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VILLA
IN THE WOODS OF JAPAN

ARCHITECT SPECIAL

ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECES

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EDITION 8

RM15



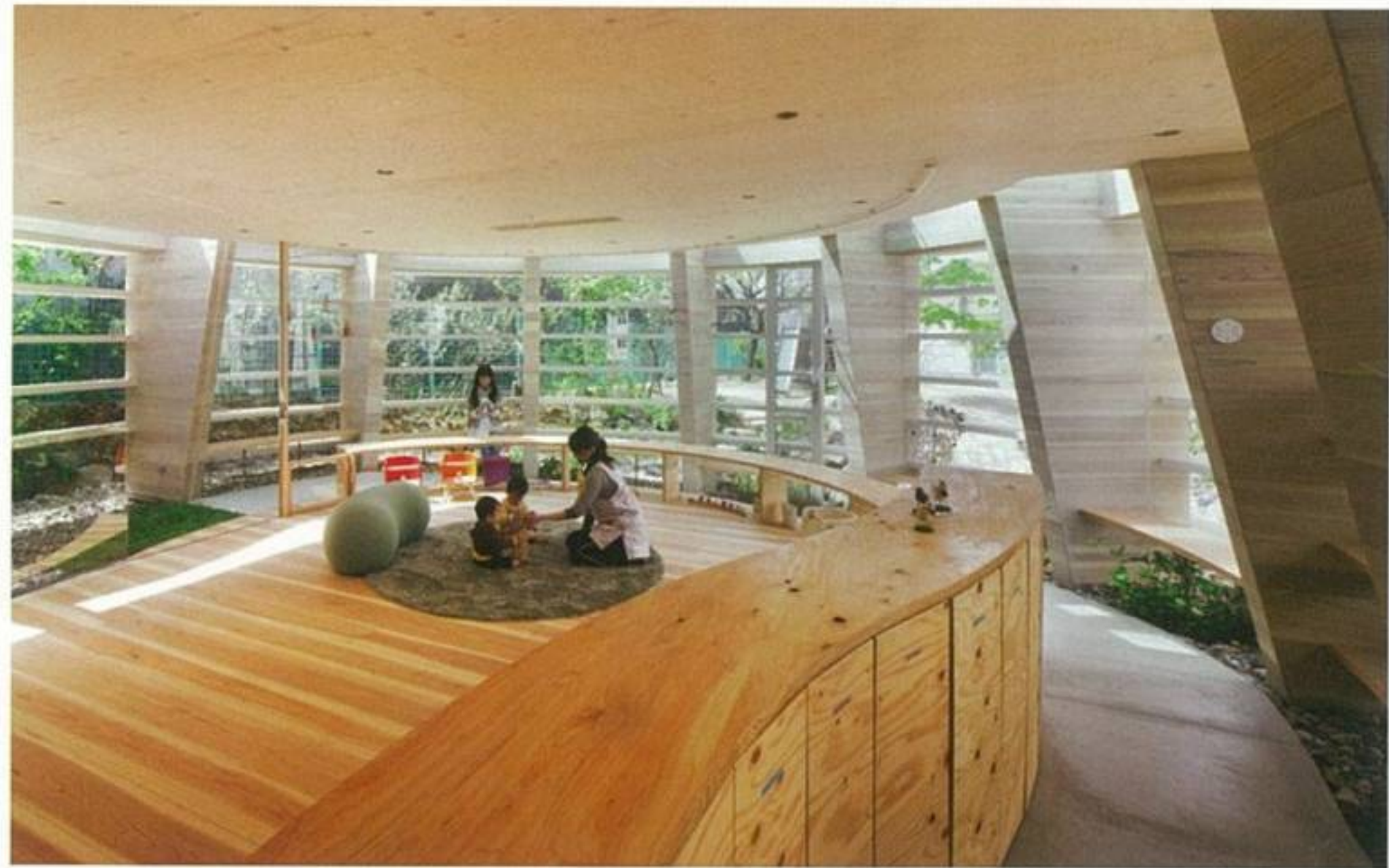
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ACGMEDIA



"A GOOD ARCHITECTURE SHOULD HAVE SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY AND GOOD COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SPACES."

Keisuke Maeda, Founder of Universal Innovative Design.



JAPANESE MODERNISM

Japanese architect Keisuke Maeda is all about combining traditional and modern while respecting the environment.

TEXT VANITHA PAVAPATHI IMAGES COURTESY OF HIROSHI UEDA

In Japan, being contemporary does not imply dismissing history. Despite the wave of modernisation that hit Japan after postwar, the sense of intricacy and simplicity in Japanese designs is still valued today as it was in traditional Japan. A firm advocate of this ideology is architect Keisuke Maeda.

Traditional Japanese architecture is very humane, with the light subtly suffused through rice paper screens and the interiors seamlessly linked to the nature outside. "I like this concept a lot. The connectivity and the fluidity of the communication between different realms ultimately form the basis of my architectural approach," Keisuke expresses.

Indeed, the 40-year-old's works blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors. For instance, Peanut, a children learning centre exists as part of the environment featuring semi-outdoor space with the building elevated slightly off the ground - typical of traditional Japanese architecture - so users can connect with nature anytime. Like a plant bearing fruit in soil, Keisuke thinks that it helps promote children's growth.

Cementing his belief that architecture should stimulate, engage and challenge the viewer, Keisuke founded his atelier Universal Innovative Design in 2003 and specialises in one-off bespoke residential designs. Since then, he has completed over 30 projects and bagged countless awards including the ARCASIA Awards for Architecture 2013/14. His most recent work Cosmic is a slight departure from his usual wooden clad dwelling. Though extremely contemporary with its all-white facade, this hilltop residence is surrounded by lush foliage.



Born and raised in Fukuyama where greenery is abundant, Keisuke's organic designs stem from his love for nature. That is why he constantly tries to interpret natural occurrences like gentle zephyr, waving trees and flowing water into his architecture.

"I like the idea of impermanence. In fact, the architecture of building changes over time, the entire environment changes every moment. When a tree grows through the house or vines envelope the facade, the architecture alters...gradually aging just like how children grow up and I think this defines sustainability," explains Keisuke.

Clearly, Keisuke's designs speak of his respect for nature. Based strongly on craftsmanship, beauty, elaboration, and delicacy, it's all about finding the perfect balance between the two realities to coexist in parallel without conflict or contradiction. ❖

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