

## HOUSE OF EARTH PLUS: AN EPILOGUE

11.2018

How to convey the idea that Shinohara's work is valuable and useful today, and that at the same time needs to be critically assessed? I've always believed that architects speak better through their work, and when their words are better than their projects, better forget about them. Only realized projects count when we talk about architecture, because only realized projects give the opportunity to be inhabited, felt, sensed -and assessed. So naturally I proposed a project as a way of criticizing Shinohara's House of Earth, which I believe it is a very important work in his career, more important than it is usually acknowledged.

Proposing an extension of House of Earth, as explained in the story-as-a-brief that was given to students (*House of Earth Plus-A Story of Endurance and Hope*), was in fact following the steps of Shinohara himself, who had the chance to design additions to several of his built projects (although they were never built). And in none of these extensions he had any respect for his own previous work. He always searched new ways, in the form of contrast and contradiction, to generate new relationships with his previous designs.

The challenge was great. It was an opportunity not only to work with existing buildings (a subject still too rare in Japan) but also to get to know intimately Shinohara's work, something I'm not sure is a norm in Japanese universities. But the results were extraordinary. They deployed a very wide range of solutions, of interpretations, of creativity. All through very hard work, free from constraints, as it should always be the case. The proposals went from building above, building besides, or building under House of Earth, to subtly altering the existing building to accommodate the new program.

I do believe that the students that followed the seminar learnt a great deal about their own abilities to cope with what, at first glance, seemed an insurmountable task. We had very fine, and deep, discussions that went beyond the usual review in such seminars. Fine-tuning ideas, exchanging visions, discussing materials and solutions, finding the pertinent form to each design.

I can only be grateful to Sakaushi-sensei, to his group of students and to his assistants for giving me the opportunity to learn so much. Because I have always thought, somehow egotistically, that one of the best ways of learning is teaching, that is, putting yourself in a situation in which you have to be ready to revise your own ideas by way of explaining them, and accept that your vision can be nuanced, even modified, by the interaction in the atelier. The final review with Professor David Stewart was especially significant in this respect, and his contribution very important, not only by his deep knowledge of Shinohara's work.

House of Earth Plus has been one of such opportunities. A memorable one that, hopefully, can set a pattern for future seminars that explore relationships between new and old.

Thank you all!

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"HOUSE OF EARTH PLUS"

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