

Preserving Japanese Modernism

YiJu Chen

ABSTRACT

Rooted in the special cultural and geographic context of Japan, the 1988 Nara Charter provoked a new comprehension of material authenticity and further discussion in including the intangible aspects of tangible built heritage preservation. Seeing Japan as a pioneer of historic preservation in East Asia, this research aims to contextualize the preservation of modern heritage in Japan, its origins, development, and focus on one of the region's most pressing problems: seismic risk.

Japan established the Act on the Protection of Cultural Properties in 1950. Influencing the development of historic preservation in other East Asian countries, particularly Korea and Taiwan. According to this act, the preservation of cultural properties is divided into six main and two supplementary categories. Although Japan has one of the most thorough frameworks for historic preservation in Asia, the exclusion of modern architecture from this system and the obstacles related to urban renewal now present enormous challenges for the designation and protection of pre- and post-war Japanese modernism.

Kenzo Tange became the first Japanese architect to receive the Pritzker prize in 1987, and Japan's Bubble Economy ended in 1991. For Japanese Modernism, the 1990s was indeed a dynamic time of construction and deconstruction, preservation, and reflection. The establishment of DOCOMOMO Japan in 1999 was a critical point in the recognition of local modern heritage.

Of major concern for the preservation of all historic structures in Japan, and especially those of concrete is seismic risk. The possibility of earthquake resistance improvement is explored in the National Museum of Western Art (Le Corbusier, 1959) and Kagawa Prefectural Government Office East Building (Kenzo Tange, 1958).



"INHERITORS"



"RIPPLES"



"MODERNIZATION"

