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KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT
When discussing the role of the sacred in design education, the conversation focuses on a transcendent divinity, the dominant paradigm of divinity in the West. This orientation towards a divine other underscores the separateness of rare, specific acts of design-for-the-divine from the majority of the projects students engage in studio and, later, in practice. Of greater value in contemporary classrooms may be student explorations of immanent forms of divinity; of spaces and objects that are not infused with spiritual meaning by their orientation towards some other, higher divinity but by the divinity present within themselves. An immanent orientation in student design studios can add layers of significance to finished projects and overlay the processes of design and production themselves, transforming them from simple acts of production into spiritual acts of communion with the divine.

Seeking as a model an extant design culture whose processes and products are intimately interlaced with the immanent-divine, this paper proposes a study of Japanese craft practices and the Japanese native religion of Shinto. Because it emphasizes practice over dogma, vernacular Shinto permeates modern Japanese culture, especially its art and design traditions. From this fusion of Shinto and contemporary Japanese craft, this paper derives three core lessons for Western designers and explores ways of incorporating these lessons into the western design education.

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Vernacular Shinto and Japanese Craft Culture: A Model of Immanent Spirituality for the Western Architecture Studio

1

INTRODUCTION

When we discuss the role of the sacred in design education, the conversation seems to begin from program types traditionally held to be sacred in the West. Conversation focuses on student engagement with worship spaces and articles of sacrament: those places and things which are specifically consecrated for or through worship towards some form of *transcendent* divinity. This orientation towards a divine other underscores the separateness of these specialized acts of design from those that focus on everyday objects and spaces; from the majority of the projects and precedents students engage in the studio and the majority of work they will do in practice. Of greater value in contemporary classrooms may be student explorations of *immanent* forms of divinity; of spaces and objects that are not infused with spiritual meaning by their orientation towards some other, higher divinity but by the divinity present within themselves. This immanent orientation

in student design studios can add layers of significance to even mundane programs like clinics, restaurants, and housing developments. It can even overlay the processes of design and production themselves, independent of the nature of their product, transforming them from simple functional or commercial acts of production into spiritual acts of communion with the divine. Seeking a model of an extant design culture whose processes and products are intimately interlaced with the immanent-divine, this paper proposes a study of Japanese craft traditions and the Japanese native religion of Shinto, particularly in its folk or vernacular form as practiced by millions of non-religious Japanese people today. Of particular interest to this study is the relationship between these traditions and the professional conduct of Japan's designer-maker craftspeople. From this study, the paper projects a model for western architectural education — studio courses in

particular — that is founded in an engagement with the immanent-divine and suggests ways in which this reformed pedagogy may alter western professional practice.

UN-CLOISTERING OF THE DIVINE IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN DESIGN EDUCATION
Transcendence
Most main-stream western religious traditions in the last two-and-a-half thousand years have centered upon belief in a divinity or divinities that comes before, stands separate from and is of greater proximity to perfection than we human beings are, at least so long as we are in the bodies we have now, living in the world we experience daily. This division is as integral to ancient Greek and Roman pantheisms with their elevated gods as it is in modern monotheisms. It is echoed even in many western spiritual traditions that do not directly engage with the divine as a singular entity, spanning from Plotinus' Neoplatonism in the third century to Steiner's Anthroposophy in the 20th.

Paralleling the philosophical tradition of a transcendent divinity in western religion has been the notion that we humans, stuck on the worldly side of the transcendent divide, could access the other side through specific, place-based sanctuaries. There is a generalized notion in most western religious traditions that there are places the divine *is* (or is accessible) and places that they are not. In these traditions, spaces, objects and practices associated with the divine are *sacred* while those not associated are *profane*. Since the sacred, and consequently human encounters with the sacred, are fairly few and far between, humans are understood to spend most of their lives in profane spaces doing profane things.

Given the important role that sanctuaries play from Delphi and Eleusis in ancient Greece through to the churches, mosques and temples of contemporary mainstream monotheisms, it is no surprise that these spaces (and the structures that enclose them) have been at the center of western architecture and architectural education until fairly recently. Only with the simultaneous rise of functionalism and expressionism in the late 19th century was there a mass turning-away from the sanctuary as a primary architectural form, informing all others. To understand this, it may be worth briefly tracing three historical trend-lines: popular belief in a transcendent-divine, the role of the sanctuary in architecture and the role of sacred space in architectural education. **Tab. 1**

The Middle Ages
From the fall of the Roman Empire through to the Renaissance, the vast majority of expensive, permanent works of architecture[1] in Christian Europe were ecclesiastical in nature. This was also true in most Islamic states of the period, though some significant civic and academic architecture was erected by those societies like the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Córdoban caliphate in Iberia with a greater interest in the *scientific* and hence, in the earthly, non-transcendent world. In this period, belief in a transcendent-divine was almost universal among the peoples of the three Abrahamic traditions. In effect, it was the background for all life, architecture included. The commissioning of sanctuaries was not, generally, a private enterprise but an effort on the part of the state, the church as a kind of ecclesiastical state or a local community.

It is hard to get a full understanding of architectural

Transcendent Divinity — The Force of an Idea over Time in the West			
Era	Presence in Society	Expression in Architecture	Role in Architectural Education
The "Middle Ages" c. 395CE - c. 1300CE	Pervasive. Virtually the only accepted understanding of trans-human divine force	Virtually all "architecture" considered as construction intended to fulfill all aspects of the Vitruvian Triad is a form of "Sanctuary" for associating with the transcendent.	"Architeture" as such is not yet a codified field. The craftspeople responsible for sanctuaries spend their lives, from education onwards, in service to institutionalized, transcendent-divinity focused religion.
Early Modern c.1300CE - c. 1850CE	Generally supported among the populous but diminished, reinterpreted or challenged by a variety of traditions stemming from Renaissance Humanism, Enlightenment Rationalism & Post-enlightenment Romanticism	Architecture begins to encompass structures for the state and for private individuals but these new programs still take their formal cues from sanctuaries of the past.	Architecture becomes an organized profession with an organized education. Sanctuaries remain a special and higher program of study and dominate educational excercises.
Late Modern c. 1850CE - c. 1990CE	Still held by many as the true state of things but significantly hidden by a generalized "secularization" of public life.	Turn to (a) personal expresson and (b) function as primary drivers of form. In (a) the focus is on personal, private and unique relationship with the divine. In (b) communion with the divine is reduced to a unique program type and addressed with the same cognitive tools as any other "profane" program.	Students are taught either (a) to project their own engagement with the divine into architectural forms or (b) to analyze communion with the divine on functionalist grounds and design to suit existing rituals held at arm's length. Spiritually-significant buildings constitute their own studio, sometimes optional, within a broader curriculum. With notable acceptions, the practice itself is not seen to have a spiritual dimension but instead wears the clothes of a rationalist scientific observer.
Present Day c. 1990CE - Present	Unsupported by a significant plurality of westerers and a majority of the world population. Supplanted in many societies by a "spirituality" more focused on immanent expressions of divine force.	Seems to lack a spiritual dimension of any kind — transcendence- or immanence-centered. How should contemporary spirituality manifest in architecture?	Seems not to engage with the spiritual in any meaningful way — transcendence- or immanence-centered. How should contemporary spiritual practices manifest in architectural practices? And how do we inculcate these new practices into students?

