

THE ART OF COLLECTING

Tadao Ando's long romance with France

A show covering five decades of the architect's work has opened in Paris

BY TED LOOS

The Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando established what he calls his "atelier" in 1969, and the French term is telling. Though he is based in his hometown, Osaka, Japan, and works all over the world, he has a long history in France.

In an interview earlier this month, Mr. Ando, 77, recalled that in 1965, he took the Trans-Siberian Express and made a pilgrimage to see a landmark of modernism just outside Paris, with hopes of encountering the man who designed it. "I made my way towards France in hope that I could see the Villa Savoye and meet Le Corbusier in person."

The latter meeting didn't happen. "Only after returning home several months later did I learn that Le Corbusier had died a few weeks before my arrival," Mr. Ando said in an email. Though disappointed, his love affair with France continued, and the feeling is reciprocated. Last week, the Centre Pompidou in Paris debuted, "Tadao Ando: The Challenge," a major retrospective covering his five decades of work. The exhibition is on view through Dec. 31.

Mr. Ando said that it was his biggest museum show ever in France and noted that his first Pompidou show was in 1993.

Just two days after "The Challenge" opened in Paris, further proof of his relationship with France was newly on display in, of all places, Chicago.

"Concrete is sober, but using light and shadow, he creates drama on its surface," Renzo Piano says.

Mr. Ando designed a new exhibition space there, Wrightwood 659, and the premier show is "Ando and Le Corbusier: Masters of Architecture," on view until Dec. 15.

Mr. Ando has worked most often in Japan and relatively rarely in the United States, but he has designed a handful of significant American art spaces, including the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis and an addition to the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass.

For the first time, New Yorkers can now see his work in their city, too. His only stand-alone residential project outside Asia, the seven-story condominium 152 Elizabeth in Manhattan, was completed this year.

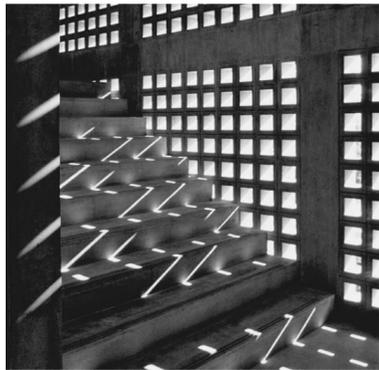
Self-taught in architecture and a former boxer in his youth, Mr. Ando has forged a quirky path that doesn't look like that of any other "starchitect."

He has become world renowned for buildings that are deeply influenced by Modernism, as demonstrated by his early interest in Le Corbusier. They are also quite accessible to the public with the serene spell they cast in concrete, his signature material.

"There are two Andos," said Frédéric Migayrou, the Pompidou curator who organized "The Challenge." "There is the self-made man who traveled to Eu-



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TADAO ANDO



SHIGEO OGAWA



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rope," he said. "But he's also an intellectual who was very close to the avant-garde movements of the 1960s."

Bringing together many of those strands is Mr. Ando's most often cited structure, 1989's Ibaraki Kasugaoka Church in Ibaraki, Japan. It is better known as the Church of the Light for the dramatic way that light comes through a cruciform opening in the concrete wall behind the nave. "It's like God coming into the church," Mr. Migayrou said. "As a concept, it's fabulous."

He called the church Mr. Ando's "masterwork," and it has pride of place in the exhibition, too. Mr. Migayrou attached a full-scale model of the church's facade to the south face of Pompidou itself, so that passers-by can get a taste of the architect's work.

Mr. Migayrou offered that installation as proof that "The Challenge" was "not a traditional architecture show."

In addition to the more typical models and drawings of buildings, "The Challenge" also displays about 30 black-and-

white photographs taken by Mr. Ando, some of which are fairly abstract images of light and shadow.

"In my mind, photography and architecture share many commonalities," Mr. Ando said. "My interests in photography stem from my friendships with many of the leading contemporary photographers of Japan."

Mr. Ando has also made friends within his own profession, including Renzo Piano, one of the few architects who shares the same level of acclaim.

In fact, Mr. Piano, a fellow Pritzker winner, designed the Pompidou itself (in the 1970s, with his then-partner Richard Rogers). Mr. Piano also attended the opening of Mr. Ando's show there.

"Concrete is Tadao's passion," said Mr. Piano, a longtime student of Mr. Ando's work. "Concrete is sober, but using light and shadow, he creates drama on its surface."

When Mr. Piano was chosen to design an addition to the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, next door to Mr. Ando's Modern Art Museum there, "I asked Tadao for the name of the man who makes his silky concrete," he recalled. "And then I stole him."

He added, "In this case, stealing was the right thing to do."

The collector Emily Rauh Pulitzer — who commissioned Mr. Ando to design the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, at the time his first commission in the United States — said that spending time in the building since it was finished in 2001 had enriched her view of his work.

"Everyone thinks Ando works with concrete, but I think he works just as much with nature," Ms. Pulitzer said, noting that Mr. Ando included, as he often does, a water feature in the design, as well as frequent, surprising views to the outside. "The building seems to change all the time, responding to the elements."

Mr. Ando is emphatic that "any sacred space," which for him includes museums, "must be related in some way to nature."

But the process of designing and getting something built is not as placid as a soft breeze rippling on a pond.

Architecture requires daily "struggle between ideals and reality," Mr. Ando said.

