
Architect of immortality dies at 72

By Kerry Pechter Thu, Jan 16, 2014

The artist/architect Madeline Arakawa Gins believed that houses with unconventional colors and planes could extend the lives of their inhabitants indefinitely.



Madeline Arakawa Gins, a poet-turned-painter-turned-architect who publicly forswore mortality — and whose buildings, by her own account, were designed to preempt death for those living in them — died on Jan. 8 in Manhattan, the New York Times reported this week. She was 72.

The cause was cancer, said Joke Post, the manager for architectural projects at the [Reversible Destiny Foundation](#), which Ms. Gins and her husband, the Japanese-born artist known simply as Arakawa, established in 1987.

With her husband, with whom she collaborated for nearly half a century, Ms. Gins practiced an idiosyncratic and highly personal brand of art that sought to deploy architecture in the service of large essential questions about the nature of being.

The couple's vision, as articulated in their published writings and their buildings, was beyond Utopian. It sought not merely better living — but, ideally, eternal living — through design.

Their work was underpinned by a philosophy they called Reversible Destiny. Its chief tenet, as the catalog of a 1997 joint exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum SoHo put it, was, "Reversible Destiny: We Have Decided Not to Die."

Eluding death through design could be accomplished, the couple believed, through a literal architecture of instability — a built environment in which no surface is level, no corner true, no line plumb. Below, an Arakawa house in East Hampton, New York.



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