Tab. 1
Parallel histories of transcendence in western society, western
architecture and western architectural education (Allen Pierce, 2022).

education in this period because the concept of an architect as a professional who is separated from the builder as one whose role is design, and commissioned as a worker in a commercial economy to perform a job for pay did not yet exist and, as such, did not have an associated training regimen. Instead of architects, there existed a hierarchy of builders who were trained from a young age to master specific acts of combined design and construction. For those who worked on sanctuaries, this was a life's calling — their lives and livelihoods were tied up in religion and in erecting sacred structures to the glory of a transcendent deity. **Fig. 1**

Early Modern

Even after the fourteenth-century, the belief in some form of transcendent-divine remained for most Westerners, though it was significantly diminished, reinterpreted or challenged by a variety of new philosophical traditions. Enlightenment Rationalism challenged the active role of the divine in the everyday and promoted, through empiricism, a focus on the observable profane world. Renaissance Humanism and Post-enlightenment Romanticism both sought to center the individual and their capacities — to think, to perceive, to express themselves — diminishing the role of the divine

(and the sanctuary) in the life of the average Westerner. Romantic arts in some media — especially literature and landscape painting — even began to embrace something close to what we would come to call the immanent divine, expressing worshipful admiration for that which is great, beautiful and awe-inspiring in the natural world, but this connection was overshadowed in architecture by that field's concurrent turn towards industry, technology, science and standardization the at the dawn of the late modern period. Though the Renaissance — which saw, simultaneously, the emergence of great building projects on behalf of non-ecclesiastical, commercially-contracted clients (the state and private individuals), and of architecture as a formal profession — architectural education remained largely focused on the design and production of sanctuaries oriented towards transcendent divinity. As late as 1830, students at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts were taught to use the sacred architectures of the past — Greek and Egyptian temples, medieval gothic cathedrals and Islamic mosques from the Sahel to the Punjab — as formal models for the myriad profane, quotidian architectural programs — banks, factories, multi-family housing blocks — that had emerged as the bread-and-butter of most architectural practices. Consideration of the profane world on its own terms was, in a sense, not a worthwhile pursuit for the architect. Rather, architects were taught to elevate everyday life towards some version of divinity by making anything worthwhile a reflection of the sanctuary.

Late Modern

Late modernity's turn to rationalism and/or expressionism represented a radical break with this tradition. We might date this turn to the 1840s: the decade in which Augustus Pugin sought to reframe the gothic tradition as a rational expression of structural forces, construction processes, and material realities,[2] while John Ruskin began refocusing architectural history away from the Spirit that sanctuaries contain and towards the spirits that conceive and realize them.[3] Though sacred spaces associated with transcendence-oriented religious traditions are to be found among the most notable works of twentieth century Modernist architecture, and although religious programs continued to be taught in student design studios, these structures were designed with a methodology and in a spirit derived from that generation's experience working with the profane and quotidian — a reversal of the early modern model. Architectural functionalism and, later, architectural structuralism's insistence that any building's form should be derived from the actual facts of the world in which the building was to exist (i.e., the profane world), namely its siting, construction and use-patterns, effectively leveled the sanctuary with any other building typology, only different in that its use-patterns engaged with the divine.

This shift paralleled the mass-secularization of the public realm, which pushed spirituality in general into the private spaces of the home and made the sanctuary a private institution serving a niche population outside of the civic commons. During this period, both belief in the transcendent-divine and practice of associated traditions diminished significantly. This shift relegated the design of sacred spaces both in practice and in student studios to a kind of special case.

Present Day

Today, students in the institutions I have been involved with in the US might be given a sacred space as a program once or twice in a five- to seven-year education. These studios — along with those that engage spaces for the dead and dying — are given as a rare opportunity for students of architecture to engage with metaphysical concerns. Different theory texts are taught. Spatial moves that are not readily explainable and would not be accepted in other studios are allowed. The sacred-space studio stands as an exception because its use is an exception. Students are made to understand that they are designing a space out of space — a heterotopia, in Michel Foucault's famous phrasing.[4] The separate-ness of divinity understood as a transcendent force has led, in contemporary, secular architecture schools, to the cloistering-off of the divine from the rest of students' work.

Acknowledging that we are unlikely to see a reversal of the two-century long, society-wide shift towards the secular in which traditional notions of the transcendent-divine, associated rituals and ritual spaces have first retreated from public life and then been largely abandoned by a growing plurality of Europeans[5] and Americans,[6] architecture's parallel separation of sacred spaces from the bulk of everyday work may seem appropriate and in-step with the changing western world. As Aike Rots points out, the transcendent-divine is no longer even a significant background assumption for many modern westerners. "[T]he social order no longer needs an external frame of reference, as the world in which we live has come to be seen as the foundational principle."[7] What, then, is the spirituality of our age, if there can be said to be one at all? And how does it manifest in architectural form? Or, acknowledging after the late-moderns that form should derive from process, how does today's spirituality manifest in architectural practice?

Immanence and Contemporary Spirituality

The same polls that spell out a general decline in traditional religiosity also highlight an increase in various personal, idiosyncratic forms of spirituality. Significantly, this spirituality is frequently focused on the everyday places, objects and relationships that surround believers rather than on spaces and objects that connect them to some other, transcendent being(s).[8] This new wave of spiritualities, which manifest in a wide variety of beliefs and practices from mindfulness exercises designed to center focus on the present time and place to the talismanic possession of natural, inanimate objects like crystals, seems to find some unity in a rejection of transcendence, itself. Instead, many of these beliefs and acts seem to share an orientation towards an imminent notion of divinity: a divinity that is here among us on this plane of existence and not elsewhere.

