

"The Architecture of the Niki Museum"

Tsuji Masuda, Planning Director of the Niki Museum

It would definitely have been best for the Niki Museum, which is a one-woman museum of a living artist, to have been designed by the artist herself. In fact we had gone so far as to have a fantastic maquette of the museum produced with the full involvement of Niki de Saint Phalle.

We could not, however, build the museum according to our original plan, which was a great pity, because the National Parks Acts and Environment Acts impose strict regulations on the colors and the shape of buildings in national parks. I will not go into the details here. The important thing is that we were able to start building the museum with Niki de Saint Phalle's full understanding of our situation and her kind agreement on the change of plans, for which I would like to express my deepest gratitude.

Under the above-mentioned restrictions, I shared with the staff in the Design Department of the Takenaka Engineering Firm the heavy responsibility of designing the museum. We adopted the idea that a balance between Niki de Saint Phalle's works and the building would come about, paradoxically, by creating a contrast between them. So we came to the conclusion that the basic architectural concept should be "straight lines, squares and black and white" in order to form a sharp contrast, respectively, to "curves, irregularity and overwhelming richness of color", of the works of Niki de Saint Phalle.

One of the main themes of the museum is the display of dynamic sculptures. Although there are many museums designed to exhibit tableaux, very few museums are built for the special purpose of displaying sculptures as the Niki Museum is.

The most challenging task was to design the space of the museum so that visitors could see sculptures from various angles (right/left, high/low and from various distances). For this purpose, we had the

idea of connecting square units in the shape of a serpent, as is seen in Niki's serpents (with a combination of V's that a flock of wild geese makes in flight). I am looking forward to finding how visitors like the floor design of the museum.

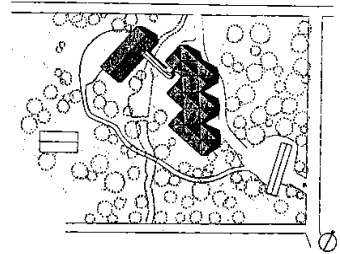
It was another challenge, given the strict architectural regulations in height, whether the museum could provide enough space for Niki's sculptures to give the feeling of "soaring up". The regulations made us abandon our plan of building cupolas. Finally, we hit upon the idea of making so-called "diamond-cut" roofs (or crossed gable roofs), which, to our relief, met our need. It would be wonderful if visitors could look up at Niki's sculptures as if they were gazing up at the sky in the forest and enjoying the feeling of soaring up.

We inherited the original layout of the garden as it was left by the former owner of the land (an art lover, I hear), together with Nagayamon, many garden lanterns, trees, a pond, and a small stream in the garden. I am most grateful to him.

Area:

Land; 6,904.87m²

Building 848.79m² (Floor Space 943.59m²)

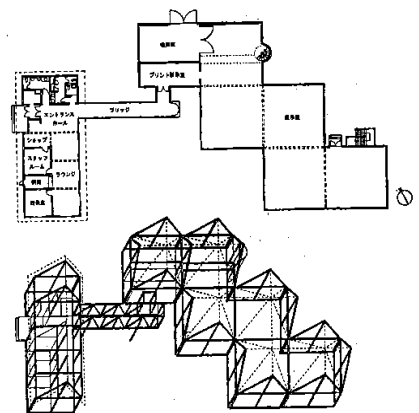


Structure:

Steel-frame and partially reinforced concrete structure

Floor Plan:

- 1 Main entrance
- 2 Reception
- 3 Museum shop
- 4 Locker room
- 5 Rest room
- 6 Staff room
- 7 Lounge
- 8 Kitchen
- 9 Director's office
- 11 Corridor
- 12 Store room
- 13 Exhibition room for printed materials



- 14 Exhibition room 1
- 15 Exhibition room 2
- 16 Exhibition room 3
- 17 Exhibition room 4
- 18 Exhibition room 5
- 19 Stock room
- 20 Small stream
- 21 Pond