

**FROM:** Hiroshi Matsukuma, Vice Chair, *DOCOMOMO Japan*

**DATE:** May 8, 2012

**RE:** "KYOTO KAIKAN" on the Heritage Alert Template of the ICOMOS ISC20C

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the historic city of Kyoto, located inside Okazaki Park across from the Heian Jingu Shinto shrines, sits a representative modern architectural heritage, KYOTO KAIKAN. However, today, it faces an imminent threat of destructive alteration, thus calling attention for the Heritage Alert at the ICOMOS ISC20C.

KYOTO KAIKAN is a multi-purpose cultural complex accommodating a concert hall, a theater and an international convention center. The complex was conceived as an edifice symbolizing the post-war reconstruction in Kyoto. It was built in 1960 and was designed by Kunio Mayekawa, a renowned vanguard architect who apprenticed under Le Corbusier in Paris from 1928 to 1930 as the first Japanese architect to do so. Without any doubt KYOTO KAIKAN has been one of the most outstanding Modernist buildings in Japan. As such it was awarded in 1960, its inaugurating year, the Architectural Institute of Japan Annual Prize, and more recently in 2003, it was registered as part of the DOCOMOMO Japan list of significant modern heritage buildings.

KYOTO KAIKAN was designed to be harmonious with its context that provided a rich concoction of natural as well as man-made 'historic' environment. It was laid out to form a courtyard embodying the adjacent Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art Annex by asserting a strip of oversized and deep concrete eaves –in loose reference to the traditional Japanese wooden construction design– to bind it horizontally. The exterior walls made of large size bricks and the *pilotis* as a sifting device moderated between the outer city and the inner spatial realm. Accordingly, Mayekawa created an architectural complex that convincingly reflected the design fundamentals of the Modern movement while simultaneously making it fit with the historic traditional context of the Kyoto cityscape.

In June 2011, the City of Kyoto, the owner of KYOTO KAIKAN, announced abruptly its plan to demolish more than a half of the complex in order to build in its place a new theater with a stage height that exceeds 30 meters. If the plan is allowed to proceed as announced, the authenticity of the complex would be categorically lost. Moreover, an emergence of massive volume don in a factory or plant like stage/theater structure would be certain to cause discord with the specific surrounding 'historic' traditional context that Mayekawa had so endearingly accorded in his design. The loss of KYOTO KAIKAN would forebode the deprivation of the built environment permeating Kyoto with a rich assortment of cultural endowment. Wherefore, we ask the ICOMOS ISC20C to deliver from the world to Kyoto a strong voice of petition to rescind this reckless and fruitless plan. ■

# ISC20C

## HERITAGE ALERT TEMPLATE

ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage

### 1.0 Identity of Building/Artifact/Object/Place\*

#### 1.1 Current name and original name:

**Kyoto Kaikan**

#### 1.2 Location Town, Country, Street:

**13 Saisho-ji cho, Okazaki,  
Kyoto-shi, Kyoto 606-8342,  
Japan**

#### 1.3 Classification/ Type of place:

**Kyoto Kaikan is located by the Lake Biwa Canal running inside Okazaki Park across from the Heian Jingu Shinto shrines in the central historic part of the City of Kyoto. It is a multi-purpose cultural complex comprising a concert hall, a theater and an international convention center. Built in 1960 and designed by Kunio Mayekawa, the complex is regarded as one of the masterpieces of architecture based upon the Modern movement in Japan.**

#### 1.4 Current heritage Protection Status:

**While awarded the Architectural Institute of Japan Annual Prize in 1960 and included in the registers of the DOCOMOMO Japan list of significant modern heritage buildings, the complex presently faces an imminent threat of destructive alteration.**

