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Design and Society in Modern Japan: An Introduction

Ignacio Adriasola, Sarah Teasley, and Jilly Traganou

It is common practice across milieus as varied as branding, advertising, exhibition reviews, and popular discourse to ascribe a particular set of aesthetic and other unique qualities to design production from different nations. British fashion is often described as “eccentric” or “individualistic,” for example. Dutch furniture and graphic design is labeled “conceptual,” and German automotive design “well-engineered.” Within this global cloud of preconceived, often carefully-marketed images for national design production, “Japanese design” possesses one of the most recognizable profiles, albeit one with multiple personalities. Notions of minimalism, *Zen*, *wabi-sabi*, and cute are often ascribed as inherent attributes of Japanese design. This profile operates across media and disciplines, from graphic design to architecture and interiors, product and furniture design, and fashion and newer industries like interaction or experience design. On the one hand, we hear of “Zen minimalism” associated with architecture, interiors, and the simple lines and matte surfaces of sophisticated product design, and on the other hand, a sort of frenetic hyper-cute sensibility associated with youth culture and digital design. Other commonly-circulated images of “Japanese design” include “high-tech meets tradition,” illustrated perhaps with a Toto Washlet or the interior of a new train, or simply “high-tech” or “tradition” presented on their own. Within academic design research in Japan, the concept of *kansei* design, an emotionally intuitive practice that attends to relations between people and their environment, is often linked to historical Japanese culture and values.¹

“Japanese design” is the product of decades of promotional activity: by various government ministries and professional organizations, by art and design universities and museums, by retailers, journalists and curators within Japan and internationally, and of course by designers and architects themselves. State initiatives and programs like the Japan Foundation and “Cool Japan” include design as a category for overseas promotion

for cultural and economic benefit, and non-profit organizations like the Japan Society in New York receive public and private funding to promote Japanese cultural products and creative industries internationally through events and exhibitions in which design plays a prominent role. Internationally-active firms as varied as Muji, Nikon, Toyota, and Sanrio serve as unofficial ambassadors of Japanese design and contribute to popular perceptions of “Japanese design,” historically and today, through their products, promotional material, and shop interiors.

Comparing the mythical aspects of “Japanese design” to everyday life in Japan and its environment, historically and today, very quickly demonstrates the shortfalls of the myth. Regardless, the myth of “Japanese design” remains remarkably strong. The association of specific aesthetic or emotional characteristics with a single nation-state or an imagined national-cultural tradition has been promoted by state support mechanisms for industrial development through a system of promotion that favors some makers and products over others. This can be seen, for instance, in the type of criteria used for selection for key international trade fairs, or traveling exhibitions that privilege products that seem to embody the national aesthetic. Such a narrative of uniqueness is further solidified in public consciousness through museum collections, exhibitions, and textbooks, which feature products chosen as illustrative exemplars of “Japanese design”—whether regional ceramics or high performance textiles.

The claim that “Japanese design” is the outcome of a particular national territory, mindset, sensibility or corporeality of the “Japanese people” is problematic in that it conflates culture and nation. Much of humanities and social science research today expresses a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between culture, society, and creative production, indicating the impact of economic, environmental, geographic, and legal factors on culture. Within design studies, and history more specifically, scholars have provided sophisticated models for what we call “national design,” including continued attempts at articulating how design reflects or adapts to changes in national identity in the face of globalization and other fundamental change.² Design historians have also shown convincingly how the national is not the only lens through which to view identity. The subnational, the diasporic, the cosmopolitan, and the global are all important frameworks that configure collective allegiance, and design plays a crucial role in disputing, shaping, and claiming the recognition of established and emerging identities.³

Within Japanese design and architectural history, researchers have provided the kind of granular study and critical apparatus necessary to construct more specific narratives of design in Japan that explore issues such as technology, gender, and regionality, not merely national identity.⁴ Similarly, scholars have convincingly deconstructed the myth of Japanese design, revealing its internal contradictions and the professional, political, and economic factors that abet its construction and our adherence to it.⁵ Popularly and in academia however, “Japanese design” still often resists this kind of nuance and analysis. This may point to the relative novelty of design within traditional academia (and to

the persistent preference for text-based sources over visual, oral or material sources as evidence), and there are of course economic incentives for maintaining “Japanese design” as a category.

Here, we should declare our hand. We wish to disentangle “Japanese-ness” from design, but are cognizant of the ideological framework for this relationship and have therefore chosen to speak about “design in Japan” rather than “Japanese design.” The special issue intentionally invited articles that treat “design” in the broader sense of the term, from the material culture of the everyday to the deliberate act of shaping or configuring the nation’s future, from furnishings, environment, and infrastructure to Japan’s image in the world. More specifically, the articles and translations in this special issue address the relationship that design and designers, individually or collectively, have or would like to have with society. The questions we asked our contributors include: What can design offer to society or to specific social struggles that have taken place in Japan, historically and today? How has the professional role of the designer intersected with the designer’s role as citizen, resident or consumer? How have people in Japan interacted with design at certain historical moments—as its creators, consumers, regulators, and inhabitants? Similarly, we selected Japanese-language writings for translation not only for their historical importance and lack of availability in English to date, but also for what they convey about particular understandings of design’s relationship to society within historical moments—and different periods of design practice—in twentieth- and twenty-first century Japan.

By asking these questions, this special issue attempts to shift the frame of discourse from one concerned with “Japanese-ness” and its representation to one that asks how design in Japan affects or is being affected by society in Japan. In other words, we hope to refocus discussion and debate—whether in research, teaching, curating or popular discourse—from a focus on national identity and uniqueness to an interest in the social role of design. In doing so, we also aim to reposition “Japanese design” as, very simply, design as practiced in Japan: as a set of industries, academic disciplines, professions, and concepts which, counter to the image of “Japanese design” most often circulated and consumed, can themselves be subject to internal dispute among practitioners and proponents, and sometimes not considered through a national-cultural lens at all.

Expanded Definitions of Design in International Discourse and Practice

The definition of the term “design” possesses local inflection deriving from specific geographic and geopolitical conditions but it also operates as part of an international continuum and community. Whereas “design” commonly denotes the specific act of form-giving or system-creation, design scholars include much more in their discourse. Design may refer to a physical object—packaging, a building, a book—or to a comprehensive visual identity, to be applied across artefacts. Design is also a verb, and the professional methods and processes of designing vary according to history, geography, and platform.

It might resemble the intuitive methods that are traditionally associated with fine arts, it can be rationalized based on engineering and scientific paradigms, or it can be user-centered, inspired by ethnography.⁶ Design(ing) is also a complex, non-linear, iterative process that resides at the core of a wide range of disciplines from architecture and urban planning to communication design, fashion, product design and, more recently, interaction design, user experience design (UX), and service design. Design may direct behavior or suggest ways of relating to other people, spaces or processes: interaction design and UX, for example, shape the interface for digital devices and online services, and service design aims to improve user or client experience of real-life and digital services. As these examples indicate, design can be visible or invisible, tangible or intangible. What unites them all is a common core that the American social scientist Herbert Simon described as the devising of “courses of action aimed at changing *existing situations* into *preferred ones*,” a type of action that engages less with “what is” (a typical question of natural science) and more with how things ought to be.⁷

As industries and professions, design disciplines like graphic, industrial, and fashion design also emerged in European centers like London, Paris, and Vienna in the mid-nineteenth century.⁸ In Japan, as internationally, design’s professionalization followed a familiar model: the establishment of educational institutions, professional organizations, corporate divisions, and so on, responding to the need to advance design knowledge as well as economic incentives, growing domestic markets for consumer goods and state and corporate desire to increase foreign market share through more visually appealing, better made products.

As the articles and translations in this special issue demonstrate, the possibility of making decisions about design, producing design, or being given access to design provides social groups and individuals with capabilities of changing their lifeworld, questioning what they have already inherited as given, and building new capacities. This is true whether we consider elite architects or non-expert communities involved in designing their own resources. Power over design can allow one professional group to shape the direction of a professional practice or discipline, or to direct public understanding. It can change a company’s revenue and impact a political campaign. In the public realm, it can fuel social change and empower communities, or have a repressive outcome that instills systems of control and inhibits freedom or growth. Conversely, lack of access or understanding of design might lead to a variety of shortcomings, from inefficiencies and lack of conveniences in daily life to uncritical consumption.

Much of contemporary design research and practice focuses particularly on questions about access to agency. Researchers in areas including design and architectural history, anthropology and science and technology studies (STS) argue that as a creative activity, design resides equally within non-professional practices, for example home sewing and mending.⁹ The realization of design projects also involves distributed agency. While designers are often popularly credited with authorship—architects are a

useful example here—complex design projects are only produced through the interplay of multiple actors: sponsors, clients, industrialists, makers, builders, regulators and lawmakers, consumers and citizens, as well as designers.¹⁰ And two decades of STS and history of technology research into the relationship between products and users has convincingly argued that users shape products in new ways unplanned by product designers and manufacturers.¹¹

The understanding of the distributed agency of design occurred also within the practice of design, most notably with the emergence of participatory design in the 1960s and, recently, co-design and social design, both practices predicated on designers working as facilitators with key stakeholders, often community groups, to co-create outcomes.¹² Trained designers might take an active role in shaping and safeguarding the tenets of their profession through specifically formed associations, but for many design theorists and practitioners, “designing” is an activity that can be performed by all.

As some of the articles and translations in this special issue indicate, this definition of design—as a social activity with distributed agency—co-exists with more established understandings of design as an industry, a commodity, and a profession. Design as distributed social practice is beginning to reshape professional practice more deeply, as designers working in more conventional modes take note of peers working in co-design and social design. This shift—notable across industrialized and post-industrial nations, not only within Japan—must be understood as part of larger historical conditions. Indeed, one purpose of this special issue is to frame design practices within their historical conditions, whether contemporary co-design or design for market penetration and political communication in the twentieth century. As such, we argue, design practices and products can be effective case studies or entry points for broader historical inquiry.

