

Nordic Memories of the East. Tetsuro Yoshida and the myth of traditional Japanese house in Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto

Memorias nórdicas de Oriente. Tetsuro Yoshida y el mito de la casa japonesa en Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto y Alvar Aalto

Iván Rincón-Borrego 

University of Valladolid. ivanr@tap.uva.es

Ramón Rodríguez-Llera

University of Valladolid. llera@tap.uva.es

Received 2021-05-12

Accepted 2022-02-21



To cite this article: Rincón-Borrego, Iván, and Ramón Rodríguez-Llera. "Nordic Memories of the East. Tetsuro Yoshida and the myth of traditional Japanese house in Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto." *VLC arquitectura* 9, no. 1 (April 2022): 27-48. ISSN: 2341-3050. <https://doi.org/10.4995/vlc.2022.15603>



Resumen: La arquitectura tradicional japonesa desempeñó un papel relevante en el desarrollo de la arquitectura moderna europea, principalmente desde principios del siglo XX. Partiendo de dicha tesis, ampliamente documentada, se investiga la influencia que la cultura nipona y la casa tradicional japonesa tuvieron en las figuras de Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto y Alvar Aalto, especialmente durante los años 30. El estudio investiga el modo en que dichos autores encontraron inspiración en Oriente, así como los contactos y fuentes que les sirvieron de referencia. Finalmente, se explica en qué medida reinterpretaban la estética nipona en sus diseños, especialmente en el caso de los Aalto y del jardín de invierno de Villa Mairea. En este contexto, la investigación apunta al papel decisivo jugado por la figura de Tetsuro Yoshida y su texto *Das japanische Wohnhaus* (1935) para los intereses y diseños de dichos autores nórdicos.

Palabras clave: Tetsuro Yoshida; Erik Gunnar Asplund; Aino Aalto; Alvar Aalto; arquitectura japonesa.

Abstract: Traditional Japanese architecture played an important role in the development of modern European architecture, especially from the beginning of the 20th century. Based on this extensively documented thesis, the influence of Japanese culture and the traditional Japanese house on the figures of Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto, especially during the 1930s, is analysed. The study describes how these authors found inspiration in the East, as well as their contacts and sources of reference. Finally, it explains the extent to which they reinterpreted Japanese aesthetics in their designs, especially analysing the case of the Villa Mairea winter garden. In this context, the research points to the decisive role played by the figure of Tetsuro Yoshida and his text *Das japanische Wohnhaus* (1935) for the interests and designs of these Nordic authors.

Keywords: Tetsuro Yoshida; Erik Gunnar Asplund; Aino Aalto; Alvar Aalto; Japanese architecture.

INTRODUCTION

European architects have been interested in Japanese culture since the beginning of the 20th century, following a path similar to that of the visual arts in the late 19th century. Cross-confluences by authors from both sides of the world have demonstrated this interest; from Wells Coates, Hans Scharoun, Hugo Häring, Richard Neutra or Bruno Taut; to Kikuji Ishimoto, Iwao Yamawaki and Bunzo Yamaguchi, who were students of Walter Gropius at the *Bauhaus*; or Kunio Maekawa and Junzo Sakakura, Le Corbusier's collaborators. However, one of the most fruitful links with Japanese architectural culture took place in the Nordic countries during the 1930s due to the contact between Tetsuro Yoshida, Erik Gunnar Asplund and the couple formed by Aino and Alvar Aalto.

The lecture *Our Architectural Perception of Space* given by Erik Gunnar Asplund on 19 November 1931 at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm is the starting point. Asplund interprets Oswald Spengler's 1918 text *The Decline of the West*, which underpins the concept of *modernity*. It embodies the idea of a type of architectural space, which he calls "infinite space,"¹ in which the interior and exterior are seen as an intertwined whole. His conclusion links that modernity with the Japanese building tradition: "In the West we are perhaps approaching the Japanese idea of a building as a not too solid, heavy and long-lasting object."² It is therefore an atavistic reference which he, nevertheless, considers to be inspiring and fully valid in contemporary times.

Shortly afterwards, it was Alvar Aalto in tandem with Aino Aalto, who admired the craftsmanship of Japanese culture during his lecture *Rationalism and Man* on 9 May 1935 at the Swedish Society of Industrial Design. Aalto valued the high quality of shapes and materials of Japanese designs, he considered them versatile, but no less refined and standardized, as Göran Schildt publishes in Aalto's words: "There is one civilization that has previously,

also at the handicraft stage, shown great delicacy and understanding of the individual in this respect. I am thinking of certain aspects of Japanese culture."³ This is just one of the occasions when Finnish architects praised Japan's culture in public during those years. Indeed, they did so again when explaining some of his masterpieces, as in the lecture on Villa Mairea *A Home of a Rich Collector* presented on 9 May 1939 at Yale University, which was published in the magazine *Arkkitehti arkitekten* the same year.⁴

Asplund and Aalto's words echoed their common interest in traditional Japanese architecture. On the one hand, the Swedish architect had confirmed this after receiving the Japanese architect Tetsuro Yoshida in Stockholm in 1931. On the other hand, the Finnish architects had been influenced by Asplund himself, as well as by several specialised publications acquired during the same decade. Among these texts is the first German edition of Yoshida's *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* [The Japanese House] of 1935; as Juhani Pallasmaa points out, one of Alvar Aalto's favourite books (Figure 1).⁵

THE EAST THROUGH BOOKS

The convergence of Western and Eastern art throughout history, Japan for our study, has opened up a range of new principles, methods and reinvented aesthetic expressions. Authors such as Clay Lancaster or Kevin Nute have argued this thesis from a clearly North American perspective; but others such as Chisaburoh Yamada or Siegfried Wichmann have done so from a European point of view.⁶ Far from an exclusively Western perspective, the compendium of research shows that East-West cultural exchange occurs in a bidirectional sense, thanks to a two-way journey.

Despite this convergence, research focusing specifically on Japan's influence on modern



Figure 1. Tetsuro Yoshida. Front cover of the book *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*, 1935.

architecture, and on Nordic countries, has been relatively scarce until just a decade ago. This may be due to the success of Lancaster's arguments about the greater impact of Japanese culture in the

United States compared to Europe, as Yamada notes.⁷ However, in our opinion, the most likely reason for this lack was the difficulty in accessing Japanese terms. Nevertheless, more

contemporary contributions in this particular line of research are worth mentioning, such as those of the Korean author Hyon-Sob Kim in the journal *Architectural Research Quarterly*.⁸ As well as the preceding works of Manfred Speidel, Anna Basham, Peter Blundell Jones and the group formed by Gabriel P. Weisberg, Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff and Hanne Selkokari in the first decade of the 21st century.⁹ In the Finnish context, which occupies an important part of this research, the study by Hiroshi Momose stands out.¹⁰

The most relevant sources of knowledge to arouse reciprocal interest between Eastern and Western architectures were the specialised publications of the first half of the 20th century.¹¹ However, specifically for the scope of this research, we highlight those editions published before the outbreak of the Second World War, as they correspond to the expansion of the Modern Movement both in Europe and in the Nordic countries. It was a time when Erik Gunnar Asplund, Alvar and Aino Aalto were aware of both the variety of influences from the European avant-garde and Japanese vernacular culture, in their own words. Although the aim of this research is not to analyse these publications from a historiographical point of view, they serve as a turning point for the Nordic authors mentioned above who were fascinated by Japanese culture. In fact, specialized books and journals prove to be the most relevant media for the exchange of information between architects from East and West, representing complementary ways of getting to know each other.

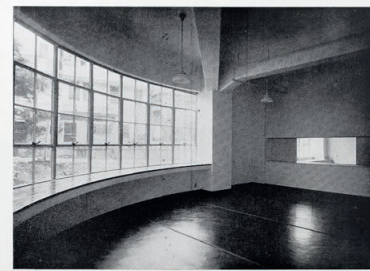
The events to which this research refers begin in 1931, the year of Tetsuro Yoshida's journey through Europe. Before that, Bruno Taut and Richard Neutra had proposed the existence of architectural values connecting European rationalist modernity and Japanese building tradition through several articles in the journals *Die neue Wohnung* of 1924 and *Die Form* of 1931, respectively (Figure 2).¹² From August 1931 to June 1932, Tetsuro Yoshida embarked on a long journey that led him to meet Erik Gunnar Asplund in Stockholm, leaving a strong impression

on him. Almost at the same time, in 1933, the renowned linguist and professor at the University of Helsinki, Gustaf John Ramstedt, put Aino and Alvar Aalto in contact with the diplomats Hakotaro and Kayoko Ichikawa, who provided them with numerous Japanese publications and brought them closer to the culture of the rising sun.¹³

From 1935 onwards, it is possible to detect a chain of events. First, Yoshida published the first edition of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* with the help of the Berlin publisher Ernst Wasmuth and the support of Hugo Häring and Ludwig Hilberseimer. This will be a key text for the understanding of the traditional Japanese house by interested modern architects. Secondly, Alvar Aalto joined the Finland-Japan Foundation created in 1935.¹⁴ Finally, the National Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm opened the replica of the *Zui-Ki-Tei* pavilion - *The House of Promising Light* - to the public in its gardens (Figure 3), having an impact on the European scene comparable to that of the *Ho-o-den* temple at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Both examples quickly became the most direct ways of approaching the sensibility of *sukiya* architecture.¹⁵ Indeed, authors such as Helge Zimdahl contributed to the rapid popularity of this pavilion, highlighting its characteristics among the closest Nordic authors; Swedish, Finnish, Danish and Norwegian, such as Jørn Utzon, Halldor Gunnløgsson, Arne Korsmo and Sverre Fehn, among many others.¹⁶ In addition, in the same year Aino and Alvar Aalto started the construction of their studio house in Riihitie, and in 1937 the project for Villa Mairea in Noormarkku. Both houses were influenced by the intellectual closeness of their authors to Japanese culture. Thus, in the brief period between 1931 and 1937, a confluence of interests was concentrated which opened up the main channel of influence of the traditional Japanese house on the masters of Nordic modernity.

