

Link+

Creating Wellness

SANU (Takahiro Homma / Yusuke Ishikawa) + ADX (Kotaro Anzai)

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OBAYASHI CORPORATION Architectural Design & Engineering Division
(Sho Ito / Shun Takayama / Mari Ota / Chiho Hoyama)



At the 2nd floor landing of Port Plus (from left in the front row: Anzai, Homma, and Ishikawa. From left in the back row: Takayama, Ito, Hoyama, and Ota)

SANU and ADX have developed villa subscriptions ("SANU 2nd Home" etc.) in forests around Lake Shirakaba and the Yatsugatake Mountains to draw city dwellers into nature, while OBAYASHI CORPORATION is working to bring nature into urban areas by converting to timber construction and greening.

At first glance, the approaches may seem to be coming from opposite directions, but our goals should be very similar. While introducing each other's activities, we discussed the symbiosis with nature, the wellness created by such symbiosis, and future visions at OBAYASHI's training facility "Port Plus" in Kannai, Yokohama. (See p.04)

Takahiro Homma
SANU Inc.
Founder / Brand Director

Born in Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima. He founded Backpackers' Japan, a guesthouse and hostel operating company, in 2010 to create "A Place for Everybody Across Boundaries." In the same year, he opened a guest house "toco." (Iriya, Tokyo), after renovating an old traditional Japanese house. His later works include the production and management of "Nui. HOSTEL & BAR LOUNGE" (Kuramae, Tokyo), "Len" (Kawaramachi, Kyoto), "CITAN" (Nihonbashi, Tokyo), and "K5" (Nihonbashi, Tokyo).

Yusuke Ishikawa
SANU Inc.
Head of Business Development

After joining Mori Building Co., Ltd. as a new graduate, he worked on redevelopment projects, including land development and design, mainly in the Toranomom and Azabudai projects. In 2022, he joined SANU for a new start and is now in charge of the business development section, including "SANU 2nd Home". He is seeking a new lifestyle for himself and his family through SANU. A first-class architect.

Kotaro Anzai
ADX Co., Ltd.
CEO

Born in Nihonmatsu City, Fukushima in 1977. He is the third generation of Anzai Kensetsu Kogyo, established by his grandfather. In 2006, he founded ADX to create sustainable architecture in harmony with nature. Emphasizing symbiotic architecture under the philosophy "living with forest", he specializes in design and construction of circular architecture, including the use of biodegradable materials, traceability for materials, and forestry and reforestation. A passionate mountain climber.

Promising Future with Port Plus

Mari Ota (hereinafter "Ota"): Please tell us your impressions about Port Plus that you have just seen.

Takahiro Homma (hereinafter "Homma"): The first impression was very stylish on the outside. When I was heading for this building, a wooden structure distinctively different from its surroundings caught my eye. Although the wooden structure wouldn't look like wood due to the fireproof treatment, I could see the design solution worked very well to show the use of wood recognizable from the outside and the inside. Then the building made me wonder what the meaning and the benefit of constructing a wooden high-rise were in the first place. Eventually, I came to conclude that its wooden appearance itself must have significance. There are some aspects that make us wonder if it is beneficial to nature, if it is costly to transport, and if we are using extra materials by using the outer skin, but I am looking forward to seeing more wooden buildings in various forms following this pilot project.

I also sensed that there must have been some difficulties in the building process, which somewhat overlaps with the design process at SANU. What I believe we should work on at SANU is the wellness aspect of the project. At Port Plus, I found it innovative and instructive to see various experiments and investigations conducted in the lodging

rooms, including face recognition, indoor environmental controls such as lighting and air conditioning using touch panels, and research on sleep, which showed the potential for future development. *1

Kotaro Anzai (hereinafter "Anzai"): As a professional in the same industry, I felt empathy when I saw glimpses of the hardships involved in design and construction. But back in the old days in Japan, this kind of architecture was not realizable due to legal, cost, and social issues. As times change, the opportunity has finally come to realize it. Completing this building is surely a big step forward, and continuing such an initiative will be a powerful message to the next generation. As Mr. Homma mentioned earlier, its stylish exterior would be the first trigger for people to want to imitate it. It is an opportunity for all of us to deepen our understanding of the benefits of using wood and its importance, which is essential for modeling the future. The interesting and challenging aspect of Port Plus is being a wooden high-rise, showing a great deal of study in various technologies. It also reminded me of the need to study.

