

truían la escalera de caracol y el techo con una habilidad que recuerda el malabarismo. A mediados del siglo XIX fue exportado a Estados Unidos como un sistema patentado y abundantemente aplicado en el interior de muchos edificios diseñados por McKim, Mead y White. No se debe olvidar la realidad de que dicho sistema hizo posible estructuralmente aquella superficie misteriosamente curva de Gaudí. El artesano del *Catalan Vault* amplió minuciosamente en la escala arquitectónica la maqueta de yeso presentada por Gaudí para convertir en realidad la superficie que traza las curvas de forma tan libre como acrobática. En su día comencé su estudio para adoptar plenamente este sistema a la estructura de la parte inferior, incluidas las gradas. Pero, después de una exhaustiva investigación, supe que ya no había ningún artesano que utilizara esta técnica y su adopción resultó imposible.

En la fase de modernización, España dejó que desapareciera ese sistema tradicional y singular. Entonces, como alternativa, adopté el sistema de «Precast Concrete». Su método de acabado es heredado del *Catalan Vault*. Este sistema produce una construcción suficientemente robusta con ladrillos y un pequeño refuerzo de hormigón. Desde pegar el *Travertine* hasta la patente de *Ball-joint* de *Space-frame* adopté al máximo los sistemas constructivos y materiales disponibles en esta tierra. Como consecuencia de ello, este edificio tiene unas partes que dan una impresión diferente a la de los edificios que diseñé en Japón o Estados Unidos. Paseando por este edificio, encuentro una parte que me sorprende, me recuerda un ambiente que contemplé en alguna parte de España. A pesar de que seleccioné los materiales, nuestra oficina hizo los planos y recuerdo claramente todo eso, pero una vez acabado el edificio, empieza a parecer como si fuera trabajo de otra persona. Esta experiencia no demuestra que el proyecto estuviera desarrollado fuera de control, sino como una historia larga que se va formando a partir de una acumulación de pequeños relatos independientes, superando la estimación del autor, y, con la ayuda del autor, otra persona empieza a contar su propio cuento. A fin y al cabo, se puede entender que el autor es arrastrado en la gestación de su obra. Creo que a través de este proyecto experimenté eso.

En todos los comentarios de los medios de comunicación sobre este edificio, una vez finalizada su construcción, aparece en abundancia el nombre «Isozaki» como su autor. Pero, pasada esta fase, creo que deberá llegar, en un futuro próximo, el momento en que este edificio sea reconocido como la cúpula engendrada por una «ciudad» llamada Barcelona. Por eso, en la entrevista dije que estaba esperando que algún ciudadano pusiera un apodo al edificio. Naturalmente, el entrevistador me preguntó qué apodo le pondría yo. Entonces pregunté: «¿Qué le parece “Escarabajo”?» Pero, a través del intérprete, se convirtió en «Cucaracha». Enseguida los medios de comunicación dijeron que al arquitecto le parecía bien el apodo «Cucaracha». Me dejé llevar. «Cucaracha» me parece bien. De todos modos este sitio fue un basurero durante más de cien años, donde depositaban la basura todos los ciudadanos de Barcelona. En los alrededores de este edificio, todavía se detecta el metano.

