

## **Maison Owl (Restaurant and House) – Ube, Japan**

ChatGPT and edited by Olivia Gordy

The Maison Owl, a restaurant and house in Ube, Japan was designed by the architect Junya Ishigami. The building is a unique and stunning example of contemporary architectural engineering. It is a fusion of both house and restaurant, serving as a hub for dining and relaxation in the city of Ube in rural Southern Japan.

The building's most striking feature is its unusual roof, which appears to float above the structure. The structure is made of concrete, covered in a layer of mud and is designed to blend seamlessly into the surrounding landscape and appear as though it is growing out of the ground.<sup>1</sup> The construction process for the project involved excavating the site to create the inverse shape of the final design.<sup>2</sup> Then, concrete was poured and the surrounding earth was further excavated to reveal the final form. This organic, flowing form provides a striking contrast to a typical building's crisp, angular lines and creates a harmonious connection between the building and its environment.

The large, crystal clear, glass windows provide ample natural light to the interior. The use of concrete and glass allows for an open and airy feel, creating a sense of space and allowing for views of the below-grade landscape. The interior spaces, which include a restaurant, a lounge area, and a private dining room, are organized around a central courtyard, adding to the feeling of openness and connection to nature. The courtyard brings in additional natural light and air and serves as a visual connection between the different parts of the building, creating a sense of unity and flow.

A large portion of the design process was done after the excavation to better accommodate the placement and number of glass pieces, arrangement and size of the furniture, and positions and details of MEP facilities.<sup>3</sup> This reverse engineering process created a feedback loop between design and reality to alleviate discrepancies in the size of the glass and MEP facilities. The building's design also emphasizes a sense of community, with spaces such as the courtyards and the dining area encouraging social interaction and a sense of belonging. The open-plan dining area, in particular, creates a lively atmosphere and provides ample opportunity for conversation and connection between diners.

The Maison Owl's below-grade form, combination of concrete and mud, and flipped design process contribute to its distinct nature. The building also nods to the increasingly popular trend of lowering buildings to reduce the visual impact of projects.<sup>4</sup> The building's design serves as a testament to the potential relationship between form and the environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Article from Dezeen confirms the use of concrete underneath a layer of mud from the site.

<sup>2</sup> Architecture News article provides a very simple graphic of the concrete solidification process.

<sup>3</sup> Design process explained in a translated article from ArchDaily.

<sup>4</sup> Trend described in Dezeen article, as well.

**ChatGPT Request:**

Will you please write me a 600 word essay about the architecture and engineering of the Maison Owl Restaurant and House in Ube, Japan by architect Junya Ishigami? Here are three articles to pull information from:

<https://arquitecturaviva.com/works/casa-restaurante-en-ube-yamaguchi>

<https://www.dezeen.com/2022/09/19/junya-ishigami-mud-covered-house-restaurant-japan/>

<https://www.archdaily.com/987227/house-and-restaurant-junya-ishigami-plus-associates>

**Original Draft from ChatGPT:**

The Maison Owl Restaurant and House in Ube, Japan by architect Junya Ishigami is a unique and stunning example of contemporary architectural engineering. The building, designed by renowned architect Junya Ishigami and his architectural firm, Junya Ishigami Plus Associates, is a fusion of both house and restaurant, serving as a hub for dining and relaxation in the city of Ube.

The building's most striking feature is its unusual roof, which appears to float above the structure. The roof, made of steel and covered in a layer of mud, is designed to blend seamlessly into the surrounding landscape and appear as though it is growing out of the ground. This organic, flowing form provides a striking contrast to the building's crisp, angular lines and creates a harmonious connection between the building and its environment. It is a clear example of how a building can be designed to not only be functional, but to also enhance its surroundings.

The building's structure is made of concrete, with large glass windows providing ample natural light to the interior. The use of concrete and glass allows for an open and airy feel, creating a sense of space and allowing for unobstructed views of the surrounding landscape. The interior spaces, which include a restaurant, a lounge area, and a private dining room, are organized around a central courtyard, adding to the feeling of openness and connection to nature. The courtyard, which bring in natural light and air, also serve as a visual connection between the different parts of the building, creating a sense of unity and flow.

The Maison Owl Restaurant and House is not just a beautiful building, it is also a highly functional and efficient piece of architecture. The use of natural materials and passive heating and cooling systems, such as the mud-covered roof, help to reduce the building's energy consumption and minimize its impact on the environment. The building's design also emphasizes a sense of community, with spaces such as the courtyards and the open-plan dining area encouraging social interaction and a sense of belonging. The open-plan dining area, in particular, creates a lively atmosphere and provides ample opportunity for conversation and connection between diners.

In conclusion, the Maison Owl Restaurant and House in Ube, Japan by Junya Ishigami is a remarkable example of contemporary architectural engineering. Its unique form, efficient use of materials, and emphasis on community make it not only a beautiful building but also a highly functional and sustainable one. The building's design serves as a testament to the power of architecture to create spaces that not only inspire and delight but also improve our lives and our relationship with the environment. The Maison Owl Restaurant and House is a truly inspiring piece of architecture that showcases the potential of design to enhance our daily experiences.

February 5, 2022

## References

Baker, Amelia. "Junya Ishigami Excavates Concrete Cave for Restaurant and Residence in Japan." Archinect, Archinect, 26 Sept. 2022, [archinect.com/news/article/150324682/junya-ishigami-excavates-concrete-cave-for-restaurant-and-residence-in-japan](https://archinect.com/news/article/150324682/junya-ishigami-excavates-concrete-cave-for-restaurant-and-residence-in-japan)

"Casa Restaurante en Ube Yamaguchi." Arquitectura Viva, [www.arquitecturaviva.com/works/casa-restaurante-en-ube-yamaguchi](https://www.arquitecturaviva.com/works/casa-restaurante-en-ube-yamaguchi).

"Junya Ishigami Covers House and Restaurant in Japan with Mud." Dezeen, 19 Sept. 2022, [www.dezeen.com/2022/09/19/junya-ishigami-mud-covered-house-restaurant-japan/](https://www.dezeen.com/2022/09/19/junya-ishigami-mud-covered-house-restaurant-japan/).

"House and Restaurant / Junya Ishigami + Associates." ArchDaily, ArchDaily, 17 Sept. 2022, [www.archdaily.com/987227/house-and-restaurant-junya-ishigami-plus-associates](https://www.archdaily.com/987227/house-and-restaurant-junya-ishigami-plus-associates).

