In 1976 a small concrete house was built in Sumiyoshi, Osaka. Set between traditional Japanese wooden row houses, the 'Azuma house'-with its blank façade—has only four rooms and a courtyard. The unusual thing about this house is that in order to move between the rooms, you have to go outside. Each time the courtyard is crossed, the changing light, the weather and the shifting seasons are experienced. This small house is a declaration of belief by its architect that we must restore our connection with nature. Known now to architects all over the world, the 'Azuma house' is the first project featured in the new book ANDO Complete Works.

Over the last thirty years, amidst the excesses and deconstructions of architecture, Tadao Ando has remained resolute in his approach. Typified by the 'Azuma house', he believes, "the role of architectural space as a spiritual shelter is crucial." Thirty-six buildings—-the majority of which are of Ando's recent designs—-are shown at length out of the architect's enormous output of almost 200 buildings and projects. From the tiny 'Azuma house' to the current wave of international museums, Ando's work is expansively documented and illustrated.

Selected by Ando, the featured projects use numerable sketches, drawings, models and photographs that reveal the diverse variety of locations, briefs and clients that Ando has worked with over the years. The XXL format gives the closest impression you will get of what an 'Ando building' is like, without visiting them. But visit them you must.

Relatively ignored outside Japan during the 70's, Tadao Ando was first championed by Kenneth Frampton in the mid 80's as part of what he termed 'critical modernism'. There is now a very large selection of publications and magazines covering Ando's work—all of which are listed in the detailed appendix of this book.

ANDO Complete Works catalogues the output of Ando's office from 1969 to today. The opening essay 'The Simplicity of Perfection' traces Ando's thoughts and projects throughout his career from his small early domestic projects in Osaka to his current international profile. Ando grew up in Osaka in the wake of the destruction of World War II and was brought up by his maternal grandmother—who's name he has adopted. Living opposite a wood workshop, he spent time there as a child discovering the nature of wood and how to shape it. With no formal education in architecture he is self-taught. Travel and such inspirations as an early encounter with a second-hand book by Le Corbusier "...till the pages turned black", guided his personal journey.

Not serving the traditional architectural apprenticeship, he describes himself as previously unemployable due to his "stubbornness." What is less known is his talent as a championship boxer, with winnings from his time in the ring funding his early architectural travels.

His Atelier in Oyodo in central Osaka, is converted from one of his early houses (Tomishima House) and is shown filled to capacity with models, drawings and a huge library. This is Ando's 'inner sanctum' and the...
As a sucker for a good church, I awaited the publication of this new volume on contemporary places of worship with some anticipation. Unfortunately, while the book has several strengths and while it includes a few genuinely striking buildings, on the whole, for me, the book disappoints. The inclusion of a few slightly ropey pictures aside, this disappointment has little to do with the quality of the book itself; it is, as ever from this publisher, stylishly designed, well written and impeccably presented. Rather, the anticlimax comes from the buildings themselves - to me they do not appear to be very spiritual places, nor would most of them really inspire me to make pilgrimage - architectural or religious - to them. So, in essence, my gripe is that if this book represents a cross section of the best in contemporary ecclesiastical design I'm not overly impressed.

I think the main problem is that I like a church/temple/mosque to look like a place of worship: different, other... aspirational in some way perhaps. It shouldn't look like a corporate office block, or an art museum or a gate-lodge, however swish, differentiated only by a religious symbol (in the Christian tradition usually the predictable, lazily applied cross). And, for me, I'd hope to see in an ecclesiastical building - even in a quiet retreat building - some obvious indication of communal, shared space, somewhere able to provide possibilities for collective, congregation and worship. It disturbs me at some nagging level if contemporary church architecture seems to be often about bare, empty, minimalist spaces - OK, so they might evoke a contemplative state of mind but they might equally lead to feelings of isolation rather than collective joy. The cover of the book seems to be emblematic of this problem: Takashi Yamaguchi & Associates' albeit beautiful Glass Temple in Kyoto, Japan, looks for all the world to me like a John Pawson minimalist living room. And even if the Glass Temple is a bad example to start criticising as it would appear from the text to be more visitor...