Themes and Chronologies

The special issue contains both original articles and a selection of writings by Japanese designers and critics, presented here in translation. Together, the texts span a period of almost 100 years from the early twentieth century to the present, with rough groupings in three periods: 1900-1930; 1945-1970; and 2011-2016. Across the special issue, articles and translations shed a critical light on the ways design has acted (or strived to act) as a means of social transformation or transition (be it practical, visionary, or utopian) in Japan, from the early twentieth century to the present day. The issue’s authors have scrutinized design during periods of political change and financial crisis with particular alacrity. Design, and all that it entails from the stage of production to that of consumption, became both a backdrop and a resource for change in Japan’s various socio-political redirections, from imperial state to postwar democracy. Throughout these changes, some actors retained a rooted belief in design as an enterprise that would help create a new democratic and peaceful society. But the opposite was also true, as design was also used as a tool to encourage militarization and colonialism. Equally if not more importantly for

design's trajectory in modern Japan, state economic policy, the growth of the domestic market and corporate desires for domestic and foreign market penetration supported design's growth as a practice that could add value and create market differentiation.

Design practices covered in the issue span architecture, urbanism, product design, advertising, graphic design, fashion, social design, and design activism.¹³ Authors often address these areas separately, but read together or across the issue, the papers and translations offer common themes such as gender, agency, or transnationalism. As will become clear, we made no attempt to provide comprehensive coverage of Japan's design disciplines. Rather, articles were selected on the basis of their ability to convey new and important narratives, information or arguments regarding the role of the social within design practice in modern and contemporary Japan. Similarly, translated texts were not selected to be representative; while some are well known in Japanese and are often cited as historical milestones, our aim was to present key primary arguments about the social role of design—arguments that in many cases shaped design practice and policy-making—making them accessible to a non-Japanese-reading audience. We also sought to illustrate how these arguments are informed by social and historical contingencies, including shifting ideological and economic frameworks, and to indicate key elements of the design practice in which these arguments occurred.

The decision to present constellations of themes rather than attempt blanket coverage of the twentieth century allows for deeper engagement with core questions and presents multiple English language texts that can be read together. It also creates two prominent chronological lacunae. Firstly, the issue contains no articles or translations focused on the practice, experience, and theory of design's relationship to society in either wartime Japan or the Japanese empire—topics that deserve full sections of their own. Secondly, the period 1970–2010 receives little attention. The final section of this introduction notes some themes we feel are worth exploring for periods not fully addressed in this issue.

Economic and Ideological Arguments for Design's Social Role in Prewar Japan

The promotion of design as a separate industry that requires specialist training and confers economic advantage on manufacturers and retailers seeking to reach and retain consumers at home and in export markets expanded after 1900. By the 1930s, a national network of technical schools and research institutes taught and advised on product design, and department stores and consumer goods manufacturers employed graphic designers for effective product promotion. In the burgeoning literature on design—much of it published by mass publishers like Hakubunkan— theorists and designers applied internationally-used terms such as “industrial art” (*kōgei*) or “commercial art” (*shōgyō bijutsu*) to new disciplines in Japan to indicate an understanding of design that stood at the intersection between art and commerce.¹⁴ Significantly, architecture and design operated largely in separate spheres. While crossover existed—for example, trained architects took posts

in new design faculties with curricula that offered a mix of product, graphic, textile, and interior design—architectural training, professional bodies, practice and theoretical debates had formalized earlier in the late nineteenth century and by 1900 existed as a specific set of practices and profession.¹⁵

As a practice concerned with creating relevant, appropriate products, and spaces for everyday life, design was a site for debate and experimentation around the continued role of tradition and the desired effects of cultural, social, technological, and political change. Early twentieth-century Japanese debates on the status and function of design were necessarily informed by historical events and conditions, not least Japan's 1905 victory in the Russo-Japanese War and subsequent colonial occupation and annexation of Korea, marking expansionist ambitions on the Asian continent. The period between 1900 and 1930 was also marked by intense urbanization and industrialization, leading to new living practices, domestic typologies, and family structures as workers and students migrated to metropolises like Tokyo and Osaka—and to housing shortages and urban reform initiatives.¹⁶ Urbanization grew domestic markets for packaged, mass-produced fast-moving consumer products such as cosmetics and confectionary.¹⁷

Events abroad also inspired reflections on the economic, social, and political stakes of design. The outbreak of the Great War in Europe in 1914, in which Japan participated as an ally, boosted demand for Japanese manufacture and new forms of industrial production, allowing advocates to make new claims for design's place in industrial policy. Writing in 1916-17 in the national newspaper *Jiji shinpo* (Current Events), design educator Yasuda Rokuzō suggested that Japan faced an important economic conjuncture. Export market opportunities for Japanese products had increased due to Europe's diminished industrial output, he argued, but Japan lacked the capacity to respond to this demand, either in terms of infrastructure, production methods, or access to raw materials. According to Yasuda, this was in large part due to the dearth of coherent industrial planning, and in particular to the exclusion of non-industrial manufacturing—glove-making, ceramics, printing, and the like—from industrial policy. Yasuda argued that a focus on large mechanized industries such as cotton spinning had inadvertently kept crafts-based light industries from modernizing, thus rendering them non-competitive, and that their inclusion within economic planning would only enhance Japanese industrial growth. To modernize light industry, he articulated a system for offering design advising to market research to small crafts and light industrial manufacturers, similar to those already in place in Europe. **Yasuda Rokuzō** reprised some of these arguments in the introduction to his book *Japan's Industrial Art: Present and Future (Honpō kōgei no genzai oyobi shōrai, 1917)*, translated here by Penny Bailey.

Yasuda's polemic represents a longer campaign by state-affiliated design activists to raise awareness and shift perceptions of design among politicians and the civil service, with the ultimate goal of building financial and political support for design schools and other institutions. It emerged from a larger debate concerning the relative importance

of developing new capital-intensive industries or modernizing existing community-based light industries—the proposed beneficiaries of designers' expertise. In the 1890s, Yasuda's mentor Tejima Seiichi had successfully gained state support for a national vocational education system, including the creation of a design course at the Tokyo Polytechnic (Tōkyō Kōtō Kōgyo Gakkō) and funded places for teacher training to lead design education. Continued debates about the strategic importance of heavy industry versus light industry however, resulted in the closure of this course in 1914. For Tejima's protégé Yasuda and his circle, the changing export conditions that accompanied the onset of war provided fertile ground for a renewed argument of state support for design as part of industrial policy—not coincidentally soon after similar initiatives emerged in Germany and Britain.¹⁸

Kunii Kitarō's essay "**Industrial Arts and the Development of Japan's Industry**" (*Honpō kōgyō no kōgeiteki shinten o nozomu*, 1932; translated by Penny Bailey) indicates the impact of the movement to incorporate design as an intrinsic aspect of industrial planning. Kunii, a civil servant, was founding director of the Industrial Arts Research Institute (IARI, Kokuritsu Kōgei Shidōsho), a research organization dependent on the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The IARI was created to provide design, technical, and marketing support for light industries, as set out in Yasuda's treatise. Writing fifteen years after Yasuda, Kunii similarly argued that Japan was squandering the opportunity to exploit its comparative advantage and advocated for the rationalization of production methods in order to scale up consumer goods manufacturing. First, this required reconciling two modes of production previously understood as distinct: objects resulting from mass manufacture (*kōgyōhin*) with those resulting from small-scale craft techniques (*kōgeihin*). These approaches to production could be recognized as compatible inasmuch as *all* products needed to incorporate both aesthetic and functional aspects. Necessary actions were thus to raise standards in manufacture, to further employ traditional aesthetic values and to incorporate modern production methods to improve rather than entirely replace existing ones. Finally, Kunii calls for the development of an institutional framework to educate, coordinate, and foment this new approach to manufacturing. The Industrial Arts Research Institute itself had emerged as part of a national institutional framework of light industry and craft research institutes, technical schools, and product museums established in the early twentieth century to improve product standards. Kunii's argument to merge craft production with mass manufacturing techniques, rather than treating the two as separate industries, indicates a move to incorporate small local manufacturers into an increasingly industrialized system—and the promotion of design as an integral aspect for both.

While the social and cultural effects of industrialization in Japan were well apparent by 1900, the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 accelerated this process of transformation. The earthquake destroyed much of the early modern substrate on which the city of Tokyo had been built. In its wake, the city underwent substantive reurbanization. Kon Wajirō,

then a professor of architecture at Waseda University, and artist Yoshida Kenkichi led a group of enthusiasts who systematically collected information on changing aspects of city life. Keeping tabs on the shifting fashions of the passersby in the Ginza, the uniforms worn by schoolboys on the street or those of maids and waitresses at its many cafés, meticulously analyzing and recording the contents of closets and wallets alike, these surveyors created virtual snapshots of everyday life in the midst of the consolidation of the society of consumption.¹⁹ The resulting visually complex diagrams provided them a means of describing changing expressions of modernity (pls. 2 and 3).

