

RED NETWORKING

ORGANIC BY DESIGN:

One of the more inventive architects in contemporary Japan, Hiroshi Sambuichi shares how his brand of architecture integrates with the environment in a seamless fashion.



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"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you," Frank Lloyd Wright, American architect, interior designer, writer and educator credited with having designed over 1,000 structures and who completed 532 works during his lifetime had written. His was a belief rooted in designing structures which were "in harmony with humanity and its environment", a philosophy he had attributed to as "organic architecture".

Moving forward to our time, Japanese architect Hiroshi Sambuichi of Sambuichi Architects shares his belief and philosophy which is rooted in nature, but which also extends its scope of



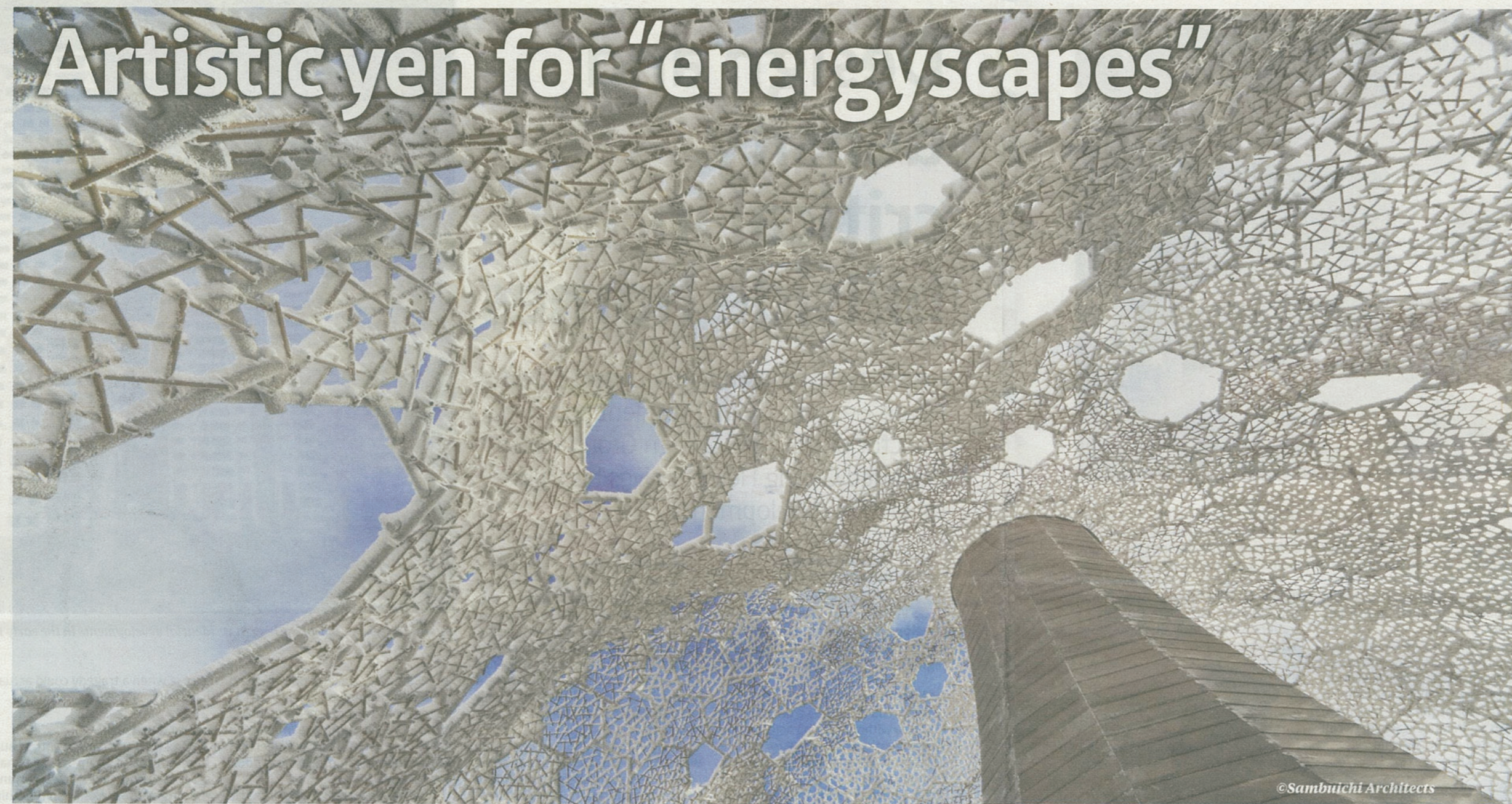
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The design for the Rokko Shidare Observatory in Hyogo, Japan was completed in 2010 to aesthetic effect, and remains a striking architectural statement of the building relating to man and the surrounding dynamic natural elements of the landscape features.

