

**NICOLAS G. HAYEK
CENTER**

TOKYO

GROUND BREAKING EVENT – JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF TRADITION

Once upon a time, in the Land of the Rising Sun, lived the god of the earth, who everyone called Kami.

Before going any further, it is important to know that Japan is full of tradition. The blossoming of cherry trees in April, auspicious occasions for asking for help from the gods, harvest time – all these warrant ceremonies, meals of infinite subtlety, floral arrangements, tea ceremonies. For the Japanese, this is a way of not losing contact with their roots. Nothing in the world would induce the Japanese people to forget their customs, so they keep a watchful eye on the celestial calendar and its mysteries, as well as the earthly calendar.

So on October 23, 2005, even before construction had started on the NICOLAS G. HAYEK CENTER, the Jichinsai ceremony, a Shinto ritual aimed at summoning and appeasing Kami, god of the earth, was organized on a site specially set up for this purpose, in the heart of Ginza. This was so that work would proceed smoothly.

The Jichinsai ritual is quite brief, and of a highly symbolic nature. It is said that if one does not submit to the ceremony, Kami will become angry, leading to the subsequent destruction of the edifice.

This celebration is considered essential, even when the Japanese construct buildings abroad.

On October 25, 2005, during the ceremony presided over by the Kannushi (a Shinto priest), Mr. Shigeru BAN (the architect), Mrs. Arlette-Elsa Emch (Head of Swatch Group Japan) and representatives of the construction company enacted some extremely symbolic, traditional and spiritual tasks. The main act consisted of piling spadefuls of soil into a small mound symbolizing the earth.

Other representatives of the project management, the architect and the construction company also took part, making precise gestures by way of an offering. Various invocations were also uttered.

The god of the earth was appeased.

And so it was that, shortly afterwards, under favorable auspices, construction work started at Ginza 7-9-18, Tokyo.

GINZA 7-9-18, TOKYO

Tokyo is an adventure: everything's different – culturally different and exotic. Even shopping is a unique experience. You gradually begin to understand the habits and customs.

Sofia Coppola

A recent article from a French magazine was entitled: *Tokyo invents the future.*

TOKYO, the mere mention of whose name evokes not only tradition and a sense of otherness, but also somewhere you can dare to create differently, demandingly, with originality and tenacity.

TOKYO, city of contrasts, sprawling, predominantly horizontal but sometimes vertical, simply teeming with human life. Thirty million inhabitants. The world's largest metropolis.

The journey from the airport to the city brings us many colorful surprises. Trains streaking through the sky at top speed beneath the gaze of imposing tower blocks, urban freeways crisscrossing the sky past huge plasma screens showing advertisements on the side of buildings.

Everything is different here – the environment, the culture, the countryside, movement and architecture.

Tokyo has a fascinating and incredible capacity for switching from one era to another, demonstrating an impressive range of different faces. Tiny unchanged islands of the past rub shoulders unselfconsciously with skyscrapers. Clusters of disconcertingly shaped small buildings, full of charm and often also of poetry, give Tokyo that impression of creative freedom found nowhere else on earth.

At the heart of this huge carousel lies GINZA.

A name that makes eyes sparkle, intimidates, and that literally means “silver mint”. Broad avenues and luxury stores in Japan's oldest commercial thoroughfare. A whirlwind of strange smells, colors, and sounds. A location packed with sensations.

Ginza 7-9-18, the arresting image of the ideal place in which to celebrate the friendship between Japan and Switzerland. Thanks to the Swatch Group, the largest watchmaking group in the world, a witness to this union, artisan of taste and of the art of precision. This jewel will be named the **NICOLAS G. HAYEK CENTER**.

IRASSHAIMASE (*WELCOME*)...*to the future!*

NICOLAS G. HAYEK CENTER

THE ACQUISITION

In 2004, the Swatch Group acquired a building dating from the 1960s in the heart of Ginza – the Pearl Building. Prices per square meter here are the most expensive in Japan, and maybe even in the world.

The purchase price amounted to around 150 million Swiss francs. With a net floor area of 475 square meters, this equates to an impressive 316,000 francs per square meter.

THE COMPETITION

The Nicolas G. Hayek Center project was the subject of a competition. The winner was Shigeru Ban, a genius of modern architecture, who envisaged the building as being constructed along the lines of a hanging garden, devoting a considerable amount of space to greenery. Imagine that in the heart of Ginza.

THE PROJECT

Taking advantage of a recent change to local building regulations, Shigeru Ban was able to create a construction project consisting of fourteen floors, going from thirty-one meters to fifty-six meters in height.