Kon Wajirō's essay **"What is Modernology" (Kōgengaku towa nanika, 1927;** translated by Ignacio Adriasola) is his first attempt at furnishing a theory for the descriptive and analytical techniques employed in such surveys. In the essay—equally manifesto and statement of research—Kon self-consciously explains his attempts to describe and define the present condition. For Kon, modernology (*kōgengaku*) is an indigenous and unprecedented attempt at articulating a positivist methodology for the study of culture as it expressed itself. The methodology proposed centers on the keen observation and analysis of material culture. Yet, while based on empirical observation, modernology is ultimately invested in the deep, underlying forces that give shape to culture: Kon found in the object a symptom of the transformed relations of production under capitalism. While Kon appears to reserve a certain degree of ambivalence toward the cult of the commodity-form in the prewar society of consumption, the emphasis on a scientific practice dedicated to the detailed analysis of objects may have hindered a more critical engagement with these concepts.²⁰

Such ambivalence is similarly present in **Hamada Masuji's** concluding chapter to the 26-volume *Anthology of Contemporary Commercial Art (Shōgyō bijutsu zenshū, 1930;* translated by Magdalena Kolodziej). Trained initially as an oil painter, Hamada turned to the industrial application of his knowledge of visual art as a means of financing his studies. His encounter with the artists Yanase Masamu and Murayama Tomoyoshi—who on his return from Berlin formed the avant-garde group MAVO—exposed him to the tenets of Constructivism. This avant-garde sensibility was founded on the recognition of technology and industry as revolutionary elements in modern society, as well as the repudiation of the aestheticizing tendencies of bourgeois art. Likewise, Hamada grounded his vision for "commercial art" within the rational and technological values of the industrial era. For Hamada, commercial art held the promise of a total, unitary artistic practice: one that anticipated a convergence of form with function that was aimed toward the spiritual elevation of the masses. This unitary practice—which for him encompassed a variety of media besides graphic design—was inextricable from the new productive context and had the potential of ultimately transforming the role of art in society. "Until today," Hamada writes, "There has been no art that has occupied, its own independent position and existed purely at the will of the artist's spirit, which takes the heart of the masses as its own. However, such an art can now be realized." As

Hamada's words indicate, the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia spurred debates across Europe and internationally on the role of cultural production within proletarian politics. These resonated in Japan's industrializing context, and gave rise to an interwar period marked also by the intensification and popularization of proletarian politics and heated debates on the social function of art.

Alongside print and visual media, travel—both to and from Japan—allowed Japan-based designers to participate in such international socio-political discourses and to stay abreast of industry and technological developments. Japan also remained a terrain of practice for European and American architects and engineers. This practice had begun in the Meiji period (1868-1912) with the direct import of international knowledge through the hiring of foreign engineers to build new infrastructure and civic building typologies, from bridges, city halls, and railway stations to theaters and department stores. By the 1920s, architects and designers came not only from well-known epicenters of Western capitalist modernity such as France or the United States, but also from Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic. Their work would bring socialist architectural principles reflected in housing programs or other public services aimed at providing a better future for all of society. These stood in contrast to the goals of individualized progress and success often reflected in the design of single-family homes for the wealthy.

For Czech architect Bedřich Feuerstein, examined in **Helena Čapková's** article **“Believe in socialism...”: Architect Bedřich Feuerstein and His Perspective on Modern Japan and Architecture,** Japan's residential architecture resonated fully with his search for social egalitarianism. Feuerstein was a self-declared socialist, well connected with politically powerful networks in the Czech Republic such as the circles around the Republic's first president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Feuerstein initially looked for a spatial paradigm of social equity in the Soviet Union but, according to his writings, instead found this paradigm in the tradition of “the Japanese house.” Japan, a country that had not and would not officially embrace socialism, provided Feuerstein with the model he believed contemporary modern society should adopt. For Japanese architects, urbanists, and designers, traveling European and American architects brought foreign knowledge (pl. 1). But Feuerstein's bridging of socialist visions with the capabilities of architectural practice was not unique. Many architects from Japan—some mentioned in both Čapková's article and in Kuroishi Izumi's article on postwar architectural practice—practiced and debated similar ideas in the 1920s and 30s.

Postwar Recovery, Affluence, and Its Critique

The second group of articles and translations addresses design and society in postwar Japan, from 1945 to 1970. Economic recovery accelerated significantly during the Korean War, thanks to the American investment in Japan's procurement industry, and ushered in nearly two decades of double-digit growth in annual GDP, a period well-known as the

high economic growth period. Architecture and the graphic, industrial, fashion, textiles, interiors, and theater design industries both contributed to economic growth and became sites of fertile, often highly-charged debate around development and social good. Articles and translations in this section describe and analyze interventions into these debates. Questions that the authors explored included: How could economic recovery be achieved and rapid growth sustained? Would a socialist or capitalist mode of production best guarantee prosperity? Who would benefit from prosperity, versus who should benefit from it? Would military alliance with the United States curtail Japanese options in this regard? And what was Japan's role in the new postwar international order? Designers and architects addressed such questions in both practice and theoretical debates.

By war's end in 1945, Japan's economic infrastructure was in disarray, much of its population was displaced and principal cities had been reduced to rubble from American firebombing campaigns in 1945. These factors compounded shortages of food, clothing, and shelter. Housing shortages and the lack of state resources for supplying shelter quickly became a pressing concern for many architects, and the severity of conditions prompted more abstract reflection on architecture's social role more broadly. The architects of the New Architectural Union (NAU), formed in 1946, saw modernizing architecture's production and legal framework as a way to both assure the integrity of the profession and serve social needs in consultation with the public. As **Kuroishi Izumi** articulates in **"Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU,"** NAU debates meshed prewar architectural debates around political ideology and architecture's role in society with new political and philosophical debates around capitalism and socialism against the very real backdrop of the postwar housing crisis. They also reflected Japanese architects' acute awareness of, and in many cases participation in, debates about functionalism promoted by the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), an international network of architects led by the eminent Franco-Swiss architect and urban planner Le Corbusier (pl.4).

Prewar professional practices and postwar material conditions also impacted graphic design. The advertising executive and designer **Nakai Kōichi**, in **"A Testimony from the Postwar Period"** (**Jidai no shōgen**, 2008; translated by Kim Mc Nelly), describes how professional skills and standards developed in the prewar years were honed through wartime employment, then used amid materials shortages and limited access to technology in the immediate postwar years.²¹ While commercial artists faced severe restrictions in wartime, the war had also offered prominent postwar figures such as Hara Hiromu and Kamekura Yūsaku opportunities for training and visual experimentation through employment on projects such as export propaganda magazines *NIPPON* and *FRONT* and domestic propaganda magazine *Shashin shūhō* (The Photographic Weekly).²²

Changing corporate practices also informed graphic design's professionalization in postwar Japan. Changes included structural reforms, most prominently the

Allied Occupation-mandated reorganization of *zaibatsu*—family-owned business conglomerates with strong links to the state—as *keiretsu* or enterprise groups.²³ Some prominent large corporations such as electronics makers Matsushita (now Panasonic) and Sony adopted systematized, largely American management practices, including marketing methods that emphasized empirical market and customer research, either in-house or through specialist advertising consultancies.²⁴ As he describes in his essay, Nakai joined leading advertising agency Dentsū in 1951 where he was instrumental in establishing the now-commonplace art and creative directors system within corporate graphic design practice in Japan.²⁵

While poor living conditions persisted for some through the early 1960s, rising incomes, infrastructure spending, and a growing supply of mass-produced goods that were promoted through advertisements supported domestic market expansion to previously isolated regions. From the bullet train and passenger cars to ready-to-wear rayon sweaters and portable stereos, new domestically-designed and produced products became desirable commodities if not always staples of everyday life. Kunii's institute, now the Industrial Arts Institute (Sangyō Kōgei Shikenjo, IAI), promoted industrial design as a tool for both product quality and usability improvement and for market share growth through product differentiation. Paralleling corporate engagement with graphic design, the 1950s saw consumer electronics and auto manufacturers form in-house product design departments. Industrial design consultancies also appeared, many launched by former senior IAI employees who sensed that design leadership was shifting from public research institutes to private firms.

The engagement of corporations with graphic and product design created expanded opportunities for designers, and the Occupation-era reorganization of higher education brought new four-year, co-educational design degrees whose graduates filled corporate need. **“Roundtable: Young Women Designers Speak” (Zadankai: wakai josei dezainā wa kataru, 1956;** translated by Haley Blum) introduces a group of young women navigating the demands of professions like architecture, interior design, advertising design, and fashion design, weighing them against their own expectations and desires as young women in the mid-1950s. Kon Wajirō reappears here, this time as an interviewer, asking: What kinds of jobs are available to you? What does it mean for you to pursue a career? Does being a woman present you with advantages over your male counterparts in understanding the design of specific spaces or objects—in particular those associated with femininity? The designers' responses are varied and at times contradictory. For some, design and architecture are professions suitable for women before forming a family, while others are clearly invested in remaining within their career-track. Others do not yet see much difference between what they can achieve as opposed to their male colleagues. The interview responses and interviewee's profiles also provide a useful snapshot of entry-level design practice in mid-1950s Japan, across a variety of employers and disciplines.

By the early 1960s, public discourse about “good design” proliferated in exhibitions, newspaper and magazine articles, and the MITI-sponsored G-Mark, an appellation created in 1957 to mark “high quality” Japanese products first for export markets, then to domestic consumers. “Good design” was a concept with real economic impact: foreign competitors and governments accused Japanese companies of patent infringement, and consumer lobbies were gaining power overseas and domestically. **Toyoguchi Katsuhei’s** chapter **“‘Good Design’ and ‘Good Quality’ for the Consumer”** (*Shōhisha no tame no guddo dezain, guddo kuoritī, 1965*; translated by Penny Bailey) in *Design Tactics: Medium-Sized Enterprise and Industrial Design* (Dezain senryaku: chūken kigyō to kōgyō dezain), represents the widespread effort by industrial designers—many, like Toyoguchi, IAI-affiliated—to promote a better understanding of design to manufacturers as a way to improve quality and originality. Writing for owners of small-to-medium sized manufacturing companies, Toyoguchi and his co-authors argue that small and medium enterprises also need to incorporate design as part of the manufacturing process, for the good of both the individual company and the national economy. To do so effectively, however, required a more accurate understanding of design practice, particularly design’s role as a strategic process throughout product development. In his critique, Toyoguchi outlines what for him are the various factors informing good design: a combination of functionality, aesthetics, economy of means, and reproducibility. Ultimately, for Toyoguchi, “good design” was not simply a formal characteristic adhering to certain objects; rather, it was the result of an involved process comprising the multiple stages of planning, production, and commercialization of a product. Good design and quality, in this regard, were something that returned to the customers and their needs: pure form was insufficient. While he does not name them, Toyoguchi’s text thus offers implicit support and critique of other prominent theories of good design, including those of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, home to the influential Good Design exhibitions, and design critic Katsumi Masaru, a 1950s proponent of design as pure form (*zōkei*).²⁶

