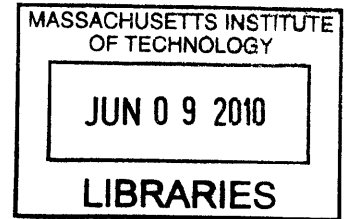


**The Work of Vitalism: Murano Togo**

by

Norihiko Tsuneishi  
Bachelor of Architecture  
University of Kansas, 2002



SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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# The Work of Vitalism: Murano Togo

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 21, 2010  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Science of Architecture Studies

## Abstract

Murano Togo (1891-1984) was a Japanese architect who based his practice in the city of Osaka. Throughout his long career, Murano won numerous awards, most notably the Order of Culture in 1967 presented by the Royal family. Despite his cultural contribution, his work was never considered within the Japanese architectural mainstream, in which technology and structure were embraced as design languages. Mainstream architects, including the modernist Tange Kenzo (1913-2005), worked mostly on public funded projects. Murano's buildings, often being ornate and commercially used, did not accord with this predominant current. Thus, he has been characterized as a "peripheral" figure or "late-expressionist" by various historians. While existing scholarship largely focuses on the stylistic and formal aspect of Murano's architecture, this thesis offers a different perspective to Murano's work.

Reinterpretation of Murano's architecture is needed and this research posits "bio-anthropocentrism" as a new approach to examine his work. This thesis argues that this particular intellectual tendency, which derived from Vitalism, informed his architectural praxis that began in the late 1910s. Bio-anthropocentrism is the discourse that conceives a society as a constantly transforming site, and positions the human subject as a central entity, represented through biological descriptions, including "Life (*seimei*)," corporeal matters and human bodies in particular. Deeming Vitalism as an epistemological current evident in various forms of art at the dawn of the twentieth century in Japan, this thesis situates Murano's work – both his writings and buildings – within this current.

This research further demonstrates how Murano's bio-anthropocentrism gained a particular anthropomorphic aesthetic. By this, Murano aimed to create architectural surfaces that appear as if they were human skin (body), described by Murano as, "tactility." Consisting of curves and shades (colors), this anthropomorphic aesthetic was conceived by Murano to prolong "Life" of his architecture under the force of capitalism because in his mind the human subject cannot be consumed. It turned architecture into an "unquantifiable" object that thus cannot be commodified. This thesis argues that, amidst the commercially oriented culture of Osaka, Murano's growing concern gave him this particular architectural language. Through this exploration, I draw a different cultural and intellectual implication from Murano's works that ultimately recasts the history of the Japanese Modern Architecture.



## Acknowledgements

This thesis could not make its current form without the support of many. Although there are not enough words and space for expressing my gratitude to all, there are a quite a few people to whom I would like to show my appreciation.

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My wife Yuko, and my parents Keiichi and Miyoko Tsuneishi, there are no words that express how much I thank for your patience and love. I dedicate this thesis to you.





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## The Work of Vitalism: Murano Togo

### Introduction

“Numbers represents our society. However, between 1 and 2, there are countless numbers[...] Humanism, in my definition, is the search for those numbers.”<sup>1</sup>  
Murano Togo

In an Asahi newspaper article, there is a photograph showing a bulky circular column meeting the ceiling (Fig-1.1). The column of lightly veined white marble has at its apex an unusual double echinus. The lower one is a cone segment, the upper one looks more like a flat circular pillow. Each is painted with rings that transition gently from a marine blue to beige that is only slightly darker than the color of the ceiling. This aesthetic does not seem to belong to any familiar design style. It is clearly different from what is generally understood as modernism. It was designed by the Japanese architect Murano Togo (1891-1984).<sup>2</sup>

Murano started his architectural practice in 1929 and designed many buildings before his death in 1984. He also wrote extensively throughout his long career, producing innumerable essays expressing his architectural thinking. He won numerous awards, most notably the Order of Culture in 1967 presented by the royal family.<sup>3</sup>

Despite his contribution to Japanese cultural history, he was never considered a part of the mainstream Japanese architectural currents. Mainstream here refers to the post-war modernists, including Tange Kenzo and others whose designs embraced technological and especially structural components of architecture; Tange's Yoyogi Olympic Gymnasium (Fig-1.2) is a prime example. As an opposition to these modernists, Murano was characterized by the architect/architectural historian Fujimori Terunobu as the Late Expressionist along with other peripheral figures, including Shirai Seiichi or Imai Kenji. Murano was, according to Fujimori, an architect who “rediscovered the dexterous

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<sup>1</sup> Togo Murano, *Kenchiku wo Tsukurumonono Kokoro* (The Conviction of Architect), ed. Naniwa-juku, 8th ed. (Osaka: Brain Center, 2006), 90

<sup>2</sup> Murano is the last name and Togo is the first name. Unlike in English, the last name comes first in Japanese, and I will use the Japanese style for other Japanese figures in this paper for consistency except in some footnotes.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Order given annually by the Japanese emperor for contributions enriching Japanese culture.

surface treatment and detail of expressionists.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, several aspects of Murano’s work made it difficult for historians to place him within the received history, or, to an extent, to accept his works.

For historians/critics, the problem with his designs is not only that they are ornate but also that his design language varies from one project to the other, often incorporating historicist vocabularies, whether European or Japanese, but blended with modern tastes. His work as a whole was considered eclectic, and often thought of as “irrational.” For instance, the façade of Mori-Go Building is covered with dark red-bricks (Fig-1.3). Sogo Department Store in Osaka is articulated by a series of vertical louvers (Fig-1.4). The building complex of Kasuien Annex of the Miyako Hotel (Fig-1.5) is organized as a series of stratified copper-clad roofs. Based primarily on Sukiya-Style, which is derived from rustic Japanese teahouse architecture, the complex has an overall “Japanese” feel to it.

Furthermore, unlike Japanese Modernists, Murano’s work comprises mostly of private and commercial buildings, such as department stores, office buildings, hotels, and churches. These types of commissions contributed to his rather unique position in the history of Japanese modern architecture, while many mainstream architects were designing publically funded projects.

This thesis will first illustrate the peculiar way Murano has been portrayed in the existing historical literature, which in some sense turned him into an ornamental figure within the dominant modernist discourse. Thus, it entails the historiographical analysis on Japanese modern architecture.

At the same time, this thesis investigates the implication of his “expressionistic” aspect. Whether Fujimori’s claim, compartmentalizing Murano’s work into expressionism, is valid or not, Murano indeed paid special attention to the surface treatment and details of buildings, as exemplified in the Ube Civic Hall designed by him in 1937 (fig-1.1, 1.6). This thesis provides a theoretical framework to understand Murano’s aesthetics.

While this endeavor will by no means be a monographic work encompassing the entire oeuvre of the architect, it elicits a new intellectual dimension from Murano’s work and simultaneously challenges convention and regularity of the way we conceive or interpret architecture. By doing so, this thesis ultimately attempts to discern what Murano means by saying that Humanism exists within the infinite numbers filling the space between 1 and 2. As contradictory as it may sound, I argue *Vitalism* is Murano’s leitmotif, although he never claimed that he was a vitalist. This thesis is an investigation of a certain discourse, architectural and philosophical, which verges on the indescribable, incalculable and unpredictable.

In the European context, German Biologist Hans Driesch and the French Philosopher Henri Bergson are considered to be the two proponents of modern Vitalist thinking. They formulated their

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<sup>4</sup> Terunobu Fujimori, *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku* (Japanese Modern Architecture) vol.2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993), 203

respective philosophies on different currents. Driesch elaborated an Aristotelian concept of life, while Bergson on the other hand adopted Nietzsche's "biological philosophy."<sup>5</sup> They both sought to challenge the positivist claims of Leopold Von Ranke and the evolutionary theories of Herbert Spencer. In contrast to these, Vitalists posited different perspectives, asserting that "the organic nature of 'life' is irreducible to mechanistic explanation." In their minds, human behavior, imagination and feeling are not static but dynamic; they have to be understood through different registers. As Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglas mention, "[b]y defining 'life' as a process of perpetual and dynamic flux, vitalism appeared to sanction the reform or overthrow of anachronistic institutions."<sup>6</sup> This current stretches to French post-structuralists, most-notably Gilles Deleuze. I will investigate the impact of vitalism on Murano's oeuvre in depth, and more broadly on Japanese modern epistemology.

Bergson was introduced into the Japanese intellectual scene at the end of the nineteenth century, resulting in a Japanese Bergsonian movement, all its own.<sup>7</sup> His books were translated, and were enthusiastically read by Japanese philosophers, writers and artists, including Murano. The literary critic Suzuki Sadami illuminates the way in which Vitalism was interpreted by the Japanese philosophers. He argues that, in this transmitting process, the existing religious and philosophical ideas, such as Buddhism and Kokugaku (the National Study), functioned as "receptors."<sup>8</sup> In fact, Motoori Norinaga, the proponent of Kokugaku in the eighteenth century, positioned "the Japanese *flow of natural feeling*" over "the Chinese *rational logical discourse*"<sup>9</sup> in his attempt to purify the Japanese national culture from Asian continental influences. The relationship between "flow of natural feeling" versus "logical discourse" is reasonably analogous to the vitalist/mechanist debate. This, to some degree, validates Suzuki's claim that Japanese intellectual traditions established fertile ground to receive Bergsonian philosophy.

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<sup>5</sup> The philosophy of Nietzsche is often considered to be an earlier version of modern vitalism, as Nietzsche describes his own enterprise as "philosophy of life." See also, Sanford Kwinter, *Architecture of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2001), 11

<sup>6</sup> Paul Douglas and Frederick Burwick *Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and TheVitalist Controversy* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 278.

<sup>7</sup> The Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro (1870 - 1945) played a pivotal role in introducing various Western vitalist philosophies, including those of Henri Bergson, William James. Nishida also attempted to reinterpret the Japanese existing religio-philosophical thinking. See Suzuki Sadami, *Seimeikan no Tankyu* (Exploration on the conception of life), (Tokyo: Sakuhin-sha, 2007) 12

<sup>8</sup> See (Suzuki, 2007), 12. Suzuki borrows the word "receptor" from biology. It is the term used for the receiving apparatus of insects, which reacts against an external stimulus. Suzuki particularly points to the translation process of philosophical concepts from occidental languages to Japanese, through which these receptors filtered the western vitalist languages and gave them particular forms in Japanese, inevitably generating a slight slippage or metamorphoses of original concepts.

<sup>9</sup> Eiko Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*. (Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences.) (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2005) 234. *Italic by me*

Regardless of Suzuki's account, *Seimei*, the Japanese word for Life, became an abstract and yet frequently used concept for a number of Japanese intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century. Literal definition of the word is 'living-life' and it signifies the entity that differentiates living beings from inorganic matters. As there are several Japanese words that describe different definitions of life, I will use Life as a translation for *Seimei* throughout this thesis in order to make a clear distinction from other kinds of life, such as everyday life (*Seikatsu*) or the life of a person (*Jinsei*).

This vitalistic concept Life was often exploited by intellectuals to describe what they saw as different, novel, and newly reconstituted conditions. These spanned from the perception of universe, and female social subjects to architectural designs.<sup>10</sup> In other words, Vitalism provided various figures with ways to engage in, as Sanford Kwinter puts it, "a fundamental ontological change." This change in Western context, as Kwinter claims, occurred as a result of the modernizing process, which started in the nineteenth century, radically transforming the way in which the world is imagined and understood.<sup>11</sup> This process greatly affected Japanese society, especially after it reestablished diplomatic relations in 1853. At that time, the country started westernizing the existing feudalistic structure, while at the same time constructing its own identity, tradition and history as a part of its modernity project.

The accelerated flow of abundant information engulfed the perception of Japanese intellectuals, subsequently prompting an epistemological shift, or rather *shifting*. This shifting changed the way Japanese intellectuals negotiated with their surrounding environment. Overflowing with novel elements - new knowledge, new economy, new politics, new pedagogy, new tradition, and new culture – the entire globe suddenly appeared before their eyes in the last half of the nineteenth century. In some ways, the history of the West and the newly realized Japanese historical concerns came into common focus. Amid these transformations, the distance to the past and the future, in the mind of various thinkers, shifted from the temporal to the spatial. This thesis will conceive of this period as the locus where those multiple histories collapsed into the space of the present. As Harry Harootunian puts it, "[Japanese] social researchers, and critics were busily involved in envisioning the experience of modernity and its constituent elements, speed, shock, sensation, and spectacle, through an optics that produced different effects according to the angle of the lens through which experience was being refracted."<sup>12</sup> This site appeared to some as a seemingly unpredictable organism; there is no way of knowing "systematically" what the world of tomorrow will be, other than the fact that it is going to be

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<sup>10</sup> Before the introduction of the discipline of architecture, a temple was previously perceived as a temple, not as architecture. See Arata Isozaki, *Japan-ness in Architecture*, ed. David Stewart. trans. Sabu Kohso (MIT Press, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> (Kwinter, 2001), 36

<sup>12</sup> Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2001), 95

different. This is precisely where, I argue, Vitalistic philosophy conveniently provided many agents, including Murano, with a way of theorizing the transforming site of everyday life, as Murano liked to say “I am a rigorous presentist.”<sup>13</sup> In addition, amid this “moving” space, the subject or the self was positioned as a central figure in its respective vitalistic narrative, and this subject was represented through biological descriptions, which is what this thesis would like to call “bio-anthropocentrism.”

Deeming this intellectual tendency as an epistemological current at the dawn of the twentieth century in Japan, I will position Murano’s architectural praxis within it. Therefore, this research deems architecture not merely as the representation of a thought, but as a thought itself, imbued with multiple implications, be they historical, cultural, social or political. In his book *Shiso to Shiteno Kindaikenchikushi* (History of Modern Architecture as a Thought), the architect/critic Yatsuka Hajime also demonstrated possible intersections between architecture and other genres.<sup>14</sup> Conceiving Japanese modern architecture as a philosophical enterprise, Yatsuka broadly covers its history. While respecting Yatsuka’s ambitious attempt, this thesis instead will draw on a particular Vitalism, bio-anthropocentrism, among many other currents, in order to elucidate the interconnection across the different genres. In this exploration, Murano functions as a nexus at which multiple strands of thought entangled with each other, organizing his praxis.

The thesis shows how bio-anthropocentrism equipped Murano with a mode of architectural exploration. In this, the human body functions as an organic platform connecting the human mind with moral-ideal, and architecture with the beauty-ideal. Furthermore, malleable biological concepts such as Life, organism and motion, enabled Murano to negotiate with various modernizing phenomena that ranged from rapid urbanizations and changing economic climates to dispersive psychologies of the masses.

This vitalistic modality reconstituted itself, actively engaging in the transforming site of twentieth century Japanese society where different forces, those of politics, economy and psychology, were confronting one another. Particularly the geo-political and cultural transformation of the city of Osaka in the 1920s and 30s, the then-leading commercial and industrial city of the nation, becomes crucial since Murano based his practice in the city throughout his career. This research argues that his

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<sup>13</sup> Togo Murano, “*Yoshiki no Ueniare* (Beyond Styles)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, 8 - 39 Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991 (originally published in *Nihon Kenchiku Kyoukai Zasshi* in 1919), 13

<sup>14</sup> See Hajime Yatsuka, *Shiso to Shiteno Kindaikenchikushi* (History of Modern Architecture as a Thought) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006)

earlier bio-anthropocentric claims transformed as he worked within the commercially oriented culture of Osaka, through which the body of his architecture gained a particular aesthetic.

Chapter I provides a general overview of the architect. It is a brief historiography concerning Murano's works, delineating the way in which Murano has hitherto been positioned in the history of modern Japanese architecture. To do this, the chapter examines three publications, all written by Japanese historians; one is *Nihon no Kindaikenchiku (Japanese Modern Architecture)* by Inagaki Eizo published in 1959; the second is *Shinden ka Gokusha ka (Temple or Prison?)* by Hasegawa Takashi published in 1972; the last is *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku (Japanese Modern Architecture)* by Fujimori Terunobu published in 1993. By doing so, while introducing the general view of the history of Japanese modern architecture and some of the tendencies intrinsic to the existing discourse, this chapter in turn conveys some of the characteristics of Murano's architectural design.

In Chapter II, I will illuminate how the vitalist philosophy was organically channeled into Murano's work. In particular the years when he was a student at Waseda University is a crucial period. Some of the influential professors at Waseda will be introduced. These include Goto Keiji, Kon Wajiro, Abe Iso and others, through whom various intellectual currents reached Murano and eventually, I argue, formed his vitalistic optic. This optic positively takes account of the various "inexplicable" phenomena as an operative device and bases the subject, the human body in particular, as the central condition of the narrative.

As I deem this bio-anthropocentric tendency as the leitmotif of Murano and as one component of Japanese epistemology, this chapter then examines how this episteme was expressed in various intellectual realms. I will elicit a bio-anthropocentric discourse and practice from some works of writers in the 1910s and of the self-acclaimed constructivist group MAVO in the 1920s. This analysis illustrates the way in which biological imagery – blood, organic movements, and a body – identifies the human subject, representing the intrinsic character of the human, ranging from mercurial human behavior and psychology. Upon establishing this epistemological condition, the thesis moves onto examine Murano's praxis in the following chapter by highlighting how this bio-anthropocentricism conditioned his work.

In Chapter III, this thesis unravels how the epistemological current impacted Murano's thesis at Waseda University, entitled "Toshikenchiku Ron (Urban Architecture Theory)." I treat this essay as his architectural creed, from which I will elicit his key bio-anthropocentric concepts that later transformed into Murano's aesthetics. The architectural historian Inagaki Eizo claims that an interdisciplinary approach is not applicable to analyze the history of Japanese modern architecture, due



to the “schizophrenic and strong factional sentiment” intrinsic to all Japanese artistic spheres.<sup>15</sup> I, however, will demonstrate that this methodology is crucial if we are to understand not only Murano’s works but also the disciplinary formation of Japanese architecture, as its discourses often borrowed concepts from the realm outside of the discipline. In this investigation, Murano’s written works will also become an important component, as he wrote quite extensively throughout his career. I will treat them as his architectural projects. Although some scholars have already examined Murano’s textual works, existing scholarship, I argue, has not yet thoroughly investigated the possible intellectual dimensions that these texts convey.

Furthermore, in the following chapter, I will highlight the manner in which Murano’s vitalistic optic reacted to emerging Japanese consumerism at the dawn of the twentieth century. First I will contextualize Murano’s praxis within the represented geo-political and cultural space particular to Osaka; which has been known as a merchant city even before the Meiji Restoration (1868).<sup>16</sup> And, this chapter will discern the way in which Murano reconstitutes his epistemological framework emphasizing more on the role of economy and mass culture in his discourse. For this, I focus on several essays that he wrote following the “Urban Architectural Theory,” including the “Above Styles” (1919). This chapter then demonstrates how his earlier bio-anthropocentric claims, previously set forth in his essays, have transformed into various material expressions, such as curves and shades (colors), what I would like to call as an anthropomorphic aesthetic. This is akin to Bergson’s images of life, non-geometric forms, upon which I draw in this chapter. This chapter further argues that this aesthetic was envisioned by Murano, at least at the conceptual level, to sustain the Life of architecture under the influence of capitalism through its unquantifiable and non-*geometric* forms.

Ultimately, this thesis attempts to propose the possible theoretical methodology to construct further historical narratives on Murano’s oeuvre. Especially, the transformation of his ideological position, leaning towards German National Socialism, can be critically investigated by a fuller understanding on his bio-anthropocentricism; how it was formulated and metamorphosed, working with nationalism during the war period.

Also, despite the difference in their aesthetic (or stylistic) languages and the diverse cultural domains in which they practiced, this thesis hopes to illustrate that Murano and mainstream architects, Tange for instance, attempted to participate within the same modernizing site of Japanese society. Furthermore, it attempts to find their shared discursive technique, elucidating how the human body

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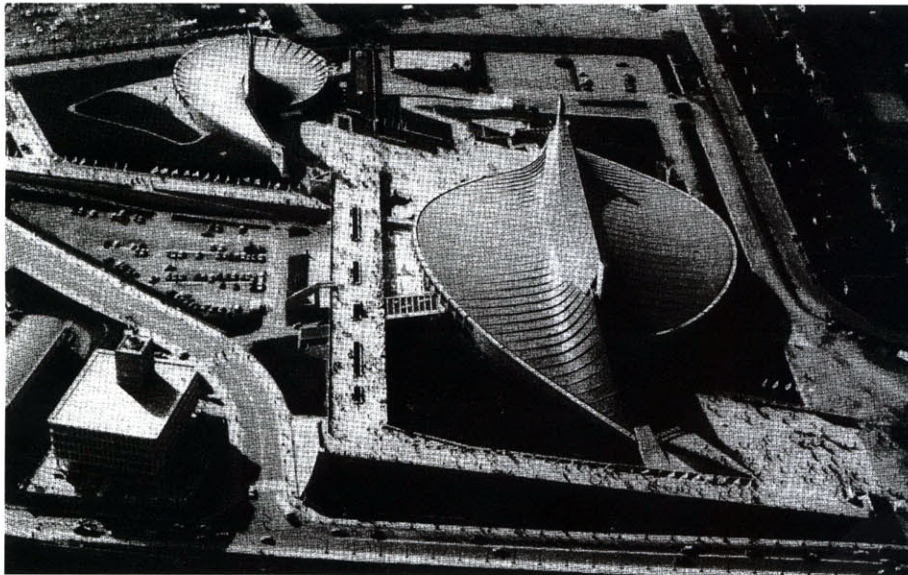
<sup>15</sup> Eizo Inagaki, *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku* (Japanese Modern Architecture), vol. 1: (SD Shoten, 1979), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Meiji Restoration: This restoration ended the almost 250-year-long Edo Period (1603-1868).

functioned in their respective concept. Without relying entirely on formalistic and stylistic analysis, this thesis hopes to find a way to reframe the history of Japanese modern architecture.



