



Arquitectura Viva Japonesa

Editor: Ruth Rivera
 Publisher: Cuadernos de Arquitectura
 No. 3/INBA
 Language: Spanish
 Year: 1961



Japón'60, el hombre y su arquitectura

Editor/Author: Fernando Barbará Zetina
 Publisher: Editorial Herrero
 Language: Spanish
 Year: 1965

Japan in Mexico

The presence of Japanese architecture in Mexico, was fundamental in 1961. On the one hand, there was a joint effort by the Universidad Veracruzana and the Japanese Embassy to present the exhibit *Living Japanese Architecture*, accompanied by a series of conferences under the same title. These conferences were collected by the Department of Architecture at the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes [National Institute of Fine Arts], under the supervision of Ruth Rivera (1927-1969),¹ in number 3 of their *Cuadernos de Arquitectura* [Architecture Notebooks].² In addition, Fernando Barbará Zetina (1925-2005)³ held a conference series at the Fine Arts Palace, *Japan: man and his architecture* that became the title of the book which he would write a little later.⁴ In fact, between 1959 and 1960 he had visited that country with an official invitation from the Japanese government to familiarize himself with the architecture and to undertake some studies at Waseda University, in Tokyo, and at the University of Kyoto. Therefore, it doesn't come as a surprise that these good relations would

culminate a decade later in the construction of the Japanese Embassy in Mexico by Kenzo Tange in partnership with Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and Manuel Rosen Morrison.

It is necessary to highlight that the Viceroyalty of New Spain was the first Western state to come in contact with Japan, having sent a group of Jesuits as missionaries to preach the Gospel, even if this effort was short-lived. Only commercial relations were maintained, through the Manila Galleon⁵ but, starting in 1639, Japan favored a policy of national isolation until, in 1874, a group of Mexican astronomers traveled there, enabling Mexico to become the first country to sign, in 1888, a Treaty of Equality. This circumstance was so favorable that, by 2nd September 1910, during the festivities for the Centenary of the Mexican Independence, president Porfirio Díaz (1830-1915) and ambassador Kuma Horigoutchi inaugurated *The Japanese Pavilion*, a large exhibit in what is today known as the Museo del Chopo. In a way, these precedents allow us to glimpse into the cultural importance of the events mentioned above and their repercussions for architectural culture.

In this way, it firstly seems interesting to analyze the book *Arquitectura Viva Japonesa* that has an introduction by Ruth Rivera and four articles; the first one is a historical outline on the culture of the country of the Rising Sun by Jorge Shisuro followed by a brief comparison of "Japanese and Western Cultures" undertaken by Alberto Hajar Serrano (1935-). Salvador Pinoncelly (1932-2007) and Ramón Vargas Salguero, both architects, who analyzed architectural works, the former focusing on traditional buildings and gardening while the latter surveyed the Modern Movement in that country, from a theoretical viewpoint. In essence it was a concise publication that offered Mexican architects a vision of a distant land in a moment when interest about Japan was growing. It also had the virtue of belonging to the novel series *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*.

The book *Japón'60, el hombre y su arquitectura*, is especially interesting because of its focus and the abundance of graphical materials. At that moment, in Mexico you could only receive news about the prosperous and characteristic Japanese architecture through foreign magazines,⁶ so having a volume that put it in perspective was very attractive. In particular, because the author had lived and studied for a time in the main Japanese cities, he was able to contribute relevant comments, accompanied by photos and blueprints, collected first-hand by him during his stay in that country.

The publication begins with an introduction written by Félix Candela, who was already recognized internationally. In the introduction he explains the circumstances that brought the author to undertake the book, emphasizing that this "is the version of the perceived, emerging from the personality of the author."⁷ Likewise, it is illuminating to see that Fernando Barbará Zetina thanked around fifteen Japanese architects for their support and friendship, amongst whom we can highlight Kiyonori Kikutake (1928-2011) and Fumihiko Maki (1928-), a fact that confirms his closeness to the architectural profession of that country. The book is made up of six chapters, with the first two devoted to "Japan" and "Man", as a vast prolegomenon to better understand the contributions in the field of architecture to which the remaining four chapters are dedicated.

