

The President's Inaugural Address: "Balanced Advancement of Architectural Science, Technology, and Art, and Development of an Original Educational System for Young Members"

Izuru Takewaki

56th President, Architectural Institute of Japan (AIJ)

Professor, Kyoto University

After being nominated as a candidate for the office of President of the Architectural Institute of Japan (hereinafter referred to as "AIJ") in the recent election for directors and receiving the approval of the Board of Directors, I have been appointed as the 56th AIJ President. In addition to being greatly honored, I am also somewhat sobered by the weight of this responsibility. On May 1, 2019, the curtain rose on a new age as the era name changed from Heisei to Reiwa. Next year, the Olympic and Paralympic Games are scheduled to be held in Tokyo for the second time in approx. half a century, and it has been decided that Osaka will host the World Exposition in 2025, again for the second time in approx. half a century. Amid these turbulent times, I intend to deeply consider the path along which the AIJ should proceed and fulfill my position of responsibility, and I humbly ask for your support in this endeavor.

I aim to pour effort into promoting "balanced advancement of architectural science, technology, and art, and development of an original educational system for young members" in order to achieve sustainable development for the AIJ as well as the architectural industry as a whole.

Up until now, the AIJ has developed along the three main pillars of architectural science, technology, and art. In many cases accumulative education and evaluation in basic theory and skills are possible in the fields of architectural science and technology, and the AIJ also has an award system for young members, including incentive awards in these fields.

In contrast, due to the elements of human sensibility and performance that exist in no small way within the field of art, this field has aspects that may not necessarily be compatible with accumulative education and evaluation, and it has been difficult for young members in the field of art to receive recognition through awards until their senior years. Accordingly, from my auditor days I included in my reports recommendations to introduce a new evaluation system with the purpose of providing initiatives for young members in the art field to participate in AIJ activities, which led to the establishment of the AIJ Young Architect Award for Selected Architectural Designs several years ago. It can be said that an opening has been created for the structure of mechanisms enabling members of the same generation in all fields to equally play an active role.

Architecture essentially encompasses a diversity of fields represented by planning/design, structure,

and environment, and these are what characterize architecture. Accordingly, the realization of outstanding architecture cannot be expected without organic collaboration among these fields. What makes this possible, I believe, is the “practice of architectural activity” and humanities-science integrated “wide-ranging basic technology and theory” supporting this practice. In Japan, discussion over work-life balance and working-style reform has recently grown lively as means for enhancing and maintaining lifestyle quality are sought. Essential to this discussion is cooperation among even more diverse academic fields than ever, and in order to achieve this, it is imperative that not only integration of various fields comprising architecture but also initiatives to maintain and develop “wide-ranging basic technology and theory” within an even larger framework—including humanities-science integration—be implemented, transcending conventional frameworks as a field of engineering.

The key to the creation of new lifestyles that enable sustainable development and consider work-life balance is cooperation between a diverse range of people of varying fields, cultures, customs, ages, and genders. In order to create such lifestyles, it is important to proactively promote practical human resources training supported by deep education. I believe that “balanced advancement of architectural science, technology, and art, and development of an original educational system for young members” is an essential element of such human resources development and makes the mission required of AIJ and the architectural industry as a whole even clearer. As concrete measures for promoting “balanced advancement of architectural science, technology, and art, and development of an original educational system for young members”, I intend to advance the following mission goals.

1. Human resources training for young members within a balanced system

While the AIJ has many young members involved in architectural science and technology, increasing the number of young members involved in art has been treated as a pending issue until now. As mentioned above, the establishment of the AIJ Young Architect Award for Selected Architectural Designs recognizing members aged under 40 years—which I strove to realize at the time I was an auditor—has received high praise, and it is my intention to provide human resources training for young member while simultaneously achieving well-balanced development in the three main pillars of AIJ activities—architectural science, technology, and art. Moreover, because the realization of outstanding architecture is difficult without organic collaboration among the fields of planning/design, structure, and environment, I believe that it is essential that a forum be created for creating mechanisms that enable AIJ members of the same generation in all fields to play equally active roles. To this end, I intend to proactively undertake the setting of common topics in which members from all fields—planning/design, structure, and environment—can participate, as well as a forum where these topics can be considered. Furthermore, within the field of architecture—which boasts a high rate of female students compared with other engineering fields—I aim to deepen discussion from the perspective of securing outstanding human resources through further promotion of female participation in the field,

considering support measures and improving systems for this.

