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The Influence of Japan upon Gardens in California and the Pacific Northwest

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Japan has a garden tradition that has been widely admired ever since the country was opened to the West. Its gardens are exquisite abstractions of Nature, designed both to aid contemplation of humankind's place in the cosmic order and to establish a relationship with the forces of nature, as well as to provide aesthetic pleasure. Western appreciation, however, was largely aesthetic. Clay Lancaster has shown in his comprehensive book, *The Japanese Influence in America*, written in 1963, how Japanese themes were absorbed by Americans into architecture, decorative arts and garden design.[1] He emphasized that in California gardens and architecture were strongly influenced by Japan, in fact more so than in other regions. This paper will explore the origins and character of this phenomenon in the gardens of California and the Pacific Northwest.

Several factors account for the west coast states' attraction to Japanese gardens and their design principles. A large population of Japanese-Americans provided direct links with Japanese culture and gardening traditions. Indeed, many Japanese-Americans became gardeners. Broad exposure to Japanese arts occurred. George Turner Marsh was almost single-handedly responsible for introducing a taste for things Japanese to California. Marsh was an Australian who had spent five years in his late teens in Japan, where he learned to speak Japanese fluently and acquired an art collection. After he moved to California he designed several gardens that were accessible to and popular with the general public, and opened three shops in San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Monterey selling Japanese art. The Bentz Brothers also maintained several shops specializing in Japanese art in southern California. The landscape itself suggested the suitability of Japanese themes. The dry landscape of southern California made possible a life out-of-doors that erased the traditional boundaries between interior and exterior space. The light flexibly designed timber-house tradition of Japan suggested several appropriate models that worked well for this region. The landscape of the Pacific Northwest, by contrast, was not unlike the landscape of Japan, with its snow-capped mountains, towering forests, and dramatic water views. Indeed, comparisons of Mount Rainier with Mount Fuji were quite frequently made.[2] Thus this scenery elicited a strong Japanese design vocabulary.

By 1900 there was a strong reaction to the excesses of nineteenth-century gardens in California. Rich soils, the long growing season, access to unlimited irrigation water, and the importation of a wide range of plants from tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate zones had established a preference for a rich and exotic plant palette, often described as tropical.[3]

Many writers called for a new "order" in the landscape. Charles Dudley Warner, Ellery Channing and Herbert Croly suggested that the character of the landscape was so like that of Italy that Italian models should be used.[4] Charles Fletcher Lummis and George Wharton James argued for a return to the local Hispanic traditions.[5]

To these calls for Mediterranean order the Arts & Crafts movement presented an eclectic array of alternatives, in which Japan figured prominently. In 1907 Una Nixon Hopkins observed that "Japanese influence is becoming very marked in the domestic architecture of the Pacific Coast, which exhibits a cosmopolitanism (sic) not found in any other part of the country."[6]

Lastly, ever since California became a state it exhibited a great tolerance of and enthusiasm for the exotic, and Japanese culture was viewed as an exotic.

Japanese influence in western gardens is, of course, part of the broad pattern of eclecticism which has dominated twentieth-century American garden design. This eclecticism was endorsed at the 34th Annual Convention of the A.I.A. in 1900 by the Arrangements Committee which decided to make gardens a discussion topic. Papers were read on Italian formal gardens, English, French, and Japanese gardens. K. Honda, a member of the Japanese Horticultural Society, gave a paper in which he outlined the forms and rules of traditional Japanese gardens.[7] Japanese influence occurred in West Coast gardens in two ways.

From the turn of the century through the 1920s traditionally styled Japanese gardens were created in conjunction with gardens in other styles, such as those associated with Italy, France, England, and Spain. " Synthetic" (as opposed to "literal") eclecticism, on the other hand, saw Japanese forms evoked rather than copied literally. The work of Charles and Henry Greene falls into this category, especially their designs executed between 1903 and 1911. Other designers synthesized several design modes, including Japan, into a distinctive idiom. From

1931 until the late 1960s, Fujitaro Kubota combined forms reflective of American living patterns with poetic references to Japanese gardens in his Seattle practice. A group of modernist Californian designers, including Richard Neutra, Garrett Ecko, Lawrence Halprin, and Robert Royston also made poetic references to Japanese themes in their work.

Clay Lancaster claims that the national popularity of Andrew Jackson Downing's landscape style laid the ground for the popularity of *Japanaiserie* in America.[8] Whatever the truth of this claim, the first Japanese garden in America was created at the Centennial International Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876. Its popularity led to a series of Japanese gardens in many subsequent expositions. The garden at the Columbia Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, had a profound influence on Charles and Henry Greene, who stopped to see it on their way to join their parents in Pasadena. The first Japanese garden in California was created at the Mid-Winter Fair of 1894 held in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco to boost Californian trade and to advertise the state's unusual climate.[9] This very popular garden resulted from George Turner Marsh's generous offer to create a Japanese garden on a one acre site in the fairgrounds. Marsh had maintained close contact with Japan since his teen years there and had developed a great interest in horticulture and gardening. He planned the hill and water garden himself, assisted by John McLaren, the superintendent of the park.

In Marsh's design five buildings were enclosed within a high wooden fence, entry was gained through a two-storied *rómon* covered by a heavy tile roof. Within the fence was a tea shelter pavilion and a two-storied dwelling. A wooden drum bridge, several stone lanterns, and numerous large plants helped establish a sense of authenticity and maturity. At the close of the fair most of the garden was retained and was presented to the city as a

Figure 1. Japanese Garden Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California, 1894. (George Turner Marsh, designer) General view. (Glenn Brown (ed.) European and Japanese Gardens, *p.161)*

*Figure 2. Japanese Garden, 'El Cerrito,' San Mateo, California, 1906, General view. (*House Beautiful, *July 1916, p. 45)*

public tea garden. The garden was considerably expanded in 1915 in connection with the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and still exists.

