BRUNO TAUT’S WORKS AS AN ADVISER FOR
THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ARTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
IN JAPAN

His Theory of Mastermodels for Industrial Arts and its Practical Guidance

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Abstract: This paper aims to report the result of investigation into the theory of mastermodels for industrial arts and its practical guidance by Bruno Taut (1880-1938), a German architect, an adviser for the Industrial Arts Research Institute (IARI, Kogei-shidō-sho in Japanese) attached to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce between November 1933 and March 1934.

The paper is composed of ten sections. In the first four sections, in order to better understand the background of the studies, the paper describes how Japanese has understood Bruno Taut and how the studies on Bruno Taut have been developed. It also includes the purposes and activities of the IARI, Bruno Taut’s life and how he came to be involved with the institute. Furthermore, in the following sections, the paper focuses on how Taut’s proposals on mastermodels in the modern society for industrial production were submitted to the IARI, how the IARI members accepted his proposals and realized his teachings.

Key words: Bruno Taut, the Industrial Arts Research Institute, Mastermodel, Deutscher Werkbund

1. Introduction — Background, Purpose and Methods of the Research

Today it is newly suggested that Bruno Taut’s achievements should be evaluated in terms of four fields such as architecture, painting, industrial arts and writings [1].

In Japan, Taut is famous as the author of "Rediscovery of Japanese Beauty" [2] and understood as a modern architect. However, his works of industrial arts are unknown.

The purpose of this paper is to focus on and gain better understanding of his remarkable achievements in Japanese industrial arts by investigating his works in the IARI.

The methods employed for the above investigation are as follows:
1) The translation and examination of Bruno Taut’s diary “JAPAN” and his writings;
2) The translation and examination of the ten documents and three letters written by Bruno Taut to the IARI;
3) The collection and observation of the experimental works by Bruno Taut’s design in the IARI;
4) The collection and observation of the IARI members’ experimental works under Bruno Taut’s guidance;
5) The collection and observation of the IARI members’ reports regarding Bruno Taut’s guidance.

2. The Short History of the IARI in Japan — The Purposes and Activities in its Early Days

The IARI was established in Sendai in 1928 by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for the purpose of studying and teaching industrial arts to promote the export of Japanese industrial arts. The IARI was organized with three departments of woodwork, metalwork and designing. The manufacturing factories of woodwork, metal work and japanwork stood at right angles to the two-storied office building. The total area of the site was 10,000 square meters [3].

The IARI’s first director, Kitaro Kunii (1883-1967),
proposed a scientific method of production, popularization of industrial arts and the promotion of the export which were the main goals of the IARI in its early stage.

The IARI members were interested in the movement of Deutscher Werkbund (DWB; the Germany Industrial Arts Association) those days.

As a commemoration of its fifth anniversary, the IARI held an exhibition of its experimental works at Mitsukoshi Department Store in Nihonbashi, Tokyo for five days starting on September 1, 1933. The purpose of the exhibition was to inform the public of the possibility of industrialization of Japanese handiwork and of the new role which "industrial arts" could play in the field of export. The IARI also tried to inform the public that the institute was contributing to achieve that goal [4].

3. The Short History of the Life of Bruno Taut

Bruno Taut was born on May 4, 1880 in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), which faces the Baltic Sea. Helping support his family, he studied both at Gymnasium and Bauwerksschule (architectural school).

After working in Hamburg and Wiesbaden, he joined the office of architects in Berlin and in Stuttgart. When he was young, it was the era of Japonisme and Art Nouveau (Jugend Stil) in Europe, and he was a vital participant in these movements.

On August 1, 1909, he opened an architectural office in Berlin in partnership with Franz Hoffmann. Then he became famous for the pavilions (Monument des Eisens at Leipzig in 1913, Glashaus in Cologne in 1914 and so on). He was both a utopian architect and a practitioner of social architecture. After World War I, he built about 12000 units of houses.

His interest in Japan was directed toward living culture. In 1924, he published Die Neue Wohnung -Die Frau Als Schöpferin (New Housing-Women as Creators), with photos of the Sanpoin hermitage at Daigoji temple and the Shinjuan hermitage of Daitokuji temple [5].

He was an overseas member of the International Architectural Association of Japan and officially invited to the society. So running away from Nazi, he was able to arrive in Japan on May 3, 1933.

