

Abstract

The dissertation deals with ideas about Japanese architecture in the Western, namely European discourse between 1945 and 1970. Architects and critics identified striking similarities between the Modernist architectural principles and the Japanese tradition from the 1920s; after the World War II, these similarities sparked a wide interest among the architectural public, which led to numerous publications on Japan unprecedented in scope and depth when compared with any other non-Western culture.

The goal of this work is to map the discourse that occurred this way, identify the main themes connected to Japan, and show their significance. The sources for the study are prevalently printed media: architectural magazines and books. The notion of ‘image’ of Japan proves useful since we study interpretations of a different culture; history of ideas as well as visual representation in photography. At the same time, work also follows the of general issues of understanding the ‘other’.

An analysis of these various representations of Japan in the printed architectural media makes up the main part of the research presented here. To examine the origins of these ideas we go back to the 1930 with architects-writers Tetsurō Yoshida and Bruno Taut, and subsequently look into of writings about Japan by architects who visited Japan and promoted its architecture – the best known being probably Walter Gropius. We also follow how the discourse on Japan evolved in European architectural magazines. This way we also gradually identify the recurrent ideas connected to Japanese traditional building, and later also the changes when facing the tumultuous progress of Japan.

In the third part, then, the same period is reassessed from a different perspective. The key words used in the Western debate about Japanese architecture and culture: e.g. construction, standardization, nature is presented in their connection to the discourse in Europe. Finally, a special chapter is dedicated to the complex notion of space in architecture.