

LIVING MODERNITY

EXPERIMENTS IN THE EXCEPTIONAL

AND EVERYDAY 1920s–1970s

リビング・モダニティ 住まいの実験 1920s–1970s

ル・コルビュジエ | Le Corbusier

藤井厚二 | Koji Fujii

2025.3.19.WED水–6.30.MON月

Closed | Tuesdays 休館日 | 毎週火曜日

ルートヴィヒ・ミース・ファン・デル・ローエ | Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Closed on May 7(Wed.), Open on April 29, May 6(Tue.)  
4月29日(火・祝)と5月6日(火・祝)は開館、5月7日(水)は休館

Opening hours | 10:00–18:00 \*10:00–20:00 on Fridays and Saturdays \*Last admission 30 minutes before closing  
開館時間 | 10:00–18:00 ※毎週金・土曜日は20:00まで ※入場は閉館の30分前まで

土浦亀城 | Kameki Tsuchiura

Venue | The National Art Center, Tokyo / Special Exhibition Gallery 1E/2E  
会場 | 国立新美術館 企画展示室1E/2E(東京・六本木)

リナ・ボ・バルディ | Lina Bo Bardi

Organized by | The National Art Center, Tokyo; The Tokyo Shimbun; Japan Arts Council; Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan  
主催 | 国立新美術館、東京新聞、独立行政法人日本芸術文化振興会、文化庁

アルヴァ・アアルト | Alvar Aalto

新 国立新美術館  
THE NATIONAL ART CENTER, TOKYO

菊竹清訓 | Kiyonori Kikutake



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## **LIVING Modernity**

Experiments in the Exceptional and Everyday 1920s—1970s

From the 1920s, architects such as Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) have sought to create both functional and comfortable living spaces, employing new technologies constantly developing through time. Their exemplary experimental visions and innovative ideas eventually spread broadly to drastically transform people's daily lives.

This exhibition showcases houses designed by architects who embraced modernity by reexamining the fundamentals of living to improve functionality, artistry and comfort. Built during the epic modern period of the 1920s to the 1970s, these houses share the international ethos of creating a new architecture fundamentally connected to their specific time, region, climate, and social context. They also vividly express the family dynamics and characters of their individual residents. Innovations in living by the architects pursuing ideal lifestyles are deeply intertwined with the distinct context of each house.

These houses were also a means to solve universal issues that have emerged in modern times. Sanitary spaces that promote personal hygiene, expansive glass windows to bring in light and breezes, kitchens to reduce household chores, furnishings such as chairs and lighting to enhance bodily comfort, and verdant landscapes brought into living spaces became key elements in defining residential architecture in the 20th century. Iconic images of these new living spaces proliferated widely through model home exhibitions, magazines and other new media.

This exhibition reexamines these innovative aspirations in residential architecture that emerged in the 20th century from seven perspectives that define modern houses: hygiene, materiality, windows, kitchen, furnishings, media, and landscape. Highlighting 14 residential masterpieces, the exhibition provides a multi-faceted examination of 20th century experimental homes through photographs, drawings and sketches, models, furnishings, textiles, tableware, and magazines and graphics.

LIVING Modernity, which began as an experimental endeavor 100 years ago, has come to permeate our daily lives and continues to evolve to this day. This exhibition offers an opportunity to reconsider how we live today.

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## Exhibition Highlights

### **1. The house: an exhibition emerging from our everyday lives**

A house consisting of a living room and kitchen at the center of the floor plan, equipped with comfortable sanitary facilities and separate rooms for family members may seem to be common today. Historically, this is a relatively new type of housing that gained popularity along with the nuclear family becoming the norm after World War II. Single family houses spreading widely in the 20th century shaped a variety of lifestyles, strongly reflecting the ideals of the residents. This exhibition revisits the pillars of our everyday life through 14 exceptional residential projects, shedding light on the 1920s to 1970s when innovative housing design spread across the globe.

### **2. Master architects' passion towards the home**

The houses showcased in this exhibition are by renowned architects who designed on both large and human scales. As leading architects of the era, they had a deep interest in everyday life at the heart of their creativity. Many of the featured projects are the architects' residences, serving as the ideal space for experimenting with new architectural concepts. From their meticulous attention to even the smallest details, we catch glimpses of their pursuit of functionality and comfort as well as their genuine appreciation for the joy and delight of living.

