



Sacred Landscape » Award

Shoji Oshio + UA architects 8-Shaped Passage » Ueno, Tokyo, Japan



With its cylindrical geometry, this hall duet is located in the precinct of a temple in Ueno, Tokyo. The design challenge was to represent the Japanese style of worship while preserving its importance. In Japan, it is believed that the soul of a deceased person dwells in one's bones. This is the reason why bones are put together with a statue of Buddha in an ossuary as a final resting place. Instead of this custom, two separate halls were designed—one is for bones and the other for a statue of Buddha. Around the two halls, there is a walkway shaped like the numeral "8," which is also the symbol for infinity. The design intent of the fusion of the number and infinity is that of Buddha and the deceased person, which is reached by tracing the passage again and again. Another intention of the project is as a memorial of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The statue of the Buddha in the hall is made from a pine tree destroyed by the huge tsunami in the Tohoku district. The 8-Shaped Passage is paved in 33 pieces of stone. The sand buried under the pavement is from 33 temples damaged by the tsunami. Walking on this stone pavement is a form of pilgrimage to the 33 temples. Despite its location in Tokyo, there are many people who visit the 8-Shaped Passage from the Tohoku disaster area.

Jury Comments

This is a place for reflection and veneration in a dense urban fabric. It works well with the existing context of sacred spaces and buildings, and it makes the garden more distinct. The movement through the garden is now a ritual of reverence, and there is a good conversation between the architecture of the existing shrines and the new. A landscape and objects filled with nuance.

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