

Pet Architecture

And how to Use it

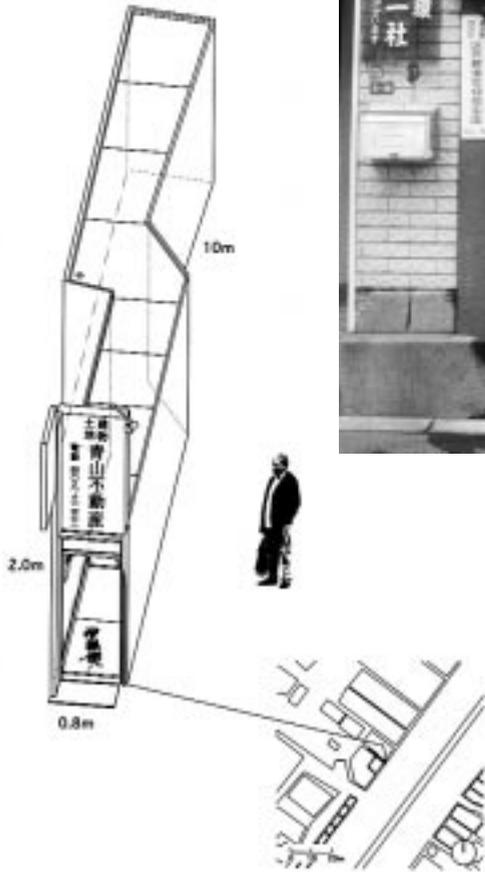
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When we walk on the streets of Tokyo we find amazingly small buildings between streets, along widened roads and in the spaces between tracks and streets. Most of these buildings are cheaply built, and therefore not spectacular in design, and they do not use the forefront of technology.

However, they attract us. It may be because their presence produces a relaxed atmosphere, and makes us feel relieved. Their shapes and forms that do not conform to styles and pretensions are refreshing to our eyes. They illustrate unique ideas with elements of fun without yielding to unfavourable conditions such as small area, size and width.

Their laudable presence reminds me of something I thought when one day I realised that they are like pets. Our society does not consist only of human beings. Various animals come into our lives as 'pets', and they are given spaces to live. It may be for our own convenience, but playing with pets is a lot of fun. It is said that connecting with pets relieves many people psychologically. It is because they live a totally different existence from us who stand on two feet, wear clothes and speak words. This play is quite good for our mental health since pets are not subjects of direct comparison to us, human beings. In other words, if decent buildings standing in decent spaces are to be considered 'human beings', small buildings standing with all their might in odd spaces would seem to be like pets in urban spaces, due to the sense of distance from human beings and the sense of presence in scenery. If we think this way, we are able to enjoy many different kinds of buildings. As a result, we have decided to call small buildings "Pet Architecture"; those that are smaller than 'rabbit houses' (a term used to make fun of small houses in Tokyo) and bigger than doghouses. We allow the existence of pets in the jungle of buildings, as there are pets in the worlds of human beings.

By giving this title, we aimed to establish one new category in urban structure by giving them a certain name and not by negatively considering them as openings and fragments. I have tentatively talked about this concept to different people and, surprisingly, found that many of them tell me about their "My Pet Architecture" existing in their daily lives,



such as “I found it there” or “That could be a Pet Architecture”. Everyone seems to have seen unique buildings, and those buildings that are extremely small or narrow attract people. There is communication between human beings and buildings.

In order to enrich this communication, we need to ‘read’ buildings. If we were able to ‘read’ buildings, it would make our lives happier, just as when we take a walk, or even just go to work or school.

How would Pet Architecture, then, function specifically in our society? Because they are small in size, their functions are limited to a certain extent. There are many small retailers selling seals, cigarettes and lunch boxes. Recent newcomers are shops selling small objects and items dealing with information such as cellular phones. There are also small restaurants and houses that agitate our imagination towards our lifestyles and even our living conditions.

