

This is a reconstruction project for a public nursery affected by the Tohoku earthquake in 2011. Located in a quiet coastal area near the ocean, I hoped the new building to be in harmony with its surrounding environment full of nature, evoking both unity and eternity. At the same time, the mayor of this town also wanted it to be a monument for reconstruction, while he demanded greater speed for reconstruction. It meant we were obliged to finish all the design only for 5 months.

I took measures against these objectives; I decided to keep the height of the building low, rendering its structure horizontal, with a large courtyard. With a number of loggias, which faces this courtyard, children can run around the nursery both indoors and outdoors. Then the rebuilt nursery's presence becomes a small part of nature and integrates with the outside environment. In other words, this nursery is not a normal "building" but a "landscape", where everyone can spend time in the fields together. Then the environment makes it feel liberated and unconventional. The thought behind this is similar to that of ancient monuments in ruins.

The outer part was designed with many conversations with nurses working here and people living in the neighboring area. I arranged them surrounding the courtyard in a circle directly and daringly, so that viewers can visualize and share the design process. Because I didn't want to cram their compelling nature of the need in a box shaped building. Thanks to their wishes, the building is complexly shaped, but it generates a variety of spaces and operates as if it were a small village in microcosm as a whole. The idea finally individualizes the architecture itself.

In the future, the shape will display a modest history and be a monument of the collaboration. The square courtyard shows an effect as a symbolic hollow and performs as order for the chaotic aggregates, enabling visitors to have a liberated experience.

At the front of the nursery, a lounge with a large retractable gate encourages local residents to congregate. This is more than a nursery, it's a public garden for the town. The result of collaboration with the local community, this school doubles as a new garden and social space for the town.

I clad it with reflective paneling. This "sparkling wall" is made of 0.3mm thin stainless sheets. It creates the sense of a delicate screen by craftsmen in Japanese tradition, as opposed to a stiff barrier with prefabricated panels. The wall also has the durability against the salt air, located near the ocean. This way, the cladding seeks to challenge preconceived notions of educational establishments. It resets the visitors' minds with a start breathtakingly, and makes them experience with fresh eyes, reminds the memory of the reconstruction, while they are so easy to forget it in daily busyness.