The Nicolas G. Hayek Center will be home to seven boutiques devoted to the *BREGUET*, *BLANCPAIN*, *GLASHÜTTE ORIGINAL*, *JAQUET-DROZ*, *LEON HATOT*, *OMEGA* and *SWATCH* brands, as well as the offices of Swatch Group Japan and three floors dedicated to after-sales service. As for the 14th floor, La Cité du Temps, that will be devoted to an interaction between the brands and the public, in the form of exhibitions, concerts, and press conferences.

MOBILE SHOWROOMS

One special feature of the Nicolas G. Hayek Center is its hydraulic elevators which will in fact be boutiques transporting visitors from the ground floor to the exhibition halls for each Swatch Group brand represented: *BREGUET*, *BLANCPAIN*, *GLASHÜTTE ORIGINAL*, *JAQUET-DROZ*, *LEON HATOT*, *OMEGA* and *SWATCH*.

These platforms will move at a speed of around 15 meters per minute, giving visitors the pleasant sensation of floating across the atrium.

THE HANGING GARDEN

The Hanging Garden was conceived not as purely decorative internal greenery, but in actual fact as a new means of introducing a garden into the heart of a modern city.

This wall of greenery 14 floors high, where nature and technology will coexist in harmony, will stand out from its immediate neighborhood, providing a marked contrast with the surrounding urban architecture.

Inside, the plants will give the building's occupants and visitors soothing splendor and freshness thanks not only to their colors and fragrances, but also their aura.

Much more than simply an ornamental wall of greenery, the Hanging Garden will be a unique modern garden, ideally representing the interaction between life and nature.

NICOLAS G. HAYEK, **Chairman of the Board of The Swatch Group Ltd**

The Man

Nicolas G. Hayek possesses the modesty of the truly great. He holds center stage magnificently, unpretentiously, unassumingly, by the sheer power of his genius. His attention is always focused on multiple, passionate projects. A kaleidoscopic talent for creating, restructuring, imagining, building... He, and he alone, is the epitome of Swiss industry and so much more besides.

In his achievements, there is no place for boredom. Swatch, Breguet, Blancpain, Glashütte Original, Jaquet Droz, Léon Hatot, Omega, Union, Longines, Rado, Tissot, Calvin Klein, Certina, Mido, Balmain, Hamilton, Flik Flak and Endura. The names of the brands he has launched or relaunched sparkle in the four corners of the globe.

Nicolas G. Hayek does not age, he matures. He emanates an unlikely charisma, with his wry smile, his regal roguishness, his lively expression, and a voice which is his hallmark. He has lost none of his principal virtue, a capacity for wonder. Fame and fortune have not changed him. He is always surrounded by an aura of respect and affection.

Victor Hugo said, “Nothing is more powerful in this world than an idea whose time has come” – a quotation that applies to the work of Nicolas G. Hayek. This is the powerful message of one great man of this world to another. And it must be said that Mr. Hayek appreciates the dynamism of messages rather than the simplicity of images that remain fixed in time.

He tames time, and he respects it.

He marches to the rhythm of his own drum. The virtuoso soloist has become the conductor. He is one of a kind.

The words of André Malraux spring to mind: “Man is what he does”. Nicolas G. Hayek can do whatever he wants. He is.

Quite simply, this great man could well become the artistic director of the world!

NICOLAS G. HAYEK, the works

Swatch Group

Nicolas G. Hayek is the co-founder of the Swatch Group, as well as being its Chairman and Delegate of its Board of Directors.

His achievements and legacy to the Swatch Group include:

- launching Swatch
- developing all the existing brands and launching new brands
- revitalizing Breguet, and positioning it as the leading luxury watch brand
- global number one in the watch sector (with sales of approx. 5.05 billion Swiss francs)
- providing support for the entire Swiss watch industry by supplying watch components
- creating the “Swatchmobil” Smart car jointly with Mercedes Benz

