

The background of the book cover is a close-up photograph of a metal surface, possibly a ship's hull or a large industrial component. A diagonal metal plate, secured with numerous rivets, runs from the top-left towards the bottom-right. The lighting is warm and dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, creating a textured and industrial feel.

Dana Buntrock

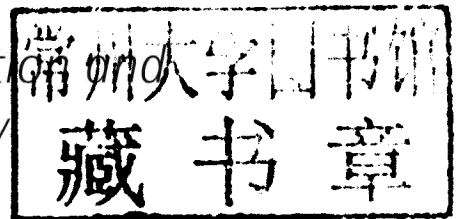
# Materials and Meaning in Contemporary Japanese Architecture

Tradition and  
Today

*Dana Buntrock*

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Meaning in  
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Japanese  
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# Acknowledgements

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I owe an enormous debt to Dr. Terunobu Fujimori of the University of Tokyo. As I wrote the opening chapters to this book, I could not help but recall the earliest days of our acquaintance. Jackie Kestenbaum (then a promising architectural historian) introduced me to Dr. Fujimori after a 1994 lecture he gave on Bruno Taut. He generously invited us to his hometown soon after, so that I could photograph the Jinchokan Moriya Museum early in the morning. Throughout that day, we three spoke of Takamasa Yoshizaka, of flowering crepe myrtles, of Fujimori's childhood and his love of rural Japan. At the end of a full day, Fujimori offered us tea, and I even now recall my surprise at his lack of concern for rotating bowls or choreographing the ritual. Afterwards, Fujimori's mother insisted that we all go off to a popular hot springs. It took me 12 years to start the book embedded in that day.

Dr. Fujimori has generously accommodated me in his research lab twice over the years, first while I was on a National Science Foundation/Japan Society for the Promotion of Science post-doctoral fellowship in 1998, and then again in 2006–2007, while on the Fulbright. I am not an architectural historian, and there are many ways that my opinions on these pages diverge from those of my colleagues

and friends in the Fujimori lab and from Dr. Fujimori's own. But I am thankful for the privilege of countless hours hearing each student in the lab struggle with the waves of change that have occurred in Asia over the last 150 years.

As will become clear, this book relies heavily on Fujimori's simple structuring of the architectural community in Japan as "Red" or "White." Yet while I link the term "regionalism" to Red, Fujimori himself, in a country where the word suggests only regressive nostalgia, would not have done so. I hope that in the end he and others in Japan will reconsider the problems for the profession that result as they avoid openly acknowledging regionalism is also open to innovation. Fujimori has taught me that the particularities of place, when not valued and maintained, are far too easily rendered obsolete.

I am also deeply grateful to Fumihiko Maki for his influence. I often feared my interest in the role tradition plays today would be too easy to romanticize. Maki, who deftly acknowledges the weight of history in his writings and his works, was an inspiration that allowed me to believe I could avoid Orientalism. He was also the only one of my subjects who demanded I be very clear about the political and social influences on many of these structures I discuss. I knew that I had accomplished something when I received a note from Professor Maki one Christmas Eve, telling me of the pleasure he took in my piece on his work in Shimane. I wish more people I research in Japan were as assertive; I consider Professor Maki's ongoing mentorship both a gift and a call to responsibility.

Each of the other architects I discuss has been unsparingly supportive. Kengo Kuma, who became a key figure in this text, met with me always with great hospitality. He made his staff and his library

*A screen of soft oya stone at Kengo Kuma's 2006 Chokkura Plaza seems almost woven, showing the architect's interest in Gottfried Semper.*

available, assisting my efforts to understand odd details; in the process, I discovered a side to him that I had not known before. Most Westerners, in fact, are likely unaware of his wit and intelligence as an insightful author. Jun Aoki was not only a cordial subject of my scrutiny, but also, quite by accident, my immediate neighbor. In years ahead we will warmly recall the charming artwork his son exhibited on their window for my husband and I, and the many convivial dinners we all enjoyed together. Ryoji Suzuki and Masato Araya, too, have been unfailingly accommodating and indulgent, assisting in my investigation of works not easily accessible to the public. Each of these men are not merely research subjects, but also people I have come to know with great gratitude and fondness. It is a privilege to know them all.