**Figure 1.1** Column in Ube Civic Hall (1937)  
Ube City, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author



**Figure -1.2** Yoyogi Olympic Gymnasium (1964)  
Tokyo, Japan  
Architect: Tange Kenzo  
Kenzo Tange & Urtec 1946-1982 - 39



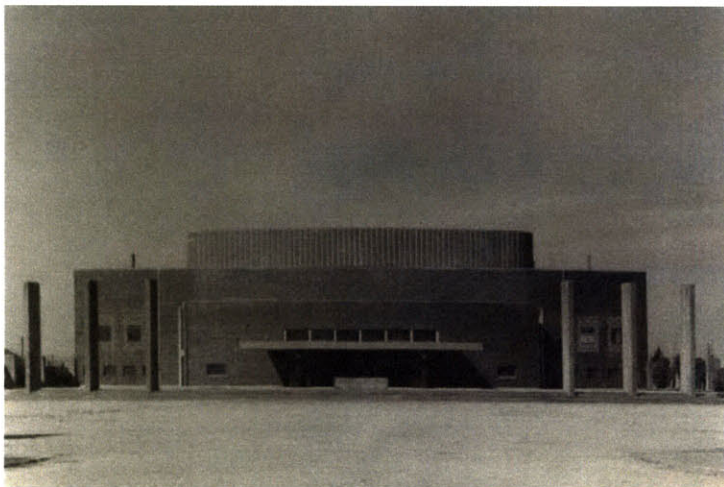
**Figure 1.3**  
Morigo Building (1931)  
Tokyo, Japan  
Architect: Murnao Togo  
*Murano Togo Kenchikusekai*  
*Zuten Katalog Vol - 8 - 15*



**Figure 1.4**  
Sogo Department Store (1936)  
Osaka, Japan  
Architect: Murnao Togo  
Bognar, Botond, *Togo Murano: Master*  
*Architect of Japan - 53*



**Figure 1.5** Kasuien Annex of the Miyako Hotel (1959)  
Kyoto, Japan  
Architect: Murnao Togo  
*Murano Togo Kenchikusekkei Zuten Katalog Vol- 8 - 61*



**Figure 1.6** Ube Civic Hall (1937)  
Ube City, Japan  
Architect: Murnao Togo  
*Murano Togo Kenchikusekkei Zuten Katalog Vol- 8 - 28*



## Chapter 1: Locating Murano: Historiography of Japanese Modern Architecture

“I think that history is a fiction.”<sup>17</sup> Murano Togo

Positioning Murano’s works in the history of modern architecture has been difficult for many scholars. His works are hardly discussed in Western scholarship; both Kenneth Frampton and William Curtis omit Murano’s projects in their respective works, whereas Tange and Maekawa are integrated into their historical narratives.<sup>18</sup> The monograph *Togo Murano: Master Architect of Japan* (1996) by Botond Bogner is the only text in English thus far that has introduced his projects in depth.<sup>19</sup> Even for Japanese historians, locating Murano’s works in the history of Japanese modern architecture has been arduous, although there are substantial texts written by Japanese scholars on Murano.<sup>20</sup> When included in the historical narrative, Murano has often been portrayed, one way or another, as “a master, but peripheral figure” among inter/post-war Japanese architects. In fact, his works triggered some controversies among the post-war Japanese architectural critiques.

The famous *Sogo Jiken* (the Sogo Incident) is one of those instances. In this event, the architectural magazine *Shinkenchiku* (New Architecture) published the comments made by several architects and critics on the Sogo Department Store that Murano designed in 1957 (Fig-2.1). Despite

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<sup>17</sup> (Murano 2006, 70)

<sup>18</sup> See William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 3rd ed. (Phaidon Press, 2001). Also, Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, 4th ed. (Thames and Hudson, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> See Botond Bogner, *Togo Murano Master Architect of Japan* (Rizzoli, 1996). David B. Stewart briefly touches upon some Murano’s works that were built during the pre-war period; see David B. Stewart, *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868 to the Present* (Kodansha International, 1987)

<sup>20</sup> One of the major monographs is written by the Japanese architectural historian Hasegawa Takashi. See his *Murano Togo no Dezaïn Essense* (The design essence of Murano Togo), Vol.1-8 (Kenchikushiryokenkyu-sha, 2000). Kyoto Institute Technology, where almost all of the drawings produced by Murano’s office, also architectural magazines that used to belong to the office are archived, publishes yearly a drawing catalog in conjunction with an exhibition since 2000. The catalogs contain drawings (plans, elevations, details, etc), pictures of models and buildings, essays and interviews. See *Murano Togo Kenchikusekkei Zuten Katalogu* (*The Catalogue of Working Drawing by Murano Togo*) Vol. 1-10, (Kyoto Institute of Technology). *Shinkenchiku-sha* (New Architecture) also publishes three volume monographs, *Murano Togo Sakubin shu* (The Works of Murano Togo) Vol.1-3 (Shinkenchiku-sha, 1983). *Shinkenchiku-sha* also published two other monographs on Murano. *Wafu kenchiku Sakubin Shosaizu Shu* (Detail drawings for Japanese style architecture) (Shinkenchiku-sha, 1986), *Murano Togo: Kenchiku to Imegi* (Murano Togo, Architecture and Image) (Shinkenchiku-sha, 1991). The later work was published to commemorate the centenary of Murano’s birth.

their positive remarks on the overall design and its careful treatment of facade surface details, the building was criticized for being a commercial space.<sup>21</sup> Nissei Hibiya Building, designed in 1963, also aroused some criticism due to its façade, which integrated historicist motifs, being dressed in granite panels that covered the primary steel structures (Fig-2.2). This building was built a year before Tange completed his famous Yoyogi Olympic Gymnasium (fig-1.2) and the Japanese architectural scene at the time was still amid the reverberations of the Metabolist movement. The mainstream architects were designing mega-structural projects, often publically funded, which incorporated cutting-edge technology (structural systems) as design components. Considering the time in which the Hibiya Building was built, the building was considered too historicist and deceptive.<sup>22</sup> These two events hint at a certain tendency that eventually molded the received history of Japanese modern architecture that pushed Murano to a periphery. This might also explain why works of Murano were not included in *Nihon no Kindaikenchiku* (Japanese Modern Architecture), a textbook on Japanese architectural history originally published in 1959, which was written by the architectural historian Inagaki Eizo two years after the completion of the Murano's Sogo Department building.

### 1.1: History of Technology

The eclipse of Murano's works in Inagaki's *Japanese Modern Architecture* can be explained precisely through the way in which his historical narrative was set up. Inagaki depicts the development of modern architecture as the process of attaining rational (economic) and simplifying form of expression, and largely focuses upon the state involved projects, within which obviously Murano's ornate works mostly designed for private (commercial) sectors cannot find its place. For Inagaki, works that rely on the historicist or any styles of the past were considered outdated.

Igarashi first posits that, as European culture began to infiltrate Japanese society around the middle of the eighteenth century, it was categorized into "the culture of material" and "the culture of

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<sup>21</sup> Reflecting back on the incident, Miyauchi Yoshihisa, a Japanese architectural critic who was one of the key figure in publishing the article, mentions that at that time dedication to *Okami* (supriority), the government (or the Emperor during WW II) was considered morally good. Anything that transgress the moral deed was always criticized. More details can be found in Miyauchi's *Kenchiku Janarizumu Burai* (The Story of Architectural Journalism): (Chuko-Bunko, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> See Teijiro Muramatsu, *Nihon Kindai Kenchiku no Rekishi* (History of Japanese Modern Architecture), (NHK Books, 1977), 203.



spirit.”<sup>23</sup> Inagaki claims that only the former was prioritized by the Japanese government; the technological development, over the cultivation of the spirit that underlined the western modernity, became the nation’s modernizing project. Inagaki delineates how traditional carpentry professions were replaced by the larger construction industry starting at the middle of the nineteenth century facilitated by the state, as a means to literally construct the modern nation state in which foreign architects/engineers were employed by the government to train the future professionals. Among these foreign educators, Josiah Condor was the most influential figure.<sup>24</sup> Inagaki asserts that these foreigners, at Tokyo Imperial University, instructed only the technological aspect of architecture – and nothing else – due to their educational background being rooted in nineteenth century eclecticism, which, as Inagaki argues, lacks the theoretical underpinnings and creativity that envision forthcoming aesthetics. None of the Japanese, says Inagaki, aspired to learn knowledge beyond the technical component. In his narrative, these consequences lead architecture to become engineering projects, while various architectural styles from Europe and the United States were employed to dress the structure of many public buildings. However, in Inagaki’s account, the theoretical and historical background from which those styles had emerged was never fully understood by Japanese architects.

Although the emerging young architects at the dawn of the twentieth century started to challenge the existing eclectic historicist practice hitherto conducted by the students of Condor, Inagaki claims that they failed fully to situate architecture beyond the scope of “engineering inquiry” and “politically administrative operation.”<sup>25</sup> These young architects, including Goto Keiji, Horiguchi Sutemi, and Yamaguchi Bunzo, strove to find the way to establish new forms of Japanese architecture that would take account of the other parts of Western modernity, namely the culture of spirit, without simply “borrowing” the foreign architectural styles. As Inagaki puts it, it was the first time that architect or architecture became aware of “self.”<sup>26</sup> This emerging tendency, however, soon lost its momentum. And architectural thinking shifted to more rational and economical forms, in part promoted by the

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<sup>23</sup> See Inagaki, Eizo, *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku* (Japanese Modern Architecture), vol. 1 (SD Shoten 1979) (originally published by Maruze in 1959) 20

<sup>24</sup> Prominent figures are, chronologically, Thomas James Waters from the Great Britain, C. de Boinville from France, Giovanni Vincenzo Cappelletti from Italy, Herman Ende and Wilhelm Bökmann from Germany, and Josiah Condor from the Great Britain.

<sup>25</sup> See (Inagaki, 1979, 224).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

state in response to the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake and the subsequent economic recession. In addition, much of the national budget was relocated to military industry starting around the mid 30s.<sup>27</sup>

From the 1920s on, Inagaki concludes the primary objective for Japanese modern architecture was to achieve rational design and practice based upon technological discourse in its own right. Some of the best examples, he continues, were designed by modernists like Taniguchi Yoshiro and Kijo Tsuchiura in the late 30s, and which reached a sophistication comparable to the 20s European modernist buildings with its white surface and cubical compositions. Inagaki further asserts that, while Japanese were perhaps influenced by their European counterparts, their architecture sprang up in a distinctive techno-cultural context. However, those works were exceptions, and the majority of buildings were still, as Inagaki claims, haunted by “the wreckage of past styles.”<sup>28</sup>

Inagaki does not include Murano in his narrative, even though by the time he was writing this book in the late 1950s, Murano had already designed several significant buildings, many of which were later described as master works by Fujimori Terunobu, including Morigo Building (1931), Osaka Sogo Department (1936), Ube Civic Hall (1937), Hiroshima World Cathedral (1958) and Sogo Department/Yomiuri Hall (1958). When Ube Civic Hall was completed in 1937, the design was quite influential among students at that time, including Tange.<sup>29</sup> Given this fact, the elimination of Murano’s works by Inagaki could be surmised as a conspicuous absence.

## 1.2: History of Opposing Poles

In the “*Shinden ka Gokusha ka* (Temple or Prison?)” originally written in 1972, the Japanese historian Hasegawa Takashi covers the history of Japanese modern architecture from the dawn of the twentieth century to the late 1960s. In this essay, Hasegawa introduced some works of Murano as the heir of Taisho architecture, which momentarily flourished at beginning of the century, which Inagaki briefly

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<sup>27</sup> This rationalizing process in turn, as Inagaki argues, enable a technician to perform the role as an architect, creating more burdens on privately owned architectural firm that emerged around the turn of the century to secure their clients. See (Inagaki, 1979, 282-283).

<sup>28</sup> See (Inagaki, 1979, 355).

<sup>29</sup> Tange incorporated the design into his studio projects. See *Murano Togo Sakubin shu* (The Works of Murano Togo) Vol.1, (*Shinkenbikusha*, 1983), 257.

covered in his book.<sup>30</sup> Hasegawa positioned Goto Keiji, who taught Murano architecture at Waseda University, as a critical figure for Japanese modern architecture. Hasegawa narrates the history by setting up two opposing camps. The first camp consists of those who promoted the technologically oriented Japanese Modernism in Inagaki's history. The other, to which Goto belongs, consists of those who advocated for the awakening of self; in other words, the autonomy of architecture based upon its own logic without relying on any external laws. In Hasegawa's account, the former can be conceived as technocratic architects, who deployed "top-down and outside-in" approach, whereas the latter is understood to be democratic with "bottom-up and inside-out" attitude. While Inagaki asserts that the emerging architectural movement did not fully realize its ideal due to the lack of their theoretical underpinnings, Hasegawa takes a different stance in terms of how modern architecture was developing in Japan. Writing this piece amid the reverberation of the 60s students revolt, Hasegawa imbued this text with an anti-establishment account, claiming that modernist architects, by creating *Temple* architecture, have been suppressing those who produced *Prison* architecture.

By *Temple*, Hasegawa means architecture for the "ruler," – whether it is the King, the Emperor, or the State – which expresses absolute power over people. Conceiving the Parthenon as the earliest example of this kind, Hasegawa claims that *Temple* forces people to admire the ruler by its overpowering monumental exterior. For Hasegawa, the ultra-technological or mega-structural projects also signify the aristocratic nature of the Japanese state. He then associates some of Modernist projects with *Temple*, especially those of Tange. Hasegawa points out how Tange's practice in fact started with *Temple* design during World War II. Tange designed Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Memorial Hall (1942) (Fig-2.3), which was a proposal for the competition held by the then imperial regime. Reading the monumental axis that was deployed in this project as the device for creating an aristocratic space, Hasegawa claims that Tange's practice on temple-like buildings continued to his post-war practice, such as Hiroshima Peace Center in 1955. In Hasegawa's account, the building's monumental axis and the elevated volume supported by pilotis symbolize the post-war Japanese nation-state. Hasegawa further accused Tange's subsequent works and others' in the mainstream, including Kikutake Kiyonori and Isozaki Arata, for being the signifier of the state. It was the design from Top-Down and Outside-In, in which the state and technological power, working hand in hand, shaped their designs. For Hasegawa, *Temple* does not contain any internal space for the people, as opposed to *Prison*, which is all about the interiority.

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<sup>30</sup> Taisho is the name of the Japanese era. The sequence of eras since the Meiji Restoration in 1868 are as follows; Meiji (1868-1911), Taisho (1912-1925), Showa (1926-1989) and Heisei (1990-).

The term *prison* was used by Hasegawa to describe the space within which the democracy, “the self” of the citizen, and autonomy of architecture were to be established. To understand Hasegawa’s use of this word, it is important to know a bit of the historical context of Japanese society in the early twentieth century. Japan enjoyed, politically and ideologically, a certain degree of liberalism in 1910s and 20s, the period usually known as “Taisho Democracy.” The state intervention of the Meiji government in molding the society was quite strong before the Taisho Era and after 1930s the imperial government harshly censored left-leaning intellectuals. In between these repressive periods, the Taisho Democracy allowed various intellectuals to express their political positioning freely. Hasegawa, somewhat analogically, sees this political expression in the realm of architecture. He compared the works and words of young emerging architects during the same period, who acted against the dominating academic historicist designs, with those of political activists, who also advocated for democracy against the then despotic regime. The former was soon taken over by the economically rational design promoted by the government and the latter by the imperialist power.

Hasegawa then almost dramatically sets up an analogy between the two contemporaneous figures, the anarchist Osugi Sakae, who was incarcerated and later assassinated by Military Police due to his political position, and the architect Goto Keiji who designed the Toyotama Prison in 1915 (Fig-10).<sup>31</sup> Hasegawa portrayed Osugi as the one who found “the self” within the prison, realizing that the true prison in fact existed outside, which was the city fully controlled by the state power. Goto Keiji is characterized by Hasegawa as a *prison*-designer, who is conscious of the oppressive power that architecture could have on people. In other words, in Hasegawa’s story, Goto ironically understood the potential aspect of *Temple* (aristocratic monumentalizing space) in architecture by designing an actual prison, the obvious space for the suppression. Goto, as Hasegawa continues, advocated for architecture that does not rely on external power. Thus, both Osugi and Goto advocated for “the expansion of the self” and “the enrichment of the self” from their respective prisons - one being in the literal sense and the other being the people’s space. Detecting the influence of Life Philosophy in their discourses, Hasegawa perceives their approaches as Bottom-Up and Inside-Out in which civil rights of ordinary subjects or autonomous expressions of architecture could be established. For Hasegawa’s prison architecture, interiority of architecture, becomes a critical space, although he does not clearly refer to how exactly this interiority was expressed through Goto’s architectural design, other than introducing the words of Goto and a few photographs on the Okutama Prison (Fig – 2.4).<sup>32</sup> Instead, Hasegawa metaphorically focuses on the interior space of architecture.

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<sup>32</sup> The hint can be found in Hasegawa’s previous texts on Taisho Architecture, where he also analyze Goto’s works. See his Hasegawa’s *Shinden Ka Gokusha Ka* (Kashima Shuppankai, 2007), 10-38.

Aesthetically speaking, Hasegawa's prison architecture seems to have moderate and less monumental exterior appearance and the interior space that could clothe the human subjects, just as Toyotama Prison does or the prison enabled the anarchist Osugi to realize his self. In contrast, temple architecture overpowers the people with its excessively symbolic and technological design.

Based upon this definition, some aspects of Murano's architecture were quite appealing to Hasegawa to demonstrate his idea of the post-war Prison architecture. He introduced Lutheran College (1969) for example (Fig-2.5). While the opaque and reserved exterior appearance of this building does echo with Goto's Toyotama Prison, Hasegawa does not go further than describing it as "the prison space appeared within the ordinary life that embodies humanistic space."<sup>33</sup> Thus, other than its muted exterior and the fact that this is privately owned, differentiating the prison to humanistic aspects of this building is difficult. Nevertheless, Murano seems to operate as a counter figure to the post-war mainstream modernists, establishing a binary between Establishment and anti-Establishment regimes. Needless to say, Hasegawa is the advocate for the latter, and becomes the ardent support of Murano. As the historian Fujimori Terunobu describes, through Hasegawa's work, "Murano, who was the only leading architect competing against Tange after the war, was finally given theoretical ground."<sup>34</sup>

### 1.3: History of Styles

The historian/architect Fujimori Terunobu published his book "History of Japanese Modern Architecture" in 1991, covering the history from the Meiji Era to the end of World War II. While touching upon the technological aspect of architecture, Fujimori focuses more on the development of aesthetics. In a sense, Fujimori's attempt is to trace the "culture of spirit" of Japanese architecture that Inagaki dismisses almost entirely from his book. Fujimori classified different camps that belong to different aesthetic practice. He claims that the history of Japanese modern architecture began with

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Hasegawa introduces Goto's texts. Instead of fully relying on structure as an exterior system that shapes design, Goto asserts that architectural should internalize the structural system as its own logic. Drawing on the Gothic architecture as a prime example, explaining how the Gothic arches were able to contrive vault system, its own expression. The newly introduced materials, such as steel and concrete, needs its own expression, which should not be imposed by an external law, the mere physical or, as Hasegawa might add, the state power. Hasegawa compare this interiority with interior of architecture.

<sup>33</sup> Takashi Hasegawa, "Shinden Ka Gokusha Ka (Temple or Prison)," in *Shinden Ka Gokusha Ka, (Kashima Shuppankai, 2007)*, 247.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

appropriating various architectural styles from Europe and the United States, from the neo-baroque, gothic revival and neo-classical to the colonial. During the last half of the nineteenth century, as those styles were applied to a number of important public projects, such as Akasaka Detached Palace (1909) designed by Katayama Toukuma and Tokyo Station (1914) designed by Tatsuno Kingo, the way Japanese architects use these styles, as Fujimori claims, eventually reached certain sophistication. At the dawn of the twentieth century, however, Fujimori continues, a group of young architects, inspired by the European avant-garde movements, started to break from the established norm. This was, as Fujimori further argues, the inception of Japanese Modernist Architecture.

Fujimori summarizes the phases of European *Modernist* design as follows: *Botanical*, *Mineralogical*, *Geometrical*, and *Mathematical*. By this, he describes the Modernist development originating in Art Nouveau, Expressionism, Bauhaus style and then eventually leading to Miesian style; his sequence of styles takes simpler forms as it moves forward. Fujimori claims that Japanese modernism followed a similar sequence.

Japanese Expressionism flourished at the early 1920's, and was initiated by then young architects, including Goto Keiji, Horiguchi Sutemi, and Takizawa Mayumi, whose works Fujimori situated in "Mineralogical." The decline of that phase was largely facilitated by the conversion undertaken by the majority of expressionists into *geometric* designs (Bauhaus style), that led to the Mathematical (Miesian).

Fujimori discusses the works of Murano in two chapters, entitled as "Barrack Decorating Company and Late Expressionist" and "War and Architecture" respectively. While claiming that Japanese Expressionism ended at the late 20's, Fujimori portrays Murano as "late-expressionist,"<sup>35</sup> and the heir of its earlier movement. Fujimori argues that two buildings designed by Murano, Mori-go Building (1931) and Ube Civic Hall (1938), embody the essence of the "late-expressionist" design in materiality and details. Along with other late-expressionist works, Fujimori describes these works as "the design that is less naïve and gaudy compared with their predecessors, and tactically falls behind the leading edge of avant-gardes movement."<sup>36</sup> Fujimori explains how the Europe trip that Murano made in the 20's impacted the architect. In this trip, as Fujimori continues, Stockholm City Hall designed by Ragnar Östberg in 1923, a hybridization of Scandinavian Gothic and Expressionism. Through this encounter with Scandinavian architecture, Fujimori argues, Murano decided to "regress" to where he

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<sup>35</sup> Fujimori Terunobu, *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku* (Japanese Modern Architecture) vol.2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993.), 193.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 196).

was while a student at Waseda University, going against the grain of Modernist development. Along with a few other architects, including Imai Kenji and Shirai Seiichi, Fujimori asserts that Murano “remained” as late-expressionist even after World War II, acting as a counterforce to the dominating post-war Japanese modernists.

#### **1.4: Summary**

Each work has its own contributions to revealing different aspects of the history of Japanese Modern architecture. Inagaki sees this history as the development of technology, thoroughly analyzing how the distinctive modern architectural design sprang up in the Japanese context. Hasegawa locates a critical moment in the Taisho period, when a different consciousness became evident among different young architects. He then differentiates a certain group of architects from the mainstream who, as he considered, closely associated with the state power. This factionalism is brought to the extreme by Fujimori, though it is not as politically charged as Hasegawa’s claim, conducting a meticulously taxonomic analysis of Japanese modern architecture that was based upon a formal and stylistic analysis.