A number of ambitious private gardens were designed in what was intended to be an authentic fashion. One of the largest and most convincing was created in 1908 at 'El Cerrito', Eugene de Sabla's estate in San Mateo. As were a number of the more literally inspired gardens, the de Sabla garden was designed by Japanese gardeners.[10] This garden was described by Horatio S. Stoll in an article on Japanese gardens for *House Beautiful* in 1914.[11] He pointed out that its design started completely from scratch: "Before the Japanese gardeners started on this beauty spot it was perfectly flat, like the rest of the highly developed grounds. But in all typical gardens of the Mikado's realm there is a little cascade or waterfall and this in turn necessitates a hillside, down which a tiny steamlet may meander. It took hundreds of tons of dirt and rock to provide a pretty background for the de Sabla Japanese garden, but as expense was not considered, the ingenious Japanese landscape artists found it comparatively easy to prepare a Japanese garden which, in detail, surpassed anything I have seen in California."[12]

Like traditional Japanese tea gardens this landscape garden provides considerable visual diversity. It is entered through a high gateway, flanked on each side by wings that join a fence. From the tea-house at the center of the garden the visitor sees "to the left a substantial yet artistic bridge, then a hillside pathway, marked with irregular flat stones that serve as steps, leading past a beautiful stone lantern to a fragile bamboo fence and fringe of pines and wide-spreading oaks."[13]

Stoll concluded his 1914 description with a wildly romantic flourish. "On a warm summer's night, the scene is like a dream of fairyland come true. The tiny waterfall is illuminated with cleverly concealed electric lights. Colored lanterns in the tea-house make pretty reflections on the dark, placid lake. The trees and shrubs look as if they were the haunt of fireflies, and the ground seems sprinkled with

glow worms."[14] The garden survives today in excellent condition.

Synthetic Eclecticism

The forms and design principles of traditional Japanese gardens also served as less literal inspiration for designers. The Berkeley poet, Charles Augustus Keeler, argued in *The Simple House* for a new kind of Californian garden that would combine natural and formal elements. He wrote of the garden as a place "where we may sit in seclusion at work; gardens that will exhilarate our souls by the harmony and glory of pure and brilliant color, that will nourish our fancy with suggestions of romance as we sit in the shadow of the palm and listen to the whisper of rustling bamboo; gardens that will bring nature to our homes and chasten our lives with the purity of the great Earth Mother."[15] The reference to the palm and bamboo represents an appropriate mingling of Japanese and Hispanic cultures.

But this fascination with Mediterranean gardens and imagery inevitably raised the issue of light. Keeler felt that California's Mediterranean light demanded strong colors and recommended using plants with brightly colored flowers and foliage. Japan, with its design traditions of wood architecture and green gardens, offered a restrained, monochromatic, largely flowerless and unchanging order.[16] The creative potential of Japanese garden forms and ideas was taken up most successfully by the brothers Charles Sumner and Henry Mather Greene of Pasadena.

Charles and Henry Greene of Pasadena

The Greene brothers were among the leading designers of the Arts and Crafts movement in Southern California.[17] Until 1903 they worked within the range of fashionably popular architectural styles, but the highly eclectic designs on which their reputation rests were executed between 1903 and 1911. Ralph Adams Cram was among the first to extol their work as part of a group of progressive Californian designers. "Where it comes from heaven alone knows," wrote Cram "but we are glad it arrived, for it gives a new zest to life, a new object for admiration. There are things in it Japanese; things that are Scandinavian; things that hint at Sikkim, Bhutan and the fastness of Tibet, and yet it all hangs together, it is beautiful, it is contemporary, and for some reason or other it seems to fit California."[18]

But it was the English architect, C. R. Ashbee, who recognized the preeminence of Japan in their work. "Like Frank Lloyd Wright," he wrote "the spell of Japan is on him, he (Charles Greene) feels the beauty and makes the magic out of the horizontal line...."[19]

The Greene brothers' architecture drew from the local Spanish-American tradition, English Tudor houses, Swiss chalets, as well as from Japanese wooden houses. Of these sources, Japan was the only design tradition which neither brother had personally experienced. Their first encounter with Japanese culture and design traditions was their visit to the Japanese exhibit at the Colombian Exposition in 1893. Subsequent influence came via books. Charles Greene told Henry Yost that a traveling salesman had sold him a book on Japanese architecture,[20] and the wife of one of the Bentz brothers (leading southern Californian dealers in oriental fine arts), claimed that Charles poured for hours on end over a book that she had given them on Japanese houses and temples.[21]

The Duncan-Irwin house on North Grand Avenue in Pasadena is the first Greene house to show strong Japanese influence. The house sits on a wide corner lot, commanding expansive views over the Arroyo, at that time, a very wild river valley that ran through the western part of Pasadena. The main house is separated from the street by cobblestone retaining walls about four feet high. The house rises from the lawn on brick and boulder retaining walls which support terraces wrapping around the house and a pergola at the entrance. The terrace opening from the living room expands and reaches out toward the mountain view with sinuous curves.

