

J A P A N E S E D E S I G N

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J A P A N E S E D E S I G N

A SURVEY SINCE 1950

Kathryn B. Hiesinger and Felice Fischer

P H I L A D E L P H I A M U S E U M O F A R T

in association with

H A R R Y N . A B R A M S , I N C . , P U B L I S H E R S

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

Japanese Design: A Survey Since 1950

Philadelphia Museum of Art

September 25 to November 20, 1994

The exhibition and catalogue are made possible by generous grants from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; The Pew Memorial Trusts; the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency; The Japan Foundation; and the Japan–United States Friendship Commission; and a grant from The Commemorative Association for the Japan World Exposition (1970) to promote world peace.

Produced by the Publications Department of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Editor and coordinator: George H. Marcus

Copy editors: Jane Fluegel, Sherry Babbitt

Translators: Minoru Endo, Felice Fischer, Rosemary Morrison

Designer: Mitsuo Katsui, Katsui Design Office Inc.

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D E S I G N

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A comprehensive survey of Japanese design since 1950 accords so naturally with the history and collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as with the enthusiasm and knowledge in their respective fields of two colleagues at the Museum, Kathryn B. Hiesinger, Curator of European Decorative Arts Since 1700, and Felice Fischer, Curator of Japanese Art, that it is astonishing to discover that this is the first such exhibition to be organized anywhere in the world. The Museum's origins in the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia, when works by contemporary Japanese craftsmen were shown and admired by a broad American public for the first time, suggest a reason for its early and sustained interest in Japanese art, and the large airy gallery containing a seventeenth-century temple and a twentieth-century traditional tea house, surrounded by bamboo and permeated by the faint sounds of water dripping into a stone basin, has been among the most popular in the Museum since it opened in 1957.

The Museum has also maintained a long tradition of showing and documenting contemporary design, exemplified by two major exhibitions, *Design for the Machine* of 1932, and *Design Since 1945*, organized by Dr. Hiesinger in 1983. It was in the course of her research for the latter project, which included a few works by Japanese designers but focused its attention upon four decades of work in Europe and the United States, that Dr. Hiesinger hit upon the idea of an exhibition devoted exclusively to the achievements of Japan during the same period. Since 1989 Dr. Fischer and Dr. Hiesinger have been zealous collaborators in a new venture, together exploring this field in which Japan's ancient traditions, its grasp of modern technology, and the innovative imagination of its artists have combined to infuse so many contemporary Japanese products with distinctive visual values.

This has been a truly collaborative international project, in which the generosity of the many lenders to the exhibition and the enthusiasm and cooperation of our Japanese colleagues who have written essays for the catalogue or given advice on so many aspects of the exhibition and publication have been invaluable. It is wonderfully appropriate that the design of the spectacular installation of the exhibition in Philadelphia has been conceived by Kisho Kurokawa, the distinguished architect and theorist, and that this striking volume, which presents the objects in the exhibition in printed form, has been the design of Mitsuo Katsui, an artist whose work has been at the forefront of graphic design in Japan for several decades.

The funding for this complex undertaking has also been international in character. An initial planning grant from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation enabled the curators to conduct extensive research and travel in Japan, making contact with the impressive circle of colleagues and designers who have assisted us so willingly. Funding from government foundations and agencies in both Japan and the United States has been gratifying in its extent. Handsome support from both the Museum Program and the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts has been balanced by most welcome grants from The Japan Foundation, the Japan–United States Friendship Commission, and The Commemorative Association for the Japan World Exposition in 1970. The Pew Charitable Trusts, which has assisted the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the research and realization of so many

major international exhibitions, was again crucial to our ability to undertake this one, and the Carpenter Foundation generously followed its early planning grant with invaluable support for implementation. Thanks are also owed to the efficiency and skill of Nippon Express, which has coordinated the complex packing and transportation of loans between Japan and Philadelphia.

The staff of many departments in the Museum have played vital roles in this project. None has worked harder to bring it to fruition than Suzanne F. Wells, Coordinator of Special Exhibitions, and Robert Morrone, Vice President for Operations. In the Departments of East Asian Art and European Decorative Arts, all have devoted themselves to the cause over the last several years, while the Registrar's Office, the Division of Education, and the staff in Publications, Public Relations, and Installations sprang into action to assure the best possible presentation to our public.