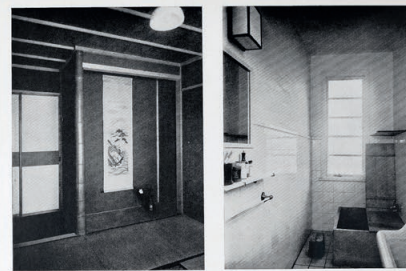


Elektrisches Laboratorium des Verkehrsministeriums. Architekt: Tetsuro Yoshida
 Laboratoire électrique du Ministère des Communications
 Electrical laboratory of the Traffic Ministry



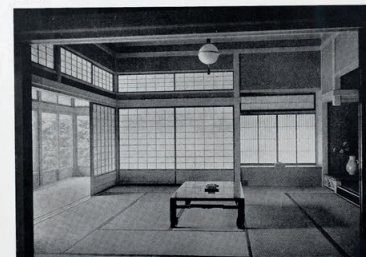
Intérieur des électriques Laboratorium des Verkehrsministeriums
 Pièce intérieure du laboratoire électrique du Ministère des Communications
 Interior of the Electrical laboratory of the Traffic Ministry

26



Ein Tokonoma, Residenz Frau Miyake. Das Äußere fortschrittlich, das Innendischlich. Architekt: K. Nakamoto
 La résidence de Mme Miyake. L'extérieur récent et emprunt aux progrès réalisés au Occident.
 The residence of Madame Miyake, Tokio. Exterior progressive

Japanische Holzwanne mit Deckel inmitten eines modernen Badezimmers. Architekt: K. Ito
 Baignoire japonaise en bois avec couvercle au centre d'une salle moderne de bain



Haus Baba, Tokio, Wohnraum. Architekt: T. Yoshida
 Maison de M. Baba à Tokio, salon
 House of Mr. Baba, Tokio, drawing room

94

Figure 2. Richard Neutra. Articles about Japan architecture published in *Die Form*, no. 1 and no. 3, 1931. The articles contain images of two works by Tetsuro Yoshida, the Baba residence in Ushigome from 1928 and the Tokyo Electric Laboratories from 1930.



Figure 3. *Zui-Ki-Tei* Pavilion, National Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm, 1935.

THE MYTH OF THE JAPANESE HOUSE

The idea of building integrity has been associated with the traditional Japanese house since the late 19th century. The evolution of Japanese vernacular architecture has generally been thought to have taken place at the margins of Western architecture, although Sand Jordan qualifies this reductionist idea to a large extent.¹⁷ Nevertheless, its high degree of technical honesty, has made it an example of innate rational design and, for this reason, also a tempting source of inspiration for the architects of the Modern Movement.

This perception of essentialism reached a high point in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On the one hand, the Universal Exhibitions fostered an atavistic image of Japan's building tradition, in contrast to the transformation of the Meiji Restoration of 1868 that was modernising Japan.¹⁸ On the other, authors such as Morse and Taut also found in this ancestral architecture an idea of lineage, as well as an alibi for modern architecture.¹⁹ The visits of many Nordic architects to the *Zui-Ki-Tei* pavilion had a similar effect. In short, it encouraged a skewed image of the traditional Japanese house, which was mainly identified with classical *sukiya* architecture, the culmination of Japanese domestic architecture during the Edo period (1603-1867).

As Manfred Speidel points out, this misperception is evident in Central European, and especially German authors.²⁰ This is demonstrated by Richard Neutra in the magazine *Die Form* in 1931, when he explicitly ignores Japan's modernisation.²¹ Bruno Taut's position is similar when he describes the modern Tokyo of 1933 with distaste.²² Moreover, he directly seeks to describe the Japanese house with a forced mystical prose already in the first pages of *Houses and People of Japan*. Sand Jordan explains this complex process of the clash between the traditional Eastern and the modern Western, with paradigmatic examples such as the incorporation of Western-style rooms, known as *yoma*, with electric lighting in traditional Japanese houses at the end of the Meiji period.²³

For Taut, as for many Northern European authors, the imperial palace Katsura-no-Rikyu in Kyoto was a reference to follow, a building in wood that he considered to be the conceptual equivalent to the expressionist glass houses published in *Alpine Architektur*. Taut contributes to elevating Villa Katsura to the status of myth; an approach that is in line with Yoshida's idea of studying the palace complex and its gardens also from the first pages of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*. This idealisation of the imperial palace turns it into an obvious sign, because of the convergence between the Japanese tradition and many of the modern functionalist principles advocated by Taut in *Die neue Wohnung* [The New Home] in 1924.

In this sense, it is not surprising that Taut was interested in the essence of Japanese domestic tradition. In fact, he worked on several projects such as the Hyuga Villa in Atami in 1936, where he tried to combine modern functionalism and the Japanese domestic space characterised by the simplicity of its proportions, the austerity of its construction technique and the concatenation of its rooms. To this end, he is assisted by Tetsuro Yoshida himself, with whom he shares the role of mediator between Japanese and modern Western culture. In addition, Yoshida was responsible for translating Bruno Taut's works into Japanese, including *Houses and People of Japan*, the Japanese version of which came out in 1949, signed in collaboration with Hideo Shinoda.

More than twenty years later, the idealised vision of the Japanese house was still resonating, as Walter Gropius demonstrated when he visited the Asian country, and the revolutionary ideals from the origins of the *Bauhaus* awoke in him. In June 1954 Gropius sent a postcard with a picture of the Ryoanji in Kyoto to Le Corbusier in which he wrote (Figure 4): "The Japanese house is the best and most modern that I know and really prefabricated."²⁴ The myth of the Japanese house still served as an alibi for modern architecture, as Ramón Rodríguez Llera and Iván Rincón Borrego explain.²⁵



Figure 4. Walter Gropius. Postcard sent to Le Corbusier with the image of the Ryōan-ji, Kyoto, 23 June 1954.

DAS JAPANISCHE WOHNHAUS: A HANDBOOK FOR ARCHITECTS

Tetsuro Yoshida and his successful publication *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* played a decisive role as a cultural bridge between East and West during the expansion of the Modern Movement's interest in Japan.²⁶

The European contacts that Yoshida had established during his trip from July 1931 to July 1932 preceded the success of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*.²⁷ Yoshida witnessed the interest in Japan of many European authors of the Modern Movement. Erik Gunnar Asplund, Alfred Fischer, Hugo Häring and Ludwig Hilberseimer, among others, were interested in the exoticism of

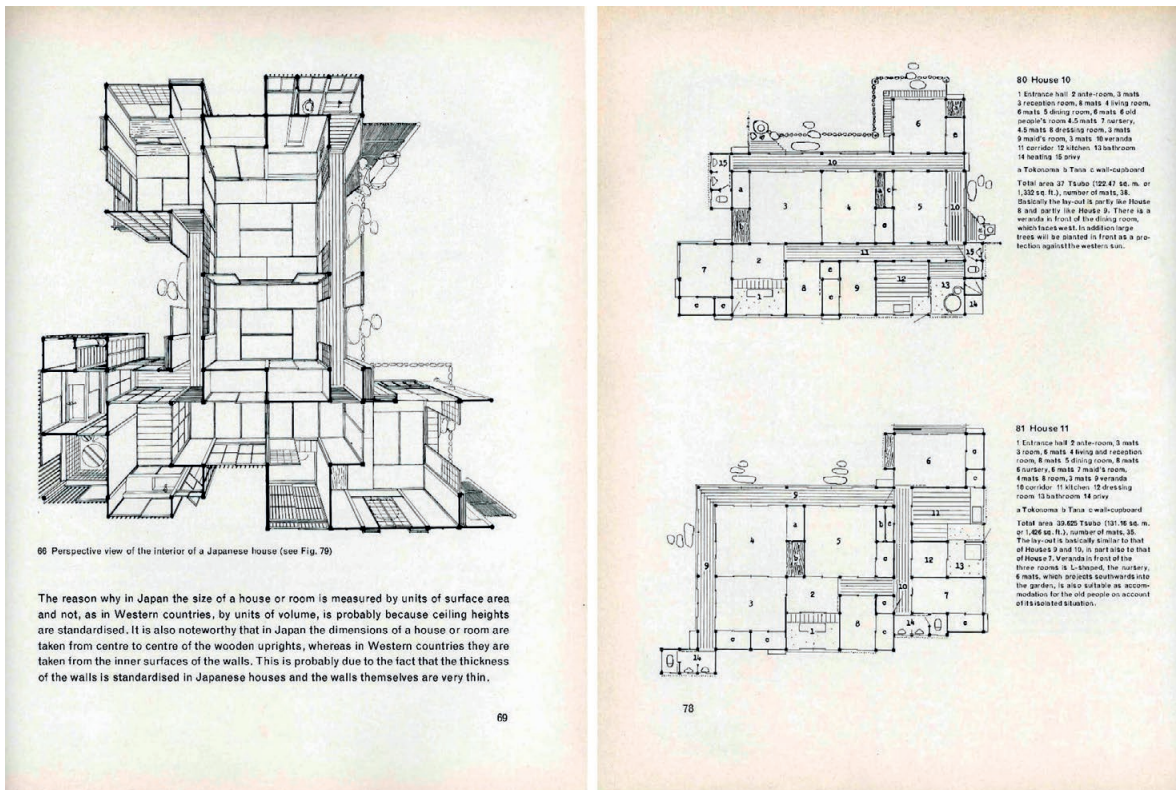


Figure 5. Tetsuro Yoshida. *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*, 1935. Western-style conical perspective of a Japanese house plan and combinations no. 10 and no. 11.

apparently “untouched”²⁸ Japanese architecture, a trend to which *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* responds. With this in mind, Yoshida approaches his publication as a comprehensive building manual, with a practical sense of technique that sets him apart from other Western authors with a more theoretical approach, such as E. S. Morse. The Japanese architect organised the graphic and written content to facilitate the access of Western authors who were attracted by the aesthetics of the traditional Japanese house and wanted to learn about its building technique and materials. So much so that the publication begins by glossing the Japanese house with eight principles as a simple starting point.²⁹ After the initial synthesis, Yoshida explains

Japanese house in nine chapters, referring to the role of each space, the form of the rooms in relation to the whole and the way they are technically built. From the beginning, Yoshida highlights the imperial palace Katsura-no-Rikyu in Kyoto as a paradigm, as we have seen, a true mythical reference for Europeans. He explains the role of the essential architectural elements of the Japanese house; the symbolism of the *tokonoma*; the function of the *engawa* as a practical response to the layout of the house and the climate; the relationship of the interior with the garden; the module of the *tatami* to unify all the constructions; the use of untreated wood; the integration of the furniture that qualifies the

ways of living; the technical efficiency of the sliding panels; the *shoin* space, the *tana* or the *tokowaki*.

