### Hermitage of Ink, 1998

Location: Uehara, Tokyo, Japan

Site Area: 132.23m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 79.10m<sup>2</sup>

Bamboo and iron were used as the main materials. Bamboo maximizes an image that embraces nature, while iron emphasizes a natural beauty contrasting with bamboo. The house shows the process of a building becoming symbolized.

#### **4. Phase 3: Architecture as a Medium(1998-2010)**

By the late 1990s, Itami Jun had broken away from his obsession with shapes and materials and deeply pondered on the question of ‘relationship’ mediated by architecture. He emphasized that architecture “must seek harmony while conflicting with nature, and act as a catalyst of communication and relationship that connects spaces with people and oneself with others.” During this time, Itami Jun broke away from fierce architecture with a remarkably sharp primitive sensibility about materials, and presented works that reveal placidity and serenity. In particular, his works in Korea, especially Jeju in his later years represent well the relationship between people and nature mediated by architecture, while displaying the smooth mellowness of his architecture.

#### Guest House Old New, 2000

Location: Gyeonggi-do, Korea

Site Area: 329.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 161.98m<sup>2</sup>

Two boxes coexist on land at different heights. Using natural materials for the transmission of light and wind, the building gives off a sense of wild beauty and warmth. This building has the theme ‘Old & New’. Symbolizing the past and tradition, the southern box is covered in dried mud bricks. The northern box, in contrast, symbolizes developing modern times, and is covered in white stone, aiming towards future-oriented architecture.

#### Long-Shadow Museum, 2001

Location: Jeju, Korea

Site Area: 54,100.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 419.52m<sup>2</sup>

This project is divided into a museum and a church with a resort hotel at the center. The Long-

Shadow Museum, which acts as a passage that connects the hotel and the church, leads people to the Church of Earth, which cannot be easily seen, as it is buried deep within its natural surroundings. The architect's intent to block the visual approach of the structure can be seen in the fact that he designed the roof garden with its mass buried in verdure.

Hakgojae Museum, 2004

Location: Seoul, Korea

Site Area: 229.10m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 153.10m<sup>2</sup>

This is the Hakgojae Museum remodeling project in Insa-dong, Seoul. Itami Jun recalled his old memories of Insa-dong to create Hakgojae Museum today.

Yangji Waldhaus Center House, 2007

Location: Gyeonggi-do, Korea

Site Area: 1,307.04m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 235.49m<sup>2</sup>

This space was designed implementing the concept of water, which is the origin of life and which reflects objects like a mirror. The building was designed in an oval shape surrounding the waterfront to express the image of an island, looking as if it is floating on water. Located at the center of the complex, it acts as an open rest area and shelter for residents.

Ophel Golf Club House, 2008

Location: Yeongcheon, Korea

Site Area: 1,312,131.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 3,862.58m<sup>2</sup>

This building is meant to embrace the natural environment and the architectural beauty of Korea. It is low, considering the border between heaven and earth, and the skyline design was inspired by the shapes of clouds. Modern-style rafters were used for the roof. Made with natural materials, the building is well harmonized with its surrounding environment.

Oboe Hills, 2010

Location: Seoul, Korea

Site Area: 7,772.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 2,311.52m<sup>2</sup>

These are low-rise apartment buildings built along the ridge of Mt. Bukhan in Seoul. Using the steep slopes, the houses show continuity in multiple layers. The streets and sidewalks are made using transverse sections. Overlaying white boxes that represent the vigor of the surrounding environment and the land, each of the houses has a rooftop garden that blends neighboring rooftop gardens into one view.

**5. Architecture of the Wind: Jeju Projects**

Jeju was Itami Jun's second hometown and he admired the ocean. If the ocean he saw in Shimizu, Shizuoka was his actual childhood home, Jeju with its free-blowing sea breezes is his heart's home of where he wanted to settle as a Zainichi Korean. Here he presented his masterpieces reaching the peak of his 40-year journey in architecture. Starting with the PINX Club House in 1998 within the 'Biotopia' complex of which he was responsible for the design, he completed Guest House PODO Hotel; the Three Art Museums Water, Wind and Stone; Duseon Museum; and the Church of the Sky. These works received attention from the domain of critics, leading Itami Jun to receive such awards as the Murano Togo Prize, and the Kim Swoo Geun Architecture Award. These buildings, assimilated with Jeju's rich nature with wind, water and stones, calmly reflect the natural features of the island which change according to the time and embrace the architect's desire to take architecture towards art.