Titles and distinctions

1984	<i>Troubleshooter of the year</i> , awarded by the Swiss media
1993	<i>Freiheitpreis</i> , awarded by the Max-Schmidheiny Foundation of the University of St Gallen in Switzerland
1993	<i>Entrepreneur de la décennie</i> , awarded by the Branco Weiss Foundation
1993	<i>Prix de l’Innovation Oekreal</i>
1996	Docteur Honoris Causa of the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences at the University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland
1998	<i>Docteur Honoris Causa from the Faculty of “Beni Culturali” at the University of Bologna in Italy.</i>
2002	<i>Grosses Ehrenzeichen mit Stern</i> , awarded by the Government of the Republic of Austria for services rendered to that country
2003	<i>Officier dans l’Ordre National de la Légion d’Honneur</i> , by decree of the President of the French Republic, Mr. Jacques Chirac
2004	<i>Citoyen d’honneur de la Ville de Bienne</i> , awarded by the City of Bienne for services to the city and its region
2006	<i>Commandeur de l’Ordre National du Cèdre du Liban</i> , awarded by the President of the Republic of Lebanon, Mr. Emile Lahoud
2007	Swiss Lifetime Award, Swiss Academy “Swiss Award”, for his achievements and the impetus he has given to the entire Swiss watchmaking sector.

Participation in committees and working parties

1995	Appointed by the former German chancellor, Mr. Helmut Kohl, <i>Member of the development, innovation and strategy council for the future of Germany and Europe</i>
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- 1996 Appointed by the French Government, *Chairman of the “Innovation think-tank”*
- 2000 Appointed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), *Member of the “IOC 2000” committee*, the objective of which was to restructure the Olympic movement of the future
- 2001 Appointed by the European Commission under the presidency of Mr. Romano Prodi, *Member of the “Brussels Capital of Europe” Working Party*, the objective of which was to define the needs and functions that a European capital should fulfill
- 2004 Appointed by the European Commission, *Member of the “High Level Group for the Future of Manufacturing”, promoting the future of production in Europe*
- 2004 Appointed by the prestigious EPFL, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, *Member of its Strategic Committee*

Hayek Engineering

Nicolas G. Hayek is the founder and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Swatch Group, and also the CEO of Hayek Engineering SA in Zurich (Switzerland).

This company consists of around 250 highly qualified and experienced specialists from a wide variety of different industries: steelmaking and metallurgy, watchmaking, automotive, microelectronics, telecommunications and other leading-edge technologies.

These specialists are involved in the development, strategic creation and implementation of projects in the fields of engineering, strategic planning and project management. They carry out optimization studies, feasibility studies and marketing studies, not to mention organizational and information systems analyses, focusing on developing product and corporate strategies.

Volkswagen, US Steel, Siemens, the World Bank, the Ministry of Metallurgical Industry of the People’s Republic of China, Olivetti, BMW, Nestlé and Friedrich Krupp. All these references testify to the outstanding reputation of the Hayek company, which is very active in Switzerland and in Europe in both the public and private sectors.

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NICOLAS G. HAYEK, the interview

By Eric Othenin-Girard

Tokyo is the city of all superlatives. The people there live differently, build differently and eat differently. A metropolis of over 30 million inhabitants by day, it has a certain charm that transcends all its contrasts. Moreover, it is an exceptional place teeming with all sorts of luxury products aimed at satisfying a clientele eagerly searching for something new. For Nicolas G. Hayek, it was therefore evident that the new building that would house the subsidiary and boutiques of Swatch Group in Japan should be erected in the heart of this legendary city.

The Chairman of the Swatch Group explains the reasons for his choice:

Nicolas G. Hayek: There are many reasons. Let me pick out five main ones. Firstly, you need to be aware that the distribution systems for all products, but above all those in the luxury sector, are currently undergoing dramatic changes. Department stores have started selling any old watches, as long as they can make money. The quality of what they are selling no longer concerns them. In contrast, we want to provide our clients with an environment in which we can make them aware of the quality criteria to which our watches are made.

The second reason stems from the fact that Japan is the third most important market for our Group, after the United States and Hong Kong which, of course, accounts for some of the watches sold in China. Within this context, it's no secret that we want to open boutiques devoted to our various major brands. And because each brand has to enable the buyer to enter into its universe, it's important that these sales areas are large enough to convey the brand's DNA, and to offer a truly extensive range of products – something that no multi-brand retailer would ever be able to equal.

The third reason relates to purely material issues. The Swatch Group has a lot of cash, and some people are asking why we've got so much money available. Building in Tokyo is a way of reducing this cash and making an extremely significant investment in terms of the Group's strategic development.

This leads me on to the fourth reason. In Japan, renting even the tiniest premises costs an arm and a leg. So if we had to rent one building for our offices, others for after-sales service, and seven premises to house the boutiques for the Group's major brands, that would cost a fortune in rent each year. In business terms, that would be a foolish solution.