The third chapter has a subtitle "Principles and elements" to guide the reader through the values of Japanese architecture, its main physical characteristics and some spiritual ones as in the sections "The abstract and the symbolic", "Tradition" and "Peace". Likewise, we find the first approach to nature and the gardens that are so significant to that country. In the fourth, titled "The past", the author makes a concise but enlightening review of what can be considered the classic architecture of Japan that is clearly the basis for some of the buildings of modernity. Here we appreciate temples and religious buildings as well as palaces and houses, with a good dose of photographs and blueprints.

Thus, we come to the part that interests us in particular, the Modern Movement, which Fernando Barbará Zetina titles "The present", with a vast and motivating text that introduces us to the architecture of the first half of the 20th century. Through this review we learn that 1868 was the year of the Meiji Restoration that clearly marks a before and after in local culture, but especially in regards to architecture. For him "the new word *Kenchiku*, architecture, appears and the old word *soka*, house construction, disappears,"⁸ with the presence of engineers and architects that came from Europe and America. Once the 20th century was under way, a distinguished group of noteworthy architects emerged more or less tied to the Western vanguard but also looking to find their own local language. The author then proceeds to review what he visited, making a critical analysis of the works and finding that the use of concrete makes them excessively heavy and rigid, in a marked contrast to "traditional Japanese architecture (that) is light, delicate, subtle and slender."⁹ In any case,

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he recognizes that some architects are well on their way to finding their own voice, amongst whom Kenzo Tange stands out, assuring in a prescient manner that he “will find the truth that he is seeking. He has all it takes, especially a great frankness and sincerity... Hopefully the Olympic Games of 1964 will bring him... the opportunity to find himself and to show his ability to the world.”¹⁰ As a conclusion he points out “I believe that Japan and Mexico share the same problem. The difference is that Japan has already seen it and understood it... whereas in Mexico we are turning a blind eye and we believe we have no problems.”¹¹

Following these affirmations, it does not surprise us that the last chapter is titled “The future”, where novel projects of what will become Metabolism emerge; presented here, in an accurate way, are not works of architecture but the original and visionary drawings of Kiyonori Kikutake, a first glance of what would a little later occupy the pages of the leading international magazines. Therefore, it is worth revisiting Fernando Barbará Zetina’s book to appreciate, guided by the author, the main works of the Modern Movement in Japan.

Louise Noelle

Notes

- 1 Ruth Rivera (1927-1969), was the first woman who graduated from the College of Engineering and Architecture at the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico; besides which she was the daughter of celebrated painter Diego Rivera.
- 2 Ruth Rivera, et al, “Arquitectura Viva Japonesa”, *Cuadernos de arquitectura*, No. 3, Mexico, INBA, October 1961.
- 3 Fernando Barbará Zetina (1925-2005), studied at the National School of Architecture, UNAM. Amongst his publications is the book *Materiales y procedimientos de construcción*, Mexico, SAM, 1955.
- 4 Fernando Barbará Zetina, *Japón ‘60, el bombe y su arquitectura*, Mexico, Editorial Herrero, 1965.
- 5 The Manila Galleon is the title given to a series of commercial trips between Acapulco and Manila, 1655-1815.
- 6 This is the case with No. 65 of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, May 1956.
- 7 “(...) es la versión de lo percibido, trascendido por la personalidad de autor.” Fernando Barbará Zetina, *Japón ‘60, el bombe y su arquitectura*, *Op. cit.*, 5.
- 8 “(...) aparece la nueva palabra ‘Kenchiku’, arquitectura, y desaparece la vieja palabra ‘soka’, construcción de casas.” *Ibid.*, 211.
- 9 “(...) la arquitectura tradicional japonesa (que) es ligera, delicada, sutil y esbelta.” *Ibid.*, 216.
- 10 “(...) encontrará esa verdad que busca. Tiene todo para ello y sobre todo una gran franqueza y sinceridad... Ojalá que los Juegos Olímpicos de 1964 le brinden... la oportunidad de encontrarse a él mismo y de demostrar al mundo su capacidad.” *Ibid.*, 21.
- 11 “(...) Creo yo que el Japón y México comparten el mismo problema. La diferencia está en que el Japón ya lo ha visto y entendido... en cambio en México, nos estamos haciendo los ciegos y creemos no tener problemas.” *Ibid.*