## A SYSTEM CALLED «ARCHITECTURE». THE PALAU SANT JORDI

### REALITY/UNREALITY

As in the EEUU there is an obvious tendency towards a strong hiper-reality syndrome, in Japan there is a trend to overcome the phenomenon of unreality. Because hiper-reality and unreality are both derived from reality, behind both of these lies the world according to reality. Both are probably destined to return to reality in the future. Hiper-reality and unreality as the description of phenomena really produced are two ways of observing our society and concepts that are basic for approaching it; for this reason it would be more correct to consider that these symptoms and phenomena have appeared so as to be conducted back to reality. On the other hand, there are other places in the world that have reality as their evaluation norm and their projects are organized in that direction. The Palau Sant Jordi is a project for a city that has reality as a norm. On the other hand, the Palace of International Congresses in Kita-Kyushu, which will be referred to in the next number, is architecture for a Japanese metropolis which is oriented towards unreality. Likewise we could say that the Disney Office Building of Disney World in Orlando, Florida, whose construction is due to be finished by the end of this year for its inauguration next year, is a project for a hiper-real city. These three constructions initiated at different times had been designed simultaneously and will be finished more or less at the same time. Working for three different cities with different characteristics, Barcelona, Orlando and Kita-Kyushu made me try to create not only different images, because the type of buildings are different, but also because I realized that they required basically different solutions. This is because the world of today is not homogeneous and the characteristics of every place require an original solution. Even if an architect has a single style, in the development of his work the particularities of every place play an important role and this produces different results. I believe we must accept this reality and show the conflict that appears during the process.

Therefore, the Palau Sant Jordi is considerably different in its architectural characteristics from the recently constructed buildings in Tokyo, a city which I qualify as «unreal». In it, the site is presented as «real» in the continuity of space and time. The reason for which Tokyo is now in an unreality phase is that this continuity was interrupted and it appears as if everything is reduced to “here” and “now”. As a consequence of this many of the meanings of the place have begun to float and have become a-historical. The sedentary community vanishes, it becomes nomadic and turns into an ephemeral phenomenon. Finally, the building breaks into fragments, becomes lighter and the result is amorphous. Jaques Derrida also searched for these characteristics desperately in the article «The point of folly» on the project of the

park La Villette in Paris, which Derrida refers to as the architecture of «Maintenant». One can see that La Villette is an attempt to create an area based on an intellectual, extraterritorial type of jurisdiction in Paris, one of the real cities in Europe. In comparison to the great effort that must be made to achieve this, in Japan this happens without any difficulty whatsoever, as if it were a natural phenomena. With this strange feeling in mind, since Barcelona is another European city with the same historical antiquity, a real city, but in which buildings are accepted as being «Non-maintenant», I thought that I should choose this posture and reflect it in the design.

As a result, I chose solemnity instead of lightness, integration instead of fragmentation, continuity instead of a cut in time and space, the «here» and «now». Historical continuity instead of a-historical continuity, a construction not for the nomads but for the citizen community, making it take root in the ground as a commemorative monument without detaching it of its meaning. In any case, I live in an unreal world but have worked in a real world for which reason I have not only stuck to its time and space continuity. Due to this one can have the feeling that the building does not live permanently, that it is far from everyday life and does not fit into its surroundings. However, here I am only going to refer to its relation with the real world. The characteristics I will point out are completely the opposite of those I would use if I had to describe the Palace of International Congresses in Kitakyushu. It will probably appear as the work of another architect. From my point of view, the author of a work looks for something that marks the profile of different forces tugging and relating with each other in many ways. One's work is never the expression of oneself. In other words, the architect acts as the mediator of the work but is not in charge of its total expression. Different people take part, unexpected events take place and sometimes the result is different from the initial plan. The place or site is an especially important factor. Depending on its characteristics, whether it is real, unreal or hiper-real, the image will inevitably be different.

Why does Barcelona appear as a real world? It is almost impossible to explain, I have no definite reason. At least the place where the Palau Sant Jordi was built possesses a great magnetic field, both historically and topographically; I could perceive it, I worked according to this concept and this was my conclusion. Or rather, my theory. Originally, Barcelona was a very prosperous Roman colony. Over the ruins of this Roman period the center of the old quarters was created, now known as the «Barri Gòtic». The Palau Sant Jordi is built on the mountain of Montjuïc, which dominates the Barri Gòtic and the harbour right next to it. Its name, in my view, reveals that its original inhabitants were Jewish. The name given to the building, «Sant Jordi», is the Patron Saint of Catalonia. This indicates that these sports facilities are considered important as a symbol. In the urban area of the mountain of Montjuïc the 1929 Universal Exposition was celebrated, and of its main facilities constructed only the Museum of Catalonia remains on part of the mountain slope. In front of it and still functioning is the fountain which, at the time, was the largest in the world. On both sides of this fountain are a few of the exhibition halls that are still used for the Fairs hosted here today. Beside the Poble Espanyol, which normally appears in any tourist route (in which there is a sample of dif-

ferent Spanish architectural styles), the Mies van der Rohe pavillion has been restored, probably the most important monument of the 20th century.