Pictures and technical drawings are used in *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* to exemplify the constructive language and the modular basis of the traditional Japanese house as an archetype that combines simple, standardised units, which are instrumentally integrated into the whole.³⁰ This plethora of layout solutions and construction details presented by Yoshida, some even in western conical perspective, all built with a minimum of standardised elements, are indeed the architectural concept that attracted Alvar Aalto's attention, as he said: "I am thinking of certain aspects of Japanese culture, which with its limited raw materials and forms has implanted in the people a virtuosity in producing variety and, almost daily, new combinations."³¹ The result is a flexible order in the way of building, a principle of extraordinary sensitivity and open spatial links between the space of the house and the space of the garden (Figure 5).

NORDIC MEMORIES OF THE EAST

Tetsuro Yoshida's legacy in the Nordic countries began when he met Erik Gunnar Asplund in Sweden. Initially, Yoshida travelled to Stockholm in the late summer of 1931 to see *in situ* Ragnar Ösberg's work, which he had studied for his design of the Beppu Municipal Auditorium (1926-28). However, on 27 September he wrote to one of his assistants in Teishinsho: "I met Asplund at his office for the first time. (...) We talked about the new architecture in Germany and Sweden. He was interested in Japanese architecture, especially the sliding window, and asked me various questions about it."³² In order to satisfy the Swedish master's curiosity, Yoshida showed him the book *Shin-Nihon-Jutaku-Zushu - Illustrations of New Japanese Houses* - from 1931, which contained a number of drawings and photographs by the Japanese author himself, especially the Baba Villas in Nasu, from 1927, and Ushigome, from 1928. Although it has not been

documented, it is likely that he gave a copy of the book to Asplund as a gift, based on the following facts.

This encounter intensified Asplund's interest in Japanese architecture, so much so that in *Our Architectural Perception of Space* he refers to the East as an archetype for the future of Western architecture. Apart from his eloquent words, Yoshida's influence was quickly felt by Asplund, who published the above lecture in the journal *Byggmästaren* in 1931, together with the picture of the veranda of the Villa Baba in Nasu that Yoshida had shown him a couple of months earlier. It is a design that combines the traditional Japanese appearance of the house with contemporary comforts, for example, by using glass on the facades instead of rice paper. Asplund himself would see the same picture published again four years later in the pages of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* (Figure 6). Given the importance of the figure of the Swedish master, the meeting between Yoshida and Asplund undoubtedly marks the beginning of a series of orientalist echoes in modern Nordic architecture directly related to the information exchanged with the Japanese author.

Considering how often Alvar Aalto visited Gunnar Asplund in Stockholm, according to Stuart Wrede, once a month on average between 1934 and 1940, it is possible to say that Aalto's access to Yoshida's work was probably sponsored by Asplund.³³ The argument extends to their joint visits to the *Zui-Ki-Tei* pavilion. According to Goran Schildt, and as a result of correspondence sent by Alvar Aalto to the Japanese Ambassador in Helsinki in 1941, this small pavilion may have become one of his most significant references: "There is a very special affinity between us modern architects and the well-balanced architecture of your country [Japan]. I believe that it is a deeper understanding of the language of materials which unites us."³⁴ A kind of understanding of the language of materials that Aalto



Japanisk villa.

VÅR ARKITEKTONISKA RUMSUPPFATTNING

AV PROFESSOR E. G. SPENGLER¹

Det är kanske icke onaturligt, att en arkitekt vid sidan av sin ordinarie verksamhet med dess ständiga studier av detaljrika och detaljkrav någon gång söker sig till en viss överblick t. o. m. av ganska vittsvävande natur.

Jag vågar ta upp vår arkitektoniska rumsuppfattning till skärskådande, fast jag är fullt medveten både om svårigheten att framlägga denna uppfattning så koncist och klart som man skulle vilja, och även om omöjligheten att här behandla det på något sållt uttömmande.

Rummets begrepp, det är icke bara rummet i vanlig bemärkelse i våra bostäder, våra offentliga hus.

Det är det rumliga över huvud taget, i torget, gatan, "stadsbildens", och inte bara i det, utan också det rumliga i alla de föremål, som omge oss.

Jag vill inledningsvis beröra en filosofis synpunkter på mitt ämne.

Oswald Spengler har i "Der Untergang des Abendlandes"² bland alla de olika uttrycken av kultur även behandlat den arkitektoniska rumsuppfattningen i gången tid.

Han säger: världshistoriens skådespel spelas av en serie kulturer, som växa upp, blomstra, vissna och dö. De har var och en sina egna uttrycksmedel, sin egen för den och ingen annan kännetecknande världsbild. Varje kultur är i alla sina livsyttringar ett symboliskt uttryck för en "kulturtyp".

¹ Installationsföreläsning på Tekniska högskolan.
² Jäst är Alf Ahlberg: Västerlandets undergång, år 1116. Högskolans samling om Spengler, arkitekt Gustaf Strängfelt. De stora arkitekturens uppkomst enligt Spengler.

Söker man tränga ner på bottnen av en kulturtyp, så långt det är möjligt, när man fram till den ursymbol, som ligger till grund för den, och som av den, som har blick för de inre sammanhängen, kan avläsas ur alla dess skapelser.

Denna ursymbol, som själv aldrig förverkligas sig i åskådlig form, är verksam i varje en kultur tillhörig människans fornkänsla och diktarar stilen i alla livsyttringar.

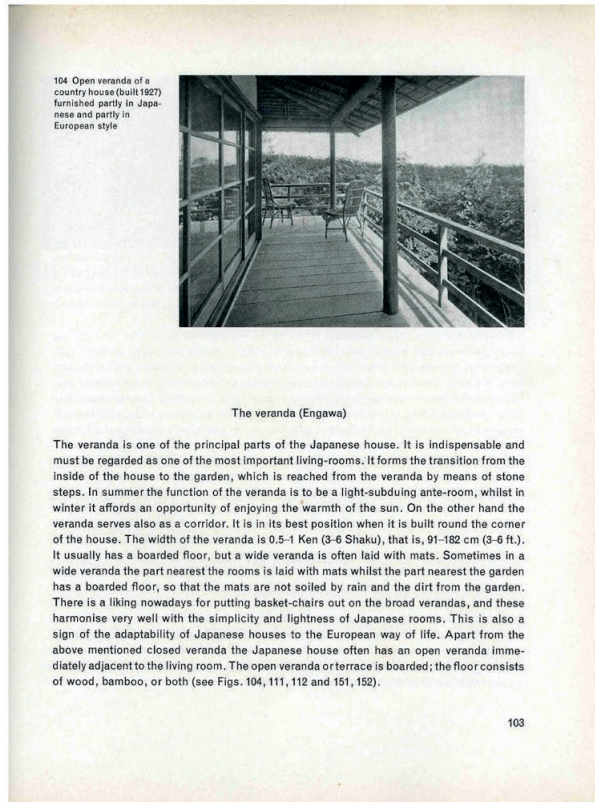
Spengler säger att "den ligger i statsformerna, i de religiösa myterna och kulturer, i etikens ideal, i målarkonstens, musikens och diktningens former, i varje vetenskaps grundbegrepp."

Spengler finner ursymbolen för de olika kulturerna ligger i deras rumsuppfattning.

Han särskiljer 8 olika kulturer och analyserar närmare fyra:

Den egyptiska präglades av det lidehöfva fasthållandet vid det förgångna och av osorgen om det tillkommande, för vilka pyramider och mumier och användandet av de mest evärdliga byggmaterial såsom portyr och diorit äro talande symboler.

I den antika kulturen inriktade sig endast på det positiva verkliga, det ständigt pågående och närvarande. "Det mogna antika tänkandet kunde i enlighet med hela sin livskänsla i mate-



104 Open veranda of a country house (built 1927) furnished partly in Japanese and partly in European style

The veranda (Engawa)

The veranda is one of the principal parts of the Japanese house. It is indispensable and must be regarded as one of the most important living-rooms. It forms the transition from the inside of the house to the garden, which is reached from the veranda by means of stone steps. In summer the function of the veranda is to be a light-subduing ante-room, whilst in winter it affords an opportunity of enjoying the warmth of the sun. On the other hand the veranda serves also as a corridor. It is in its best position when it is built round the corner of the house. The width of the veranda is 0.5-1 Ken (3-6 Shaku), that is, 91-182 cm (3-6 ft.). It usually has a boarded floor, but a wide veranda is often laid with mats. Sometimes in a wide veranda the part nearest the rooms is laid with mats whilst the part nearest the garden has a boarded floor, so that the mats are not soiled by rain and the dirt from the garden. There is a liking nowadays for putting basket-chairs out on the broad verandas, and these harmonise very well with the simplicity and lightness of Japanese rooms. This is also a sign of the adaptability of Japanese houses to the European way of life. Apart from the above mentioned closed veranda the Japanese house often has an open veranda immediately adjacent to the living room. The open veranda or terrace is boarded; the floor consists of wood, bamboo, or both (see Figs. 104, 111, 112 and 151, 152).

103

Figure 6. Erik Gunnar Asplund and Tetsuro Yoshida. Comparison between the poster of *Our Architectural Perception of Space* and a page of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* with the photo of the Villa Baba, 1931 and 1935.

would have experienced first-hand at the mythical *Zui-Ki-Tei*.