The principle pedestrian entrance to the house lies right against the southern property boundary. An article in *The Craftsman* captures something of the originality of its design. "Large stones are used in the foundation of the porch and smaller ones are scattered throughout the supporting pillars at widening intervals until at the top solid brick is used; the effect is unique giving a sense of solidity at the foundation, of rich color and greater

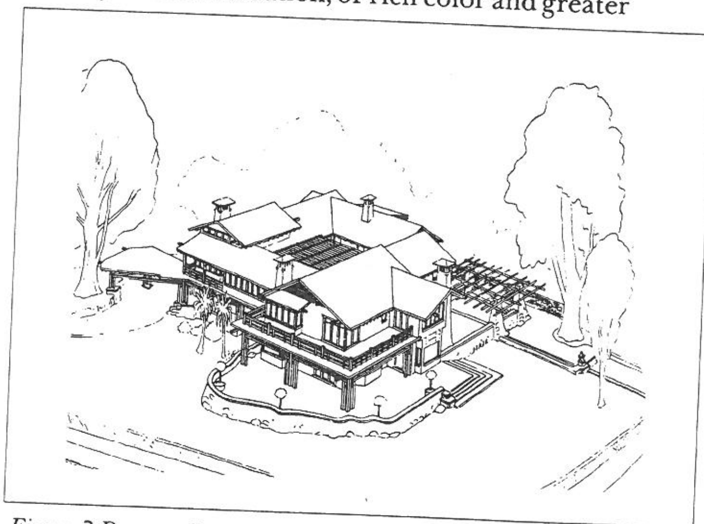

Figure 3. Duncan-Irwin House, Pasadena, California, 1906. (Charles Sumner and Henry Mather Greene, architects and garden designers) Perspective sketch of entry path. (Clay Lancaster, The Japanese Influence in America, *p.108)*

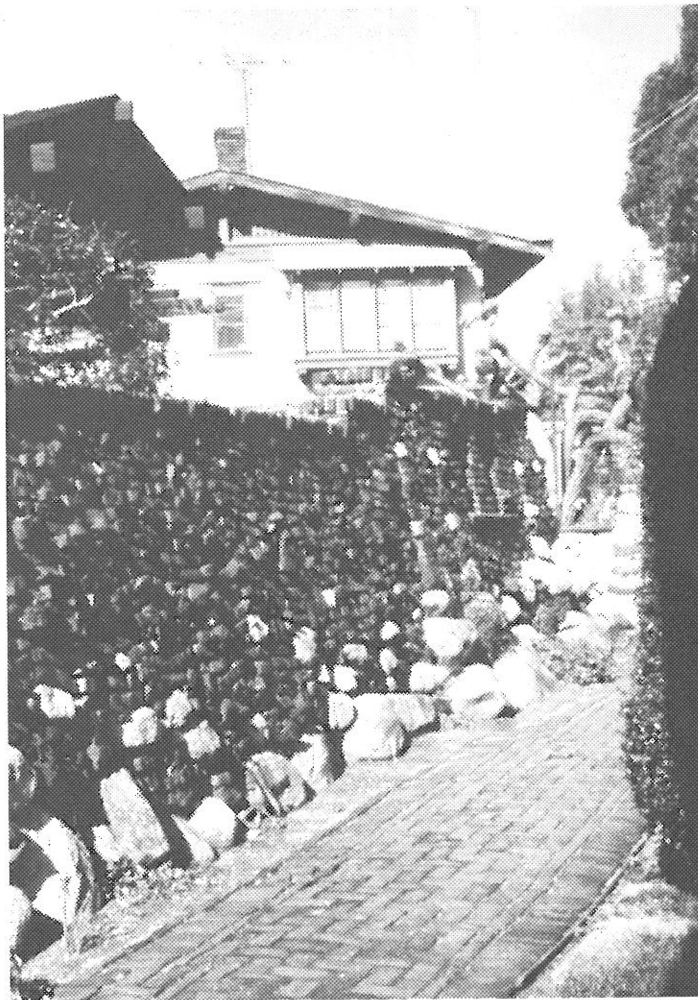

Figure 4. James O'Neill House, Pasadena, 1906. (Charles and Henry Mather Greene, architects and garden designers) Retaining wall from street. (Photo by Author)

lightness at the crown; solid stones are used at the side of the path which leads to the entrance and the floor of the path is covered with tiles; a great Japanese lantern is seen at the left of the entrance, a most picturesque substitute for the ordinary glittering electric light." [22] A large eucalyptus tree stands in the path against the fence. Halfway up the path are two steps lit by a Japanese stone lantern on a socle. Broad steps lead up to the lawn on the left; arriving visitors were led to turn at right angles around an open trellised porch and turn at right angles to ascend a short flight of steps up to the front door. This circuitous way of moving through space is similar to that structured by the layout of many Japanese city courtyards. Despite the size of the house, its lot is quite small. However, it seems larger as a result of the circuitous movement patterns that the landscape implies.

Another Greene brothers' house, for the Van Rossems is located around the corner on Arroyo Terrace. Built in 1903, it was enlarged in 1906 by the creation of a terrace on the street side supported by a large battered retaining wall of boulders and clinker bricks. The Greenes frequently used both materials to establish a sense of regional identity. The boulders were dragged up from the nearby Arroyo stream bed. The misshapen clinker bricks, resulting from over-firing, could be easily fitted around the boulders. The resulting wall (lightened by the introduction of perforated turquoise ceramic tiles[23]) was a fluid tactile work of art whose battered form recalls that of the massive retaining walls in many Japanese castles.

In 1907 the Greenes designed their largest landscape garden in Pasadena for the R. W. Blacker house on Hillcrest Drive. The Greenes retained almost in toto an earlier plan of a house for this site by Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey.[24] However, they moved the house to the corner of the site to allow the creation of a small lake in the center, which became the principal visual focus of the garden. Its banks were lined with carefully placed boulders and stands of water-loving plants. The carefully graded banks of the lake were arranged with an odd selection of palm trees, boxed orange trees, and pine trees. However, these disparate elements were brought into a harmonious order evocative of the character of a large Japanese stroll garden, devoid of explicit literal references.

An arbor of massive timbers sat on a graded knoll above the lake, enabling the Blackers to sit in the garden and contemplate both the lake and the stark, dramatic beauty of the distant San Gabriel mountains. The arbor's slightly inclined timbers, echoed the angle of the roof planes of the house and evoked tori gate structures.