It is the fervent hope of the curators of the exhibition, and of their colleague George H. Marcus, Head of Publications at the Museum, who has overseen the creation of this splendid book, that both visitors and readers will be struck by the extraordinary range and variety of Japanese design presented here. Themselves necessarily only a fraction of the impressive number of imaginative and efficient designs produced in Japan over the last five decades, each of the 255 objects were selected for both their individual quality and their ability to add to a composite picture. In the process of their work on this project, the curators reflected upon the mix of qualities that help define the special character of recent Japanese design: compactness, craftsmanship, simplicity, asymmetry, and humor are among the most striking. Whether it be a witty paper package in the shape of a banana (no. 137), a Sony Walkman (no. 132), a graceful bent-plywood stool (no. 27), or a spectacular variation on the traditional form of the kimono, each object partakes of at least one, and often several, of such qualities, and in so doing establishes its place in a visual world that is both centuries old and undeniably modern. Japanese traditions infuse contemporary Japanese design in the most unexpected ways: Hanae Mori may translate a technique for making lacquerware into the built-up beaded surface of a dress (no. 202), while the serene concentric patterns of raked sand gardens of Zen temples may reappear in a printed furnishing fabric (no. 90). The controlled dramatic violence of Noh theater may have echoes in a brilliant, aggressive poster, or the pictogram of the word "celebration" may find itself transformed into a piece of furniture (no. 228). The lyrical asymmetry that characterizes the venerable art of flower arranging may reappear in the design of a piece of ergonomic equipment that proves satisfyingly shaped to the user's needs. In few twentieth-century cultures do past and present seem so intricately interwoven, or does the work of the most gifted designers (in the most diverse mediums and styles) bring these subtle connections so vividly to the surface.

This exhibition and book are envisioned not as the definitive word on a vast subject but rather as the beginning of an exploration. Neither would have been possible without the exemplary commitment over the past four decades that Japanese government agencies, private companies, and individual designers have made to the effort to infuse everyday objects, clothing, and machines with that individual attention to their shape, color, and appearance—one may almost say their spirit—that makes Japanese design so distinctive despite its diversity. It is to the designers above all to whom we owe a profound debt of gratitude, for their enthusiasm and their cooperation with this complex project, and for their extraordinary creative energy, which inspired this undertaking from its inception.

Anne d'Harnoncourt

The George D. Widener Director
Philadelphia Museum of Art

The Japanese, by geographic disposition and aesthetic temperament, have historically exhibited an extraordinary talent for learning and adapting from outside sources without sacrificing their age-old traditions and beliefs. When, with the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century, the Japanese encountered Chinese civilization, they deliberately set about experimenting with aspects of China's sophisticated culture. They adopted Chinese dress at court, and elaborate Chinese models dominated the architecture of Buddhist temples and even entire city plans. The successive eighth-century capitals of Nara and Kyoto were laid out on a grid plan copied from China's early-seventh-century T'ang dynasty capital of Ch'ang-an. But the most profound foreign adoption was that of the Chinese system of writing, based on ideographs, or characters, which is still used in Japan today. By emulating the Chinese example, Japan sought to become China's equal, and Chinese civilization remained the model for Japanese culture for over a thousand years.

This talent for cultural accretion became even more pronounced during the period of Japan's encounter with Western civilization. In 1853 the American commodore Matthew Perry first brought his ships into the bay at Uraga and began the process of "opening" Japan to American and European trade after more than two hundred years of virtual isolation under the military leaders, the shoguns. The treaties signed with the United States and various European nations in the 1850s came at a time when internal opposition to the shogunate was growing, and they ultimately contributed to the overthrow in 1867 of the last shogun, who had ruled from his castle in Edo in eastern Japan in the name of the reigning emperor, whose residence was in Kyoto. The fifteen-year-old prince Mutsuhito ascended the throne, ushering in the reign period known as Meiji (Enlightened Rule), which started in 1868 and lasted until his death in 1912. With the new emperor's accession, the government returned to the lessons of Japan's own history: emulate what was perceived as superior models to become their equals without discarding existing strengths.

The telling difference in the nineteenth-century encounter with the West was the matter of time. While Chinese religion, literature, and political philosophy had been learned over the course of centuries, the lessons of modernization, industrialization, and imperialism were absorbed in a matter of decades. This led to an often-confusing telescoping of Western ideas and methodologies introduced simultaneously, and sometimes only the adoption of outward forms, devoid of their social, philosophical, and aesthetic underpinnings. What is amazing, however, is how quickly and how well Japan succeeded.