It is worth asking how we can resolve the simultaneous secularization of society and the rise of these new, immanent spiritualities. As a means of understanding, Rots points to the way in which the dichotomy of Religious-Secular maps onto that of Transcendent-Immanent in the writings of the philosopher Charles Taylor. In Rots' reading,

> ..."secularity" does not signify the absence of deities, offerings, or ritual specialists: quite the contrary, what it signifies is their immanent character. "Secular" in this sense of the term, does not mean "disenchanted", nor does it imply institutional neutrality, atheism or the absence of worship practices in public space, even though this is how the term is often understood today.[9]

Acknowledging this, I believe that the architectural profession's apparent retreat from the spiritual is a mistake; that contemporary architecture must remain engaged with the spiritual just as the west at large seems to have remained, albeit on modified terms; that architecture must not become disenchanted. The re-enchanting of architectural design must begin in daily practices and practices must be seeded and nurtured in our schools of design. I would like to propose that architects and architectural educators consider adopting immanent forms of divinity as the basis not only for project programs but also as a grounding for studio practices. By adopting new forms of divinity into a modern, secularized field, it may pass through the current moment of disenchantment to "recover a sense of the sacred within the everyday,"[10] in the words of Edward McDougall, a process Rots calls *sacralization*. In so proposing, I suggest that other immanence-focused cultures with strong craft and design traditions may be worth studying as a model for our own emergent practices.

VERNACULAR SHINTO: CRAFT CULTURE, SECULAR MODERNITY AND THE IMMANENT-DIVINE
Shinto as a Model of Immanent Spirituality in a Secular Society

Though a full exploration of immanence and its dialectical relationship with transcendence is well beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that immanent orientations to the divine are thought to be features of some of the most ancient human religions and are present in many contemporary metaphysical systems — especially animistic traditions in which parts of nature or nature itself form an omnipresent divine. One such contemporary religion is Shinto — a group of beliefs and practices native to and little practiced outside of Japan.

Shinto stands as a unique example in some ways because, unlike many other fully formalized immanence-centered spiritual systems,[11] it is still widely practiced in a fully-modern, technologically advanced, secularized society. This seems to challenge the notion, most fully developed in late-Heidegger, that contemporary technology is at odds with humans' ability to feel close to the divine; that "modernity denies the sacred within the everyday because the thing is reduced to another commodity in the flow of resources, presented as its use or value."[12]

Instead, a major part of the Japanese population continues to engage regularly in practices that acknowledge and celebrate divine entities called *Kami* (神) that represent and are present in everyday objects and spaces. McDougall points out that "In contemporary Japan, a traditional, non-technological understanding of being still exists alongside the most advanced high-tech production and consumption."[13] *Kami* are very unlike the transcendent gods on which most major world religions center their worship. They exist alongside humans within our world, which is generally understood as the only world. *Kami* are omnipresent — invisible to humans but not removed from or above them in some natural hierarchy. *kami* inhabit specific locations, objects or natural phenomena that stand outside of and above everyday experience — what we might characterize in the west as beautiful, terrifying or in some other way awe-inspiring — but are still part of the everyday world. Worshipers visit *kami* where they are and these special spaces are typically marked by the construction of a shrine or by demarcation with a sacral rope called a *shimenawa* (注連┌) and wooden *torii* (鳥居) gates.[14] **Fig. 2** The easiest way to understand what makes *Kami* special or divine is to appreciate their connection to awe, beauty, or the enchantment of the everyday. McDougall characterizes each *Kami* as an "immensity that is immanent,"[15] noting that, "the presence of the *kami* is disruptive to the ordinary... an embodiment of the underlying sense of mystery in existence."[16] This, I think, is the type of divinity that many contemporary westerners are responding to and one that contemporary architectural practice should incorporate.

Vernacular Shinto: Background to the Everyday; Practice, not Belief-system

For most modern Japanese practitioners of Shinto (神道),[17] it is hardly understood as religion in the traditional sense. In Rots' characterization, Shinto is "a public, collective, non-optional frame of reference... the immanent, foundational framework by which Japanese culture and society are shaped and conditioned."[18] It "is not so much a-religious as some sort of ontological a priori that shapes the conditions of religious (or not religious) beliefs."[19]

Though a minority of Japanese people today practice Shinto in a formalized way akin to the worship of contemporary western monotheists, acknowledging trained priests and other spiritual leaders, dedicating time at specific moments in the day, week and year to visit sanctuary-like temples and acknowledging a common creed (Shinto scholar Thomas Kasulis calls this "Shrine Shinto"[20]), most of those who engage with *Kami* do so in passing as part of their daily lives without any great focus on the specific metaphysics of *Kami* or humans' relationship to them. They visit shrines and they perform designated practices, but their engagement is *secular* in the sense that Charles Taylor uses the term: as the opposite of *religious*.[21] Their practice constitutes what Kasulis calls "vernacular Shinto."[22] In Japan, this is sometimes called *Minzoku* (民族) Shinto, meaning people's Shinto or folk Shinto.[23] **Fig. 3**

In this vernacular tradition, Snéad Vilbar points out that "... the emphasis may be less on the divinities and more on what people might do in awareness of the existence of the divine."[24] The emphasis is on the conduct, not the beliefs of the worshiper, and on the presence of the *kami* as a source of wonder rather than as objects of worship. Modern, secular Japanese conduct their daily lives and — most importantly to our study — their work "in awe of an immanent presence of the gods marked out from the ordinary, which is, at the same time, bound into the practice of daily life."[25] In this regard, I want to look closer at three ideas tied to Shinto practices and to Japanese craft traditions that offer lessons for how we in the West may also incorporate a sense of the awe-some and out-of-the-ordinary into our own craft- and design-practices, thereby re-enchanting the products of our work and engaging our own emergent spiritualities.

Tying the Divine to the Everyday, Marking its Presence

It is worthwhile to begin by asking: if the divine is not transcendent of the material objects of the human world but present in them, what is it? How is it *in* those objects? Through our context and conditioning as westerners, we may be tempted to answer with a version of Cartesian Dualism; to say that the object and the divinity are separate things that operate according to separate rules but somehow converse with one another. The problem with such a Cartesian view is that it still places that which is

divine above the worldly, embodied object and emphasizes their fundamental separation as prior to and more significant than their temporary intercourse.

In a way, this view is almost diametrically opposed to the Shinto understanding. In Shinto, the divine (*kami*) and the worldly objects with which they associate are inseparable — they are tied (*Musubi*, **むすび**) together. It is impossible to say whether the *kami* or the object/person/phenomenon to which it is tied is the source of the experience of awe-someness we receive by engaging with them because one does not overlay or transcend the other. They are one. Likewise, it is impossible to say whether the *kami* cause the objects with which they are associated or antedate them. It seems, instead, that each is a co-requisite of the other. There is only this one world — our world — and all that is in it (including us, including the products of our hands and minds) has *kami* in it. The striking experience of awe-someness we have only sometimes in our lives is merely the result of our having come closer to an awareness of this; our having seen clearer the actual nature of the world that is clouded by our daily goings-on.

When something is presented as an object of beauty, or as a site of the divine, as in the case of a Shinto shrine, this marking only serves to bring our attention to what is always present and is everywhere. Per Kasulis, "when people get lost in the details of everyday life, when they disconnect from their capacity for awe, they often feel homeless...