### 2.0 Statement of Significance and History

#### 2.1 Statement of Significance\*:

- a. It qualifies as a major work of Kunio Mayekawa (1905-1986), who was the first Japanese young architect to have sought an apprenticeship from Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and succeeded to work at Master Le Corbusier's *Atelier* in Paris during 1928-30, accordingly, thereafter becoming among the most notable forerunning architects of the Modern movement in Japan.
- b. In pursuit of achieving his architecture, Mayekawa had envisioned a certain equilibrium or parity between the tenets of Modern movement and the unequivocally Japanese contexts derived from her wood construction traditional culture and the lucid four seasons with harsh winter and moist summer. As a well versed intellectual and critic, Shuichi Kato, who examined Japan through the domestic and international perspectives had summarized in praise: *'Kyoto Kaikan exemplifies as a quintessential embodiment of architecture based on the Modern movement in the post-war era.'*
- c. The notion of contextual architecture as delineated in Kyoto Kaikan by Mayekawa attests as follows: Introducing a slope to the stage/theater roof that assimilated that of the temples and shrines for a visual continuity and adopting simple details to its structural members such as major beams and columns that collectively contributed in complementary existence with the flow of the Lake Biwa Canal and the surrounding settings. Asserting a strip of oversized and deep concrete eaves in loose reference to the traditional Japanese wooden construction design on the elevations, not only the building was horizontally bound but also produced a sense of unity with

the adjacent buildings. By the same token, the balconies and terraces were associated with the ancient temples and shrines in the city, likewise the Corbusian *pilotis* operated as a certain suggestion of an undertone relation to the Buddhist temples' grand gates. All of which acted conjointly to moderate the outer city context and the inner spatial realm of the complex so as to be harmonious with the city's rich combination of natural and man-made historic context and tradition.

- d. In contrast to the stark austerity of the primary structural members in exposed concrete finish, the exterior walls are finished in specially manufactured large size brick-tiles based on the traditional Japanese ceramic technique to stand the unavoidable aging by maturing –a question that Modern architecture has yet to answer.
- e. It realizes an engaging urban space by its design of out door spaces that are open to public with easy access. Consequentially, this large *piazza*-like outdoor urban space, created by the setback of 16 meters from the frontal street and defined by a row of *Keyaki* or Japanese Zelkova trees, acts as a filtering medium where people are ushered in through the *pilotis* to the inner courtyard and to further spatial sequence. The inner elevations facing the courtyard are designed with large windows and openings with the provision of stairs, balconies and terraces that collectively enable the intimate and animate dialog between the courtyard space and the lobby, restaurant and conference room foyer spaces in the interior.

2.2 History of place\*:

Kyoto Kaikan is located inside Okazaki Park. Okazaki Park traces its history back to the *Heian* period by over 1000 years when it had originally accommodated 6 Buddhist temples collectively called '*Rokusho-ji*.' However, the site was neglected subsequently during the feudal and *Edo* periods and turned into mostly vacant lots. After the *Meiji* Restoration (1868), the Lake Biwa Canal was made for modernization and in 1894 the site was used as the venue for the National Industrial Exposition to commemorate the passage of 1100 years after the relocation of the capital to Kyoto. The following year the area became the site for urban development project and designed as a large urban park to contain various cultural facilities such as the Heian Jingu Shinto shrines complex (1895), Kyoto Prefectural Library (1898), Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art (1933), etc. Subsequent to the construction of Kyoto Kaikan in 1960, the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto by Fumihiko Maki was built in 1986 and in 1992 a huge exposition structure, Miyakomesse was completed.

2.3 Date of project/ Date of Construction/ Finishing of work:

**Completed and inaugurated in 1960.**

2.4 Architect/ designers:

**Kunio Mayekawa (1905-1986).**

2.5 Architect Designers still living? Residence, country of birth, contact:

**The Mayekawa's office continues its services posthumously**

**Presently with Isao Hashimoto as Representative Director:**

**Mayekawa Associates, Architects and Engineers**

**Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0003**

**Japan**

**[+81] 03-3351-7101**

**web page: [www.maekawa-assic.co.jp/](http://www.maekawa-assic.co.jp/)**

2.6 Original and current use of building/place:

**A multi-purpose cultural complex comprising a concert hall, a theater and an international convention center.**

2.7 Changes, additions:

**No major changes or additions up-to-date.**

2.8 Current Condition:

**While it shows a certain aging through the passage of time in the past 52 years, according to the released latest structural tests results and analyses, the concrete structural properties maintain a competent level of structural integrity.**

