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Ma

It seems to me that *Ma* captures similarly what Walt Disney and Salvador Dali created in their collaboration *Destino*, and animated short that revolves around the personification of time and its lament of love towards a mortal in a surreal landscape that is eroding and reconstructing from its parts throughout (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GFkN4deuZU>). Arata Isozaki explains his lament in rebuilding from the utter destruction of Hiroshima into a new ‘utopia’ and comes to realize that this destruction always occurs over any expanse of time, and that to rebuild, one should consider what structures came before. We should not shun, disregard, or forget what was there before, but include it, in whatever form it has now, and build from that, including the new with the old. It reminds me of what Isaac Newton said about the progress of science, and mankind in general, that we “stand on the shoulders of giants”, giving a nod to those who came before us and provided the opportunity for us to be here. It is ironic that Einstein later quoted this in his humanistic letter on empathy, compassion, and pacifism after the scientific exploits he helped discover ultimately were used to create the atomic bomb that created so much destruction in Hiroshima. The sentiments ring true, where Isozaki realizing this time eternal pattern we can see.

I also see *Ma* in the very way biological, geological, and astronomical processes unfold. In evolutionary biology, there is an old adage that “you can only build from what came before”, referring to adaptations taken on by different organisms. For instance, the finger-like bones we can see in a bats wing; the bats only formed wings to fly because there was a pre-existing structure that was able to accommodate that ability over time. Geologically, the crust of the Earth we’re building our very structures on was created in the center of the earth and then stacked upon itself over and over again through tectonics and erosion. The idea of *Ma* to me captures one of the fundamental traditional Japanese aesthetic philosophies of modeling nature, including nature, and honoring nature.

Referring again to Einstein, the shifting idea of space and time Isozaki talks about coincides with the new view that came from Einstein’s theory of relativity, E=MC2, which deconstructs the linear notion of time. As Isozaki points out, *In Praise of Shadows* illuminates (ironic juxtaposition intended) the shadows, the dark places in between, the void, representing the timelessness and perceptual change in a world of infinite time only defined by moments, and physical space being set up to capture, facilitate, and highlight our perception of each passing and reoccurring moment as it occurs to each individual. I assume then that the role and design of the Japanese tea house is to facilitate a moment that can be as closely shared as possible between a collection of individuals, and can almost perceive a moment of time as the same thing; a unique, powerful, and transcendent experience indeed!