understanding further to include other elements.

"Most importantly, it is an exhaustive investigation of local landform, climate and history, something I term as 'energyscapes', he shared.

Sambuichi has been described as "one of the more inventive architects in



# Artistic yen for "energyscapes"

The Rokko Shidare Observatory located on a mountain is a breathtaking example of attention to detail coupled with the elements of nature celebrating the multiple changes water exhibits in all its forms here.

Oftentimes, Sambuichi's works combine "air and water" elements which he considers as "moving materials" with "non-moving materials" such as steel and timber, to aesthetically pleasing, and fully functional effect.

This is prevalent in many of his early projects such as the Running Green Project and Air House as well as among the later notable projects undertaken by his firm including Miwa-gama, Sloping North House, Stone House, Base Valley, Inujima Seirensho Art Museum and the Rokko Shidare Observatory.

It is hardly surprising then that his meticulous attention to detail, his careful analysis and research into the typology of the sites on which his projects are located have earned him numerous awards and accolades.

Among them are the ar+d Awards (2003), the Shinkenchiku Prize (2001), the Detail Prize, Special Prize (2005), as well as both the JIA Grand Prix and the AIJ Prize (2011).

It is evident that Sambuichi, 45, is every bit as passionate about architecture as he is about how it relates to the surrounding context of the site and the past leanings of the place to derive a suitable expression of the modern day form of architecture.

"The concept of 'energyscapes' is very large, but in general it concerns the landscapes over time. Earth consists of moving materials; mainly air, water and sunlight. They are the basis of life and nature adheres to these (elements).

contemporary Japan", given his yen for studying the topography and climate of the site to accurate detail and then distilling this information to create his distinctive brand of architecture.

Undeniably, looking at his creations, one will see architecture being integrated with the environment in a seamless fashion, akin to an almost natural process of arriving at the end result.



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The Running Green Project designed by Sambuichi based on the concept of "energyscapes".



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"Likewise, 'moving materials' are exceedingly important in architecture. Considering 'energyscapes', it is not only important in creating comfortable buildings that can make use of natural phenomena, but also to make sure that they become integral parts of these 'energyscapes'."

This alumni of the Tokyo University of Science in Japan worked at Shinichi Ogawa's office in Hiroshima, Japan after graduating. He then opened his own firm in 2000.

In his first ten years of independent practice alone, approximately 25 projects were completed. It is no secret that the concepts and ideas emerged from the meticulous study of the specific local "energyscapes". By using both inert and "moving materials", Sambuichi strives to "create architecture as details of Earth".

**Aesthetic architectural gems**

Miwa-gama located in Yamaguchi, Japan is a storehouse that was completed in 2002. Designed in concrete, it is an example of Sambuichi's work which largely incorporated the element of formwork. The formwork was intentionally used to cast it as part of the architectural element of the place.

**House for all seasons**

The Sloping North House completed in 2003 meanwhile exemplify the strength of his tenacity, talent and understanding of topology. For this unique house situated in Yamaguchi, Japan, he ensured that the house would make use of the "topology of the north facing the sloping site" that would thus allow the sunlight in during the winter while blocking it from coming in during the summer.