3

Disoriented, they seek a marker to show the way back to the *kami*-filled… world. The *torii* serves that purpose."[26]
Marking the divine in the world serves to refocus our attention onto it, so that we may feel it in our own lives; in ourselves. Immense natural phenomena like a raging waterfall, an ancient tree, or a tall, bare mountain on the horizon serve as their own markers. As Kasulis says, "If people can feel [a place or thing's] concentrated material energy, this is enough to associate it with a *kami*."[27] Outside of such naturally-striking places, it falls to us as *homo faber*,[28] to create our own markings in the world, reminding us to refocus on the divinity present everywhere.

These marked places are, in Kasulis' phrasing "holographic" entry points to the generalized, immanent divine. Though they are but a part of the world, they remind us that the whole is in every part.

> Insofar as the whole world is *kami*-filled… every single thing in our world in some way reflects the wondrously mysterious power of *kami*. Yet Shinto uses markers to designate specific sites where the holographic nature of *kami* is easier to sense.[29]

Personal Conduct towards the Immanent-Divine as a Virtue Ethic

Because vernacular Shinto places a higher value on a person's practices than their beliefs, one's conduct — one's

virtuous action — is the means of getting right with and accurately perceiving the divine. Only through embodying key virtues can practitioners engage with the divine and create openings for *kami* to manifest in everyday life. In my study of Shinto practices and ethics, three key virtues appeared regularly, each with something to contribute to craft and design practices. These virtues roughly translate to sincerity, purity and gratitude. Each of those English words is burdened with certain understandings that derive from a Judeo-Christian outlook on virtuous action so I would like to explore them as they are understood in Japan.

Sincerity

Magokoro (真心) is the Japanese word that is generally translated as sincerity, truth, or genuineness with respect to human virtue. It is a compound of two Japanese characters: *Makoto*, means truth or genuineness and carries a meaning similar to our use of the word *purity* to describe an unadulterated precious metal. *Kokoro* refers to a kind of unified heart/mind, the seat of both thinking and feeling, which is rooted in the physical body, not separated from it as in the Cartesian model we are used to considering in the west, The compound *magokoro*, then, might be understood to mean something like: sincereness of heart and mind.

Being or possessing the virtue of *magokoro* is a prerequisite for participating in the divine. Per Kasulis,

In the land of *kami*, one is a portion of the sacred… To be genuinely receptive to the presence of kami and not merely responsive to it… people must first be *makoto*. Only then can they recognize how kami is part of what they themselves are. They will reflect kami and not merely reflect on kami.[30]

A *magokoro* person possesses an openness to the actual way things are. For artisans, this has meant cultivating an awareness of and skill in amplifying the natural features of their chosen medium, since these are the sites of connection to *kami*. Kasulis shares a traditional story of two chefs, one Chinese and one Japanese. The Chinese chef brags of his ability to control his ingredients such that he can make chicken taste like duck. The Japanese chef's pride lies in his ability to make a carrot more like a carrot than any diners have ever eaten.[31] The Japanese chef, in exercising his skills to bring forward that which is most natural about the carrot, is exhibiting *magokoro*.

There is something humble in someone or something that possesses *magokoro*. The aesthetic philosopher and *Mingei* founder Soetsu Yanagi felt that everyday implements produced by anonymous craftspeople had a separate and greater engagement with the awe-some than did individual works by named artists, stating that great art "must be an art of the ordinary. Only then will it become something out of the ordinary."[32] Both the maker and the made can possess *magokoro*. Indeed, it is the *magokoro* left in the object that

allows divinity to be tied up in it and for others to engage with it there.[33] What they find can be understood as *naturalness*, *sincereness*, or even *truthfulness*. Yanagi describes the work of the humble maker thusly: "It is like looking for true belief in a world infested with self-centeredness. Only when egotism diminishes does true belief make an appearance."[34]

Purity

In Shinto, when one suggests that an object (or site, or phenomenon) allows us to see awe-someness or, in Yanagi's phrasing, "truth," one must also be conscious of the fact that this is just one part of the larger truth: the immanent-divine present in all things. Any one presentation of the divine is but an entry point into the pervasive, singular divine. This object, then, serves as a mirror for the viewer, reflecting the divine that is, of course, in them too, though it may be obscured by everyday-ness. The mirror is a major symbol in Shinto, present at most shrines and frequently considered to be tied to *kami*. As Kasulis points out, "a mirror's capacity to reflect depends upon its cleanliness."[35] and "the mirror can be so covered with the dust of everyday worries and problems that it ceases to reflect."[36] Herein lies the significance of our second Shinto virtue: purity,[37] *Jundo* (純度). Purification is a significant part of any Shinto ceremony because it symbolizes the cleaning and clearing of the practitioner so that they are fully open to divine presence and unimpeded by the dust of the everyday. Approaching a shrine, it is typical to wash one's hands
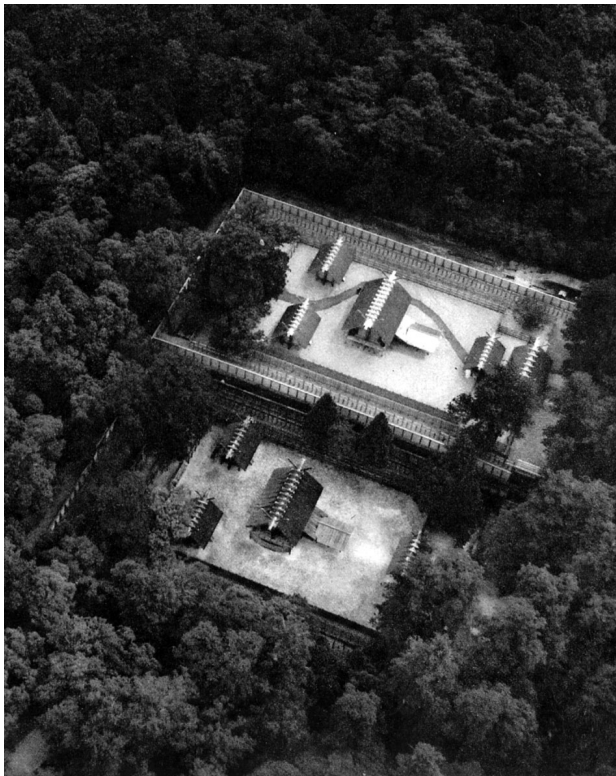
5

and mouth at a ritual trough, clearing away "physical and verbal misdeeds," leaving visitors' "hearts and minds pure."[38] **Fig. 4** These misdeeds are not understood to be volitional trespasses against the divine in the sense of Judeo-Christian *sin* but are, rather, the accumulations of everyday filth that block us from realizing the divine in the *kami* and the *kami* in ourselves. If one approaches the divine in an impure state, "the point of connection and overlap between the sacred and the human is itself defiled." Purification generates a state of openness and connection; defilement, a state of separation.

