

# TOKYO POP LAB

By Alan Song

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Arch 346 Competition Elective  
Professor Terri Meyer Boake

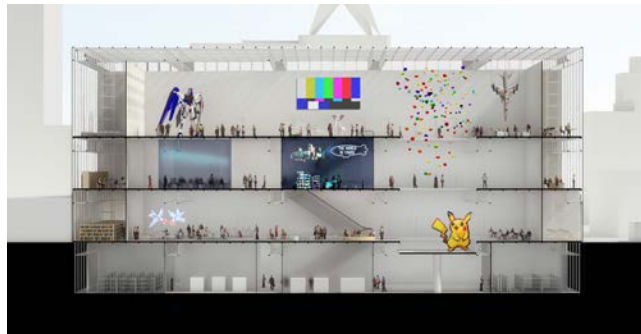




Fig 1. Exterior Perspective

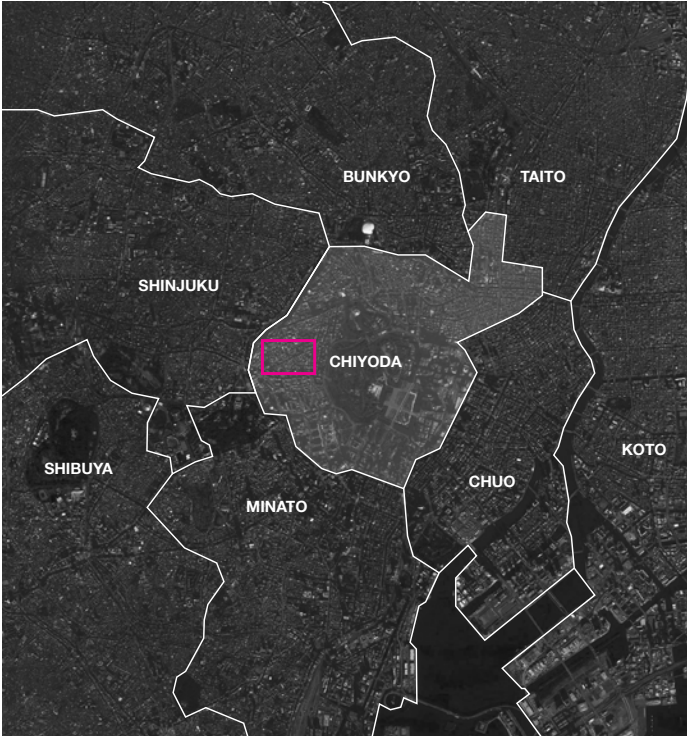


Fig 2. Context Plan



Fig 3. Site Plan

# INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

Popular culture was not always a term associated with the masses. Its roots lie in association with the undeducated lower class citizens, and helped differentiate between that of the 'official culture' linked to the upper class. However, with the growth of the media and the internet, there is no doubt that popular culture has become the preeminent topic of discussion amongst today's generation. Everytime a tweet is retweeted or a Facebook comment liked, we are contributing to the development of present day popular culture and trends. As such, popular culture is not an entity that can be shaped or broadcast alone, it requires the collective caucusing of individuals to shape and determine what lies in its future.

The state of a pop culture is then a constant renewal and update of trends. A pop culture centre is then, much more than a stagnant building, but rather seeks the potential to become a self-revitalizing machine for the production, broadcast, and storage of trending mementos. This space must not only be able to preserve trends of the past but accommodate real-time updates in the present.

Located in the Chiyoda ward of Tokyo, the site is surrounded by the rich cultural trends produced by Japan over the past few decades. Separated from Akihabara by the Imperial Palace grounds, the site is located in a quiet residential and commercial neighbourhood. Directly contrasting Akihabara; perhaps the one place that comes to mind when someone mentions 'pop-culture', the proposed site offers an opportunity to revitalize an entire neighbourhood while respecting its adjacent context.

Tokyo is undoubtedly the pop culture capital of the world. Take a walk on the streets or a ride in the subway trains and you'll see 50 and 10 year olds each enjoying its contents equally. The brief calls for a pop culture institution that will teach students the history and relevance of popular culture. They imagine a space that could host multi disciplinary events and provide a high quality education space. However, we do not see a pop culture laboratory as just a museum of sorts, but rather an active machine that participates in the education and production of popular culture and trends.