On the second day of his stay in Japan, he turned 53. He visited Katura Rikyu (the Katura Detached Palace) in Kyoto under Mr. and Mrs. Isaburo Ueno’s guidance. It was a splendid birthday present for Taut [6].

He established close ties with the world of Japanese industrial arts. His first official appointment was as an adviser of the IARI, his second assignment was with Okura-Toen (a chinaware manufacturer) and thirdly he became a cooperator of a young industrialist, Fusaichiro Inoue, in Gunma Prefecture.

In recent years, there is a movement to re-evaluate Bruno Taut’s achievements, the main points being (1) Taut should be grasped in terms of the four genre of architecture, painting, industrial arts, and writings, (2) it was in Japan that he was active in all of these four fields, although his architectural achievements were limited, and (3) it was in Japan that he completed his works in the four fields[7].

4. How Bruno Taut Came to be Involved with the IARI

Bruno Taut arrived in Japan on May 3, 1933 and stayed in Kyoto and Tokyo for a while. He was informed of the IARI exhibition by a member of the IARI, Michiji Suzuki. He knew that Taut was a member of DWB. He took Taut’s arrival in Japan as a good opportunity to ask about the economic ground of the German association. He and his colleagues had just issued The Formation and Spirit of Germany Industrial Arts Association. Receiving a detailed reply from Taut, he sent Taut a letter of thanks together with the invitation to the exhibition [8].

Taut visited the exhibition on September 4. Requested by the IARI members, he offered criticisms on each of the umbrella handles, tea sets, fruit plate sets, cake bowls, folding screens, smoking utensils, desk sets, tables and so on. Later, he wrote in his diary entitled "Japan", "Is there anything of high quality? Far from it. Just two or three. The rest are temporary substitutes. They are quick imitations of things European and American, and nothing more than exoticism [9]."

Kunii, who listened to Taut at the exhibition, asked him to make his comments in writing. Thus, his "Proposals submitted to the IARI" dated September 5, 1933 came into being[10]. The IARI intended to utilize Taut’s opinions as a representative of international views to promote Japan’s exports and to get information on DWB.

His proposals led Kunii to make up his mind to invite Taut to the IARI as an adviser. There were some problems about inviting him then, because it was not budgeted in that year. But Taut had an advisory office in the IARI on November 12, 1933 after Kunii made strenuous efforts. The institute members were under direct guidance of Taut from that time to March 6 the following year.
5. Ten Documents and Three Letters by Bruno Taut for the IARI

5.1 The Outline of Bruno Taut’s Works for the IARI

Bruno Taut proposed that the mission of the IARI should be to produce mastermodels for industrial arts. Based upon his proposals on September 5, 1933, Taut successively submitted several proposals to the IARI regarding the fundamental concept of overall activities and individual plans of its activities. His answers to the members’ questions and the interim and final reports on his works at the IARI were also submitted in writing. The following is the list of his writings collected by Iwanami Publishing Co. in Tokyo, Japan.

—Before he joins the IARI
Original (in German)

A. Vorschlage fur Kogeishidosho
den 5. September 1933

Proposals submitted to the IARI

September 5, 1933

Translation

—After he joins the IARI

B. Programm
den 14. November 1933

Program

November 14, 1933

C. Besuch in der Metallwerkstatt (auch Lack) mit den Herren Saito, Ueda und Suzuki
den 18. November 1933

Visit to a metalwork
(and japanwork)

studio with Saito,
Ueda and Suzuki

November 18, 1933

D. Antwort auf die Frage des Direktors

Answer to the Director’s question

E. Bericht uber Forschungsarbeit fur Mobel
den 11. Dezember 1933

Report on how to study furniture

December 11, 1933

F. Bericht uber die Metall-Arbeitung
den 11. Dezember 1933

Report on metalwork

December 11, 1933

G. Vorschlage fur die Kunstgewerblichen Einzelgegenstande
den 12. Dezember 1933

Proposals regarding respective works

December 12, 1933

H. Lampen den 13. Dezember 1933

Lamps December 13, 1933

I. Bericht uber meine bisherige Arbeit fur Kogeishidosho Sendai
den 5. March 1934

Report on my works for the IARI-Sendai

March 5, 1934

J. Vorschlag fur Ausstellung von Kogeishidosho
den 6. March 1934

Proposal regarding an IARI exhibition

March 6, 1934

—Taut’s tour through Tokyo and the Kyoto-Osaka area from December to February

K. A letter dated January 8, 1934

L. A letter dated January 12, 1934

—After resigning from the IARI

M. A letter dated April 12, 1934

Fig. 1 Document I

Brief an den Herrn Saito

Liebe Herr Saito,


In dieser Hinsicht hoffe ich, Ihnen in Zukunft wieder zu helfen. Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Bruno Taut

Fig. 2 Letter L

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These ten documents can be divided into three categories: six Vorschläge (Proposals: the document A, B, C, G, H and J), three Berichte (Reports: the document E, F and I), and one Antwort (Answer: the document D)[11].