### **3. A rich assemblage of works and images from Japan and the world**

This exhibition brings together a rare and exceptional collection of works spanning the globe, including the United States, Europe, Brazil, and Japan. The exhibition features original, rarely exhibited drawings by the architects such as Mies van der Rohe and Alvar Aalto in addition to architectural drawings, models and photographs of both exteriors and interiors. Furniture and household items designed for their residential projects, along with films, will also be on display. The exhibition offers a comprehensive reexamination of re through these diverse works and images.

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#### **4. A centenary of modern houses + iconic furniture and lighting still in use today**

The housing designs featured in this exhibition, along with the chairs, tables, and lighting designed by the architects to complement these homes, remain strikingly “modern” even by today's standards. Many of these pieces of furniture and fixtures are still in production and use today. Behind these masterworks, which we often encounter in our daily lives, lie the timeless, universal questions that architects and designers have posed about function and form.

#### **5. Realizing a Mies van der Rohe unbuilt courtyard house at full scale**

Following the exhibition in Special Exhibition Gallery 1E on the first floor, the 8-meter-high Special Exhibition Gallery 2E on the second floor will feature a full-scale reproduction of Mies van der Rohe's “Row House” project (1931) as part of his ongoing courtyard house series. Visitors will also be able to explore an immersive experience showcasing iconic contemporaneous furniture, along with a virtual reality experiential installation. Additionally, we will hold lectures and more events in the second-floor gallery. The second floor, including the opportunity to experience *Row House*, will be free and open to all visitors.



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## Exhibition Layout

This exhibition considers seven fundamental challenges faced by architects in the 20th century, focusing on 14 residential masterworks spanning the globe.

### **HYGIENE: creating a culture of cleanliness**

As underscored by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining health and hygiene in confronting infectious diseases has long been one of humanity's most critical challenges. Architects in the early part of the 20th century sought to maximize natural light and ventilation to combat tuberculosis in an age of rapid urbanization and increased population density. As a starting point for modern design, the bathroom and requisite fixtures became particularly important to promote hygiene and well-being through cleanliness of the body.

### **MATERIALITY: discovering physical functions**

In the 20th century, steel, concrete and mass-produced glass transformed the house, affording a new sense of lightness and spatial freedom. Architects embraced these material changes and rediscovered the potential of traditional materials including wood, tiles, and textiles. This exhibition highlights the ways they domesticated these materials for modern living.

### **WINDOW: framing indoor/outdoor living**

Advancements in reinforced concrete construction and production of glass brought on new possibilities to liberate the wall for window openings. Unprecedented large windows afforded natural light and ventilation, as well as panoramic views from inside the home. The transformation of the window fundamentally redefined the boundary between interior and exterior, creating seamless connections between indoor and outdoor living spaces.



**KITCHEN: modernizing the hearth**

Modern kitchens followed developments brought on by industrial revolution. The Frankfurt Kitchen (1926) emerged based on the ethos of maximizing efficiency of space and movement in cooking at a minimal cost for some 10,000 social housing units in Frankfurt and has had global influence in the development of built-in and systematized kitchens. Cooking spaces traditionally placed at the back of the house, such as in European basements or Japanese *doma* (dirt floor), shifted to brighter, more central locations near dining and living areas and reflected the increasing prominence of the nuclear family and liberation afforded by modern appliances.



Otto Lindig, *Cocoa Pot*, 1923, stoneware, Utsunomiya Museum of Art

**FURNISHINGS: creating comfortable living**

A range of design movements emerged in the 19th century in reaction against the indiscriminate replication of past styles and the overwhelming presence of low-quality mass-produced items. In the 20th century, such modern movements could be found in the Bauhaus (1919-1933) to combine crafts and fine arts while seeking to unify individual artistic vision with industrial production. Designers at the Bauhaus realized these ideals through the creation of everyday items such as textiles, metalware, lighting, and furniture. Many of the architects who sought to harmonize furnishings together with their architectural designs also themselves designed furniture and other household items. This exhibition showcases various furnishings that enriched everyday life in the 20th century from the Bauhaus and beyond based on their new aesthetic sensitivities.