New Directions in Japanese Architecture

Author: Robin Boyd
 Publisher: Studio Vista (London),
 George Braziller (New York), 1st edition
 ISBN: 978-0289795637
 Language: English
 Year: 1968

New Directions in Japanese Architecture is one of the *New Directions in Architecture* series covering European and American countries in addition to Japan. However, unlike the other books in the series, Japanese architecture is described and analyzed by a non-native of the country; Australian architect, Robin Boyd (1919-1971), who visited Japan in 1961 (to write his book on Kenzo Tange) and 1965. His two books on Japan brought modern Japanese architecture, and especially that of the Metabolists, to English speakers.

The first three chapters of the book set out the background to Japanese culture and Modern architecture in Japan. They portray Japan from an outsider’s viewpoint rather than revealing the architecture from a position of ownership and authenticity. However, it remains one of the earliest English language exposés of Japanese Modernism and Metabolism and paralleled the West’s exceptional post-war interest in Japanese culture. The great value in the book is the comprehensively illustrated coverage of individual architects’ work up to 1967 in the final section of the book.

The book was an important English language introduction to modern Japanese architecture of the mid-20th century and it is also an interesting reminder of the difficulty of an outsider writing of the meaning and importance of architecture to another culture without displaying cultural naivety or arrogance.

Scott Robertson



Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization

Authors: Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre
 and Bruno Stagno
 Publisher: Academy Press
 ISBN: 978-0471496083
 Language: English
 Year: 2001

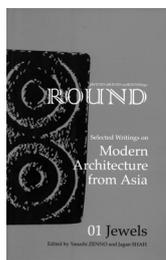
The tropical region covers a significant proportion of the globe, and yet its architecture receives relatively little outside comment or exposure. Dispersed widely throughout the world, the region incorporates areas as far-flung as the Caribbean islands, India, South-East Asia, and large parts of Australia, Africa and South and Central America. Despite their great cultural diversity, these areas share both climatic and ecological factors, as well as a post-colonial condition and the pressures of modernization in the world of globalization. Architects’ reactions to the tropical context are as varied as the region is diverse.

Tropical Architecture brings together architects and critics from throughout the tropical region, examining the implications of the opposing forces of tradition and innovation and the struggle between global and local order. Among the issues covered are sustainability, bio- and cultural diversity, micro-climatic control and technology and multi-disciplinary design. The argument centres on Critical Regionalism, a concept introduced into the architectural debate in the early 1980s by two of the book’s co-authors, Tzonis and Lefaivre. This is not a style but rather an approach to architecture that asks for design to be conceived in response to the needs and opportunities of a specific region - although it is not inherently opposed to global potentials. The theoretical debate is backed up by case studies of a range of projects, from small-scale designs using minimal technology to super-sophisticated, high-tech solutions, and from schemes that look to environmental comfort to ones concerned with issues of symbolism and memory. It is out of this multiplicity of approaches that the general global lesson of Critical Regionalism as applied to tropical architecture is to be found.