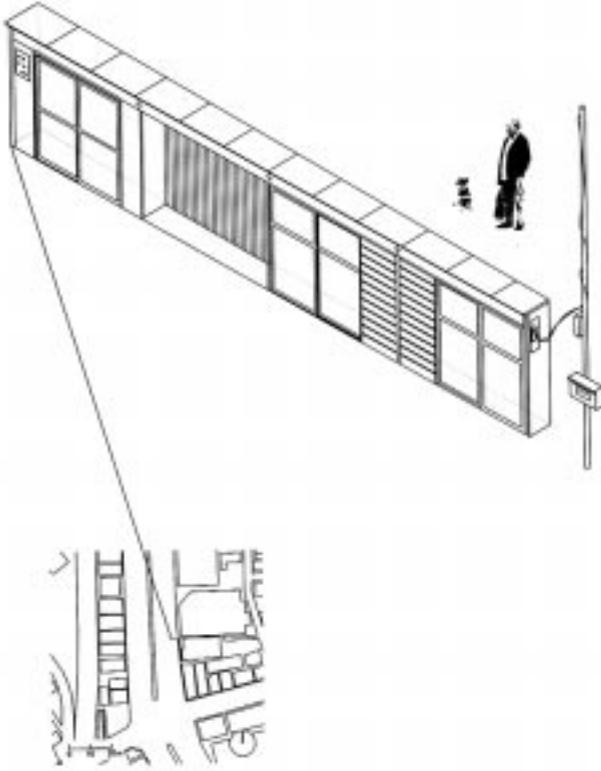
How is Pet Architecture constructed? Even store signs, vending machines and exterior attachments for air-conditioners that are of not worth being concerned about when we construct normal sized buildings become relatively important aspects for constructing Pet Architecture. It is easier to explain them with the theory of ‘using’ rather than the theory of ‘constructing’ buildings. In other words, Pet Architecture is a tool for users to customise buildings. Every building has secondary aspects of customisation, and due to the small size, customised areas can be seen in Pet Architecture. In that sense, it can be said that Pet Architecture is construction of customisation. Since Pet Architecture has less consideration of its appearance, it shows a sense of willfulness, unexpectedness and handmade feeling in its structure. It cannot be done objectively, but naturally.

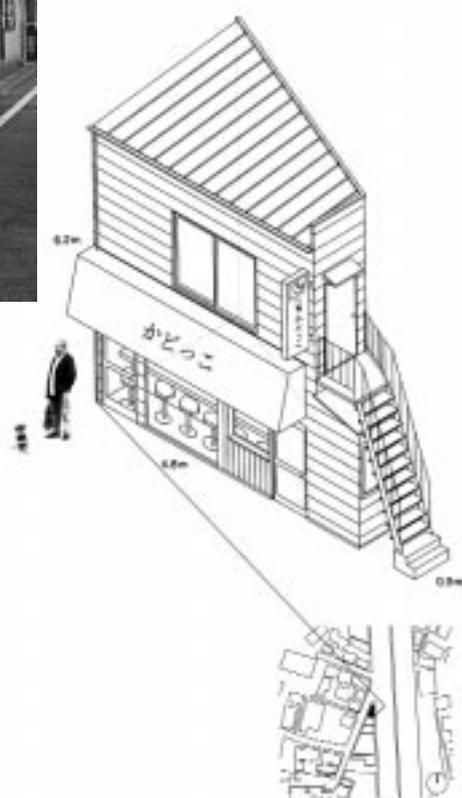
Where is Pet Architecture? Through careful examination of places with Pet Architecture, it can be observed in areas with a one-metre opening between buildings, subdivided small lands, narrow ground yielded from gaps between geometric designs of roads, railroad tracks and rivers, street corners clipped out by road widening construction, spaces between new roads and old towns, and other areas that are spin-offs from urban developments. Pet Architecture accurately shows in its size and shapes the conditions of unique locations. We become eyewitnesses of urban changes.

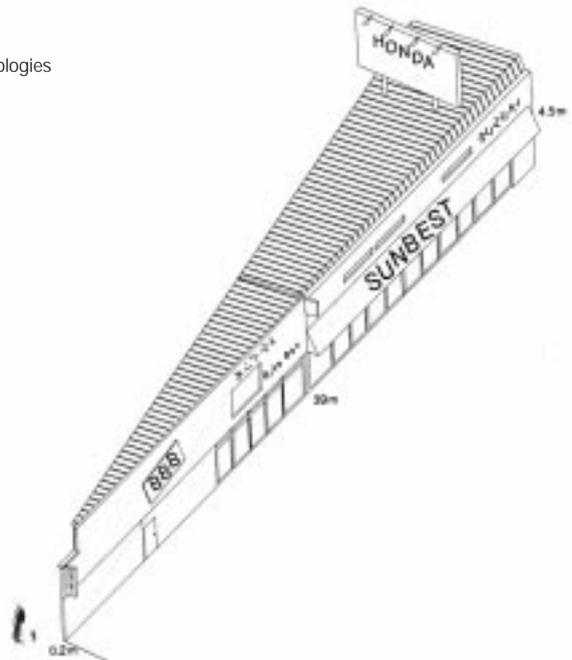
Conversely, we are able to imagine how those areas and towns have been developed through observing Pet Architecture. Therefore, we are able to recognise in photographs of towns that the passage of time has been layered in the scenery.

The popularity of Pet Architecture with its unique sense of scale as the smallest structure in Tokyo allows differences in the concept of building lots, constructing techniques and ways of customising to resurface. It also makes Tokyo a unique urban space that allows Pet Architecture in the city.

There have been many Pet Architectures constructed, and they have been spread in peculiar places in the cities. They can also be built with low costs. By using these aspects, we may be able to utilise Pet Architectures as a tool to direct the use of urban spaces and to recycle unused urban openings in the coming future. This is my ongoing project.







Photos and drawings courtesy Yoshiharu Tsukamoto.