Marcel Breuer, *Side Chair B32*, 1928, tubular steel, wood and wickerwork, MISAWA HOMES CO., LTD.  
Photo: Keinosuke Tachiki



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**MEDIA: visualizing the dwelling**

Advancements in photography and modern printing technology in the 20th century afforded the development of mass media platforms of newspapers and magazines that would circulate worldwide. Architects and designers from Le Corbusier to Kōji Fujii, embraced these new media to present their design ideas to the broader public audience. Housing exhibitions such as the Deutscher Werkbund exhibition in 1927, *Die Wohnung* (The Dwelling), promoted the modern house through direct experience. This section examines the broad range of media from books and magazines to housing exhibitions to promote ideal lifestyles to the public at large.

**LANDSCAPE: living in nature**

How can one live in harmony with the natural environment and specificities of sight within manmade spaces for living? This became a vital challenge for modern houses in the 20th century. Expansive glass windows afford the primary experience of changes through the four seasons and natural flora and fauna. Beyond the physicality of the window, these connections to the elements of light and air extend to promoting hygiene and health to restore fundamental bonds with nature suppressed through rapid modernization to contribute to one's overall well-being. How do we situate living spaces in the natural environment in harmony with the site character of the land? This exhibition thereby considers such efforts to fundamentally sustain the home in harmony with natural forces.



## 14 residential masterpieces

1. Le Corbusier, Villa «Le Lac », 1923
2. Koji Fujii, Chochikukyo, 1928
3. Mies van der Rohe, Tugendhat House, 1930
4. Pierre Chareau, Maison de Verre, 1932
5. Kameki Tsuchiura, Tsuchiura Kameki House, 1935
6. Lina Bo Bardi, Casa de Vidro, 1951
7. Kenji Hirose, SH-1, 1953
8. Alvar Aalto, Murtala Experimental House, 1953
9. Jean Prouve, Jean Prouve's House in Nancy, 1954
10. Eero Saarinen, Alexander Girard, Dan Kiley, Miller House, 1957
11. Kiyonori and Norie Kikutake, Sky House, 1958
12. Pierre Koenig, Case Study House #22, 1959
13. Louis Kahn, Fisher House, 1967
14. Frank Gehry, Frank & Berta Gehry House, 1978



Koji Fujii, *Chochikukyo*, 1928  
Photo: Taizo Furukawa



Lina Bo Bardi, *Casa de Vidro*, 1951



Kenji Hirose, *SH-1*, 1953  
Photo: Chuji Hirayama



Frank Gehry,  
*Frank & Berta Gehry House*, 1978  
© Frank O. Gehry. Getty Research Institute,  
Los Angeles (2017.M.66)

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## Guest Curator

### KEN TADASHI OSHIMA

Professor of Architecture at the University of Washington, Seattle, where he teaches in the areas of trans-national architectural history, theory and design. He has also been a visiting professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and UCLA. He received a PhD in architectural history and theory from Columbia University, MArch from U.C. Berkeley and A.B. degree, magna cum laude, from Harvard College. Dr. Oshima is a Fellow of the Society of Architectural Historians and served as President from 2016-18. He curated the exhibition *The Wright Imperial Hotel at 100: Frank Lloyd Wright and the World* (2023) and is author of *Kiyonori Kikutake Between Land and Sea* (2015), *Global Ends—Towards the Beginning* (2012), *International Architecture in Interwar Japan: Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku* (2009), and *Arata Isozaki* (2009). His articles on the international context of architecture and urbanism in Japan have been published in journals including *Architectural Review*, *Architectural Theory Review*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Kenchiku Bunka*, *Japan Architect*, *L' Architecture d' Aujourd' hui*, and the *AA Files*.