*1 The technology used is called WELCS place™, a smart building platform that visualizes energy and controls the comfort level of air-conditioning and lighting.



On the 5th floor of Port Plus (showing the smart building platform "WELCS place™")



In discussion on the 8th floor of Port Plus



On the 3rd floor of Port Plus (explaining the solution for purely wooden construction)



Takahiro Homma (SANU)



Interior view of SANU CABIN (cabin with large windows overlooking nature)



Shun Takayama (OBAYASHI CORPORATION Architectural Design & Engineering Division)

The Significance of Wooden Building

Sho Ito (hereinafter "Ito"): Our goal at OBAYASHI CORPORATION Architectural Design & Engineering Division is to create new value. In the Port Plus project, too, we created new values in many ways, including wellness and communication, where employees feel comfortable during training. The user experience is an easy-to-understand value, whereas the value in wooden structure is a question to be asked myself. What comes to mind first is the social value in a recycling-oriented society—it was a major mission to clarify and define the value to it in figures. The question remains for me personally whether it really inspires users or whether the values of society and people will ever converge. You offer the value of "Living with nature" to inspire the users, but you also promote the socially conscious value as "Circular Architecture". Do you feel it inspires users?

Homma: That is something I often discuss with my founding partner, Gen Fukushima (CEO of SANU). My answer to you is that we are not trying to inspire the users. Let's say, when you buy sportswear, the first thing that comes to your mind is that the product is simple, easy to move around in, and durable so that you can wear it for a long time, rather than its eco-friendly feature. In other words, "design and functionality" is the entry point for purchase decisions, and "eco-

friendliness" is the exit point. In fact, we did consider promoting ourselves as an environmentally-friendly company in the past but decided to focus our vision on proposing a lifestyle that is compatible with people and nature. If you love nature, you should approach your work with a sense of respect for it, but we didn't want to impose that awareness on the users. So far, I believe we were in the right direction.

Shun Takayama (hereinafter "Takayama"): Was the overall concept of SANU CABIN, the lodging facility of SANU 2nd Home, created with the intention of circularity?

Homma: Yes, it was.

Takayama: Was it naturally derived as a result of seeking content that would inspire users, or was it accompanied by ingenuity in placing the content in a circular context?

Homma: Anzai, a leader of ADX, who took charge of the design and construction of the SANU CABIN, is a mountain lover and doesn't want to ruin the mountains. This cabin was built by people who want to protect the mountains, and thus is a straightforward expression of our feelings. It is my understanding that the promotion and brand image came out as an additional factor.

Ito: Is it possible that the circularity has resulted in easier fundraising, or has it created additional social recognition?

Homma: Well, I think it is partly true. In terms of funding, it will probably

take a few more years in Japan to make it easier for sustainable things to get funded. On the other hand, many end-users who subscribe to our villas tend to support companies like ours out of a natural desire to pass down a positive statement to our next generation. That is why I thought it was right to say "partly".

Similar to how littering, which was normal 20-30 years ago, was somehow recognized as tacky and immoral, environmentally compatible and sustainable manufacturing will come along in 10-20 years, even if it is not recognized as normal now. We would prefer to focus on our activities with the awareness that this is common sense in society in the long run toward the future rather than advocating anti-littering.

That said, we should disclose information about our activities without emphasizing sustainability upfront. Otherwise, no one will get to know us. It would be just right for SANU to keep the balance of keeping the idea of offering a comfortable time in a second home in nature on the front cover and clearly appealing to ourselves as an eco-conscious company on the next page.

Takayama: Port Plus was a project in which we highlighted the wooden construction as the main feature of the building. However, the wooden structure itself is not really a concern for the end user as long as it is finished with wood. Therefore, we focused on the wellness aspect,

which encompasses the story of the timber, rather than the physical aspect, so that we could create a healthy place for users and society.

Homma: Propelling a society forward or creating the future a little further is exciting for us creators. In that sense, Port Plus is probably a healthy project that is significant in both social and corporate aspects.