In 1929, the year of the Universal Exposition, various sports facilities were built on the mountain of Montjuïc, of the same magnitude as those built for the Olympics. In 1936, Berlin obtained the Olympics, which Hitler denominated «Festival of the Nation». But on this mountain an olympiad was going to be held directed by the representatives of workers from socialist countries as an alternative to the Olympics controlled by fascism. The day of the inauguration, Franco raised the anti-revolutionary forces against the democratically constituted power of the Popular Front. Immediately the athletes, in representation of the workers, declared their participation in the army of volunteers against Franco. A story as dramatic as this is engraved in the history of this mountain. The civil war is detailed in a novel by Hemingway and in *Homage to Catalonia* by George Orwell, and the places named in these two books still exist in the city today. I suppose this war left many scars, and a very wellknown example is the story of the plans and sketches of Gaudí which were burnt in the fire provoked by the anarchists who locked themselves up in the workshop of the Sagrada Família. This incident took place only ten years after Gaudí's death.

As an example based on the near past, the place known as the «Olympic Ring», which the Barcelona Olympic Committee assigned as the site for the main facilities for the Olympic Games in 1992 —including the Stadium, Sports Palace, swimming pool and press center—, is full of memories for the citizens, both historically and topographically. In other words, the meaning of this land or site, like the continuity in space and time, penetrates very deeply indeed. It is impossible to eliminate; on the contrary, the main point is to situate the building in the continuity of its meaning.

Before finishing the construction of the building, a Barcelona publishing company, Gustavo Gili, together with Iwanami Shoten, published *Barcelona Drawing*, which contains all the sketches of the design phase. For its publication, the writer wanted to include the sketches that I made before beginning the design and he selected two from my drawing book. One was a view of the mountain of Montjuïc and the other was the lighting of the Barcelona Expo. This selection was made from the point of view of space and time in every place; in other words, with the criteria that topography and history should be the ultimate factors. I agreed with him totally. The place is clearly signified as an element that constitutes the real world. Barcelona shows us its history maintaining its equilibrium with unusual clarity, and the Barri Gòtic is a good example of this. During the modernization of the 19th century, the Barri Gòtic was surrounded by the streets and avenues that extended radially tracing squares according to the clearly reflected concept of block, offering a contrasting panorama in relation to the labyrinth of the Barri Gòtic. Later the pavillion type buildings were constructed around it, on the hill and on the slopes of the small mountain. This idea of urbanism, to fill every part with the architectural style that characterizes every period, seems to have been inherited like something natural in the course of time as a tradition.

For example, in the 19th century there was an eclectic style; the end of the same century saw the birth of Modernism, this being the Spanish representation of what is known

as Art Nouveau, and Gaudí is one of the architects belonging to this movement who shares much with other architects of this tendency. In the 1920's came the influence of the «Noucentisme», that appeared in Milan after the First World War. Eugeni D'Ors is the most wellknown critic of this period. The majority of free-style, neo-classical buildings belong to this period. The fantasy of Modernism gives way to classical elegance. Later, after the war, comes Rationalism, which, contrary to Italy, develops as the contemporary architecture with lack of imagination that characterizes the post-war period. What we must pay attention to during this period is the posture of ignoring the urbanistic context that existed in «Modernite» and separating from it; at the same time, criticizing its sometimes latent quality that can destroy the structure of entire blocks to try to connect with the context as the urbanistic architecture of the future. This critical attitude has always existed in this city. Oriol Bohigas is putting it into practice, being an example of it himself. Since he is indirectly directing the development of the Montjuïc Olympic Ring plan I am sure that this place will remain within the continuity of space and time and that the architecture will be integrated within the context. Since I accepted this job within this framework I had to give a clear idea of my own point of view in relation to the context. In this aspect, the Palau Sant Jordi has been a construction in which solutions have been applied to solutions in order to adapt it to the context of this real city. My contribution to this process as an «alien» from an unreal world has caused certain unease in relation to correctly following the context. Since this building was not for an exclusively local occasion but rather for an international event such as an Olympiad, this unease was partly expected and partly limited at the same time. I believe that this time the balance between both was necessary. The particularity of this building insofar as its external aspect is the dome. This building is a multi-sports gym with a 200m rope and a total capacity for 17.000 spectators (13.000 seats + arena). The enormous roof that covers the whole building is the only singular element, in two and three dimensions, as well as the image symbolized, therefore the concepts are all related to the dome. Here is where I would like to describe three aspects of this dome: the architectural process according to the advances of technology, the cultural context of this land and the systematic architectural distribution adopted as a result.