In 1907 the Greene brothers also designed the Freeman Ford house for a large site at the edge of the bluff above the Arroyo. The house was sited at the top of this slope so that the living spaces commanded magnificent views. The remainder of the site was developed to offset the flat topography. A winding drive meanders through skillfully graded mounds that provide visual balance to the long horizontal lines of the house and also served to screen the service quarters. Strategically placed pine trees punctuated these rounded compositions.

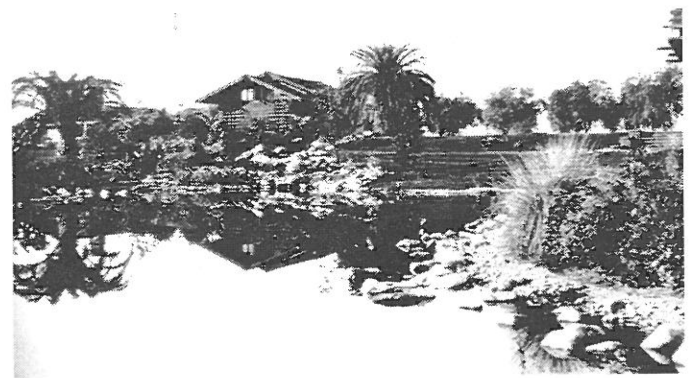

Figure 5. R.H. Blacker House, Pasadena, 1907, (Charles Sumner and Henry Mather Greene, architects and garden designers) Lake. (Documents Collection, College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley)

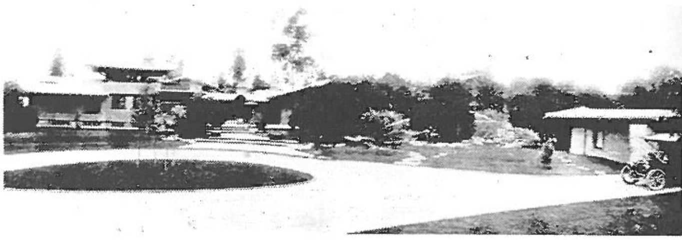

Figure 6. Freeman Ford House, Pasadena, California, 1907. (Charles and Henry Mather Greene, architects and garden designers) Drive. (Documents Collection, College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley)

The David Gamble house of 1908 is the Greene brothers' finest surviving design. Drawings show that three design solutions were developed, each of which used three existing eucalyptus trees as major visual anchors and attempted to take full advantage of the prevailing breezes. The executed design reveals the Greenes' extraordinary sensitivity to the placement of structures on the land. A graceful mounded, brick-paved drive gives access to the front door and the detached garage. This crescent-shaped feature is screened from the road by beautifully graded berms from which the foundation walls of the house appear to rise almost organically. A narrow winding path of stepping stones leads away from the drive to a small gate into the drying yard that evokes the form of a tori gate. Originally, the house must have appeared as a relatively diminutive horizontal structure standing against the forms of the large trees.

Life in a natural setting appears to be the theme that unifies the decorative forms of inside and outside. Tiffany glass oak trees in the glass panes of front door and elsewhere throughout the interior create an internal "nature" that complements the garden.

The living room terrace was constructed around the two large eucalyptus trees at the rear of the property. Together with a small pond it functioned as an outdoor living room. In this asymmetrical composition, every element was organized as a part of a unified composition. The descent to the lawn was made via large stone steps, that signaled a transition in scale, color, and texture from the brick and quarry tile terrace to turf. The soft, rippling, sensuous forms of the graded lawn were emphasized by the flowing lines of a stepping stone path leading to the edge of the garden.

From the lawn the house appears as a delicate structure perched atop a rugged earth-bound foundation wall. In this respect the Greenes appear to have miniaturized the character of a Japanese castle rather than using the model of traditional Japanese houses where wooden structural columns rise directly from stone pads on the ground.

The muted range of colors affirm the Greenes' interest in creating an ordered and appropriate idiom for this dry region. Despite the fact that the stained redwood siding of the house was not local, its earthy color combined well with the Arroyo boulders, locally produced earth-colored clinker bricks, quarry tiles, and green lawn. This restrained color palette served to link the garden space as foreground to the sublime mountainous regional landscape. Serene and understated monochromatic designs like the David Gamble house attempted to provide an extremely subtle evocation of Japanese design elements to form an ordered foreground to borrowed views of regional scenery. However, it should be emphasized that the Gamble landscape was, like the Japanese gardens it evoked, a "representation" of nature.

Fujitaro Kubota

The experience of Japanese immigrant gardeners in this country was very different from that of American designers who mined the Japanese design vocabulary. Frequently subjected to severe racial discrimination, only rarely were they given an opportunity to design gardens that celebrated Japanese culture. Some accommodation to American cultural traditions invariably appears to have been necessary. Fujitaro Kubota (1881-1972), a Seattle nurseryman, was significant because he attempted to fuse Japanese garden design principles and forms with American living patterns, regional characteristics, particularly native Northwest plants.[25]

Figure 7. David Gamble House, Pasadena, California, 1908. (Charles Sumner and Henry Mather Greene, architects and garden designers) Garden Facade. (Greene and Greene Library, San Marino)

Kubota was born on Shikoku Island in Cochi Prefecture, Japan, the son of a prosperous family of rice farmers. According to tradition, as the eldest son he would have inherited the family's farm, and a period of study at a local agricultural school should have served as a good preparation for this role. Instead, he used his keen and sensitive understanding of plants and soils to become a garden designer.

