



Opus 24

Kisho Kurokawa, Kuala Lumpur International Airport

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The completion of the first phase of Kuala Lumpur International Airport in July 1998 resulted in two 4000 m runways and a 335 000 m² main terminal building. It can handle 25 000 000 passengers a year. By 2020, however, the airport will be able to handle 120 000 000 passengers a year.

It is not surprising that everyone should wonder why Malaysia, with a population of 20 000 000, would need an international airport of that size. The reason is the intense strategic competition that has already started.

Unquestionably, the world will have an entirely new high-speed transportation system by 2025 at the latest. This will be the HSST (hypersonic speed transport), which will carry between 300 and 500 passengers at speeds up to Mach 3.5. The HSST will be meaningless for short routes. Therefore the required international hub airports will be limited to two in North America, one in Central and South America, one in Africa, two in Europe, one in Russia, and three in Asia. Like China and South Korea, Malaysia is very eager to obtain one of the three Asian international hub airports, because a country with such an airport and the associated infrastructure is very likely to become a financial, information, tourism and advanced industrial centre.

The airport is an integral part of a future linear capital corridor, which was also developed by Kurokawa. The area surrounding the airport will be used for an experiment in artificially restoring the tropical rain forest. Creating such a forest is the most effective method for blocking out noise from the airport. This is the basis of the architect's concept for a symbiosis between airport and forest. In addition, the architect believes that this is effective for expressing the identity of Malaysia, as tropical rain forests are the typical vegetation of the country.

Kurokawa was a key figure of Japanese Metabolism; he has played an essential role in this movement, not only through projects and buildings, but also through theoretical writings. Since then he has been one of the leading architects in Japan.

Catherine Slessor studied architecture at the University of Edinburgh. She is currently Deputy Editor of the *The Architectural Review* in London. Dennis Sharp trained as an architect at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London and as an architectural historian at Liverpool University. He is Professor of Architecture at Nottingham University. Recently he curated and designed the Kurokawa retrospective exhibition in London. Tomio Ohashi is famous for his distinguished photographs of ancient, as well as contemporary, Japanese architecture.

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