Gratitude

The final virtue, gratitude**,** *Kansha* (感謝)**,** stands for a positive orientation to what already is, and to what one already has. Frequently, Shinto practitioners visit shrines and other *kami*-inhabited locales simply to thank them for that which already is; for the presence of awe-someness, of divinity in the world. Tied up in the naturalness or truth that is revealed by or through an encounter with *kami* is the notion that the divine is already present and is only being brought forward or uncovered for one who is both sincere of heart and purified of obscuring thoughts, words & actions.[39]

This notion seems to run counter to the Western sense that a creative act is almost inherently a novel one, bringing forward a beauty that was not present before. Instead, a creative act may bring forward and celebrate what is already present and divinely beautiful in the world — in this regard we might remember the chef's carrot or Kasulis' "potter of the mindful heart," who, "amplifies it [the voice of clay] so we all can hear it."[40] Gratitude is a mode of conduct that we might all carry with us throughout the day, not just in the creation of a beautiful thing or a visit to a *kami*. "The sacred is approached, not as something out there to be focused upon, but instead as something of which the person is already a part. One might think of contemplation [of a kami] as… being open or sensitive to what is already present."[41] This is "… a spirituality without an agenda."[42] in which one of true heart, purified, identifies, engages with, and amplifies what is already good, beautiful, divine in the world.

Ritual as Cyclic Force, as Progressive Force

Japanese life is intimately tied up in ritual. Ritual occurs regularly, marking out each day and season. Some ritual acts like the famous tea ceremony (*chadō*, 茶道), have their basis in Buddhist practice,[43] but many, from daily visits to small urban shrines to the emperor's yearly blessing of the rice harvest, are rooted in Shinto. Shinto rituals, whatever form they take, are moments of connection between the quotidian human world and the awe-some world of *kami*. They recognize the outstandingness of the place, object or phenomenon on which they are centered. They require the practitioner to stop their normal forward motion, to set their heart into a properly sincere attitude, to purify themselves of the contaminations of living, and focus for a moment (with gratitude) on what is both an integral part

of and stands beyond the everyday. In this way, Shinto rituals serve as a re-set; a self-reinforcing return to a way of being that is properly centered on the wonderments of the world. This re-setting — really a re-cycling — is an integral feature of the tradition. We see it in the famous burning and reconstruction of the Shinto shrine at Ise every 20 years, an act of purification by literally making-new the home of the solar *kami* Amateratsu.[44] **Fig. 5** Making new, then, for Shinto practitioners, is a re-turning to the divine as it exists around and among us each day, which, as we have seen, is also, through the mirror, a recognition of the divine in oneself and one's own works.

The new, then, is not about novelty in the sense we understand it in the west. It is not new in the sense of having a new form, yet-unseen or unknown by its audience. Rather, it is a repetition-cum-return; a re-playing of the way the world actually is before the mirror is again made dusty by the impurities of living. When the shrine at Ise is rebuilt, it is supposedly rebuilt exactly as it was built twenty years earlier; exactly as it has been rebuilt for over a thousand years. It is both entirely new and so ancient that its existence can seem perpetual. Still, it must be noted, no re-cycling ever returns things exactly the way they were before. There

seems, in the tradition, to be an understanding that this cycling overlays the linear arrow of time as we understand it in the west, and that, when things go well, each new cycle improves upon the form in some ways.

When I challenged one of the lead builders of the 2013 Ise reconstruction on this point several years ago at a lecture, he conceded that it is unlikely the shrine of today is exactly like the shrine of one millennium ago. Indeed, photographs from the latest reconstruction look much more like a contemporary Japanese construction site than some kind of history-park costumed pageant of ancient carpenters at work. Though they use hand saws and thatch roofs with straw, the workers wear modern coveralls and hard-hats (all in white, a sign of purity both required within the shrine precinct and commonly adopted for everyday projects in the profane world). Engineers reviewed digitally printed drawings and calculations. Work was performed from modern steel scaffolding, sometimes draped with plastic sheeting to enclose the worksite completely. **Fig. 6** The builder admitted: this is just a better way to work, though it doesn't fundamentally change the work itself. It is new and it is ancient.

In the Japanese conception, this progressive cycling of
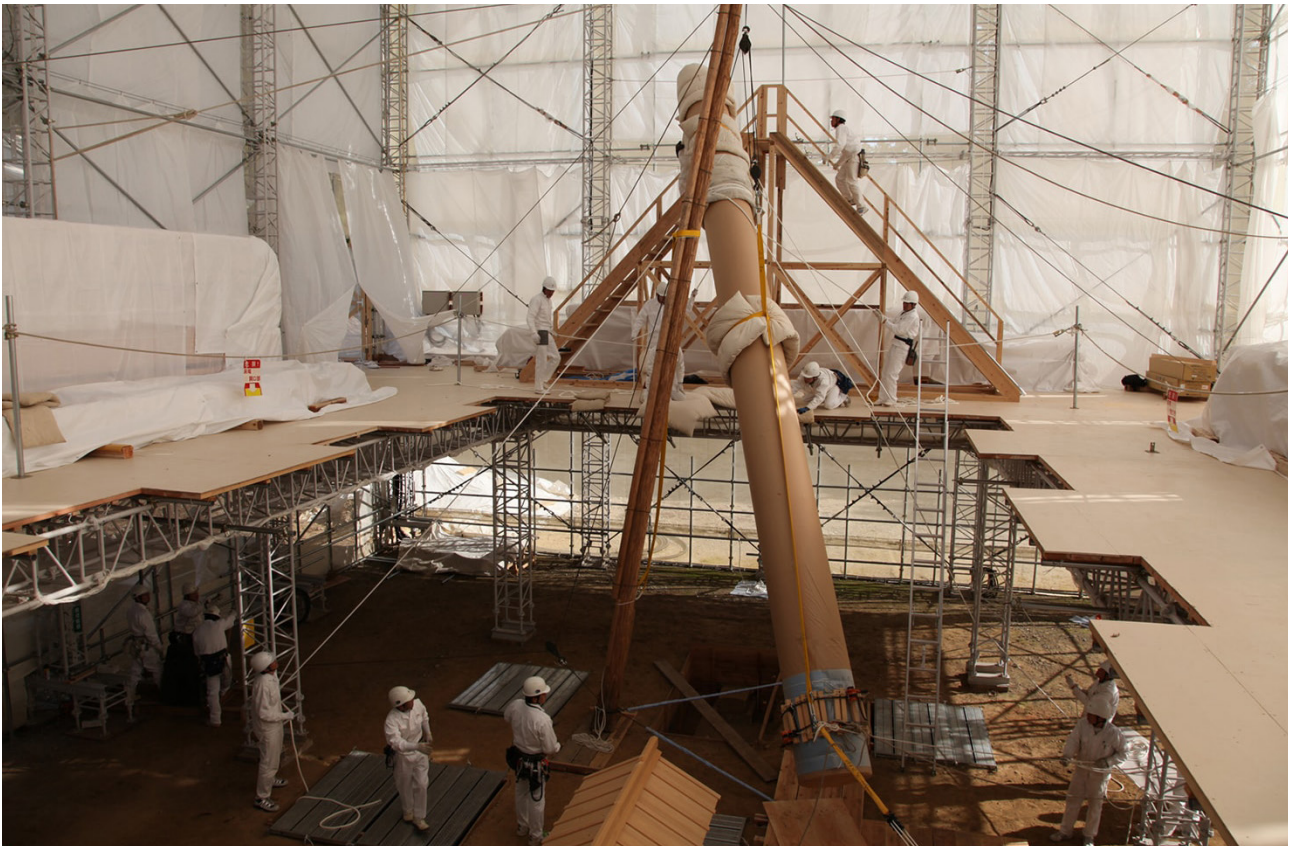
ritual is in harmony with the at-once deeply tradition-bound and perfection-seeking attitude present in many Japanese crafts. Yanagi regularly expresses his aesthetic preference for hand-made production goods — made by anonymous but highly skilled individuals to be used for everyday tasks[45] — over the products of creative makers who are out to produce art. In the work of these anonymous production makers, Yanagi finds that "beauty emerges from repetition."[46] The constant re-making of a pottery vessel or a set of chopsticks engages the maker's attention and that attention is slowly perfected, allowing them to bring forward a more sincere expression of the thing itself — that which is its beauty, its inherent divinity.

