

## Project Japan – Metabolist Architecture



Taschen have recently published this rather [fine looking volume](#).

Co-written, edited and researched by the Dutch (st)architect Rem Koolhaas, it's an in-depth review and assessment of the Japanese architectural movement called Metabolism, often considered to be the first non-western avant-garde movement of any significance.

Launched with the publication of their bi-lingual manifesto "Metabolism 1960: The Proposals for a New Urbanism" a group of young Japanese architects, including the now familiar names of Kenzo Tange, Arata Isozaki, Fumihiko Maki and Kisho Kurokawa, set out how they imagined cities of the future could be designed to reflect their contemporary society.

These proposals generally involved placing various forms of compatible accommodation (such as retail, mass housing, education and transit hubs) in large scale megastructures designed to be both theoretically and physically flexible enough to reflect the changing demands and needs of their inhabitants.

These concepts were very much inspired by the many new technologies being developed throughout the post war world during the 50's and 60's, effectively arguing that improved construction methods and techniques could allow previously 'static' built forms to develop organically over time. It's no coincidence that similar ideas were being explored by many of the younger architects of the time such as Superstudio in Italy and Archigram in the UK (who even went as far as proposing cities that could move themselves...)

Due in no small part to the practical and financial implications of getting such massive projects built, the movement lasted not much longer than 10 years or so, and a relatively few number of built examples were completed before the swan song of the movement at the Expo of 1970 in Osaka, master planned by Kenzo Tange.

Two buildings that stand out for me are the amazing Nakagin Capsule Tower in Tokyo which we went to see when we were in Japan in 2005, and which I have [previously written about](#), and the truly awesome silhouette of Tange's, Culture Hall in Yamanashi from 1966, sitting like some huge malevolent beast in the center of a predominantly two storey historic Japanese town...

Anyway, Koolhaas's book looks fascinating and with over 700 pages of beautiful drawings, stunning photos of concrete and bonkers ideas, something I would definitely like to own...

If it wasn't for the fact that some of the online reviews (and most of the personal ones on Amazon) complain that its been poorly designed, with images disappearing into a ridiculously small/ non existent central gutter and difficult to read text/ background choices. So instead I think I'll wait until I next get to the RIBA bookshop and have a look at the real thing...

The images below are flattened versions of the pages and look fantastic, except for the second image which demonstrates the central gutter problem...