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Asian Province and The *Encyclopedia of Asian Design*

Abstract

The year 2009 marked the 50th anniversary of the founding the Japan Society of Design. In 1962, the *Journal of the Japan Society of Design* started. It is one of the first academic journals to examine design history and theory in the world. Major part of a booklet celebrating the anniversary is a catalogue of the articles published in the journal during 1962-2009. Although the society deals with the whole aspects of design, it is a fact that a large proportion of papers published there is design history, and this tendency is strong from a certain point of time. Therefore, the catalogue could be an indicator of design history studies in Japan during the decades of 1960s - 2000s. It was in 1989 when the journal started carrying English abstracts. The globalization of studies in design history in Japan started in the late 1980s and it was at full swing in the 2000s. Extra special efforts are needed to publish papers in Western languages, while keeping the academic level of original papers written in Japanese.

The Japan Society of Design, jointed with the Japanese Society for the Science of Design, Design History Forum, and Design History Workshop Japan, supported the 6th ICDHS held in Osaka in 2008. It was meaningful that the first academic meeting of the ICDHS in Asia was held in Western Japan where design is active not only in practice but also in research. These events symbolize today's situation of those societies. On the one hand, it is a time of globalization. On the other, it is also a time of self-identification or movement toward a community, which does not mean a local community but a community of design history and studies. Any society of design tends to be caught up in the currents of the day such as business or trend. The Japan Society of Design is, however, a society that is slowly growing even after 50 years. *The Encyclopedia of Asian Design* for which many members of these societies are now working together may be the next step toward its real globalization

Keywords Japan Society of Design, Japanese Society for the Science of Design, Design History Forum, Design History Workshop Japan, *Encyclopedia of Asian Design*

Introduction

There are at least three design history study groups in Japan. They are the Japan Society of Design, the design history subcommittee of the Japanese Society for the Science of Design, and Design History Workshop Japan. Another study group, Design History Forum joined the Japan Society of Design a few years ago. Each of them is holding academic meetings in major cities of Japan every year. The number of design history papers published in these Japanese societies is approximately 20-30 per year. Most of them are, however, almost unknown outside Japan, because they are published in Japanese in most cases. Now there is a large-scale publication project in English, *the Encyclopedia of Asian Design*, for which various members of these societies are working together.

An Asian Province

The year 2009 marked the 50th anniversary of the founding the *Ishō Gakkai* (Japan Society of Design), which was organized in 1959 as the Western Japan Society of Design in Kyoto. In 1962, its journal, the *Dezain Riron* (*Journal of the Japan Society of Design*) was started, and the name of the society was changed to the Japan Society of Design in 1978 along with the increase of its membership beyond the limit of Western Japan.

The Journal of the Japan Society of Design is one of the first academic journals to examine design history, theory, and practice in the world. It was a yearly journal from 1962 to 2002, but, two issues are being published from 2003 along with the increase of academic papers submitted especially by graduate students and PhD candidates at various universities and colleges mostly in Japan. Its regular features include historical and theoretical articles and extensive book reviews by members of the Japan Society of Design.

Four months after the 50th anniversary meeting held at Osaka University on 11-12 July 2009, the Japan Society of Design held its 200th regular academic meeting at Kyoto Women's University on 14 November 2009. It is not coincidence, because the Japan Society of Design has been organizing four regular academic meetings every year from its very early days. The 200th regular academic meeting means a constant continuation of yearly activities and the fair development of the society during its first 50 years. A commemorative booklet in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Japan Society of Design was published in 2010 (Figure 1). Its major part is a catalogue of the articles published in the *Journal of the Japan Society of Design* during 1962-2009. Most of them are peer reviewed academic papers. Though the Japan Society of Design and its journal are dealing with the whole aspects of design, it is a fact that a large proportion of papers published in the journal are design history and theories, and this tendency is strong from a certain point of time. Therefore, this catalogue could be an indicator of design history studies in Japan during decades of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s.



Figure 1.

Publication commemorating the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Japan Society of Design (2009), designed by Miki Imai (54 cover designs for the *Journal of the Japan Society of Design*)

It was in 1989 when the *Journal of the Japan Society of Design* started carrying English abstracts at the end of each volume. It is also from 1989 when the titles of papers are catalogued both in Japanese and English in this commemorative booklet. The globalization of academic studies in design history and design theory in Japan started in the late 1980s and it was proceeding at full swing in the 2000s, despite the fact that those studies were started in the 1960s and flourished in the 1980s and 90s. Extra special efforts are needed to publish papers in Western languages, while keeping the academic level of original papers written in Japanese. Through those efforts, however, the circle of global exchange in design studies will spread throughout the country and the world.

The Japan Society of Design, jointed with the Japanese Society for the Science of Design, Design History Forum, and Design History Workshop Japan, supported the 6th ICDHS held at Osaka University in October 2008. It was very meaningful that the first academic meeting of the ICDHS in Asia was held in the historical *Kansai* (Western Japan centering on Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe) where design is very active not only in practice but also in research and education.

These successive events in 2008 and 2009 symbolize today's situation of the Japan Society of Design and its future. On the one hand, it is a time of globalization for the society, and particularly for its younger generations. On the other, it is also a time of self-identification or movement toward a community, which does not mean a local community but a community of design history and design studies. Any society of design tends to be quickly caught up in the currents of the day such as business or trend. The Japan Society of Design is, however, a society that is slowly changing and growing even after its 50 years' anniversary.

The Encyclopedia of Asian Design

Although Asia is still a province in the world order where the English-speaking nations maintain a cultural hegemony over many areas of the globe, it is now attracting the attention of interested people of the world in various fields of activities. In the field of design, preparations for a project of *the Encyclopedia of Asian Design* were made by a former managing editor of Berg Publishers in 2009. It was started as a three-volume encyclopedia covering "Histories and Geographies," "Theories and Practices," and "Key Issues in Modern Design." It finally became a four-volume encyclopedia consisting of "East Asia," "South and Southeast Asia," "Western and Central Asia," and "Transnational Issues in Asian Design." Despite geographical limitation to Asia, this four-volume publication is unprecedented in the field of design where the most dictionaries and encyclopedias were one volume or two or three at most.

Asia, the world's largest and most populous area with approximately 4 billion people, covering nearly 30% of the Earth's land area has a long history of design, both as producers and consumers. We decided that this publication should be an encyclopedia of "design" in a broad sense rather than a narrow sense which only means "modern design." In *the Encyclopedia of Asian Design*, history, theory, practice, technology, and design culture including Asian way of life will all be covered. It will include all aspects of Asian design, from calligraphy to manga, from flower arrangement to public spaces, from ceramics to textiles, and from *origami* to architecture.

Conclusion

The *Encyclopedia of Asian Design* for which various members of Japan's design history societies are now working together with design specialists of the world may be the next step toward real globalization. Although we are still facing various linguistic difficulties, the project is slowly proceeding. When published in 2016, we hope that the meaning of design may slightly change. We also hope that the meaning of globalization may also gradually change.

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