



The University of Illinois at Chicago

Gallery 400 (M/C 033)
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NIKKEN SEKKEI: Its Ninety Years and the Modernization of Japan

October 5 - November 2, 1990

Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois at Chicago presents an exhibition on the architecture firm Nikken Sekkei of Japan. Nikken Sekkei is the oldest and largest architecture firm in Japan. Although little known in America, in Japan Nikken Sekkei is highly regarded not only for the quality and influence of its built work, but also for both advanced research in construction technology and innovative management of complex design projects. The origins of Nikken Sekkei date back to a predecessor firm established in 1900 to provide Sumitomo Bank with a headquarters building designed in neo-classical style and constructed using the latest in Western technology. Today, Nikken Sekkei employs a staff of 1,500 architects, planners and engineers. Projects range from corporate headquarters to public housing, from private museums to the world's largest and most advanced cyclotron.

Beginning with the landmark Osaka library of 1903 and ending with such recent overseas projects as the Islamic Development Bank (Saudi Arabia), the exhibition presents a selection of 40 projects arranged chronologically on 40 panels. Panels include introductory text describing the period in which the projects were designed, as well as photographs and drawings documenting the projects themselves. In this way the exhibition establishes the historical parallels between the growth of Nikken Sekkei and the modernization of Japan. These parallels are shown to obtain in successive phases from 1900 to the present - Meiji importation of western technology and eclectic styles; political liberalization and Japanese development of European modernism; nationalism and the Imperial Crown style; the Pacific War and heavy industry; post-war reconstruction and urbanization; the "economic miracle" and megastructures; high technology and the revival of Japanese tradition.

This exhibition will be accompanied by a monograph by Botond Bogнар, Kenneth Frampton, and Sandy Heck with additional text by Kunio Kudo. The exhibition was curated by Dr. Kunio Kudo, Professor at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. The monograph was published by Princeton Architecture Press, New York, New York.