The reason the experience of a beautiful object is beautiful, in the Shinto conception, is that this object constitutes a clean mirror, reflecting the divinity present in all things. This polish is achieved through the practiced hand and clear eye of the craftsperson who works without the ego of the artist, seeking instead, through repetition, against novelty, the greatest expression of *kami*, of beauty, of divinity, of awesomeness in their work. Shinto rituals are acts that promote focus on and gratitude towards what already is in the world and that reward the perfection of these actions over time.

By honing the practitioner's focus on *kami*, a practitioner improves his life. Per Kasulis:

> In the context of music, the routine of daily practice is usually considered as a sign of dedication, not mindless repetition. Similarly, the more often [a contemporary Japanese man who regularly, casually visits a shrine] feels the spiritual connectedness at the shrine, the more this feeling will carry over into his daily life. The more frequently he reflects the *kami*-filled world, the less likely he will be to ignore it later. Many sensitivities, in fact, deepen with praxis… The opposite is true as well. Routinization sets the conditions for noticing when things are not as they should be… In short: recurrent praxis nurtures sensitivity and responsiveness.[47]

Ritual is a return, a practice, but one that grows our ability to recognize that which is natural and pure, and to recognize it in ourselves, too. Yanagi sums it up well: "When one becomes a child of nature, one is encompassed by a natural beauty that only nature can give. The more one returns to the bosom of nature, the more intense that beauty becomes."[48]

LESSONS FROM SHINTO: PROPOSALS FOR ENGAGING THE IMMANENT-DIVINE IN WESTERN ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Understanding better what a culture centered on the immanent-divine as "a public, collective, non-optional frame of reference,"[49] looks like and how that understanding of divinity plays out in daily life and, especially, creative practices, I would like to look briefly at the structure of western creative practices and how they are taught in order to propose changes and alternate practices that may re-enchant the architecture studio, the architecture student, and their products.

I do not think that this alternate frame of reference needs to radically transform the subject matter of the student studio or its structure. What will change, I think, is the mindset of all who are involved, and this will transform practices at a more granular level — how we speak to one another, how we evaluate ideas, what we value in the work we produce. The change lies, I think, in Vilbar's statement, repeated from above, that: "… the emphasis may be less on the divinities and more on what people might do in awareness of the existence of the divine."[50]

Tying the Divine into Every Work and Every Practice

Today, there is a fundamental separation between quotidian architectural programs (the bulk of students' and practitioners' work) and programs that deal with the divine or metaphysical, as I noted in Section 2 of this paper. If we acknowledge a turn among our students' generation towards an imminent understanding of the divine along the lines of Shinto's, this division ceases to make sense. It is neither the case that a project focused on a sanctuary or other metaphysical space is somehow closer to divinity than any other, nor that a quotidian program like a housing tower or medical clinic is removed from the presence of the divine. One way to highlight this for students is to point out the omnipresence of the awe-some, and the way in which awe-some experiences of architecture and landscape alike demonstrate the tying-together of worldly objects and divine presence. A second is to ask of students, almost as part of a programming exercise, how they can include markers of the divine in everyday spaces — ways of reminding users to re-focus and become aware of the presence of the awe-some even as they go about their daily lives, fulfilling whatever other programs the studio is engaging.

Conducting Oneself with Virtue in the Studio and Out

As a way of initiating this shift in mindset, we might ask students to cultivate and monitor virtues within themselves. This might mean giving studio time over for reflecting (alone or in a seminar setting) not only on the project before them but on their own inner deportment towards the work. This may represent a larger re-centering from *productivity*, as I have seen it glorified in the studios I've known as both student and instructor, and towards *reflection*. Too often, we focus first on the fact that something gets done, second on how it is done and third (if at all) on our own conduct in the doing. A virtue-centered approach might reverse this

order. By asking students to first focus on their deportment towards the work setting out before them, then to allow this to color their actions, then to accept the result — in whatever level of completion, whatever form of expression — as the output of this process, we can emphasize the role of the creative worker in bringing forward what is right, natural or true over the importance of producing something novel *ex nihilo* and presenting it on set terms.

Students might embody sincerity as a deportment towards the program, the materials and the project users, real or hypothetical. Such an attitude would likely move students away from projects that merely perform a function in the modernist tradition, since this is often not the most sincere but also away from projects that serve more as cultural comment or humorous meta-architecture than as products of and generators for genuinely rich and fulfilling experiences for users. Likewise, students might adopt an attitude of purity in the Shinto sense — working to uncover and uncloud what is true and awe-some about the materials, sites, programs, and clients at hand, allowing these virtuous qualities to shine-forth for the students themselves and for their (real or hypothetical) end-users. In so doing, the students may recognize the beautiful and the authentic in themselves, setting aside many of the societally-conditioned preconceptions and self-deceptions that we all bring to our creative work in the western world. Asking students to reflect upon and *purify* their way of being towards and thinking about their work may initiate a productive reset that will alter motives and goals, echoing down into the work itself.