And lastly, the fifth reason is a simple statement of the facts as they stand today. Our infrastructures in the Land of the Rising Sun are currently scattered. Not only does this lead to problems with regard to communication, sharing information and the movement of employees, but we're spending a total of almost 3 million [Swiss francs] each year in rent. If we look at the cost of the purchase we've made in Ginza, i.e. 150 million for 475 square meters, representing a mere 316,000 francs per square meter, well, in spite of this price and that of the construction work that's currently underway on this plot of land, it's a good deal in the long term. It's an investment that will obviously be profitable. And let's not forget that we are right in the heart of the city, in the most prestigious district, which is also close to the imperial palace. We're already being offered between 30% and 40% more than we bought the place for...

I would also add, to make matters crystal clear, that if we had the opportunity to repeat this operation in Geneva, Zurich, New York, Paris, Rome, Bombay or Dubai, we would jump at the chance.

So a center like this is good for the Group's image, but doesn't it also have to convey a message?

NGH: Absolutely, and that's what we're doing. As you know, we're a company that manufactures luxury products, and these products don't pollute. We also have a reputation of being the sort of people, and I'm talking here of Swiss watchmaking in general, who go to a great deal of trouble to produce watches of a very high quality. What's more, we represent a nation which, like it or not, has an image throughout the world of being a privileged paradise. Switzerland gives an impression of tranquility, security and calm, and above all of having an exceptional and unspoilt natural environment. We are seen as a symbol of beauty and of respect for the objects and landscapes that surround us, a symbol of democracy, peace and freedom. That is what we represent in the eyes of the Japanese people.

So we wanted, in this center, to build a sort of natural monument in the middle of a district which, although prestigious, has an almost total absence of green spaces. For the clients who will come, but not just for them, our center will be somewhere quite exceptional. Our aim is to make it a meeting place for people. It will be an "in" place, somewhere not to be missed.

And that's not all, because it's usual in Japan for this type of building to be dedicated to the public too. For this reason, visitors will be able to walk through our center, which also opens onto another street. They will therefore have the choice of strolling through an area of greenery or attending all sorts of different events. This center will be a symbol, and should be seen as an example of what Switzerland and the Swatch Group are about.

The inauguration of the Nicolas G. Hayek Center will take place in the first half of 2007, in the presence of Nicolas G. Hayek?

NGH: Yes, even though I'm not keen on such long plane trips. I'm a dynamic person and I need to keep moving, make phone calls, see people, and get out and about. So spending 14 or 15 hours on a plane drives me mad. Having said that, I will be going to Tokyo, but in several stages. I have to visit a certain number of places, and meet people along the way. So I'll be taking advantage of breaking the journey down into small manageable legs.

The center is named after you...

NGH: Yes, but that was absolutely not my idea. Nor did I want it. It was the employees at our subsidiary in Japan who absolutely wanted to give it that name, because they claimed it would increase the building's prestige, so in the end I accepted. I'm not seeking out this type of honor, and in any case, there'll be plenty of time to name buildings or places after me in the future...

NICK HAYEK Jr., President & CEO of The Swatch Group Ltd

G. Nicolas (“Nick”) Hayek assumed overall responsibility for all Swatch Group businesses in January, 2003, when he was named President of the Executive Group Management Board. Prior to his appointment as chief executive of The Swatch Group, Mr. Hayek was responsible for Swatch, one of the Group’s most highly visible and successful brands, where he served as Delegate of the Board of Directors (since October 2000), President (1998-2000) and Vice President, Marketing (1994-1998). Nick Hayek has been a member of the Swatch Group Management Board since April 1994. He had previously worked as a consultant for Hayek Engineering, where he was responsible for projects in both the watch industry (Swatch USA, Vacheron Constantin) and the film business (Gaumont).

As a writer, director, producer and founder of his own film production company, Mr. Hayek gained extensive first-hand experience in a business largely dependent on the creative and technical capacities of highly skilled personnel. As a filmmaker, Mr. Hayek was responsible for the production of a series of documentaries for Swiss Television, several short fiction and two feature-length films, and a number of his films won awards at industry festivals. His experience and reputation as an enterprising and inventive executive led to his subsequent involvement in the Swiss watch industry, where he served initially as a creative consultant and organized a number of exhibitions with Swatch.

Mr. Hayek studied filmmaking at CLCF in Paris and business at the University of Economics, Law and Social Sciences in St. Gallen. He is 52 years old.

NICK HAYEK Jr., the interview

By Eric Othenin-Girard

Substance

At the time of the inauguration of the N. G. Hayek Center in Tokyo, an exceptional building situated in the heart of Ginza, a prestigious district in the Japanese capital, Mr. Nick Hayek, President of the Executive Group Management Board of the Swatch Group, explains the reason for this high-profile presence of the world's leading watchmaking group in the "Land of the Rising Sun".