At an early age Kubota studied the temples and gardens of his native region. He was evidently greatly influenced

by Ritsurin Park in the city of Takamatsu, the most famous traditional garden on Shikoku Island, and an outstanding example of a "stroll garden". Developed about 360 years ago by Takatoshi Ikoma, it was retained as a villa by the Matsudaira family until the Meiji Restoration of 1867 overturned the power of the ruling samurai class. Like many aristocratic gardens Ritsurin villa eventually became a public park.[26] Its planting, rock arrangements, and spacious landscape character are remarkably similar to those in the gardens that Kubota was to create in Seattle.

It is a clear measure of an independent spirit that Kubota decided to forsake the security of his family's farm to embark on an uncertain future in this country. Whatever his original intentions, he settled in Seattle where he established a landscape maintenance business in 1923. This was sufficiently successful that in 1929 he was able to purchase five acres for a nursery demonstration garden in the Rainier Beach section of south Seattle.

Henceforward Kubota combined a nursery and garden design practice with great success. Indeed, the display garden that survives as a city park is one of his most important designs. After 1931, Kubota's flourishing business enabled him to purchase additional property to expand the central garden. The Spring Pond Garden was the first improvement created in 1931. Surrounded by a clipped hedge, this is an introverted garden in which the pond, the bridge, an island, and a traditional stone lantern closely follow traditional patterns. One of the small bridges is a concrete replica of a *dobashi*, or earthen bridge, extremely common in gardens such as Ritsurin Park and Katsura Imperial Villa.

Subsequent developments in Kubota's garden were more inventive and less derivative, although his ideas about planting appear to have been inspired by his contemplation of Ritsurin Park as a young man. In the mild climate of Takamatsu, palm trees, bamboos, pines, and deciduous trees flourish together with pampas and other ornamental grasses, sumacs, and lotuses. These unusual plant associations appear to have inspired Kubota to experiment with the broad range of plants that will flourish in Seattle.

Kubota's designs deliberately synthesized American and Japanese ideas. This merging of cultures incorporated the Japanese tradition of using local plants, including materials and construction techniques, to create an appropriate atmosphere. Kubota Gardens also reflects the Japanese desire to meet specific needs of the garden patron and owner. In this respect Kubota's garden was most unusual, and is quite possibly unique, in being a "drive-through" garden.

A graceful curving road through the flat area outside the Spring Pond Garden served as an automobile "stroll garden" providing comfortable access to potential clients, as well as to visitors who came for pleasure. While some might view the intrusion of the automobile into a garden, which in its origins was understood to represent nature, as being almost blasphemous, but Kubota clearly recognized the importance of the automobile in American society. For him the circulation of Cadillacs through his garden was not unlike the elaborate royal boats that floated through the pleasure garden of the Heian period.

Figure 8. Kubota Gardens, Seattle, Washington, 1950. (Fujitaro Kubota, garden designer) Drive. (Photo by Author)

The garden served as an important meeting place for the local Japanese-American community. Kubota frequently opened it for events such as weddings, graduations, and community celebrations, and this tradition continues. Other gardens in the Pacific Northwest such as the Kuni Mukai garden on Vashon Island also served to reinforce the retention of traditional Japanese ceremonies. Each year its designer would hold a garden party when the cherry trees flowered.[27]

Kubota also employed the Japanese tradition of reusing old elements such as stones and lanterns from ruined temple gardens. He recycled a number of old elements from demolished or abandoned sites such as the King County courthouse and the Broadway High School. Plants came from a variety of sources. Most were grown in his nursery and then transferred to the garden. But often,

trees were moved from other sites.[28]

This garden reached its peak of popularity and maintained perfection just prior to World War II when the Kubota family, like most Japanese families living in Seattle, were forced to relocate. They moved to Camp Minidoka, an interment camp in Idaho, and were not allowed to return until the end of the war. The garden had not been maintained during their absence; weeds four feet high filled the lawns, the ponds were silted up, and many of the trees, dependent on meticulous pruning, had become grossly distorted.

In another remarkable parallel with old Japanese gardens, the character of these years of decline permanently imprinted the garden. Like the famous moss garden at Saitoji which resulted from a long period of neglect during the Onin Wars, unusual serendipitous associations of plants in the central part of Kubota Gardens resulted from the war-time neglect.

Kubota refurbished his garden after the war as time and money permitted. The garden was expanded and new areas were developed, but it never regained its pre-war splendor. The last major construction was the "Mountainside", completed in the early 1960s as a background to the flat central section of the garden. It was developed in the manner of Japanese-style hillside gardens; four hundred tons of rock were moved in to create a 100-foot waterfall and an elaborate series of winding paths. Kubota used the stones naturalistically to create asymmetrical compositions that evoked the character of the local Cascade mountains. The view from the top of the hill is a classic example of "shakkei", or borrowed scenery. One of Kubota's most ambitious works, the "Mountainside" is distinctively regional in its use of northwestern plants, with a range of textures and colors that are quite different from those of traditional Japanese gardens.

Much of Kubota's design practice was residential. The Pries-Lea Garden (1958) was developed in close collaboration with Professor Lionel Pries, a distinguished professor of architecture at the University of Washington who had traveled extensively in Japan and was an avid collector of Japanese and Oriental art. The landscape design is notable for its strong integration of architecture and garden.[29]

The principal garden, a flat sand garden at the entrance to the house, is overlooked by large windows from the living room and reached by a colonnaded gallery with knarled tree trunk columns. From the entry gate, the eye relates the horizontal ground plane of the garden to the distant horizontal plane of Lake Washington through two sets of windows. This is a most effective use of *shakkei* reminiscent of Japanese tea gardens. The raked sand in the garden foreground both represents water abstractly and is connected visually to a large body of real water.

Following traditional precedents, the stones are arranged in the raked gravel in odd-number groupings while the plants serve primarily as screening devices. However, the mixture of ferns, a Japanese black pine, and rhododendrons serve as references to the regional flora.