Finally, asking students to begin from an attitude of gratitude towards that which is already given rather than assuming from day one of a studio that they need to produce something novel will lead them towards projects that have a greater sense of and respect for each aspect of impinging context. Students may gain a greater awareness of and willingness to work with site context including existing topographic conditions, atmospheric effects, and sunlight. They may approach their end-users with a greater sympathy, seeking to truly understand and build for their needs instead of projecting needs or seeking to modify behaviors. They may come to understand the nature of the materials at hand and design to them rather than insisting that materials adapt to abstract formal considerations developed in a vacuum or reaching for increasingly complex and esoteric building systems whose inner workings remain opaque to designer and user alike.

Daily Rituals of Practice

These virtues seem to lend themselves to the creation of new rituals for architects and architectural students. Rituals can play the same roles for us as they do for Shinto practitioners: simultaneously returning us to what is most true and profound in the objects of our work, in our work and in ourselves, and allowing us to become more aware of and thereby better at what we do repeatedly in our daily practices. We might ask students, each time they sit to work, to perform an inward-oriented reflection on what

awe-someness could be present in their work, what stands in the way of its clear presence in the work and how that presence can be drawn forward. Such a reflection done regularly (almost like a kind of journaling practice either entirely in the mind or on paper) would serve to re-set the student's perceptual center point, their expectations for the working session and their goals for the project before they dive in to the work, where they may be prone to losing these higher-level awarenesses in the myriad small problems of a design exercise. This repetition would, over time, make such a reflection second-nature for students and their awareness of when they are and are not properly oriented towards their work would increase, keeping them on target more often and allowing them to return there with greater ease when they wander.

We might also ask students to perform a kind of outward-oriented reflection focused on where and how they apply their attentions while they work and what they note as they work. This might be as simple as asking them to slow down in their work and acknowledge openly with themselves what they intend by an action before they act. Such a ritual would parallel the Japanese practice of *pointing and calling* (*Shisa kanko,* 指差喚呼), in which individuals point at and verbally call out what they are doing as they are doing it. Such rituals of attention, famous for their use by workers on Japan's trains and in its factories, has been proven to raise workers' consciousness of their own actions significantly, bringing each action to the workers' front-of-mind where any dissonance between intention and action rings out clearly. Students might declare "I am going to cross-cut this board on the rip saw" and note the inappropriateness of this task. They might note "I am going to make a path that follows the site's contours from one pavilion to the next" and note that this seems like a natural course of action. In following this simple ritual, they will bear out for themselves the resonances and dissonances in their work, and their work will improve by it. Like Yanagi's production potter, whose repetitive, ritualistic work over years makes it possible for him to note immediately by feel when a vessel is off in some way and when it is right, students will grow to recognize and reliability bring forward 'naturalness' that begins to approach *awe-someness* and to reflect that which is divine in the work and in themselves.

Each of these projected additions to our pedagogy and practice leads students, teachers and, ultimately, practitioners, towards a greater focus on that which is awe-some in the most quotidian acts of our daily practice and the most mundane of our work products. They remind us to focus on the small things that are already with and around us by recognizing the bond between the divine and the everyday, by cultivating virtue in our own attitudes towards them, and by perfecting our understanding of them through repetitive, ritual engagement.

CONCLUDING NOTES: TOWARDS A HYBRID FRAME OF REFERENCE

These prescriptions for the western architecture studio seek to place students into a personal disposition towards their work that emphasizes "what [they] might do in awareness of the existence of the [immanent-]divine,"[51] as noted above. As this paper offers prescriptions, not merely possibilities, "what [they] might do" would be more accurately characterized as "what they *ought* to do." Thus framed, the choice to adopt such a disposition becomes an ethical imperative — one related to western notions of personal agency and personal responsibility. Central to the western frame of reference is the idea that each individual is capable of and duty-bound to note what is right and what is wrong about the world around them, and take individual action to make right what is wrong; action that improves the situations in which they find themselves. For many Japanese people, this mode of ethical thinking is somewhat foreign. It is common in Japan for individuals to feel a sense of social, rather than personal responsibility. In this frame of reference, what one ought to do is defined by traditions, group culture, instructions from authority figures and the expectations of peers. To some western critics, this means of calculating responsibility tends to discourage independent assessments of right and wrong, to encourage the perpetuation of the status quo and to allow individuals to abdicate personal responsibility for the failings of the organizations and social groups to which they belong.

Though this paper is not concerned with perpetuating or countering these criticisms, the conflict between two ethical frames of reference — the one in which the paper itself operates and the one culturally associated with those who practice Shinto — could pose a challenge to this paper's attempt to synthesize concepts from Shinto with western educational practices. Is there a necessary link between Japan's dominant ethic and Shinto's immanence-based notion of the divine? Without giving too much space to the sources and sustaining factors of this ethical framework, it does not seem that such a connection exists. As Kasulis notes, the core of modern Japan's ethics of social responsibility was imported with Neo-Confucianism from the continent, syncretized in medieval Japanese society and is not inherently present in Shinto beliefs or practices.[52] In fact, the core practices of Shinto, noted above, emphasize the individual's personal responsibility to be pure and to be rightly disposed towards the whole, independent of the (often polluting) actions of peers. The two elements of Japanese culture are, as much as possible with integral elements of an old and relatively monolithic national culture, independent.

As such, it seems possible to absorb lessons from our explorations of Shinto into a frame of reference founded on the western ethic of personal responsibility and autonomous action. What this paper ultimately proposes is a hybrid frame of reference — one that turns to Japan for an alternate understanding of divinity and human relationships to it, but one that also sustains the westerner's individual ethical imperative to impart change where it is seen to be needed. This hybrid frame of reference is necessary to the objectives of this paper, which is ultimately a call to action. In the end, it will take a voluntary striving by individuals towards the prescribed dispositional virtues to see a

change in outlook and in practice. That striving must stem from a heartfelt and personally-defined ethical imperative — an ought — on the part of instructors and students if it is to be sincere. And this new way of thinking, acting, and being must be sincere if it is to be successful. Without the western personal imperative to engage it, the imminent divine can neither find a home in nor transform our field. The way forward is through this new, hybrid frame of reference.

[1] It may be useful here to differentiate *architecture* from mere *building* in pre-renaissance, pre-professional societies as structures that attempt to fulfill all three aspects of the Vitruvian triad: beauty, functionality and lasting-ness. Sanctuaries in western transcendence-focused spiritual traditions typically attempt all three while quotidian, worldly programs typically engage only one or two until the modern era.

[2] See: Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture.* Originally published 1841 with many editions since.

[3] See: John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.* Originally published 1849 with many editions since.

[4] See: Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* (October 1984).