In Japan, Barcelona is wellknown for the pinnacles of the Sagrada Família. Its image is interpreted as an unreal world of fantasy and appears in many publicity advertisements as a fantasy scenario, like a Fellini movie. Japan, which is an unreal world, uses this panorama to create an unreal image and Barcelona, which I qualified as a real world, appears completely inverted. But in reality Barcelona, which has a much more real mentality than Japan, saw the appearance of the Modernist movement which is full of fantasy, in spite of which present-day Barcelona continues to be a part of the real world. Fantasy and unreality are concepts of a different order. Real, as I have said before, is where a place is acknowledged as a continuity in space and time and things are evaluated according to this way of understanding. In comparison, «unreal» is when many phenomena which are not originated in continuity are penetrated and produce confusion and disorder in their relation. «Hiper-real» could be said to be the world where things with no foundation are dominant producing im-

aginary rules. From this point of view, it is easy to pass from «unreal» to «real».

## EFFECT OF THE DOME

As an example, when one sees from afar the rows of houses of Chartres or Strasbourg, the cathedral stands out noticeably in the midst of all these constructions. This panorama is like God descending to earth, giving the idea that the gothic style cathedral, together with its decorations, is supported by Theomorphism. It also gives the idea that every city had its own pattern.

Since the 15th century, the great dome has substituted the set of gothic-style pinnacles. Florence and Vicenza still transmit the commotion caused by the appearance of the dome. Santa Maria dei Fiore retains its voluminosity till today and transmits the surprise caused by Brunelleschi when he created something real following his resourceful spirit. On the other hand, the basilica of Vicenza is a large «City Hall» type of space and with this construction the architect Palladio began doing exterior design. Its dome is basically characterized by its oval shaped arch and maintains something of the gothic style. The same shape can be seen in Brunelleschi's dome.

Its dome is not very large, like R. Buckminster Fuller's project in Manhattan, covering only part of the city, but it probably has a space that can accommodate all the cities inhabitants. The fact of having such a space represents that the inhabitants of this city form an urbanistic community.

When the great roof of the Palau Sant Jordi appeared on the slope of the Montjuïc mountain, the citizens had the impression that something like a cathedral or a basilica had appeared. I felt a sort of awakening when I realized the amount of people who came to visit it during the first days of its construction. I was used to seeing the construction of buildings as an object of consumption. But this experience reminded me of the first time I saw the domes of Florence or Vicenza from afar and I understood part of what European citizens feel for their cities during centuries. This time I felt the same emotion, the applause of all the unknown citizens. I lived the process during which the building, which had been crowned with the name of their patron, was offered to the community by means of an architect's hands.