Japanese and Modernist Gardens

Japanese design principles were a factor in the development of European and American modernist gardens, especially in California. While, this influence has not been exhaustively studied, it has been recognized by a number of writers, especially John Oldham and Dame Sylvia Crowe.[30] The architect Richard Neutra, and a group of landscape architects influenced by Christopher Tunnard were inspired by Japanese themes in different ways.

After finishing the Lovell Health House, a project which brought him instant national and international attention, Neutra visited Japan in 1930. He was profoundly affected by the Japanese treatment of space and nature, and the restraint of the gardens. He published a series of articles on Japan in *Die Form.*[31]

Neutra was moved by the acts of seeing, hearing and smelling nature in small garden courts. He appreciated how one's senses were heightened and moods affected by following a garden path or gently climbing a gooseneck bridge over a lotus pond. Above all, Neutra was impressed by the Japanese "value of the small." As he said, "In traditional Japanese towns, houses cluster on miserably small lots, but often a veritable gemlike fragment of the universe and an ideal landscape are skillfully caught in a miniature backyard."[32]

While many of the elevations of Neutra's houses in the 1930s houses recall traditional Japanese houses with their narrow, vertical fenestration rhythms, he did not use a repetitive module to organize the plan. By the 1940s narrow fenestration had given way to large sliding glazed panels which permitted a complete physical and visual integration of interior and exterior space.

This new design character was initiated in the Nesbitt House in Brentwood (1941). The house is approached from the street by a diagonal brick paved path. At the entrance, Neutra created a remarkable degree of transparency by the use of large glazed panels at the front and rear of the house, further enhanced by a small pool that is half inside and half outside.

Neutra described the house as having "a Japanese feeling...not by the use of borrowed forms, but by the low scale, the pine planting."[33] The pines, carefully pruned into bonsais, the circular water basins, and the stepping stone path are clear references to Japan.

By the late 1940s, Neutra had successfully developed a characteristic domestic landscape idiom in which the volumetric mass of the house was treated as an abstract arrangement of delicately poised horizontal floor and

Figure 9. Nesbitt House, Brentwood, California, 1941. (Richard Neutra, architect and garden designer) Entrance to house. (Richard Neutra, Mysteries and Realities of the Site, *p.45)*

roof planes. These abstract compositions were so transparent that they almost disappeared in the landscape. In traditional Japanese houses, transparency always occurred within the house which thus retained a strong volumetric character.

One of the finest of these spatially transparent houses is the Warren Tremaine house in Montecito (1947), which Neutra described as follows, "Because the living room is separated from nature only by the full-height thin-framed sliding doors of glass, the living space sweeps on through and reaches out for miles until finally it is closed off by the mountain. The mountain is, indeed, the 'back wall' of this stupendous living room."[34] The later garden designed by the landscape architect Ralph Stevens incorporates local boulders excavated from the site and a rich palette of drought-tolerant succulents that form an effective frame to the distant views of the San Ysidro mountains. The paved terrace becomes analogous to a raked sand garden, with the succulents and the trees at the edge of the garden framing the distant mountains. The use of shakkei and the abstraction of individual elements are clearly inspired by Japan.

Large houses for rich clients, such as the Tremaines, served as conceptual experiments for small houses, which Neutra believed to be the greatest challenge facing contemporary designers. The exploded volumes of his houses enabled their occupants to "live" in nature in a way that somewhat recalls the reclusive lonely Oriental scholar's retreat to a mountain hut. The Perkins' house (1955) in Pasadena shows how he applied his miniaturized abstracted "nature" and "shakkei" to a very small house on a restricted lot.[35]

The avant-garde Canadian landscape architect, Christopher Tunnard, influenced many young progressive American landscape architects with his series of seminal articles in the *Architectural Review* in 1937, published in 1938 as *Gardens in the Modern Landscape.*[36] This book was highly influential, since it was the first to advance a coherent theoretical basis for modernist landscape design. Unlike modernist architectural theories which completely rejected references to the past and any overt meaning, Tunnard advanced an inclusive and eclectic synthesis of ideas that embraced three approaches: functionalism, what he called the "empathetic," and the use of modern art. The empathetic approach was associated with what he called "occult balance," a formal device similar to techniques of abstract and constructivist modern art and architecture. Tunnard believed that the Orient had much to teach modern designers about how to use nature "not as a refuge for life, but as a sustainer of it."[37]

Tunnard particularly admired the Eastern regard for the spiritual dimension in inanimate objects, which he believed paralleled modern philosophy that challenged the western belief in the antithetical relationship between Man and Nature. He also admired the Japanese's sparing use of color and the effects of extreme simplicity, and the placing of stones and plants. He illustrated his original article with photographs of modern Japanese gardens by Antonin Raymond and the landscape architect, Sutemi Horiguchi.[38] Raymond was an important modernist designer whose work in Japan has been unjustly neglected.[39] His own studio house in Tokyo is a striking demonstration of the use of the traditional abstraction of nature in creating a modernist garden.

A number of young California designers were strongly influenced by Tunnard's ideas, especially Garrett Eckbo, Lawrence Halprin, and Robert Royston. In *Landscape for Living* (1950), a radical polemic, Eckbo attacked what he believed to be the mindless formal aridities of the Beaux-Arts system. He laid out an approach involving eight factors. These included what he called the "informal" traditions of eighteenth-century England, Japan, and China.[40]

This eclectic and inclusive approach was derived from and enlarged upon Tunnard's work. But since Eckbo understood the tradition of Japanese gardens entirely through reading, it played little direct influence in his own work. Nevertheless, some of his 1950s designs evoke Japanese qualifies in a marked fashion The Honeyman garden (1950) in Whittier, California, has a "dry stream" with carefully placed standing stones in a bed of white rocks which sinuously moves across the lawn space, in a manner reminiscent of abstracted Japanese streams. This reference is further enforced by the berms planted with pine trees.[41]

However, the experience of serving in the Pacific Basin during World War II was a more potent aesthetic influence on Lawrence Halprin and Robert Royston.