Ito: This project was only possible by a general contractor. One of OBAYASHI's philosophies is "Making Beyond." This was a very rewarding and exciting experience for me, taking on the challenge of new construction methods and moving forward with an awareness of the circulation beyond.



Model of Rigid Cross Joint



Mari Ota (OBAYASHI CORPORATION Architectural Design & Engineering Division)

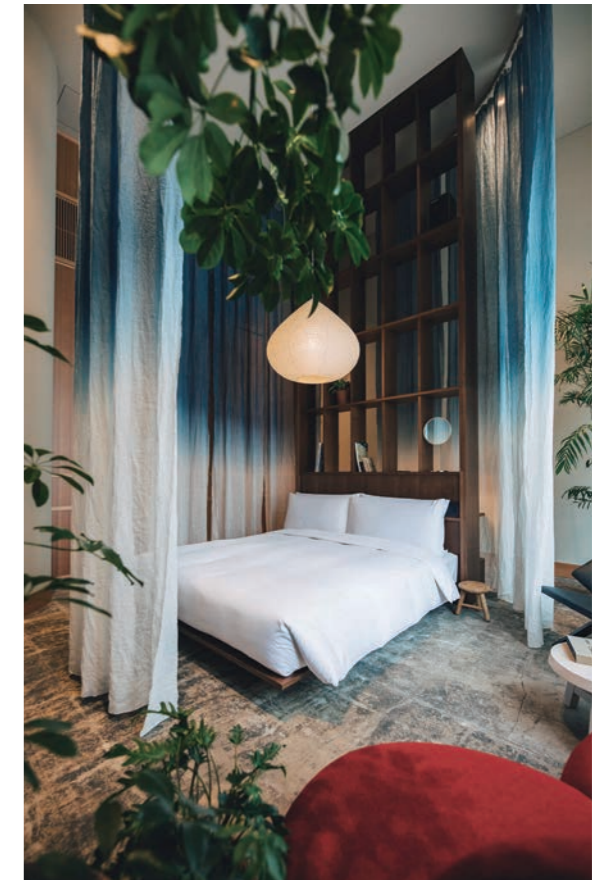
Stimulating Sensibility to Nature

Ota: SANU CABIN is built in such a way that you can feel various elements of nature as if it has been a part of the forest for a long time. Do you have any design ideas for bringing a sense of nature into the city?

Homma: The first project I worked with Anzai was "K5" in Kabutocho, Nihonbashi, which was an experimental project to bring nature to the city. I was unsure at first whether the answer to this concept would be abundant plantings, the installation of solar panels, or wooden structures, so I came up with the hypothesis of what would happen if we appealed to the human senses rather than to the physical one. Living in a city, people tend to fall into the simple mindset that nature is good and cities and artifacts are bad. But, in reality, there are two types of nature: comfortable and uncomfortable. For example, fresh air and water make nature pleasant, while stale air and lots of mosquitoes make nature unpleasant. The same goes for cities; some places have stale air, and some places have pleasant breezes. Assuming that we humans are part of nature, which makes the artificial thing a part of nature as well, I understand that whether or not you feel comfortable is the key to determining nature.

Takayama: Creating a sense of nature without natural elements means creating something artificial and that is essentially a fake. But I still want to call it nature in a way.

Homma: We placed many indoor plants in K5, and at the same time, we have elaborately designed the spaces with indigo-dyed curtains to convey the nuances of the sky and the sea, curtains that sway in the wind, and red lamps reflected in mirrors to evoke the sun, to name a few. Other examples include the introduction of high-performance speakers to reproduce the sound quality close to that of nature with a sense of being on a hill or by a lake, which may actually be connected to "nature" at the core. There are still ways to bring nature into the city from a different perspective. For me, there are very few places in the city where I would like to spend my time. This is because all buildings are built squarely with the floor area filled to capacity due to the prioritization of economic rationality over comfort. On the other hand, local cities that are a bit far from the metropolitan area still have the potential to create something new, in terms of wood construction and zoning, for example. When we spend time in a squarely sectioned space, our thoughts become square as well, but in a forest where everything is composed of curves, our thoughts and personalities become more flexible. I think we can create something that has never been seen in conventional condominiums by carefully studying the zoning, the wood construction, and how much of the skyscape and airflow can be taken in.



