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Nikken Sekkei: Building Future Japan, 1900-2000

Botand Bognar, Kenneth Frampton

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As the oldest and largest design firm in Japan, Nikken Sekkei employs over two thousand people and boasts of over fourteen thousand completed projects in forty countries. This volume examines their finest displays of architectural refinement, elegance, and bravura from 1990 to the present. Botond Bognar, Professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Kenneth Frampton, Ware Professor of Architecture at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, provide an authoritative and thorough history of the firm's achievements since the beginning of the century, focusing on such important recent works as the Islamic Development Bank Headquarters, Jeddah; the IBM Japan Head Office, Tokyo; and the Education and Cultural Center "Cairo Opera House." Although famous for their innovative approach to materials and new technologies as applied to the designs of magnificent large-scale buildings and monumental complexes like the high-tech Osaka World Trade Center Building "Cosmo Tower" in Osaka and Queen's Square in Yokohama (nearly the scale of a small city), Nikken Sekkei's brilliantly executed miniature conceptions, like the artfully conceived Sakuradamon Police Box in Tokyo, display a similar level of artistic control and finish as well. Whether reclaiming land from the sea, as in the Kansai International Airport Passenger Terminal Building and the Asia and Pacific Import Mart (AIM); merging buildings with the surrounding environment, the Museum of Ehime History and Culture in Uwa; or constructing them underground, the subterranean Osaka Municipal Central Gymnasium, whose site is located under the expansive greenery of YawatayaPark, the superbly crafted architectural solutions of Nikken Sekkei are both feats of creative engineering and thoughtfully conceived monuments, based on a long-standing aesthetic judgment both firmly rooted in the past and present and moving beyond them.

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