



## PAPER TIGER

— **SHIGERU BAN** turns cardboard into beautiful — and beautifully functional — pillars of wisdom.

Shigeru Ban takes a lot of old paper and, like a poet, remakes it into something beautiful. And functional. This Tokyo-born architect's work became widely known after the 1995 Kobe earthquake, when he whipped up temporary housing from cardboard tubes and beer crates (yellow Kirin crates, the perfect complement, Ban felt, to the pale brown tubes).

"Perhaps it has to do with the education my parents gave me, but I hate to throw things away," Ban says in a monograph recently released by Taschen. "I guess, then, that I have a natural predisposition to reuse things."

Ban's design for the just-opened Centre Pompidou-Metz, where exhibition spaces can be easily

changed to suit what's on display — was fine-tuned from a cardboard structure atop the original Pompidou in Paris. His recycled paper tubes can be made quickly, in varying sizes, and just as importantly they can be waterproof and fire-resistant. Similar structures were used to create nine school rooms following the 2009 Sichuan Earthquake. Not only practical, these initiatives in disaster zones create relations with local architects, opportunities to rethink the basics of design.

Explaining the distinctive roofline of the Pompidou-Metz, Ban told an interviewer, "In Japan, we have a porch called the *engawa*, which is not really interior but not exterior either, and this space really makes people relaxed. This is why I created

a huge roof that connects inside and outside, instead of building walls."

Born in 1957, Ban took the unusual step, for a Japanese architectural student, of studying in the United States, first at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) and then Cooper Union School of Architecture. He opened his own firm in Tokyo in 1985 and began his work with paper the next year, being reluctant to use precious wood on a temporary structure for an exhibition of Finnish architect Alvar Aalto's work.

Philip Jodidio's hefty *Shigeru Ban: Complete Works 1985–2010* looks like it could supply enough recycled paper for one of Ban's buildings, but we're happy to leave the book as it is and savour the drawings, the story, and the creations of this exceptional architect. ○

Text  
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In 2005 Shigeru Ban created the Nomadic Museum, a 4,180-m<sup>2</sup> structure made from steel shipping containers and waterproofed paper tubes.

Photography  
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(this page); HIROYUKI  
HIRAI (following  
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1985–2010*, Taschen