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Other architects have an unseen but important presence on these pages. Hajime Yatsuka has been an unfailing and central influence in my life; as I completed this text, I re-discovered his essay "Internationalism vs. Regionalism" in my files and realized to my chagrin that I essentially set out to rediscover much of what he has argued over the years. I am lucky to have as a friend someone with both a towering intellect and infinite patience.

Itsuko Hasegawa may be surprised to find herself thanked on these pages, but a casual comment she made midway through this work

did much to shape its final form. Toyo Ito, too, while playing only a modest role in the text, has been an active stimulant throughout, also offering exciting digressions from this path during my time in Japan. I am looking forward to more opportunities to survey his work.

And finally, my thanks to Kay Itoi, who took the time to be both a check on my translations and a careful Japanese-language copyeditor. Of course, any mistakes in my translations should only be blamed on me – but they are fewer thanks to Kay.

My Berkeley colleagues have been supportive in ways both visible and invisible; I simply do not believe I would have written this book had I remained in the Midwest. I find traces of the long conversation we at Berkeley have on regionalism, linked to the work of others once associated with my department, some quoted in these pages: Marc Treib, Philip Theil, and E. Michael Czaja. My colleagues have been unquestioningly open to the fact that I took nineteen months away from campus to research and write this book, even though I teach core courses. Some, like Susan Ubbelohde and Mary Comerio in my department and T.J. Pempel in the Institute of East Asian Studies, have gone further, offering unstinting and always timely advice. Lauren Mallas, my student, friend, and colleague, covered classes for me while I was gone and made my return far easier than it could have been.

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project to take further. Bill Coaldrake has been unsparing in his insights and advice; George Wagner tends to just take a moment to scare the socks off of me. In the final days of writing this book, Clover Lee gave me a refuge far from home to quietly and calmly complete my work. I am fortunate to be amongst an international network of scholars.

Finally, there are those who inspire in print, as I hope I might. I have yet to meet Gregory Clancey, but I would like to. His book, *Earthquake Nation: The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity, 1868-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), is one of the few I know that attempts to understand Japanese architecture and its history through materials and construction. I am grateful for the way his work influenced and informed mine.

The team at Routledge has been tremendously accommodating, especially Francesca Ford, who surely found me a demanding and insistent author. Chuck Byrne was brought in as a designer at my request and – with what turned out to be a remarkable level of difficulty – he incorporated footnotes and Japanese text on each page (in spite of not knowing Japanese!). I know from my earlier book with the same publishing family that the firm makes a commitment to scholarship that will be valued for a long time, but it is thanks to Chuck, and the time he took to mentor me, that this book is an attractive one. Many times, he brought a richer and more nuanced way of understanding what architects expressed simply in his insightful arrangement of illustrations and text.

It seems odd to thank disembodied, digital organizations (especially in a book that is inclined to the visceral), but I am also grateful to the people at Berkeley's Baker service, who collected materials on my

behalf, sending them to me electronically while I was in Japan. Such support is a luxury; no research assistant could have been as attentive and untiring. In addition, I have no idea why services like DropSend exist or where they make their money, but allowing me to store materials on-line in a trouble-free and cost-free way offered me peace of mind as I shuttled between the two territories I love, each waiting for an enormous earthquake. Thank you to both of you.

And finally, arriving at the heart and in the hopes that its impression most endures, I want to thank the man I adore, often dubbed "Saint LeRoy" by those who know him well. It is he who taught me to take time for pleasure and be open to the many kinds of indulgences embodied in this book. If I had never met LeRoy, I would likely never have lifted a camera, never ventured to Japan. I would have spent little time, if any, luxuriating in *onsen* waters and eating feasts set on short tables on *tatami* floors. He was with me in Japan each day this book emerged, listening as I tried out ideas, distracting contractors, sharing *sake*. Without my husband, without his unfailing support and sustenance, without his absurdly enormous camera and good cheer, there simply would be no book at all – and life would be far less fun.