## LIVING Modernity: Experiments in the Exceptional and Everyday 1920s–1970s

Period | March 19 (Wed), 2025 — June 30 (Mon), 2025  
Closed on Tuesdays, May 7  
(Open on April 29, May 6)

Opening Hours | 10:00-18:00  
(Fridays and Saturdays, 10:00-20:00)  
(Last admission 30 minutes before closing)

Venue | The National Art Center, Tokyo  
Special Exhibition Gallery 1E, 2E  
7-22-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-8558

Organized by  
The National Art Center, Tokyo; The Tokyo Shimbun;  
Japan Arts Council; Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan  
With the support of  
Architectural Institute of Japan; The Japan Institute of Architects  
With the sponsorship of  
KAJIMA CORPORATION; TOTO LTD.; HASEKO Corporation;  
YKK AP Inc.  
With the cooperation of  
MISAWA HOMES CO., LTD.; TAKENAKA CORPORATION;  
Shinkenchiku-sha Co., Ltd.; arc co., Ltd.;  
USHIO LIGHTING, INC.

### Admission (tax included)

1,800 yen (Adults), 1,000 yen (College students),  
500yen (High school students)

\*Visitors who are junior high school students or younger will be admitted for free.  
\*Disabled persons (along with the one assistant) will be admitted for free upon  
presenting the Disabled Person's Booklet or an equivalent form of government-  
issued ID.

A part of exhibition area can be viewed admission free.

### Inquiries

(+81) 47-316-2772 (Hello Dial)

Exhibition HP | <https://living-modernity.jp/>



NACT HP | <https://www.nact.jp/english/>

✕ NACT\_PR  
📍 thenationalartcentertokyo  
🌐 nact.jp

### Related Event

#### International Symposium “LIVING Modernity: Past, Present, Future”

To commemorate the opening of "LIVING Modernity: Experiments in the Exceptional and Everyday 1920s-1970s," the National Art Center, Tokyo will hold the international symposium, "LIVING Modernity: Past, Present, Future." The exhibition reconsiders innovative attempts in housing design beginning in the 20th century from seven perspectives that shape the modern house: hygiene, materials, windows, kitchens, furnishings, media, and landscape.

The symposium presents key researchers/curators of the exhibition's featured 14 masterworks from Japan and the world. They will consider how the architects' experiments beginning a century ago continue to shape living today and how their visions of modern houses may be passed on to the next generation. This symposium offers the opportunity to examine these questions from multiple perspectives of architect, client, and conservator.

Date | March 20 (Thu, National Holiday), 2025

Time | 14:00-17:00 (Door opens at 13:30)

Venue | The National Art Center, Tokyo,  
3rd Floor Auditorium

#### Admission

Free admission for LIVING Modernity exhibition ticket holders.

Organized by  
The National Art Center, Tokyo

\*Time and content may change without prior notice.  
\*Please check the website for more information on this symposium and other related events.




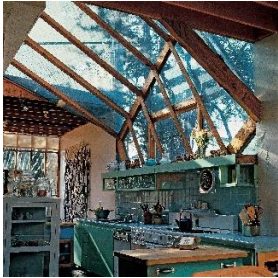



### Touring Information

The Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art  
September 20 (Sat.), 2025 — January 4 (Sun.), 2026 (TBC)

### Press Contact

The National Art Center, Tokyo - Public Relations  
7-22-2 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-8558  
E-mail: [pr@nact.jp](mailto:pr@nact.jp)

# Press Images

<p>1. Koji Fujii, <i>Chochikukyo</i>, 1928 Photo: Taizo Furukawa</p>	<p>2. Lina Bo Bardi, <i>Casa de Vidro</i>, 1951</p>	<p>3. Kenji Hirosose, <i>SH-1</i>, 1953 Photo: Chuji Hirayama</p>	<p>4. Frank Gehry, <i>Frank &amp; Berta Gehry House</i>, 1978 © Frank O. Gehry. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2017.M.66)</p>
			
<p>5. Otto Lindig, <i>Cocoa Pot</i>, 1923, Utsunomiya Museum of Art</p>	<p>6. Marcel Breuer, <i>Side Chair B32</i>, 1928, MISAWA HOMES CO., LTD. Photo: Keinosuke Tachiki</p>	<p>7. (no creditline)</p>	
			

\*Please consider to use 4. or 7. when you publish only one image.