Fig 4. Ground Floor Lobby



Fig 5. Third Floor Atrium

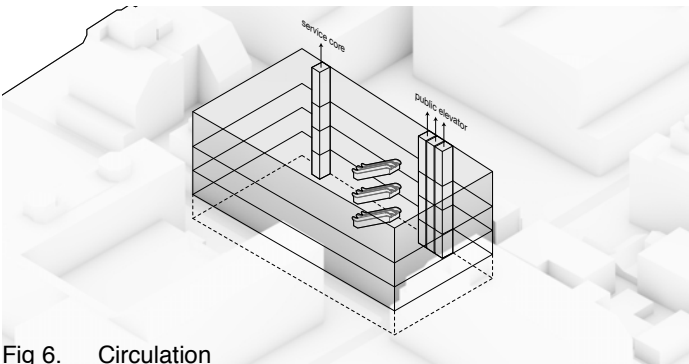


Fig 6. Circulation

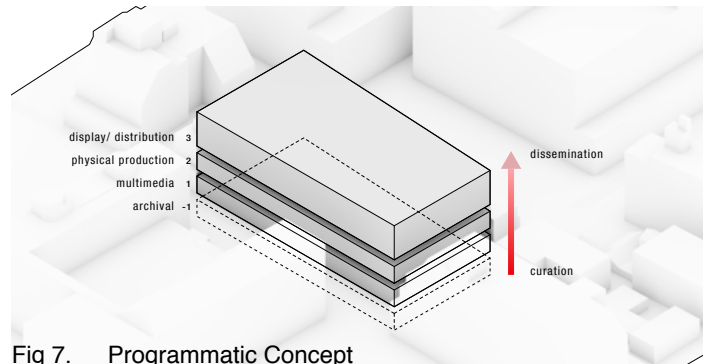


Fig 7. Programmatic Concept

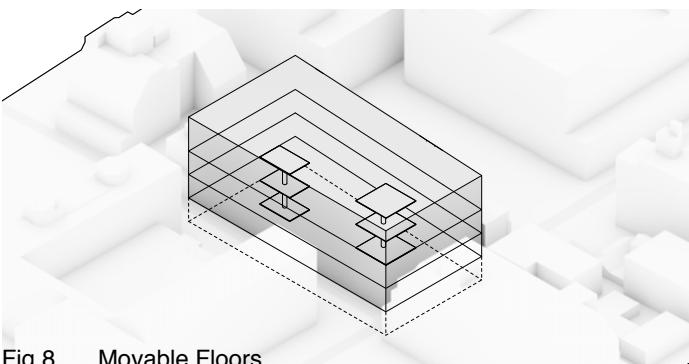


Fig 8. Movable Floors

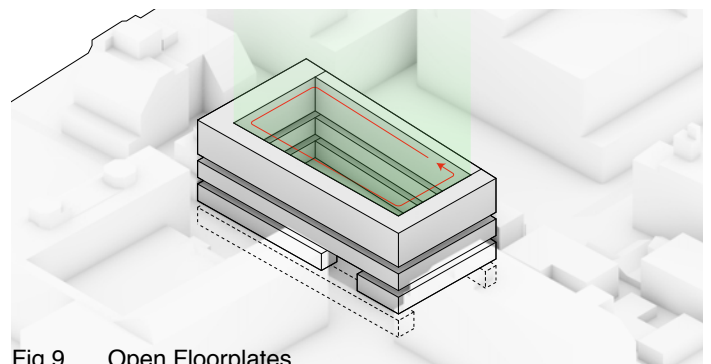


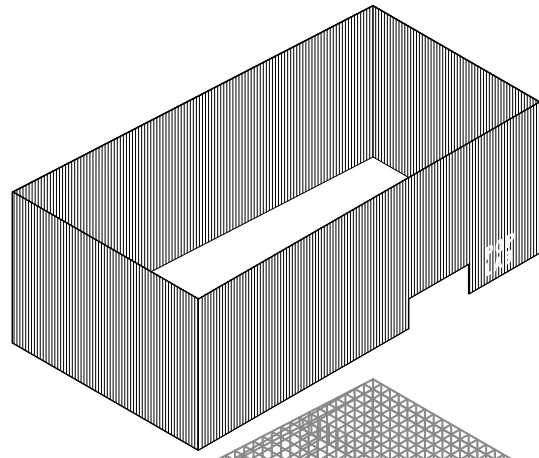
Fig 9. Open Floorplates

# DEVELOPMENT

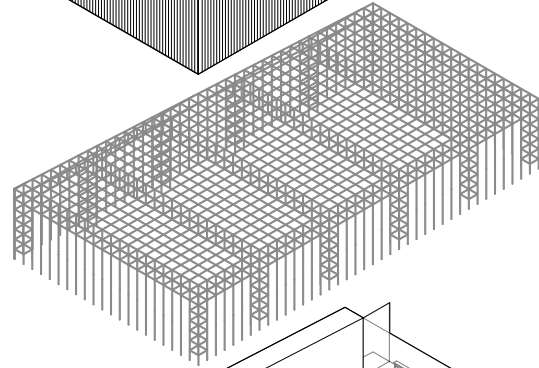
The proposed building is a direct reaction to the dynamism and containment of a popular culture laboratory. It is a space where the continuous cycle of old and new meet and engage with the public. It was important to us that the building looked quiet in its architecture, but loud in its appearance. The ultimate goal is to create spaces that can be easily adapted to fit the needs of a changing culture in society. There is an equal emphasis on the physical and multimedia components within the building.

The massing strategy of the project was to maximize the floor plate size and build to the site lines, thus leading to a simple extrusion of the site. Due to the low heights and programming of the adjacent buildings, we wanted to design a building that fits into its context and does not intrude into the existing fabric of the neighbourhood.

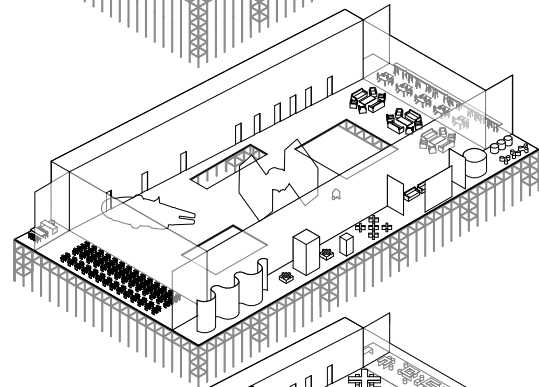
The service and educational facilities are located within the walls of the building, while spaces in the central floors are opened up for display and gathering of the public. Movable stages migrate between the floors to allow for changing exhibits and the renewal of old and new popular culture artifacts. This allows for a dynamic open floorplate where visitors can experience the permanent displays as well as the changing exhibitions on the movable floors.



