



Architecture: Chihiro Iwasaki Art Museum of Picture Books
(Chihiro Art Museum) 1977-2001





Exhibiti Room



Video Library



Babies' Library



Café on the 3rd floor



Shop



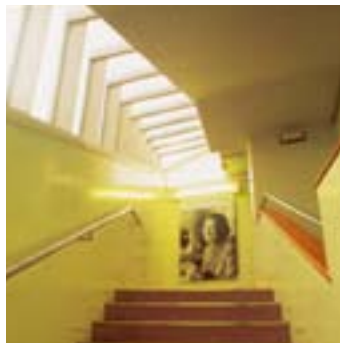
Museum building at the time of the foundation



Exhibiti Room



Chihiro's Restored Atelier



Stairs leading up to Chihiro's Atelier



Library

The First Step

Architect
Yoo Hayakawa

Has it already been thirty years? Thirty years ago, Takeshi, Yuriko Matsumoto and I--in our mid-twenties, along with volunteer students in their teens--were just groping our way in the dark. There were so many things we did not know how to accomplish.

A number of "adults" in those days quietly and warmly watched over us. At my age today, looking back on how they dealt with us, I am humbled and grateful for their patience and understanding.

On the other hand, I think it was partly our very ignorance that made it possible for us to create something truly novel, as we were starting without any preconceived ideas.

We had a good number of arguments, and the atmosphere was often quite tense. However, when the museum was completed, we were so happy that we all felt like hugging each other.



Entrance used before the complete renovation



Chihiro Art Museum Tokyo, since 2002

Buildings that Accumulate Memory and Recollections

Architect

Hiroshi Naito

Thirty years is said to be the cut-off point in architecture. When a new building of more or less good quality is completed, it draws wide public attention at first, helped by the value of its novelty. Eventually, however, the initial craze cools down and the building is gradually forgotten. It is in this process that the true value of a building is put to the test. Like the human body, the functionality of a building declines. During this process, if the building lacks charm, it will gradually fall out of favor with the public, become neglected, and pass into oblivion as a white elephant. By contrast, if a building is loved and cherished, the passage of time can work to the building's advantage. Memories and recollections accumulate in the building, creating distinctive value that far exceeds the disadvantages of declining functions. We see the same process in humans, and buildings in fact do resemble us. You cannot definitely say at which age humans face these crossroads--everyone has led a different life. But for architecture, these crossroads are reached invariably after 30 years. Going over this hurdle, the building will slowly pass into the vast terrain of history.

The Chihiro Art Museum Azumino building is ten years old, while the renovated Tokyo museum is five years old. Both museums still have many years to go before they reach their respective crossroads, although the various activities of the Chihiro Museum now date over 30 years. Originally based only in Igusa, Tokyo, the Museum expanded over time, broke new ground in Azumino, and renovated its Tokyo museum. I would like to offer my respects to the museum for consistently consolidating its base, even as it expanded into the future. It is certain that these activities themselves will become treasured memories, here where the memories of many people are accumulating. I believe that the buildings will similarly gain and absorb countless memories.

Finally, I would like to share a particular treasure of my own. Since so many years have passed, I think that those concerned would grant me permission. When the designing of the new Tokyo museum was about to reach



Exhibiti Room



Viewing the café from the multipurpose exhibit hall



Café



Library



the most exciting part, key members of the museum got together and talked freely about the museum. The treasure I have is the paper on which Ms. Tetsuko Kuroyanagi wrote down each member's opinions during the discussion. Her notes read:

1. I would like the new museum to take care in maintaining the gentle, intimate feel of a relaxing retreat.
2. I would like the museum to maintain an atmosphere in which the relationship between artwork and the viewer is as close and friendly as possible.
3. I would like the Tokyo museum to have its own distinctive character (different from the Azumino museum) particular to this place, where Chihiro lived, painted, and drew for 22 years before she passed away.
4. Yet at the same time, it should be a building that can convey an image of originality and novelty.
5. The café, hall, and other facilities should only play a secondary role; the main role should, by all means, be played by Chihiro's artwork. From a commercial viewpoint, however, we would like the other facilities to be profit-earning far into the future, so we hope that they will continue also to appeal to young people. (Note: Comments to this point were made by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, director of the museum.)
6. I prefer the type of museum that will bring smiles to children's faces; for example, one with facilities such as an entrance only for children (film director Yoji Yamada).
7. I hope that works will be displayed such that children will not have to stretch their necks to see them.
8. I would like the museum to be a friendly place where children can behave freely—the type of museum that you can just call "Chihiro's place." (Note: The last two comments were given by Zenmei Matsumoto.)

This note says everything. Strangely enough, by following the characteristics of the Azumino museum, the note tells everything there is to know about the Tokyo museum. I am sure this note will serve as a guidepost leading the building to still-distant crossroads. I think that eventually these comments will also become part of the Museum's history.



Barrier-free Entrance



Exhibit Room



Play Room



Café Terrace



View from the Courtyard





Chihiro Art Museum Azumino since 1997



Exhibit Room



Facing the Courtyard



Exhibit Room



Exhibit Room of Picture Book Illustrations from the World



Couches and Parasols



Picture Book Library



Café



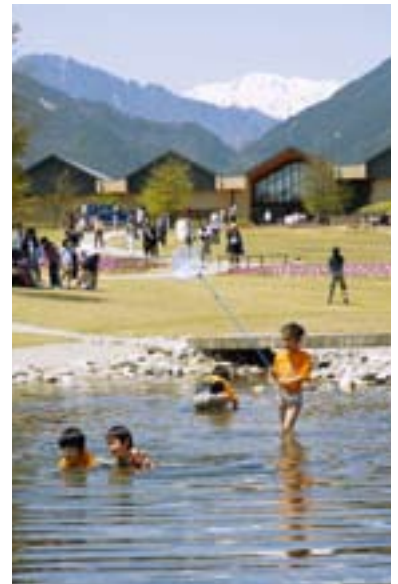
Playroom



Miniature chair masterpieces where sitting boards are made of a single piece of wood.



The Kurohime Cottage



A pond where you can play with water
(photo offered by Matsukawa village office).