Abstract forms, restrained color harmonies, circuitous ways of moving through space, and the sensitive placing of stones in their work can clearly be attributed to their war-time encounter with Japan. For both designers Japanese gardens and architecture provided a wide range of conceptual ideas about organizing space and arranging element.

Dame Sylvia Crowe has described how the treatment of "modern Californian gardens show a strong Japanese influence in their restraint and concise compositions of rock and plant," together with Hispanic influences. [42] Architectonic character, an emphasis on monochromatic color and texture, and the treatment of small grass panels as precious elements in a dry landscape occurred in the forties and fifties in the highly abstract garden designs of Lawrence Halprin, Douglas Baylis, and Thomas Church. Small panels of grass, often with an asymmetrically placed rock, were placed on ground planes, diagonally

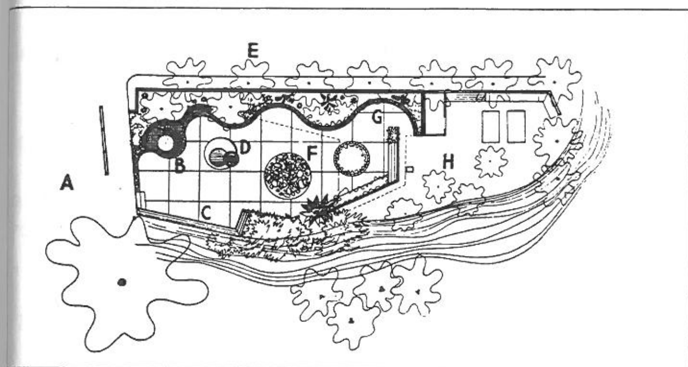

Figure 10. Plan of garden designed by Lawrence Halprin. (Sylvia Crowe, Garden Design, *p. 75)*

slanted redwood decking or concrete paving. These designs recall the "abstract" nature found in many Japanese gardens. But the sources of such designs can just as well be found in Cubist painters such as Arp, or in the flowing designs of Alvar Aalto. [43]

Halprin's design for his own garden in a small housing tract development in Marin County (1948) shows his interest in searching for ways to visually expand very small spaces through the use of "borrowed scenery." [44] The grass ramped mound at the end of the garden was designed to lead the eye into the outer landscape. The clear definition of the garden space by the wooden fences, and the palette of boldly textured plants, owes much to Japanese miniaturization practices.

Robert Royston's designs also consistently use a number of devices found in Japanese gardens such as diagonal lines of movement, the use of paved stepping stones, and carefully articulated wooden decks. Royston also used abstract gridded structural screens with white plastic panels to create remarkable effects of translucency. [45]

In his design for a garden for a 1950 house in Marin County, designed by Campbell and Wong, Royston arranged the stones of a "dry stream" and long rectangular paving slabs in a way that clearly evokes Japanese dry gardens.

Common to all these modernist California gardens is a highly restrained color palette that recalls the post-Victorian concern for ordering the potentially rich vegetal lushness of California. However, these modernist gardens were conceived for a very different range of uses and a different concept of nature from that of Japanese gardens. Conceived as outdoor 'rooms', Japanese-inspired spaces were adapted for modern American living patterns, which valued nature as a visual amenity and backdrop, rather than as a conceptual and philosophical abstraction central to life.

Conclusions

The influence of Japan on West coast gardens was diverse and reflected the presence of a Japanese population, a wide exposure to Japanese fine arts, an aesthetic affinity for Japanese design ideas brought about by the regional landscape, a reaction to Victorian garden excess, and a taste for the exotic. Specific Japanese influences occurred in two broad patterns: *Literal Eclecticism*, represented a fashionable preference for the exotic as one of a range of styles, rather than any fondness for the culture that produced the style. Traditional forms were created through the use of traditional rules.

Synthetic Eclecticism featured the highly selective use of certain formal devices, and was motivated by aesthetic considerations. Some Arts and Crafts gardens, the work of Fujitaro Kubota in Seattle, and the work of some modernist designers incorporated a number of Japanese design principles such as: irregular ways of moving through space, occult balance, sequential revelation of pictorial views, borrowed scenery, principles of miniaturization, the use of local materials and reference to specific design elements. However, the use of these devices was highly selective and was motivated by aesthetic considerations.

The selective process used by this second group of designers is significant since it can be argued that the most inventive work of Greene and Greene and some of the modernist designers captured the aesthetic "spirit" of Japanese gardens. However, in the case of the modernist designers, one should be careful about allocating a central place to Japanese influence, since many other influences were at work.

At their best, these designers created synthetic artistic expressions in which ideas gathered from multiple sources, past and present, resulted in powerful and personal statements of time and place. Their significance derives from their ability to synthesize these design principles and elements into a regional sensibility.

Notes

[1]Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1963, 1983).

[2] In fact the similarity of their silhouettes was not close. This is confirmed by many of the photographs taken in the first two decades of the century by the famous Northwestern photographer, Asahel Curtis.

[3]David C. Streatfield, *California Gardens: Creating a New Eden* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 44-51.

[4]Charles Dudley Warner, *Our Italy* (New York: 1891); Ellery Channing, "The Meeting of Extremes," *Out West* 19 (1903): 243-45; Herbert Croly," The Country House in California," *Architectural Record* 34 (December 1913): 485-519.

[5]Charles Fletcher Lummis's critical contribution to California's recovery of its Hispanic heritage is summarized by Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 397-401; George Wharton James, *Through Ramona's Country* (Boston: Little Brown, 1912).

