Darkness in JAPANESE SPACE

by

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to find out the significance of darkness in modern Japanese architecture. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part attempts to discuss the aesthetic of a semi-dark Japanese space through a detail analysis of Tanizaki’s In Praise of Shadow set in the Tokugawa period. The second part explains how darkness became an important element in the Japanese spatial concept and when it started. This is done by looking at Tange’s articles which concentrate on seeking the vital energy in the prehistoric Jomon period. The third part of the essay attempts to find a representative architect who had successfully amalgamated darkness into modern architecture. Kazuo Shinohara was selected because he was an important architect of the 70’s and almost half of his career was focused on integrating tradition and modernity; a large part of tradition he mentioned deals with darkness of the primitive past.

The result is that darkness is an important bonding element between Japanese tradition and modern architecture. The paper timeframe spans between 1920’s to 1970’s because it was a crucial period when it was generally popular to revive tradition after the excessive Western influence in the Meiji period.

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