As this description suggests, the opportunity to present design as a solution for concerns about originality and quality provided designers a platform for articulating theories of the social role of design more broadly. Conversely, Toyoguchi’s conceptual argument about design appeared not as an internal community debate but to effect actual change in manufacturing industry practices, particularly among smaller manufacturers. We must also recognize that then as today, such communication might also represent the perceived need among the design community to promote their services to potential users, whether as design consultancies or public research institutes. While not explored here in this issue, parallels with the promotion of “design thinking” to corporate practice and the tech world today is a topic worth exploring.²⁷

By 1960, information about architecture and design from Japan circulated internationally through multilingual periodicals such as *IDEA: International Graphic*



Plate 1

Plate 1

Bedřich Feuerstein's stage design for Karel Čapek Rossum's *Universal Robots* (premier in the National Theater on January 25, 1921). Courtesy of the National Museum Collection, Czech Republic. *H6D-19291*

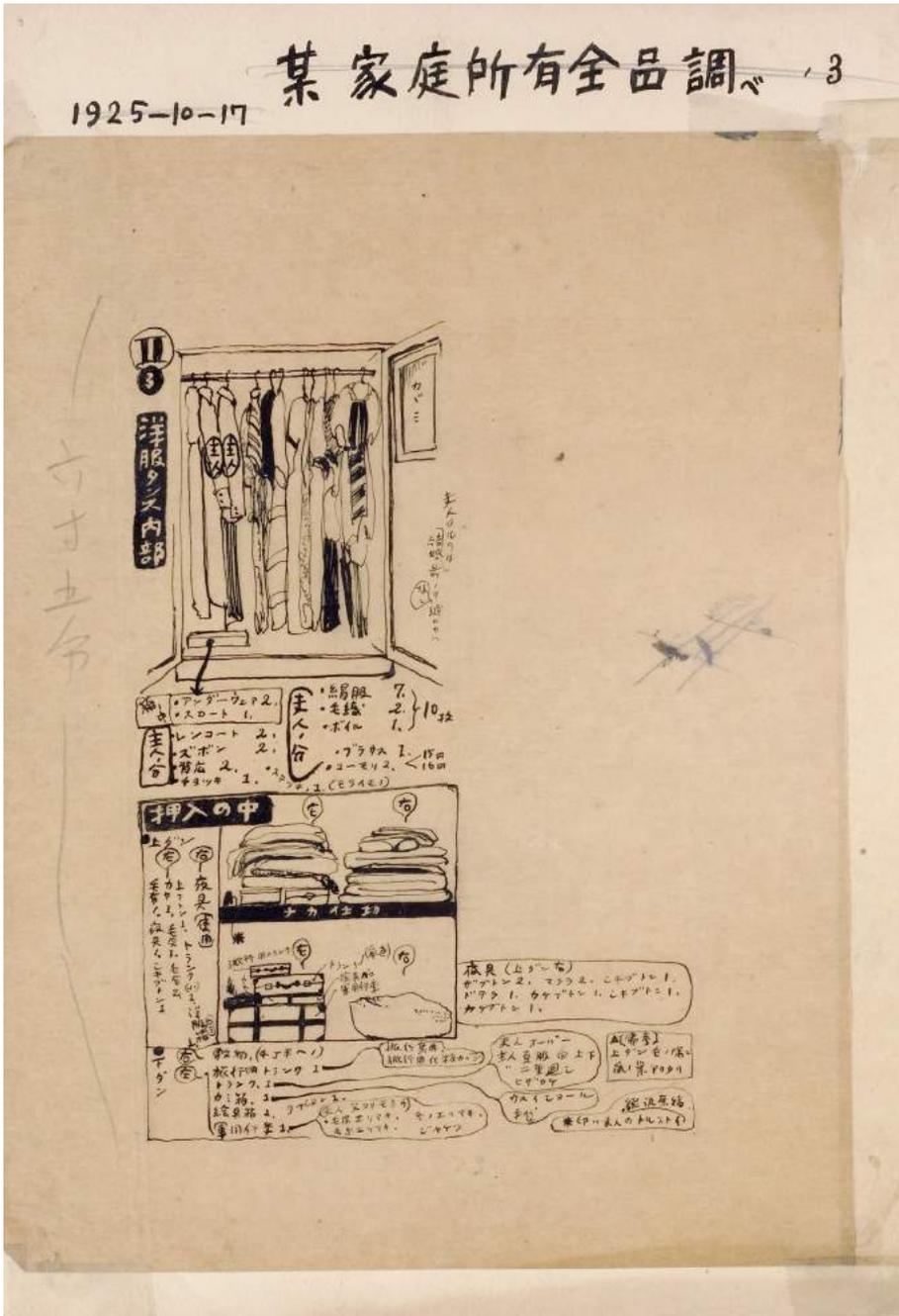


Plate 2

Plate 2

Kon Wajirō, *A Comprehensive Illustration of a Newly-Married Couple's Household*, Room #2, Image 3, 1925. Kon Wajirō Archive. Courtesy of Kōgakuin University Library. All rights reserved.



Plate 3

Plate 3

Yoshida Kenkichi and Kon Wajirō, *Uniforms of Waitresses at Cafes in the Ginza* (Ginza kafē jokyū-san no fukusō), from *Women's Graphic* [Fujin gurafu] (November 1926). Kon Wajirō Archive. Courtesy of Kōgakuin University Library. All rights reserved.

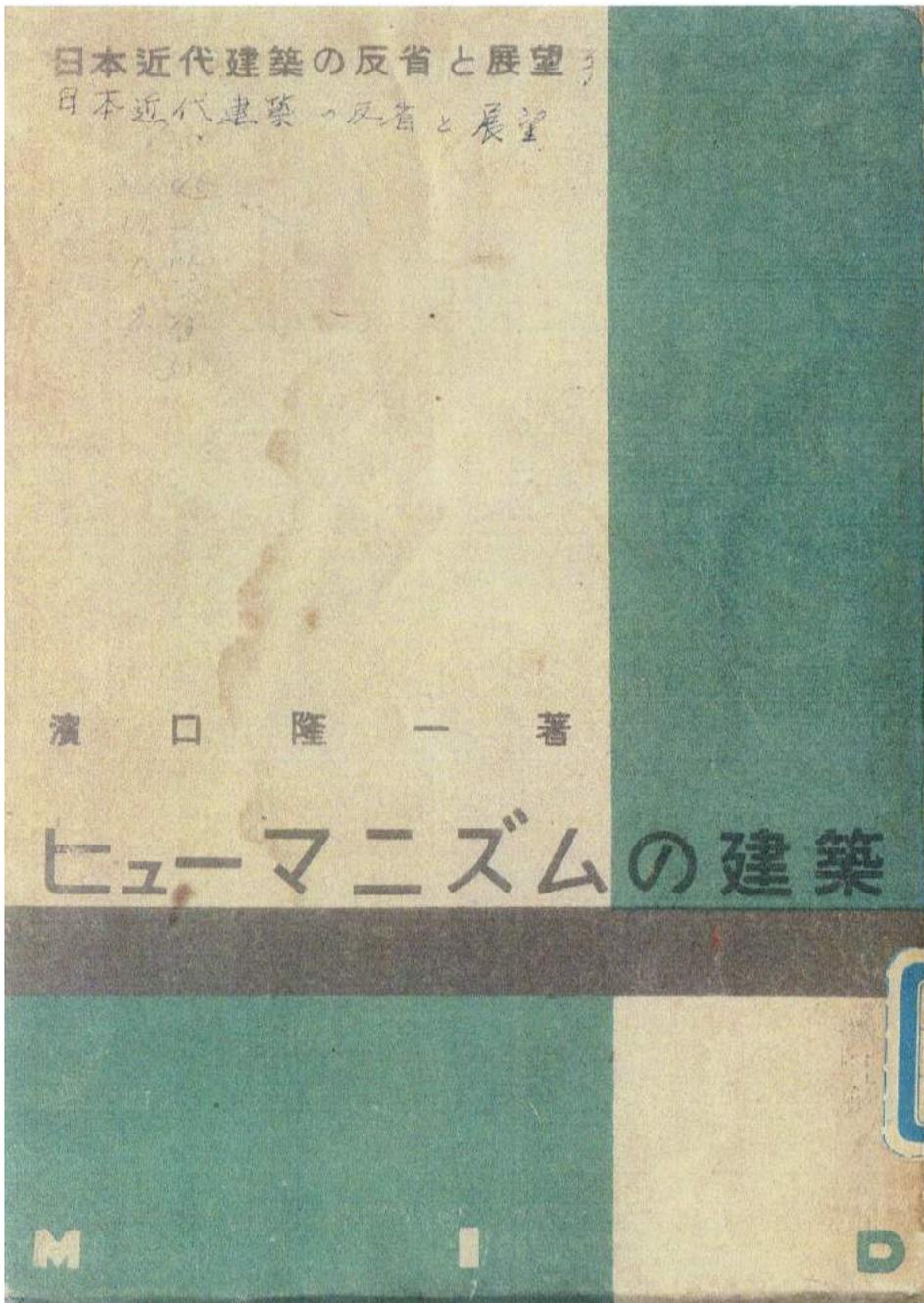


Plate 4

Plate 4

Front cover of Hamaguchi Ryūichi's *Architecture of Humanism* (Hyūmanizumu no kenchiku, 1947).