In 1869 the seat of the imperial government was moved from Kyoto to Edo, renamed Tokyo (Eastern Capital), and the emperor, depicted in photographs with a beard and in Western-style military uniform, became the center and symbol of the drive for modernization. Japan's entry into the contemporary world came with dizzying speed. Establishing a pattern of support for industry that persists even today, the government actively decreed and financed new ventures, starting with strategic areas such as mining, shipbuilding, and munitions. The first telegraph line was laid in 1869 and the first rail service began in 1872, running between Tokyo and Yokohama. That same year fire destroyed most of the Ginza district in Tokyo, and its over 950 wood houses were rebuilt in brick, following the English model. As with Chinese influence in the past, architecture was one of the most evident aspects of foreign culture emulated, one that could be used to impress visitors with Japan's progress toward becoming a thoroughly modern nation. Some of the early attempts by Japanese carpenters working in the traditional wood idiom to replicate Victorian buildings led to eccentric hybrids, but examples such as the Kyoto National Museum, designed by Tokuma Katayama in the Second Empire style and built in 1895, stand as ample proof of how quickly and completely new architectural styles were mastered (fig. 1).

In keeping with the aim of the Charter Oath of 1868 that "knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule,"¹ the Meiji government dispatched its first official delegation to the United States and Europe in November 1871. The Iwakura Mission, named after its leader, Tomomi Iwakura (1825–1883), minister of foreign affairs, consisted of some one hundred officials, translators, technical



Fig. 1 Kyoto National Museum, 1895

Fig. 2 Coffee service, c. 1875, signed Kichizan. Porcelain. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Visi Aromiskis

Fig. 3 Design for a cloisonné vase, by Yasuyuki Namikawa (1845–1927). Ink and colors on paper. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Clayton French Banks, Jr., in memory of his grandparents, George W. and Mary French Banks

experts, and students, the last sent primarily to learn about European manufacturing techniques and to collect examples of European goods. Before their return to Japan in September 1873, some of the members attended the Weltausstellung in Vienna, the first world's fair in which the Meiji government itself participated as an exhibitor.

The phenomenon of international expositions as a stage for displaying the best and latest wares of the industrialized nations began in London in 1851. Japan did not exhibit at the 1851 London exposition, but several of its feudal domains had participated in subsequent expositions, in London (1862), Paris (1867), and San Francisco (1871). At Vienna in 1873 Japan was represented by 6,668 catalogue items in 25 sections, which included displays on mining, agriculture, the chemical industry, textiles, leather, basketry, lacquerware, metalwork, and ceramics.² Between 1873 and 1910 the Japanese participated in twenty-five such events, which provided valuable bellwethers for assessing trends abroad and directing development at home.

Preparations for and participation in the Vienna world's fair provided many useful lessons for Japan's infant industries. One telling result was soon manifested in the Japanese language itself. Until the Meiji period there were no equivalents for the categories of *Schöne Kunst* (Fine Art) and *Angewandte Kunst* (Applied Art) that appeared in the announcements for the Vienna exhibition, for the Japanese did not see distinctions between art made to be looked at and art made to be used. In order to work within the Western model, new words were coined. For fine art, the term *bijutsu*, which initially referred only to Western-style oil painting and sculpture, was introduced, while *kogei* was the word used for applied art, encompassing both handmade crafts produced with traditional techniques and objects of daily use made with new manufacturing processes.

In selecting the objects for exhibition in Vienna, the Japanese government relied heavily on the counsel of a German chemical engineer, Dr. Gottfried Wagener (1831–1891), who in 1868 had been one of the foreign advisors in different fields hired by the Japanese. Wagener, whose specialty was ceramics, recommended that the displays for Vienna concentrate on high-quality traditional crafts, such as ceramics and textiles, rather than on machinery or industrial products, and indeed, the craft items that were exhibited there proved very popular and sold extremely well.

Following this success, the Japanese government, which badly needed funds for the national coffers, decided to encourage the production of crafts for export. Under the supervision of the potter Kaijiro Notomi (1844–1918), who had been to the Vienna exposition, such ventures as the Edogawa ceramic plant in Tokyo were started (1874) to experiment with European-style plaster molds for ceramic production. These molds were useful in producing new shapes, for example, cups with handles and coffee services, suitable for the Western market (fig. 2). Notomi was also involved in the Kiritsu Kosho company, founded the same year in Tokyo with government assistance, to produce ceramics, lacquerware, metalwork, and cloisonné (fig. 3). By commissioning painters and craftsmen to create original designs for manufacture, it became the primary source for the decorative arts sent by the Japanese to subsequent world's fairs. By 1882 the company had retail shops in Paris and New York, and its workshops, which employed some sixty craftsmen, became an important training ground for young artists.

Textile production was another field in which foreign technology was successfully introduced. In Kyoto, the traditional center for textiles, the first government-sponsored plant was established in 1874, and it experimented with aniline dyes and new weaving techniques. Yanosuke Date (died 1876), one of the country's leading weavers who had been sent with the textile exhibits to Vienna, subsequently purchased the first Jacquard loom, which was brought back to Tokyo and set up in 1875. Regional centers such as Kiryu were not far behind the larger cities, and they too soon became important producers of machine-made textiles.