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From the publisher



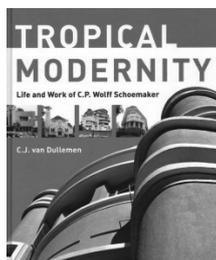
Selected Writings on Modern Architecture from Asia

Edited by: Yasushi Zenno and Jagan Shah
 Publisher: Acetate
 ISBN: 4-902539-10-1
 Language: English
 Year: 2006

mAAN was established in 2001. One of the main reasons that triggered the formation of the network was the dominance of the “Eurocentric” perspective in architectural discussion and education in Asia back then. Also, how little Asia has produced studies, interpretations, and theorizations from our Asian perspective. *round 01* journal was first published in *Acetate 10* in 2006, to publish scholarly articles on modern Asian Architecture and Asian modernity initiated by mAAN. The journal was the first of its kind, showcasing the textual wisdom found in diverse architectural traditions of Asia. This knowledge for many years has been restricted to local circles of scholars and practitioners of each culture in various non-English languages. By publishing in English, they wish to foster the sharing and discussion of such vital knowledge and practice across the national and linguistic boundaries that separate the cultures of Asia. It was co-edited by Yasushi Zenno (Tokyo/New York) and Jagan Shah (New Delhi). Acetate is a private publishing house founded by Norihito Nakatani (Waseda University, Japan) in Osaka in 2003. It was specializing in publishing in limited quantities

of still largely unknown seminal texts. The first publication was a free e-publication *Acetate 001* on modern-vernacular urban house-on-stilts typology in Medan, Indonesia, one of the results from the first mAAN comprehensive inventory of modern heritage program there in 2003. After the publication of *Acetate 022* (“Diary of Architect”), Acetate closed down on 27 August 2014.

Johannes Widodo



Tropical Modernity – Life and Work of C. P. Wolff Schoemaker

Author: Jan Van Dullemen
 Publisher: Sun
 ISBN: 978-9085068792
 Language: English
 Year: 2009

Charles Prosper Wolff Schoemaker (1882-1949) was the Frank Lloyd Wright of Indonesia. Between 1910 and 1940 he designed numerous buildings on Java, including Villa Isola and Hotel Preanger in Bandung, which are among the highlights of Dutch colonial architecture. This publication presents his complete oeuvre. Histories of Dutch architecture often pass over the architecture of Dutch architects in the former Dutch East Indies. Wolff Schoemaker and Henri Maclaine Pont were the main architects in Indonesia in the 1920s and 1930s. They determined the architectural landscape and the discussion of it.

From the publisher



Introduction to Architectural Science: The Basis of Sustainable Design

Edited by: Steven V. Szokolay
 Publisher: Routledge; 3rd Edition
 ISBN: 978-0415824989
 Language: English
 Year: 2014

The publication *Introduction to Architectural Science: The Basis of Sustainable Design* intends to provide the fundamental bases of physics applied to architectural design. Translated into numerous languages, this third edition is completely updated to the present. We are becoming increasingly aware of how impracticable it is the use of our traditional sources of energy (coal, oil, gas) and we now realize more than ever the importance of ensuring the conditions (focusing on the heat, light and sound) required for the indoor environment with little or no energy use.

With these environmental questions in mind, the author aims to help the reader to develop his critical capacity to use the knowledge acquired in his work to fully use the potential of a sustainable and bioclimatic design. In fact, basic design decisions regarding size, orientation, and form have a great impact on the sustainability, cost, and comfort of a building. The goal is to stimulate a conscience and to better educate architect/designers for future generations.

The book is divided into four parts: “Heat: the thermal environment”; “Light: the luminous environment”; “Sound: the sound environment” and “Resources: energy, water and minerals”. In each one, physical principles are assessed, followed by a debate on their relationship with humans and their comfort and by an examination of the relation of passive and active controls in buildings to their use of energy. Every chapter is concluded with data and method sheets related to its theme, describing some calculations and procedures of the project.