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# Introduction

Japan is a sort of accordion of history: a long compressed concertina where the past is very close to the present.

—Philip Thiel<sup>1</sup>

Temples and teahouses, shrines and sliding *shoji* screens, cascading cherry blossoms and solitary stones; perhaps this is what comes to mind when you think of Japan. Tokyoites carrying the tiniest, technologically sophisticated telephones insist they are unaware of tradition, yet all around them vestiges remain: small Buddhist cabinets at home, *sake* offerings sitting on the shelf of a delicate Shinto shrine in a favorite *sushi* restaurant. Craftsmen split bamboo with old instruments or shave ribbons of cedar by hand, using oddly beautiful planes. Many still employ their grandfathers' tools – then ship completed work to distant nations or install it on the highest floors of soaring skyscrapers not even possible a few years ago.

Art historians Julia Moore Converse and Ann Bermingham recently observed, "Despite the tremendous social, political, and economic upheavals of the twentieth century, Japan continues to inspire the world as a culture at once ultra-modern and profoundly traditional, international and yet intensely local."<sup>2</sup> One cannot help but wonder: how does an architect address the conflicting and concurrent demands of tradition and today?

Adopted from outside Japan in the mid-nineteenth century,

architecture from the first expressed its modernity. Professor C. Douglas Lummis wrote:

... after the Meiji Restoration the Japanese government labored to remake Japanese society politically, economically, technologically, and culturally. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* included no analysis of Japan, but surely Japan ought to be considered as a paradigmatic case.<sup>3</sup>

Architecture and engineering emphasized the Japanese Empire's innovation, introducing rail lines and train stations, post offices and schools, offices and art museums – all new building types, constructed in all-new materials, and often inhabited by people in oddly innovative attire. The entire character of public space in society changed in a short time.

Everything added in the late nineteenth century emphasized the importance of the capital, the new seat of the Emperor – Tokyo – underscoring its centrality. That primacy – in architecture, infrastructure and education – is still evident today. Most of the nation's leading designers are based in Tokyo, for practical reasons if nothing else. All rail lines express their direction in relation to the megalopolis: going "up" to Tokyo, or moving "downwards" when headed away, whether north, south or westward, uphill or downriver. The web of speedy *shinkansen* bullet trains, also initially following the *Tokaido* shore, only extended farther nearly forty years after the first lines were built, but all still ultimately end in Tokyo. Likewise, few domestic flights connect cities on the periphery, yet many link the urban areas of the *Tokaido* belt – especially Tokyo, Yokohama, and Osaka – to the rest of the nation.

Japan's leading universities, too, cluster in the capital: Tokyo Uni-

*Age expressed in bamboo lath, crumbling plaster and bits of straw.*

1. Thiel (1962) p. 107.

2. Converse and Bermingham (2007) p. 6.

3. Lummis (2007).



versity, Waseda, Keio. A few other important ones exist – most, like Kyoto University, remnants of the Imperial University system started in the Meiji era. Universities rapidly injected Western scientific and professional knowledge into what was until the mid-nineteenth century essentially a pre-modern society separate from international exchange. Writing of the flagship, Tokyo University, historian Stefan Tanaka points out "... article one of the Imperial ordinance outlining the organization of the university stated, 'It shall be the purpose of the [Tokyo] Imperial University to teach the sciences and the arts ... in accordance with the needs of the State.'"<sup>4</sup> Unlike today, when architecture students explore the private territories of houses and housing, those initial undergraduates studied models for modernization; they went on to design and supervise the construction of schools, post offices and train stations, brick banks and bridges, factories and furnaces. They also became the first generation of long-term faculty, replacing the forefront of foreign hires.