The government also organized a series of domestic industrial expositions—the first in 1877—to further competition and to display products from all parts of the country. The official policy of supporting mass production and exports soon proved almost too successful as dozens of private companies sprang up to share the profits from the overseas trade. By the mid-1880s Notomi and others were criticizing the poor quality and lack of creativity displayed by these goods, and new organizations were founded to promote and control standards of quality in production, among them, the Japan Textile Association (1885) and the Japan Lacquer Association (1887). Notomi also advocated the establishment of technical schools near regional production centers at which students could learn design and craftsmanship along with new industrial techniques. He opened the first of these schools in Kanazawa with support from the Ishikawa prefectural government in 1887. Notomi's school admitted women, and offered revolutionary courses such as Western dressmaking, as well as textile weaving and dyeing,



metalwork, and papermaking. While such efforts were being made to promote and improve goods made by mass production, there were those who feared that the traditional handicrafts were in danger of being overwhelmed by commercialization and industrialization. The one-of-a-kind examples of ceramics, lacquer, textiles, and metalwork being made were conservative in conception and tended to emphasize technical virtuosity while the cost of fabricating them increased as the market declined.

Within twenty-five years of initiating policies for rapid modernization, the government found that it had to take measures to ensure the survival of traditional crafts. This in part reflected the general mood of the Japanese in the latter half of the Meiji period. The excitement and euphoria of change and Westernization began to wear off and a conservative reaction set in, fueled in part by the opinions of Westerners, such as the American Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), a much respected teacher and government advisor in Japan, who urged that traditional Japanese art be preserved.³ The Technical Art School founded by the government in 1876 to teach Western painting and sculpture was closed in 1883. When its successor, the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, opened in 1889, the curriculum established with Fenollosa's advice emphasized traditional ink painting and decorative arts, which had been neglected at the earlier institution. The later domestic industrial expositions had separate categories for industrial crafts and "art crafts" (*bijutsu kogeï*), and both were shown in the Japanese exhibits at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

In 1888 eighteen artists were named members of the Imperial Household Arts and Crafts (later the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts), and to provide financial support for them, their works were purchased for the imperial collections. This system raised the prestige of traditional crafts and assured their survival into the twentieth century; similar measures were taken after the disastrous earthquake of 1923 and during World War II, when materials were scarce and the studios of many craftsmen were destroyed. The postwar designation Holder of Intangible Cultural Property (Living National Treasure) for artists in traditional crafts is a descendant of this system.

Works by artists named members of the Imperial Household Arts and Crafts were shown at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. This international exhibition proved to be another landmark in the evolution of the Japanese design community, when the elaborate and intricate crafts were admired for their technical virtuosity but were criticized for their old-fashioned designs (fig. 4). If the result of the Vienna exhibition had been to make the Japanese conscious of Western methods and techniques of production, the Paris exposition made them aware of new ideas about design.

A number of artists and craftsmen who had studied in Paris and returned to Japan around the time of the exposition tried to introduce changes that would bring Japan into the international art community. Among them were men like Mataichi Fukuchi, founder of the Japan Design Association (1901), and first senior professor of design at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. He organized the first Japanese exhibition of Art Nouveau (1902), introducing the style that had taken Europe by storm. A group of teachers and students from the Tokyo College of Industrial Arts formed the Greater Japan Design Association around the same time. The fruits of their labors were displayed at the Domestic Industrial Exhibition of 1903, where the Art Nouveau style predominated in ceramics, textiles, and graphics.

Graphic design significantly reflected the artistic trends in early twentieth-century Japan. Changes in graphics, following a pattern similar to those in other mediums, were two-fold: technical and aesthetic. The technical developments had already started in the 1870s with the introduction of Western machinery and printing techniques. Lithographic-engraving technology advanced quickly, and four-color lithography made its debut in 1881, when it was used for advertisements by a tobacco dealer. The tremendous expansion of the book-publishing industry in the early Meiji period encouraged the rapid changeover from manual woodblock printing to the use of moveable type and modern machinery, and during the 1870s and 1880s, innumerable translations of Western books, from technical manuals on shipbuilding to the complete works of Shakespeare, were printed on the new equipment. Gas- and electric-powered presses were in use by the late 1880s, as were rotary presses for newspaper printing. Daily newspapers (the first, the *Yokohama Mainichi*, appeared in 1871) were another new phenomenon, as were their advertisements and the agencies that sold advertising space. Some manufacturers set up their own printing facilities to produce advertising and packaging, notably those established by rival tobacco companies in Tokyo and Kyoto. It also became fashionable to use foreign words and lettering for brand names, and among the new tobaccos were those dubbed Peacock, Telephone, and Pin Head.