This dramatic incident which I have faced for the first time in my career as an architect I believe stems from my decision to introduce the dome in this project. In my usual way of beginning a design, I looked up all the possible structures and styles for covering a large space. At the beginning, the parabolic line arch was going to be the main feature. When the moment came to take part in the contest, the roof had an irregular ondulation that had nothing to do with the dome. When we were faced with the crisis in the realization of the undulated roof structure, the idea of the dome appeared. Briefly, in order to construct the structure of the irregularly-shaped roof with Space-frame I had a technical guarantee of being able to easily construct the Ball-joint of different angles by means of a robot synchronized with the computer. But the problem was the large surface that had to be covered. The weight of the roof was excessively concentrated in certain places, it could not be compensated with the homogene-

ous part and was not feasible. Then I decided to reconsider the design thinking of the Pantadome system created by Dr. Mamoru Kawaguchi. This happened after the basic concept had been approved in the contest and before reflecting it in the design. The people concerned thought that this change from the undulated line to the dome was a step backwards. The fact that I had been chosen as the architect was because my roof contained a free line that did not exist anywhere else yet. Any European architect could make a dome, which is typical of European culture. Apart from this, the place originally chosen for the building was 30 mts away from the rock bed and these 30 mts were made of residue accumulated during the past 100 years. The state of the ground was completely inadequate and we were forced to displace the site of the building. The Palau Sant Jordi was going to be situated in the place originally thought for the Sports University designed by Ricard Bofill (which will be used as the Press center). Before this decision was made, there was much discussion but not at a technical level; arguments were of a political nature. When the aforementioned unease arose is when I decided to introduce the Pantadome system. I had to repeatedly explain the construction process which challenged the imagination of many.

The Pantadome system is a rational solution that can eliminate the scaffolding in the middle of the construction process. According to the idea of this construction system, it is built at floor level in various articulated components and once raised to its final height its structure is consolidated. This unconventional idea seemed very attractive to me. Mamoru Kawaguchi explains that the construction process of the wooden cube was the origin of this system. The wooden cube is made up of various sheets. Joining the parts by means of rings, a stable space is achieved in the interior. The roof is basically divided into various parts, each part is a curved surface of a dome-type shape and once they are ensembled together they produce the dome effect in another even higher dimension, so that it has a double mechanism. The «dome effect» is basically the concept of the construction project, and its curved surface is on the limits of structural possibility. In the city scale the buildings cover the city and enfold its massive citizenship within it. Thanks to the historical testimonies and its morphological image I apply the name «dome effect» when the latter gives the feeling of integration at a visual level. The dome is a very European and historical concept. The degree of dome effect of the Palau Sant Jordi is hardly visually perceptible. It could have been lifted higher, like any other dome, but it was decided to leave it at its present level. Many invisible efforts were made to give it its flatness. Its line represents the smooth ridge of the small mountains that surround Barcelona like the mountain of Montjuïc. It is easy to simply imitate the shape of these mountains. However, it is very difficult to demonstrate, at the same time, that this is the result of a rational construction system with a minimum of interior components and pillars, without insinuating any other reason or cunning (Gimmick). What is probably required of this type of building is that it comply with the mentioned conditions. In other words, that its structure and construction have no redundances but, at the same time, give the strong impression of an excess of caprice. I have dared to describe this in my explanation as the imitation of natural geography by means of an artificial product.

I have been asked whether trying to create a dome that would correspond to the natural geography of its surroundings wouldn't have the effect of subordinating this dome to the rule of natural morphology. I have then had to answer by explaining the historical relation between nature and artificial objects. Their separation, imitation and adjustment. The anti-natural characteristic of the great structure whose gravity lies in the atmospheric current. And even the freedom I had to decide on its shape. First of all one must accept the dome from the point of view of the history of its community and intentionally admit the influence of the ground's topography. To design after totally accepting the latent history of the community, the topography of the area and the technology at our disposition, which I will refer to later on, leads us to express completely new meanings of *Topos* (place) as the continuity in space and time. The place must be accepted as the real world and the project must try to be conceived as a real project. This made me radically change the posture I usually have in Japan when designing. A place must be understood as a continuity in space and time full of meanings, separated from those summarized in the «here» and «now», from postmodernism words such as *Antitopos*, *Ephemera*, *Nomad*, *Chaos against Community*, *Non-history*, *Non-hierarchy*, *Non-order*, *Catachresis*, *Non-presence*, *Absence*, etc.

