

Rethinking the Museum of Modern Art Kamakura

By Kenji Watanabe

An exhibition about the works of Japanese Modern architect, Junzo Sakakura, entitled “*Une architecture pour l’homme Junzo Sakakura in Architectural Documents*”, took place from 27 November 2013 to 23 February 2014. The exhibition was organized by the National Archives of Modern Architecture, Agency for Cultural Affairs which was established in May 2012 for the first time in Japan. This exhibition could promote to rethink MoMA Kamakura as facing on dangerous situations to inherit as cultural heritage of Modern Movement in Japan.

MoMA Kamakura was designed by Junzo Sakakura who was one of the disciples of Le Corbusier. The building has been surviving over 60

years, even though it was built in the post-war period, when construction had to deal with the lack of materials.

MoMA Kamakura was substantially the first work in Japan, built at a historical site and surrounding the greenery landscape of the historical town of Kamakura, adjacent sacred district of the Tsuru-gaoka-Hachiman-gu (Hachiman Shrine).

The main issue of this exhibition is to collect and document the original drawings by Sakakura Associates, to introduce the work to the public and to prompt evaluation of Modern Movement in Japanese architecture. This is on the agenda of **docomomo** since its establishment, however,

in Japan, these facilities and archive networks for architectural documents are eventually coming up, consequently, some of documents have been already transferred to the museums or, regrettably, to institutions overseas. Therefore, this exhibition could be a significant first step for the constitution of architectural archives in Japan.

Kanagawa Government owns and runs MoMA Kamakura since 1986. It has obtained its leasehold from Hachiman Shrine for 30 years. After then, it should finish its role as a museum by 31 March 2016 returning to be a vacant lot.

Perhaps new proposals should be considered, as the original idea by Sakakura, whose ideal of Modern architecture was to integrate rational and functional thinking to traditional aesthetics; whose mentioning “One cannot ignore the unique localities that are shaped by differences in environment and human customs” as entitling the exhibition. Kanagawa Government has announced to decide some kind of directions including any possibility of conservation and maintaining this masterpiece by the end of 2014.