New aesthetic possibilities of graphics began to be explored after the turn of the century, quickly reaching great sophistication in advertisements for kimonos. In 1904 Echigoya, one of the dry goods stores that were the traditional purveyors of kimono fabrics, converted its shop in Tokyo into the first department store modeled on the Western prototype (better known by its later name, Mitsukoshi). The firm had started a design department in 1909 and hired artists like Hisui Sugiura (1876–1965) to create advertisements for their kimonos. Perhaps because the



Fig. 4 Box carved with quails and millet, c. 1900. Ivory. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Mrs. Henry W. Breyer, Sr.

Fig. 5 Mitsukoshi department store, Tokyo, 1914



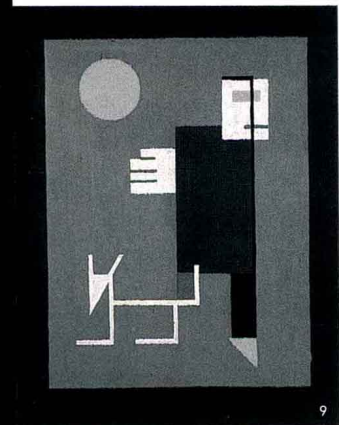


Fig. 6 Catalogue of kimono patterns for Marubeni department store, Kyoto, Fall 1926 collection. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Dr. Judith Stein in memory of Saul Bernstein

Fig. 7 Poster for Mitsukoshi department store, designed by Hisui Sugiura, 1914. Lithograph. Museum & Library, Musashino Art University, Tokyo

Fig. 8 Poster for *Un Suicide*, designed by Takashi Kono, 1929. Silkscreen. Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music

Fig. 9 Study for the textile hanging *Man and a Dog*, by Michiko Yamawaki, 1931. Watercolor on paper. Collection of Michiko Yamawaki, Tokyo

kimono was a traditional dress form, the aesthetic inspiration for advertisements came from the heritage of eighteenth-century *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, particularly *bijinga* (pictures of beauties). In a poster issued to commemorate the opening of the new, imposing Mitsukoshi store, built in 1914 in Tokyo (fig. 5), Sugiura translated the *bijinga* into a contemporary idiom (fig. 7), depicting his beautiful woman amidst modern Art Nouveau motifs, butterflies on her kimono, the carving on the table, the picture on the wall behind her, and even the style of calligraphy for the store's name. Mitsukoshi, which featured Western-style furniture and interior design, introduced the department store art gallery, which became, and still is, an important venue for exhibitions of both traditional and contemporary art in Japan. Mitsukoshi and other firms also regularly sponsored competitions for new textile and graphic designs, exhibiting the prize winners and publishing catalogues to spur interest in them (fig. 6).

Sugiura himself sought to raise the prestige of commercial art and designers as the profession was growing in Japan; he founded the graphic art research and study group Shichininsha (Group of Seven) in 1924, and published the magazine *Affiches* (from 1927) to introduce the best of graphic art from Japan and abroad. A spate of new art and architectural magazines, such as *Mizue* (started 1925) and *Kenchiku Shincho* (New Wave Architecture, founded 1929), also began publication. Young graphic artists like HIROMU HARA and TAKASHI KONO absorbed the lessons of French Cubists, Italian Futurists, and Russian Constructivists, producing posters and magazine illustrations that reflected these influences (fig. 8), and in every field the decades between the two world wars proved a rich and fruitful period for Japanese artists. An increasing number of young artists were studying abroad, while Westerners were coming to Japan, among them, the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1905 and the English potter Bernard Leach in 1909.⁴

Two influential German institutions, the Deutscher Werkbund and the Bauhaus, had a great effect on young Japanese of that generation. Their impact was probably so strong because their philosophies and aesthetic ideals coincided with much that was an integral part of the Japanese concepts of beauty and functionality, and their most important contribution was perhaps to remind the Japanese of their own rich heritage, and how it could be applied in the contemporary world. At the Bauhaus school and workshops established in 1919 at Weimar, its founder, Walter Gropius, called for the reintegration of fine art and applied art, an attitude the Japanese had held before the distinction was introduced from the West. Japanese architects had visited the Bauhaus as early as 1922, but the first to enroll as a student was Takehiko Mizutani (1898–1969), who studied there from 1927 to 1929. Mizutani taught at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts after his return, and one of his students, the architect Iwao Yamawaki (1898–1987), and his wife Michiko (born 1910) left to study at the Bauhaus in 1930. Both were won over by the school's curriculum, which included theoretical courses as well as studio classes in drawing and painting, and workshops in metalwork and textiles. All three became principals in establishing and teaching at the New Academy of Architecture and Industrial Arts in Tokyo, which was modeled on the Bauhaus. The driving force behind the school was the architect Renchichiro Kawakita (1902–1975); although he had not attended the Bauhaus, nevertheless he devoted his career to its educational ideals. The New Academy gave courses in architecture, painting, stage design (taught by Kawakita), dressmaking, and weaving, the last two courses being taught by Michiko Yamawaki, who had studied at the Bauhaus under Josef Albers (fig. 9). Among her students was the dress designer Yoko Kuwasawa (1910–1977), who founded the Kuwasawa Design School in Tokyo on the Bauhaus model in 1954. Another New Academy graduate was graphic designer YUSAKU KAMEKURA, who applied the lessons learned there in his work for *Nippon*, Japan's first multilingual graphics magazine, published for international distribution by the Nippon Kobo (Japan Workshop) from 1934.