Likewise, Aino and Alvar Aalto never visited Japan. However, they established a close relationship with the Japanese ambassador to Finland Hakotaro Ichikawa and his wife Kayoko Ichikawa from March 1933 to July 1937, which reinforced the Finnish couple's interest in all things related to Japanese culture and art.³⁵ As Paul Bernoulli explained to Pallasmaa, Aalto himself used to wear *kimonos* while working in his studio in the late 1930s.³⁶ Hakotaro and Kayoko Ichikawa provided them with an unparalleled opportunity to learn about, and interact

with their oriental culture. Although even today it is difficult to find evidence of the friendship between them, Göran Schildt gives an account of the impressions left by both sides when he refers to *Finland Zakki -Essays on Finland-*, a kind of short memoir published by the diplomatic couple in 1940, after their return to Japan:

(...) Of all the people I met in Finland, I particularly remember Alvar Aalto as a highly gifted man. He told me that he had read Marco Polo's memoirs in his youth and had conceived a liking for Japan. Later he had collected many books on our architecture, especially on tea

rooms. In his hospitals, libraries, dwellings and restaurants he used pure wood, even bamboo, with an unerring feeling for style (...) One day Mrs. Aalto sent a particularly thoughtful gift to our residence, a glass vase of her own design [probably belonging to Aino Aalto's 'Bölgeblick' series, manufactured by Karhula Iittala since 1932], with carmine flowers arranged to represent the unity of earth, heaven and man. I had sent Mrs. Aalto books on the art of Japanese flower arrangements, and she had clearly arranged the flowers according to the rules in these books.³⁷

Hakotaro and Kayoko Ichikawa had given them a series of nine books published by the Japanese Government's Tourist Industry Department in 1934: *Tea Cult of Japan* (1); *Japanese Noh Plays* (2); *Sakura (Japanese Cherry)* (3); *Japanese Gardens* (4); *Hiroshige and Japanese Landscapes* (5); *Japanese Drama* (6); *Japanese Architecture* (7); *What is Shinto?* (8); and *Castles in Japan* (9); about Japanese culture, art, architecture, and gardening, which are currently on display in the Archives of the Alvar Aalto Foundation in Jyväskylä. According to Ichikawa, Aalto himself had acquired other publications, especially on architecture, such as Konni Zilliacus's *Japanesiska studier och skizze* from 1896. As previously mentioned, *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* was one of his first books. But he also had access to Taut's House and *People of Japan*, a copy of which was sent to him by Hugo Valvane, who was responsible for foreign affairs in Japan in the same year.³⁸ As well as *Antonin Raymond: Architectural details* which Antonin Raymond himself sent to him signed by several Japanese colleagues in 1938.³⁹ Likewise, although without evidence of this, it is easy to assume that Aalto had access to the German version of *The Book of Tea - Das Buch vom Tee* - widely circulated in northern Europe, especially considering that it was one of the references in Helge Zimdahl's article *Zui-Ki-Tei* cited above on the Stockholm Pavilion. These publications and contacts support the Finnish couple's interest in Japan. But how is this interest reflected in the work of these authors?

The words of Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino and Alvar Aalto, together with the many evidences, seem to explain that the three architects gradually became more and more familiar with Japanese architectural culture, a process in which Yoshida's work played an essential role. Moreover, it seems that the way Tetsuro Yoshida presented Japanese houses and gardens, as opposed to other studies of a less practical nature, may well have been one of the decisive factors in Aalto's obsession with this particular book.⁴⁰ After all, even if they only knew each other only indirectly, both Yoshida and Aalto still spoke the common language of architecture through drawing.

Two projects designed by Aino and Alvar Aalto after the publication of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* demonstrate the sensitivity they had acquired towards Japan. On the one hand, their own studio-house built in Riihitie, near Helsinki, from 1935-36. On the other, the Villa Mairea built for Harry and Maire Gullichsen in Noormarkku, from 1937-39. In both cases, the degree of experimentation to incorporate influences from Japanese domestic architecture is remarkable. Compositional aspects of Villa Katsura, synthetically explained in *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*, play a predominant role in both designs (Figure 7). Thus, the subdivision of parts of the Japanese house, the combinations of *tana*, *shoin* or the *tokonoma*, are strongly detected as parallels between both works and the pages published by Tetsuro Yoshida.⁴¹

As mentioned above, Yoshida explains Villa Katsura at the beginning of his study. He gives it prominence as a refined synthesis of Japanese domestic architecture. The palace complex is built on *shinden-zukuri* principles: "style of aristocratic house-building,"⁴² with a garden at the southern end and a pond at its centre. The interiors use *shoin-zukuri* elements, with subdivisions of sliding doors, mat-covered surfaces, and concatenated rooms around the *tokonoma*.⁴³ In

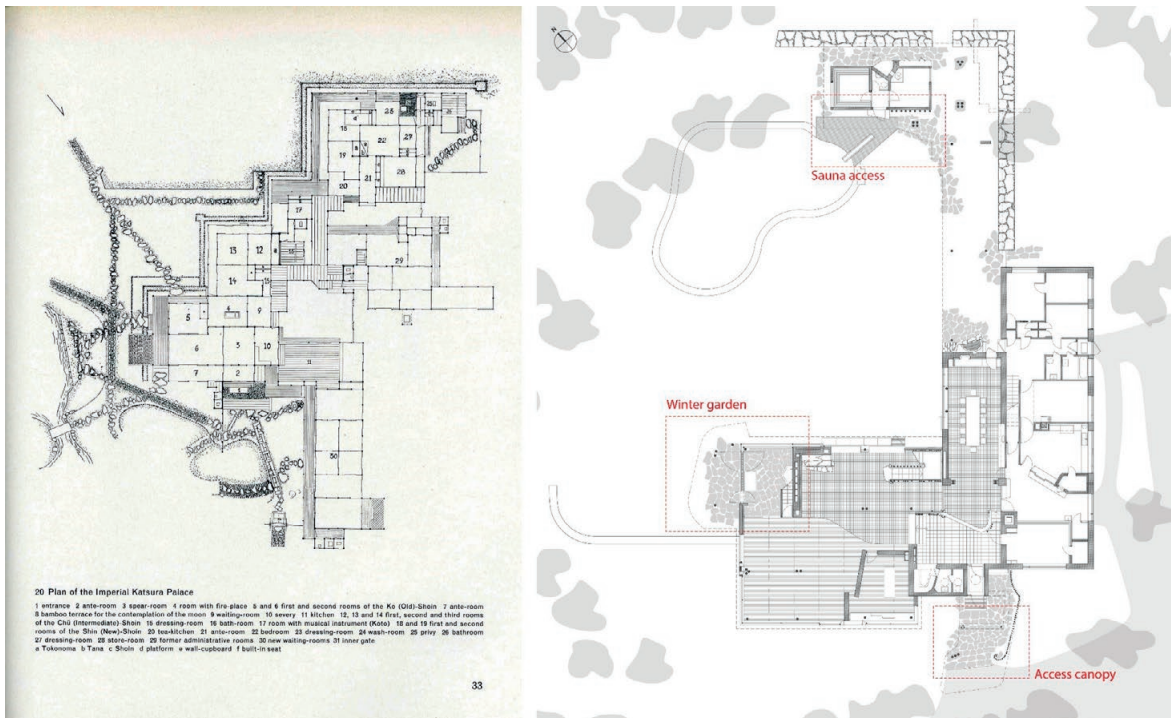


Figure 7. Tetsuro Yoshida. Site plan of Villa Katsura published in *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*, 1935. Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto. Site plan of Villa Maireia in Noormarkku, 1937-39.

addition, he notes the influence of the *sukiya* tea pavilions in Japanese gardens. The main volume of Villa Katsura has a stepped L-shape, opening onto a tea garden with a south-facing pond, thus responding sensitively to the site and the location. However, it is important to emphasise that Aino and Alvar Aalto do not imitate the forms of Villa Katsura directly in the Riihitie and Noormarkku projects. What they do is to take on this oriental sensibility in a personal way, in order to integrate the space of the house and the garden.

For example, in the case of Riihitie, the way in which the rationalist volumetry is stepped and opens to the south could be reminiscent of the imperial palace, especially in view of the comparative

rigidity with previous projects such as the Villa Tammekann of 1932.⁴⁴ A comparison of the two projects shows a clear evolution of the incipient idea of blurring the boundaries between natural and built space (Figure 8). Aalto projects the perimeter of the south wing of Riihitie using small granite blocks that serve as drainage, stone pathways leading to a mini pond at the end of the garden, but at the same time they serve to blur the flowerbed and lawn along with the stepped edge of the house. The design softens the boundary of the built and emphasises the search for a “relationship of intimacy” between the interior and the garden, as Yoshida outlines in his ideas.⁴⁵