Thus I believe that achieving appropriate balance among a range of aspects—architectural science, technology, art, planning/design, structure, environment, generations, and genders, etc.—is very important for the AIJ’s sustainable development.

2. Architecture’s contribution to a resilient social structure (towards the creation of resilient architecture)

When considering “balanced advancement of architectural science, technology, and art, and development of an original educational system for young members”, I believe that it is essential that common goals be set after members from various fields of planning/design, structure, and environment have come together. I intend to establish a forum where members from various fields can come together to discuss and create with regard to the theme of “resilient architecture”. In Japan last year, damage caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, heavy rain, and typhoons was unprecedentedly high, causing tremendous problems. Numerous phenomena that cannot be covered by conventional statistical knowledge have been observed. I believe it is essential that the AIJ and architecture industry as a whole undertake measures, that are effective even in an age such as this when it is difficult to make predictions, from the aspect of “resilient architecture”. Furthermore, in order to create good-quality, resilient architectural stock from various architectural science/technology/art perspectives, the earthquake resistance and functionality of existing buildings need to be improved, and improving the quality of existing buildings to enhance their carbon neutrality—the key to realizing a low-carbon society—is also essential. The AIJ will also aim to strengthen architecture that is closely related to the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. Administration that responds sincerely to members’ broad range of requests

So that many members sustaining the AIJ can proactively participate in institute activities within a system that balances a diversity of aspects— architectural science, technology, art, planning/design, structure, environment, generations, and genders, etc.—and experience the benefits of membership to an even greater degree, I intend to promote the enhancement of AIJ’s system for responding to members through the use of ICT and data science. Although the AIJ has built up a tremendous amount of architectural science materials and information, it cannot be said that these resources can be sufficiently accessed by all AIJ members at present. The AIJ website has been renewed under successive presidents and digitalization is advancing at a good pace, but I believe that further improvements are necessary. As AIJ President, I believe it is my responsibility to proactively lead this system development. Moreover, seriously recognizing the phenomenon of “Tokyo centralization”, I will endeavor to improve systems for establishing sustainable financial bases for chapter offices and

promoting information-sharing between headquarters and chapters.

While respecting the organization and activities that the AIJ has built up over many years, I intend to implement as swiftly as possible the initiatives I wish to promote, as mentioned above under the slogan of “balanced advancement of architectural science, technology, and art, and development of an original educational system for young members”. I also intend to succeed the VISION 2025 medium-long-term plan that was considered during the term of President Nakashima and continued during the term of President Furuya, as well as carry out interim evaluations.

Turning our eyes to the world, Japan’s international status in the field of architectural science has conspicuously declined, and I believe that even more than ever, careful attention needs to be paid to any decline in influence with regard to essential aspects that are not reflected in rankings and other forms of evaluation. I think that the decline in commitment by Japanese researchers and engineers in academia and cutting-edge technological fields is the most extreme example of this. No matter what it takes, we need to get onto a path towards certain recovery through the training of young human resources.

Over approximately 40 years, as an AIJ member I have not only participated in a variety of AIJ activities centered on my own field of specialization (structure), but also been involved with administrative matters in the positions of Vice-President, Auditor, and Architectural Science Director. I have also served on numerous architecture-related committees under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and university evaluation-related committees, as well as taken part in many practice-related activities. With regard to architectural science, I have had experience editing the AIJ’s English-language journal *Japan Architectural Review* (JAR) and acted as field chief editor for an international architectural science journal (Switzerland). This not only enabled me to observe world trends in architectural science with my own eyes, such as the opening up of scientific information, but also made me keenly aware of the importance of educating and training young researchers, engineers, and architects in Japan. Utilizing these experiences, I intend to give my all under the creed of “Living sincerely” for the further development of the AIJ and the architecture industry. Again, I humbly ask for your continuing support in these efforts.