The model to which Japanese industrial designers looked in the 1920s was that of the Deutscher Werkbund, an association founded in 1907 by a group of designers and manufacturers to improve the quality and design of industrial goods in Germany. An early advocate of the Werkbund ideals of integrating craftsmanship and industrial technology was Chikutada Kurata (1895–1966), a lecturer at the Tokyo College of Industrial Arts. A handful of Kurata's students joined him in 1928 in establishing the Keiji Kobo (Form Workshop), which according to its 1928 brochure, was "a conscious attempt to give contemporary form to the architecture and industrial arts

that are part of our daily lives. [Its] focus is crafts for interiors, and it aims to produce pieces that are simple and economical for as large a market as possible.”⁵ Members planned to produce furniture, lighting, ceramics, and glassware, but in fact furniture became their main product. The lack of manufacturers willing to experiment with new products without a proven market, especially in the depressed economy of a Tokyo still recovering from the great Kanto earthquake of 1923, was an obstacle to the mass production of their work, although it was the shortage of housing and goods after the earthquake that had first stimulated this generation of architects and designers to plan low-cost housing and furnishings.

Keiji Kobo was the longest lived and most successful of the idealistic groups that sprang up in the 1920s and devised plans to use industrial design to better the lot of the urban masses. Unit furniture, emphasizing standard sizes for ease and economy of production, was introduced, beginning with designs for Western-style chairs. KATSUHEI TOYOGUCHI designed a series of low-cost chairs (1927–34) with wood veneer for the frame and woven hemp for the seat (fig. 10). To bring members’ work to public notice, Keiji Kobo launched a series of exhibitions, accompanied by lectures, held in Tokyo in 1928 and 1930 at the Kinokuniya bookstore gallery and in 1934 at the Takashimaya department store, where the complete line of furniture was shown in two model rooms. The final exhibition, featuring its series of childrens’ furniture, was held at the Itoya department store in 1937. Keiji Kobo members published their designs in architectural magazines, and in 1930 began propagating their ideas and marketing their furniture through articles and advertisements in the women’s magazines, such as *Fujin no Tomo* (The Housewife’s Companion). The group was dissolved in 1937 under pressure from the militarist government, which disapproved of its international outlook.

Ironically, the ideals that Kurita, Toyoguchi, and their generation espoused were flourishing at the same time under the aegis of the government in Sendai at the Industrial Arts Institute. In 1928 the government had recruited Kitaro Kunii (1883–1967) to direct the Institute for the Promotion of Industrial Arts of Northern Japan. Established to promote small- and mid-size manufacturers in the six northern prefectures of Japan by introducing mass-production techniques and encouraging the manufacture of new products for export, the institute published a monthly journal, *Kogei Shido* (Industrial Art Promotion), and held an annual open house exhibition to show new products, for example, experimental bamboo furniture in 1931. Kunii was sent to Europe, America, and Southeast Asia for six months to study manufacturers and markets. In 1933 the government opened a Tokyo office of the institute (later renamed the Industrial Arts Institute) to coordinate regional craft production nationwide. The magazine was renamed *Kogei Nyusu* (Industrial Art News) and was distributed nationally from an editorial office in Tokyo. The venue for the annual exhibition was also moved to Tokyo, where it opened in September 1933 at the Mitsukoshi department store.

Of all Europeans and Americans who visited Japan in the first half of the twentieth century, the German architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) left the most indelible impression on young architects and designers. His is the one name that is invariably mentioned when Japanese industrial designers of that generation are asked about influences on their work. Taut had practiced architecture in Berlin from 1904, and after World War I became involved with utopian city planning for community housing projects. His interest in Japanese architecture prompted him to join the International Architectural Association of Japan as an overseas member (as Walter Gropius had also done), but he was unable to attend the association’s first meeting in Osaka in 1930. In the spring of 1933 Taut fled the Nazi regime and made his way to Japan, where the architect Isaburo Ueno met him when he arrived on May 3. The following day, Taut’s birthday, Ueno took him to see the Katsura Detached Palace in Kyoto, the paradigmatic example of Japanese traditional architecture (fig. 11). Taut was deeply impressed by its “modernity”: its spare, plain architecture, clean lines, perfect proportions, and the logic of the modular *tatami* mats that were the standard unit for interiors. He expressed his enthusiasm in his book *Nippon: Yoroppajin no Me de Mita* (Japan: Seen with European Eyes),⁶ which became a best-seller in Japan and was instrumental in helping to turn the attention of the Japanese back to their own architectural heritage.