Looking back almost one hundred years later, the influential architect Kenzo Tange argued:

At the time [of the Meiji era], of the persons who had received training as Western-style architects, practically all had to connect themselves to the State or else to state influence and power ... some became supervisors of architectural administration or else architectural engineers of the government offices, some became professors in universities ...

He continued, "It may be said that the existence of an architect as a free citizen was permitted only as an exception."<sup>5</sup>

In those early years of the Meiji era, Japanese architects earnestly studied European eclecticism, articulating their ideas in an entirely

alien language, English.<sup>6</sup> They were concerned not with their nation's history and traditions, initially almost entirely ignored (understandable as those first faculty, all foreign, would have little known or appreciated the intricate systems embedded in Japan's indigenous architecture). Instead, students delved into the Romanesque and Renaissance, European antiquity an endorsement of the newly elite establishment, as it was abroad. But by the time these students progressed to professorships, Japan's enthusiasm for all things Western had weakened.

Anthropologist Marilyn Ivy explained, "The state became increasingly aware of the destabilizing social forces that modernization could unleash, and came to temper its calls for advancement with appeals for time-honored 'tradition.'"<sup>7</sup> The Meiji government continued to embrace engineering and scientific innovation, but also began to employ religious rites to assert legitimacy. Among the earliest and most influential native-born teachers at what is today Tokyo University, architect and architectural historian Chuta Ito accordingly argued for an evolutionary architecture, adopting elements from ancient Asia in novel architectural works like his 1895 Heian Shrine in Kyoto. He drew the past into the present, asserting through his architecture that Japan would never be Western – it was of and in the Orient.

Efforts to affirm tradition were also emphasized in pavilions at international expositions in far-flung Vienna and Chicago, illustrating the argument that Japan, too, enjoyed a distinguished and cultured pedigree. An authority on Japanese architecture with an interest in these artifacts, William Coaldrake, pointed out, "... a long and rich tradition of architecture became for Japan a vital tool for countering Western perceptions of Asian inferiority."<sup>8</sup>

4. Tanaka (1993) p. 41.

5. Tange (1956) p. 10.

6. I am indebted to Don Choi for this important point.

7. Ivy (1995) p. 70.

8. Coaldrake (2008) p. 200.

Thus, in the opening years of the twentieth century, Japan nurtured two distinctly different poles of architectural practice: it built structures underscoring modernity and a new social fabric, internationally up to date, and yet also offered ongoing allusions to an older Asia, to Japan's religious roots or residential realms. Discourse divided into technology and science versus culture and arts, the latter often (but not always) indigenous. By the 1920s, architecture also offered a solution that straddled both: the *Teikan Yoshiki* style, concrete buildings capped with sweeping roofs recalling religious structures. Arata Isozaki asserted:

Beginning in the late 1920s, the Japanese nationalist "decorated shed" became popular as an easy, practical way of representing Japan-ness ... Many thought that the *teikan* style was the most direct way of realizing that purpose, and accordingly a number of public buildings of the prewar era showed such ideology.<sup>9</sup>

Others isolated these two territories of ancient and innovative, embracing both in separate realms. Tokyo-based Czech architect Antonin Raymond, once an employee of Frank Lloyd Wright, is best known in Japan for exposed concrete structures of Perret-like lacy screens and Corbusian purity, designed and built contemporaneously with their more widely known European exemplars. But concurrently and with no sense of contradiction, Raymond designed playfully artless retreats, summer villas beyond the city. Inspired by the folkcrafts movement in Japan, Raymond used hand-hewn chestnut logs and cedar planks at these homey hideaways, buildings shingled in bark, shaggy beds of larch branches laid over metal roofing.<sup>10</sup>

Japan's early twentieth-century architects also used abstraction to

unify past and present, an architecture of achromatism achieved by unpainted natural materials, modularity in a clearly articulated and simple structure, all inspired by the history of *shoin* and *sukiya*. The approach reached its finest expression in Junzo Sakakura's Modernist 1937 pavilion in Paris – but Sakakura's design, notably, was accomplished only through cunning; his bureaucratic clients intended something more conventional, the architect arguing its impossibility abroad. Even at the moment of Japanese architecture's greatest prewar expression, Isozaki asserts, "... because of its internationalist associations, modern architecture was oppressed and persecuted in Japan during the 1930s."<sup>11</sup> Orientalizing texts from this era, such as Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's 1933 *In Praise of Shadows*, remain in print abroad, seemingly washed of the implications in this shift from international to inward-turning.