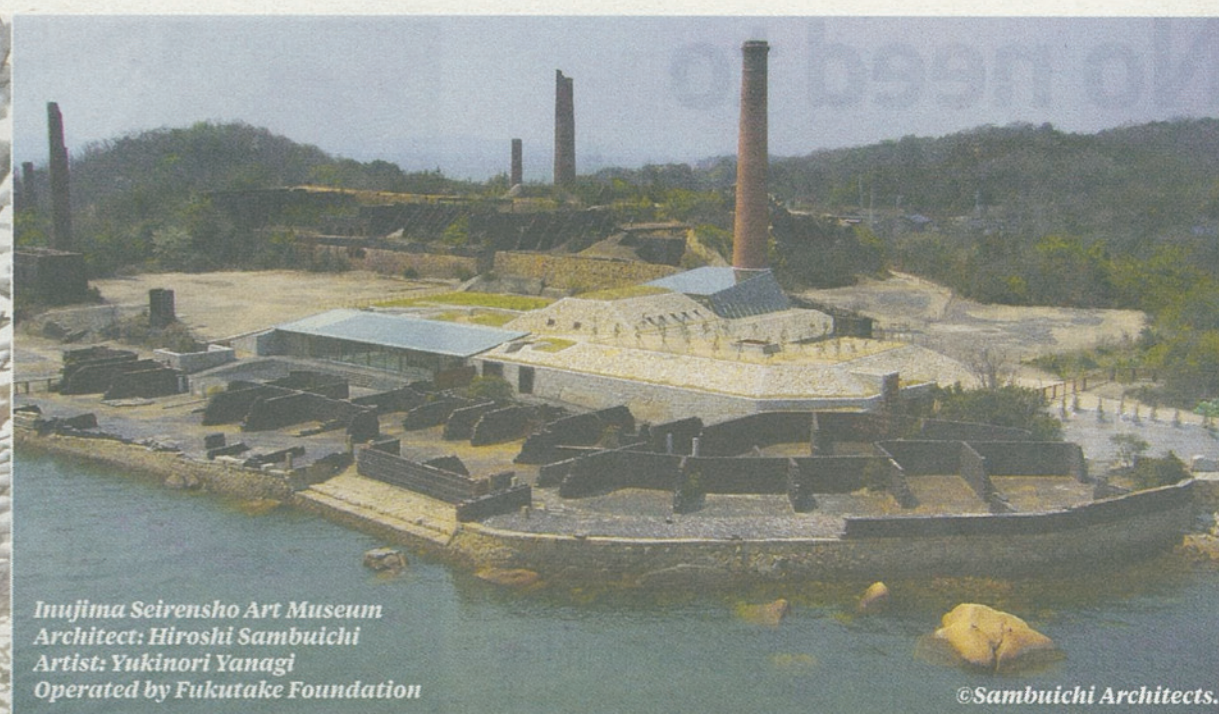
**Natural formation**

The Stone House in Shimane, Japan that was completed in 2005 utilised various sizes of stones to protect the building from the natural elements. Through Sambuichi's carefully thought out design, the house is protected from "moving elements" such as wind and water while "controlling" the speed of these elements in their various states.

**Winds of change**

The example of The Base Valley, a house in Yamaguchi, Japan that is cooled by "bringing in wind from the valley where it is situated" is indicative of the changes and improvements that a properly designed house can offer.

Sambuichi designed this house to ensure that the cool wind coming in from the valley and into the house is then



Inujima Seirensho Art Museum  
Architect: Hiroshi Sambuichi  
Artist: Yukinori Yanagi  
Operated by Fukutake Foundation

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The partly underground Inujima Seirensho Art Museum in Okayama, Japan designed by Sambuichi and completed in 2008 relies solely on natural phenomena and operates without electricity.

heated up by the glass roof. The cleverly designed house was completed in 2007.

**Natural museum**

A museum operating without electricity but relying solely on natural phenomena sounds revolutionary but in the case of the Inujima Seirensho Art Museum, this feature has been operational in Okayama, Japan since the project was completed in 2008.