## JAPANESE DISTRIBUTION

At first, we did not know that the dome was a key image, hidden like a necessary story inside a city. When the dome was finished and we saw that unknown citizens began to show their interest in different senses, I began to understand this. The incredible enthusiasm was not because the Olympic sports facilities had been concluded, but rather due to the fact that something essential for the city had been created and the citizens felt this intuitively. I began to believe, considering the history of every European city, that the dome had led them to feel it. I chose the Pantadome system at a moment of crisis in the middle of the design process. Without having foreseen it, the system connected with the deeply embedded feelings of the city and evidenced the hidden story of the land. I applied this system not only as a tool to make the dome but also to add another possibility to the general development of the dome, knowing the work of Brunelleschi, Gaudí and Fuller. That is, apart from having a double intention, building every part of the divided roof has a dome effect in itself and the whole set put together repeats this effect again, the process of raising it conveys it with spectacularity (in truth, the communication media informed of the process) and, as I intended in the design, I searched for a limiting point that would allow structural stability and froze it in this position in the middle of the process of uniting the divided parts. Before the divided parts formed a complete configuration, they were immobilized in the air. And placing a Sky-light in the connection with the hinge from the outside one can see the discontinuous surface, and from the inside every divided part is seen separated from the rest and floating in the air.

At the beginning, when I was still thinking of the undulated irregularly-shaped roof, I wanted to underline the contrast between the shape of the flat surface and the shape of the roof

that would finally be joined to it, and I was going to adopt some system for making its visual difference stand out. If I had continued with this idea, this building would possibly have ended up looking like the «contrasting visualization» type that was in fashion during the eighties. At the time, I even tried to disperse the roof.

However, the final solution adopted was probably traditional, since it consisted of unifying the flat surface, the structure and the construction solution in one only system. Simply uniting and articulating the parts that were previously divided produced a state of ambiguity; the complete silhouette of the roof appears ambiguous. The unification of the system rationalizes the relation between the elements and is the only path that can enable the possibility of communication between the different cultures, in the development of teamwork in collaboration with the architects and technicians of Barcelona. If I wanted to, I could be arbitrary and justify it under the name of art as many European architects do. But I did not think this was the idoneous solution. Rather, considering the budget, the technology at our disposition and the human team that I was going to form temporarily, I believed that this was the most adequate solution that could be applied.

After all, once the dome was applied, the dome being an important part of Western history, I discovered that its distribution (Parti) coincided with the architectural system of Japanese temples. The silhouette of the roof is divided into three parts. That is, «Omoya» (great roof), which corresponds to the central arena, «Hisashi» (eaves), to the tiers, and «Magobisashi» (gable-end) to the surrounding corridors. As you know, the Omoya, Hisashi and Magobisashi divisions can be seen in Japanese temples whose architectural system consists of achieving the form allowing the distribution of the floor and the structure of its roof to condition each other in space. This time I did not obtain this result on purpose. I imagined the structure of the three parts corresponding to the arena, the tiers and the corridors, and later the Pantadome system allowed the union of these parts. Since the presence of the relation between the system used and Japanese architecture was not intentional, I did not mention it to the people involved in the project. But at one point one of them mentioned that the roof resembled that of a Japanese temple and this made me think. The dome does not exist in Japanese culture and I believed there was no relation whatsoever. And the roof of the temple is normally bulging but never rounded like in the case of a dome. I was blinded by its geometrical characteristics and the name of the construction system.

This system with an Omoya, Hisashi and Magobisashi hierarchy was generated in a natural way by the limitation of the structural system of those days and the division of space produced as a consequence of this. During a time in Japan they also tried to summarize the three parts into one only silhouette. The roof of the sanctuary temple is an example, but it still allows the subtle appearance of the interior division in its exterior line. Later, in the Sukiya (building whose structure stems from the tea-drinking room) there is an intentional underlining of the difference of its «structure = space system» applying different materials to the roof. I could interpret the architectural history of this shape thanks to the critics in Barcelona and I realized that the Western urbanistic construction, the dome, and the Japanese system of divided space such as Omoya, Hisashi and Magobisashi, are curiously

fused together. I guess that it is interesting in this case that when a Japanese architect designed an urban building, he consciously or unconsciously seems to have adopted an architectural system derived from the already-existing systems in the history of two different lands. I feel, in this sense, once again trapped in the magnetic attraction that the place possesses (Topos).