And also they can be divided into four categories: six documents regarding the theory of mastermodels (the document A, B, C, D, G and H), two documents regarding the practical guidance of mastermodels (the document E and F), one report on his works (the document I), and one proposal regarding an IARI exhibition (the document J).

5.2 The Outline of Document I ("Report on my Works for the IARI-Sendai " Dated March 5, 1934)

In the document I "Report on my works for the IARI-Sendai " dated March 5, 1934, Taut describes his works for the IARI in the following five points: 1. proposal of large-scale program, 2. proposals of individual programs, 3. selection of excellent works, 4. education and 5. practice.

No. 1 indicates his proposals submitted to the IARI under date of November 14, 1933 with the title of Programm (the document B). No. 2 signifies his various proposals on mastermodels for industrial arts made individually (the document G, H and so on). No. 3 explains his selection of excellent works of industrial arts both domestic and abroad as samples. The letters of K and L are his reports of domestic selection. No. 4 means the education of IARI members. No. 5 is concerned with the documents E and F. These are his reports on the actual production of the door handles of his own designing and the experimental production of mastermodels for wooden work chairs and metallic desk lamps, which were done under Taut's guidance.

No. 1 and No. 2 are related to the theory of mastermodels for industrial arts by Taut. No. 5 is the practical guidance. No. 3 and No. 4 are related to the former and the latter.

This document I is important as the entire picture of Taut's contribution to the IARI drawn as the adviser himself, and moreover, as the witness of IARI's level of design study in the early Showa era [12].

6. Six Documents Regarding the Theory of Mastermodels for Industrial Arts by Bruno Taut

6.1 The Outline of Document A ("Proposals Submitted to the IARI " Dated September 5, 1933)

Document A is a documentation of Taut's comments at the IARI exhibition mentioned in the previous section.

In this document, he tried to convince that the mission of the IARI is to offer industrial arts of the highest quality out of the materials, skills and shapes proper to Japan through a modern manufacturing process, which should yet be applicable to manners and customs of international society. At the same time, he contends that only excellence in product quality can bring success to Japan, who was aspiring for an international export market. He advises to set up a goal similar to that of DWB. This document strongly motivated the IARI to invite him to the Institute as an adviser.

6.2 The Outline of Document B ("Program ", which is a Memorandum of his Plans, November 14, 1933)

Document B is a genuine proposal in the sense that it was made after he took office in and actually inspected the IARI. In this document, he also tries to convince that the IARI should try to present model works of utmost quality by uniting materials, skills, forms and excellent quality with modern production technique and international customs and lifestyles. And he also advises to set up a goal similar to that of DWB which was leading international industrial arts those days.

His fundamental principles are clearly shown in this document, in which he shows three points as the IARI's tasks. The first point is the production of mastermodels of the modern age for industrialization. The second point is the development of the IARI's original area based upon patents of its own. The third point is the organization of a committee to take charge of collecting at works, performing PR activities and producing quality works with Japanese originality and modern spirit.

He emphasizes that the IARI should assume the responsibility of guiding industrial arts studios and workshops by presenting mastermodels for new modern Japanese products because the IARI is the only state-owned educational institution.

He advises to create a fundamental form in accordance with the utensil's purpose and function. As its concrete means, he points the necessities of (1) selecting and collecting highest quality works both international and domestic (making lists of excellent workshops, books, guidebooks, trading companies and catalogs, and producing and collecting model works), (2) close collaboration between the designer and the craftsman so that improvement can be possible by repeated examination and discussion throughout the whole process from designing to model completion (these examinations and discussions should be repeated at least several times for simple products, and more than twenty times for furniture), and
(3) comments by committee members who have deep and keen insight into art (and when the committee members do not accept the product, it should be sent back to the earlier stage of examination and discussion between the designer and the craftsman). The process can be put into the next stage of mastermodel completion only when it is accepted by the committee. Even in that case, much attention should be paid to the point that the mastermodel should have a natural simplicity and an elegant form[13].