Nick Hayek Jr. : Even though it is not the leading market in the luxury sector, for our Group, Japan remains a country to be reckoned with, and where it's vital to have the right presence. Firstly, the Japanese people love the world of luxury, and they buy lots of expensive products. Local consumers also attach great importance to how goods are presented in window displays. They greatly appreciate the fact that boutiques pay attention to the smallest details. They examine everything, from the way an item is displayed to its packaging, not forgetting lighting, the display accessories, and the color of the décor. It has already been emphasized that this exceptional building will house seven boutiques, representing seven of our Group's brands. In our eyes, such a presence is an extremely strong sign. Not only does it show our great interest in the Japanese market, but it also clearly demonstrates the substance of the Group brands that will be presented at the N. G. Hayek Center.

Because it's the brands that you're highlighting in this building...

GNH: Absolutely! The strategy of our group is that our watch brands should have a life of their own. There's no question, nor has there ever been, of aligning the products of all the different brands. What's more, I'm sure that ordinary consumers may not even know that Breguet, Blancpain, and Omega belong to the Swatch Group. When they set their heart on a watch, they want to be able to enter into the universe of their chosen brand, and discover its spirit and its history, in order to experience even more intensely the emotions that this brand arouses in them.

But by bringing them together, isn't there a risk of confusion?

GNH: I'm convinced that won't happen, because we've designed this building to work in a special way. Elevators laid out as small boutiques will transport customers to brand universes on different floors. So consumers who take the Breguet elevator will be taken straight to the Breguet universe. And we're well aware that in Japan, customers are quite happy to move between floors. We've therefore brought together all the brands in a single building which, moreover, has been designed by one of Japan's leading architects, adding a touch of freshness and nature in the center of this vast city, because nature will be extremely evident in this building. This is all part of the Group's strategy.

That is to say?

GNH: As I've already mentioned, it's to further strengthen the Group and its brands, and also to present the retail community with the brand image that we want. In fact, the signal we're sending out is very clear. This also means we're going to continue opening single-brand boutiques, either alone or jointly with partners. In this respect, we're a bit behind in Japan, because we wanted to respect the tradition that exists in the sphere of distribution. However, by opening boutiques we can develop this distribution and consequently help to raise the standards of retail points of sale.

I'd also like to go into a bit more detail to further clarify the debate. The Swatch watch brand was the starting point for the idea of in-store entertainment. Right from the start, Swatch created events in its points of sale, providing entertainment while facilitating purchases. In this building we'll be doing the same thing. It's part of our tradition.

And this building will also enable you to provide an "after-sales service"?

GNH: Of course, because these days it's extremely important to be able to provide consumers in urban settings as large as Tokyo and the world's other major cities with on-site watch cleaning, servicing and repairs. The brands also want to "showcase" this after-sales service, because it's an important activity. I also see it as a way of proving to the customers of our brands that we are keeping track of the product, even after it has been sold, and that we are giving ourselves the means to implement a true policy of quality and durability. It's a very strong sign, not just for consumers and distributors, but also for our own employees.

So the N. G. Hayek Center will be the first of many?

GNH: It's in line with our existing well-established strategy. Following the creation of the Cité du Temps in Geneva, which has become a place where people meet and chat, we bought a museum in Germany, at Glashütte, which will obviously be associated with our Glashütte Original brand. We're also going to completely renovate the Peace Hotel in Shanghai. There'll be a commercial area, with various boutiques for our brands, at the bottom of the building but, most importantly, we'll have 30 bedrooms that can be used for a certain period of time by artists. This building will be managed by the Swatch brand. It'll be a sort of "Swatch artist center". And then there'll be other projects as well, of course...

ARLETTE-ELSA EMCH,
Member of the Executive Group Management Board of The Swatch Group Ltd.; President of Swatch Group Japan

Arlette-Elsa Emch, Swiss citizen, holds a degree in Ethnology and History as well as a certificate in Journalism. She joined the Swatch Group in December 1992 as Communication Manager, incorporating in this position her broad experiences as a journalist. She has been a member of the Extended Group Management Board since 1998 and of the Executive Group Management Board since December 1999.

She was appointed president of ck Watch in 1997 and has since then managed this brand which is a joint venture between the Swatch Group and the American designer Calvin Klein. In 2004, ck jewelry was launched and the name of the company is hence ck watch & jewelry Co. Ltd.