Andreia Gonçalves

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**mASEANa Project 2017:
modern living in Southeast Asia –
The Report of mASEANa project 2017:
4th & 5th International Conferences**

Edited by: mASEANa Project

Publisher: **docomomo** Japan

Language: English

Year: 2018

mASEANa Project 2017: modern living in Southeast Asia summarizes the fourth and fifth international conferences of the mASEANa (modern ASEAN architecture) Project. The fourth conference took place in Jakarta between 18th and 20th January 2018, followed by the fifth conference, which was held in Tokyo on 11th March 2018.

The Jakarta conference, *Modern Living in Southeast Asia: between universality and locality*, took place in the Istiqlal Mosque with three Sessions (“Sports and Modern Urbanism”, “Modern Projects, Changing Lifestyles, Resilience” and “House Types and Forms”). These sessions had contributions from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore and Myanmar. The Tokyo conference, *Modern Life and Urbanization: Modern Architecture in Japan and Southeast Asia*, took place in Jiyu Gakuen Myonichikan Lounge Hall, and had contributions from Japan, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

The book is organized in two parts. “Part 1: modern living in Southeast Asia” contains 13 papers from both conferences organized around the themes of the first conference. “Part 2: Inventory of modern Buildings” includes an inventory of modern architecture from the cities of Yangon (Myanmar) and Jakarta (Indonesia). Beyond those two hundred buildings exhibited with images, name, address, construction year, function and architect, and an introduction about each city, this edition is finalized with a report of the mASEANa Project from 2017.

Silvio Alves



**mASEANa Project 2018:
Materiality, Technology and
modern movement
in the Southeast Asia –
The Report of mASEANa Project 2018:
6th & 7th International Conferences**

Edited by: mASEANa Project

Publisher: **docomomo** Japan

Language: English

Year: 2019

The book *mASEANa Project 2018: Materiality, Technology and modern movement in the Southeast Asia* compiles the 6th & 7th International Conferences of the mASEANa Project - a five-and-a-half-year project directed jointly by researchers in Southeast Asia and Japan which reunites cooperative research on modern architecture in Southeast Asia.

The 6th conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand, between 25th and 27th October 2018 and had five sessions under the theme “The Future of the Past: Materiality and Resilience of Modern Architecture in Southeast Asia”; the 7th conference was conducted one year later on 16th February in Tokyo, Japan, with two sessions about the “Materiality, Technology and modern movement in the Southeast Asia & Japan”.

The publication is arranged in two parts. The first has the same subtitle of the theme of the Japanese conference, approaching questions including the new conservation in modern architecture, material selection (such as wood and concrete) and the struggle between design and optimization. The second part is a conclusion with reports on the Phnom Penh and Bangkok Inventory Workshops and their achievements. I am certain that these will be referred to whenever the modern architecture of Southeast Asia is studied.

Andreia Gonçalves



**mASEANa Project 2019:
“Progressive Once More”,
Rejuvenating Mid-Century Modern
Architecture in Southeast Asia –
The Report of mASEANa Project 2019:
8th & 9th International Conferences**

Edited by: mASEANa Project

Publisher: **docomomo** Japan

Language: English

Year: 2020

This is the most recent report from the mASEANa Project. The publication summarizes the *mASEANa Project 2019: 8th & 9th International Conferences* which were held between 31st October and 2nd November 2019 in Singapore and on 15th February 2020 in Tokyo, Japan, respectively.

The eighth conference, in Singapore, took place in the Urban Redevelopment Authority Centre with three panels (“Modern landscapes and the everyday”, “Community and ground-up initiatives” and “Technology and tectonics”). The conference had contributions from Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, the US and the UK. The ninth conference, in Japan, took place in Meiji Jingu Sansyuden with Jun Aoki and Ho Weng Hin as Keynote speakers. The session was titled “Progressive Once More” and included a discussion session. The conference had contributions from Japan, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines.

This report is organized in two parts. “Part 1: ‘progressive Once More’” is organized in 6 sections with papers from both conferences. “Part 2: Inventory of modern Buildings” includes an inventory of modern architecture from Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Singapore. This edition is finalized with images of mASEANa Project activities.

Silvio Alves