Taut repeated these points over and over again in other documents (proposals, reports and answer).

6.3 The Outline of Document C ("Visit to a Metalwork (and Japanwork) Studio with Saito, Ueda and Suzuki " Dated November 18, 1933)

Document C is a report of his inspection of a metalwork and japanwork studio. There is a description that the inspection tour was made with two IARI members and Suzuki as an interpreter. The substance of the document is an agreement between Taut and the three members[14].

6.4 The Outline of Document D ("Answer to the Director's Question")

Document D is Taut's answer to the director Kunii's question whether the products should be modified in accordance with foreigners' preference in order to be exported. His answer is that there are many people abroad who highly evaluate Japanese works. He recommends that the members study fundamental forms of best furniture in Europe and apply Japanese materials and taste to the findings. He assures that it will enable them to produce original modern Japanese furniture with inherent Japanese quality.

Document D does not have the date in the original. According to Michiji Suzuki, who served as Taut's interpreter, the date was November 30, 1933 [15].

6.5 The Outline of Document G ("Proposals Regarding Respective Works" Dated December 12, 1933)

Document G was submitted a month after Taut took office and was written after he examined the design drawings and exhibits in the display room of the IARI.

In this document, Taut says that these works in the display room pass neither Japanese quality standard nor European quality standard and that nothing satisfactory can be found in the design drawings.

He calls it a false attitude to imitate kitsch in a book and advises younger members to take up a simple article of good quality, make its precise drawings and reproduce the article at a workshop for themselves.

He also advises that the design for the IARI's products should be without decoration and in the case of producing high grade articles with decoration, excellent artists should be called to the task in order to avoid kitsch.

Another advice is that the designers' names should be recorded in the IARI.

He contends that the IARI as a state-owned institution has a duty to show private workshops, industries and vocational schools how to avoid kitsch, affirming that Japan's high quality culture is sure to be accepted by highly cultivated people abroad.

After all, document G carries his advice on how to design small works and how to teach design to younger workmen.

6.6 The Outline of Document H ("Lamps " Dated December 13, 1933)

Document H shows how to collect and manufacture mastermodels of lighting apparatus. That is an explanation on systematic arrangement of collections and systematic method of creating good form. This can be viewed as a proposal on how to understand the function of lighting apparatus (Fig.3).

Taut used this document as a guidance material when members of the Institute studied how to make a mastermodel of lighting apparatus and tried to produce their works according to the mastermodel [16].

Kawabuchiho
Prof. Bruno Taut
Senda
15. Dez. 1933

Lampen
System für die Anordnung der Sammlung und für die Herstellung guter Typen.

1. Tischlampen
A. Gewöhnliche, einfache,
B. wie A
C. Schreibtisch- u. Leselampen
D. Nachttischlampen
E. Speziallampen.

2. Hängelampen
A. Einfache, über tischischen u. gle.
B. Zentrallampen in der Mitte der Zimmerdecke
C. Kronen, reicher als B
D. Speziallampen für Besonderheiten.

3. Wandlampen
A. Einfache
B. Reiher
C. mit Jugendstil, zu lesen
D. Ausstehbaren
E. Speziallampen wie 2.D.

Fig.3 Document H
7. The Practical Guidance of Mastermodels for Industrial Arts by Bruno Taut

7.1 Taut's Practical Guidance for the Younger Members of the IARI

The younger members of the IARI were enthusiastic not only about getting information on DWB but also learning design directly from Taut.

Taut believed the making of mastermodels of the modern age for industrial production to be the duty of the IARI. The members' experimental works on wooden work chairs and metallic table lights were part of their effort as the duty.

7.2 The Outline of Document E ("Report on How to Study Furniture" Dated December 11, 1933)

The document E is a report of his teaching how to make wooden work chairs. It was an experimental project for manufacturing mastermodels for industrialization. It shows how Taut guided the study and production of a mastermodel of furniture [17].

7.3 The Outline of Document F ("Report on Metalwork" Dated December 11, 1933)

Document F is a report on how to design metallic lighting apparatus and how to collect catalogues of excellent works abroad. The document also reports on how he designed door handles as a sample of "the production of mastermodels of the modern age for industrialization," and how the members learned from the manufacturing process [18].