2.9 Original Design Intent:

**The original design intent of the Kyoto Kaikan was to realize an architectural complex that convincingly reflected the design fundamentals of the Modern movement while simultaneously making it fit with the historic traditional context of the Kyoto cityscape.**

**3.0 Description (history and technology)**

3.1 Physical description:

**The primary structural columns and beams are constructed in exposed concrete with a continuous strip of oversized and deep eaves that surrounds the building top horizontally. The exterior walls are finished in specially manufactured large size brick-tiles based on the traditional Japanese ceramic technique to stand the unavoidable aging by maturing. The overall design presents a simple yet powerfully eloquent composition.**

3.2 Construction system used:

**Poured-in-place exposed reinforced concrete with partial steel construction.**

3.3 Context/setting:

**Located inside Okazaki Park with the adjacent Lake Biwa Canal and a distant view of the Higashi-yama (hills) in the background.**

3.4 Social and cultural context:

**An old City Hall stood in this site but only to have been destroyed by a typhoon during the pre-war period. Therefore, the idea was to recreate a hospitable urban center for the citizens to gather again, accordingly, Kyoto Kaikan was built to symbolize the post-war reconstruction in Kyoto.**

3.5 Materials/fabric/form/function:

**Poured-in-place exposed reinforced concrete.**

**Specially manufactured large size brick-tiles based on the traditional Japanese ceramic technique**

3.6 Aesthetic value:

**It was to ensconce in an ambience of calm *savoir-faire* not so dissimilar to that of Zen temples while promoting an intimate and animate dialog in the courtyard space with open, expansive and limpidly modern composition.**

**4.0 Source of Alert**

4.1 References, contacts\*:

**Primary liaison: Hiroshi Matsukuma, Vice Chair, *DOCOMOMO Japan***

**e-mail address: [matukuma@kit.ac.jp](mailto:matukuma@kit.ac.jp)**

**At DOCOMOMO Japan:**

**e-mail address: [docomomojapan@yahoo.co.jp](mailto:docomomojapan@yahoo.co.jp)**

**web page : <http://docomomojapan.com/>**

**Hiroyuki Suzuki, Chair**

**Kenji Watanabe, Secretary**

**Shin Ichiro Ohnishi**

**Yoshiyuki Yamana**

4.2 Groups supporting Alert and/or nomination, contacts:

**DOCOMOMO Japan**  
**Architectural Institute of Japan**  
**Japan Institute of Architects**

4.3 Groups potentially against Alert action:

**The City of Kyoto**  
**Rohm Co., Ltd.**

4.4 Local, Regional, International significance citations\*:

**Jonathan M. Reynolds, Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture,  
University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 2001**

**The Work of Kunio Mayekawa: Pioneer of Japanese Modern Architecture, Bijutsu Shuppan-sha,  
Tokyo, 2006**

4.5 Letters of support, newspaper articles, etc.:

***(Information not available as of this writing)***

4.6 Publications that describe the work/place, bibliography, etc.:

**Jonathan M. Reynolds, Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture,  
University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 2001**

**The Work of Kunio Mayekawa: Pioneer of Japanese Modern Architecture, Bijutsu Shuppan-sha,  
Tokyo, 2006**

**The Japan Architect; August 1960 Issue, Shin-Kenchiku-sha, Tokyo, 1960:**

**Article (in French): Françoise Shoay, "Impression de Kyoto Kaikan"**

**Article (in English): Ryuichi Hamaguchi, "A Modern Temple for the People of Kyoto"**

4.7 Time Constraints for Advocacy (immediate action/delayed action)\*:

**The basic design for the new structure is due completion in end May 2012, and the demolition work to commence soon afterward. Therefore, an immediate action/petition to counter the process is imperative.**

**5.0 Recommended action\***

5.1 Heritage Alert: international/national distribution:

**ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage**  
**UNESCO International and Japan**  
**DOCOMOMO International and Japan**