In course of her career within the Swatch Group, her responsibilities have been expanded. First in 2000, with the management of the company Dress Your Body (DYB) which designs, develops and produces jewelry lines for various Swatch Group brands (Breguet, Omega, Leon Hatot, Swatch, ck Calvin Klein). Moreover, in 2002, she was appointed president of the high jewelry brand, Léon Hatot.

Furthermore, Arlette-Elsa Emch is a member of the Board of Directors of Breguet, responsible for the jewellery and the retail stores Breguet and responsible for Swatch Group Japan and Swatch Group South Korea.

ARLETTE-ELSA EMCH, the interview

By Eric Othenin-Girard

Mrs. Emch, how was the idea of this building conceived?

Arlette-Elsa Emch: Japan is one of our principal markets. The Japanese people are fascinated by watches and clocks, and they love immersing themselves in our universe. In this country, owning luxury goods is a sign of social status, and also a way of being out of the ordinary.

We wanted to find locations in Ginza where we could open boutiques for seven of our brands. But that would have taken forever. So in 2004, we acquired an old building dating from the 1960s, the Pearl Building, at the heart of this district. We demolished it in order to construct a building in which customers will find five floors of stores, for the 7 brands (BREGUET, BLANCPAIN, GLASSHUTTE ORIGINAL, JAQUET-DROZ, LEON HATOT, OMEGA and SWATCH), with a strong identification of the universe and DNA of each brand, because this is an integral part of the luxury that we are selling. There will also be three floors devoted to after-sales service and, of course, our offices. Last but not least, on the 14th floor, there will be a space dedicated to the interaction between brands and the public. This will range from meetings of watchmaking enthusiasts to concerts, and will include all sorts of exhibitions and even press conferences.

But building in Japan isn't a trivial undertaking...

AEE: Obviously not, and we had to entrust a Japanese company with this responsibility because absolutely everything has to be translated, and without local support we would have been heading for disaster. Not forgetting that the Japanese are some of the best architects in the world.

I imagine the choice was immense and quite tricky?

AEE: Yes, firstly because Tokyo itself is a sort of gigantic architectural competition. So I immersed myself in this environment, and I also read dozens of books on the subject. In the end, we chose eight of the best architects in the world. We contacted them, and they all accepted enthusiastically. So we briefed them and, despite the very tight timescales they were given, they all performed outstandingly. First drafts were submitted, we made some adjustments, and they got back to work. We then eliminated some of the submissions, leaving a shortlist of four.

And who did you choose?

AEE: We finally chose an exceptional Japanese architect, Shigeru Ban. There were several reasons for this decision. We wanted this building to convey a message about nature, because the Japanese are familiar with Switzerland and its relatively well-preserved natural environment. In the district of Ginza, which has no green spaces at all, it was important to add some greenery to the city. It was this architect's first daring bid that immediately won us over. Shigeru Ban's project also suits us because we are a non-polluting industry, and that is an important message to convey, especially since we're selling luxury goods that appeal to the notion of pleasure rather than necessity. It's vital that we retain our ecological conscience. Last but not least, we liked this project because of its remarkable earthquake protection system. It's an important factor in this city which experiences frequent and sometimes devastating earth tremors.

Work is currently in full swing. When will the center be complete?

AEE: Before we talk about the end, let's mention the beginning. In Japan, when you want to construct a building, there are a certain number of rules that must be observed. Before work begins, a very

serious ceremony takes place. This is the Jichinsai, a Shinto ritual aimed at summoning and appeasing Kami, god of the earth, so that work will proceed smoothly. Then, once work has started and the building reaches street level, you hold a new ceremony during which food is offered to the gods. It's all very traditional and, at the end of this celebration, there's a meal at which the contractor, the architect and the mandating party are thanked. It's an amazing experience and a total contrast in such a huge metropolis (18 million inhabitants) to see the utmost respect the Japanese have for their ancient traditions.

While it's a rule to observe traditions, the Japanese are also a very efficient people and, for this construction project, we obtained permission to work around the clock, seven days a week. The roof will go on in October 2006. The building is due to be completed in April 2007.

But in October 2006, it won't be anywhere near finished...

AEE: That's right. We'll have to choose all the materials, components and furniture, including the type of trees, because they play an extremely important role in the whole thing. We're working on this as a team, but that won't stop me from getting involved regularly in these technical questions. And we'll also need to monitor the concept of the boutiques, which is different from those already in existence. As it wasn't possible to house all seven boutiques on the ground floor, we conceived the idea of elevator boutiques. Each customer who chooses a brand will enter a small boutique that is in fact an elevator, which will take them directly to the universe of that brand.