Taut worked on several architectural projects in Japan, but his ideas were most concretely realized in the area of product design. In 1933, when Taut visited the exhibition at the Mitsukoshi department store that showed experimental works of the Industrial Arts Institute, he criticized the tendency of the institute’s designers to produce imitations of European products rather than to use the inspiration and resources of Japan’s own rich craft traditions. Kitaro Kunii subsequently invited Taut to Sendai as an advisor (fig. 12). During his stay, from November 1933 to March 1934, Taut introduced his ideas for the design and production of consumer goods, based

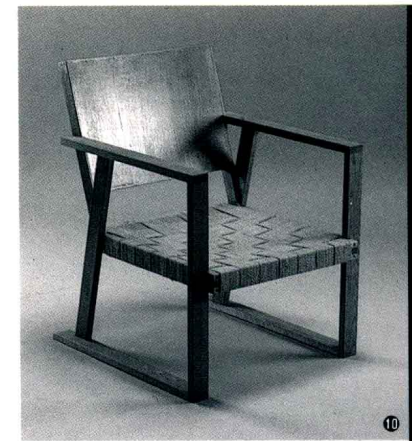


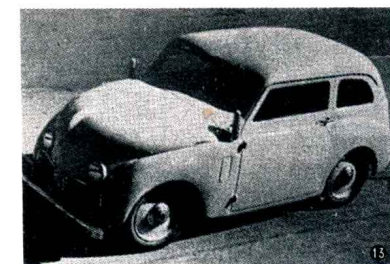
Fig. 10 Chair, designed by Katsuei Toyoguchi for Keiji Kobo, 1934. Wood and hemp. Museum & Library, Musashino Art University, Tokyo

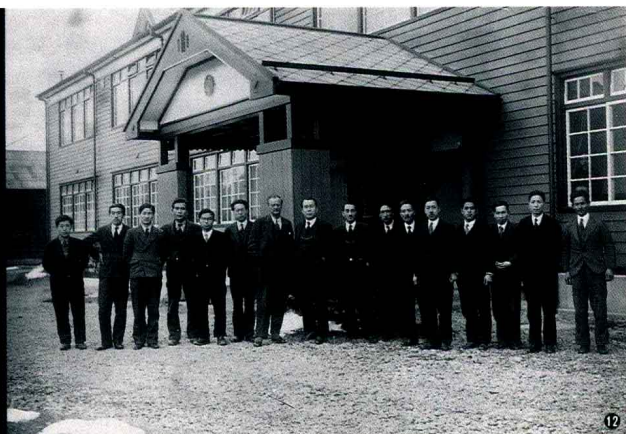
Fig. 11 Katsura Detached Palace, Kyoto, 1636

Fig. 12 Bruno Taut and Kitaro Kunii in front of the Industrial Arts Institute, Sendai, 1934 (Courtesy of Kenmochi Design Associates)

Fig. 13 Datsun Deluxe Sedan DB, made by Nissan Motor Company, 1948

Fig. 14 Standing lamp, designed by Bruno Taut, 1936. Lacquered wood and paper. The position of the shade can be adjusted along the entire height of the frame (Photograph by Osamu Murai)





1 For the complete Charter Oath of 1868, see Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, comps., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York, 1958), p. 644.

2 See Herbert Fux, *Japan auf der Weltausstellung in Wien 1873* (Vienna, 1973).

3 See Felice Fischer, "Meiji Paintings from the Fenollosa Collection," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 88 (Fall 1992).

4 Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) was first exposed to Japanese architecture at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. He first visited Japan in 1905, and began collecting woodblock prints there. His most important building in Japan, the Imperial Hotel, was completed in Tokyo in 1922. Bernard Leach (1887–1979) first came to Japan from England in 1909 and stayed eleven years. During that time he worked with the potter Shoji Hamada and with the founder of the folk-crafts (*mingei*) movement, Soetsu Yanagi. Leach introduced the Japanese climbing kiln and pottery techniques to European studio potters.

5 Gruppe 5 and Katsuhei Toyoguchi, eds., *Keiji Kobo kara: Toyoguchi Katsuhei to Dezain no Hanseiki* (From Keiji Kobo: Katsuhei Toyoguchi and a Half-Century of Design) (Tokyo, 1987), p. 64.