[6]Una Nixon Hopkins, "A House of Fine Detail That Conforms To The Hillside On Which It Is Built," *Craftsman* (June 1907):329.

[7]K. Honda, J. "Japanese Landscape Gardening", in Glenn Brown (ed.), *European and Japanese Gardens: Papers read before The American Institute of Architects* (Philadelphia: H.T. Coates Co., 1902), 130-156.

[8]Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, 189.

[9]Ibid., 97-103.

[10]In articles on west coast gardens, unlike those written about Japanese gardens created in eastern states, the names of the gardeners are consistently omitted. Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, 208. This might be an example of racial prejudice.

[11]Horatio S. Stoll," Japanese Gardens," *House Beautiful* 36 (July 1914):44.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 45. For a comparable Japanese garden in the Pacific Northwest see the description of the Japanese garden at 'Villa Carman,' Tacoma, Washington. Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, *The Golden Age Of American Gardens: Proud Owners, Private Estates* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1991), 307.

[15]Charles Augustus Keeler, *The Simple Home*, (San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1904; rev. ed. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1979), 16. It is now generally accepted that most of the design recommendations in this book were conceived by the Berkeley architect, Bernard Ralph Maybeck, who used color extravagantly in his own designs.

[16]These qualities were emphasized by C.H. Townsend in "Notes on a Japanese Garden in California," Brown, *European and Japanese Gardens*, 158-162.

[17]For the architecture of Greene and Greene see Randall L. Makinson, *Greene and Greene: Architecture as Fine Art* (Salt Lake City and Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1977); for discussions of the Greene brothers' garden designs see David C. Streatfield, "Echoes of England and Italy 'On the Edge of the World': Green Gables and Charles Greene," *Journal of Garden History* 2 (October-December 1982), 377-398; and Janet Lynn Becker, "Charles Sumner and Henry Mather Greene, Architects. The Integration of House and Garden: Southern California, 1893-1914," Unpublished Master of Landscape Architecture Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1988.

[18]Ralph Adams Cram, "Preface," in *American Country Houses of Today* (New York: The Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1913), iv-v.

[19]Robert W. Winter, "American Sheaves from 'C.R.A' and Janet Ashbee, "*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 30 (December 1971), 317-22.

[20]L. Morgan Yost, "Greene and Greene of Pasadena, "*Journal of Architectural Historians* 9 (March 1950), 11-19.

[21]Makinson, *Greene and Greene*, 55.

[22]"California's Contribution To A National Architecture: Its Significance As Shown in the Work of Greene and Greene, Architects," *Craftsman* (August 1912), 543.

[23]Makinson, *Greene and Greene*, 140-41.

[24]Ibid., 150-55; for the Hunt and Grey design, see Herbert Croly, "Some Houses by Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey, "*Architectural Record* 20 (October 1906), 282.

[25]Thomas M. Robinson, "Traditions In Translation: The Gardens of Fujitaro Kubota," Unpublished Master of Landscape Architecture thesis, University of Washington, 1992.

[26]Ibid., 98-100.

[27]The Kuni Mukai garden is most unusual in having been designed by a Japanese-American woman. There is strong circumstantial evidence to suggest that in creating this garden Kuni Mukai was affirming her cultural roots, in contrast to her husband's fierce attempt at complete cultural assimilation. I am grateful to Mary Matthews of the King County Cultural Resources Division for bringing the Mukai garden to my attention.

[28]Robinson, "Traditions in Translation," 112.

[29]Ibid., 130-33.

[30]John and Ray Oldham, *Gardens in Time*, (Sydney, Auckland, London, New York: Lansdowne Press, 1980), 81; Sylvia Crowe, *Garden Design*, (Chichester, West Sussex: Packard Publishing, 1958, 1981), 75.

[31]Richard Neutra, *Life and Shape* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1962), 227-28.

[32]Ibid., 227; Richard Neutra, *Mystery and Realities of the Site* (Scarsdale: Morgan and Morgan, 1951), 56. However, only his own Van Der Leuw House (1933) and the Von Sternberg House (1936) actually use courtyards, always referred to on his plans as patios.

[33]Ibid., .48.

[34]Ibid., .24.

[T]homas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the [Se]arch for Modern Architecture: a biography [an]d history* (New York: Oxford University [Pr]ess, 1982), 257, 262-63.
[C]hristopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the [M]odern Landscape* (London: Architectural [Pr]ess, 1938, 1948).

[I]bid., 84-5.

[I]bid., 88-9.

[A]ntonin Raymond, His Work in Japan 1920-[19]35 (Tokyo: Johnan shoin, 1935); Antonin [Ra]ymond, *Antonin Raymond: An [Au]tobiography* (Rutland, Vt: C.E. Tuttle, [19]73).

[G]arrett Eckbo, *Landscape for Living* (New [Yo]rk: Architectural Record with Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1950). Eckbo's eight factors included 1) the formal garden traditions of Renaissance and Baroque Europe and Islam; 2) the "informal" traditions of eighteenth century England and Japan and China; 3) scientific horticulture; 4) the conservation movement; 5) the urban and regional planning movement; 6) the modern movement in the arts; 7) rural agriculture land use traditions; and 8) folk garden traditions.

[41] Streatfield, *California Gardens*, 218.

[42] Crowe, *Garden Design*, 75.

[43] Streatfield, *California Gardens*, 192-93; and 196-200.

[44] San Francisco Museum of Art and Association of Landscape Architects, San Francisco Region, *Landscape Design* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Art, 1948), 30.

[45] Joseph E. Howland, *The House Beautiful Book of Gardens and Outdoor Living* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 56-7. James Rose also incorporated shoji-like screens into some of his early gardens, but the effect is quite different, owing to the different size of the wooden members. James Rose, *Creative Gardens* (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1958), 11-15.