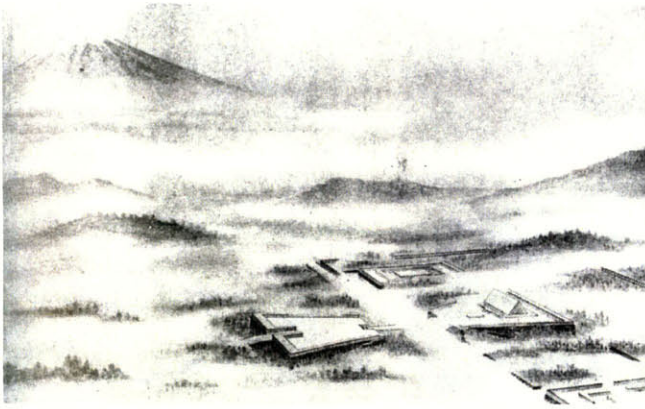




**Figure 2.1** Sogo Department Store (1957)  
Tokyo, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author



**Figure 2.2** Nissei Hibiya Building (1963)  
Tokyo, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author



**Fig-2.3**

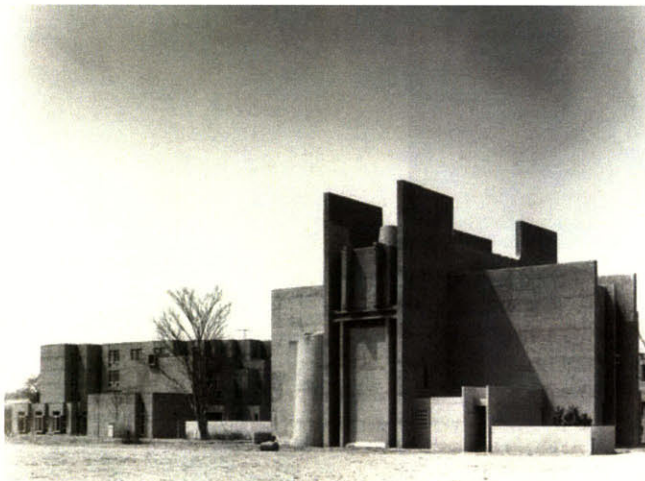
**Figure 2.3**

Greater East Asia  
 Co-Prosperity Sphere Memorial Hall (1942)  
 Architect: Tange Kenzo  
 Jonathna Reynolds, *Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture* - 127



**Figure 2.4**

Toyotama Prison (1915)  
 Tokyo, Japan  
 Architect: Goto Keiji  
 Terunobu Fujimori, *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku* - 168



**Figure 2.5**

Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary (1969)  
 Tokyo, Japan  
 Architect: Murano Togo  
 Botond Bogner,  
*Togo Murano: Master Architect of Japan* - 107

## Chapter 2: Vitalism: Body Imagery

“One percent remains. This one percent is Murano. I always say this. This is the one percent that even Murano himself cannot do anything about. No matter how one rationalizes, once the job is offered to Murano, everyone has to face Murano. It is from this point that the real architecture might emerge. Sometimes, that one percent may rule the whole.”<sup>37</sup> Murano Togo

### 2.1: Exposure to Intellectual Currents

Architecture was still a developing discipline in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century; the architecture school in Waseda University was established in 1910, only two years before Murano attended it. As Murano later reflects, the architectural education at Waseda was somewhat ad hoc, and as a result, he was inevitably exposed to other disciplinary realms, such as philosophy, literature, and life sciences that were circulating in the pedagogical environment.<sup>38</sup> Reading through Murano’s essays, especially his graduate thesis, one can easily discern the influence of those various disciplines. In fact, the provisional curriculum at Waseda made Murano’s architecture a particular kind of inter-disciplinary project. Thus, while the received history on Japanese modern architecture overlooked this larger intellectual context, there is, I argue, a certain epistemic condition that must be deciphered if we are to understand Murano. The following section briefly introduces several educators through whom he was exposed to different intellectual terrains; i.e., it is a sketch of the intellectual milieu that Murano was trained as an architect.

Initially pursuing electrical engineering when he matriculated in Waseda University in 1912, Murano eventually decided to transfer to the department of architecture.<sup>39</sup> From an architectural design point of view, despite the effort of some professors at Waseda, who encouraged him to follow the conventional historicist design, Murano maintained a secessionist stance throughout his student years. “Secessionist,” in the Japanese context, does not refer only to the movement associated with the Viennese Secession. The term was rather used loosely. It describes the core of western avant-garde

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<sup>37</sup> Murano Togo, “*Shakaigeijutsu toshiteno Kenchiku wo Tsukurutameni* (To Make Architecture as Social Art)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (*Murano Togo Complete Writings*), vol 1, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991) (originally published in *Kenchiku Nenkan* in 1980), 426.

<sup>38</sup> See Murano Togo, “*Watashino Kenchikukan* (My view on Architecture)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (*Murano Togo Complete Writings*), vol 1, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991) (originally published in *Kenchiku Nenkan* in 1965), 690.

<sup>39</sup> Murano later expressed his appreciation for the support of Abe Isoo, the founder of Japan Socialist Party and the head of the School of Liberal Arts, in this transferring process. Regardless of their majors, all students were enrolled in the school of liberal arts for the first two years. .

movements at that time, including German Expressionism and Italian Futurism, or any attempt to act as a counter-movement to the existing historicist design practice imbued with the predominant elite academism.<sup>40</sup>

During his years in architecture school, Murano was educated by several influential figures. Murano learned the history of architecture, especially the history of Italian Renaissance architecture, through the architect Sato Koichi, who, upon graduating from Tokyo Imperial University, founded the architecture school at Waseda. Sato's lectures were based upon the architectural history written by the British architect William Lethaby. From Goto Keiji, Murano learned architectural design and perhaps *Lebensphilosophie*.

Murano established a lifelong relationship with professor Kon Wajiro. Although Kon was educated as a painter in the Tokyo School of Arts, he was hired to teach in the newly established architecture department. It is uncertain what exactly Kon taught. Judging from his background as an artist obsessed with decorative arts (Fig-3.1) and as seen in his Barrack Decorating Company (Fig-3.2), it can be surmised that Murano developed his interest in ornament through Kon's lectures.<sup>41</sup>

Kon's influence on Murano, however, was perhaps greater on something other, if not larger than architecture. Despite his background and professorial position at Waseda University, Kon is often portrayed by many scholars as an urban ethnographer.<sup>42</sup> Initially Kon, along with Sato Koichi, was affiliated with Japanese folklorists, including Yanagida Kunio and Yanagi Soetsu, who investigated the culture and social customs of rural Japan. Kon later became more interested in contemporaneous mores of the Japanese masses that emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century industrial Japan. He meticulously documented various customs, ranging from types, postures, and locations of social subjects in urban spaces to commodities owned by those subjects or displayed in shop windows. Later he names this urban ethnographical approach *Modernology*, as opposed to *Archeology*.

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, as one can discern from Murano's thesis project, his design does not resonate with the works of his contemporaneous Western Avant-gardes. Rather, it looks similar to historicist designs. However, as Fujimori points out, the languages deployed by Murano radically transgressed conventional architectural orders and the normative use of styles. During the years in Waseda, "Murano consciously put the capital upside down on the column." See Fujimori Terunobu, "*Kaisetsu 1920 Nendai to Murano Togo no Gendo* (Commentary, the 1920s and Murano's Praxis)" in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991), 818-829.

<sup>41</sup> Kon was obsessed with Rococo ornament, and used Rococo as his trope to describe any type of ornament. See Kawazoe.

<sup>42</sup> In his book *Overcome by Modernity*, Harry Harootunian introduces Kon Wajiro as an urban ethnographer, who observed and documented multiple social phenomena taking place on the streets of urban Japan under the influence of the emerging consumer culture during the 1920's and 1930's. See (Harootunian, 2000).

Kon, possibly through Yanagi, became familiar with the works of the Shirakaba-ha (White Birch Group) writers.<sup>43</sup> It was through an informal reading group organized by Kon that Murano encountered their literatures and ideas. As the critic Suzuki Sadami claims, the Shirakaba-ha writers were greatly influenced by the literature of Tolstoy, the arts of Auguste Rodin, and the philosophy of Bergson, and thus expressed a particular type of Vitalistic thinking. According to Harry Harrotonian, Kon's approach was based on the psycho-sociology of the French intellectual Gabriel Tarde. It can be reasonably presumed that Kon was a critical conduit through which various fields of studies were introduced to Murano.

Abe Isoo was another figure who had an impact on Murano's thinking. Abe studied at the Theology School at the University of Hartford and Berlin University. He was one of the founders of the Japanese Socialist Party, and became known as a Christian Socialist. In addition to teaching economics at Waseda University, Abe wrote the essay "Toshimondai (The issue of Urbanization)" in the early twentieth century, concerning the existing conditions in the emerging cities. Abe's take on the issue relating to urbanism and economy was clearly evident in Murano's graduate thesis, entitled "Toshi Kenchiku Ron (Urban Architecture Theory)," which I will discuss in depth later on. Lastly, Haraguchi Takejiro, who was a graduate of Waseda and also educated at the same Theology School in Hartford as Abe, introduced Eugenics to Murano. Through these intellectuals, Murano was exposed to different discourses, ranging from architectural design, urbanism, psycho-sociology, economic theory and philosophical thinking. In this chapter, I explore the general current of what I call a "bio-anthropocentric" epistemology in Japan at the time - evident in literature, plastic and performing art. In the next chapter I will locate the influence of this epistemology within Murano's work, and in particular, his thesis the "Urban Architecture Theory."

## 2.2: Vitalistic Optics

From the late nineteenth century onward, Vitalistic ideas, spurred by the introduction of Western philosophies and Life Sciences, became a way for different Japanese thinkers and artists to respond to the modernization of Japanese society, which created a kaleidoscopically "moving" analytical object at that time. It contained a mix of alien elements – political and industrial systems based on Western models, new commodities, and different modalities of living. A novel consciousness arose in the cultural and intellectual sphere, and forced various intellectuals to become aware of the dynamics of

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<sup>43</sup> Yanagi was the co-editor of the magazine *Shirakaba* (White Birch) and was a member of *Mingei* Movement, the Japanese equivalent to Arts and Crafts Movement. Prominent members of Shirakaba-Ha writers were Arishima Takeo, Shiga Naoya, and Musanokoji Saneatsu.

their surroundings. In this constantly transforming site, the human subject, the self, was positioned as the center of their discourse.

In the debate over ornament during the 1920s, Kon Wajiro advocated the beauty in multiplicity over simplicity. Describing the flow of a crowd as “careless colors, forms, movements that are completely out of rhythm,” he claims that this turbulent flow could ruin the simplicity of architecture. The purpose of architecture is, however, for him to provide the “pleasurable” and “comfortable” environments precisely for those who live in unpredictable orders. Only multiplicity, in his account, can serve the purpose. For this, ornament enables him to “emancipate a means of expression and to freely complicate the contents of the expression.”<sup>44</sup> While deeming the social condition as perplexing, the word such as “multiplicity” or the use of ornament, which is not easily discernable from structural (or geometrical) perspectives, Kon attempted to conceptualize the unpredictability.

Goto Keiji also takes notice of the heterogeneity within architecture. He points out that there are multiple architectural rules, which inevitably contradict one another. As Goto argues, two apparent solutions for this situation are, one; to find the “compromise” among them, or two; to “dogmatically” exploit a single rule, while ignoring others. He, however, disputes both approaches, characterizing them as strategies that rely on extraneous rules. To overcome this conundrum, Goto proposes to find a principle deriving from the “self.” As such, he insists that the self, architecture, should expand its conceptual domain. Only then, does a “realistic” and “humanistic” architecture become possible. He is analogically arguing how an autonomous architectural law can be devised through the same manner in which an autonomous human subject can be constructed. In his account, what holistically unifies the existing contradiction is the interiority of the self.<sup>45</sup>

The Christian Socialist Abe Isoo takes a humanistic position in his theory. He refutes the existing model of urban modernization, which was envisioned by Meiji policy makers who treated the city as an “inanimate object.”<sup>46</sup> Witnessing the worsening living conditions of citizens within the urbanizing cities, especially the working class, social reformers at the dawn of the century criticized the fact that the national wealth, gained through Japan’s industrialization, was not distributed equally to all

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<sup>44</sup> Kon, Wajiro “Soushoku Geijutsu no Kaimei (Understanding Ornamental Arts)” in *Zoukei-Ron (Design Theory)* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 61-65 (Tokyo: Domes Shuppan, 1975), 64. Translated by author. Kon then positions Rococo ornaments as an original devise to liberate design by “its abundance of curvature that are the most difficult to be discerned geometrically.”

<sup>45</sup> See (Hasegawa, 2007, 35-36).

<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey E. Hanes, *The City as Subject: Seki Hajime and the Reinvention of Modern Osaka*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2002), 180.

its constituents. As professor Jeffrey Hanes claims, Abe was one of those radicals, who “demeaned the central government’s tendency to *dehumanize* cities by treating them merely as the *mechanical* means to national economic development.”<sup>47</sup> Promoting municipal socialism, Abe positions the people and city as a central, autonomous subject. Abe attempts to transform the city into something other than mechanical means by deploying an anthropocentric, if not a socialistic, claim.

As the “self” seems to play a central role in the above narratives – unpredictable flow on the one hand and an entity unifying or revitalizing the unpredictable on the other – the subject-oriented discourse is a recurrent theme in Japanese vitalistic thinking at that time. This tendency, on one level, acted against the prevailing mechanized modern society of the earlier twentieth century in order to regain human subjectivities. As Suzuki claims it became a singular current specific to the Japanese intellectual-cultural sphere due to the way in which European and American Vitalist thought has engaged with the existing Japanese philosophical and religious thinking, including Christianity. In Western concepts, Vitalism was a way to think of Life as a means to understand variegated natural and social conditions, without relying on scientific or religious concepts. As Bergson explains in *Creative Evolution*, “a vital principle” is the kind of rule that governs all the individual organisms, which pretend to have their own.<sup>48</sup> In Japanese Vitalism, Suzuki avers that the ontological being of “I” or “self” becomes one of the expressions of “the greater life of the universe.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, it was thought that one could describe the vital world through representing or presenting “I” as the organic entity. This ontological being, or rather *becoming*, becomes a pivotal condition for many intellectuals. As we saw with Abe, Kon and Goto above, the human subject was, often allegorically, positioned as a central figure to describe the intricate character of humans for artistic, moralistic and even political purposes. The notion was conceptualized in the forms of languages, images, and material objects, through employing bodily imageries, turning into a particular bio-anthropocentric discourse. The body in turn becomes a domain for various agencies to claim, in many ways, human subjectivity.

During the 1910s, some artists utilized different techniques in order to confront the established arts in the universities. Instead of depicting the nude body as an idealized, proportional composition, as the art critic Mizusawa Tsutomu claims, the painter Yorozu Tetsugoro in *Nude Body* (Fig-3.3) depicts a woman in a disharmonized way, employing polychromic expression and energetic gestures. It entailed a “new visual language which was impregnated with a primitive and uncultivated

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>48</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1998), 43.

<sup>49</sup> See (Suzuki, 2007, 11).

Nietzschian vitalism,” according to Mizusawa.<sup>50</sup> In order to reveal the inner organic self, Mizusawa continues, Yorozu depicted a body as a “dynamic field of potential power.”<sup>51</sup> This approach was taken to the extreme by some performing artists, who became an art object of their own work, including Yamada Kosaku and the self-claimed constructivist group MAVO whose works I am going to examine later. Mizusawa further argues that this seemingly backward art practice, employing the very primitive theme such as that of the human body, paradoxically turns artists into modernists in the Japanese context. In a sense, it was conceived as a way of indentifying their “self” by entering into the organic, if not unidentifiable domain that (Western) modernism, be it mechanist or finalist perspective, could hardly penetrate.

Similarly, body images also became instrumental tools within certain literary circles at the time, especially in the Shirakaba-Ha writers, for depicting mercurial human tempers as an innate character, thus as an expression of the “self,” and art as Life. This is precisely where I locate a vitalistic expression specific to the Japanese cultural scene. In the following section, I delineate this particular practice in the works of Japanese artists in the early twentieth century in order to construct the larger epistemological horizon.

### 2.3 Flesh and Blood in Japanese literature

As several modern artists started questioning the idealized figurative representation of the then dominant art practice, several writers also emerged around the turn of the twentieth century who challenged the existing literary trend that depicted the “harmonized” world. One current was naturalism, which strove to portray the true human life as it was. In their endeavor, reality was thought to be systematically and rationally discernable. Japanese writer Tokuda Shusei claims that naturalists conceived human life as a “laboratory, they observed it as if they were scientists.”<sup>52</sup> As Tokuda continues, naturalists condemned the concept of the ideal world, portraying reality instead as tragedy. In reaction to these mechanistic and pessimistic renderings of the human, however, a different group of writers came in to the scene who were inspired by the works of Western vitalistic thinkers, including “Christianity and New Idealism’ of Rudolf Christoph Eucken and ‘Creative Evolution’ of Henri

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<sup>50</sup> Tsutomu Mizusawa, “The Artist Start to Dance: The Changing Image of the Body in Art of the Taisho Period” in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*. ed. Elise K. Tipton and John Clark. (University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>51</sup> (Mizusawa, 2000. 21).

<sup>52</sup> Tokuda Shusei, *Nihon Bungaku Kouwa (Lecture on Japanese Literature)* (Tokyo: BBC Bunko, 2006), 72.



Bergon.”<sup>53</sup> These new Western philosophies liberated the new writers from the existing naturalist approach, allowing them to in turn embrace unpredictable human behavior and psychology, and to believe in the ability of each individual to form a better world precisely due to their strong individuality. For these writers, interiority of self became an important theme. As Tokuda attests, “while naturalist writers strove to depict life which takes place in nature,” these new writers “focus more on the nature that moves within the self, in other words destinies, chances and necessities of subjects.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, a mercurial nature of the individual, which was previously denigrated or ignored by naturalist, was in a sense exploited by these new writers as a creative motif. In order to describe this interiority, body imageries were a crucial device for many writers. As exemplary of these emerging writers, Tokuda positions Tanizaki Junichirio and several Shirakaba-ha writers, including Shiga Naoya and Arishima Takeo.

The Japanese writer Shiga Naoya (1883-1971) wrote a short novel entitled *Kamisori* (Razor), published in the magazine *Shirakaba* (White Birch) in 1910. The story is of a neurotic person, who, though diligently devoted to his profession as a barber, once he is distracted by an illness, he commits murder.<sup>55</sup> In this piece, madness is shown underlie the apparent sanity of human life.

“Razor” captures the psychological transformations of the protagonist, Yoshisaburo that took place within a few days. Yoshisaburo has owned a barber shop in downtown Tokyo for ten years and is proud of the fact that he has never slipped and cut a customer when giving them a shave. One day, Yoshisaburo catches a cold and needs to let his assistants, whom he does not trust, take care of his shop. However, frustrated with the laziness of these assistants, Yoshisaburo, despite his illness, decides to shave a young customer who came in to his shop at one night. The high fever makes Yoshisaburo dizzy and quick tempered, and he eventually becomes irritated by the young man who falls asleep in his barber chair. This set of circumstances results in Yoshisaburo accidentally cutting the customer’s neck with his razor. Although it no more than a scratch, this is the first time he has ever cut a customer and the barber believes that he has committed a “crime.” Yoshisaburo suddenly becomes paranoid and cuts the throat of his customer, killing him.

The vitality of the young man and his sudden death contrast with the old man’s lack of living emotion and his continuing life in order to illuminate, as the writer Takada Hozumi (1910-1987)

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 98

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 122

<sup>55</sup> See (Suzuki, 2007, 596).

describes it, “a crisis of life.”<sup>56</sup> Whether this “crisis of life” was expressed by Shiga in response to the mechanized modern society at the dawn of the century is uncertain, but the way in which he renders this theme is precisely where I locate Shiga’s Vitalistic gesture; the attempt to visualize unpredictable human nature. The following is a short extract from the scene in which Yoshisaburo just committed his first cut.

A cut was only less than a half inch in length. He (Yoshizaburo) was standing, and just staring at the cut. Initially, the color of the scar, where his skin was lightly peeled, was milky-white. However, as soon as it turned into pale crimson red, the blood suddenly started to swell. He was watching this process. Blood became blackened and formed a growing sphere. When the size of the sphere reached its climax, it crumbled, and a stream of blood ran down. It was this moment when a kind of violent emotion occurred to Yoshizaburo.<sup>57</sup>

By capturing the sequence of blood swelling up and finally streaming down the young man’s neck, Shiga depicts the “still-living” young man and, to an extent, Yoshizaburo himself. In this scene, blood is clearly characterized as a moving organic matter, which, I argue, signifies the force mobilizing the Life of mankind, equivalent to Bergson’s *élan vital*.

This quasi-thermodynamic concept, conceiving human life as a movement prompted by a vital force, is further exemplified in the following scene. After Yoshisaburo committed the “second” crime, he is by himself with the young man in the shop, sitting silently in the chair nearby with his eyes shut, as if he were a dead man. Shiga delineates this moment as; “[t]he night became complete silence, as a *dead body*. All the *movements (undō)* were terminated. Everything is now in deep sleep. Only a triple mirror was coldly witnessing this scene.”<sup>58</sup> Obviously, one of the movements that Shiga implies is the life of the young customer, which has just been “terminated.” Furthermore, I also argue that another motion of life is expressed in the mercurial temper of Yoshisaburo, an earnest barber metamorphosing into a murderer. Upon killing his customer and sitting in a chair, Yoshisaburo “looked like a dead man,” which can be interpreted as his vital spirit has also ended. Here Shiga renders moving life and temper by illuminating the organic motion of blood contrasted with complete termination (dead body) and the inorganic mirror.

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<sup>56</sup> Hakuichi Sakaue and Yoshinori Amino, *Taisho no Bungei (Literature in the Taisho Era)* (Soubun-sha, 1996), 21.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Italics by author.

The motif of blood was used by Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), whose works were one of Murano's favorites. In "Aru Onna (A Woman)", published also in *Shirakaba*, Arishima depicts a dilemma of a woman, Yoko, confronting her newly constructed subjectivity amid modernizing or, as Arishima puts it, "awakening Japanese society" at the dawn of twentieth century. On the one hand, Yoko, raised by a mother who was a devout Christian, knows the conventional female role that she is forced to play. On the other hand, due to her awakened subjectivity, she cannot regulate her growing inner emotion, resulting in an affair with a married man, Mr. Kurachi. Arishima described this as a story depicting "the tragic trajectory" of the woman's life that gradually "denigrates and anguishes."<sup>59</sup> It is a kind of "metamorphosis."

There are several scenes in "Aru Onna" where Arishima renders the change in Yoko's passion and temper by describing the flow of her blood. The following is the scene where Yoko, already having been hysterical due to her worsening relationship with Kurachi, becomes furious with her ill sister, Sadayo. Despite Yoko's efforts, Sadayo expresses her dislike for the liquid food that her sister prepared.

At this moment, Yoko is already incapable of regulating her emotion. She feels that all the blood in her veins is quickly heating up, streaming into her heart, then to her brain, as if it were penetrating her skull with the ruptured sounds. 'My devoted nursing is wasted.' Her anger was multiplied.<sup>60</sup>

In this description as well, blood is treated as an organic moving force, simultaneously signifying shifting human emotion, which embodies, ironically, Yoko's subjectivity. Thus, the heat and movement of blood, and corporeal elements, including her heart and brain, signify the Life of a woman.

Although the writer Tanizaki Junichiro (1886-1965) was not affiliated with *Shirakaba-Ha* writers, he nevertheless was their contemporary who was also against the hitherto naturalist approach. In the work of Tanizaki, art was conceived as Life itself. In *Giniro no Shi* (The Death of Golden Color), written in 1914, Tanizaki portrays the lives of two artists, Okakura, who came from a rich family, and the anonymous "I" who is narrating the story. Okakura and "I" were together from their elementary school, both were distinguished students contemplating to become great artists. While "I" is conversant with almost all subjects, including mathematics

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 142.

and literature, Okakura, disliked science and history but appreciated languages, reading and gymnastics a great deal. Okakura rejects history, claiming that “[h]istory is merely a line.”<sup>61</sup> They have different notions of the concept of what constitutes ideal art. On the one hand, “I” considers philosophy as the most important component of great art. Okakura, on the contrary, asserts that all genuine art arises from a trained human body, which explains his fascination with gymnastics. In other words, “I” and Okakura indentify the dichotomy between mental and physical.