Isn't it stressful managing all this at a distance of 15,000 kilometers?

AEE: I've been surprised to see how calmly everything takes place. Even though everyone knows that time is short, everything runs smoothly, after the Japanese fashion, with that infinite respect for harmony, the most important word in their culture.

SHIGERU BAN, the architect

A brilliant creator, an innovator, an experimenter, a master of the use of space – Shigeru Ban is all these things, and a great deal more as well. A man of modesty, he freely admits: “I don't invent anything, I'm just happy to use materials in a new way”.

Creating spaces which move us by their serenity - that could be his ideal.

A globe-trotter whilst carrying out his commissions, when he comes to Paris he resides on the sixth floor of the Beaubourg Center, where he has built for himself a structure out of cardboard tubes.

Shigeru Ban is an architect famous for using lightweight materials such as cardboard as walls or as frameworks, in an original interpretation of Far Eastern traditions.

He sees many of his projects as giving him the opportunity to rework materials that are found in the traditional architecture of Japan, where he was born in 1957.

Shigeru Ban commands respect by his cat-like scrutiny, his chiseled silhouette, and his slow, measured gestures that resemble the choreographed movements of Japanese Noh theater. He makes you want to listen to him, and to follow him. To discover his universe with respect, attention and enthusiasm.

His smile, like a conspiratorial wink that accompanies a profound and fundamental statement: “I have learned that everything is possible, provided that the concept is plausible and that you believe in it.”

A neutral palette, nothing superfluous, no conspicuous signs of wealth.

Quite simply, a genius.

SHIGERU BAN, biographical milestones

1957	Born in Tokyo
1977-1980	Studied architecture at the Southern California Institute of Architecture, Los Angeles
1980-1982	Studied architecture at the Cooper Union School of Architecture, New York
1984	Bachelor of Architecture, Cooper Union
1985	Established his own agency in Tokyo
1995	Consultant to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees

SHIGERU BAN, key projects, achievements and prizes

1989	Paper Arbor at the World Design Expo, Nagoya
1994	Miyake Design Studio Gallery in Tokyo for the designer Issey Miyake
1995	House and church made from cardboard tubes for refugees in Kobe
1997	Tazawako Station in Akita (Japan)
1998	Paper Dome, Gifu
1998	Issey Miyake Collection Stage Set Design, Paris
1998	Awarded the JIA prize for the best young architect of the year
2000	Japan Pavilion at the Hanover International Exhibition (Germany)
2000	Berlin Art Award, Akademie der Kunste, Germany, Japan Pavilion, Hanover Expo 2000
2000	Boat shelter on the Burgundy Canal at Pouilly en Auxois in the French department of Yonne, with Jean de Gastines
2001	Winner of the competition for the Centre Pompidou in Metz
2002	Best House in the World, World Architecture Awards 2002, Naked House
2003	Finalist in the competition to rebuild Ground Zero in New York
2004	Winner of the competition for the Nicolas G. Hayek Center in Tokyo
2004	Grande Medaille d'Or, Academie d' Architecture

SHIGERU BAN, bibliography

1997	Shigeru Ban, GG Portfolio, Editorial Gustavo Gili, S.A., Spain
1998	Shigeru Ban, 17 realisations/works, Institut Francais d'Architecture, France
	Paper Tube Architecture from Rwanda to Kobe, Chikuma Shobo Publishing Co., Ltd., Japan
	Shigeru Ban, JA30, The Japan Architect Co. Ltd., Japan
1999	Shigeru Ban, Projects in Process to Japanese Pavilion, Expo 2000 Hanover, TOTO Shuppan, Japan
2000	Shigeru Ban, Galerie Renate Kammer, Junius Velag GmbH, Germany
2001	Shigeru Ban, Princeton Architectural Press, New York
2003	Shigeru Ban, Phaidon Press, London

SHIGERU BAN, the interview

by Rahel Marti, Hochparterre

The Swatch Group has paid 150 Million Swiss Francs for 475 square metres. You are therefore building on one of the most expensive sites in the world. That must be really impressive for an architect.

Shigeru Ban: Actually I wasn't aware of these figures. I am not one of those architects, who dream about building something in Ginza. But it's obviously a fantastic opportunity as it's Japan's most popular shopping area. It's the first time that I've built anything that has been the subject of so much publicity in Japan – most of my buildings have been in locations where there are not that many people passing by. Actually, it's working with Swatch that I find more interesting than the site itself.

What is it that appeals to you about working with them?

SB: Well, everyone knows that Swatch is innovative and inventive. They have reinvented the watch and revolutionised the watch industry. I am trying to do the same thing in architecture – to be inventive. So we go well together!