5.2 Letter (s) to.....:

**Mayor of the City of Kyoto, Daisaku KADOKAWA**  
**Kyoto City Hall**

**Oike, Teramachi-dori,  
Nakakyo-ku,  
Kyoto-shi, Kyoto 604-8571  
Japan**

**Construction cost partially funded by:  
Kenichiro SATO, Chairman of the Board  
Rohm Co., Ltd.  
21 Sai-in Mizosaki-cho,  
Ukyo-ku, Kyoto-shi,  
Kyoto 615-8585,  
Japan**

5.3 ISC20C Website upload:

**Yes.**

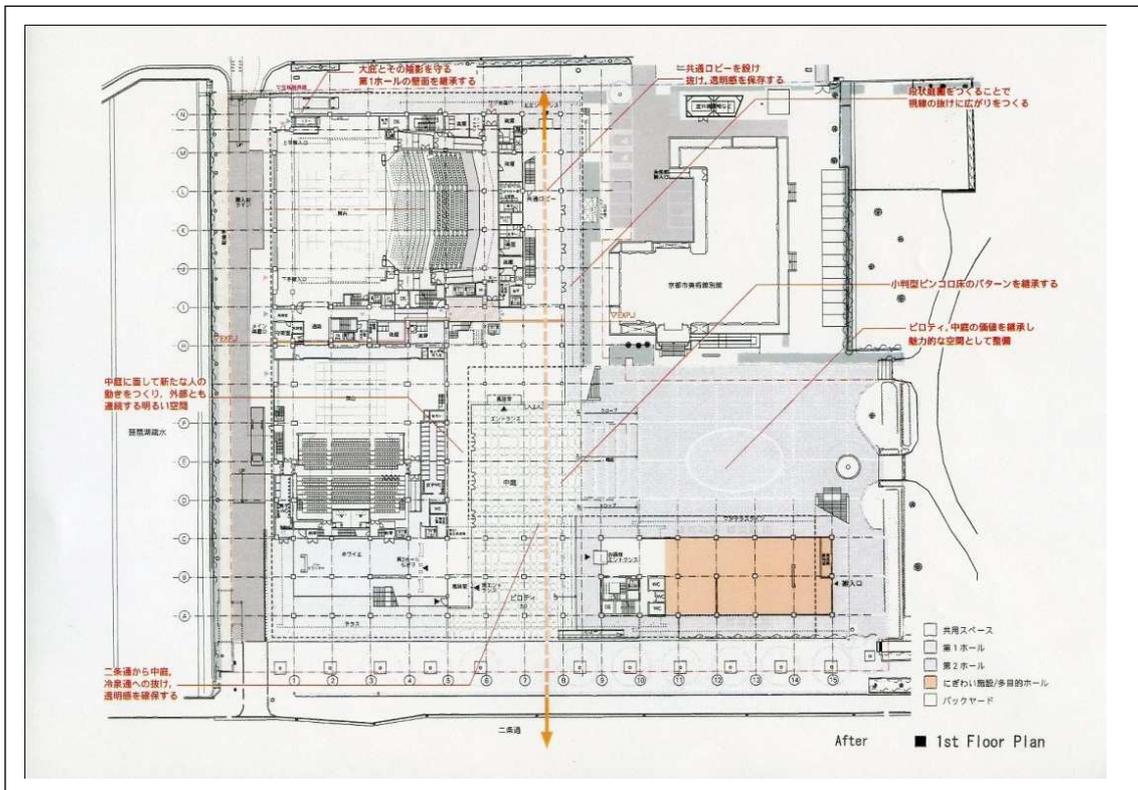
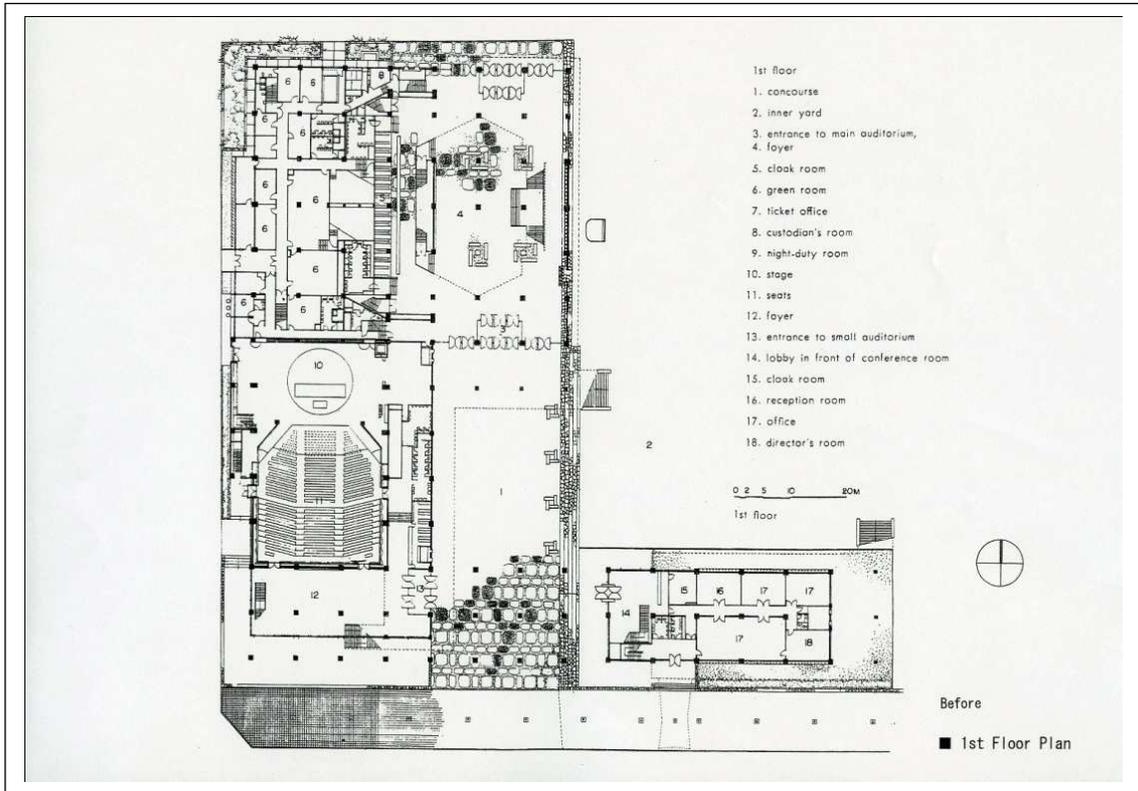
5.4 Affiliated distribution eg UIA/Docomomo/TICCIH:

