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## Yamasaki series premieres

Organizers hope speeches will raise awareness

Brian Walker

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Dr. Dale Allen Gyure, associate professor of Architectural History at Lawrence Technological University, spoke Nov. 12 about famous architect Minoru Yamasaki.

Tyler D. Griffis

Wayne State hosted the first installment of the Yamasaki Legacy Lecture series on Nov. 12.

The Office of the Vice President for Research organized the event in honor of Minoru Yamasaki, an architect who designed the McGregor Memorial Conference Center, the Education Building, DeRoy Auditorium and Prentis Hall. The lecture was given by guest speaker Dr. Dale Allen

Gyure, associate professor of Architectural History at Lawrence Technological University.

Organizers hope the lecture series will raise awareness about Yamasaki and his contributions to the school's campus. While best known as the chief architect of the World Trade Center, Yamasaki's buildings at WSU have received nationwide acclaim. Three of the buildings are in the process of being added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Gyure has done extensive research into Yamasaki's designs as well as his personal life. This search for knowledge, Gyure said, was due to a general lack of information about the architect.

"I became interested a few years ago when I was asked to write a biography for a National Register of Historic Places nomination some people were putting together," Gyure said.

The nomination was in regards to Yamasaki's Troy office.

"I discovered that there wasn't that much material available on Yamasaki, and also that there was a ton of his work in the Detroit metro area," Gyure said. "So I began compiling information on him. And then last year at a lecture I met some of his former employees and decided it was time to begin some serious research on Yamasaki and his architecture."

Yamasaki was born in Seattle in 1921 to a struggling family of Japanese immigrants. He worked his way through college at a salmon cannery and eventually landed a job with a prominent New York architecture firm. After recognizing his talents, the firm Smith, Hinchman & Grylls lured him to Detroit in 1945 to work as its chief designer.

Yamasaki's first contribution to WSU was the McGregor Center, completed in 1958. Inspired by a trip to Japan, Yamasaki included a zen-like garden in his design complete with floating platforms, water lilies and eight different types of trees. He sought to create a "friendly" building that would stand in contrast to the rigid modern-style ones on the school's campus.

"(Yamasaki) wanted to make buildings that people would want to reach out and touch," Gyure said. "This is why he used traditional materials like wood and stone in his designs as opposed to what he considered the 'cold' steel and glass that had become popular at the time."

The McGregor building was an instant hit and led to Yamasaki being asked to design more buildings at WSU.

“He felt that (McGregor) succeeded in adding a sense of serenity to the school’s campus,” Gyure said.

Yamasaki’s strive for serenity explains the pools that originally surrounded the McGregor and DeRoy buildings. They have since been drained due to maintenance costs, but organizers of the lecture series hope to see them restored in the near future.

“Looking at a dry moat doesn’t have quite the same effect,” Gyure joked, in response to the buildings’ current state.

At the end of the lecture, organizers presented Gyure with a plaque on behalf of WSU for his research into the school’s history.