[5] Neha Saghal, "10 key findings about religion in Western Europe," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., May 29, 2018.

[6] Benjamin Wormald, "Us Public Becoming Less Religious," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., November 3, 2015.

[7] Aike P. Rots, "Public Shrine Forests? Shinto, Immanence and Discursive Secularization," *Japan Review*, no. 30 (2017): 184.

[8] Laura Silver, Patrick Van Kessel, Christine Huang, Laura Clancy and Sneha Gubbala. "Finding meaning in the bigger picture," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., November 18, 2021.

[9] Rots, "Public Shrine Forests?," 182.

[10] U. Edward McDougall, "Everydayness, Divinity and the Sacred: Shinto and Heidegger," *Philosophy East and West* 66, no. 3 (July 2016): 884.

[11] By *system* I mean a complex of interlinked beliefs and practices.

[12] McDougall, "Everydayness," 886.

[13] McDougall, "Everydayness," 886.

[14] Though these shrine-markers indicate that a place is special, they do not link visitors to some transcendent otherworld in the same way as a western sanctuary. They merely call attention to the presence of something special that predates them, would exist without them and would be accessible without their intercession.

[15] McDougall, "Everydayness," 888.

[16] McDougall, "Everydayness," 889.

[17] Many written *words* in Japanese can be vocalized in radically different ways that alter their meanings. Here 神道 can be read Shin-do (spirit-way; Cf. Chinese 道 *dao/tao*) but also *kami no michi* (the kami path/road).

[18] Rots, "Public Shrine Forests?," 179.

[19] Rots, "Public Shrine Forests?," 188.

[20] See: Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), Ch. 6. The native religion of Japan, formalized "Shrine Shinto" has a deep entanglement with the Japanese state ("State Shinto") dating to the mid-19th c. Meiji Restoration. It has been admired by and occasionally played a role in right-wing nationalist, imperialist political movements in Japan up to the present day. Invocations of Shinto identity were part of the generalized attitude of Japanese exceptionalism that led to widespread human rights abuses during the Japanese occupations of Korea and China in the 20th c. For more, see Kasulis, *Shinto*, Chapter 5.

[21] Rots, "Public Shrine Forests?," 184.

[22] See: Kasulis, *Shinto*, Ch. 6.

[23] Compare *Min* (民) with the analogous use of the word *Volk* in German as both *people* and *folk* in the sense of vernacular, unrefined and of low culture.

[24] Snéad Vilbar, "On Art and Kami," in *Shinto: Discovery of the Divine in Japanese Art*, edited by Snéad Vilbar, 1–12 (New Haven: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 2019), 2.

[25] McDougall, "Everydayness," 884.

[26] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 18.

[27] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 20.

[28] Man the Maker: Richard Sennett's noted reframing of *homo sapiens*, deemphasizing higher cognition as the mark of our species and instead centering our capacity for an apparent need to make and remake our world.

[29] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 23.

[30] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 24.

[31] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 43.

[32] Soetsu Yanagi, *The Beauty of Everyday Things*, trad. Michael Brase (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 23.

[33] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 43.

[34] Yanagi, *The Beauty of Everyday Things*, 168.

[35] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 23.

[36] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 26.

[37] *Makoto* can also be translated as *purity*, a word with some ambiguity in English. *Makoto* is used in the sense of being unadulterated or of not having the base substance of a thing polluted or diluted by another substance. *Jundo* is concerned not with a polutant's mixing with the precious substance but overlaying it. *Jundo's* purity refers to a kind of cleanliness.

[38] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 23.

[39] There are parallels here with the notions in late Heidegger of unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*, ἀλήθεια) and the need to prepare ground for unconcealment by preparing oneself, dispositionally. Many have noted the possible influence of Shinto thought on Heidegger, particularly through the work of his contemporary, the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro. For a thorough discussion of this exchange, reference: Shigemi Inaga, "Japanese Philosophers Go West," *Japan Review* 2013, no. 25 (2013): 113–44.

[40] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 44.

[41] Kasulis. *Shinto*, 34–5.

[42] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 36.

[43] The ways in which Buddhist and Shinto traditions and beliefs have influenced one another are well beyond this paper but it is worth noting that they coexisted and were commonly practiced simultaneously by most individuals until the Meiji Emperor forced their separation by law after 1868. See Kasulis for more.

[44] See: Kenzo Tange and Noboru Kawazoe, *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1965).

[45] Yanagi repeatedly uses the word *Mingu* (民具), people's implements, for the objects he holds in highest regard. Note that the first character (民) is the *people* of *Minzoku* (民族) or *people's* Shinto: an ongoing emphasis on the significance of common, distributed practice over an elevated tradition that is held apart from daily life.

[46] Yanagi, *The Beauty of Everyday Things*, 29–30.

[47] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 34.

[48] Yanagi, *The Beauty of Everyday Things*, 41.

[49] Rots, "Public Shrine Forests?," 188.

[50] Vilbar, "On Art and Kami," 2.

[51] Vilbar, "On Art and Kami," 2.

[52] Kasulis, *Shinto*, 110–12.

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Shinto vernacolare e cultura per l'artigianalità giapponese: un modello di spiritualità immanente per il laboratorio di progettazione occidentale

Allen Pierce

ABSTRACT

Quando si discute del ruolo del sacro nell'educazione alla progettazione architettonica, la conversazione si concentra su una divinità trascendente, il paradigma dominante della divinità in Occidente. Questo orientamento verso un divino altro sottolinea la separazione di rari e specifici atti di progettazione per il divino dalla maggior parte dei progetti che studenti e studentesse intraprendono durante la formazione e, successivamente, nella pratica. Si potrebbe invece dare maggiore valore alle esplorazioni di forme immanenti di divinità; di spazi e oggetti che non sono infusi di significato spirituale dal loro orientamento verso qualche altra divinità superiore, ma dalla divinità presente in loro stessi. Un orientamento immanente negli corsi di progettazione può aggiungere strati di significato ai progetti finiti e sovrapporsi ai processi stessi di progettazione e produzione, trasformandoli da semplici atti di produzione in atti spirituali di comunione con il divino.

Cercando come modello una cultura del progetto i cui processi e prodotti sono intimamente intrecciati con l'immanente-divino, questo articolo propone uno studio delle pratiche artigianali giapponesi e della religione nativa giapponese dello Shinto. Enfatizzando la pratica rispetto al dogma, la Shinto vernacolare permea la cultura giapponese moderna, in particolare le sue tradizioni artistiche e architettoniche. Da questa fusione tra Shinto e artigianato giapponese contemporaneo, il presente lavoro ricava tre lezioni fondamentali per i progettisti occidentali ed esplora i modi per incorporare queste lezioni nell'educazione architettonica occidentale.

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