Upon graduating from a college, “I” becomes a writer. However, his popularity among the literary circle gradually declines, as he subsequently decides to visit Okakura, who has quit a university and is residing in his villa located in a mountain in Hakone outside of Tokyo. In this villa, Okakura has constructed his own art utopia, using his abundant fortune inherited from his parents.<sup>62</sup> All buildings or structures were eclectically designed; different styles and themes were sampled from different geographical-temporal locations, such as Japanese temple-style building and Roman architecture. Some of the garden landscapes were reproductions of scenes taken from masterpieces of Western paintings; e.g., “The Source” of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingre and another unidentified piece of Lucas Cranach (probably the Elder). Okakura scattered (see comment about past tense) innumerable replicas of great sculptures around his villa, including Michelangelo’s *Rebellious Slave*; sculptures of Apollo from the Louvre and from Pompei; and many Rodin pieces installed in various places. Different banquets held each night for “I” also amalgamate different themes, ranging from Buddhism to Russian avant-gardes designs. Thus, as Okakura claimed earlier, history is treated not as a *line* but, though not ignored, collapsed into a single space, illustrating in turn the emerging information within Japanese cultural scene.

Seeing these statues in the villa as if they were “thrown away dead bodies,” “I” soon realizes that all the sculptures are made out of real humans. This villa is, as “I” describes it, art that is constructed (*kosei*) from living bodies. The banquets, held every night to welcome “I,” also turned into performing arts. Okakura entertains “I” by wearing different costumes each night, such as those resembling stage costumes designed by the Russian designer, Léon Bakst. On the tenth night, Okakura made “beautiful males and females” dressed in the guise of Buddhist saints (*kannon bosatsu*) and monsters (*akkirasetu*). Okakura gilds himself, which eventually kills him due to the lack of cutaneous respiration. However, looking at the corpse of Okakura, “I” describes it

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<sup>61</sup> (Sakaue, 1996, 55).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 62.

as “the most beautiful dead body I have ever seen.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, despite the earlier disparities in their views on art, “I” finally admits that Okakura is a true artist. While asserting that his name has to be remembered, “I” is skeptical about whether people will appreciate the works of Okakura, who has lived such an eccentric life.

In this work, too, multiple movements, or lives, are captured by Tanizaki. Most notably, Tanizaki elevates corporeal forms to great art, thus, I argue, animating art to become life itself that mutates and metabolizes over time, as expressed by Okakura’s “living” statues. The climax is, of course, Okakura becoming the art object himself, covered in gold and his subsequent *beautiful* death, which, just as in Shiga’s *Razor*, accentuates Okakura’s prior life. This led “I” to say, “[h]is [Okakura’s] art appears as a phantom, and disappears with his death from the face of the earth.”<sup>64</sup> Tanizaki’s description of corporeal art in many ways precedes a series of work produced a decade later by the Japanese self-proclaimed constructivist group MAVO, who incorporated their own bodies as a medium to “construct (*kosei*)” their art.

## 2.4 Corporeal Objects in Japanese Plastic and Performing Art

MAVO was formed by a group of young artists in 1923. Although the members were loosely affiliated, - each producing different types of art works - what they had in common was their attempt to break away from the art practices in which idealized worlds were forcefully depicted. The *shirakaba-ha* writers in fact were criticized for their elitism. Nevertheless, both the earlier writers and MAVOists shared their conviction in art as the affirmation of self. In MAVOist works, their aim was not only to *represent* the new social subjects but also to *present* themselves as vital subjects. Murayama Tomoyoshi, the leading figure of MAVO, says “[a]ll of my passion, contemplation, songs [kouta], philosophy, zenith and sickness are now seething, demanding its expressions and exteriorizations.”<sup>65</sup> In order to reveal the inner nature, MAVOists incorporated the tactility of material, which implies the engagement of audience bodies into their arts, and various corporeal materials to embody desire, sexuality and eroticism, as the innate nature of self.

While studying in Germany in 1922, Murayama encountered *Tactilism*, a concept of Italian Futurism, through a meeting with Filippo Marinetti. In addition to an emphasis on visual appearance,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>65</sup> Toshiharu Omuka, *Nihon no Avant-garde Geijutsu; MAVO to Sonojidai (Japanese Avant-garde art; MAVO and Its Era)* (Seidosha, 2001), 57.

Tactilism incorporates the sense of touch as a property of materials, going even beyond the mere textural quality of materials. Murayama introduced this concept to his native cultural scene. Tactilism was then advanced, and radicalized to a certain degree, becoming *Tactora*, a word invented by Shibuya Osamu. While drawing on *Factura* of Russian Constructivism, which connotes the textual quality of materials, *Tactora* is the sensation derived from the direct interaction between skin and materials. In Murayama's "Construction (Fig-3.4)," for instance, spectators view the compositional and textural aspect of the work, and, at the same time they are allowed to put their hands on it to feel its tactility.

*Tactora* for the MAVO artists works in opposition to the figurative representation as well as the elitism practiced by the-then dominant academism. Visual effects are highly valued by the academic doctrine, which inevitably create distance between a painting, or a painter, and a viewer. In contrast, as demonstrated in Murayama's "Construction," MAVOist works engage the viewers through the result of the tactility of materials. As Gennifer Weisenfeld asserts, "it [*Tactilism*] brought 'the lowest senses' into the elite realm of art."<sup>66</sup> In this light, *Tactora*, by integrating the bodies of viewers, is MAVO's political counter to elite academism.

The use of corporeal materials is another unique characteristic of *Ko-Sei-Ha* artists; here, not only does skin interact with materials but also skin becomes material itself. In the work *Constructivist Stage Design* (Fig-3.5) designed by Shibuya Osamu, human hair is included as a material, and often used in other *Ko-Sei-Ha* artists. MAVO artists even utilize their own body as objects. Murayama presents his own body in his studio, posing in different positions and creating various compositions with his own arts works in the background (Fig-3.6-3.8); other MAVO artists displayed their bodies as parts of compositions as well. Three MAVOists performing an acrobatic dance (Fig-3.9), as described by Weisenfeld, compose a "living structure, exhibiting the male body in homage to Niddy Impekoven,"<sup>67</sup>

Representations of women are also reoccurring themes in MAVO work. In Shibuya's work, *Construction of Artificial Flowers Lacking in Sympathy* (Fig-3.10), the depiction of female legs wearing high-heels and flowers represent the contemporary woman. MAVOists took this to an extreme by incorporating their bodies being cross-dressed, as shown in the picture of Murayama in tunic (Fig-3.11). In this account female bodies are represented by presenting the male body, embodying the ambiguous gender subjectivities that were arising at that time.

Due to the advent of various political movements advocating women's rights, largely initiated by feminists of either Bolshevik or anarchist persuasions, the role of women in Japanese society was

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<sup>66</sup> Gennifer Weisenfeld, *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2001), 135.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 236. Impekoven was Murayama's favorite ballet dancer during his stay in Berlin.

shifting. The notion of the new woman emerged. As E. Patricia Tsurumi describes, “[p]articipants in the feminists’ version of the *ana-boru* fight [anarchist-bolshevist fight] deplored the social construction known as ‘woman’ in the Japan of their day and they sought to construct ‘woman’ for a postrevolutionary Japan that would embrace gender equality.”<sup>68</sup> More women began joining the workforce, and gaining political power, including their right to vote, thus liberating themselves from traditional roles which were forcefully molded by a male dominated society. This women’s movement altered the hitherto domestic role of woman, blurring the socially constructed boundary between men and women. This emerging ambiguity of gender roles was expressed through Murayama’s cross dressing performance. Murayama also published the photograph of him with long hair, and his wife, Kazuko whose hair was cut short. Visually, this image further questioned the conventional social parts each gender had been playing.<sup>69</sup>

As women became more active agents in the Japanese socio-economic sphere, the images of them, especially those of Western women or westernized woman, were published in fashion magazines, as “eroticized, fashionable symbols of modernity in the marketing of commodities.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, on the one hand, women became more politically empowered. On the other hand, they turned into the “sexually liberated ‘modern girl’”<sup>71</sup>; signified by the transliterated term *modan gaaru* (Modern Girl). While Murayama’s cross dressing demonstrates one emerging aspect of the Japanese woman - i.e., the *new woman* as an autonomous socio-political entity - in both Murayama’s and Shibuya’s art works, female legs wearing high-heels and flowers signify the other aspect: the *modern girl*. Both aspects – – *new woman* or *modern girl* – – epitomize the socio-cultural representations of Japanese women at that time.

The use of bodies by MAVO artists and the political radicalism they expressed through corporeal materials culminated in the “Dance of Death,” a theatrical work performed by MAVO in 1924. As shown in a photograph (Fig-3.12), MAVO artists, cross-dressed, stripped, their faces made up and bodies painted, creating a whimsical composition consisting of their own bodies. This composition

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<sup>68</sup> E. Patricia Tsurumi, “Visions of Women and the New Society in Conflict: Yamakawa Kikue versus Takamura Itsune,” *Japan’s Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900-1930*, Sharon A. Minichiello, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), 335.

<sup>69</sup> Cross-dressing in fact can also be found in the Japanese Kabuki theater. In my paper, entitled “Lost in Translation,” for the seminar “Global Constructivism” led the professor Marek Batelik in spring 2009 at MIT, I argue that there was a certain tradition that might have impacted on the Japanese avant-gardes art in the 1920s. Also the Japanese tradition in tattooing might also have influenced the way body became an instrumental tools for some Japanese artists.

<sup>70</sup> (Weisenfeld, 2002, 136).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 133.

provokingly evokes sexuality and eroticism, which MAVO artists utilized “as resistance to publicly sanctioned morality and as social criticism.”<sup>72</sup>

As Japan began its construction of “nation-state” throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, emulating the United States and European countries as political, economic and military models, the predominant figures in the nation-state construction were, as Mariko Asano Tamanoi asserts, “men whose character was molded in schools to be masculine, nationalistic, and self-sacrificial.”<sup>73</sup> Tomonoi argues that these men, the *Meiji* men<sup>74</sup>, not only suppressed women in the socio-political sphere, thus continuing a practice from the pre-modern period, but also sanctioned the “cultural life” of each individual man and woman.<sup>75</sup> Starting in the *Meiji* era (1868-1912), the newly established Japanese government began intervening into many aspects of cultural life.

MAVO artists’ corporeal eroticism expresses their social criticism against oligarchic politics. To MAVOists, freely expressing one’s sexual behavior and desire was equated with a true liberation of the self, while these desires or pleasures were opposed to the kind of ascetics promoted by Japanese government officials. In contrast, postulating human desire as the fundamental interiority of the self, MAVOists believed that it could mobilize individuals and ultimately bring social change. Thus, their bodies, possibly the most radicalized form of Takutora, became the critical apparatuses for their social criticism.

By way of depicting various selves, writers and MAVOists reviewed above deployed various techniques to render their selfhood. In their artistic practice, motion (vital force), indiscernibility (human psychology), and invisibility (inner desire) were positively exploited and externalized through bodily imageries, and conceived as the very nature of the human subject. In their works, amid modernizing, institutionalizing and politicizing processes in early twentieth century Japan, the body became a critical domain to paradoxically express the inexplicable, unconventional and absurd. By positioning the self, as the central figure - whether through new social subjects or artists themselves their stories and art become a particular bio-anthropocentric practice. Deeming this practice as an idiosyncratic epistemology at that time, I will unravel Murano’s praxis in the following section. I will

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 249

<sup>73</sup> Mariko Asano Tamanoi, “The City and the Countryside: Competing Taisho `modernities` on Gender,” *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900-1930*, ed. Sharon A. Minichiello, (Honolulu: University of Hawai ‘i Press, 1998), 99.

<sup>74</sup> Refers to politically powerful figures during the Meiji Period (1868 - 1912) under the reign (though symbolic) of the Meiji Emperor.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 100.



particularly focus on how these vitalistic themes and modalities, as expressed in the above artists, were operating within his work.





**Figure 3.1**  
“Lao-ya and Children” (1912)  
Artist: Kon Wajiro  
Noboru Kawazoe, *Kon Wajiro: Sono Kougengaku*

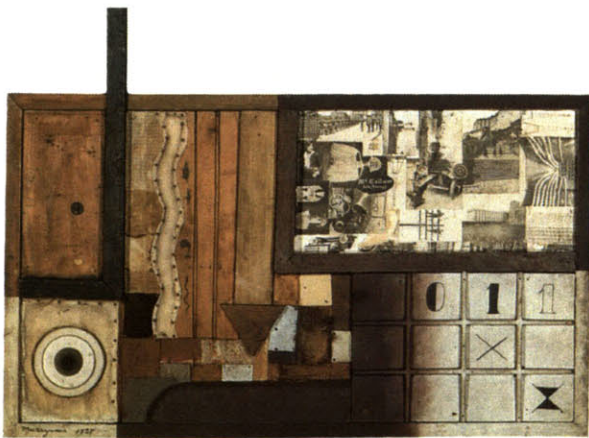


**Figure 3.2**  
Kirin Café (1924)  
Tokyo - Japan  
Architect: Barrack Decorating Company  
Hasegawa, Takashi, *Shinden Ka Gokusha Ka* - 147



**Figure 3.3**  
Nude Beauty (1912)  
Artist: Yorozu Tetsugoro  
Elise K. Tipton and John Clark ed.,  
*Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from  
the 1910s to the 1930s* – cover page

**Fig-3.3**



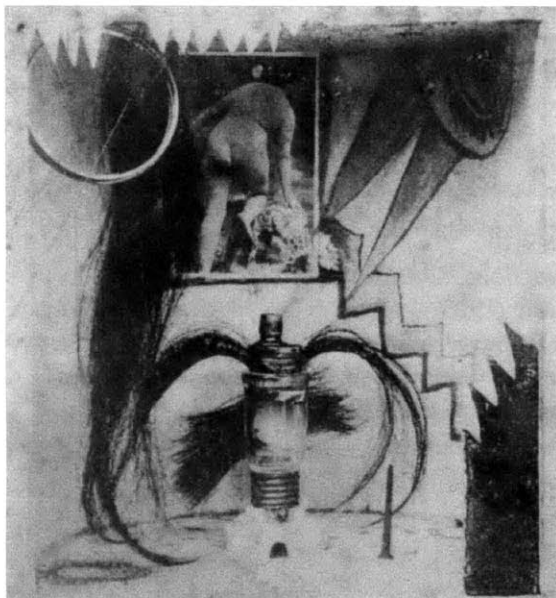
**Figure 3.4**  
Construction (1925)  
Artist: Murayama Tomoyoshi  
Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists  
and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – plate 13

**Figure 3.5**

*Constructivist Stage Design* (1915)

Artist: Shibuya Osamu

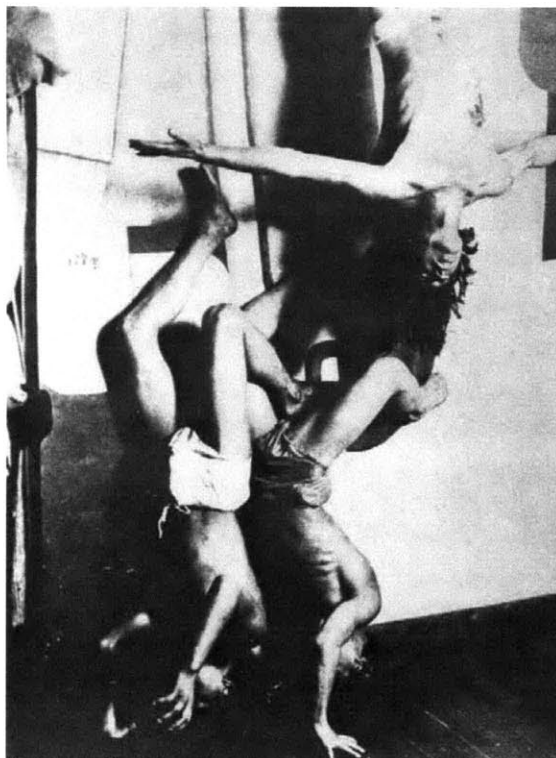
Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – plate 137



**Figure 3.6 – 3.8**

Murayama dancing nude in his atelier (1923)

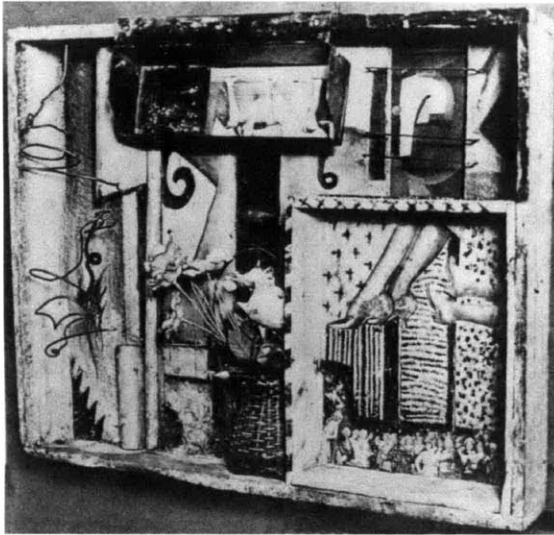
Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – 237



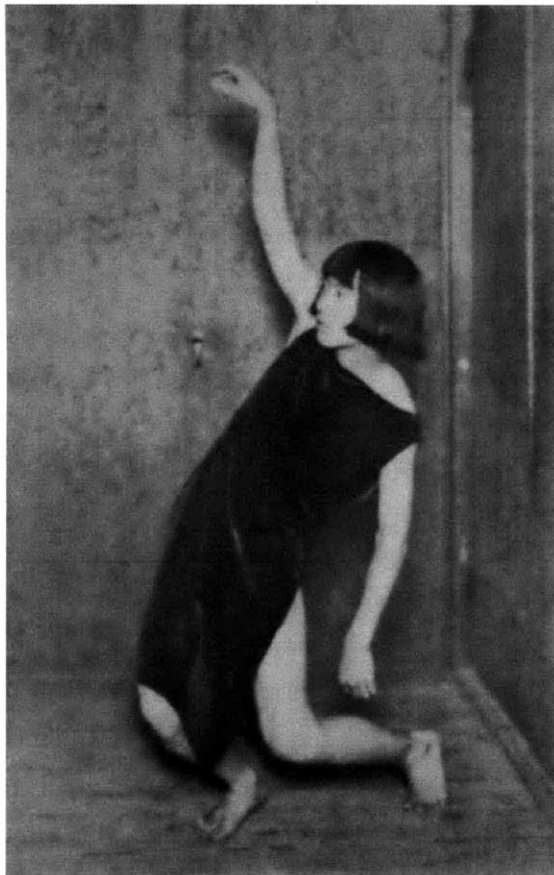
**Figure 3.9**

MAVO acrobatic performance (1924)

Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – 238



**Figure 3.10**  
Construction of Artificial Flowers Lacking in Sympathy (1925)  
Artist: Shibuya Osamu  
Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – 133



**Figure 3.11**  
Murayama in dance pose wearing tunic (1925)  
Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – 177



**Figure 3.12** MAVO members performing *Dance of Death* (1924)  
Weisenfeld, Gennifer. *MAVO: Japanese Artists and the  
Avant-Garde, 1905-1931* – 240





### Chapter 3: Whole as Motion

“Being in the present of Woolworth, instead of being in the past of mastaba.” – Murano Togo

During the earlier twentieth century, various artists positioned the human subject as an only, fundamental entity that could overcome various predicaments posed by modernization. This subject was then depicted through biological imagery by these artists, some of whom presented their own body as the representation of their selfhood. This is what I call as anthropocentric epistemology, which I will elucidate within Murano’s praxis in the following.

Murano was exposed to the works of various writers, and the *Shirakaba-Ha* in particular, by participating in informal reading groups organized by his mentor, Kon Wajiro at Waseda University. This is evident in his thesis at Waseda University, entitled “Toshi Kenchiku Ron (Urban Architectural Theory)” (1917). As its title suggests, this essay discusses issues relating to architecture in the urban(izing) environment of Japanese cities at that time. His vitalistic optic is exemplified in the way he positioned the human subject, and the body in particular, as both the center of his analytic and also within the dynamic systems (wholes) that Murano sets up in which motion, multiplicity, and unpredictability functioned as fundamental properties. In this malleable system, various parts participate in the moving whole, entailing a particular whole/parts relationship.

This relationship can be first found in the way he constructs his argument through this thesis. In order to narrate his claim, he takes ideas from different sources, regardless of their origin, whether they are from different genres or eras, ranging from Jesus, Kant, and Gustav Le Bon to Woodrow Wilson.<sup>76</sup> His way of incorporating ideas resonates with Okakura’s villa depicted in Tanizaki’s “Golden

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<sup>76</sup> In the introduction, Murano moves from one paragraph to the other, introducing different examples or concepts, almost as a form of “stream of consciousness.” Advocating the legitimate new (or modern) Japanese architecture, Murano first proposes to *Japanize* the science. By this, he asserts that merely borrowing construction techniques and structural systems from the west is not adequate. Furthermore, predicting the imminent Americanized economy possibly transforming Japanese life styles, Murano expresses his hesitation towards the Japanese culture that subordinates to it. Drawing on the work of Gustave Le Bon, *Les Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples* (The Psychology of Peoples, 1894), Murano claims that each nation or ethnic group has its own way of scientific, economic and cultural performance, thus foreign concepts has to be recoded in accordance with the endemic condition of each group.

Murano further emphasizes this specificity. While praising the declaration made by the US president Woodrow Wilson on Humanism, he then again enunciates the difficulty of implementing this American account of humanism in Japan, as he did for science. Murano calls out for the careful consideration of the Japanese *history* and *heredity* enriched in the past thousand years; from this line, his nationalistic interpretation of eugenics can be identified, following upon which he touches upon the Zionism movement defined by the Prime Minister of England, David Lloyd Jones. Murano then asserts that having its *own* architecture as a rational deed, suddenly

Death” discussed in the previous chapter, wherein replicas of architecture and sculptures from different temporal-geographical locations are compressed into a (single) space. As scenes (themes) in the Villa move from one place (or one night) to the other, Murano’s sources also shift in his narrative. Whether or not this mode of writing was consciously set forth by these authors or not, this persistent flow of sources (or scenes), forms a conceptual assemblage, revealing the virtual display of knowledge that had accumulated since the mid-nineteenth century Japan.