The «Topos» carries within it a chain of historical meanings. I do not wish to justify it as the soul of the earth. But sometimes when I reflect on the work carried out I realize that the significance of its history, topography, culture, events and folklore dominate the land in the form of beliefs, unconscious rules, a space that is difficult to escape, like tales being told. I especially felt this when the site of a building was in the midst of country scenery like in the case of the Hara Museum Arc and Musashigaoka Kyuryo Country. I thought that this context had disappeared in large Japanese cities. However, in the case of the Palau Sant Jordi the power of the site is clearly revealed. When the existence of this power as the key to the architectural solution is so clearly evidenced, its world can be considered a real world.

One of the reasons that the roof reminds us of a Japanese temple are the black enamelled tiles. The tiles are made of a type of ceramics which is traditionally used in Catalonia. This material and its manufacturing method have been used during centuries for covering the cathedral dome. It was selected as the material that would more easily cover a curved roof. I often referred to this fact to explain the relation with my birthland. Being a Japanese architect I suppose that this black colour, from my point of view, gives it a certain Japanese air. As for the construction, there is a system known as Catalan Vault which I wanted to use for this project but had to give up in the end. It is a traditional Catalan solution which allows to construct the vault with bricks without using scaffolding. With this system the circular stairs and the roof are constructed with such tremendous skill that it seems almost like juggling. In the mid 19th century it was exported to the United States as a patented system which has been frequently applied in the interior of many buildings designed by McKim, Mead and White. We must not forget that this system structurally enabled the construction of Gaudí's mysteriously curved surface. The artisan of the Catalan Vault carefully enlarged in the architectural scale the chalk model presented by Gaudí to produce the surface that traces curves both freely and acrobatically. At one point, I began to study the possibility of fully adapting this system to the structure of the bottom part, including the tiers. But after extensive research I realized that no artisan still used this technique and its application could not be carried out.

In the modernization period, even Spain allowed the disappearance of its most traditional and singular system. As an alternative, I then adopted the «Precast Concrete» system. Its finishing method is inherited from the Catalan Vault. This system produces a sufficiently robust construction with bricks and a little concrete brace. From the Travertine to the Ball-joint patent of the Space-frame, I tried as much as possible to use the construction systems and materials of this land. As a consequence, this building has certain parts that offer a different impression in comparison to the buildings I designed in Japan or the United States. Walking through the building, there are parts of it that surprise me and remind me

of surroundings that I saw somewhere in Spain. In spite of having selected the materials and our studio having made the maps, I clearly remember this feeling that once the building is finished it begins to seem like the work of someone else. This experience does not mean that the project is carried out without control, but rather, that a long history is formed by the accumulation of small independent histories, overcoming the esteem of the author and that, with the authors help, someone else begins to tell his own history. After all, it can be understood that the author is dragged along in the gestation of his work. This is my experience with this project.

All of this is part of the Palau Sant Jordi. In all the articles appeared in the press on the subject of this building, once its construction had been finished, the name «Isozaki» as its author appeared very frequently. But once this phase has been overcome, I believe that in the near future the time will come when this building will be acknowledged as the dome generated by a «city» called Barcelona. For this reason, during an interview I said that I was waiting for some citizen of Barcelona to give the building a nickname. Naturally the interviewer asked me what nickname I thought would be appropriate. And I asked him: «What do you think of “Beetle”?». But the translator who did the interpretation turned it into «Cockroach». Immediately the media said that the architect approved of the nickname «Cockroach». I let it be. «Cockroach» is all right with me. Anyway, this place was a garbage dump during over 100 years, where all the citizens of Barcelona deposited their waste. Around the building one can still detect the smell of methane.