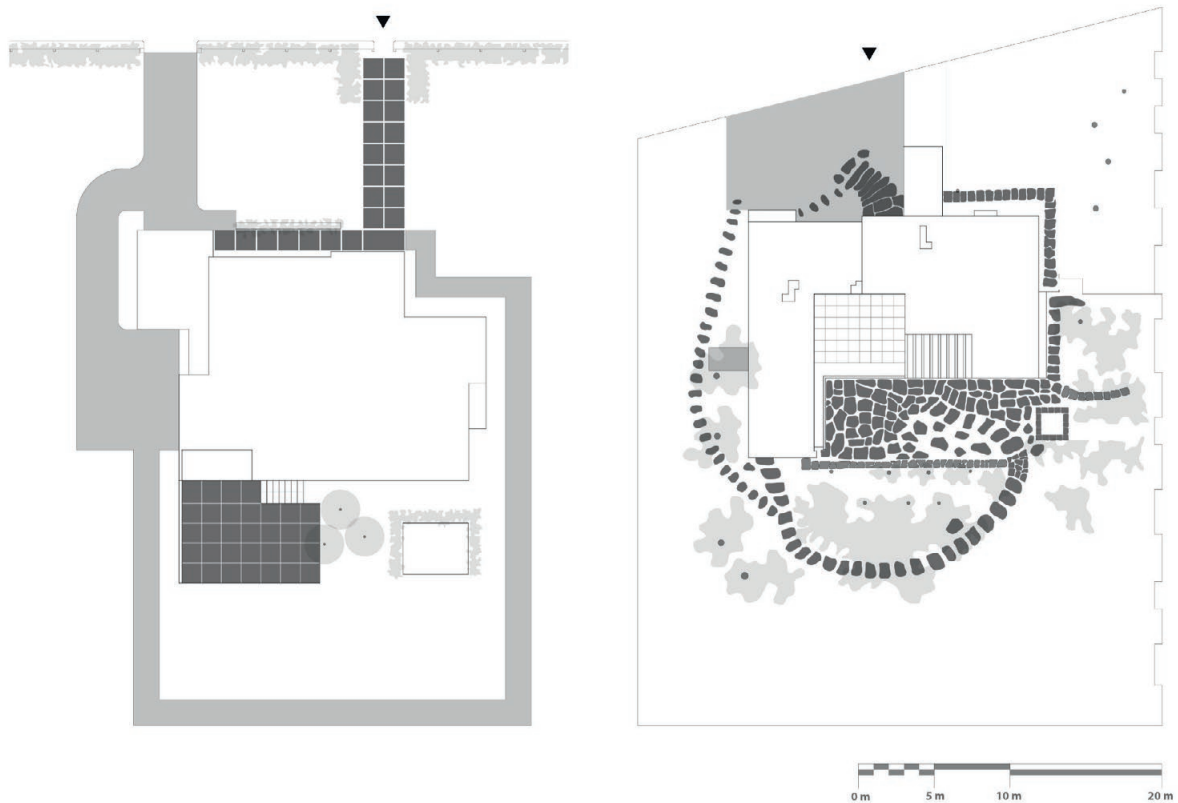


Figure 8. Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto. Comparison between the site plans, garden design and its relationship to the L-shaped plan of the Villa Tammekann (left) and the Studio House in Riihitie (right), 1932 and 1935-36.

Looking back at Yoshida's work, he published sixteen models of Japanese houses built from a combination of simple, repeated elements.⁴⁶ The floor plans of Japanese houses were usually L-shaped and generally had two areas, a public one dominating the garden and a more private service area. The floor plan of Riihitie and Villa Mairea partially reproduce this layout, apart from their respective programmes. In the first, the office/study wing extends like an arm towards the garden. In the second, there is a service wing which plays the role of a connection with the back of the property,

especially with the sauna that looks like a small tea pavilion. In both projects the Finnish architects intensify the fluid relationship of the public spaces from the interior to the exterior, to which they open. In Japanese culture, such public spaces can be equated with the reception area for visitors, carefully built by *shoin*, *tokonoma* and *tana*: "which traditionally plays the principal role in a Japanese house,"⁴⁷ in Yoshida's words.

Yoshida insists that the aesthetics of the tea garden and the house are two issues of essential

importance, because they represent the primitive forms of those vernacular Japanese buildings that emphasised a rusticity and humility pursued in their outcome.⁴⁸ These aesthetic principles coincide with those practised by Sen no Rikyu and Kobori Enshu, masters of the tea ceremony, collected in the *Sakuteiki*, the book of garden creation, which are summarised in the idea of creating beauty by trying to avoid it. An example of this would be the *karesansui*, the dry mineral garden of rocks and sand just built for contemplation. From a certain point of view, Aalto adopts this principle to alter the features of the canonical functionalist language in Riihitie's studio-house and in Villa Mairea. The houses seem to be the result of a long building process due to the asymmetrical layout, the irregular shape, and the union of different construction solutions as an assembly of structures, materials, and coatings. Juhani Pallasmaa has called this way of designing "cubist collage."⁴⁹ It would therefore be an architecture understood as a palimpsest, as a decantation of material layers, rather than a deliberate design, in the style of the Japanese aesthetics that Aino and Alvar Aalto knew in the *Zui-Ki-Tei*.

The large number of studies developed on Villa Mairea makes the identification of potential parallels with Japan more complex. Sigfried Giedion emphasised Villa Mairea's fluid space and intimacy through the textures of the house.⁵⁰ Kenneth Frampton refers to it as an example of Finnish Romanticism, explaining it from a "principle of duality."⁵¹ Malcolm Quantrill reviews the conflict of Aalto's vocabulary in the house.⁵² Juhani Pallasmaa presents it as a "cubist collage."⁵³ Scott Poole approaches its elemental materiality from a phenomenological point of view.⁵⁴ And finally, José M^a Jové analyses it as an architectural landscape of synthesis that figures the natural forms of its surroundings.⁵⁵ Thus, Villa Mairea shows in unison the modern functionalist utopia, the constructive heritage of vernacular cultures and the potential of industrial technology, but at the same time integrates orientalist details.

A good example of integration are the bare trunks supporting the entrance canopy tied with wicker. The parallels with the Japanese building technique assembling without nails, known as *nawa garami*, can be seen. However, the space that stands out most in this respect is the winter garden at Villa Mairea, because it captures the essence of *shoin* design. According to Yoshida, the *shoin* was originally a reading room for Zen masters in ancient Buddhist monasteries, but over time it was turned into a reception and rest space, widely open to the garden.⁵⁶

Aino and Alvar Aalto design a special *shoin* for the Gullichsen family as a sophisticated winter garden. The graphic analysis reveals how this area of Villa Mairea seems to be constructed by a sum of individual orientalist elements arranged on each of its four fronts, as if it were an *okoshi-ezu* composition (Figure 9).

The first front that stands out is the northeast-facing window. Yoshida specifies in his book two essential types of *shoin*. The first one, called *tsukeshoin*, which has a hollow and deep bottom space for storage and seating. And the second one, *hirashoin*, like the previous one, but with a flat bottom plinth, instead of the space in depth.⁵⁷ The second version is the one that Aalto adopts directly in the winter garden of Villa Mairea. In fact, according to the original project sketches, specifically no. 84/322, the *hirashoin* was initially planned as a corner enclosure, probably single-layer, but was eventually built as double glazing, with an air chamber between the two sides. The solution finally built means that the Japanese-looking joinery partition is mainly visible on the inside, while on the outside the windows have a larger opening scale. This is evidence that Aalto considers the *hirashoin* more as a filter of views and light, rather than as a compositional element of the façade. In other words, the way in which the garden is framed from Japanese interiors prevails in its design, rather than the other way around (Figure 10).

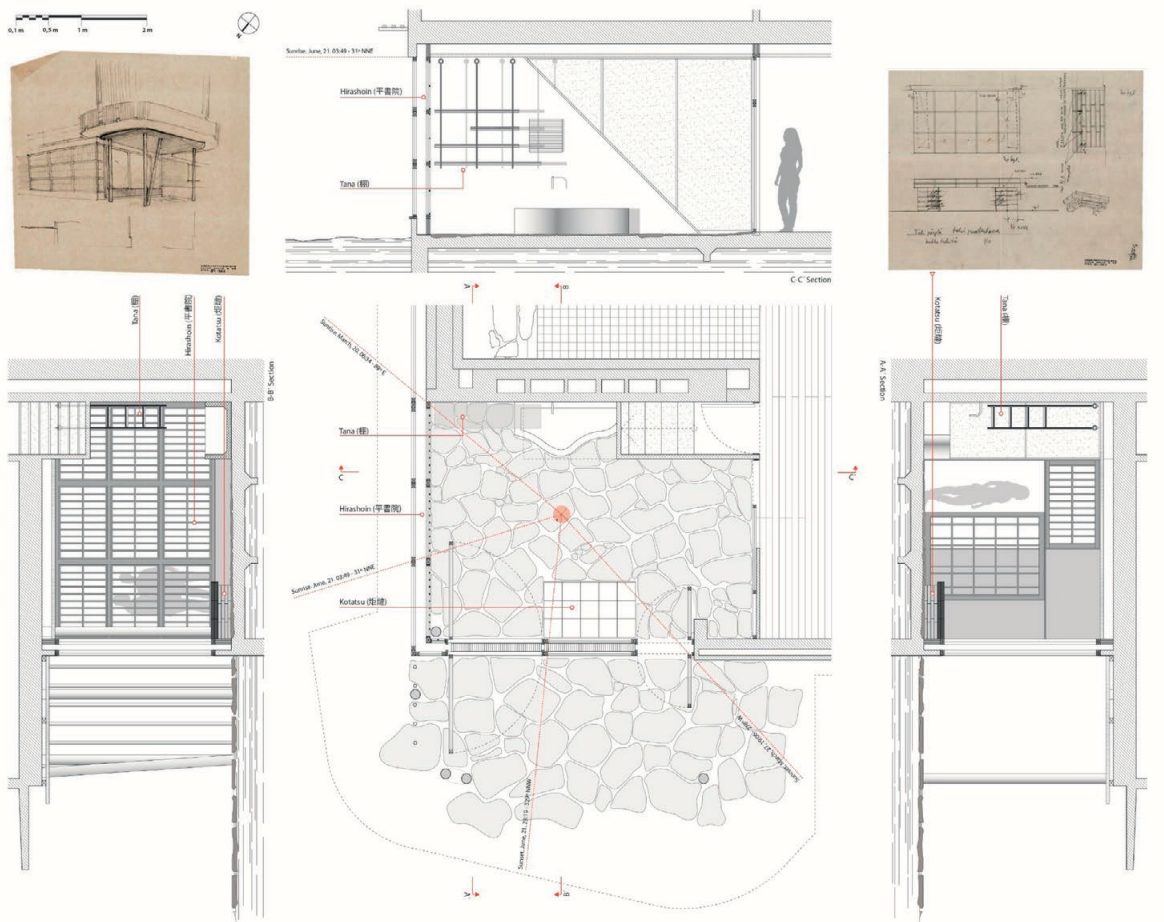


Figure 9. Graphic analysis of the winter garden of Villa Mairea and sketches by Alvar Aalto (nos. 84/322 and 84/325).

On the south-east and north-west sides of the winter garden, Aalto placed a light hanging shelf in the style of a *tana*, and a low table of just seven rows of brick, which he carefully details in plan no. 84/325, opposite each other. On the one hand, the variations in *tana* design had been extensively illustrated by Yoshida. On the other, the small brick construction seems to evoke the appearance of the *kotatsu*, the traditional Japanese table, although now placed at the side of the room.