This “sampling” also echoes with Murano’s design practice, a practice that the Japanese architectural theorist Yatsuka Hajime critiques as merely “stratification” or “adjoining” of different elements (styles) and spaces, rather than “constructing.” By constructing, Yatsuka refers to the process in which the whole is schematized before its parts are built. He compares this process with the creation of perspective drawings in which the view of a subject (creator or viewer) is already predicated; in other words, the overall composition (whole) is consciously framed before its parts are filled in.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, while attributing this construction as the duty of an architect, Yatsuka claims that stratifying or adjoining elements without conforming to a grand schema (perspective) is the work of craftsman. Referring to the monograph of Murano’s Sukiya Style, Yatsuka points out the way the book was divided into elements of his architecture, such as windows, floors, and roofs, rather than a whole.<sup>78</sup> In fact, this subdivision was also used in Murano’s other monograph, *The Design Essence of Murano Togo*, a ten volume survey of Murano’s various projects. Each volume features different components, ranging from exterior, interior, ornament and staircase. For Yatsuka, this approach in turn proves his characterization of Murano as eclectic, merely manipulating parts but not envisioning a whole. In Yatsuka’s assessment, Murano is not an architect, and to an extent is not exemplary of a modern subject.<sup>79</sup>

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inserting the line “I now remember that word ‘a city is the purpose of its citizen and the indication of the nation states’ by Sir. Christopher Wren.”

Murano goes on to argue that problems imposed upon modern architecture and urban planning are intertwined with social psychology, ethnology, sociology and ethics, and these problems are rooted in the depravity of civilizations. Accusing the way in which economics and science were erroneously practiced which led civilizations to corruption. Murano then quotes Jesus and Kant in order to make his claim that the morality gives a certain satisfaction in the life of mankind.

<sup>77</sup> This Yatsuka’s model of construction/whole/part relations is quite identical to that of Russian Constructivist; construction/tectonic/factura.

<sup>78</sup> (Yatsuka, 2006, 321).

<sup>79</sup> It is interesting to note that Yatsuka coupled Murano with Tanizaki Junichiro, the writer I introduced in the previous chapter, as a non-modern figure. The further literary analysis on Tanizaki’s work could also entail a counter-argument to Yatsuka’s whole/parts relationship, and perhaps his concept of modernity at large.

Although I am by no means going to identify whether or not Murano's works were "modern," I will counter-argue that Murano does perceive the dynamic relationship between whole and parts. While Yatsuka's whole is grounded in a static perspective, similar to perspective drawing, Murano's whole is a dynamic model more akin to cinematic movement.<sup>80</sup> For example, Later in his career Murano explained his design approach, as taking account of the different "perspectives" of a building that appear before the eyes of *moving* subjects within cities. A building is first seen from oblique angles; this oblique, rather than frontal, view becomes the "façade" of building. As a viewer approaches, the volume of the building gradually disappears and there remains materiality, "tactility" as Murano described it. Thus, the whole of the building involves shifting vantage points, multiple scales and duration. This model can be compared to how Deleuze describes duration as the conceptual whole of Bergson; "[t]his whole is virtual. It is actualized according to divergent lines, but these lines do not resemble what they actualize."<sup>81</sup> Consisting of these divergent lines, which could be interpreted literally as lines of Murano's texts or as those stratifying parts, Murano attempts to engage in malleable wholes. The pivotal point for Murano to enter into this dynamic is the human subject, the body, from which he constructs his bio-anthropocentric argument.

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<sup>80</sup> To an extent, the above Murano's monographs might also fail to capture, what I would like to call as, Murano's dynamic whole.

<sup>81</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberijam, (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 105. Through this research, I found several similar tendencies between Murano and so called post-modernist, or to an extent, post-structuralist discourses. In fact, Murano's work was characterized as a precursor of post-modernism, when the movement became prevalent in the 70s in Japan. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the way Murano devalued architectural styles, turning them into ready-made sign, does echo with the disruption between signifier/signified relationship that posed by some of post-structuralists. Here I am by no means going to characterize Murano as an antecessor of post-structuralist/modernist. In fact, I believe that Murano is fundamentally different from the postwar French intellectuals, especially with regards to the conception of subject. While Murano characterizes the human subject as a definite entity, post-structuralists seem to challenge that notion.

What I found it interesting is that the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche and also Martin Heidegger became critical philosophical backbone for both the post-war French and pre-war Japanese intellectual scene in which Murano formulated his philosophical perspective. The influence of these philosophers on the French post-structuralists was expressed by Jacques Derrida and also by Michel Foucault. See Michel Foucault, "Structuralism and Poststructuralism" in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New York Press, 1998) 433 – 458. Also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface" in Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* (John Hopkins University Press, 1997). vii – lxxxvii. The above German thinkers were not widely accepted in the French scene in the first half of the twentieth century due to World War II, whereas Japanese intellectuals had an access to them (because of the war, ironically). Plus, Bergsonian philosophy, which influenced Deleuze, was quite influential among the Japanese intellectuals at the dawn of twentieth century. I speculate that these same circumstances in different periods might have shaped the similar epistemological context from which "post-structuralistic" discourse could emerge at the early twentieth century in Japan.

In his thesis, Murano claims that “[h]umans act in order to seek satisfaction. And they infuse this consciousness into architecture to pursue an ‘Affirmation of Life.’ In this regard, mankind is a peculiar *expression of Life*.”<sup>82</sup> Murano goes on to argue that:

Art and science have already lost their creative mission, [since they] have been taken over by destructive capital. Architecture has also renounced its original objective by being subjected to the unimaginative arts and sciences. In the human condition, architecture’s right of existence and value of Life has been taken out, metamorphosing into a machine. This indeed means a death to human beings.<sup>83</sup>

Murano does not reject science altogether; in fact throughout this essay he claims that it is an important component of architecture. He instead calls into question the way in which science is controlled by the lack of moral and social consciousness of the capitalist. The result is a shortage of houses, especially for the lower classes. He further asserts that “[t]he progress of economy and science,” “the fluctuation of social thought,” and “the transformation of moral concepts,” which occurred in the nineteenth century in Japan, further confused architecture’s content and design, and its relationship to urban growth. Murano then advocates reconstituting the ethic of each individual as an urgent task to eradicate the misconception of science, and economy, by capitalists. Positioning himself (architect) as a social reformer, rather than a builder, Murano believes that architecture can form morality through engaging with the body of subjects. Positioning rather idealizing morality as an ultimate purpose for human consciousness and products, Murano developed his urban architectural theory from the point of view of art, science and economy. This is the bulk of his claim, around which his bio-anthropocentric argument is constructed.

Murano’s dynamic whole in this essay ranges from rapid urbanization, and mercurial economic climate to changing morality, which were being, both epistemologically and ontologically, transformed within Japan’s modernization. Murano describes the whole as *motion[undo]*, which are ungraspable in nature. In order to conceptualize the dynamic whole, body imageries, including Life, human body, and the notion of mutating, were somewhat allegorically used in Murano’s thesis to

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<sup>82</sup> Murano Togo, “*Toshi Kenchiku-Ron* (Urban Architecture Theory)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, appendix 3 – 89 (Tokyo: Kashima Shuppan, 2008), 21. Italics by author. Here one can clearly sense the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 5-6

articulate its parts. In this discursive system, his perception of Humanism is a key to unravel this text, in which social subjects function as parts participating in motions.

As Murano later acknowledged, Humanism works as an undercurrent throughout this text, as it led him to say “*humanize* the science.”<sup>84</sup> The definition of this concept could vary depending on the context in which it is used. In Murano’s perception, Humanism is the subject-oriented discourse, with which he became familiar through reading, in particular, the works of Shirakaba-ha writers. As Taisho writers and MAVOists also based the “self” as the central theme of their art, the social subject plays an important role in Murano’s account. Furthermore, similar to the way in which persons, their emotions and their arts were depicted in the various medium by these artists, the body, or rather body imagery, is an essential component of Murano’s argument to empower subjects. In Murano’s account the human body is a nexus at which a subject, architecture, aesthetic and morality could intersect. This bio-anthropocentric vision is what Murano calls Humanism.

Positioning humans as the central figures and criticizing the existing urban condition at the same time, Murano claims that cities and architecture have to be designed for these subjects. The physical bodies of each individual become an especially crucial component of his argument, for, as Murano claims, only a healthy body can construct good morality, and thus a healthy society. As the external physical environment has a huge impact on the human health, urban conditions have to be improved. In order to explain the relationship between subjects and their surroundings, he gives an illustration of human development.

Murano postulates that humans have roughly two states of emotional and mental condition. During the first stage, human behavior is dominated by “irrational intuition,” in which humans are strictly confined within the law of nature. The next state is what Murano calls “mental” (*seishinteki*), in which humans create a different mode of living set against the instinctive one of the previous state.<sup>85</sup> Instead of being controlled by the law of nature, this new subject consciously projects new purposes and ideals outward. Conceiving the modern everyday life of humans as an amalgam of these new subjects with their respective plans, Murano asserts that this dispersive amalgam has to be considered as a whole, in which different components coexist, often integrating and confronting each other. They will never become one. Although different subjects form different “composites” (*fukugotai*), such as nation-states and science, these composites are not “true unifications” because they lack “the internal

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 77

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 34

whole,” which was being lost as society developed and mind replaced intuition. In his words, “there is no Life that emerged from an innate entity.”<sup>86</sup>

Once the “instinctive phase” is replaced by the “mental”, the new internal Life will be formed. However, this Life is no longer instinctive, since it is no longer operating within natural law. Instead it is susceptible to external conditions; this Life grows as it negotiates with its surrounding conditions, be they other subjects, national laws, or religio-ethical beliefs. Here, there is no internal truth in each individual. Murano continues that the truth is only graspable by identifying the element that externally governs “an ordinary and good man.”<sup>87</sup> Although Murano does not elucidate what qualifies as “ordinary” and “good,” in Murano’s mind, this idealistic, moral element is somehow capable of harmonizing his contemporaneous everyday life as a whole. Similarly, “Good” and “Beauty,” are neither owned by each individual as their interior value nor by a group of people.<sup>88</sup> These qualities have to belong to the larger whole.

Humans are, however, not satisfied with the phase at which their internal values are merely shaped by external, but not entirely universal, ethical or ideological condition. They also seek to obtain higher value by further cultivating their firm interiority, the self. Murano then reframes the interiority/exteriority relation to the subjective/objective one. He explains, drawing on the German philosopher Rudolf Christoph Eucken, that only when the mental is exhaustively trained, “will Life unhesitatingly intervene between the subject and the object. In fact, Life will take subsume both within, letting them affect each other while being grown cultivated by the other.”<sup>89</sup> This is an ideal state that the human mind can reach. In this domain, Life organizes every part, almost identical to the role that nature plays in the instinctive phase of beings. For Murano, in order to cultivate this ideal mind, the healthy body is an essential condition – one which is only attainable within the adequate environment. As the human body is inseparable from both intellect and instinct, external conditions must have a tremendous influence on one’s self. “The pleasant environment is a means and also the purpose of everyday life dedicated to God.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>88</sup> Throughout his narrative, morality and true beauty seems to work almost interchangeably. I am not sure if Murano has read Kant’s three critiques, but his way of using nature (sublime), moral and beauty seems to echo with Kant’s logical construction.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 23. This is the quote from Eucken but the source is unknown.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 23.

In order to build up his claim on the influence of the external environment, Murano sets up a binary structure between nature and the artificial environment, which is analogous to the instinct/mind relationship. Nature gives humans an aesthetic sensation, whereas, the artificial environments is a product of people, and thus assumes art and knowledge. In his definition, this manmade terrain is a “humanistic” creation. On the one hand, nature operates as an absolute system in Murano’s narrative, in which everything is perfectly ordered. In this system, the cause and effect relation is always isomorphic among the all phenomena. On the other hand, the artificial environment is a chaotic system, in which there is no such given system that coherently governs all of its constituents. Here, Murano clearly distances his claim from mechanistic or naturalistic accounts. He then deploys this binary system to the rural and urban opposition. Although this relation was a historically recurrent theme in Western discourse, the dichotomy between city and rural areas was also strongly expressed by various Japanese intellectuals amid the rapid urbanizations of several Japanese cities. In fact, as Vera Mackie claims, the distinction between urban and rural was considered as “one of the features of modernity.”<sup>91</sup> Murano asserts that these two poles must be thoroughly understood by “measuring” them, in which his bio-anthropocentric perspective is demonstrated.

Murano claims that, as the relationship between the dead and the living had once been in balance either through cure or exacerbation by natural force, the manmade world subsequently complicated this balance. For example, pollution denigrated the health of human citizens. In his account, natural elements are no longer operative in urbanized areas. Although various studies were hitherto conducted, this research was unable to harmonize death/living, as nature previously did. In this context, instead of relying on statistical analysis, which merely indicated the number of deaths and was perhaps a common practice to predict the average life span of a person, Murano proposes to discover a method to “calculate the average vital force” of an individual in order to fully understand how both natural (rural) and artificial (urban) environments were influencing the body. This claim can be read as an amalgamation of two opposing concepts – vitalism and mechanist - while the former conceives the human body as mobilized by a force, the latter measures this force by calculation. Despite this confusing position, the body and its internal energy are clearly working as an force, based upon which Murano navigates his claim. Upon positioning the body as the intersection of morality and external environment, Murano analogically re-poses his argument on the urban architectural conditions.

Despite the few remaining natural elements, Murano claims that urbanizing cities have ultimately turned into artificial environments. In this system, there are no coherent cause-and-effect

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<sup>91</sup> Vera Mackie, “Modern Selves and Modern Spaces: An Overview” in *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s*. ed. Elise K. Tipton and John Clark. (University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 186.

relationships; the city inevitably contains errors, contradictions, and frictions among the different constituents. Given that the majority of people are now living in cities, and their lives are “to be consumed” by the cities, he claims that understanding the artificial terrain becomes crucial for the health of mankind.

In Murano’s account, while nature functions as “liberation” and urban conditions as chaotic, the human also has an emotional drive to emancipate themselves from the chaotic landscape. He repeatedly insists that it is important to know how environments affect the body, and thus also the mind and personality of an individual. Although, as he claims, the ideal world is conceivable but not reachable, the “living spirit” is still possible within the urban environment through a healthy human body. To construct this vital body, Murano asserts that Architecture, which is a critical component of the growing artificial landscape, has to now replace the previous role of nature, giving all individuals “relaxation,” “tranquility” and “beauty.”

The dynamic whole that Murano delineates is *urbanizing* cities and buildings as their constitutive part. The urban environment is, as he describes, so chaotic that it numbs the nervous systems of individuals. He characterizes this chaos as a “complex organism” filled with vigor and ever changing conditions. This perpetuates a “purposeless urban city” without end, and creates the “masses” (gunshu). Describing urban architecture as a collective work of art, Murano asserts that the urban city is not a mere amalgam of individuals, but has to be conceived as the whole in which people unfold a certain kind of an organic drama. In his words, a city is not the composites of individuals, “Romeo” and “Juliet,” it is instead the drama called “Romeo and Juliet,” but without a curtain call. As he describes, “the scenes of metropolises keep mutating eternally. They are disjunctive and disordered. There exist only transformations derived from a series of contingency.”<sup>92</sup> While conceiving this growing organism as a virtually ungraspable entity, Murano takes it positively by describing it as an amalgam of “humanistic elements.” This view echoes with the vitalistic perspective set forth by Shirakaba-ha writers and Tanizaki against the naturalist. While finding the present urban condition problematic, Murano is still positively characterizing subjects as the driving force for social reform.

Just as each character is a part in a drama, individual buildings in cities represent “emotion,” “heart,” and “Life.” Here bio-psychological images are allowing Murano to, almost allegorically, represent the urbanizing city, wherein, as he implies, the concepts of art or beauty could govern the chaos. Beauty in architecture can be measured based upon what he calls “psychological Life,” in other words, “humanistic value” which at the same time has to be “virtue.” Furthermore, as he continues, Beauty based upon virtue becomes the moral.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 34.



He claims analogically that a single architectural work has to contain a whole within, just as the Life of a subject must be equal to that of a whole, which he portrays as *a motion*. “By participating in the motion of a whole, the life of mankind will be imbued with a moralistic and humanistic character.”<sup>93</sup> This new form of architecture is, in Murano’s mind, equivalent to the idealized moral subject, whose Life is equal to the Universal Life. “Life amplifies within architecture, subsequently creating a true architecture.” He claims further that this new architecture could engage the human with “God and, even more mystically, the origin of the universe.”<sup>94</sup> Condemning contemporary urban architecture as exclusive (or static), which was designed only by and for a handful of capitalists, Murano claims that the new ideal urban architecture will participate in the moving whole, as ever expanding metropolises, such as Tokyo and Osaka where the influx of people from rural areas and classes are accelerated.

Murano then asserts that, depending on the point of reference, this individual / whole relationship could be reframed in multiple conditions. It could be, as he already demonstrated, individual architecture to the city from the urban point of view. This could expand to the relationship between metropolis, “municipal groups,” and the state, continuing to the nation and the world at large. In this latter framework, each nation, as an individual, will participate in the movement of the world, at which, as he claims, the issue of “National Style” will arise. Ideally, this individual/whole relation will reach Universal Life, where all the individuals at multiple dimensions will be moralized. This ideal state is perhaps almost identical to the natural environment, but, instead of being pre-given, only achievable through cultivating the human mind. There is, to an extent, only the process of cultivation; there is an ideal but it is unreachable. Rather there is the whole in constant motion. Each individual in turn constantly has to cultivate their mind to be part of this movement. This endeavor has no end but is only a process of working towards the ever growing whole. As he says, “our life will become an endless project, through which it will gain the supreme dignity.” From this line, we can surmise that Murano’s whole is a dynamic model that would internalize contradictions that could occur among different subjects or composites.

In the “Urban Architectural Theory,” Murano touches upon the issue of style and economy, which he will explore in depth in his later essays. In the section describing styles entitled, “Aesthetic Account on Urbanism,” Murano enumerates structure and ornaments as two components of architecture. In this account, multiple binary structures also play out. As the first system, Murano places the rational structural system as “the embodiment of God” and “the negotiation with the true

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 24.

Universe.”<sup>95</sup> He validates this claim by explaining how archaic people have simply put one stone on two to create primitive architecture. He concludes that Structural law is universal. On the other hand, Murano characterizes ornament as the expression of the aesthetic instinct of humans, using cave paintings as this example. Thus, structure is a product of god, whereas ornament is that of man. In the natural state, when behavior was still mobilized by natural instincts, these two components were in balance. As artificial environments took over, this equilibrium gradually lost coherency. The humanistic stand point emancipates architecture from this denigrated condition.

Asserting that “practicality” and “hedonism” will weaken architecture, Murano posits that the purpose of architecture is the liberation of humanity through architectural content, which is what he calls “environmental beauty.” This particular quality can be found in the “feeling of stepping onto the floor,” “touching” and the “sense of containment of everyday life.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, in a sense, this beauty resides in the tactical experience between architecture and human subjects. As in the case of Murayama’s *Construction*, which was discussed in the previous chapter tactility allows the human body to interpenetrate the objects. Murano claims that “[b]eauty is a purpose, and Life is a means. Beauty is ideal, Life is reality.”<sup>97</sup> However, beauty has to be found as a purpose and ideal within a means, and Life must be transformed into beauty. In this claim, beauty and Life, in other words, architecture and human body, are integral parts, just as Okakura’s body (Life) became the art (ideal) in Tanizaki’s “Golden Death.”

Murano claims that historical styles still resonate with the present. Although new elements will be created as time moves forward, as long as variegated historical styles are not entirely detrimental to the current condition, they have to be modified accordingly. In his account, molding was appropriated for the time of the ancient Greek. However, if there was enough money and time to create moldings (ornament) in the present time, money should be used rather for the leisure of workers; e.g., seeing dramas or listening to music. For this, he claims that godly beauty can be found in the steel structure of a factory or a gigantic warehouse. He insists that ornaments are obliged to serve their original purpose, which is to satisfy the aesthetic instinct of humans. This is where Murano finds the intersection of “Beauty and economy” and “beauty and humanism.” It is in this equilibrium that one can find that structure and ornament form a coherent system. He asserts that ornaments can be also used for advertisement, a commercial element that was becoming quite conspicuous in the modern

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 53

artificial landscape. However, as he continues, they have to be an art, and thus within the moving drama of the urban whole.

Murano shifts his argument to a scientific account on urban architecture. He postulates Humanism and Science as two components of modern civilization. Upon claiming that science plays a crucial role in urban society in term of “convince,” “hygiene,” and “protection,” Murano illuminates that science, along with Ideas and language, can become a dogma, which especially under the influence of capitalism, the weak can blindly fall into.<sup>98</sup> Taking on the economic theory of Thomas Malthus, Murano critiques this theory for being scientific truth clothed in mathematics. In his account, “humanist element” is lacking in Malthus’s economy, in which starving workers were marginalized. Murano then introduces Darwinian evolutionist theory, which was largely influenced by Malthus’s theory.<sup>99</sup> As he continues, these seemingly stable scientific systems augment each other, and they were conveniently exploited by capitalist discourse. In the end, this process produces monstrous machines devoid of Life and virtue. Positing science as the study of “facts,” Murano challenges science by claiming that there are unquantifiable facts. Science, as he continues, has the danger to form a myopic framework excluding, if not creating, unnecessary elements. In order to fill the gap between the countable and uncountable, he again positions the human as the central figure, claiming that humanism, with healthy body and ethics, can come into play in science. In a sense, the subject body in Murano’s discourse works as “filler.” As living is the fundamental purpose of humans, science has to support this objective. Living means to express “good living” and “securing happiness,” which was, in Murano’s account, historically envisioned as a truth within various narratives, be they myth, constitution, art, ethics, or science. Here again, portraying science as a composite, Murano argues that science will engage in the “movement of the whole,” which would be able to internalize and resolve multiple, contradictory facts.

From an economic stand point, Murano postulates that architecture could be considered as capital, an account which became more extreme in the later essays. Dividing types of architecture into two - publicly and privately funded buildings - Murano focuses more on the latter. And, interestingly enough, this is the terrain that Murano practiced later as an architect in Osaka. Here he claims that beauty and economy have to be harmonized. Economic oriented ideology only turns architecture into a machine. On the other hand, beauty without economic concern only creates hedonism. While suggesting to seek for their “harmonized expression,” he never specifies what exactly entails.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> From this line, Murano’s elitism, to some degree, can be discerned.

<sup>99</sup> Here Murano may be referring to the Social-Darwinism of Herbert Spencer.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

In summary, in his “Urban Architecture Theory,” Murano developed an humanistic argument on how architecture should exist in the urban condition by emphasizing humans, their bodies, as an organic platform that connects morality and the physical environment, To summarize his claim, while there are ultimate ends – ideal morality, beauty and truth – that are equivalent to the natural law, these are unreachable in his narrative. Instead, he postulates virtual wholes consisting of varied constituents, and treats them as a dynamic in which healthy subjects can partake. Through this constant engagement, humans can endlessly cultivate their minds to only approach, but not to reach, the ideal. Analogically, true beauty in architecture is also approachable through participating in the moving whole, e.g., urbanizing cities, by the individual body of architecture. This bio-anthropocentric perspective was deployed to conceptualize architecture style in his next essay entitled *Youshiki no Ueniare* (Beyond Style) (1919).

