

The Museum of Modern Art

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SHINJUKU, a dense cluster of shopping and entertainment activity, a business and transportation center that attracts more than 3 million people each day, and the most active and visually exciting district in Tokyo, is the subject of a new exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art. THE PHENOMENAL CITY, which will be on view in the Goodwin Galleries from December 17 through February 15, 1976, attempts to convey the structure and quality of Shinjuku and to demonstrate the success of the Japanese way of urban design in a modern context.

The exhibition, which has been guest-directed by Peter Gluck, architect, Henry Smith, historian, and Koji Taki, architectural critic, illustrates the excitement and character of the district by means of a three-dimensional overlay map, hanging banners, giant ads, a wall-size photographic mural, stacks of photographic cubes, a catalog of environmental forms, plastic food and plastic nature used by the commercial establishments in the district, and by a continuous slide show of Shinjuku throughout the various periods of the day.

In Japan, unlike the West, the traditional design process has stressed accommodation to change and flexibility of use as the most desirable qualities for a human environment. This is perfectly illustrated by Shinjuku, which has no large public projects and no planning authorities. The Shinjuku environment is the outcome of a constant process of ad hoc solutions to particular problems by a vast number of participants, both public and private.

As a result, Shinjuku is at once vernacular and modern, offering a diversity of goods and services for every need and taste. It contains more than three thousand retail shops, bars, restaurants, night clubs, and theatres. It serves as a center for the artistic avant-garde, as hangout of gangsters and low-life, as hotbed of student radicals, as entertainment area for white-collar workers,

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as fashion parade of middle-class youth, and as shopping mecca for suburban housewives.

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