Two years after Sakakura's Paris pavilion, things had changed considerably. As Akiko Takenaka-O'Brien argued in her dissertation, "In the New York World's Fair of 1939, amidst the pavilions of streamlined, futuristic design ... Japan constructed a national pavilion modeled on a traditional Shinto shrine."<sup>12</sup> With war unfolding, international modernism became impossible; even its strongest advocate, Kunio Maekawa, capitulated in the end. Others, especially Sutei Horiguchi, adopted artfully collaged compositions of vernacular and modern materials, relying on the aesthetics of the teahouse, but retreating to the private realm of the residence. He looked inward, to the residential *sukiya* style.

Kenzo Tange's earliest unbuilt works, executed in the waning days of World War II, also blended past and present, drawing on Japanese archetypal architecture. His award-winning proposals in key compe-

9. Isozaki (2006) p. 9.

10. Raymond's 1933 summer retreat so closely resembled Le Corbusier's 1930 Errazuriz House (proposed for a site in Chile) that the two architects had a brief falling out. I discuss the Errazuriz House further in the next chapter. See also Helfrich and Whitaker (2006), p. 332. Dr. Terunobu Fujimori, discussed in the next chapter, continues to draw on the model offered by the Raymond house in Karuizawa, which served as a basis for the 1997 Nira House and the 2007 Yakisugi House. See "Doukutsu Juutaku – Yakisugi House" 洞窟住宅 – 焼杉ハウス [Cave Living – Charred Cedar House], in *Shinkenchiku* 新建築 [New Architecture], vol. 82, no. 6 (June, 2007) pp. 62–63.

11. Isozaki (2006) p. 14.

12. Takenaka-O'Brien (2004) p. 1.

titions alluded to the Grand Shrines of Ise, the Kyoto *Gosho* Imperial Palace and Katsura *Rikyu*, an Imperial retreat. Tange wrote books on two of these sites in the postwar era, published both at home and abroad and read even now. More importantly, Tange taught many architects who are still influential: Arata Isozaki, Fumihiko Maki, the late Kisho Kurokawa, and Hajime Yatsuka. Architectural historian Jonathan Reynolds rightly insists that "... [mid-century] discourse successfully shaped a consensus that modern architectural practices in Japan [were] inexorably bound up with and could not be understood outside the context of pre-modern architecture ..."<sup>13</sup>

Noticeably, in these three periods – the initially modernizing Meiji, the early twentieth-century before World War II, and the initial postwar years – architects drew on different pasts. In the nineteenth century, Asian allusions drew a line demarcating East from West; in the early twentieth century, Japan invaded Asia and asserted its own distinctiveness in opposition to the Orient, illustrated by archetypes on its own soil. Defeated in World War II, surrounded by little but what was leveled, architects and artists advocated a re-evaluation so thorough and complete that they returned to the past of the Japan's Neolithic *Jomon* era. Tange wrote of the *Jomon* people as powerful peasants: dark, Dionysian, brutal, strong-willed, spirited, and solid; the primitive period was a perfect paradigm for the impoverished and almost annihilated nation. Even today for older architects the word is an allusion to freedom from hierarchy, to raw strength and spirit. But Tange also acknowledged that Japan rose above this privation, presenting in his discourse an aesthetic struggle between the nomadic *Jomon* and the subsequent culture of the *Yayoi* people, primogenitors for the present, who were Apollonian and elegant

aristocratic elites, ultimately eclipsing the *Jomon* people through agricultural abundance.