## Chapter 4: Vitalistic Praxis; Anthropomorphic Aesthetic

“The notion of style is for me a means to articulate your exalted emotion, while controlling it, by weaving it into a single principle.”<sup>101</sup> Murano Togo

### 4.1 Exposure to Commercialism

Immediately after Murano graduated in 1918, he was employed by Watanabe Setsu.<sup>102</sup> Working in Watanabe’s office had an impact on Murano, especially two aspects which would determine his later career. One aspect is Watanabe’s American Beaux-Arts inspired design approach through which Murano became conversant with variegated stylistic languages. And, more importantly, Murano was exposed to the architectural practice within Osaka’s commercially oriented environment, as opposed to Tokyo’s government led cultural sphere.

Reflecting back to when he came to Osaka, Murano described the city as “liberal,” whereas Tokyo was “formal,”<sup>103</sup> and portrayed Osaka as a city based upon “the merit system,” where any individuals could succeed in their respective business based upon their talents. On the contrary, Tokyo is structured through a strong bureaucratic system imposed by the central government and the universities located there. Regardless to what extent Murano’s characterization of the city is credible, there were tendencies in the city’s economy, politics, and aesthetics, in which various figures attempted to identify, if not represent Osaka as a liberal city by differentiating it from Tokyo. In this chapter, I will delineate the perceived geo-political and cultural characteristics of the city that forcefully conditioned Murano’s architectural praxis, and thus indicating the point at which his vitalistic modality corresponds to commercialism.

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<sup>101</sup> (Murano, 1991, p695).

<sup>102</sup> Some of his most renowned works are Nihon Kougyou Ginkou (Japan Industrial Bank) (1922), Osaka Building (1924) and Mengyo Crabu (Textile Industry Association Hall) (1931) Watanabe, who was characterized by Fujimori Terunobu as one of the “American Group Architects,”<sup>102</sup> i.e. an architect that adopted the architectural style of the United States. Designing banks and office buildings in Osaka, he based his design vocabulary on the American Beaux-arts style, especially on the works of McKim, Mead & White. Watanabe’s design approach was, stylistically speaking, contrary to Murano’s secessionist attitude while in architecture school. In addition, Watanabe incorporated rational architectural practices from the US; “rational” here means economical. For instance, Watanabe introduced plaster, a manufactured material, to the Japanese building industry, standardized the measurements of drawings, and reorganized the drawing scales of construction documents in order to expedite the durations of projects, from designing, bidding, and to construction.<sup>102</sup> In this regard, while most of Watanabe’s designs resonated with the prevalent historicist styles, his architecture straddled both historicist and modern (Americanized) designs. Murano worked on the Mengyo Crabu (Japan Textile Industry Hall) as a chief draftsman.

<sup>103</sup> (Murano, 2006. 24-25).

As the Japanese scholar Funakoshi Miko describes post-Meiji Restoration Osaka, “[a]lthough [the city] lacked a political organ, it established, economically speaking, a distinctive status within the nation.”<sup>104</sup>In fact, Osaka is known for having been a merchant city even before the Meiji Restoration, characterized as “The Kitchen of the State (Tenka no Daidokoro).” There were several decades of recession in the beginning of the Meiji Era, because the newly introduced economic and industrial system based upon the Western model disrupted the existing socio-economic structure of the city. However, Osaka continued to be the business center of the country, and gradually adapted to the imposed Western system. As Takabe Yoshito describes, due to the long tradition of “the commercial temperament of the people in Osaka,”<sup>105</sup> Osaka reclaimed the city’s reputation as the merchant city of Japan. Although Takabe does not go further to describe what “the commercial temperament” was, Osaka indeed experienced rapid development from the late nineteenth century onward.

By 1908, Osaka was already surpassing the nation’s capital Tokyo in many commercial and industrial sectors. For instance, a 93% share of government bonds sold nationwide took place on the Osaka Stock market.<sup>106</sup> The railway company stock sold in Osaka was also the highest. In addition, productions of various materials, such as cotton, leather, brick, oil and many others, were dominated by Osaka industry. As a port city, the profits from foreign trade were third in the nation, following Yokohama and Kobe. Through the increased overseas demand as a result of a series of wars (the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, The Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905 and World War I 1914-1919) Osaka developed a primary textile, machine and chemical industry by 1920, becoming known as the “Manchester of the Orient.” When the great Kanto Earthquake devastated the Tokyo region in 1923, Osaka, by further expanding its city limit, became the metropolis with the highest population in Japan. The city was then often portrayed and promoted as “Dai Osaka (the Great Osaka).” Around this time, “Great Osaka” was transformed into a heavily industrialized city.

In Osaka’s economic and physical growth during 1920s and 30s, the mayor Seki Hajime played a pivotal role. As Jeffrey E. Hanes characterizes, Seki was a progressive social reformer, believing in that urban problems are social issues. Seki brought a series of urban and social changes to the city; e.g., expansion of city limits and implementation of boulevards and subway systems that were

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<sup>104</sup> Mikio Funakoshi, “*Osaka to Yobareta Machi* (Cities Called Osaka; Cities that Imitate and the City that was Imitated)” in *Dai-Osaka Image* (Dai-Osaka Image: Dream of Growing Modern Megalopolis), ed. Setsuya Hashizume, 266-294, (Tokyo: Sogen-sha, 2006), 287.

<sup>105</sup> I based the information concerning the Industry of Osaka on Takebe’s *Osaka Sangyo Shi* (The History of Industry in Osaka), (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1983).

<sup>106</sup> In addition, the stock for the railway company was 87% of the national selling.

hoped to connect the downtown to the suburbs. Promoting the municipally oriented governance of the city, Seki characterized Great Osaka as “much freer than Tokyo, [its] culture is neither totalitarianistic nor formalistic. It instead is liberal and individualistic. We must build Great Osaka as a base where the progressive business spirit can be brought into play.”<sup>107</sup> As Hanes reports in his book *The City as Subject* (2002), if it became necessary Seki encouraged private business to take over the function of the city. For example, Seki let private streetcar companies to program the system, not relying on traditional paternalism that attempts to govern every part of socio-economic and political sphere, still widely practiced in Tokyo.

As Osaka was represented as a politically and commercially liberal space, the city’s architects came to reflect this tendency. Although there was certainly a different type of bureaucratic power governing the city, be that of the municipal government or of the commercial combine (*zaiibatsu*), the city provided architects with a power structure that allowed, if not forcing, them to take a particular aesthetic approach.

Murano claims that, in regards to style, architects in the Kansai region freely deployed different styles creating a diversified cultural landscape, as exemplified in the works of several Kansai architects including Watanabe, Shidara Sadao, and Yasui Takeo. On the other hand, architecture in Tokyo at that time was more confined by a rather stringent rule of order imposed by political and academic authorities. Around the time when Murano arrived in Osaka in the late 1910s, there were already several practicing architects in the city. Some of those architects designed, as Murano described, eclectic buildings that could not possibly be built in Tokyo. Murano later refers to the Arisawa Optometry designed by Shidara (Fig-5.1), consisting of brick walls and various eclectic elements, as the prime example of the aesthetic liberalism prominent in Kansai region. Murano asserts that “[y]ou cannot have that in Tokyo.”<sup>108</sup>

One of the reasons for this aesthetic liberalism, which allowed for eclecticism, was that different private clients made various demands on the architects. The architects in Osaka needed to create multiple identities for various clients, some of whom were business competitors. Within this commercial environment, Murano argued that architectural styles were reduced to the tastes of these commercial urbanites. To an extent, style no longer carries any meaning, rather it becomes a kind of

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<sup>107</sup> Shibamura, Atsuki, *Seki Hajime no Osaka Kan to Shisei* (The view of Osaka and the municipality of Politics of Seki Hajime) *Kindai Osaka to Toshi Bunka* (Modern Osaka and City Culture) ed. the Literature Department of Osaka University, (Osaka: Seibundo, 2006), 51.

<sup>108</sup> (Murano, 2006. 34).

part to be constantly rearranged and reconstituted by architects as a means to construct different identities for their various clients.

As the scholar Sakai Kazumitsu describes, Yasui Takeo was an architect who, “while maintaining good relations with people in the city’s business circles and skillfully incorporating their needs into design, he [Yasui] also ensured his aesthetic originality.”<sup>109</sup> In fact, Yasui’s dexterously deployed different aesthetic vocabulary, as exemplified in buildings he designed in 1920s, such as the Nomura Bank Headquarter, Kourabashi Nomura Building (Fig – 5.2) and Gas Building (Fig – 5.3), varying from neo-classicist to expressionistic designs. While providing a distinctive identity to each building, and thus also to the client, Yasui maintained his aesthetic by carefully paying attention to the proportions of a building, materiality (Fig – 5.4) and ornament details (Fig – 5.5). Conceiving this characteristic as intrinsic to Kansai architects, Sakai includes Murano as an architect who shared a similar attitude toward the architectural design based upon the practical and aesthetic requirements of the clients. Additionally, Sakai argues that, similar to Yasui, Murano imbued his subjectivity into his works in a distinctive manner. As Murano’s career went on, I argue, style for him changed in its significance, if not becoming meaningless altogether.

As Murano practiced architectural design in Osaka, his analytical view on style and design gradually shifted. This shift is identifiable by tracing a series of essays he wrote following his graduate thesis. While in his “Urban Architecture Theory” there had been an idealized endpoint in his system, such as morality, beauty and the good, to which a part (human and architecture) could aspire, these ideals gradually disappeared in his subsequent essays. His vitalistic optic sought some other properties, starting with the “physical aspect” and shifting to the “economic value” of architecture. In other words, if architecture is considered as a body, Murano’s optic shifted from a morphological to a physiological analysis. And, in fact, Murano’s particular architectural expressions derived as a result of this change. At this very point, I argue, his bio-anthropocentric concept was directly deployed onto the “body” of architecture. In the following sections, I will show how his vitalistic thinking, working with Osaka’s commercialism, gained its distinctive physical forms through his early career in Osaka in 1920s and 30s.

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<sup>109</sup> Kazumitsu, Sakai, *Dai Osaka Jidai no Toshikeikan to Kenchikuka no Yakuwari* (The Role of Urban Planning and Architect during the Dai-Osaka Era) *Kindai Osaka to Toshi Bunka* (Modern Osaka and City Culture) ed. the Literature Department of Osaka University, (Osaka: Seibundo, 2006), 146.



## 4.1 Beyond Styles

In 1919, two years after working in the office of Watanabe Setsu, Murano published an essay entitled “Yoshiki no Ueniare (Above Styles)” in the magazine *Nihon Kenchiku Kyoukai Zasshi* (Japan Architecture Association Magazine). In this essay, Murano rejects the use of a formal language of a particular style and era. Instead, he postulates style as “a peculiar organization consisting of structure and ornament.”<sup>110</sup> In order to theorize his claim, Murano, developing his argument from “Urban Architecture Theory,” conceives whole(s) as an ever-growing organism, while positioning the subject as the central figure imbued with corporeal descriptions. Additionally, the ideal – moral, beauty and good – still governs Murano’s claim in “Above Style”.

By way of validating his rejection of style, he first presupposes evolution as an organic transient process that consists of “time, biological heredity, and environment.”<sup>111</sup> He claims that this process is prompted by an *immortal energy [enerugi fumetsu]*, progressing from the savage to the sophisticate. The transformation in the size of human skulls affected the function of intelligence and nerve tissue; in effect, the nature of humans is always in flux. Thus, as he analogically concludes, architectural styles, the very product of mankind, has to constantly transform as well. As an example, Murano takes the Gothic Revival of eighteenth century England, asserting that it failed to revitalize the true spirit of the Gothic style simply because the mind of eighteenth century British architects did not belong to the Gothic period.

Furthermore, he not only rejects the historicist approach, but also discredits the futurist approach. In this context, futurism does not merely refer to Futurist as such – Italian or Russian Futurist – but to the design that myopically contrives futuristic styles. Claiming that he belongs neither to the past nor the future, Murano calls himself “a rigorous presentist”, who “finds a pleasure of life in the present.”<sup>112</sup>

Understanding Murano’s claim of being a “presentist,” will further help illustrate his vitalistic position on the issue of style, which takes account of the transforming artificial landscape. On the one hand, Murano presupposes that the past was more naturalistic where things automatically fell into place. Just as the law of nature used to coherently govern the natural environment, there were a sequence of static systems, such as Greek, Roman and Gothic; in this account, Acanthus was “the most correct and

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<sup>110</sup> Murano, Togo, “Yoshiki on Ueniare (Beyond Styles)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991), 8.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 13.

the most natural” design to Greeks.<sup>113</sup> It was only the genius who was capable of superseding the old style (or era) with the subsequent one. On the other hand, the present for Murano is a whole ruthlessly being transmuted by various forces, drastically altering the significance of architectural beauty and structure. With the advent of science coupled with the (modern) free spirit, humans engage in the eternal activity. Murano argues that, due to the technological advancement and economic growth, buildings are becoming gigantic in the present urban environment, disproportionate to the rather narrow streets of urban cities. Thus, a style consisting of order, proportion and moldings is hardly noticeable from the various vantage points of moving viewers. Subsequently, an aesthetic consciousness, he continues, must be reformulated.

Beyond styles, what then governs architectural design for Murano is beauty. Continuing an argument from the earlier “Urban Architectural Theory,” this beauty plays an equivalent role of the ideal morality that, somehow, governs individuals; as Murano claims, “true beauty is the moral.”<sup>114</sup> As the self-cultivating individuals are moving toward the moral, the development of architectural style should also be analogically approaching the ultimate beauty. “I am quite happy,” Murano says, “if, by future, it means an ideal end which would be pursued and envisaged through our endeavor and cultivation.”<sup>115</sup> This process to the ideal end is what Murano calls the truth.

Drawing upon the ideas of Henri Bergson, Murano posits that truth can no longer be found in the purpose (end), for truth only exists in the process.<sup>116</sup> He claims that an achievable end was only able to exist where there is the static system, in which the beginning-end or cause-effect relationship is always the same. In the dynamic system of the present, process carries more weight than the end. However, while agreeing with Bergson that there is only constant mutation, Murano critiques Bergsonian philosophy to some degree for not having purpose (end), other than duration. Murano asserts that purposeless change only creates a void. This process, devoid of morality, only allows the “handful of capitalist” and the “heartless scientist” to stand above the “flesh and blood of many

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>116</sup> Murano summarizes this claim in a short essay, entitled “*Mumokutekinaru Gendai Kenchiku Youshiki no Hanmon to sono Kaishaku* (Concern and Meanings of Purposeless Modern Architecture),” published in a magazine *Kenchiku Hyoron* (Architectural Critique). In this essay, asserting that “the truth exist in process,” Murano explains that it means that modern or new style always has to supersede old ones. See Murano Togo “Concern and Meanings of Purposeless Modern Architecture” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, 42 – 45, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991).

humans.”<sup>117</sup> This can be avoided, he continues, by “humanizing science.”<sup>118</sup> Here again, the human subject and body are discursively working as a central position to be secured and, at the same time, to connect process with purpose, or science with morality. It is only then, as Murano asserts, the new Life of architecture will emerge. Just as in “Urban Architectural Theory,” working as an organic platform that could “fill” the void between reality and ideal, foreseeable and unforeseeable.

This bio-anthropocentric claim was also evident in his discussion of the issue of National Style in “Above Style”, in which Murano conceives nationhood as one of moving wholes.<sup>119</sup> Other than asserting that National Style is achievable through “organizing various elements in accordance with the life of mankind by science and humanism,” Murano does not provide a further description of what the new national style could be. However, despite its indeterminacy, his bio-anthropocentricism is clearly expressed.

Discussing the issue of National Style, Murano critiques both the nationalist position as well as what he calls an “abnormal cosmopolitanism.” By these, he is referring to two factions that are diametrically opposed to each other; one advocates traditional Japanese architecture as a national style; the other champions the full implementation of Western style buildings. He claims that nationalist position does not take account of the change brought by modern science and economy. Additionally, merely importing the Western modern styles is also problematic, since the West is also going through a contemporaneous process of transformation, and thus the West’s style is also questionable with regards to its legitimacy. In addition, to import these extraneous elements, one has to consider “the cells of a body,” “lineage” and “the rule of heredity.”<sup>120</sup> Comparing this to the difficulty of the “international marriage,” he warns about the complexity of importing Western designs.

In this essay, Murano claims that style has to constantly be renewed in order to engage in the moving present, and at the same time it has to be grounded in humans and the human body. As one has to approach the moral, architectural style needs also to develop toward the ideal of beauty. In his bio-anthropocentric claim, Murano often conceptualizes architecture as imbued with anthropomorphic characteristics, such as cells, skulls and most importantly, Life. While relying on these concepts,

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>119</sup> It is contradictory to discuss National Style, if Murano’s essay aims to surpass styles. However, it can be surmised that nationhood seems to work for him as the dynamic whole that individual can or should participate. I will touch upon this issue in the conclusion.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 30.

although he never elucidated what the new style might be, Murano in “Above Style” focused more on the physical aspect of architectural style; what the new style should look like and how it should evolve. This morphological concern gradually disappeared in his following essays, in which the physiological conditions, and the economic value of architecture became the central concerns. In the following section I will illustrate this shift by examining his subsequent essays.

### 4.3 Physiology of Architecture

Amidst the commercially oriented culture of Osaka that allowed, if not forced, architects to be eclectic, styles became virtually meaningless and ready-made-parts to be applied to represent the identity of clients. Working in this environment, Murano gradually reframed his concept of architectural style and design in general.

In order to justify the common eclectic architectural practices of Osaka, Murano wrote the “Effects of Eclectic Architecture in Japan” in 1933.<sup>121</sup> By Eclecticism, Murano postulates those architectural styles that “incorporate foreign styles,” or those that “transform these styles in Japan.” Murano argues that, from a socio-economic and engineering point of view, Japanese eclecticism is not necessarily lesser in comparison to those modernist buildings, white-cubic boxes that were emerging at that time (fig – 5.6) As modernists claim that design has to be the honest expression of structure and materiality, an eclectic design which covers a primary structure with stones or bricks is seen to be deceptive. However, Murano questions whether we can repudiate eclecticism due to its structural dishonesty, especially if these embellishments could bring “profit” to the clients. Murano further challenges the modernist claim by posing the question, “[i]f the building cannot seduce the masses, then is that architecture meaningful?”<sup>122</sup>

One of the notable aspects about this essay compared to his previous ones, is the way Murano shifted his framework from the ideal to economy and psychology, which, as Murano claims, “develop eternally.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, though unreachable, an end (ideal) was evident in his previous writings; it became less visible and there appeared to be endless motion. And, in this later essay Murano positioned his architectural praxis within this dynamic whole that as his architectural praxis, at the same time exploiting its transient and thus indiscernible condition. As Murano claims in this essay, there is a

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<sup>121</sup> This is the text based upon his presentation to the *Shinko Kenchiku Kouenkai* (Lecturer on Modern Architecture). There was Bruno Taut in the audience, who visited Japan at that time. Yatsuka asserts that Murano’s speech was not translated for Taut. See (Yatsuka, 321, 2005).

<sup>123</sup> Togo Murano, “*Nihon ni Okeru Secchubugij Kenchiku no Kouka* (Effects of Eclecticism in Japanese Architecture)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, 233 – 242 (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991), 240.

true autonomous beauty in architecture free from any socio-economic constraints, which appeal purely to our perception and tactility. But there is also an opposing characteristic, which is the utilitarian aspect of architecture. Thus the economic value of architecture lays somewhere in between these two poles. Similar to the way he had previously implied that there was a way to calculate the “average vital force” of humans, the goal here of his praxis is to find a way to measure the immeasurable, the average economic value (force) of architecture. In this account, the unpredictable, invisible and sometimes contradictory nature of both the masses and economic value become important components, and would later turn into his aesthetic. The economy, or its necessary processes of production, became the force that transformed the whole, and thus directly impacts the body of architecture.

Two important essays concerning economic issues are *Kenbiku no Keizaiteki Kanryo* (Economic Condition of Architecture) (1926) and *Kenbiku no Keizai Mondai* (Economic Issues in Architecture) (1930). These essays were written during a period of economic crisis following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. As Murano claims, architecture becomes an economic value rather than aesthetic under capitalism. Deeming architecture as an end result of the production process, similar to all other commodities, Murano asserts that architects are no longer able to create new styles and that style thereby becomes meaningless. Previously, in “Above Style”, he justified his rejection of replicating historical styles, basing this rejection upon how urbanization was physically distorting the way a building can be seen by viewers. This claim now becomes more explicit in these two essays, in which economy becomes an extraneous, invisible, force. In this context, architectural design only embodies different “tastes” of either clients or the masses (as consumer subject), from which a different notion of Life within architecture emerge. This is where I am locating Murano’s vitalistic praxis corresponds with consumerism, seeking a way to prolong the Life of architecture.

In these two essays on economy, Murano postulates the two Lives of architecture; one is “Structural Life” (*Kouzouteki Seimei*) and the other is “Commercial Life” (*Eiriteki Seimei*). Structural Life indicates the period in which a building can physically sustain its structural value. In other words, it describes the period in which building structures and materials deteriorate. Commercial Life indicates the duration in which buildings hold their commercial value, producing economic profits. The later has, as Murano claims, a shorter life-span compared with the former. Here I argue, by applying his recurrent trope, Life, Murano allegorically conceives of architecture as mortal matter, or a material subject, that transmutes its physiological condition, which is the fluctuating economic value under capitalism that in turn determines its life span. Vitalistic discourse previously deployed in his discussions concerning styles was reframed, enabling him to examine, if not express the impact of a seemingly unpredictable

economy on the body of architecture. And in turn his earlier bodily imageries gradually attained its physical form.

Murano's conceptualization of architecture as an organic value is further exemplified in the chart he drew to explain the interrelationship among structural, commercial and land values (fig-5.7). Through this graph, he asserts that an intersection between the two lives (structural/commercial) in relation to the land value must be carefully considered when deciphering the Life of building. Its owner, as Murano claims, determines the price for the rent based upon construction costs, interest rates related to maintenance fee and other necessary costs that are required to get a return on principal, while land value, in theory, should not be included in the rent. Murano called such a rent "unreasonable." To secure a profit out of the rent, thus from the building, the relationship of the triad, Structural Life, Commercial Life, and Land Value, became crucial. In the chart, the line indicating Land Value moves from the left bottom corner to the top right forming a straight line, taken from the American magazine article on which he based his argument (fig-5.8). However, the one indicating building depreciation moves from the top right to the left bottom creating a gentle curve. By this Murano explains how the structural value "AB" decreases over time, also lowering the commercial value of building, whereas land value constantly increases over the time. At the point C, the critical point as Murano puts it, the land value and commercial value intersect. Once the Life of a building passes the critical point, Murano argues that the rent has to decrease as well. Or else, the owner has to upgrade the building structure in order to maintain or increase the rent.