Finally, the south-west front is the access point to the winter garden from the main hall of Villa Mairea. This is designed by a single sliding door, assembled on a wooden frame and with vertical partitions that create a dialogue with the *hirashoin* situated at the back, resulting in a sequence of sliding curtains with a clear orientalist taste.

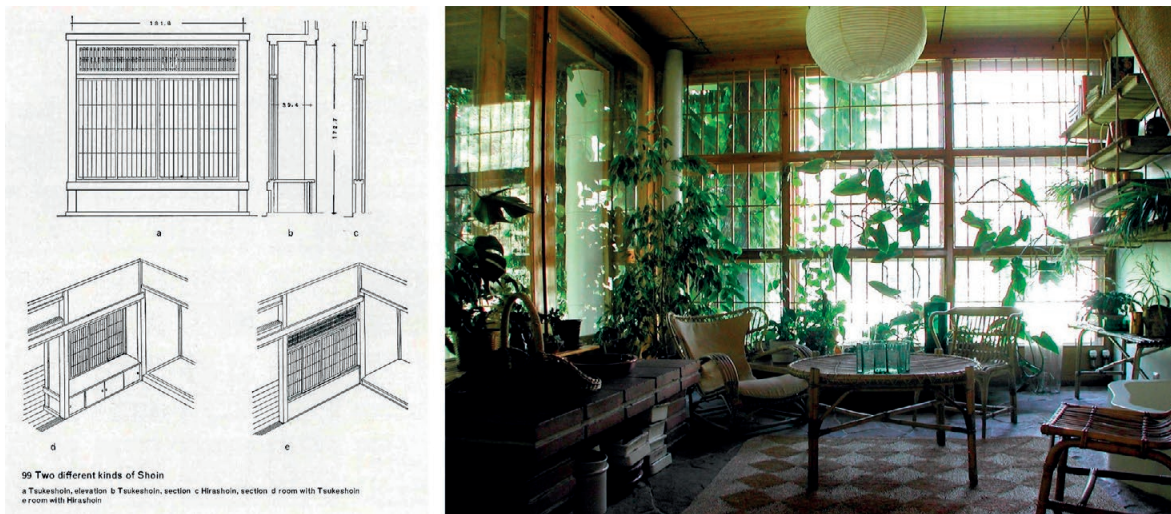


Figure 10. Tetsuro Yoshida, Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto. Comparison between the winter garden in Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea and the pages of *Das japanische wohnhaus* showing two types of *shoin*, 1935 and 1937.

Another aspect of the orientalist interest of this winter garden is the pavement. Instead of a matted surface, Aalto covers the ground with natural stone slabs, which may well correspond to the stone paths that Yoshida says, "lend the Japanese garden its peculiar charm."⁵⁸ Curiously, he uses natural stone in the interior, but extends it to the exterior, or vice versa. At the same time, the small-section wooden slatted ceiling produces the same ambiguous indoor-outdoor play, underlining the hybrid character of this space: exterior and interior, natural and architectural. In this respect, it is worth remembering that Japanese gardens have a strong combination of artifice and nature.

For all these reasons, the winter garden of Villa Mairea can be considered much more than a space for growing plants and flowers. On the contrary, it is a space with a strong symbolic orientalist character, which seems to respond to both a creative and practical function, perhaps for the creation of delicate *ikebana* flower arrangements, in an atmosphere of material treatments and forms that subtly transport us to Japan.

Other more obvious Japanese analogies have also been studied in previous research. For example, the spatial quality of the wooden sliding doors connecting the living room and the studio in Riihitie's project;⁵⁹ or the *tokonoma* concept of Villa Mairea's living room as a showroom for the Gullichsen art collection.⁶⁰ Yoshida explains that in the traditional *tokonoma* there is only one column, called *tokobashira*, the main one, which was made with a rough trunk, in contrast to the fineness of the rest of the surfaces. In the same sense, the contrast of textures in the wicker-covered pillars of the Villa Mairea living room can be interpreted as an analogy of those solutions drawn by Yoshida, which, in short, confirm *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* as a reference for the designs of Aino and Alvar Aalto.

CONCLUSIONS

Tetsuro Yoshida begins *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* by writing: "I have long been dreaming a dream: (...). Thus, I picture to myself the cultural

interchange of all peoples, and it has been my wish to take part, even if only as one little drop, in this important work.”⁶¹ and on the face of it, he clearly succeeded in doing so.

Traditional Japanese culture in general, and architectural culture in particular, was a clear reference for Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto during the 1930s. Their interest in establishing contact with Japanese architects and diplomats, their shared visits to the *Zui-Ki-Tei*, and even their adoption of rituals typical of the Japanese way of life, such as the *kimono* or the art of *ikebana* flower arrangement, underline the importance of these sources for the authors, who shared them among themselves and with their closest circle, with collaborators such as Paul Bernoulli. In the view of this research, Tetsuro Yoshida represented much more than a “little drop” in this process.

The great success of Tetsuro Yoshida’s work was not only to bring Japanese architectural culture closer to Western authors, but also to do so using an architectural, graphic and technical language, designed as if it were a handbook on building. *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* facilitated the formal and conceptual connection with certain traditional Japanese buildings, such as Villa Katsura. The idealised perception of the myth of the Japanese house by the Modern Movement, especially in Germany, had its own version and success in the Nordic countries. Numerous Nordic authors, such as the Norwegians Arne Korsmo and Sverre Fehn, the Danes Jørn Utzon, Halldor Gunnløgsson, Vilhelm Wohlert and Jørgen Bo, as well as Erik Gunnar Asplund, Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto themselves, far from reproducing Japanese technical details mimetically, understood and reinterpreted traditional Japanese solutions. Indeed, Erik Gunnar Asplund was the key contact who facilitated the arrival of Tetsuro Yoshida’s legacy in the Nordic context, while Aino and Alvar Aalto clearly internalised Japanese designs.

The winter garden of Villa Mairea is one of the best evidences of this attitude, a deliberate combination

of parts of the Japanese house; *hirashoin*, *tana* and *kotatsu*, an amalgam of Eastern elements adapted to a new use between indoors and outdoors. Aino and Alvar Aalto did not imitate Japanese references but interpreted them filtered through their own architectural sensibility. In other words, they reflect a process of architectural syncretism between the oriental and the modern.

Nonetheless, the fact is that the building tradition of the Nordic countries shares with that of Japan a strong desire to live in contact with nature. The idea of interweaving house and garden, interior and exterior, that “infinite space” mentioned by Erik Gunnar Asplund, is one of the keys that both the above-mentioned Nordic authors and the Japanese referents seek to reconcile to a greater extent. It is also one of those underlined in the pages of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*.

Asplund’s and Aalto’s writings and lectures of those years echo the drawings and explanations of Tetsuro Yoshida. Neither mentioned Tetsuro Yoshida’s name explicitly, although he played a decisive role in the Japanese immersion of the Nordic countries.

Notes and References

¹ Erik Gunnar Asplund, “Vår arkitektoniska rumsuppfattning,” *Byggnästaren: Arkitektupplagan* (1931), 203-210.

² *Ibid.*, 203-210.

³ Alvar Aalto and Aino Aalto, “Rationalism and Man,” in *Alvar Aalto: in his own words*, ed. Göran Schildt (New York: Rizzoli, 1998), 93. Aalto argues that standardisation makes design “inhuman” but notes that in Japanese culture such standardisation is not at odds with sensitivity to the user.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 225-229.

⁵ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Aalto House 1935-36* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Akatemia & Saatio, 2003), 75. Ramón Rodríguez Llera, *Japón en Occidente. Arquitecturas y Paisajes del Imaginario Japonés, del Exotismo a la Modernidad* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2012).

⁶ Specifically, we refer to the following studies: Clay Lancaster, “Japanese Building in the United States before 1900: Their Influence upon American Domestic Architecture,” *The Art Bulletin* 35, no. 3 (1953): 217-224; Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Chisaburoh Yamada, ed. *Dialogue in Art: Japan and the West* (Kodansha, Tokyo: New York & San Francisco, 1976); Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese influence on Western art since 1858* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981).

