SANAA

21st CENTURY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, KANAZAWA

Kanazawa, Japan
Sanaa is an Architecture firm founded in 1995 by Kazuyo Sjima and Ryue Nishizawa for the purpose of collaborating on larger projects. The firm is based out of Tokyo but frequently works internationally as well. Both Sjima and Nishizawa maintain practices of their own for smaller, more locally based projects. Both individuals went through architecture school in Japan and Sjima worked under Toyo Ito for several years before founding Kazuyo Sejima and Associates. In 1995, together, her and her former employee Ryue Nishizawa founded Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates. In 2010 SANAA was awarded the Pritzker Prize, architecture’s highest honor.
SANAA focuses heavily on a projects program as a way of approaching design. They hope to question typical hierarchies through their designs. They are also concerned with how their designs react to the surrounding site and their process is a conversation between the program of the project and existing site.

SANAA’s design process involves extensive modeling and drawing in order to produce multitudes of variations with which to inform their design. Their drawings are minimalist in nature and they attempt to manifest that simple elegance in the built form. For them, a line in drawing attempts to be a line in built form.

A material palette of steel, glass, concrete, and white paint exists extensively throughout their work.

They often collaborate with Guy Nordenson and Associates, and Tokyo-based structural engineer Mutsuro Sasaki to achieve the minimal, light, elegant look found throughout many of their projects.
Kanazawa Cityz Climate Conditions

The weather conditions of Kanazawa are influenced by temperate climate. The temperature in Kanazawa ranges from zero degrees celcius in the winter months to 30 degrees celcius in the summer months. The average temperatures are more mild. Kanazawa experiences the highest rainfall in the season of autumn and winter. It is also important to note, that due to it being a Japanese city, building insulation requirements are less strict and it is common for rooms within the same building to vary in temperature.
The concept of the Kanazawa Museum was based on its central location in the city. A circular glass exterior form was chosen to represent transparent, equal opportunities to enter the building from anywhere in the city. Within the circular form, a series of rectilinear forms fulfil the programmatic needs of galleries, courtyards, and auditoriums. The spaces between these rectilinear boxes become the circulation paths of the building. The transparent, circular, glass facade allows the exterior of the building to extend into the city and the city to move freely into the building. The simple palette of white and glass allows the relationships between spaces and form to be read as clearly as possible.

The museum's structure consists of a steel beam and concrete ceiling, steel beam shear walls (the museum boxes), five-inch tubular steel columns holding up the ceiling, polished concrete floor, and a steel structured basement and sub-floor to support the ground floor.
Sketch Model
Building Condition Sketches

How the building turns the corner

How the building meets the ground

How the building meets the sky

How the building makes an opening

How the building makes a wall
The Kanazawa Museum turns the corner in several ways. On the exterior of the circular building, the corner is turned through the transparent, circular glass’ relationship as it passes by the opaque, rectilinear boxes. The interior of the building is the only place where a physical corner is made. If the corner is making a gallery then it is a opaque, solid, corner. In any other place where a physical corner is made, SANAA attempts to make that corner disappear. They achieve this by using as many thin, transparent materials as possible. When they are forced to use opaque materials for the rods that hang the glass ceiling, they space these unevenly so that any rhythm or pattern disappears and the viewer tends to notice the rods less.
Model Process
Condition Model
Condition Model