The notable aspect of graph is that, while the value of land is described in a straight line, which reveals that this is mathematically or geometrically calculable in Murano's mind, sinuous curve of commercial life indicates the unpredictability of the Life of architecture. Since the depreciation line was drawn with a straight line on the grid in the US magazine, it was, I argue, Murano's conscious attempt to represent Life by the curve, or by expressions that cannot easily be easily represented geometrically and quantified. And, it was precisely this "unquantifiable" aesthetics that, to Murano, was able to sustain the Life of architecture under the brutal force of capitalism. It was Life filled with vital value, if not force, without being dematerialized and orchestrated by taylorism.<sup>124</sup> Instead, it was an allegorical body that contains blood, desire, eroticism and art, as Taisho artists (re)presented, which in turn claimed the autonomous, immeasurable self. It became the visualization of "the sinuosities of life."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> This is the form that cannot be *demythologized* and turning into the bodies of Kracauer's Tiller Girls, which were "a linear system that no longer has any erotic meaning." See Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>125</sup> (Bergson, 1998. 43).

In the following section, I will demonstrate how, starting from the morphological and shifting to the physiological analysis, Murano's concerns on economy in turn provided him with a certain anthropomorphic aesthetic.

### 4.3: Anthropomorphic Aesthetic

As discussed by Murano in his essays "Above Style" and "Economic Condition of Architecture," Style as a formal concept had become meaningless. His vitalistic thinking, which embraced multiplicity, change, as well as commercialism rather forcefully, prevented him from devoting himself to one particular style. It became instead, as he described in the essay "Above Style," an organizational device that somehow articulates the elements, or as he later describes it, his growing emotion. Formal languages of style that can be identified with the word "ism," such as Classicism, Expressionism or even Modernism, became a-historical parts that created his design palette. Murano chose various parts from this palette to accommodate the taste of the masses and thus to produce economic value for his clients. As he later asserts, "Something New: Social conditions are changing drastically. In order to participate in this change, you cannot stick to only one thing. And, you cannot only give one logic. Always create something new. You have to execute this."<sup>126</sup> As one can discern by looking at the buildings he designed in the early 1930s, for example, the Mori-Go Building, Osaka Pension (fig-5.9), and the Daimaru Superintended House (fig-5.10), there is no single "style" that can be identified as Murano's. Thus, compartmentalizing Murano into a single style only captures a small portion of Murano's architectural practice, since what did not change in his usage of style was the fact that it almost always changed, which itself is indicative of a vitalistic approach.

Instead of relying on a stylistic analysis, what follows is a discussion about the way in which seemingly "ineffable" imageries and expressions gave Murano a means to paradoxically conceptualize his works, allowing for his eclectic approach. In this praxis, I argue, his vitalistic modality, and his bio-anthropocentric claim in particular, gained their physical architectural expressions. Just as in his earlier "Urban Architecture Theory," wherein the human body functioned as an organic platform that, although physically influenced by the extraneous environment, produced moral value, here bodily expressions became an integral part of his aesthetic. This expression is what Murano characterizes as the "tactility (*kanshoku*)" of architecture, comprised of curves, materiality and hues.

By this, I refer to a particular mode of aesthetic production that attempts to consistently avoid, in Bergson's term, *geometrical* expressions. Although it is uncertain if Murano incorporated the

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<sup>126</sup> (Murano, 1991. 418).

concept of geometry/non-geometry from Bergson's "Creative Evolution," their accounts indeed resonate with each other, revealing their shared vitalistic attitude.

In Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, geometry works as a metaphoric device to describe the system of mechanistic, and finalist systems, in which all the phenomena were thought to be objectively understood by an external principle, such as physics or mathematics. In this sense, geometry is the discursive domain that consists of mathematically "measurable" shapes and events. While describing the astronomical phenomena as mathematically foreseeable, Bergson contrasts this geometrical order with another kind of order, disorder, by characterizing a Beethoven's symphony as, "genius, originality and therefore unforeseeability itself."<sup>127</sup> In Bergson's account, the former is conceived as "inert and automatic," and the latter as "vital and willed."<sup>128</sup>

The movement of the human body is continuous. While mechanists attempt to break up the movement into different positions and finalist only finds orders in it, for Bergson, both accounts ignore the *duration* of human action; and he describes this continuous movement of Life as a curve. Similarly, Bergson makes an analogy with paintings with the characteristic of Life by portraying curved lines and shades (color) as a quality that is *only* replicable with *infinite* straight lines and colored dots. Geometry thus cannot represent Life.<sup>129</sup>

For Murano, curves and shade (or hues), represent infinity and thus immeasurability of the Life, or the body of architecture. In his graduate thesis, the human body was the domain from which the self could emerge, and these seemingly incalculable elements and qualities identify the self as an autonomous entity. As Murano later asserted, the "[h]uman is the only thing that cannot be consumed," and thus body characteristics, I argue, are considered by Murano to prevent architecture from being quantified and thus commoditized. In fact, this aesthetic was further articulated discursively with body imageries, as Murano described them as "tactility," "shade" and "humanistic," which not only represent these non-geometrical qualities, but also nuances the interaction with the body of humans. Subsequently, various surface expressions become a critical component for his architecture; i.e. the surface as a point of intersection between two bodies. And it was his trip to Europe in 1930 that gave Murano the particular aesthetic language that could embody indescribable quality.

Murano claimed that during a trip, Scandinavian architecture, especially the works of Ragnar Östberg (fig-5.11), impacted his career. As Fujimori Terunobu points out, this influence is clearly

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<sup>127</sup> (Bergson, 1998. 224).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.



expressed in the Mori-Go Building and Ube Civic Hall. What the architecture of Östberg provided for Murano was not only the aesthetic form but a particular “quality” that Murano had been searching for. In his essay, “Seeing while Moving,” Murano describes the Stockholm City Hall as “*ineffable* [...] If one judges this building from the modern architectural point of view, it probably contains a lot of faults. However, from an artistic point of view, *it transcends all reasons*.”<sup>130</sup> Although Murano does not provide a further description of what he thought of as ineffable, judging from the aesthetic of Mori-Go Building and Ube Civic Hall, it was the materiality consisting of a seemingly infinite number of bricks, or cells.

These cells are translated into various forms in Murano’s praxis; each cell, often having slightly different forms and hues, further confuses the measurability of architectural body. These cells are best exemplified in the following works; the detailed treatment of mortar joints as seen in the Hiroshima World Cathedral (Fig-5.12); reflective and refractive surfaces of brick and glass blocks used in the Ube Civic Hall (Fig-5.13); sandy surfaces of granite panels covering the Nissei Hibiya Building (fig- 5.14), or the rough mortar sprayed onto the wall surfaces of the Takarazuka Catholic Church (fig-5.15). Their materiality devises what Murano terms “shade.” He further describes the methodology that “attaches human quality to the architectural surfaces.”<sup>131</sup> These particular material expressions become, I argue, one of Murano’s anthropomorphic aesthetics.

In addition to Scandinavian architecture, Murano also found the indescribable quality in the work of the Russian constructivist architect, Yakov Chenikohov. Reflecting back when Murano found a monograph of this constructivist when he visited Russia in 1930, he writes, “[a]lthough I did not understand the words that were written, it was not hard for me to perceive the hidden philosophy that surpasses the language barrier; the philosophy expressed in a number of pictures and, in the *mysterious curved forms*.”<sup>132</sup>

The curved form, as a *mythologized* form, in particular was further elaborated on in his post-war essay, *Sen ni Shishu Ari* (Poetry in Line).<sup>133</sup> In this essay, Murano critiques the famous Bauhaus

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 202. Also see Togo Murano, “Murano Togo 1930-1930 (Interviewed by Hiroshi Sasaki),” in *Kindai Kenchiku no Mokugekisha* (Witnesses of Modern Architecture), ed. Hiroshi Sasaki, 2nd ed. Tokyo: Shinkenchi-sha, 1981

<sup>131</sup> Murano Togo, “*Shakaigeijutsu toshiteno Kenchiku wo Tsukurutameni* (To Make Architecture as Social Art)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991), 651.

<sup>132</sup> Murano Togo, “*Cherunikofu no Honyakushuppan ni Tsuite* (About the Book on Chetnikov)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, 220-222, (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991), 220. Italics by author

building designed by Walter Gropius. He claims that its design was conceived through an emphasis on the production process, which was later brought to the United States and adapted well with Americanized automated production. Deeming architecture as a means within capitalist productions, Murano claims, that “human labor was gradually replaced by the means [of production]” with the birth of capitalism.<sup>134</sup> This made production more economically and technically efficient, but in turn removed human labor, thus bodies, from this process. The more capitalism creates simpler modes of production, the more it, as he continues, eliminates certain traces from commodities, such as “stress” and “contradiction” associated with its production. Through this mechanism, products take monotonous forms, with which Murano associated straight lines, such as linear movements of pistons that accelerated by the circular movements of disks in a steam engine; the forms than can be deciphered through Bergson’s geometry. Asserting that architecture indeed is embedded in this process, except for some monuments, Murano affirms that all architecture has to be *consumed* in order to produce profit; they all take “the form of commodities.” He then characterizes architecture abundant with straight lines, such as the Bauhaus building, as “consumer expressions of simplified production,”<sup>135</sup> devoid of invisible forces – stress and contradiction. Murano claims, that curve renders these invisible. As curved forms were utilized to represent the Life of architecture, as expressed in the graph introduced in the previous section, a subtle curvature was utilized throughout his career, turning into his oppositional anthropomorphic aesthetics.

These non-geometrical curves are most obvious in exterior forms of the Takarazuka Catholic Church (Fig-5.16), the interior of the Nissei Theatre (Fig-5.17) and possibly the interior of Yatsugadake Art Museum covered with fabric (Fig-5.18). A subtle curvature used by Murano also functions, sometimes subtly, as an anthropomorphic aesthetic that creates “shades” of a human body. For instance, those rounded-off corners of the Mori-Go Building exterior (Fig – 5.19), the small curve that is deployed in the façade of the Nissei Building, which creates a subtle transition from the building’s “piano-nobile” to the upper volume, creating a continuous façade surface (Fig-5.20), and the rounded-square shape of the columns in the lobby of the Hahata Civic Center (Fig-5.21). Each creates distinctive continuous surfaces, producing gradating shades and color effects comprised of *infinite colored dots*, which also ties back to, although composed by segments of lines, the gradating colors deployed at

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<sup>133</sup> This piece was written as a forward to the monograph of Yoshiro Taniguchi (1904-1979), wherein Murano writes not only about the nature of Taniguchi’s works, but also his own conception of architecture. Taniguchi was the leading modernist architect who has designed several important buildings, including Tokyo National Museum (1968) and National Museum of Modern Arts (1969).

<sup>134</sup> Murano Togo, “*Sen ni Shishu Ari* (Poetry in Line)” in *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* (*Murano Togo Complete Writings*), vol 1, 604-614 (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991). 611. By the time, he was conversant with Marx’s Capital.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 613

the double echinus of the column in Ube Civic Center that I introduced at the very beginning of this thesis.

Furthermore, the distinctive characteristic of materiality and sinuosity of Murano's architecture is that many of these anthropomorphic aesthetic qualities occur at a scale, as I have demonstrated above, that forces the viewer to stay within the perceptible distance. This scale and proximity – whether it is the facade of a building or a mortar joint between bricks –are where Murano's "tactility" emerges; this is the "plane at which humans and architecture intersect."<sup>136</sup> Again, this plane could be interpreted not only in a literal but also metaphoric sense. While possibly meaning to actually touch the undulating surfaces of the interior wall in the Nissei Theatre, which consists of uncountable mosaic tiles (cells), Murano's tactility could occur when one approaches the Yahata Civic Center without actual touching. From distance, the center appears as a red rectangle volume (fig-5.22). It is only when at the bottom of the building that one notices the gentle curvatures of the façade and skin-like texture of red bricks surface (fig-5.23). Similar to the Osaka Sogo Department, the tactility of glass blocks only appear when approached (fig-5.24).

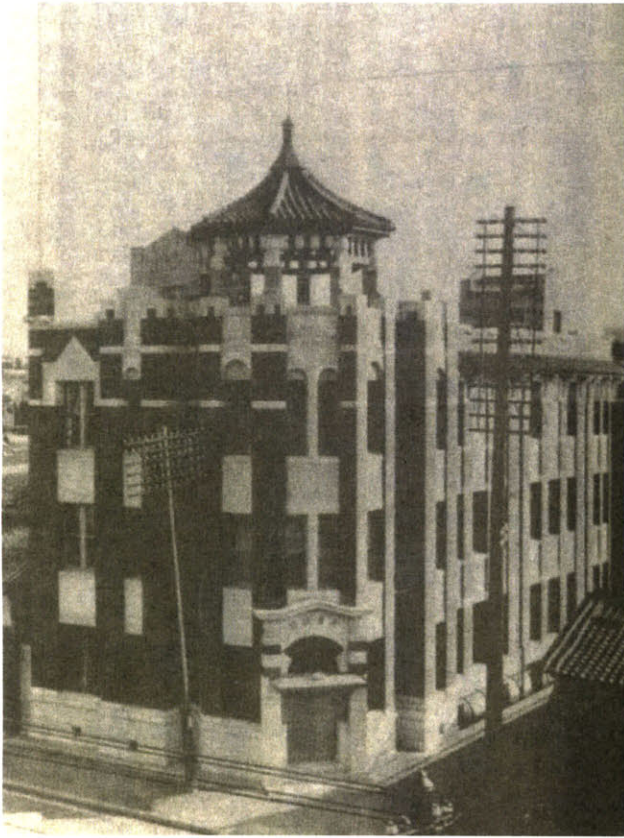
Conceiving the dynamic wholes – the vantage point(s) of *moving* viewers within *urbanizing* cities, Murano imbued his architecture with Life, the body expression. It is this aesthetic that resists decomposition into numbers, straight lines and other *geometrical* measurements. Murano's anthropomorphic aesthetic is persistently presented at a proximate distance to the viewers. It was his tactic to represent "enchainment" through these non-geometric forms, which to him gives a vital force, or the commercial value, to architecture, further sustaining its life without being demythologized by capitalism.<sup>137</sup> Engaging the human subject, the body of his architecture found multiple Lives at its surface (fig-5.25).

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 650

<sup>137</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, (Harvard University Press, 2005).





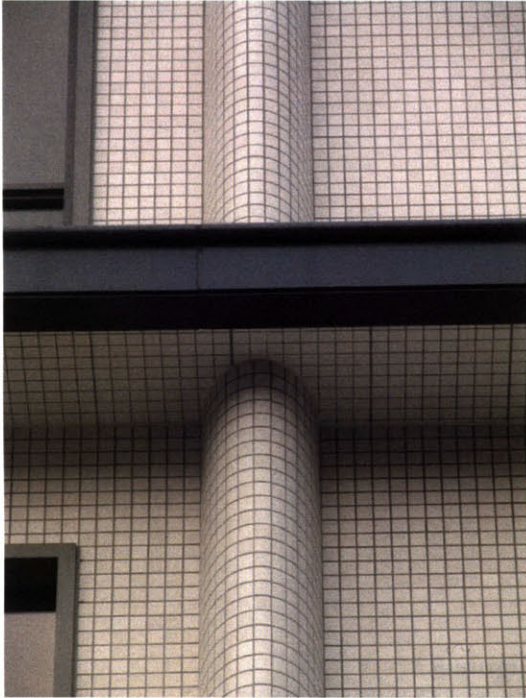
**Figure 5.1**  
Arisawa Optometry (1914)  
Osaka, Japan  
Architect: Shidara Sadao  
Togo Murano, *Kenchiku no Tsukurumonono Kokoro* - 37



**Figure 5.2**  
Kourabashi Nomura Building (1927)  
Osaka, Japan  
Architect: Yasui Takeo  
Photograph taken by author.



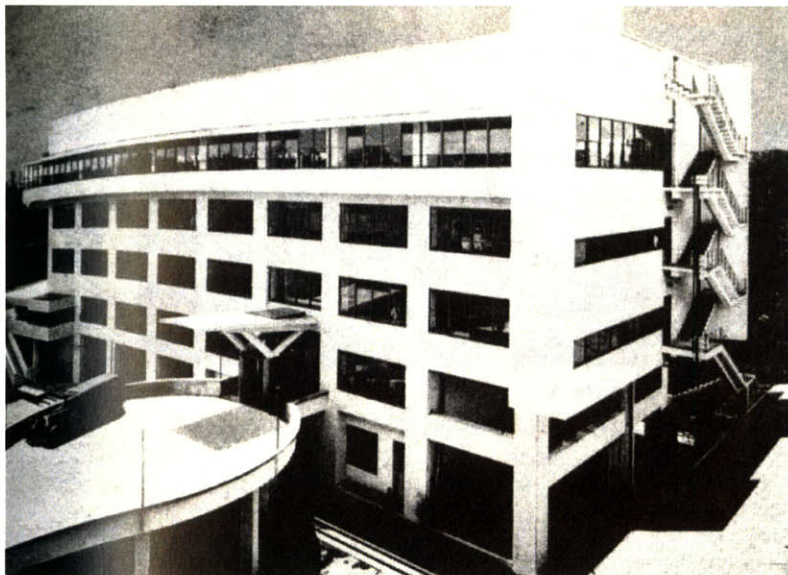
**Figure 5.3**  
Osaka Gas Building (1933)  
Osaka, Japan  
Architect: Yasui Takeo  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.4**  
Wall Details of Osaka Gas Building (1933)  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.5**  
Ornament Details of Kourabashi Nomura  
Building  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.6**  
Extension of Nihon Dental  
College (1934)  
Tokyo, Japan  
Architect: Yamaguchi Mamoru  
David B. Steward, *The Making of  
a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868  
to the Present* - 163

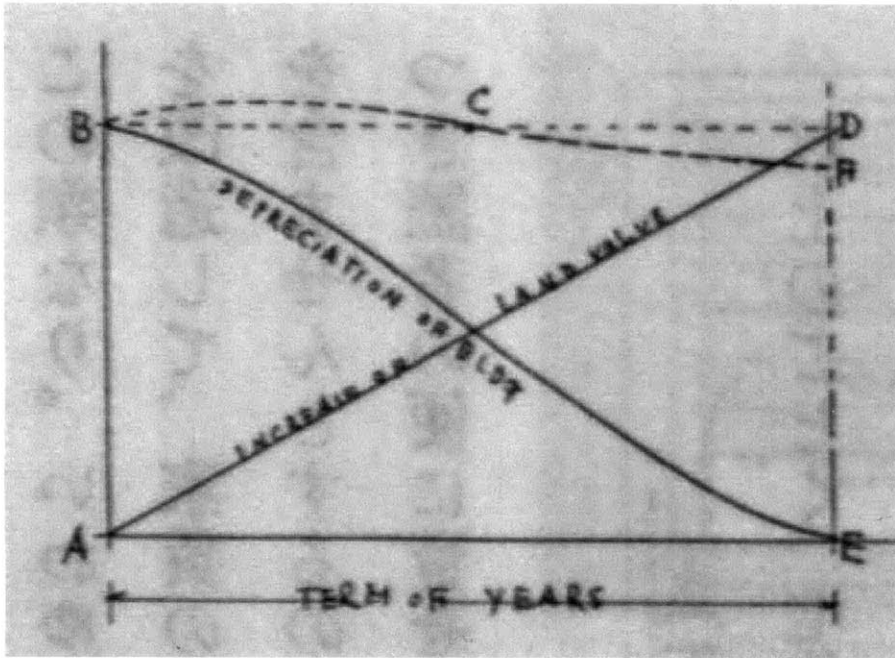


Figure 5.7 Chart drawn by Murano (1926)  
Murano Togo, *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* - 119

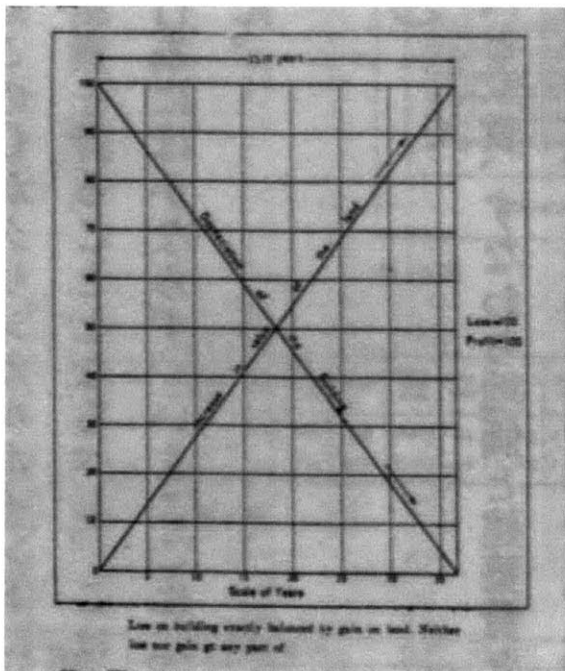
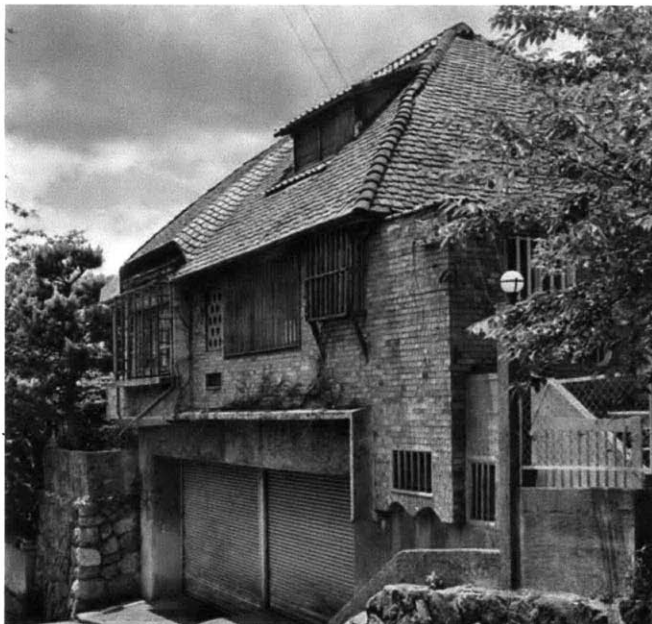


Figure 5.8 Chart taken from a US magazine (the exact source is unidentified) by Murano (1926)  
Murano Togo, *Murano Togo Chosaku Shu* - 119

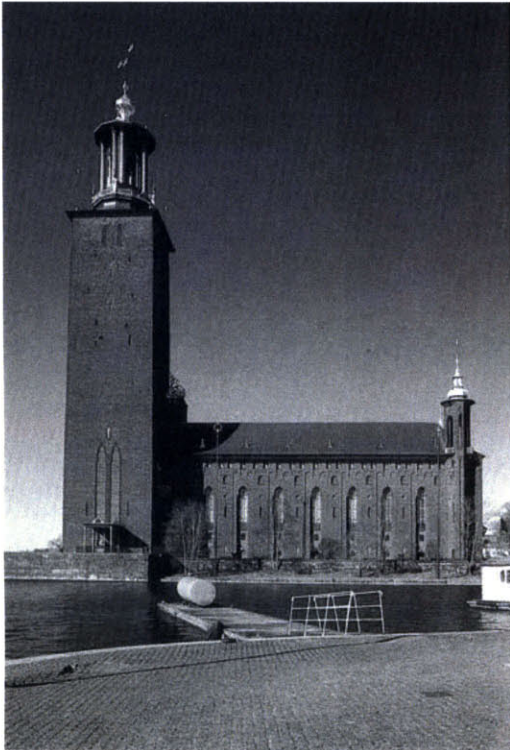


**Figure 5.9** Osaka Pension (1931)  
Osaka, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
*Murano Togo Sakubin shu vol-1 - 19*



**Figure 5.10** Dormitory Superintendent's House (1931)  
Hyogo, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
*Murano Togo Sakubin shu vol-1 - 12*





**Figure 5.11**  
Stockholm City Hall (1924)  
Stockholm, Sweden  
Architect: Ragnar Östberg  
Luca Ortelli, *Ragnar Östberg*  
*Municipio di Stoccolma - 62*



**Figure 5.12** World Peace Memorial Cathedral (1953)  
Hiroshima, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author



**Figure 5.13** Wall details of Ube Civic Hall showing glass blocks and tiles.  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.14** Wall details of Nissei Hibiya Building showing granite stone panels.  
*Murano Togo Sakubin shu vol-1 - 232*



**Figure 5.15**  
Wall details of  
Takarazuka Catholic Church (1966)  
showing sprayed mortar surface.  
Hyogo, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.16** Curved rooflines of Takarazuka Catholic Church  
Photograph taken by author.