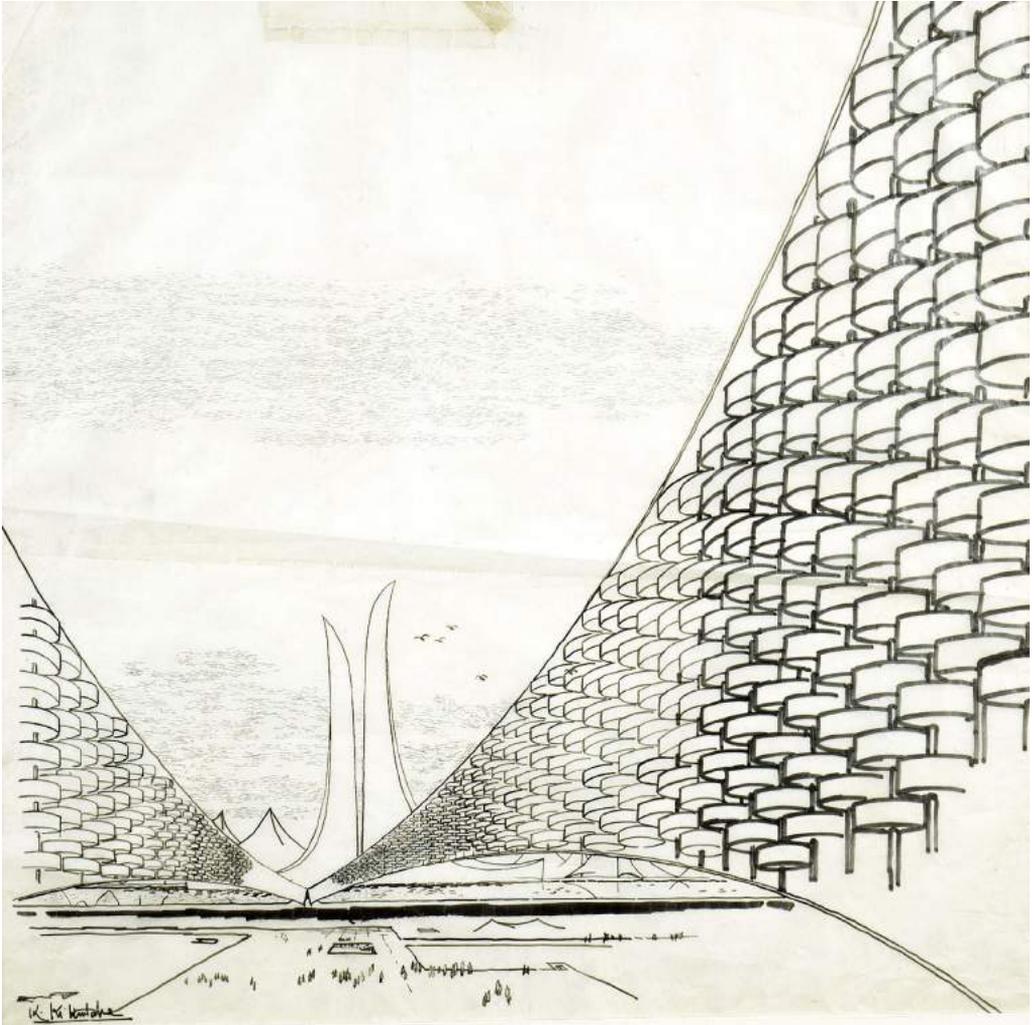


Plate 5

Plate 5

Kikutake Kiyonori, *Marine City*, 1971. Drawing with felt-tip pen, 64 cm x 64 cm. Photo by Jean-Claude Planchet. Musee National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris France. © CNAC/MNAM/Dist.RMN-Grand Palais/ Art Resource, NY. Courtesy of Kikutake Architects.

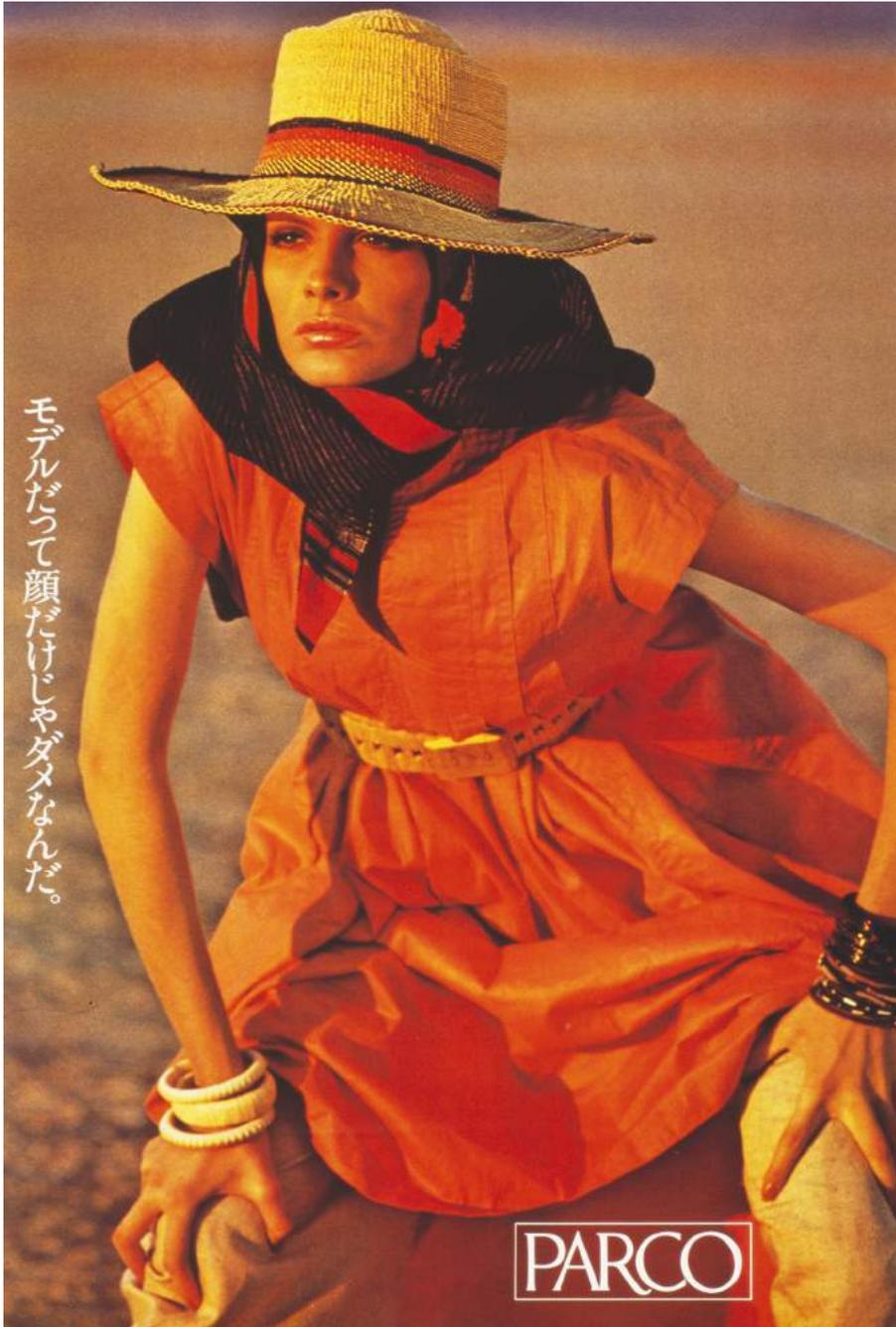


Plate 6

Plate 6

A Model Is Not Just a Face, advertisement by Ishioka Eiko, for Parco, 1975. © Courtesy of Parco Co., Ltd., and the Yoshida Hideo Memorial Foundation, Advertising Museum Tokyo.



Plate 7

Plate 7

Kyōtoku Maru carried by the tsunami in Kesenuma, December 2012. Photo by Yoko Akama.

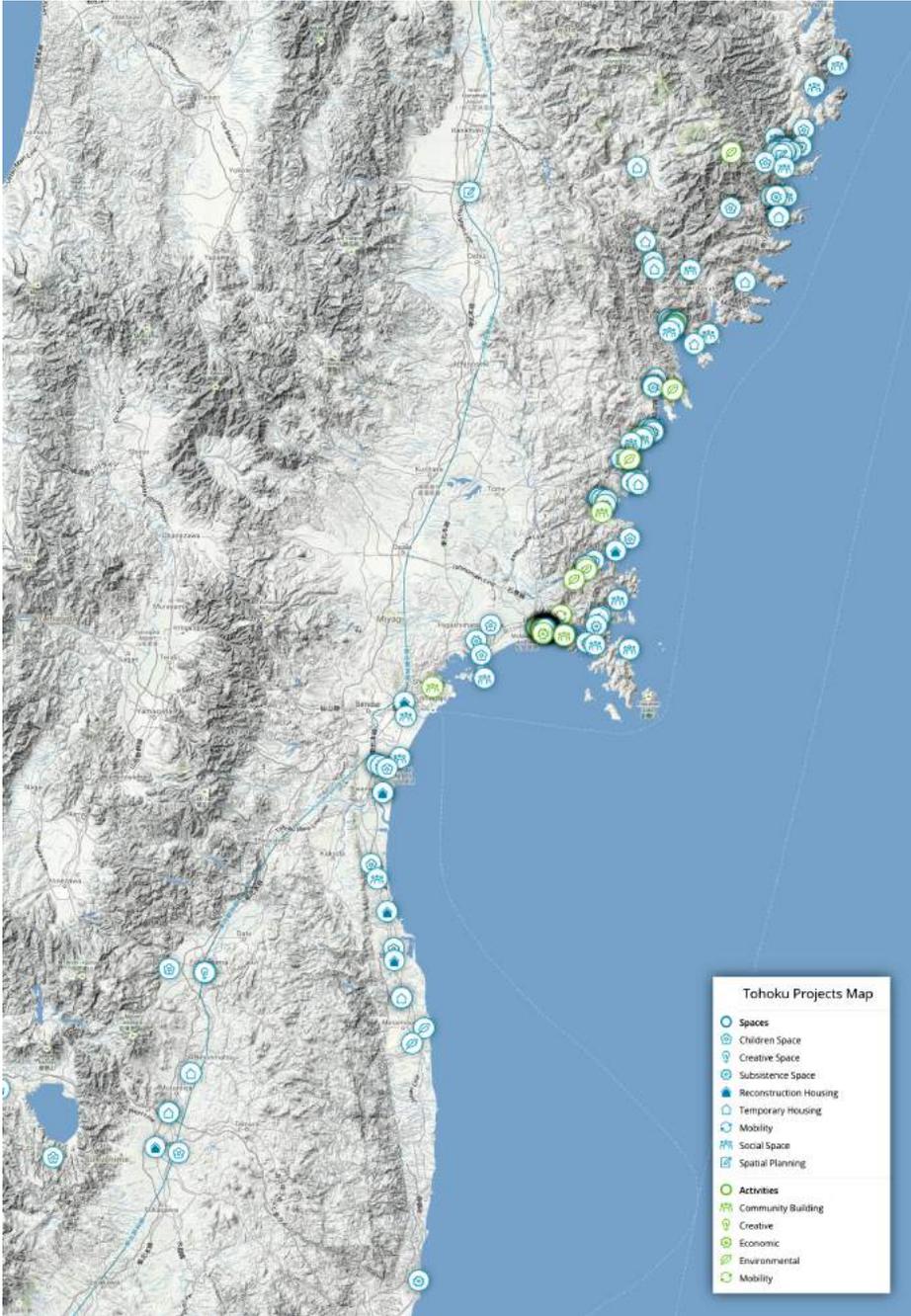


Plate 8

Plate 8

The Tōhoku Projects Map shows post-disaster community recovery projects (2011-13) (<http://www.tpf2.net/tpm/>).
Graphics by Jan Lindenberg. Courtesy of Jan Lindenberg.