Partly located underground, it makes use of an existing chimney to "pull air in" through the underground galleries.

**Bird's eye view**

The Rokko Shidare Observatory in Hyogo, Japan was completed in 2010.

The observatory located on a mountain experiences the unique phenomena of nature surrounding it and aims to show not only a spectacular view but also the multiple changes water exhibits in all its various forms.

In summary, Sambuichi's works only seem to mature with the passing seasons and years into a striking statement of architecture that evolves with time, in sync with the "energyscapes" concept he speaks so much about.

Alternating in pace, like a musical score written in *adagio*, slowly gaining ground and ending with a *crescendo* when revisited after a long pause in season, Sambuichi's works resonate well with the passing of time.

Perhaps the description by 20th century Canadian novelist Robertson Davies sums it up most aptly - "A truly great book should be read in youth, again in maturity and once more in old age, as a fine building should be seen by morning light, at noon and by moonlight."

Pics courtesy of Sambuichi Architects.

## Quick takes with Hiroshi Sambuichi of Sambuichi Architects

This is an architecture with a difference. Indeed, no one can fault Hiroshi Sambuichi of Sambuichi Architects for doing what he loves best - that is to study the typology of the given site of his project to military precision and thereafter, weighing the challenges of the site and only then embarking on the design concept. He dedicates himself to conceptualising the project design that will complement the surrounding demographics of the area and the differing landscape features.

Working to combine manmade and natural elements into a coherent whole, he works with these two categories of "non-moving materials" such as steel and timber with that of "moving materials" as in "air and water" to form his architecture framed against the surrounding canvas of the landscape.

Your thoughts on winning awards such as the ar+d Awards (2003), the Shinkenchiku Prize (2001), the Detail Prize, Special Prize (2005), as well as both the JIA Grand Prix and the AIJ Prize (2011). What do you think are the criteria for award-winning projects?

I am of course happy with winning the awards.

However, the work I do is not profitable, and only a small minority truly understands and supports my aims.

My clients share my goals and support my work process, which might account for the focused evolution of my work.

**Have you set yourself any particular goals related to architecture?**

I have no ultimate goals. I keep building on my experiences and hopefully (will continue to) keep advancing.

You have stated that your architecture emerges from meticulous studies of the "specific local 'energyscapes', by using both inert and moving materials" and that you strive to create architecture as "details of the earth". Please share your architectural concept.

Builders since ancient times have been, out of necessity, experts in making use of "energyscapes". I have no fixed ideal in architecture and, my main source of inspiration is local "energyscapes".

**How do you relax and what are your plans moving forward?**

Like all humans, I relax best in comfortable "energyscapes"... I (will) continue work as I have done so far...

**What is your advice to aspiring architects?**

Pursuing the local (context) is connected with a global concept. To foster pride in the local (context), use its climate, culture and history to reconstruct it.

For example, (you can) regard a tropical climate like Malaysia as a quality rather than a problem.

I think you will find the source of creation in those things we normally consider (as) problems.



Sambuichi's original idea of "energyscapes" he says is a concept related to sustainability but has a broader meaning than the current concept of sustainability and ecology.

Hiroshi Sambuichi is one of the speakers who will be presenting on the theme of "ArchiTechnique" at DATUM: KL 2013. DATUM, the International Architectural Design Conference organised by the Malaysian Institute of Architects or Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) will be held on 21 June and on 22 June 2013 from 9am to 5.30pm at the Plenary Hall of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Other speakers are Raj Rewal of Raj Rewal Associates, India; Borja Ferrater of Carlos Ferrater & Partners, Spain; Madhura Prematilake of team Architave, Sri Lanka; Andrew Maynard of Andrew Maynard Architects Pty Ltd, Australia; Martin Klein of Morger + Dettli Architekten AG, Switzerland; Budiman Hendropurnomo of Denton Corker Marshall, Indonesia; Malaysia's Abdul Harris Othman of RDA Harris Architects and Razin Mahmood of Razin Architect.