What have you proposed for the Nicolas G. Hayek Centre?

SB: As a first step, I have altered the way the range of competing products is presented. That was a risky thing to do, but fortunately the plan worked out alright. The Swatch Group wanted to locate seven shops in the building with one for each brand of watch. If I had arranged the shops on different floors, then we would have been giving preferential treatment to the brands on the ground floor. However, I explicitly wanted to present all the brands in the same way; but that would have made things a bit cramped on the ground floor.

What does your solution look like?

SB: I've turned the ground floor into a street or a public thoroughfare, which connects the streets at the front and the back of the building. We have located one booth for each brand in this street rather like market stalls. The people stroll along this street past the booths. The booths are glazed and one can go in and looks at the displays. The trick here is that in the booths there are hydraulic lifts. If someone is interested in seeing more watch, then they simply press the button and the lift takes them to the showroom of the brand. These showrooms – the actual shops – are located on the first three floors and the basement. Once there you can walk around the shops and go up or down via the central lift.

How do you ensure people enter the building and use the thoroughfare?

SB: The shop fronts are enclosed with glass shutters, which are, incidentally, another of our inventions. When the shops are open, the shutters are stacked up. Then there's no longer any shop-front to separate the inside from the outside. I think this will entice people to come in. One can roll the blinds right up below the roof and open up the whole building. An open commercial building without a facade is something that doesn't exist anywhere else.

What happens then on the floors further up?

The customer service areas are located above the floors where the shops are and above these are the Swatch Group offices and in the roof there is a reception area that can be used for a wide range of different events. When the glass shutters are open, the atrium of the customer services also becomes a semi-open area that is three storeys high. There it will feel as if you are up on a terrace high above the street. I want to ensure that the employees don't just have to sit in air-conditioned rooms, but can also go out into the fresh air, the light and the sunshine.

Are there any links with traditional Japanese architecture behind these spatial situations?

SB: No, this is not a Japanese building. Of course it stands in Japan, but apart from that there are no links to Japanese culture. As for myself, I have neither studied architecture in Japan nor do I see myself as a Japanese architect.

Does the Japanese building tradition not play any role for you?

SB: It perhaps indirectly influences me. For me, however, the Japanese culture is not a theme or a vocabulary for design work. For example, the Japanese didn't actually invent paper so when I build houses using paper it's not building in a Japanese style. The structures with cardboard tubes are my inventions. They are a new way of using paper.

You come from Japan and have studied in the USA, work frequently in Paris and build in Europe. Now you are designing the headquarters in Japan for the Swatch Group, which is a European company. Isn't all this cultural exchange a kind of theme for you?

SB: That isn't really anything particularly special any more. I have already built for an Italian in New York and for Japanese clients in Europe. Of course, there are differences, every country is different. That is exciting to have to keep in mind and at times it's exhausting. For example, in Japan they build much faster than in Europe. There people work in shifts and if it's got to be done quickly then one hires more people; in that way you can keep to a schedule. In Europe, I've had to learn to be patient.

Back to the Nicolas G. Hayek Centre: You are going to completely cover one side wall in plants. Can I assume that here there is also no connection with the Japanese garden?

SB: Not at all. The plants come from over half the countries of the world; these days it's the same everywhere. The largest part of the wall will be covered with evergreen plants, but one part of it does follow the seasons of the year: at Christmas, for example, we could plant red poinsettias there.

What is the idea behind the green wall - is it more as decoration?

SB: Yes, it could become a sort of miniature park, because in the surroundings of the Nicolas G. Hayek Centre in this shopping quarter of Tokyo there is nowhere to relax. I was thinking about the pocket parks in New York: a small garden in the middle of all the hustle and bustle where one can relax, look at some greenery and hear water splashing. As we have no space for the garden on the ground floor, we are just suspending it instead.

Internally the building promises lots of experiences. But when the shops are closed and the glass shutters are down, the building will appear a bit dull.

SB: Precisely as it should do. I like to create unique spaces – spatial experiences. Many clients and architects as well want a statement – something unusual. For me, the decoration and the cosmetics are not of interest.

These spatial experiences need space. This is a piece of luxury in a location where all the others make use of every last available square metre.

SB: Absolutely. The sales area is four storeys high; it has lots of air and not much space. Subscribing to this concept is a courageous step by the Swatch Group, because good architecture should be more important than pure profit. But Mr Nicolas G. Hayek is someone who is full of ideas and it seemed to me that this building would be something that appeals to him.