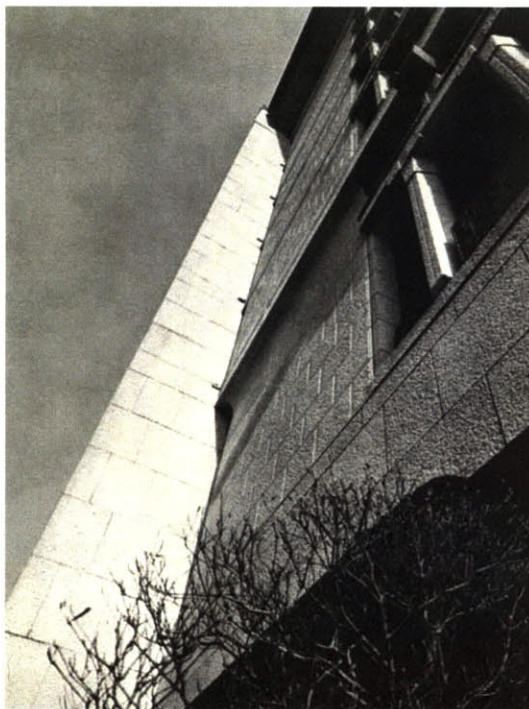
**Figure 5.17**  
Theater wall of Nissei Hibiya Building  
*Murano Togo Sakubin shu vol-1 - 228*



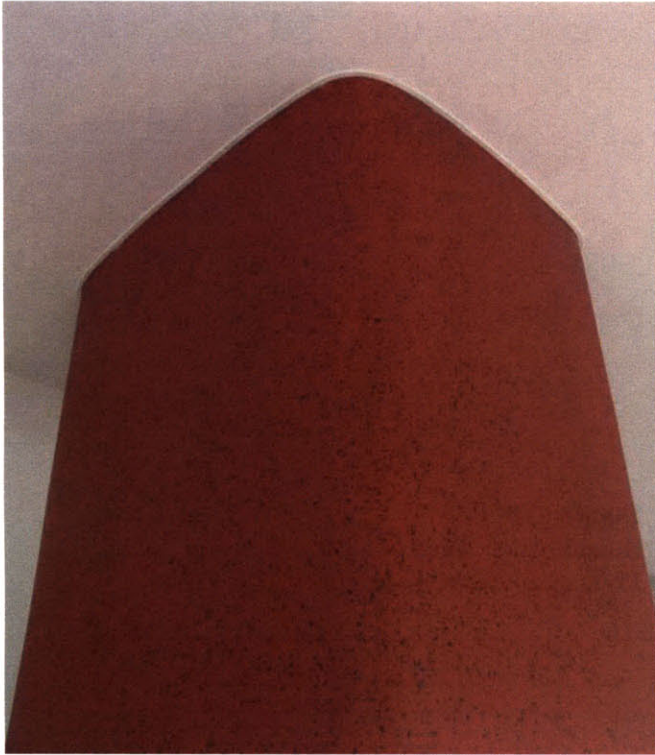
**Figure 5.18** Interior of Yatsugatake Art Museum (1979) showing the fabric covering the ceiling.  
Nagano, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author



**Figure 5.19**  
Round corner detail of Morigo Building  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.20**  
Wall detail of Nissei Hibiya Building.  
*Murano Togo Sakuhin shu vol-1 - 211*

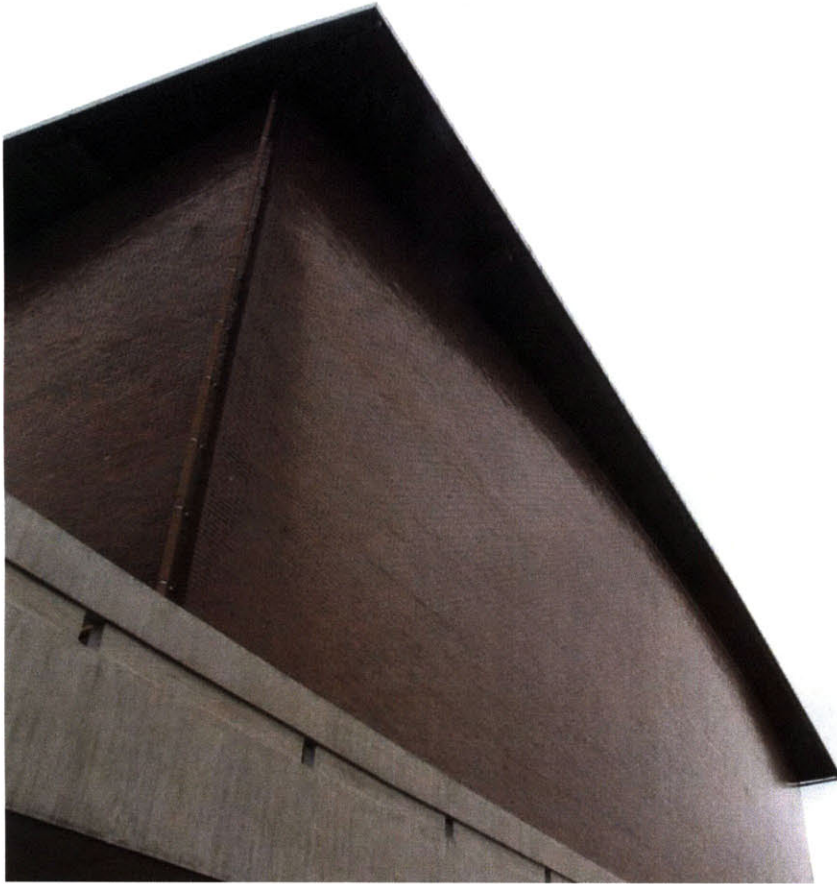


**Figure 5.21**  
Round Squire Column in  
Yahata Community Center (1958)  
Fukuoka, Japan  
Architect: Murano Togo  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.22**  
Yahata Community Center  
View from the distance.  
Photograph taken by author.

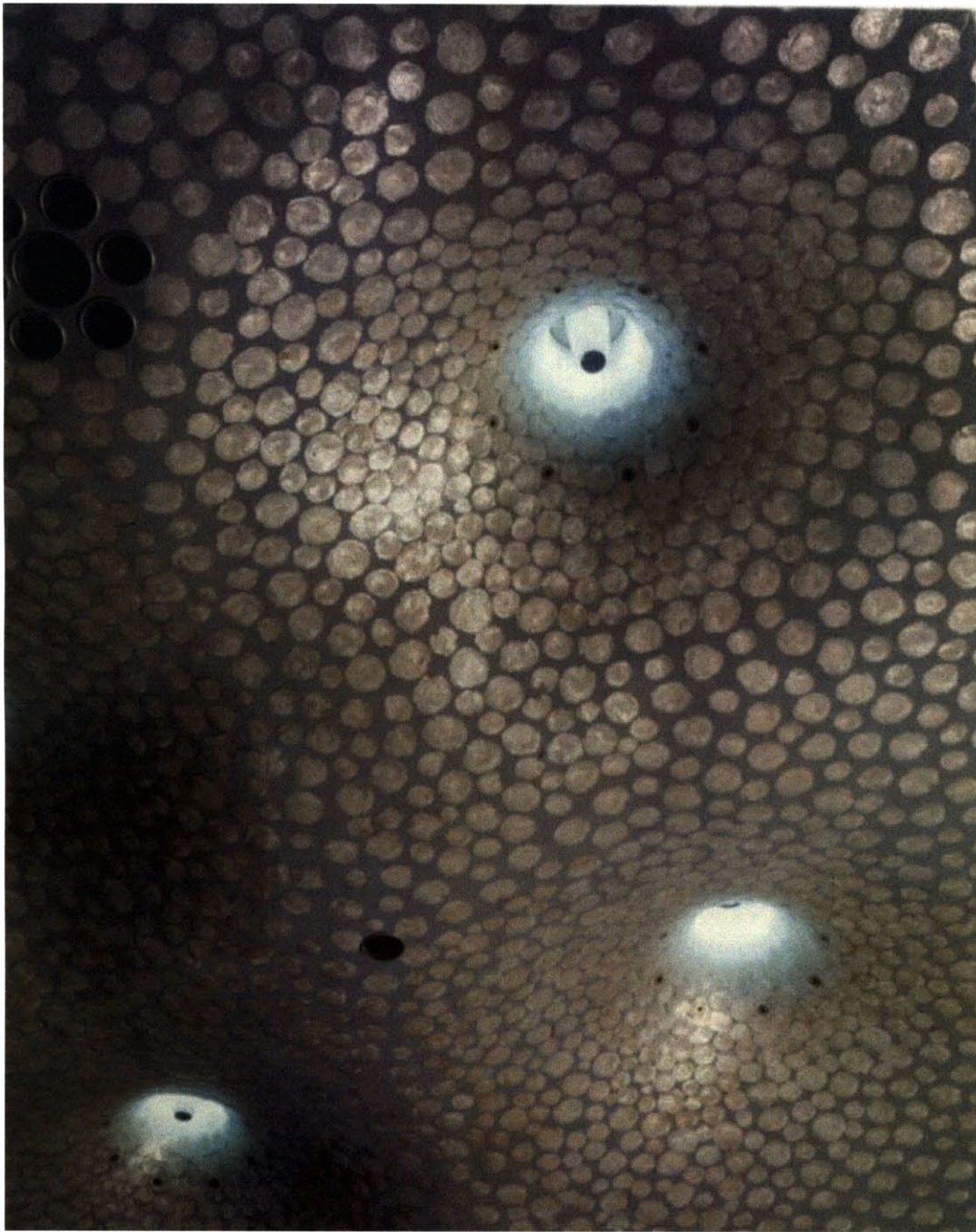




**Figure 5.23** Yahata Community Center  
Curved Façade  
Photograph taken by author.



**Figure 5.24** Sogo Department Store  
Close up view of façade  
*Murano Togo Kenchikusekkei Zuten Katalogu vol - 3 - 4*



**Figure 5.25** Nissei Hibiya Building  
Close up view of ceiling surface in the theatre  
Botond Bognar, *Togo Murano: Master Architect of Japan* - 89



## Conclusion

“Why don’t we affirm the chaos as it is? If we conceive everything, including tradition, imitation, originality, and reproduction, as the process to achieve creativity, it is too native to stick to just one of them. It would be much easier, if we consider chaos and disorder as the world as it is.”<sup>138</sup> Murano Togo

In this thesis, I have illustrated the way in which vitalistic thinking informed Murano’s architecture, especially how the human body became a critical domain in his work, as a reaction to the modernization of Japanese society at the dawn of the twentieth century. This was a particular Vitalist discourse in the Japanese intellectual scene. On one hand, it conceived modern “moving” society as a chaotic, unpredictable flow consisting of myriad components. On the other hand, it positioned the human at the center to overcome the unpredictable, in which the biological description or presentation of the human body became a pivotal device to define a modern subject. This bio-anthropocentrism was an epistemological current in which I have located Murano’s praxis. Delineating the way in which this discourse allowed him to engage with or to conceptualize modernizing phenomena, it was in turn the growing commercialism that gave Murano’s earlier vitalistic thinking a particular anthropomorphic aesthetic. The aesthetic, that in Murano’s mind embodied the indescribable, unpredictable, and unquantifiable, cannot be easily commodified.

Life, body imageries, and other biological descriptions by no means are capable of fully explaining what is inexplicable. They are only able to give a representation to invisible or ungraspable conditions; e.g., the representation of self rather than self itself. Similarly, Murano’s distinctive aesthetic – curve, cells and colors – are not entirely unquantifiable; they represent what he conceived as “immeasurable.” In fact, much of his aesthetic was devised through mathematical equations and engineering (Fig-6.1). In this sense, Murano’s “tactility” or “shades” were the very product of capitalism. However, rather than critiquing the validity of his claims, my interest lay in the technique in which bio-anthropocentrism was developed in his architectural praxis. Especially how the human body, seemingly the most graspable and immediate entity to humans, was utilized to respond to the unforeseeable dynamics of modernization.

By doing so, this research has tried to entail a different intellectual dimension of Murano’s work and of Japanese modern architecture at large. Finding an intersection between architecture and

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<sup>138</sup> Murano Togo “Kendai Bunka Jutaku no Hanmon (About Modern Cultural Home)” in Murano Togo Chosaku Shu (Murano Togo Complete Writings), vol 1, 125-142 (Tokyo: Nan-Pu-Sha, 1991), 133.

other genres, such as literature, plastic and performing arts, this research further proposes that Murano's architecture could become an optic through which a glimpse of the socio-cultural or ideological geography of Japan in the twentieth century can be unfolded.

Further analysis on the intellectual currents that channeled into Murano's discourse will offer a clearer understanding of how bio-anthropocentrism was formulated and became an influence in his later career. Especially since eugenics, heredity and the idea of Nation were concepts that often appeared in Murano's vitalistic framework, this exploration could possibly elucidate why Murano positioned the healthy human body as the central position in his claim. An investigation of this particular epistemological current can reveal how this current might have had an impact on the formation of the subsequent Japanese intellectual scene leading up to World War II, in which Murano's praxis can also be located. This analysis may allow us to visit the least spoken aspect of Murano's career. That is, Murano's inclination to the National Socialist Politics of Germany during the 30s.

The idea of the nation-state as an entity that could govern human individuals was already expressed in "Urban Architectural Theory," a decade before he adopted National Socialism. Although Murano vitalistic optic embraced the chaotic and transformative modern society, his thinking seemed to constantly seek an ultimate system, or belief, that could theorize the ideal and give form to the motion. This tendency can be best exemplified in the fact that he devoted himself to Christianity and Marxism throughout his life. In this case, Christianity formed his ultimate ideal – good and moral – and Marxism provided Murano with a way to conceptualize an unforeseeable economic condition. According to Murano, the nation also operated as a framework that could glue together the dispersive flows of individuals, allowing them to strive for the ideal-the Universal World. As idealistic as this claim may sound, or precisely due to this idealism, this view could lead an individual to a dark side. The body of the nation can have overwhelming power. In the "Urban Architectural Theory," Murano says:

Economy that is based upon fewer individuals needs to be modified. Otherwise, it will not become *the purpose of Nation*, and prosperity of a society in general. Thus, the individualistic economic structure would only separate the human from the ideal.<sup>139</sup>

One can clearly discern his anthropocentric system here; while setting up the unreachable ideal, it emphasizes the human subject engaging in the motion that attempts to reach the ideal. Here, by posulating the purpose of Nation, Murano substitutes the motion with Nation.

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<sup>139</sup> (Murano, 2008. Appendix 84). Italics by author.

Fujimori Terunobu reveals that Murano was the first architect among others to show his support to the German National Socialist politics, which was particularly evident in Ube Civic Hall in which he incorporated the emblem of Nazi Germany into his designs for the lighting fixtures (fig-6.2).<sup>140</sup> As an explanation for Murano's inclination to Nazi politics, psychologizing Murano to some degree, Fujimori explains that for Murano, having devoted himself to Marxism and Christianity in most of his life, it was inevitable to be drawn to it "because National Socialism was believed to overcome the contradiction and poverty that were produced by Capitalism."<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, many other intellectuals at that time, as Fujimori claims, also took a similar path.

Instead of relying on a mere psychological or highly speculative analysis, the investigation of Vitalism or Murano's bio-anthropocentrism might be able to open up a way to narrate, critically and historically, the ideological transformation of Murano's oeuvre, starting from the pre-war and inter-war even to the post-war periods, in which one can read into how eugenicist ideas have engaged with a particular, or a myopic idealism. As Peter J. Bowler claims, eugenics is often associated with Nationalist movement in order to improve the body of the population.<sup>142</sup> This seems to resonate with aspects of Murano's bio-anthropocentrism. One could argue that besides Murano's Nazi tendencies, the epistemological condition at large that formed his claim also had an unfortunate resonance with National Socialist ideology.

Furthermore, it is worth exploring why the human body, in relation to various "unpredictable" circumstances, gained certain significance in Japanese cultural-intellectual scene. Interestingly enough, this bio-anthropocentric technique was in fact also used by the modernist. Tange Kenzo. At a CIAM meeting in the 1950s, Tange, who is often considered as a figure opposed to Murano, the expressionist, in the received history, also used body imagery to address the condition of post-war urbanizing cities. In his talk, criticizing the position taken by his contemporaneous architects, including TEAM X and the Italian architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers as being too "formalist," "fatalist" and not concerned with the "incompatibilities" derived from science and humanism, Tange postulated that the study of the human body could provide a means to overcome these inconsistencies.<sup>143</sup> Tange's

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<sup>140</sup> Fumori enumerates architects who inclined toward the right; some of the listed architects are Murano Togo, Sakakura Junzo, Mekawa Kunio and Tange Kenzo. See also Fujimori, Terunobu, *Senjikani Umaretamonoha Nanika (What Occurred during World War II?)* in Maekawa Kunio: *Gendai Tono Taiwa (A Dialogue with Modernity)*, ed. Hiroshi Matsukuma, (Tokyo: Rikuyosha, 2006) 97-104

<sup>141</sup> (Fujimori, 1993. 244) These fixtures were taken out by Murano and his office during the renovation after the World War II.

<sup>142</sup> Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of Idea*, 4th ed. (University of California Press, 2009) 308

<sup>143</sup> See Kenzo Tange, "Aestheticism and Vitalism," *Japan Architect*, October 1960, 8-10

ideas that conceived the humanistic element as disordered, while utilizing the body as an organic platform, resonated with Murano.

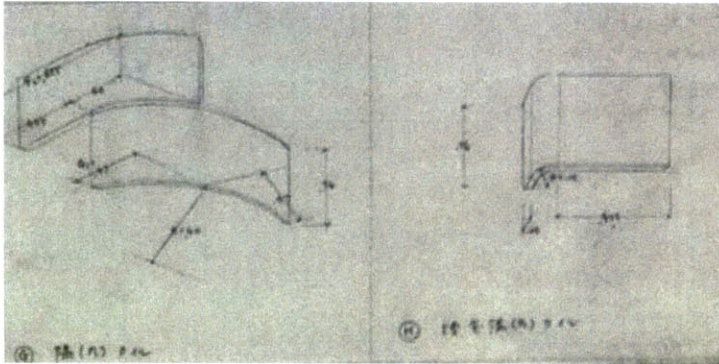
The difference here is the fact that Tange, unlike Murano, attempts to systematize the human body into two scales. Tange claims that the body constantly mutates at a microscopic level, as exemplified in cells, mobilized by the unknown “principle of life.”<sup>144</sup> On the contrary, at a macroscopic level, the body keeps the same organizational structure. In order to take into account incompatibility in modern society, Tange continues, freedom (spontaneity) and order (system) have to be reconciled to construct the “true picture of a whole.”<sup>145</sup> Thus, as he argues, a microscopic/macroscopic analysis of the human body can be applied to subsume freedom/order relationship. Although the body in Tange appears to be a more quantifiable entity, he also relies just like Murano on the mystical aspect, “the vital principle,” of body to render “unpredictability.” Instead of compartmentalizing Tange and Murano into two opposing currents based upon a formal analysis, an exploration of their discursive techniques could possibly open up a different interpretation of Japanese modern architecture. For instance, deciphering their epistemology of the human body might illuminate not only their differences but also their shared ground. Looking through the works of a peripheral figure, this analysis has tried to give a new Life to the history of Japanese modern architecture, unfolding its cultural, intellectual and political dimensions.

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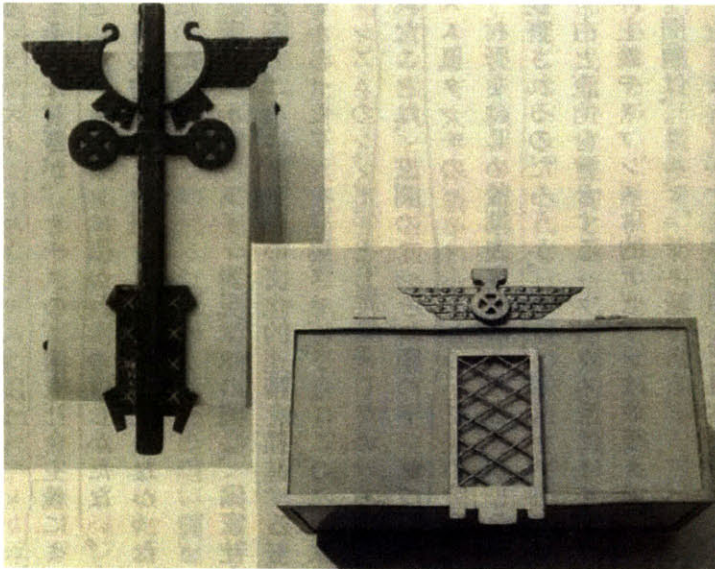
<sup>144</sup> Kenzo Tange, “Technology and Humanity,” *Japan Architect*, October 1960, 12

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 12





**Figure 6.1** Morigo Building  
 Drawings for corner tiles  
*Murano Togo Kenchikusekai Zuten Katalogu vol-4 - 67*



**Figure 6.2** Ube Civic Center  
 Ornament detail for lighting fixtures.  
 Fujimori, Terunobu, *Nihon no Kindai Kenchiku* - 243



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