Tange was not alone in offering these analogies of ancient eras struggling for expression in Modern architecture, though he is perhaps best known abroad. The artist Taro Okamoto studied ethnography in Paris with Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille before turning to painting; he first framed these ideas, and architects such as Sei'ichi Shirai advocated them as well. Shirai wrote, "To us who create, to use tradition – which is at the same time an image of the future – as a moment for creation is ... to recognize in our reality the potential as an *a priori* force connected in its history."<sup>14</sup> And here is where Horiguchi's *sukiya* seeds took root: enlarging on the Arcadian teahouse and the primitive power of the *Jomon* period, postwar architects underscored affinity to a populace with political power (not the Imperial elites of earlier eras); they used rustic references to celebrate commonality and community.<sup>15</sup> Shortly after the end of the U.S. Occupation of Japan, Ryuichi Hamaguchi wrote of, "... the spirit of 'resistance' as shown in the *sukiya*. The *sukiya* must always have a certain link of sympathy with the lives of the poor ..." Hamaguchi linked the architecture of private retreats to the political tenor of the times: "when one speaks of *wabi* or *sabi*, there are (1) resistance to authority, (2) a feeling of solidarity with the poorer classes ..." <sup>16</sup> tellingly continuing,

at least in a sentimental sense. For that reason, in modern *sukiya*, no matter how much money has been spent on it, and no matter how luxurious it may be, it must not give the impression that it is different from the way of life and characteristics of the general multitude.<sup>17</sup>

13. Reynolds (2001) p. 316.

14. Shirai (1956) p. 4. Shirai also links *Rikyu* to the *Jomon* era on the same page.

15. See, for example, Ito (1956) p. 37.

16. Hamaguchi (1956) p. 57.

17. Ibid., p. 59.

In those initial years of the postwar era, Japan thus reframed an international understanding of what it offered by proffering gentle arts: flower arranging and fine kimono, pottery and handmade paper. The nation emphasized modest rustic retreats, thatched farmhouses and small shrines demanding regular reconstruction – not the robust architectures of monumental temples or of castles set on tall curving walls of huge, hand-cut stone.

Japan roared back to life, its economic recovery a new sort of war, white-collar workers encouraged to undertake aggressive innovation. Only decades after its thoroughgoing devastation, Japan's economy ranked second internationally, thanks in part to technological innovation. At the first Olympics in Asia, held in Tokyo in 1964 (and then again at the first International Exposition in Asia, held in Osaka in 1970), visitors from abroad boarded high-speed trains traveling 200 kilometers an hour, bound for Kyoto's gardens and shrines. The nation felt no need for tradition to tell its tale to any but tourists; it used technology to state its strengths. Tange's sophisticated stadia sheltered them in Tokyo, his sprawling steel space frame in Osaka. There were robots and prefabricated capsule hotels; architects offered audacious proposals to urbanize in Tokyo Bay. Scientific civilization supplanted the cultural arts. That trend continues today, with Buck Rogers elevators zipping through trellis-like tubes at Toyo Ito's Sendai Mediatheque and spare, 16-millimeter thick (5/8 of an inch) structural sheets all that enfold Kazuyo Sejima's Plum Grove House. Architects' explorations in shipyard steel, curving concrete and extruded aluminum annihilate expectations of what is unbildable.

And so today, the leading Tokyo University architectural historian Hiroyuki Suzuki understandably objects, "... the fiction is that

Japanese architecture has been created in the spirit of ideas such as *mono no aware*, *wabi*, *sabi*, *shibui*, *iki* ... generated by the traditions of Shinto, the philosophy of Zen, and the way of tea."<sup>18</sup> To evade such threadbare thinking, many simply avoid talking of tradition today. Science is instead embraced.