Design. Japanese architects and designers participated in and organized international competitions and conferences—most famously the 1960 World Design Conference in Tokyo. Major international events such as the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo and the 1970 World Expo in Osaka—both planned and executed with core involvement from architects and designers—further cemented Japanese practitioners’ status in international design circles.²⁸

For example, the World Design Conference (WODECO), held in Tokyo in May 1960, brought together professional designers in fields ranging from architecture and urbanism to graphic and industrial design from Japan, other Asian countries, Europe, South America, Oceania, and the United States. WODECO followed on a decade of international design and architecture conferences, most prominently CIAM and the International Design Conference held at Aspen in the United States. Attendees heard papers on pressing questions for design and architectural practice and rubbed shoulders with leading practitioners such as architect Louis Kahn, graphic designers Herbert Bayer, Saul Bass, and Bruno Munari, and the architectural critic and historian Bruno Zevi. The conference provided an opportunity for younger Japanese designers and architects to hear directly from famous overseas practitioners, and showcased and promoted emerging trends in design and architecture in Japan to an international audience.²⁹ The conference also provided the impetus for the formation of the short-lived but influential Metabolists: a group of architects and designers who proposed an ambitious program for social renewal through total design, articulated from a distinctly “Oriental” perspective.

The Metabolists’ visionary program is introduced by architectural critic **Kawazoe Noboru** in “**The City of the Future**” (**Mirai no toshi, 1960**; translated by Ignacio Adriasola), the final chapter for his book *The Extinction of the City* (*Kenchiku no metsubō*) published a few months after the conclusion of the conference. Kawazoe—a former student of Kon, and one of the Metabolist group’s main ideologues—discusses a number of their architectural projects: ambitious plans for mega-form cities, structure groups, elaborate transportation systems, and building methods reliant on modularity and prefabrication. Kawazoe saw in their approach to design a solution to the core problem of how to give direction to the forces that propelled the ever-accelerating renewal and transformation of contemporary cities, or *shinchin taisha*. Paradoxically, the essay presaged the end of cities altogether, as the force that by propelling urban development today would eventually render them unnecessary (pl. 5).

Kawazoe’s eclectic combination of Marxist social theory, scientific accelerationism, and a belief in socio-spatial determinism may appear contradictory, but in many ways it reflects the faith in progress generated by state-driven, top-down planning prevalent during the era of high economic growth. However, Metabolism’s techno-utopian optimism also belies a deep ambivalence regarding the past and anxiety about the future.³⁰ Such contradictions are also present in their relationship to place: the Metabolists articulated a seemingly decontextualized design program, which could in theory easily

be transported to any locale, yet it originally was ideated as a response to a very specific experience—the destruction and reconstruction of Japanese cities during and after the war. Similarly, and despite its universalizing rhetoric, Metabolism depends on the specificity of an unproblematized East Asian standpoint—at times its discourse borders on cultural essentialism.

Some of these elements reappear in **Ekuan Kenji's** idiosyncratic essay **“Introduction to the World of Tools”** (*Dōgu sekai dōnyū*, 1969; translated by Frank Feltens). For Ekuan, an industrial designer and founding member of consultancy GK Industrial Design Associates, tools are more than simply things at the disposal of human beings, as he writes,

Tools, cities, and dwellings actively exert influence over things distinct from them, transform humanity's lived environment, affect human consciousness and behavior, and moreover promote their evolution. . . . Tools are no longer things that add value to life; tools have become life itself.

Ekuan captures the vitalist ideas present in Metabolism and combines them with his quasi-animistic theories of the tool's doubled status as object and agent of change. He also presents a holistic approach towards the artificial which includes a range of design endeavors from product design to architecture.

Kawazoe's and Ekuan's writings represent an alternative view of design's potential for social change in capitalist modernity: design operating within a capitalist system, but with holistic aims beyond those of design for economic development. By the late 1960s, some designers and architects were articulating a position even more critical of the manufacturing-based, export-oriented economy, of consumerism as lifestyle, and of the technocratic view of social progress that underpinned both of these. For some, this stance accompanied participation in wider social movements, including the student movement of the 1960s and 70s. Gender, race, politics, and environmental issues appear both in work intended to openly undermine the status quo and in the commercial activities of major market players. **Ory Bartal**, in his article **“The 1968 Social Uprising and Advertising Design in Japan: The Work of Ishioka Eiko and Suzuki Hachirō,”** sees Parco and Fuji-Xerox advertising campaigns as providing a platform for designers Ishioka Eiko and Suzuki Hachirō to convey messages about social justice and women's liberation. While Parco's and Fuji-Xerox's desire to expand market share and the designers' desire to make social and political statements might seem mutually exclusive aims, Bartal argues that the medium of advertising—particularly as a constituent voice in the urban landscape—allowed both clients and designers to achieve their aims through the same vehicle. Turning to content, Bartal argues that advertising in late 1960s Japan offered a platform for reconciling seemingly conflictual aspects of identity. By consuming advertisements, an office lady at a traditional corporation could claim an imaginary

that was different from the conventional feminine standard in the working and familial environments of Japan in the 1960s and 70s. Advertisements also merged Japanese anti-American social protest with support for the American civil rights movement, and American feminism with women's search for a new social role in Japan. To emphasize these messages, designers self-consciously employed a global corporate visual language, which they cross-fertilized with references to Japanese and Buddhist visual traditions, as well as to foreign national contexts, using advertising's high visibility to deliver multiple, layered messages to a wide public audience (pls. 6 and 7).

The Emergence of Social Design in Response to the 3.11 Triple Disaster

The third group of articles discusses powerful and important new directions in design practice in Japan, particularly after the triple disaster of March 2011. Like the debates in architecture, graphic, and industrial design presented in the previous two sections, the perspectives presented in this section form part of broader international developments and discussions around the potential of design to contribute to social change. Unlike the professional voices and practices represented in the previous two sections, the voices and practices in this section are concerned to reframe design as a social practice that can be performed by entire communities, not by designers alone.

Japan's economic growth slowed dramatically following the end of the asset price bubble in the early 1990s. Since then, Japan has moved between a string of recessions and deflationary cycles, leading many to term the 1990s a "lost decade" from which the country has not yet fully recovered. In response to the slowdown, successive governments have implemented partial liberalization measures in finance, public spending, and the labor market. These measures have not solved Japan's economic challenges and have contributed to new forms of social inequality and the precarization of labor. At the same time, the developed world's famously most-ageing population has presented new challenges for urban and rural infrastructure and social welfare systems. Yet, Japan remains the world's third-largest economy, with dynamic and innovative manufacturing and technology industries and famously low unemployment.³¹ When its decreasing population is taken into account, its per capita GDP remains similar to that of other advanced industrial democracies. Given these conditions, some commentators suggest that Japan may represent the way to a new form of post-industrial economic development.³² From a social perspective, a post-growth society might offer advantages, especially when considering how, in spite of these challenges, Japan has managed to maintain relatively high levels of social cohesion and to improve its environmental outcomes.

On the other hand, these economic shifts have exaggerated some of the features and contradictions inherent in Japan's uneven modernization. Moreover, changes in economic production, population decline and ageing, and the environmental effects of industrialization are not equally distributed across Japan—the situation in many rural areas differs from that in large metropolitan areas, and that of Tokyo from other cities.³³

Such inequalities become particularly evident at times of disaster: the earthquake and tsunami that hit the Tōhoku region in March 2011, and the subsequent meltdown of the Fukushima Dai'ichi power plant are a case in point, and provide the focus for the articles in this section.

In the 1990s, many designers and architects found their practices and economic livelihoods rocked by economic uncertainty and industrial shifts. In many regions facing shrinking markets, designers joined industry-academia-government partnerships to support local industries through new product development and branding and marketing of products and regions.³⁴ More recently, designers based both in Japan and overseas have embraced the emerging practices of social design (*shakai dezain*) and community design (*komyuniti dezain*) to strengthen local communities, whether in urban neighborhoods or depopulating rural areas. In many ways, the 3.11 disasters and their aftermath intensified these existing trends. The articles in this section provide a sample of contemporary developments, ranging from attempts to bridge academic discussion and practice to corporate design and, finally, to community-oriented design interventions. What they share is an understanding of design as a form of engagement with social problems in which the designer is only one of many participants.