8. Bruno Taut's Proposal Regarding an Exhibition by the IARI

The document J ("Proposal regarding an IARI exhibition dated March 6, 1934 ") shows Bruno Taut's hope for a new type of an IARI exhibition on the basis of his achievement in the five points in the document 1, especially No. 3 (selection of excellent works) and No. 5 (actual production, that is, the mastermodels for the manufacturing of wooden work chairs and lighting apparatus on an experimental basis under his guidance, and Taut's own designing of door handles).

In this document, Taut proposes to lay out the exhibition hall in three concentric circles in order to arrange the exhibits in the following way: 1. excellent pieces produced by traditional workshops in Japan and collected by Taut in the name of IARI adviser at the heart of the three circles. 2. outside the heart, the fruits of IARI members study in making mastermodels for metallic lighting apparatus and wooden work chairs under Taut's guidance - materials in showing their study on forms and design sketches - , already completed test chairs and also completed door handles that Taut designed himself, and 3. in the largest circle, which is alongside the walls of hall, the experimental pieces produced by IARI members without Taut's advice (Fig.4).

![Fig.4 Bruno Taut's Plan Regarding an Exhibition by the IARI](image)

This document was written just before his quitting his office. This future exhibition was meant to declare that Japan (the IARI) made a start to establish its new industrial arts based on the combination of Japanese tradition and Western modernity [19].

9. How the IARI Members Accepted Taut's Proposals and his Guidance

Bruno Taut proposed that the mission of the IARI is to produce mastermodels for industrial arts.

In order to know how the IARI members accepted his proposal, themes of their studies done in the IARI have been examined. The findings are that the themes on mastermodels for industrial arts were done in the 1930s and these themes were concerned with mastermodels for furniture, metal fittings, chairs and lamps.

Where and how the studies were published have also been examined. The discovery is that they were published in the form of exhibition and print in the 1930s.

The writings of the IARI members sometimes
accompany photos of panels that seem to have been used at the exhibitions. The illustrations for the photos say "the purpose of mastermodels is to develop industrial arts properly" and "the process for making a mastermodel is investigation→designing→manufacturing→evaluation→completion (Fig.5)." This process is based on that of Document B ("Program").

Another illustration for the photo says "Currently, three types of chairs are being studied in two forms with and without arms respectively. The types are classified as A with straight materials, B with straight materials and wound materials for the seat frames and C with three different materials for hind legs, seat frames and backs (Fig.6)."

The present writer's study confirms that the IARI members regarded the study of mastermodels as an important duty in the 1930s and that they did their duty in earnest under Taut's guidance.

10. Conclusion

The above ten documents and three letters of the Iwanami collection clearly manifest the consistency in Taut's belief in the principle of making mastermodels of the modern age for industrial production. Taut's main point is that the IARI should try to unite tradition with modernity without relying on sketchy, imitative designs for the sake of export. In other words, by uniting Japanese traditional sense, form, material and skill handed down from ancient times with European modern spirit, technology and lifestyle, a new type of modern industrial arts can originate in Japan. He encouraged that things truly Japanese will be internationally accepted. Taut thought it very important for the IARI to achieve this because it had a responsibility to educate domestic studios and workshops.

Throughout his service for the IARI, he never weakened his enthusiasm in giving advices and making proposals. Ten documents and three letters are the proof of it.

It has been confirmed that the IARI's study on mastermodels and their experimental production was achieved full-fledged after Taut began to lead them. Unfortunately, the originals of wooden work chairs and metallic desk lamps as the fruits of Taut's advices to younger members of the IARI on designs for mastermodels and the door handles of his own designing are lost forever.

But what they were like can be found in the IARI's bulletin, Industrial Arts News[20] (Fig.7, 8 and 9).
Taut, an architect by profession, unintentionally played an important role in the early stage of Japanese industrial arts during his stay in Japan.

The IARI members intended to utilize Taut’s opinions as a representative of international views to promote Japan’s exports and to get information on DWB which was leading international industrial arts those days.

It can be concluded that the invitation of Taut to the IARI was realized out of the strong interest in DWB on the Japanese side, the study of mastermodels were an important subject for the IARI in the 1930s and Taut’s consistent fundamental attitude in resolving tasks had profound influences on all of the IARI members who had been involved with him and his work (Fig.10).

Fig. 9 The Door Handles of Taut’s Own Designing

Fig. 10 A Picture of the IARI Members with Bruno Taut

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   transformed into the Industrial Products Research Institute in
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