While architects enthusiastically accepted commercialism and cutting-edge technology, ignoring antiquity, society was drawn to "Discover Japan." In the aftermath of the 1964 Olympics and the 1970 Expo, the nation exploited its extensive new infrastructure to explore its past.<sup>19</sup> The domestic tourism industry offered excursions to leafy shrines and stone gardens, ending the day immersed in *onsen* hot springs or on a futon laid on a *tatami* floor. The two territories of tradition and today each grew, one romantic and provincial, the other international and innovative; regional richness was pitted against representations of national know-how.

A few hardy postwar *machi-tsukuri* ("town-building") pioneers developed districts around the scattered remains of earlier eras, often in service to tourism. Their ability to offer a critical examination of local character, however, was hampered by the clientele they served, who desired familiar counterfeits and cleverly concealed modern comforts. When challenged to acknowledge the past, industry fell back on stereotypical symbols, nationalized traditions derived from shared sources, the selections shifting with time, but remaining remarkably united. (Coaldrake points out that even a model of a farmhouse shipped to an 1873 exposition in Vienna, one "which would normally display distinct regional characteristics, is a strangely generic building rather than one that can be identified with a specific part of Japan."<sup>20</sup>) An undercurrent of interest in the past only

18. Suzuki (1996) p. 9.

19. See Ivy (1995).

20. Coaldrake (2008) p. 204.

smoldered until Kisho Kurokawa tried to revive the ornamental excess of Toshogu Shrine as part of his postmodern pastiche, arguing for a revived respect for Japan's Edo era (1603 – 1867) as early as the 1960s. Perhaps it is only evident in retrospect why his effort died, irrelevant in moments of extreme economic vigor, the Toshogu too Chinese at a time when Japan as yet felt superior to Asia. Had he lived a bit longer, Kurokawa might have had better luck: Japan today cannot help but acknowledge the economic impact of its larger next-door neighbor.

In the Japanese countryside today, economic optimism is no longer evident. Small city centers are in decay; silent, shuttered shops separated by open urban lots. In the wake of Japan's burst Bubble era of economic speculation, municipalities merge and villages are vanishing.<sup>21</sup> To towns beyond Tokyo, tourism is often the only industry. Just as the Meiji government once used architecture to draw a distinction between East and West and the nation subsequently used architecture to emphasize its autonomy in Asia, now rural clients insist architects underscore the unique nature of each outpost. This is uncomfortable territory for architects. Accustomed to short daytrips to distant sites, unschooled in Japanese architectural history (a legacy of those early days of education offered by foreign faculty), almost all today remain ignorant of the past, unaware of the subtleties of place. Clients commodify their heritage with no awareness of complications, but architects fear that acknowledging custom and local culture may move them uncomfortably close to convention and *kitsch*. They grapple with how to accommodate history.

In a book entitled *The Future of Nostalgia*, Russian émigré Svetlana Boym argues that there are not merely differences in one's com-

fort with the past, but also in one's construction of it. She offers two types of nostalgia, restorative and reflective: "Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition. Reflective nostalgia ... does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity."<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in the same book, she adds, "Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstruction ... of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history"<sup>23</sup> and adds, "... restorative nostalgia has no use for the signs of historical time – patina, ruins, cracks, and imperfections."<sup>24</sup> It was exactly this acceptance of age that started me on my search for the meaning in materials, my confusion at the works illustrated in the pages ahead embracing decay, deterioration, corrosion and cracking, without in any way being conservative. In the end, I have come to see these approaches as embodying a reflective response to tradition, establishing a range of regionalisms, representing differing perspectives on the relationship between past and present.

21. See, for example, Kohara (2007) pp. 7–11. The newsletter can be accessed on-line at <http://newslet.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>. Kohara points out that overall municipalities in Japan dropped from 3,232 in 1999 to 1,820 in 2006, and that in some prefectures the number of municipalities dropped to nearly 1/4 of earlier totals.

22. Boym (2001), p. xviii.

23. Ibid., p. 41.

24. Ibid., p. 45.







Black  
Blood Red  
to  
Palest Pink