Christian Dimmer's article, "**Place-Making Before and After 3.11: The Emergence of Social Design in Post-Disaster, Post-Growth Japan,**" considers socially-engaged place-making practices that emerged after the triple disaster. It is common for designers to immediately respond to disaster, and this recent response echoes objectives from earlier design projects of social recovery, in which designers emphasized the need to strengthen human capacity as a resource for recovery and future resilience, in contrast or in addition to state-led physical reconstruction projects. Today's responses are marked by the large number of participatory projects that propose, as Dimmer states, "people-centered design solutions" and "address human needs that were not fully reflected in the official reconstruction policies." This degree of design-led responses to national problems of grave importance—responses that operate outside state initiatives—is unprecedented in modern Japan, and aligns with shifts visible internationally. This invitation to non-experts to participate in the design process (and the efforts for re-skilling of non-expert population) is noteworthy as a community-building program. But as Dimmer notes, it also runs the risk of co-optation, as neoliberal governments encourage communities to "develop creative development strategies and "compete or lose funding and perish." At the same time, community self-management runs the risk of allowing the state to drop social service provision, with the argument that citizens providing for themselves do not need entitlements to social welfare.

Yoko Akama's article, "**Ba of Emptiness: A Place of Potential for Designing Social Innovation**" provides an in-depth analysis of one such project in the Tōhoku region: i.club, an after-school program for high school students in Kesenuma, a small fishing town about 500km north of Tokyo that was devastated during the 3.11 disaster.

Akama's article questions recovery approaches that "reinforce authority and centralization, usually by experts that seek to 'solve' problems on behalf of the community." In contrast to recovery efforts that provide solutions focused on compensating for material destruction, Akama argues for locating alternatives that can catalyze social innovation through the engagement of members of a community, thus building societal resilience. i.club has tried to resolve complex societal problems such as depopulation, lack of local jobs and a "disconnect with local knowledge and traditional practices." In her theoretical explanation, Akama merges American sociologist Ray Oldenburg's theory of "third place" (a place where people can gather informally to build the infrastructures of human relationships beyond the home [first place] or work [second place]) with the notion of *ba of emptiness*, rooted in Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō's Zen Buddhist philosophy. Akama frames this project as an effort in co-designing, which is an indispensable component of a new field: design for social innovation. As she describes it, this "utilizes participation and action research methodologies that collectively draw upon various stakeholders' local, situated knowledge," in order to catalyze change and unlock tacit knowledge. *Ba* becomes the site or the condition where "'we-ness' coalesces," and "a shared place for emerging relationships and a context in which meaning is created and understood" (pl. 8).

Areas for Further Research

Read together, the articles and translations in this special issue offer powerful insight into how some designers and architects in modern and contemporary Japan have understood their practices' potential to contribute to social transformation, whether through cultural provocation, economic empowerment, or political awakening. While expansive in its scope, the issue does not propose a comprehensive, totalizing view of the field. Indeed, focus necessarily creates lacunae, including absences that we hope will provoke new research. Perhaps most obviously, the special issue focuses on design and society since the 1910s, prompting, we hope, reflection on the relationship between design and society in Meiji, early modern, and premodern Japan. More specifically regarding the time period treated here, we would like to flag imperialism and design in Japan and its colonies, including the legacy of colonial period practices on design in East Asia and postcolonial approaches to these questions, as a crucial area of research. Less common in current research on design and society in Japan but key for academic and public understanding are studies that put aside designers' ideas and actions to address user agency, including the impact of class, age, gender, and region on user experience. Similarly, we would like to see research into design professions, practices, and education outside the elite circles largely represented here (even i.club, discussed in Akama's chapter, has an affiliation with the University of Tokyo). The relationship of technological change to design practice and user experience demands more exploration. We point here to the emergence of digital design practice and to areas such as synthetic textiles, and call for attention not just to "firsts," but to the actual and often messy ways in which designers and makers adopt new and old technologies.³⁵

Moving from lacunae to provocations, the articles and translations present many issues that we would argue cut across most, if not all, inquiries into design and society, beginning with gender. In explaining the different elements that require balance in product design and why certain products, despite their poor appearance, are more functional and thus better suited to satisfy a customer's needs, Toyoguchi Katsuhei turns in his 1965 essay to a gender metaphor:

To give a familiar example, a woman's abilities, talents, and good health have little to do with her beauty; most men will want to marry a woman with a nice figure, good looks, and a smooth complexion. But it is also true to say that without ability, talent, and good health, she may not be terribly appealing. Generally speaking, men prefer able women who possess a variety of talents. We must shift our way of thinking from the singular notion of "good design" to focusing on a more holistic "good quality."

For the historian and critic, what does it mean when Toyoguchi attempts to explain the evaluation promoted by the principles of "good design" as analogous to the way a presumably heterosexual man would discuss the attributes of a woman? Is the casual sexism reflected in this passage of any consequence to us today, when we consider design and society in Japan? At a deeper level, there is a question to be asked about the gendered assumptions implicit in design. Are such assumptions inherent to specific moments within disciplines and professions? Have these ideas lost currency, or are they still operative today? It is useful to contrast this passage with the varied views on femininity articulated by female designers in "Young Women Designers Speak," or with Ory Bartal's discussion of how Ishioka Eiko's advertising work for the department store Parco in the 1970s related to contemporary gender politics and movements.

Another theme that cuts across research on design and society is that of agency and its distribution. Within social design in Japan and internationally, researchers, activists, and practitioners (often one and the same) posit that opening up the act of "designing" to non-professionals can democratize design practice, demystifying design as a practice limited to experts. As the articles addressing contemporary practice articulate, some designers and activists have embraced this more distributed understanding of design as a way of increasing non-government, non-economically-powerful actors' agency in personal and community decision-making. This understanding of design as facilitating or helping shape broader social goals allows designers to become participants in social change in a different way, working for/with other populations in need as citizens and social actors as well as professionals.

One further theme suggested in the present volume is the role of design in society as it emerges from Japan but seen in a transnational perspective. The exchanges between Japan and the broader world become obvious when looking both at the circulation of

ideas and the movement of people. Recent work by scholars in design and architectural history has emphasized the need to see design beyond the confines of the nation and rather address its global and transnational dimensions, a proposition we also endorse and hope to see in the expanding of future research.³⁶

Finally, we would argue for inter-, cross- and transdisciplinary collaboration and curiosity among researchers considering design and society, whether in Japan or elsewhere. All too often, we reside in silos, unaware of methodological tools and perspectives relevant for pursuing our own research interests. We exist ignorant of relevant work in adjacent fields, or of the very possibility that work and approaches in adjacent fields might be relevant to us. All too often art historians speak to art historians, economic historians to economic historians, historians of technology to historians of technology and designers to designers. And yet, as we hope this special issue forcefully presents, design as a practice and action exists across disciplines and their subdivisions. Furthermore—and while less explored here—given design’s impact on the environment and its lived experience, to overlook design, or to misunderstand it as superficial gloss not serious enough for consideration, necessarily leads to an incomplete characterization of historical situations, and to arguments based on incomplete evidence. In addition to urging new and further research into design and society then, we would urge research into methods and perspectives employed by colleagues in other fields also concerned with variously exploring, communicating, and attempting to shape the relationship between design and society in Japan. Our **Bibliography, compiled by Tsuji Yasutaka and Kikkawa Hideki**, aims to provide some direction to readers who wish to further explore the subject as it is treated by the existing literature in Japanese and English. With these texts, the special issue hopes to provoke further inquiry into the relationship between design and society from the vantage point of Japan, in the anticipation of yet further resources, provocations, and design-led contributions to society to come.

Due to constraints associated to our timeline to production, four translations have been deferred for publication. In the first text to come, a 2013 interview with the journal *IDEA*, the graphic designer Sugiura Kōhei discusses his work for architectural magazines of the 1960s, and the important intellectual and aesthetic debates that informed it.³⁷ The remaining texts correspond to contemporary developments. Two of them touch on the redistribution of agency and expertise: Kakei Yūsuke introduces the approach to social design practiced by his firm *issue+design*,³⁸ meanwhile, design critic and scholar Mizuno Daijirō leads a roundtable discussion on the changing face of fashion and the democratization of taste in the era of fast-retail and the “prosumer.”³⁹ A fourth, final text introducing the adjudication of a competition organized by the design magazine *Nikkei dezain* addresses corporate responses to disaster-readiness in the aftermath of 3.11.⁴⁰

These texts will be published in the 2017 issue of this journal: we hope our readers will look forward to these translations, which provide important supplements to the questions highlighted here.

Acknowledgements

This special issue could not have been realized without the generous help and support of many individuals and organizations, and the editors would like to express their deepest thanks to all, beginning with article authors Yoko Akama, Ory Bartal, Helena Čapková, Christian Dimmer, Kuroishi Izumi and the other scholars who submitted a proposal for the initial call. Penny Bailey, Haley Blum, Frank Feltens, Magdalena Kolodziej, and Kim McNelly put great effort into providing translations, and an anonymous team of peer reviewers provided thoughtful and extensive constructive criticism. Tsuji Yasutaka and Kikkawa Hideki elegantly compiled a bibliography. Jonathan Reynolds graciously assisted with terminology. The following individuals and organizations generously provided us with permissions and assistance to reproduce and reprint copyrighted materials: the Kon Wajirō Archives at Kōgakuin University, Ekuon Kenji, and Kawazoe Noboru. We are particularly grateful to Kuroishi Izumi for assisting with copyright matters at the Kon Wajirō Archives at Kōgakuin University. Claudia Marina and Rachel Smith provided invaluable editorial help. Tajima Miho assisted with all the permissions work and provided invaluable editorial support, and we are grateful to Natta Phisphumvidhi, the production editor. Miya Elise Mizuta, Executive Editor and Managing Director, not only invited us to undertake the project but supported us with great alacrity, and the generous support of Editor-in-Chief Mizuta Noriko and the Jōsai International Center for the Promotion of Art and Science at Jōsai University have allowed the special issue to materialize.

