

OPEN WORK
Advanced Architecture Studio VI
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Half a century ago, architecture became open-ended. Buildings would change and grow, architects argued, not unlike cities. They embraced impermanence, promoted flexibility, timed obsolescence, and welcomed uncertainty, just as Umberto Eco proclaimed the birth of the open work, and Roland Barthes pronounced the death of the author. Architects also questioned authorship. They would no longer strive to prescribe an outcome, let alone inscribe a meaning. Against the backdrop of modern masters and monuments, and as a result of cultural, social, and technological developments, buildings became systems. Paradoxically, architects would pioneer new building types, in unprecedented ways, by openly disregarding program.

Design theories for open-ended buildings differed, but they all implied, almost invariably, free plans and modular units, as well as building components discriminated by their rate of renewal: frame versus clip-on, core versus capsule, structure versus envelope. By the mid-sixties, just a few years after speculation on openness had begun in earnest, several projects materialized. Over the following years, many changed: some according to plan, some according to other plans, or no plan. Many others did not. Some were demolished against the architect's will, some preserved against the building's principles. Today, they stand as monuments of architecture's attack on permanence.

This studio will address three open-ended buildings in Japan, namely: Kisho Kurokawa's Sagae City Hall, Fumihiko Maki's Chiba University Memorial Hall, and Masato Otaka's Tochigi Prefectural Conference Hall. The brief is straightforward. You will join a team, be assigned a building, and asked to double its surface. Do you endorse openness, and observe, refine, or redefine the script? Do you argue against it, and monumentalize? What is at stake is to design in conversation with, and take position on, a building and the arguments it advanced, and to tackle a longstanding question within the field, again, half a century later.