- ⁷ Chisaburoh Yamada, ed., *Dialogue in Art: Japan and the West* (Kodansha, Tokyo: New York & San Francisco, 1976), 16.
- ⁸ Hyon-Sob Kim's most important research in this field are: Hyon Sob Kim, "Tetsuro Yoshida (1894-1956) and the Architectural Interchange between East and West," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2008): 43-57; Hyon Sob Kim, "Cross-Current Contribution: A Study on East Asian Influence on Modern Architecture in Europe," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (2009): 9-18; Hyon Sob Kim, "A Study on the Influence of Japanese Tokonoma on Aalto's Art Display Concept in Villa Mairea (1937-39)," *Journal of Architectural History* 15, no. 3, (2006); Hyon-Sob Kim, "The Historical Significance of the Architect Tetsuro Yoshida's Travel Abroad," *Journal of Architectural Institute of Korea: Planning and Design*, no. 225 (2007): 199-206.
- ⁹ Manfred Speidel, "The Presence of Japanese Architecture in German Magazines and Books 1900-1950," in *Dreams of the Other*, ed. H. Adachi (Kobe: Kobe University, 2007); Anna Basham, "At the crossroads of Modernism and Japonisme: Wells Coates and the British Modern Movement. Papers Delivered in the Thematic Sessions of the Sixtieth Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 66 (2007): 422-425; Peter Blundell Jones, "The lure of the Orient: Scharoun and Häring's East-West connections," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2008): 29-42; Gabriel P. Weisberg, Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff & Hanne Selkokari, *Japanomania in the Nordic Countries, 1875-1918* (Helsinki: Ateneum Art Museum, 2016).
- ¹⁰ Hiroshi Momose, "Japan's relations with Finland, 1919-1944, as reflect by Japanese Source Materials," *Slavic Studies*, no. 17 (1973): 1-39.
- ¹¹ We refer to the following publications: Edward Sylvester Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886); Kakuzo Okakura, *The Book of Tea* (London; New York: Putman's sons, 1906); Franz Baltzer, *Das Japanische Haus: Eine Bautechnische Studie* (Berlin: W. Ernst & Sohn, 1903); Ralph Adams Cram, *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts* (New York: The Baker & Taylor company, 1905); Tetsuro Yoshida, *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1935); Hideto Kishida, *Japanese Architecture* (Tokyo: Board of Tourist Industry, Japanese Govt. Railways, 1935); Jirō Harada, *The Lesson of Japanese Architecture* (London: Studio, 1936); Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: The Sansendo co., ltd., 1937).
- ¹² The series of articles published by Richard Neutra in 1931 are: Richard Neutra, "Gegenwärtige Bauarbeit in Japan," *Die Form* 6, no. 1 (1931): 22-28; Richard Neutra, "Die Japanische Wohnung, Ableitung, Schwierigkeiten," *Die Form* 6, no. 3 (1931): 92-106; Richard Neutra, "Neue Architektur in Japan," *Die Form* 6, no. 3 (1931): 333-40.
- ¹³ Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto. His Life* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2007), 354-362.
- ¹⁴ Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Decisive Years* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 107-114.
- ¹⁵ Helge Zimdahl, "ZUI-KI-TEI," *Byggmästaren: Arkitektupplagan*, no. 9 (1938): 82-94.
- ¹⁶ The influence of this pavilion in the Nordic area has been well documented and studied. The building proved to be one of the most direct ways of getting to know Japanese building sensibilities. In fact, many Nordic architects drew it in some detail, such as the Danish architects Karen and Ebbe Clemmensen during the 1950s. For example, in the Danish context, the issue is documented by Mirjam Gørgensen, *Influences from Japan in Danish Art and Design 1870-2010* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag. Danish Architectural Press, 2013). The studies by Carmen García Sánchez also stand out, "1950 Around the Louisiana Museum 1970," PhD diss., (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2015); "La casa de Halldor Gunnløgsson (1959). Una mirada a Oriente desde el Sund," *rita. revista indexada de textos académicos*, no. 7 (2017): 68-75. In 1956 the Norwegian Arne Korsmo mentions his insistent visits to the Zui-Ki-Tei, as does his disciple Sverre Fehn. Arne Korsmo, "Japan Og Vestens Arkitektur," *Byggekunst*, no. 3 (1956): 70. Iván Rincón Borrego, "El singular "Hommage au Japon" de Sverre Fehn. Sincretismo moderno en la Villa Schreiner (1959-63)," *rita. revista indexada de textos académicos*, no. 11 (2019), 44-55.
- ¹⁷ Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan. Architecture, Domestic Space and Bourgeois Culture 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003).
- ¹⁸ Peter McNeil, "Myths of Modernism: Japanese Architecture, Interior Design and the West, c. 1920-1940," *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992): 281. The Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900 and the Decorative Arts Exhibition in 1925 exhibited handcrafted objects, kimonos, bamboo parasols and lacquered furniture.
- ¹⁹ Edward Sylvester Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886), 347. Morse emphasises this when referring to the Ho-oden pavilion in Jackson Park.
- ²⁰ Manfred Speidel, "The Presence of Japanese Architecture in German Magazines and Books 1900-1950," in *Dreams of the Other*, ed. H. Adachi (Kobe: Kobe University, 2007).
- ²¹ Richard Neutra predicts the disappearance of the Japanese building tradition in favour of new construction systems. However, he forgets that the first steel-framed building in Tokyo, the *Maruzen* bookshop, was built in 1909. David B. Stewart, *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868 to the Present* (New York: Kodansha USA Inc, 1988), 95.
- ²² Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan*, 2a (Tokyo: The Sansendo co., ltd., 1958), 3. At the same time he longs for the rural Japanese architecture, which he considers to be "untouched."
- ²³ Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan. Architecture, Domestic Space and Bourgeois Culture 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center 2003), 106.
- ²⁴ Francesco Dal Co, "La Princesse Est Modeste," in *Katsura: La Villa Imperial*, ed. Arata Isozaki (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007), 387-89. The content of the postcard is as follows: "Dear Corbu, all what we have been fighting for has its parallel in old Japanese culture. This rock-garden of Zen-monks in the 13 century - stones and raked white pebbles - could be by Arp or Brancusi - an elating spot of peace. You would be as excited as I am in this 2000 years old space of cultural wisdom. The Japanese house is the best and most modern that I know of and really prefabricated. Hoping you are well. Greetings to you and Mme. Yours Gropius." Francesco Dal Co reproduced it and wrote a short text entitled "La princesse est modeste."
- ²⁵ Ramón Rodríguez-Llera and Iván Rincón-Borrego, "Miradas cruzadas. Notas sobre arquitecturas nórdicas y arquitectos viajeros entre Japón y Europa," *Rita*, no. 14 (2020): 102-111.
- ²⁶ Hyon-Sob Kim has been one of the pioneers in researching the legacy of Tetsuro Yoshida and his influence on the architecture of the Nordic countries. However, recently, researchers such as Chen-Yu Chiu, Aino Niskanen, Ke Song or "Author" have explained that the influence of this legacy extends even into the second half of the 20th century due to the enormous repercussion of *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* and its re-editions.
- ²⁷ Hyon Sob Kim, "Tetsuro Yoshida (1894-1956) and Architectural Interchange between East and West," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2008): 51.
- ²⁸ Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan*, 2a (Tokyo: The Sansendo co., ltd., 1958), 2.
- ²⁹ Tetsuro Yoshida, *The Japanese House and Garden* (London: Architectural Press, 1955), 9. The principles enunciated by Tetsuro Yoshida are: "1. the Japanese house is a detached house with a garden; between house and garden there is an intimate relationship, the interior of the house and the garden forming an organic whole; 2. it has many large door and window apertures, and rooms open to the outside, making it highly adaptable to the climate of the country and creating a strong link with nature; 3. the plan of the house is flexible: the divisions of the rooms and their multifarious uses are easily changed; 4. design and construction are practical and rational, and result in an architectural beauty; 5. the grouping of the rooms, with the Tokonoma at the centre, is clean, simple and clear; 6. unpainted wood is used so that the natural beauty of grain and colour is given its full value; 7. furniture is appropriately built in, and other measures are taken to permit the full use of available room and to give an impression of spaciousness; 8. the size of rooms and the various structural components are standardized down to the smallest detail, making possible rapid and cheap construction without robbing the house of its individual character."

- ³⁰ Ibid., 73.
- ³¹ Alvar Aalto and Aino Aalto, "Rationalism and Man," in *Alvar Aalto: in his own words*, ed. Göran Schildt (New York: Rizzoli, 1998), 93.
- ³² Tetsuro Yoshida quoted by Hyon Sob Kim, "Tetsuro Yoshida (1894–1956) and Architectural Interchange between East and West," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2008): 56. In the same letter, which Kim translates from Japanese, Yoshida writes: "I met quite a few Swiss architects and was guided to their architecture, but all were keenly interested in Japan. Because they want the actual size of the (Japanese style) sliding window, please make various drawings of it with wheels and others and send them to me."
- ³³ Stuart Wrede, *The Architect of Erik Gunnar Asplund* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1980), 237.
- ³⁴ Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto. His Life* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2007), 360–361.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 354–362.
- ³⁶ Juhani Pallasmaa, *Villa Mairea, 1938–39* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Foundation, Mairea Foundation, 1998), 98.
- ³⁷ Ichikawa quoted by Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto. His Life* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2007), 354–360.
- ³⁸ Hyon Sob Kim, *The Unknown Wheel: Japanese Tokonoma Concept in Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea, 1937–39* (Pori Art Museum, 2007), 50.
- ³⁹ Chen-Yu Chiu, Aino Niskanen, and Ke Song, "Humanizing Modern Architecture: The Role of Das Japanische Wohnhaus in Alvar Aalto's Design for His Own House and Studio in Riihitie," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 16, no. 1 (2017): 3.
- ⁴⁰ Juhani Pallasmaa, *Villa Mairea, 1938–39* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Foundation, Mairea Foundation, 1998), 98.
- ⁴¹ Alvar Aalto and Aino Aalto, "Mairea: Maire Och Harry Gullichsens Privat Hus, Norrmark," *Arkitekten*, no. 9 (1938): 134–37; Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto in His Own Words* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998), 229–230.
- ⁴² Tetsuro Yoshida, *The Japanese House and Garden* (London: Architectural Press, 1955), 170. This style refers above all to the articulation between house and garden. As Yoshida writes: "In the tenth to twelfth centuries, the time of the *shinden-zukuri* style of aristocratic housebuilding, the garden was placed at the southern end of the palace buildings. Its central feature was a pond with a hillock in the background. One could glide on the pond in an exotic canoe and enjoy poetry and music. For the rest the garden was laid out with a variety of flowering shrubs which gave it a colourful and splendid appearance in contrast to the modern garden which is largely planted with evergreen trees."
- ⁴³ Ibid., 27. Yoshida explains this style as follows: "Shoin-zukuri is quite free. Various buildings are grouped around the main structure in a completely informal and practical way. The large interior is now divided by means of sliding doors into smaller rooms and the whole floor is covered with mats. In addition, we find for the first time the *Tokonoma* (recess for picture), the *Tana* (recess for wall-shelves) and the *Shoin* (bay reading-window)."
- ⁴⁴ Chen-Yu Chiu, Aino Niskanen, and Ke Song, "Humanizing Modern Architecture: The Role of Das Japanische Wohnhaus in Alvar Aalto's Design for His Own House and Studio in Riihitie," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 16, no. 1 (2017): 4.
- ⁴⁵ Tetsuro Yoshida, *The Japanese House and Garden* (London: Architectural Press, 1955), 9.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 73.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 86. Such is the representativeness of this space that is also used as a guest chamber.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 141–144.
- ⁴⁹ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Aalto House 1935–36* (Alvar Aalto Akatemia & Saatio, 2003), 80.
- ⁵⁰ Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1949), 475–482.
- ⁵¹ Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980), 199.
- ⁵² Malcolm Quantrill, *Alvar Aalto. A Critical Study* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1983), 90.
- ⁵³ Juhani Pallasmaa, "Villa Mairea – Fusion of Utopia and Tradition," in *Alvar Aalto: Villa Mairea. GA 67* (Tokyo: Ada Edit, 1985); Juhani Pallasmaa, "Image and Meaning," *Studio International* 200, no. octubre (1986), 90–98; Juhani Pallasmaa, *Villa Mairea, 1938–39* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Foundation, Mairea Foundation, 1998).
- ⁵⁴ Scott Poole, *Elemental Matter in Villa Mairea. The New Finnish Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 18–27.
- ⁵⁵ José M. Jové, *Alvar Aalto. Proyectar Con La Naturaleza* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2009), 253.
- ⁵⁶ Tetsuro Yoshida, *The Japanese House and Garden* (London: Architectural Press, 1955), 98.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 98.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 174.
- ⁵⁹ Chen-Yu Chiu, Aino Niskanen, and Ke Song, "Humanizing Modern Architecture: The Role of Das Japanische Wohnhaus in Alvar Aalto's Design for His Own House and Studio in Riihitie," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 16, no. 1 (2017): 4.
- ⁶⁰ Hyon Sob Kim, *The Unknown Wheel: Japanese Tokonoma Concept in Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea, 1937–39* (Pori Art Museum, 2007), 50.
- ⁶¹ Tetsuro Yoshida, *The Japanese House and Garden* (London: Architectural Press, 1955), 7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aalto, Alvar, and Aino Aalto. "Rationalism and Man." In *Alvar Aalto: in his own words*, edited by Göran Schildt, 89–93. New York: Rizzoli, 1998.
- Aalto, Alvar, and Aino Aalto. "Mairea: Maire Och Harry Gullichsens Privat Hus, Norrmark." *Arkitekten*, no. 9 (1939).
- Asplund, Erik Gunnar. "Vår arkitektoniska rumsuppfattning." *Byggmästaren: Arkitektupplagan* (1931).
- Baltzer, Franz. *Das Japanische Haus: Eine Bautechnische Studie*. Berlin: W. Ernst & Sohn, 1903.