**Yes, distribute through UIA/DOCOMOMO/TICCIH, etc.**

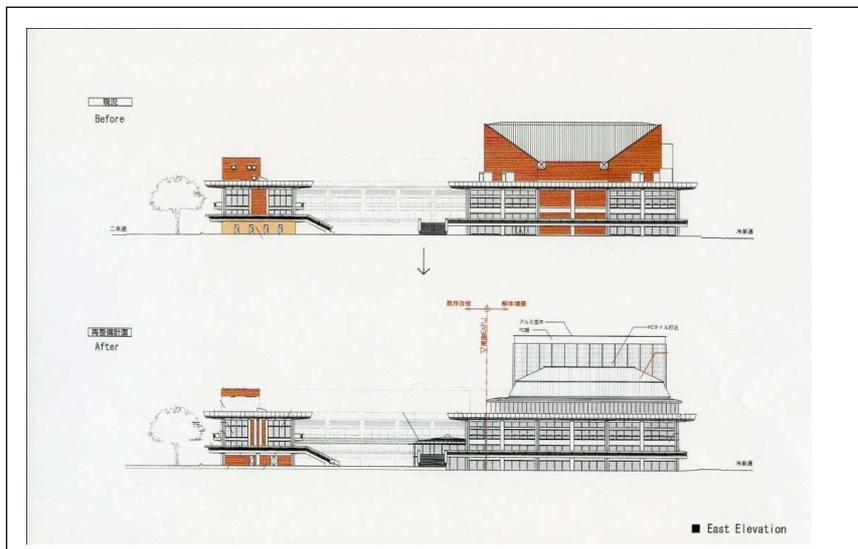
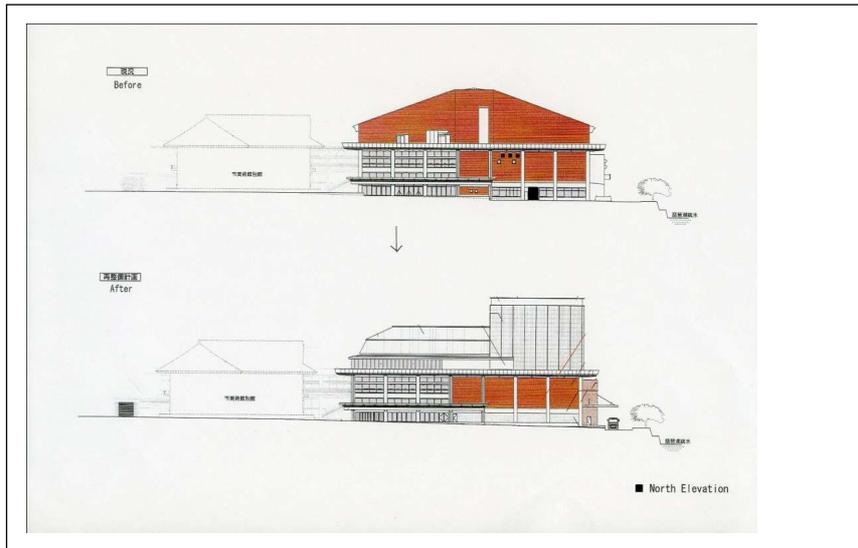
5.5 Other actions recommended:

**Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Government of Japan  
Commissioner, Seiichi KONDO  
3-2-2 Kasumi-gaseki,  
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8959  
Japan**