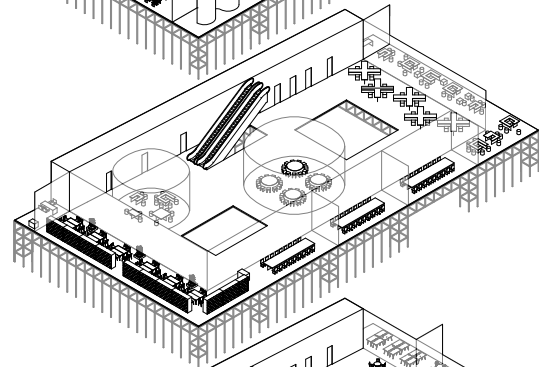
FACADE



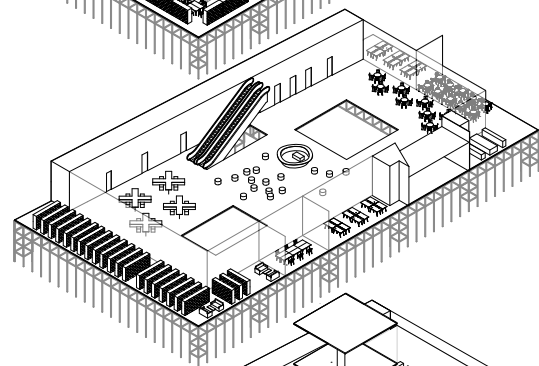
STRUCTURE



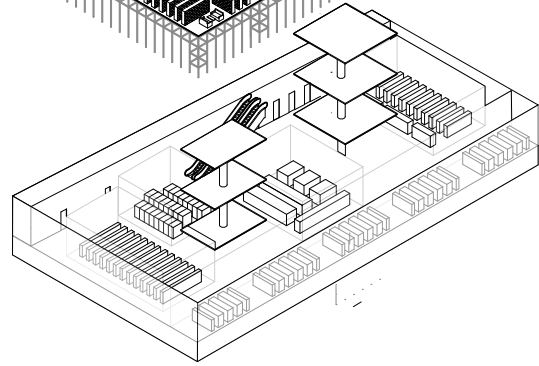
3F



2F



GF



B1

Fig 9. Exploded Axonometric

# PROGRAMMATIC BREAKDOWN

The exterior facade of the building is made of polycarbonate. Between the exterior skin and structure lies a set of mechanical systems that project multimedia content onto the facade itself to broadcast current events and trends.

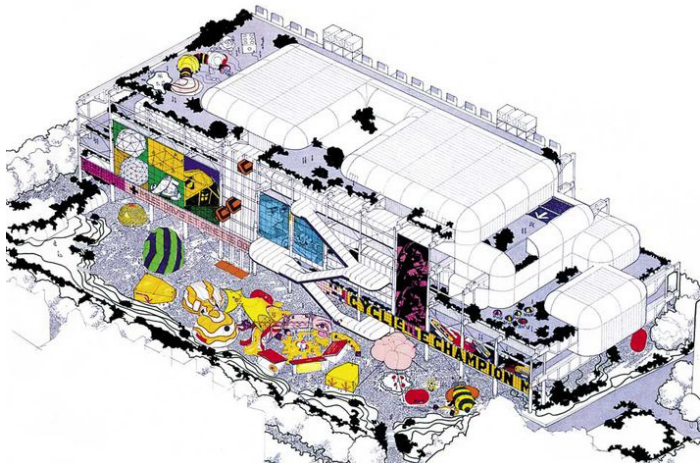
The structure of the building is a steel grid frame, consisting of elements 1.5m x 1.5m x 1.5m in size. This frame in essence creates a series of vierendeel trusses that allow for the large spans in the atrium. The repetitive grid structure also allows for simple assembly and future flexibility due to its modularity.

The third floor atrium space has a 10m floor to ceiling height allowing for larger exhibitions and display of pop culture icons. A realtime interactive arcade exists where visitors can see current trends and influence potential future trends. The programming in the walls consist of a lecture hall and broadcast centre.

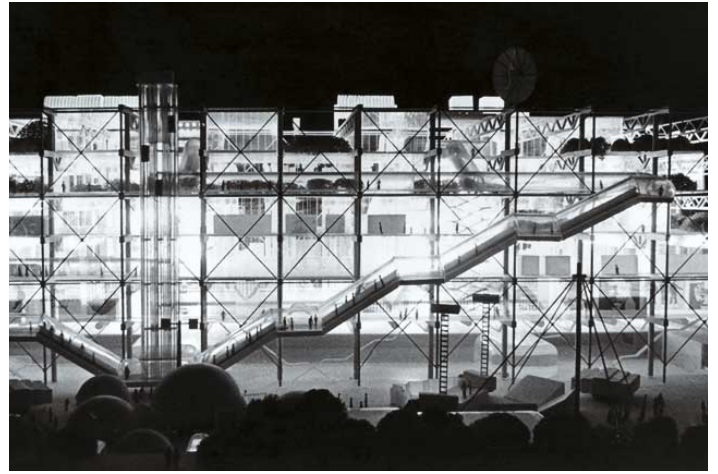
The second floor atrium space exhibits works produced within the pop lab itself. Large open conference spaces occupy the space to further the education of popular culture. The programming in the walls consist of production facilities ranging from workshops to meeting rooms.

The ground floor atrium space exhibits pop culture artifacts and provides lounge seating. Visitors are greeted with an open atrium space and changing exhibits on the movable floors. The programming in

The basement floor atrium space contains a series of archival rooms for the storage of exhibition artifacts. This is a space accessible to the public to allow for a further engagement in the workings of an educational laboratory such as this. The programming in the wall consists of rare archive and IT servers for the storage of data.