"I believe that passion and willpower can triumph over these kind of obstacles," he added. "When I was a professional boxer in my youth, I learned to train progressively harder to defeat larger and stronger opponents."

Kulapat Yantrasast, a Los Angeles-based architect who once worked for Mr. Ando for eight years, noted some of the contradictions in his mentor's personality.

"His work is minimalist and disciplined like a Zen monk, but he's the opposite in person: very funny and personable," said Mr. Yantrasast, who runs the firm wHY. "He's so charismatic."

He also noted the long hours that are typical at the highest levels of architecture, and he said that no one put in more time than Mr. Ando himself.

"He leads by example with his precision and determination," Mr. Yantrasast added. "He walks the walk."

Mr. Ando's considerable efforts are currently being trained on the Bourse de Commerce, a project just a few blocks away from the Pompidou.

François Pinault, the billionaire art collector and Christie's owner, is scheduled to open a contemporary art museum in the historic building next year.

Mr. Ando said he hoped it would "uphold Parisian culture for the next generation." And he seemed to imply that doing such projects would perhaps also keep him young.

"I am 77 years old and do not plan to stop working anytime soon," he added. "No matter your age, it is better to be an unripe green apple than a mature red apple."

Beautiful spaces

"Tadao Ando: The Challenge," is at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The exhibition includes buildings he designed and some of his photographs. Clockwise from top, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2002; Church of the Light, 1989; Roberto Garza Sada Center, University of Monterrey, 2012; and "Festival," a photograph by Mr. Ando, 1984.

FIAC counts collectors among its treasures

FIAC, FROM PAGE A9

Alechinsky, Jean Dubuffet and Joan Miró.

"The challenge for a gallery is to be immediately recognizable, and yet not the same every year," said Lelong's owner, Jean Frémon. "We wanted the presentation to be strong and simple, and things we're known for."

The booth includes Miró's "Oiseau Solaire," (1966-97), an "important and rare" sculpture in bronze, Mr. Frémon said, chosen in part because there is a retrospective of the artist's work in another part of the Grand Palais.

Lelong has been participating FIAC for years. "Like other fairs, with the exception of Art Basel, it has had ups and downs," Mr. Frémon said. "At one point

"What's not to like? It's Paris in October, with great museums, food and shopping."

we were considering stopping being in it, but it improved again."

As at many fairs, some dealers choose to focus on just one artist. New York's Anton Kern, for instance, will show the work of Nicole Eisenman. Her four bronzes on view include "Maquette: Standing Man" (2018), and they will be displayed with two sculptures in aluminum.

Blum & Poe, which has branches in Los Angeles, New York and Tokyo, offers works on paper and paintings by Robert Colescott (1925-2009).

The painter is perhaps best known for "George Washington Carver Crossing



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the Delaware: Page From an American History Textbook" (1975), depicting the pioneering black scientist and inventor in the famous boat-astiride pose ascribed to the first American president.

The gallery represents the Colescott estate and presents him with an eye to a retrospective scheduled for fall 2019 at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati.

"A show like that can move the needle a bit," Matt Bangser, a partner in Blum & Poe, said of interest in Colescott.

"His work resonates," Mr. Bangser

added. "Through his life he was intent at looking at the American experience, not just the African-American experience. It's a cross-section of stories."

Blum & Poe has attended FIAC for the past four years and has usually done solo shows.

"We don't have a gallery in Europe and we find that a fair is a nice opportunity to highlight an artist that people may not see otherwise," Mr. Bangser said. "And at a moment of art fair fatigue, it can be good to focus on one artist."

That fatigue is one big reason that Ms. Flay has trained much of her energy on Hors les Murs, or Outside the Walls, a series of programs that take place all over the city.

"Paris has these beautiful patrimonial sites; it's very unusual for a fair," she said. "We've got these incredible features in a country that is steeped in culture."

Hors les Murs tries to build on that foundation without gilding the lily. In collaboration with the Louvre, 30 works will be placed outside in the Tuileries

Gardens, by artists scheduled to include Robert Indiana, Alicja Kwade, Per Kirkeby, Alexander Calder and Richard Long.

Over at the Musée National Eugène Delacroix, the British artist Rebecca Warren will show two sculptures. (Delacroix, a 19th-century painter, is currently the subject of a large retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is co-organized with the Louvre.)

On the Place Vendôme, the provocative duo known as Elmgreen & Dragset will address climate change with an installation called "To Whom It May Concern."

Those locales have all been activated by FIAC projects in the past. This year, the Place de la Concorde joins the party for the first time as host to five installations, which Ms. Flay called a "village of nomadic architecture." Two of the structures are by Jean Prouvé and one each are by Kengo Kuma, Claude Parent and Jean Maneval.

Ms. Flay said she wanted to connect one of them in particular, Prouvé's "Ecole Provisoire de Villejuif" (1957), to current events well beyond the typical concerns of an upscale art fair. The temporary school, made of glass, steel and wood, was meant to be easily built, dismantled and moved.

"Some of Prouvé's work was done for displaced people after World War II," Ms. Flay said. "There's something so current and vital in the concept," regarding issues of migration and sustainable development. "We should be keeping these ideas in mind in today's world."

Evolving

At left, Joan Miró's bronze "Oiseau Solaire," from Galerie Lelong, and Jennifer Flay, FIAC's general director, who has had a major role in determining the shape of the event.