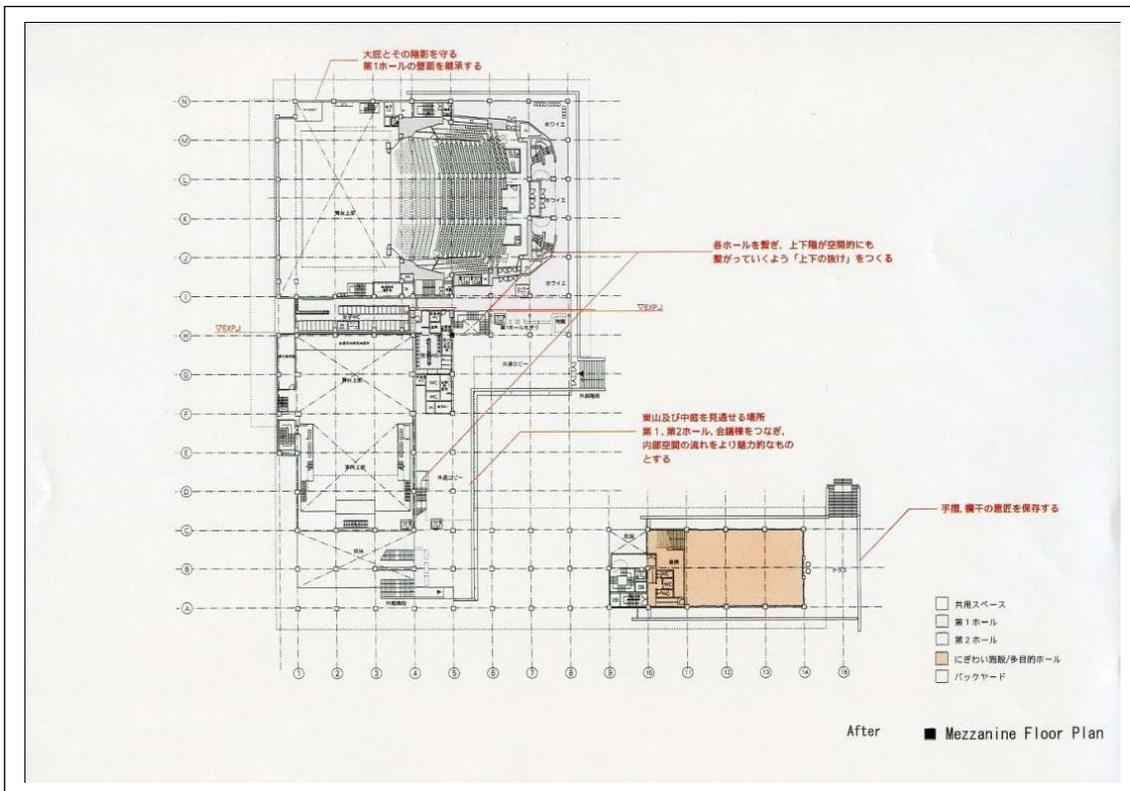
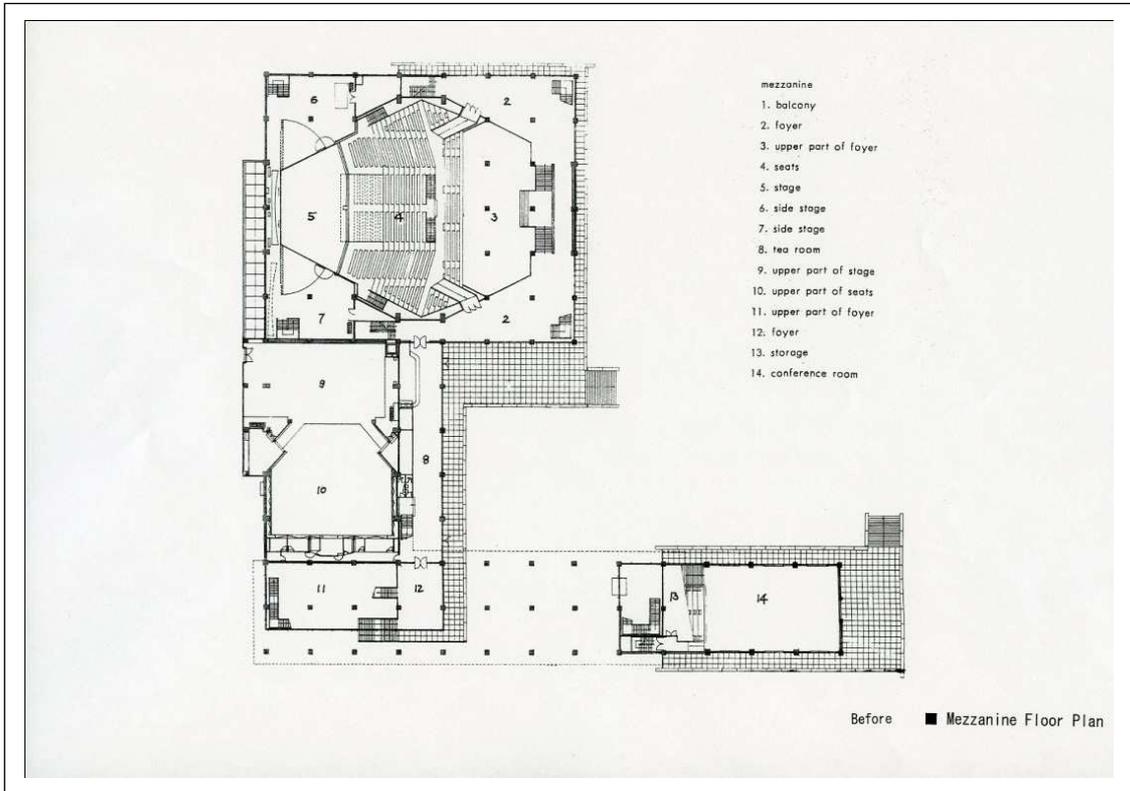
APPENDIX drawings: Kyoto Kaikan; First Floor Plans



APPENDIX drawings: Kyoto Kaikan; Elevations



APPENDIX drawings: Kyoto Kaikan; Mezzanine Floor Plans





View from the south-west, 2010



Proposal plan Photo-montage



View from the north-west, 2012



Proposal plan Photo-montage



View from the east court, 2011



Proposal plan Photo-montage