



Kisho Kurokawa in front of the recently completed Nakagin Capsule Tower, c. 1974.  
Photograph by Tomio Ohashi. Courtesy Masanori Ohashi

“This building is *not* an apartment house.” With this declaration, Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa introduced the Nakagin Capsule Tower not as conventional housing but as a radically new vision for urban living. Completed in 1972, the structure consisted of 140 prefabricated single-occupancy capsules that were attached to two concrete-and-steel cores in Tokyo’s Ginza district. The building became the defining example of Metabolism—a Japanese movement of the 1960s whose members, some influenced by biology, imagined cities and buildings that could adapt over time. Kurokawa envisioned the Nakagin Capsule Tower as a dynamic system, one in which capsules would be periodically replaced in response to changing needs. This plan was never realized; instead, over five decades, all the original capsules remained in place, though their functions changed dramatically. Initially marketed as micro-dwellings for commuting businessmen, they were repurposed into second homes, offices, student housing, and even tearooms, libraries, galleries, and DJ booths.

*The Many Lives of the Nakagin Capsule Tower* presents original drawings and models with ephemera, photographs, and films to explore how this unconventional structure became a hive of creativity and community. Once a symbol of Japan’s postwar techno-futurism, the building was controversially demolished in 2022 after years of deferred maintenance. Yet its memory and legacy live on. At the heart of this exhibition stands capsule A1305, a fully restored unit once located on the Nakagin Capsule Tower’s highest level. Video interviews with former residents and a navigable three-dimensional model show how Kurokawa’s design evolved from a prototype for flexible urban living to an experiment in physical and digital preservation. The story of the Nakagin Capsule Tower invites us to reconsider how cities confront aging buildings and rapid urbanization—and to contemplate how architecture might endure these challenges by taking on new roles, functions, and meanings beyond what its designers ever conceived.

Organized by Evangelos Kotsioris, Assistant Curator, and Paula Vilaplana de Miguel, Curatorial Associate, with Joëlle Martin, former 12-month intern, Department of Architecture and Design.

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Opposite wall: Nighttime at the Nakagin Capsule Tower, with Mr. Takayuki Sekine seen through the window of capsule B1004, 2016. Photograph by Jérémie Souteyrat. © Jérémie Souteyrat

We invite you to explore the related publication, *Kisho Kurokawa: Nakagin Capsule Tower*, which is available in the Museum Store.

For related content and programming, visit [mom.org/nakagin](https://mom.org/nakagin).