Guest room at K5 (Indigo-dyed curtains around a bed give a sense of nature)



Kotaro Anzai (ADX)

Love for Wood Unites People

Anzai: My background as the third generation of a building contractor has always involved working with wood. As I went into the mountains to purchase timber, I noticed that there were good mountains and unpleasant ones. As I dug into the underlying backgrounds, I learned there were big issues such as climate change and the structure of Japan's forestry industry. It then made me appreciate trees and forests more when I decided to use wood carefully as things have changed. Our philosophy of "living with the forest" has naturally attracted people who love trees and want to build wooden buildings. I also try to interact with as many different specialists as possible, including those in plants or energy fields.

Ito: That must make great architecture.

Anzai: It certainly does. Architecture is completed by a combination of various information, so if you use only architectural standards, everything will end up the same. It is only when various techniques and expertise come together that something great is created. The more people from multiple fields outside of design could work together with designers, they could bring about the kind of biodiversity within a company.

Ota: Port Plus was the first wooden building I was involved in, and I found it interesting and fascinating that, once wood became the building material, people gathered from different fields and I could interact with them through architecture even more easily than before. I see a promising future in wood and lumber-oriented architecture as a tool to create a network like that. The eco-conscious approach mentioned earlier in the discussion appeared to be the last option to arouse customer interest, but choosing that approach itself will be linked to wellness in the future. Although cost is an unavoidable part of wooden construction, we want to be able to demonstrate that wellness can be the deciding factor in choosing a wooden building.



The Restaurant at K5 (with ornamental plants creating a sense of nature)



Exterior view of SANU CABIN (The cabins are arranged without tree logging as much as possible)



Yusuke Ishikawa (SANU)

Design to Embrace the Nature

Chiho Hoyama (hereinafter "Hoyama"): A pharmaceutical factory like Miyarisan Pharmaceutical (see p.34 of this issue) does not allow for nature to be taken in due to insect control measures. As I was in charge of the cafeteria building adjacent to the factory, the idea of stimulating the senses, discussed earlier, made a lot of sense as a way of incorporating nature for relaxation. While I wonder why you build identical cabins in a natural environment where each place has a different character, I also feel they rather enhance the surrounding nature as the main attraction. I would like to know in what direction you are going to update SANU CABIN in the future.

Homma: There are two reasons for creating identical houses. One is economic rationality. To expand the act of creating something beneficial to society and the future in a limited time frame, we thought it would be better to produce identical products. The idea behind them is similar to

that of making products such as smartphones and cars, which I think is the key to a consistent and repetitive production process. Another factor is design, and the ultimate design comes down to a natural form. Plants growing on the land have settled into that form over decades and centuries, so humans can't compete with them. I thought our design should be as minimal as possible not to interfere with the beauty of intact nature. Mr. Anzai believes that we should create an architecture that is like an elegant white vessel, which certainly can enhance the characteristics of whatever is on it. For example, a white vessel with a pine tree would look Japanese, a pineapple or hibiscus would look Hawaiian, and a maple leaf would look Canadian. We decided to keep the identical design because the simpler the vessel is, the more it makes the most of the uniqueness of a site.

Anzai: I was actually a bit shocked to hear that they were all cookie-cutter houses, but the idea was to design the second homes, not a hotel. People come here to spend a relaxing time in nature, and not

to see the building. So, the architecture works as a white vessel, but with those large windows designed as one of the features to make the stay more comfortable. We want to help the users keep coming back to SANU 2nd Home to have more time to appreciate nature and foster communication with their families during each stay. Our main focus will be to update the cabins, pursuing what is pleasing for their stay, and how we can make them stay longer.