1 Centre Pompidou Competition Axo



2 Centre Pompidou Competition Model



3 IAC Vimeo Projection



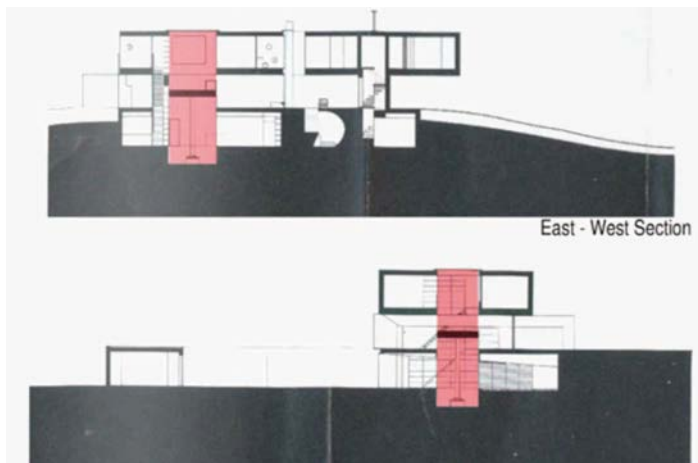
4 IAC Vimeo Projection



5 OMA Kansai Interior



6 OMA Kansai Interior



7 OMA Maison Bordeaux Section



8 OMA Maison Bordeaux Interior



# PRECEDENTS AND RESEARCH

The function of a pop culture laboratory as described in the brief is to create a space that could host multi disciplinary creative individuals and provide them with a high quality education space. As discussed in the initial summary we spent much of our time concentrating on how the building could be less of a museum and more of a self sustaining machine for all things pop culture. The contemporary museum has become too stagnant for today's time. Exhibitions are always changing, but they always remain objects of the past instead of participating in the present and future. Our building is separated into 4 vertical components with those being: archival, multimedia, physical production, and display/distribution. What connects these fragments together are the movable floors acting as a time machine of sorts allowing for the cyclical exchange of pop culture exhibits from the past to the present.

In researching for this we looked at the Centre Pompidou in Paris; not the realized building but Piano+Rogers' initial competition entry. Their original concept was to create a machine for culture, outfitted with a façade of projection screens and movable floors within to allow for a modular museum. Similar to our proposal, by pushing all the service elements to the exterior walls, Piano and Rogers were able to free up the space between, allowing for large uninterrupted spans in the interior.

Another project we looked at was Vimeo's Festival Projection Mapping where multiple videos and images were projected onto Frank Gehry's IAC building by the Highline. In this sense, this was our inspiration for the 'loudness' of our building. The building form did not play a factor in our aesthetic rationale as we were comfortable creating a box of sorts, a simple vessel for pop culture. It would be the interactive polycarbonate façade that portrayed the loudness or visibility of the laboratory. One could imagine real time updates and multimedia displays projected onto all four sides of the building allowing the public to see and realize the speed and impact with which our current trends come and go.

OMA's Kansaikan was also an important precedent for us. The evocative images of a large atrium like space flanked by programming in the walls was an image we wanted to produce, albeit on a much smaller scale. For a building like a pop culture lab, we felt it was important that as designers we imposed the least restrictions possible on the interior spaces. This is not a building that will look or function as it does today 10 years from now.

We found inspiration for our movable floors in OMA's Maison Bordeaux as well as in Tokyo's mechanical parking stalls. These vertical elements allow exhibits or displays to transcend the floors and act as an active purveyor of trends.

# CONCLUSION

The Tokyo Pop Lab is a space that facilitates the study, broadcast, and display of popular culture. Although reserved in its massing it creates a reference point to a new type of exhibition space that operates at a multitude of scales and reactive to the changing environments. Over time, pop culture has evolved from a niche into all that encompasses modern society today. The Tokyo Pop Lab emerges as a concept of renewal and change, giving the user access to all stages of archival, production, exhibition, and broadcast. The question we faced head on was how we could create a machine that is not only able to accommodate the exhibition needs of today, but whatever new functions may surface in the future. This is a space that, rather than forcing exhibits to conform to its spaces, it is easily able to adapt to what an exhibition requires.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

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