Notes

1. Pierre Lévy, "Beyond Kansei Engineering: The Emancipation of Kansei design," *International Journal of Design*, 7.2 (2013): 83-94.
2. Grace Lees-Maffei and Kjetil Fallan eds., *Designing Worlds: National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016).
3. Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, eds., *Global Design History* (London: Berg, 2011); Javier Gimeno-Martínez, *Design and National Identity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
4. Nagata Ken'ichi, Toyoro Hida, and Hitoshi Mori, eds., *Kindai Nihon dezainshi* (Kokubunji: Bigakushuppan, 2006).
5. Ken Oshima, *International Architecture in Interwar Japan: Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009); Jonathan Reynolds, *Allegories of Time and Space: Japanese Identity in Photography and Architecture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).
6. Herbert A. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996 [1969]); John Chris Jones, *Design Methods* (New York and Chichester: Wiley, 1970); Andrew Crabtree, Mary Rouncefield, and Peter Tolmie, *Doing Design Ethnography* (London: Springer, 2012); Jesper Simonsen, et al., *Situated Design Methods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014). An excellent analysis of Simon's approach is Daniel J. Huppatz, "Revisiting Herbert Simon's 'Science of Design,'" *Design Issues* 31.2 (Spring 2015): 29-40.
7. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, 111. The prescriptive dimensions of

design have often been questioned, but the concept of design for improvement or betterment has a recurring presence and can be seen both in the ideas invested behind the production of design and in design discourse historically.

8. Useful overviews of the international development of the design industry in the modern period include Victor Margolin, *World History of Design* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Pat Kirkham and Susan Weber, eds., *History of Design: Decorative Arts and Material Culture, 1400–2000* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2013), and David Raizman, *History of Modern Design* (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2003), all commonly used for undergraduate teaching.

9. Fiona Hackney, “Quiet Activism and the New Amateur: The Power of Home and Hobby Crafts,” *Design and Culture* 5.2 (July 2013): 169–93; Stephen Knott, *Amateur Craft: History and Theory* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

10. Victor Margolin, “The Product Milieu and Social Action,” in *Discovering Design: Explorations in Design Studies*, eds. Richard Buchanan and Victor Margolin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); John Law and Michel Callon, “The Life and Death of an Aircraft: A Network Analysis of Technical Change,” in eds. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law, *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992): 21–52; Albená Yaneva, *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012).

11. Trevor Pinch and Ronald Kline, “Users as Agents of Technological Change: The Social Construction of the Automobile in the Rural United

States,” *Technology and Culture* 37.4 (2016): 763–95; Joy Parr, “What Makes Wash Day Less Blue? Gender, Nation, and Technology Choice in Postwar Canada,” *Technology and Culture*, vol. 38, no. 1 (January 1997): 153–86; Nelly Oudshoorn, Trevor Pinch, *How Users Matter: The Co-construction of Users and Technologies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

12. Ezio Manzini, *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015); see also *Design Issues* 28.3 (Summer 2012), a special issue on participatory design.

13. Vehicle, textile, typographic and interaction design are notable omissions here, and fashion receives relatively light treatment. This was not intentional; as issue preparation progressed it became clear that we could not give all possible areas equal attention.

14. Both terms were in common use internationally in the early twentieth century, but do not map exactly onto current terminology. “Commercial art,” for example, encompassed the application of visual art techniques in advertising, as well as show-window display. The term “industrial art” reflects an understanding of design as a creative, aesthetic practice inseparable from industry, both industrialized and craft-based production.

15. Jonathan Reynolds, *Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Sarah Teasley, “Reforming the Inside Out: Kogure Joichi on Furniture and Architecture,” *Design History* 2 (June 2004): 75–114; and Kenji Kaneko, *Art Nouveau in Japan 1900–1923: The New Age of Crafts and Design* (Tokyo: National Museum of Modern

Art, 2005).

16. Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space and Bourgeois Culture, 1880–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

17. Jennifer S. Weisenfeld, “‘From Baby’s First Bath’: Kao Soap and Modern Japanese Commercial Design,” *The Art Bulletin* LXXXVI.3 (September 2004): 573–98.

18. Frederic J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); John V. Maciuika, *Before the Bauhaus: Architecture, Politics, and the German State, 1890–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

19. Harry Harootunian, “Perceiving the Present,” in *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 95–201.

20. Miriam Silverberg, “Constructing the Japanese Ethnography of Modernity,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1 (February 1992): 30–54.

21. Significantly, Nakai’s text—like several other key autobiographical texts by graphic designers of this generation—does not downplay designers’ roles in the war effort. See, for example, Tanaka Ikkō ed., *Kikigaki dezain shi* (Design History Heard and Written) (Tokyo: Rikuyōsha, 2001) and Seiichi Tagawa, *Sensō no gurafizumu: “Front” o tsukutta hitobito* (War Graphism: The People Who Made “Front”) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000).

22. Mari Shirayama and Yoshio Hori, *Natori Yōnosuke to Nippon Kōbo 1931–45* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006),

and Jennifer S. Weisenfeld, "Touring 'Japan-As-Museum': NIPPON and Other Japanese Imperialist Travelogues," *positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2000): 747-93.

23.

Hidemasa Morikawa, *Zaibatsu: The Rise and Fall of Family Enterprise Groups in Japan* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1992).

24.

Etsuo Abe, "The Development of Modern Business in Japan," *The Business History Review*, vol. 71, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 299-308.

25.

Creative directors oversee the general orientation and messaging (copy) adopted in advertising campaigns, art directors work with designers and supervise the visual aspect of the campaign. This system entailed a further specialization of design and positioned visual design practice as essential to advertisement creation, alongside copywriting and marketing.

26.

Sarah Teasley, "Tange Kenzo and Industrial Design in Postwar Japan," in eds. Seng Kuan and Yukio Lippit, *Tange Kenzo and Postwar Japanese Architecture* (Zurich, Lars Müller, 2012), 157-75.

27.

See for example the designer, design educator, and influential Silicon Valley venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield Byers former partner John Maeda's "Design in Tech Report 2016," <http://www.kpcb.com/blog/design-in-tech-report-2016>.

28.

Jilly Traganou, *Designing the Olympics: Representation, Participation, Contestation* (New York: Routledge, 2016), Chapter 1.

29.

The event was chaired by urban designer Asada Takashi, but was

originally spearheaded by industrial designer Yanagi Sōri, who after participating in the International Design Conference in Aspen of 1956, mustered support for his initiative by appealing to architects Maekawa Kunio, Tange Kenzō, and Sakakura Junzō—all connected to CIAM. Yatsuka Hajime and Yoshimatsu Hideki, *Metaborizumu: 1960-nendai Nihon no kenchiku avangyarudo* (Metabolism: 1960s Japan's Architectural Avant-Garde) (Tokyo: INAX Shuppan, 1997): 10-14; also Naitō Hiroshi, "Sekai ni nanori o ageta 'ka,' 'kata,' 'katachi,'" *INAX Report*, no. 171.23 (footnote 10).

30.

Cherie Wendelken, "Metabolism Back in Place," in Sarah Goldhagen, ed., *Anxious Modernisms* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000): 279-99.

31.

Comparative data on economic development can be found in the OECD website. Japan's unemployment rate appears as the lowest among OECD countries for 2015. <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rate.htm>

32.

See for example the nuanced discussion in David Pilling, *Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival* (London, Allen Lane, 2014).

33.

On rural Japan see Peter Matanle and Anthony Rausch with the Shrinking Regions Research Group, *Japan's Shrinking Regions in the 21st Century* (Amherst NY: Cambria Press, 2011) and Stephanie Assmann, ed., *Sustainability in Contemporary Rural Japan: Challenges and Opportunities* (London: Routledge, 2016).

34.

More recently, the Cool Japan initiative has supported this approach.

35.

David Edgerton, *The Shock of the*

Old (London and New York, Oxford University Press, 2007).

36.

See Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, eds., *Global Design History*; Yuko Kikuchi and Yunah Lee, eds., "Transnational Modern Design Histories in East Asia," a special issue of *Journal of Design History* 27.4 (2014); and Jilly Traganou and Artemis Yagou, "Visual Communication Design in the Balkans" special issue, *The Design Journal*, 18.4 (2015). A recent argument for the continued importance of national borders for understanding design practice is Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei eds., *National Design Histories in an Age of Globalization*.

37.

"Intabyū: Sugiura Kōhei" (Interview: Sugiura Kōhei), *Aidea* (Idea) (March 2013): 50.

38.

Kakei Yūsuke, "Purorōgu: shakai kadai to sōsharu dezaian" (Prologue: Social Issues and Social Design), in *Sōsharu dezaian jissen gaido—chiiki no kadai o kaiketsu suru nanatsu no suteppu* (Guide to Social Design Practice: Seven Steps for Resolving Local Issues) (Tokyo: Eiji Press, 2013): 330-44.

39.

Fasshon ga kōshin dekiru no ka? Kaigi (Can Fashion Be Renewed? Forum), *Gijiroku*, vol. 1: "DIY - DWO - DFO to iu jidai ni'" *gijiroku* (Report, Vol 1. "From Do It Yourself to Do It With Others to Do It For Others") (Web: October 2012), selections.

40.

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Our bibliography aims to provide direction to readers who wish to further explore the subject as it is treated by the existing literature in Japanese and English, with a few additions of key texts in European languages. The bibliography is not comprehensive, but provides a basis for further reading, both in primary and secondary sources, and for further critical scholarship on the discourse around design, society, and Japan. Texts are organized by topic, and divided into non-Japanese and Japanese-language texts to make it easier to identify accessible readings for non-Japanese readers. A list of academic journals published in Japan is included to introduce readers based outside of Japanese academia to these under-utilized sources. Texts are listed in chronological order, to indicate how directions in scholarship have changed over time.

Publications have been grouped along broad thematic areas, each section roughly divided into non-Japanese and Japanese-language sources. If a publication contains text in both it has been recorded in the non-Japanese language section.

Japanese titles have been rendered in English in square brackets. If a Japanese publication has been given a title in English by its publisher, this information is listed following its Japanese-language title after an equals sign.

The selection of Japanese-language journals has been restricted to major academic publications.

Materials published in the prewar period (before 1945) are represented here mainly through recently reissued document collections.

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