6 Bruno Taut, *Nippon: Yoroppajin no Me de Mita* (Japan: Seen with European Eyes) (Tokyo, 1934).

7 Kogyo Gijutsuin Sangyo Kogei Jikkensho, ed., *Sangyo Kogei Jikkensho Sanjunen-shi* (The Thirty-Year History of the Industrial Arts Institute) (Tokyo, 1960), p. 283.

8 Ibid., p. 53.



on Deutscher Werkbund practices. Young designers at the institute, such as ISAMU KENMOCHI and RIKI WATANABE, were impressed with Taut's program of building and testing full-scale models of furniture and other products before sending drawings off to the manufacturer. Above all, they recall his insistence on *Qualitätsarbeit* (quality workmanship) and his call for a return to the craftsmanship still evident in the works of some of the artisans, such as ROKANSAL IIZUKA, whose studio he visited. In 1934 Taut met Fusaichiro Inoue, who asked him to become an advisor to his workshop at Takasaki, in Gumma Prefecture, where Inoue wanted to revive local craft production. During a two-year stay at Takasaki, Taut designed over six hundred items, including furniture, lighting, trays, and salad bowls, which Inoue sold through the Miratesu craft shop in Tokyo beginning in 1935. In his standing lamp of that period, with its cylindrical handmade paper shade and lacquered wood frame, Taut borrowed directly from Japanese tradition (fig. 14). Taut stayed in Japan until 1936, his sojourn coinciding with a time when Japanese designers were receptive to the message of modernism and to quality craftsmanship, and they saw him as the manifestation of those ideals. Nearly thirty years later, Isamu Kenmochi recalled Taut's days in Sendai: "For that short period, the Modern Movement was alive directly in Japan, and planted the seeds of a tradition that we could not deny in our later careers."⁷

The Industrial Arts Institute subsequently invited other foreign designers to consult and lecture. The most notable was Charlotte Perriand (born 1903), a French architect who had worked with Le Corbusier in Paris before the war. She came in 1940, and brought much the same message as Taut, noting the lack of character in modern Japanese crafts in contrast to the beauty of traditional works. In 1941 Perriand organized an influential exhibition in Tokyo, "Tradition, Selection, Creation," which included her own pieces inspired by Japanese crafts. The activities of the institute continued through the war, although the National Mobilization Act of 1938 had decreed restrictions on uses of such materials as copper, iron, rubber, and leather. The institute worked on finding substitute materials, and its exhibition in 1940 featured items such as shoes and handbags made from fish skins. Experiments also included work with molded plywood, principally for making decoy airplanes, technology that would find peacetime applications in the field of furniture manufacture. During the years from 1939 to 1945, the government recruited the best and brightest of the young designers for the institute, and the employee roster reads like a who's who of leaders of postwar industrial design in Japan: Isamu Kenmochi, Katsuhei Toyoguchi, MOSUKE YOSHITAKE, IWATARO KOIKE, JIRO KOSUGI, Iwao Yamawaki, and Masaru Katsumie (1909–1983).

The arrival of the Americans brought Japan its first experience of occupation by a foreign power. The Japanese showed a remarkable resilience in the face of another tidal wave of new ideas and demands, not dissimilar to that shown nearly one hundred years before. Once again, they resolutely sought to learn as much as possible as quickly as possible. The Industrial Arts Institute became one of the focal points of learning and recovery when, in 1946, American General Headquarters (GHQ) ordered furniture and equipment for 200,000 new housing units for its personnel. In all, thirty types of furniture were designed with an eventual output of 950,000 pieces.⁸

The Industrial Arts Institute coordinated the production of electronic goods for occupation housing, working with firms such as Toshiba, which made washing machines and coffee percolators, and Mitsubishi, which supplied refrigerators. Japanese industry was in effect given a jump start by GHQ orders: this included such industries as glass manufacturers, which suddenly had to produce hundreds of thousands of tableware items for the Americans. Other industries experienced a quick move toward recovery. By 1947 Nissan and Toyota had put their first passenger cars on sale (fig. 13). By 1949 electric fans, autobikes, and cameras appeared on the market, and exports, aimed primarily at the United States, were making headway as well. The Americans were surprised and impressed by the energy and abilities of the Japanese as they once again demonstrated their openness to new and even opposing ideas and ideals.

The history of the first century of Japanese design might be defined by the aesthetic principal of *wa* (harmony). The great originality of Japanese civilization lay in its ability to harmonize disparate elements, seeking not so much to conquer the new or exotic as to accommodate them, to allow them to coexist and find their own place in the rich and varied blend of tradition and modernity that characterizes the culture of Japan.