- Basham, Anna. "At the crossroads of Modernism and Japonisme: Wells Coates and the British Modern Movement. Papers Delivered in the Thematic Sessions of the Sixtieth Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* no. 66 (2007). <https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2007.66.3.422>
- Blundell Jones, Peter. "The lure of the Orient: Scharoun and Häring's East-West connections." *Architectural Research Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135508000912>
- Cram, Ralph Adams. *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts*. New York: The Baker & Taylor company, 1905. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25435595>
- Chiu, Chen-Yu, Aino Niskanen, and Ke Song. "Humanizing Modern Architecture: The Role of Das Japanische Wohnhaus in Alvar Aalto's Design for His Own House and Studio in Riihitie." *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering* 16, no. 1 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.3130/jaabe.16.1>
- Dal Co, Francesco. "La Princesse Est Modeste." In *Katsura: La Villa Imperial*, edited by Arata Isozaki, 387–89. New York: Phaidon Press, 2007.
- Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1980.
- García Sánchez, Carmen. "1950 Around the Louisiana Museum 1970." PhD diss., Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2015.
- García Sánchez, Carmen. "La casa de Halldor Gunnlögsson (1959). Una mirada a Oriente desde el Sund." *Rita*, no. 7 (2017). [https://doi.org/10.24192/2386-7027\(2017\)\(v7\)\(03\)](https://doi.org/10.24192/2386-7027(2017)(v7)(03)).
- Giedion, Sigfried. *Space, Time and Architecture*. 2a ed. Cambridge Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1949.
- Gørgensen, Mirjam. *Influences from Japan in Danish Art and Design 1870-2010*. Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag. Danish Architectural Press, 2013.
- Harada, Jir. *The Lesson of Japanese Architecture*. London: Studio, 1936.
- Jové, José M. *Alvar Aalto. Proyectar con la Naturaleza*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2009.
- Kim, Hyon Sob. "A Study on the Influence of Japanese Tokonoma on Aalto's Art Display Concept in Villa Mairea (1937-39)." *Journal of Architectural History* 15, no. 3 (2006).
- Kim, Hyon Sob. "The Historical Significance of the Architect Tetsuro Yoshida's Travel Abroad." *Journal of Architectural Institute of Korea: Planning and Design*, no. 225 (2007).
- Kim, Hyon Sob. *The Unknown Wheel: Japanese Tokonoma Concept in Arvar Aalto's Villa Mairea, 1937-39*. Pori Art Museum, 2007.
- Kim, Hyon Sob. "Tetsuro Yoshida (1894-1956) and the Architectural Interchange between East and West." *Architectural Research Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (2008). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135508000924>
- Kim, Hyon Sob. "Cross-Current Contribution: A Study on East Asian Influence on Modern Architecture in Europe." *Architectural Research Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (2009).
- Kishida, Hideto. *Japanese Architecture*. Tokyo: Board of Tourist Industry, Japanese Govt. Railways, 1935.
- Korsmo, Arne. "Japan Og Vestens Arkitektur." *Byggekunst*, no. 3 (1956).
- Lancaster, Clay. "Japanese Building in the United States before 1900: Their Influence upon American Domestic Architecture." *The Art Bulletin* 35, no. 3 (1953). <https://doi.org/10.2307/3047491>
- McNeil, Peter. "Myths of Modernism: Japanese Architecture, Interior Design and the West, c. 1920-1940." *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/5.4.281>
- Momose, Hiroshi. "Japan's relations with Finland, 1919-1944, as reflect by Japanese Source Materials." *Slavic Studies*, no. 17 (1973).
- Morse, Edward Sylvester. *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*. Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1886.
- Neutra, Richard. "Gegenwärtige Bauarbeit in Japan." *Die Form* 6, no. 1 (1931).
- Neutra, Richard. "Die Japanische Wohnung, Ableitung, Schwierigkeiten." *Die Form* 6, no. 3 (1931).
- Neutra, Richard. "Neue Architektur in Japan." *Die Form* 6, no. 3 (1931).
- Nute, Kevin. *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Aalto House 1935-36*. Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Akatemia & Saatio, 2003.
- Pallasmaa, Juhani. *Villa Mairea, 1938-39*. Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Foundation, Mairea Foundation, 1998.

- Poole, Scott. *Elemental Matter in Villa Mairea. The New Finnish Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1992.
- Okakura, Kakuzo. *The Book of Tea*. London; New York: Putman's sons, 1906.
- Quantrill, Malcolm. *Alvar Aalto. A Critical Study*. New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1983.
- Rincón Borrego, Iván. "El singular "Hommage au Japon" de Sverre Fehn. Sincretismo moderno en la Villa Schreiner (1959-63)," *rita_ revista indexada de textos académicos*, no. 11 (2019), [https://doi.org/10.24192/2386-7027\(2017\)\(v7\)\(03\)63](https://doi.org/10.24192/2386-7027(2017)(v7)(03)63)).
- Rodríguez Llera, Ramón. *Japón en Occidente. Arquitecturas y Paisajes del Imaginario Japonés, del Exotismo a la Modernidad*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2012.
- Rodríguez-Llera, Ramón, and Iván Rincón-Borrego. "Miradas cruzadas. Notas sobre arquitecturas nórdicas y arquitectos viajeros entre Japón y Europa." *Rita*, no. 14 (2020). [https://doi.org/10.24192/2386-7027\(2020\)\(v14\)\(05\)63](https://doi.org/10.24192/2386-7027(2020)(v14)(05)63)
- Sand, Jordan. *House and Home in Modern Japan. Architecture, Domestic Space and Bourgeois Culture 1880-1930*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9781684173846>
- Schildt, Göran. *Alvar Aalto: The Decisive Years*. New York: Rizzoli, 1986.
- Schildt, Göran. *Alvar Aalto. His Life*. Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2007.
- Speidel, Manfred. "The Presence of Japanese Architecture in German Magazines and Books 1900-1950." In *Dreams of the Other*, edited by H. Adachi. Kobe: Kobe University, 2007.
- Stewart, David B. *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868 To the Present*. New York: Kodansha USA Inc, 1988.
- Taut, Bruno. *Houses and People of Japan*. 2ª. Tokyo: The Sanseido co., Ltd., 1958.
- Yamada, Chisaburoh (ed). *Dialogue in Art: Japan and the West*. Kodansha, Tokyo: New York & San Francisco, 1976.
- Yoshida, Tetsuro. *Das Japanische Wohnhaus*. Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1935.
- Yoshida, Tetsuro. *The Japanese House and Garden*. London: Architectural Press, 1955.
- Weisberg, Gabriel P., Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff and Hanne Selkokari. *Japanomania in the Nordic Countries, 1875-1918*. Helsinki: Ateneum Art Museum, 2016.
- Wichmann, Siegfried. *Japonisme: The Japanese influence on Western art since 1858*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1981.
- Wrede, Stuart. *The Architect of Erik Gunnar Asplund*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1980.
- Zimdahl, Helge. "ZUI-KI-TEI." *Byggmästaren: Arkitektupplagan*, no. 9 (1938).

IMAGES SOURCE

1. *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* (1935). 2. *Die Form*. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg. 3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zui-Ki-Tei#/media/File:The_first_Zui-Ki-Tei,_from_1935.jpg. 4. Le Corbusier Foundation (F.L.C. E2-11). 5. Yoshida, Tetsuro. *The Japanese House and Garden*. London: Architectural Press, 1955. 6. Asplund, G. "Vår arkitektoniska rumsuppfattning." *Byggmästaren: Arkitektupplagan* (1931) / Yoshida, Tetsuro. *The Japanese House and Garden*. London: Architectural Press, 1955. 7. Yoshida, Tetsuro. *The Japanese House and Garden*. London: Architectural Press, 1955. / The authors. 8. The authors. 9. The authors / Alvar Alto Foundation. 10. Image courtesy of Jesús de los Ojos Moral / Yoshida, Tetsuro. *The Japanese House and Garden*. London: Architectural Press, 1955.