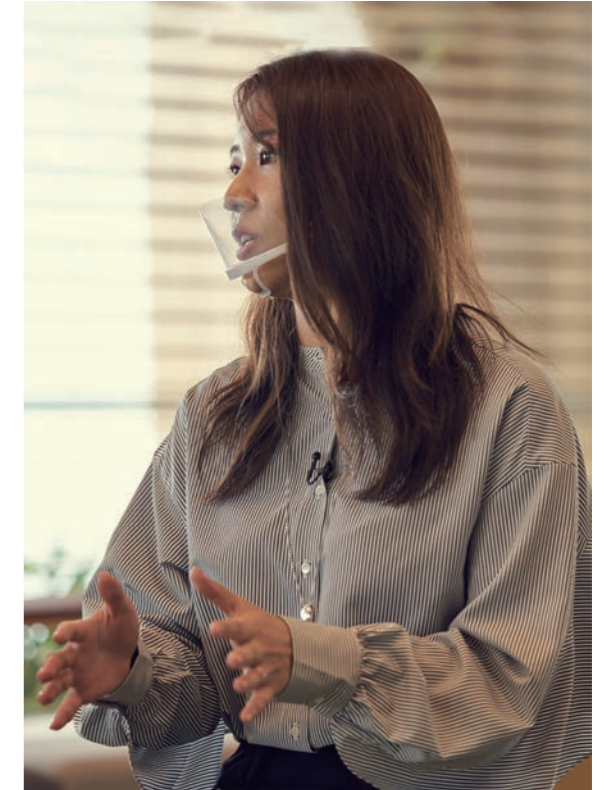
Takayama: If the cabin itself is a white vessel, is there anything you tried to do in terms of placement or the relationship between the cabins, as it should not be simply arranging the same vessels?

Anzai: From our perspectives, building a cabin equals "intruding on a site". The SANU CABIN is oriented in different directions to maximize local vegetation. The spacing between the cabins was the result of our desire to avoid tree logging as much as possible because we were intruding on nature. Seemingly a random arrangement of cabins will probably be almost hidden by growing trees in a few more years. We wanted to care more about integrating the building properly into the ecosystem rather than trying to squeeze a building onto the site.

Homma: To be frank, my ultimate goal is to create a masterpiece. I believe that mastering simplicity will lead us to the state of being stylish but not boring. A house should be as stylish as a hotel, but at the same time, it should not be boring. The design of the house allows no compromise, but at the same time, it is important to have a variable design that can be changed when you feel bored with it. That's what I want to stick to.

Ota: The moment I stepped into SANU CABIN, I realized how comfortable it is just to be there, with no need to make any special elaborations. At first, I wondered if it would be better to have different cabin designs according to the site, but listening to your thoughts on the effect of making identical cabins convinced me that they would make users feel as if they were back to their second homes.

Ishikawa: One of the unique features of SANU is the flexibility to use a variety of locations, and there expects to be more locations in the future. It would be wonderful if users could appreciate the surrounding nature and the culture of each region rather than the building itself.



Chiho Hoyama (OBAYASHI CORPORATION Architectural Design & Engineering Division)



The Cafeteria Building of Miyarisan Pharmaceutical (Wooden beams bring about a space like under a big tree)



From left, Takahiro Homma (SANU), Sho Ito (OBAYASHI CORPORATION Architectural Design & Engineering Division)

