From March 30 to June 10, 2018, the Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain presents *Freeing Architecture*, the first major solo exhibition devoted to the work of Junya Ishigami. An important and singular figure of Japan’s young architecture scene, Ishigami—winner of the Golden Lion award at the Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2010—is the creator of a conceptual and poetic body of work in which the landscape occupies an important place.

For the exhibition *Freeing Architecture*, conceived specifically for the Fondation Cartier, Ishigami reveals twenty of his architectural projects in Asia and in Europe. These projects will be presented through a series of large-scale models, accompanied by films and drawings, which document their different stages of conception and construction. In dialogue with Jean Nouvel’s iconic building, this event is also the first large-scale solo-show that the Fondation Cartier pour l’art contemporain has devoted to an architect.

A unique body of work and recipient of numerous awards

Ishigami readily finds context for his architectural projects in the natural world—landscapes, clouds, forests—thus removing the boundary between the external environment and interior space. Situating his work in the existing environment while also privileging the dream world as an important element in his creations, he elevates sensitivity to the rank of virtue.

Born in 1974 in Kanagawa Prefecture, Ishigami belongs to the younger generation of Japanese architects who emerged in the 2000s in the wake of Toyo Ito and Kazuyo Sejima, and to which the Museum of Modern Art in New York has recently devoted a large exhibition. Trained at Tokyo University of the Arts, he gained experience as an architect at SANAA before founding junya.ishigami+associates in 2004. Seemingly free of the rules and constraints of architecture, his work was quickly recognized for its singularity and honored with numerous awards. Among his large-scale projects are the construction of the Kanagawa Institute of Technology Workshop in Japan in 2008, a building notable for its lightness and continuity between the interior space and the surrounding environment; the renovation of the Moscow Polytechnic Museum and its transformation into a museum park since 2010; and the design of the House of Peace in Copenhagen in 2014, a cloud-shaped building resting on the sea as a symbol of peace.

“I WISH TO THINK ABOUT ARCHITECTURE FREELY; TO EXPAND MY PERSPECTIVE ON ARCHITECTURE AS FLEXIBLY, BROADLY, AND SUBTLY AS POSSIBLE, BEYOND THE STEREOTYPES OF WHAT ARCHITECTURE IS CONSIDERED TO BE.”

*Junya Ishigami*
Models as architecture
In *Freeing Architecture*, Ishigami elaborates upon his most recent research into function, form, scale and the environment in architecture, thereby revealing his vision for the future of the field. Through over 40 models, as well as numerous films and drawings, the exhibition presents twenty projects from their genesis to the complex process of their realization. Far from being tools prior to construction, the models assembled in the exhibition were made specifically for the occasion. As viewers contemplate these hand-crafted works, assembled in the architect’s studio over the course of one year, one can see the many steps and the painstaking work that led to the development of their final form. All different in terms of their material, size and level of detail, they offer a glimpse of the slow maturation process, necessary for the creation of Ishigami’s architectural works. Works infused by a poetics that is achieved as much through experimentation, as it is by theory, knowledge, and technology.

Architecture as a natural phenomenon
A true ode to freedom, the exhibition *Freeing Architecture* demonstrates Ishigami’s astonishing capacity to think of his practice outside the limits of know-how and architectural thought. It takes the public on a journey into the artist’s imagination, revealing a multitude of poetic, sensitive worlds. A line drawn in the sky sketches a monument (Sydney Cloud Arch, Sydney, Australia); a collage of illustrations and animations for children serves as the pattern for the roof of a kindergarten (Forest Kindergarten, Shandong, China). According to Ishigami, architecture can be formed naturally, like a stone built over time, through sedimentation and erosion. A project for a chef’s restaurant and residence in the south of Japan is designed “as a rock” (House and Restaurant, Yamaguchi, Japan). Between earth and sky, a semi-open space for university students evokes a changing sky, framed by an imaginary horizon (University Multipurpose Hall, Kanagawa, Japan).

A new landscape
Ishigami considers the surrounding environment as an integral part of each and every architectural project. He incorporates the landscape in his work, always magnifying it, even transforming it, as with a newly constructed lake in Rizhao, China, designed as the site for a one-kilometer long promenade building in Rizhao, China, and a forest project in Tochigi, Japan, with more than three hundred trees moved from their existing site and replanted on a neighboring plot of land.

Designed as an architectural project, the exhibition *Freeing Architecture* makes sense in the environment for which it was conceived: Jean Nouvel’s building surrounded by Lothar Baumgarten’s garden. Meticulously scenographed, the exhibition creates a new landscape in each room so that the visitor appears to travel along a winding path, endlessly discovering new perspectives. The gigantic model of a very tall chapel, characterized by its elegant curves and on a scale of 1/10 (Chapel of Valley, Rizhao, China), may be seen alongside the structure of a garden house landscaped with real plants, and the transparent and sinuous lines of Park Vijversburg visitor center in Holland, set at ground level. Grouped by elective affinities, works are exhibited together in chapters like “the world of childhood” and “the phenomena of clouds.”

In the open spaces of the Fondation Cartier, in the absence of partitions, the juxtaposition of small and large-scale models, as well as immense collages and drawings,
create an atmosphere that is at once solemn, dreamlike, playful, and calm.

**Perspectives on a kaleidoscopic body of work**

Children’s gardens, chapel, museum, landscaped park, house-restaurant, garden house, monument, and urban sculpture... the variety of constructions presented in the exhibition *Freeing Architecture* serves to reveal the richness and complexity of a flexible body of work, which is constantly reinvented. Rejecting the very possibility of a singular style, Junya Ishigami advocates, on the contrary, the inscription of each building into a specific aesthetic context, determined by its environment, function, inhabitants, and client. The architect approaches each of his projects without preconceived ideas, and is quick to question his entire practice from both an aesthetic and a technical viewpoint.

The apparent sobriety of his buildings deliberately masks the incredible complexity of their construction: he uses the soil of the very building site as a mold for a concrete structure (House and Restaurant, Yamaguchi, Japan); he transplants an entire forest destined to be felled in order to compose a dreamlike landscape dotted with trees and ponds (Art Biofarm, Tochigi, Japan); and he designs the extension of a museum from underneath, by unveiling and enlarging its foundations (Moscow Polytechnic Museum, Russia). Junya Ishigami is the author of a work imbued with poetry and simplicity, behind which lie real technical challenges, put at the service of an exploration of human’s place within the architectural construct.

**Nights of Uncertainty in attendance of Junya Ishigami**

During the exhibition, several Nights of Uncertainty will be devoted to the universe of Junya Ishigami, for which the architect will be in attendance. The events will consist of discussions with other architects, talks by philosophers, engineers and critics, and a musical evening, as well as a number of conversations around the theme of “Architecture for the Senses.”