PINX Members Golf Club House, 1998

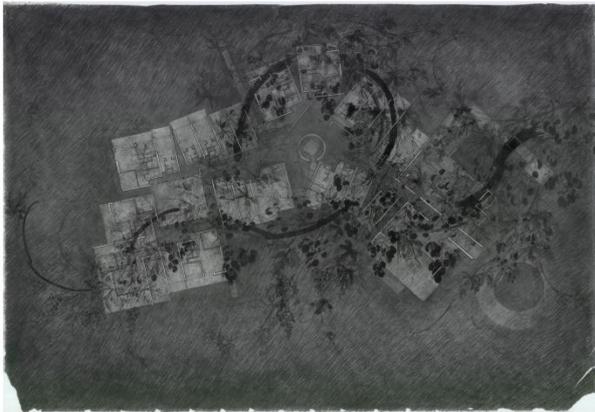
BLDG Area: 2,295.95m<sup>2</sup>

The building has its mass half buried under the horizontal plane, and seems as if it coexists with the earth. It was designed to flow in parallel with the surrounding mountain terrain, along the top of the building.

Guest House PODO Hotel, 2001

BLDG Area: 4,050.00m<sup>2</sup>

This building is arranged to follow the differences in ground level, and the curves of the roof look like the mountains, private houses, or secondary cones of Jeju's volcanic mountain. The plane appears as a small village, with the central passage acting as the path through the village. Two columns in front of the main gate are made up of stones, iron plates, and wood, showing the 'indigenouness' of Jeju and 'beauty of materials' all on a single column.



A Drawing of PODO Hotel, 2001

Stone Museum, 2006

Site Area: 1,071.00m<sup>2</sup>

BLDG Area: 74.25m<sup>2</sup>

This is a space of stones evoking poetic fantasy. The movement of light that enters through the open lotus-shaped hole within the dark box creates the sensation of a fantastical space. Steel plates are used for the floors, walls, and ceilings of the interior.



Stone Museum, 2006 / photo: Yongkwan Kim

Water Museum, 2006

BLDG Area: 85.84m<sup>2</sup>

An oval opening is made at the center of the strong cube to provide a space where sky and water meet. Water reflects the movement of the sky and reflects its sound. Native Jeju materials were used for the exterior walls, and Jeju stones were used as flooring. A cantilever canopy, formed of the exposed

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mass concrete, shows the movement of water in projection.

Wind Museum, 2006

BLDG Area: 76.80m<sup>2</sup>

The Wind Museum is a wooden box designed like a cabin, evoking memories of nature. The façade represents the arc of a bow, and the gaps between the wooden plates enable one to hear the sounds of the wind. Light that enters through the gaps is reflected within, creating a beautiful lighting effect. The flooring is finished with a mixture of Jeju stone fragments.

Duson Museum, 2007

BLDG Area: 220.65m<sup>2</sup>

Duson Museum, designed after the Three Art Museums

‘Water’, ‘Wind’, and ‘Stone’, is a work exhibiting outstanding formativeness. The building appears to have been designed based on the concept of Mt. Sanbang said to resemble the profile of a woman or a position of prayer with both hands clasped together, but ultimately the building was inspired by the place and landscape. Duson Museum appears paired with the Stone Museum in terms of location. With a finish in black and silver iron plates, Duson Museum forms a harmonious yet tense contrast with the Stone Museum which is finished in rusty red Corten steel (weathered steel).

Church of Sky (Bangju Church), 2009

BLDG Area: 663.25m<sup>2</sup>

Located west of the BIOTOPIA site, Church of Sky is an extended project of the Three Art Museums ‘Water’, ‘Wind’, and ‘Stone’ as well as Duson Museum. Judging from the way the top of the building touches the sky, you can see evidence of the artist’s efforts to try and convey the ever-changing sky of Jeju through architecture. The building looks like a boat floating on water, while being unified with the geographical features of the land and its surroundings.