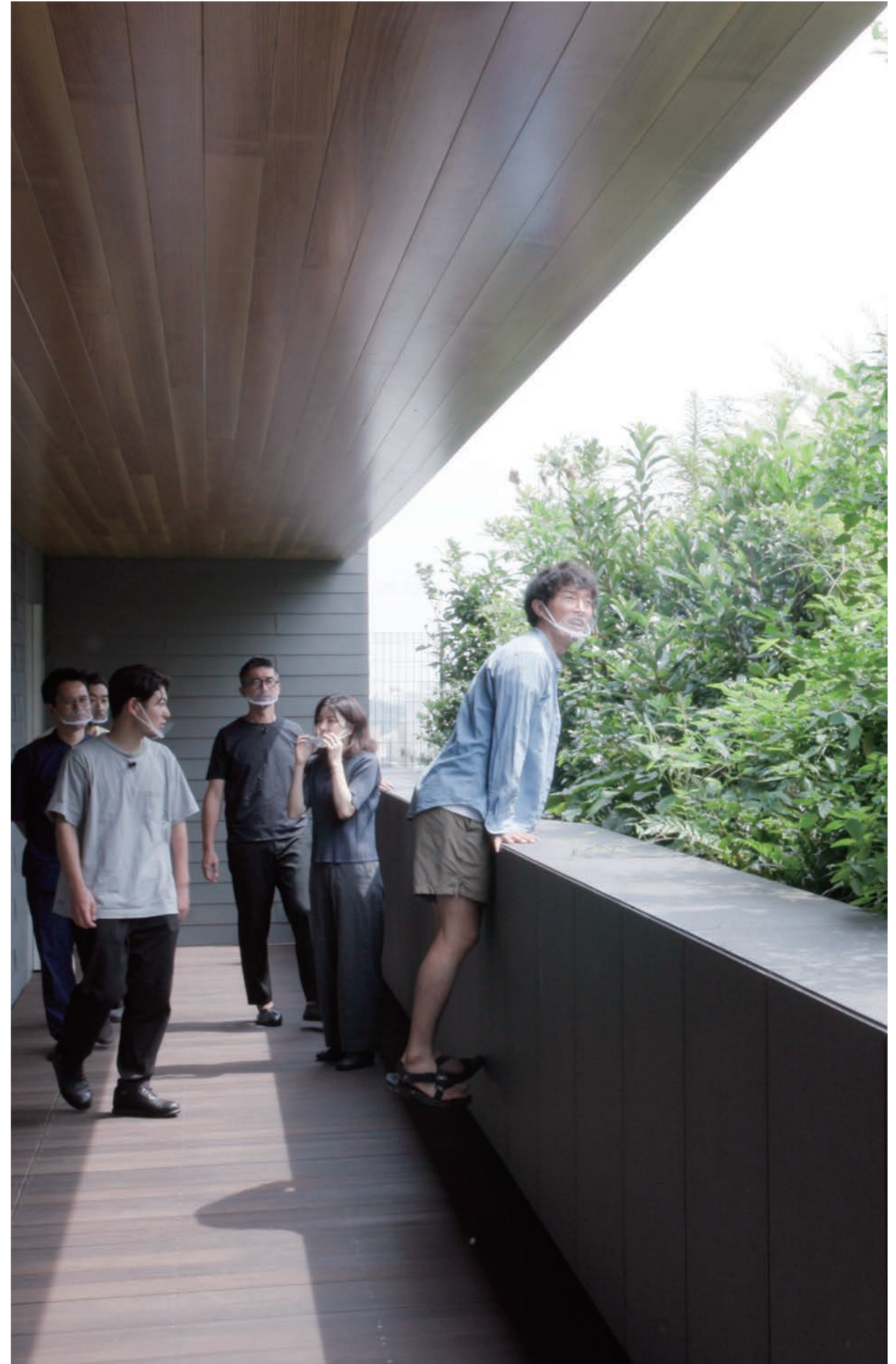
Elaborations for Wellness

Ito: Now, I would like to discuss happiness as one of the two meanings of wellness—health and happiness. The connection between people and their wellbeing has become a very important theme after the experience of COVID pandemic. This training facility is designed to create incidental encounters and connections among trainees. SANU's policy is to prioritize time with family and those who come with them, and I wonder if there is a need for making connections with other users of the SANU 2nd Home.

Homma: I have always thought that community is a double-edged sword since communication can bring happiness while it can also bring unhappiness, such as pressure and stress. I am especially cautious of closed communities with a strong sense of constraint because they involve a lot of peer pressure. Our community at SANU is based on intangible services, such as fireworks events or casual gatherings over glasses of wine. These multiple occasions allow users to decide,

according to their feelings, whether they want to socialize or rather enjoy their private time. SANU is committed to providing such freedom of choice.

Ito: I suppose that the community environment plays an important role in the sense of wellbeing derived from connections. Wellness is also the physical and mental health that results from the environment. As we, OBAYASHI CORPORATION, wish for the wellness of both employees and users, we have set a mission to create wellness buildings in the construction industry. Port Plus can be both a training facility and a testing ground for wellness in that sense. The importance of sensibility, mentioned in this discussion, made a lot of sense to me. People come in contact with nature because they want to be healthy. On the other hand, providing an environment that makes people healthy in an artificial place or building, is the wellness we want to pursue at OBAYASHI CORPORATION. We have a lot to share with SANU, and it would be wonderful to exchange information again in the future.



The 5th floor of Port Plus (semi-outdoor terrace atrium)