

Chapter 9

Bruno Taut's Colors in Architecture: Arts and Nature

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ABSTRACT

Leading German architect, Bruno Taut, was most active between World War I and World War II. He was noticed for his value of colors after his baptism into the Expressionist movement. Then Taut was fascinated by the Garden City movement, which originated in Utopian Socialism thoughts of England. After World War I, which he stood against as a pacifist, Taut got a chance to experiment with color architecture in the old city of Magdeburg, Germany. However, Taut was removed due to arguments and objections against his concepts. He then developed nature-conscious apartments around Berlin, Germany, before Nazi hostilities forced him to flee to Japan in May 1933. In Japan, Taut's focus had no chance but to shift from architecture to written observations on color. Before his move from Japan in 1936, Taut left the Hyuga Villa, a rare and significant color architecture. Taut lived the remainder of his life in Istanbul, designing many structures before dying in 1938.

INTRODUCTION

Bruno Taut (1880-1938) was a leading architect of the modernist architectural trend, whose elusive features can be identified through extensive, stubborn, and continuous historical descriptions. The trend can be characterized by three curiously paradoxical distinctions: (1) highest criteria; (2) comprehensive, pluralistic information about the happenings of architectural culture in their age (even if not arguing in favor of avant-garde activities and devoted to their central fighting claims); and (3) crystalizing repeated arguments into myths (Lampugnani, 1994). These are, namely, movements of Expressionist, International, and Constructive architecture.

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Buildings in the Expressionist architectural movement, according to the style's definition, "should not be confined to functioning well but create sensations freely shaped abstract sculpture" (Pevsner, Fleming, & Honour, 1976, pp. 160-161). On one hand, in this sense, the most radical architectural expressionism or abstract sculpture-architecture was never built in Germany. Even Erich Mendelsohn's (1887-1953) Einstein Tower (1924) in Potsdam, the most representative example of this movement in Germany, housed a solar telescope. On the other hand, German Expressionism in visual arts is featured as a response to a similar spiritual background as found in French Fauvism. Both appeared around 1905, during the first decades of 20th century Europe. Unlike the French, which developed from post-Impressionism arts, the German origin derived directly from German Nature-lyrism. It stood at the boundary where artists' insufficiencies in representational images transformed into a desire of symbolism created through spiritual response. Some artists tried to simplify objective forms into a concise core, where colors drove into contrasting tensions (Haftmann, 1983). Such a tendency leads to an "abstraction and an unprecedented freedom in choice of materials and subject matters" and it "enabled painters to divorce color from the traditional demands of representational art" (Bomford & Roy, 2000, p. 7). Taut's use of color over form is demonstrated when he is called "one of the most prominent representatives" (Abalos, 2011) or "a pioneer instigator and advocate" (Boyer, n.d.) of the German expressionist movement in architecture. In fact, he was the most ardent and consequential advocate of "new colorism in architecture" (Herrel, 1994, p. 99).

Upon his arrival in Japan, Taut expected himself to be introduced as an Expressionist, an advocate of color architecture, and a utopian socialist. However, the Japanese who invited and received him, with some exceptions, emphasized modernist aspects of International or Constructive styles with functionalism, so-called "white cubic style," which was not his inclination. This gap affected his activities as an architect in Japan.

This chapter aims to illuminate Taut's attitudes toward color, which shifted from those in Magdeburg to those showcased in Japan. First, his early experiences and focus on color led to the formation of his color conception. This chapter will discuss this aspect in his career, including color application in the design of garden cities and Expressionist activities. Then, this chapter will explore his experiments in Magdeburg, as well as reflect on his architectural activities in Berlin. Next, this chapter will compare the gap between Taut's ideas and those of the Japanese architects who received and introduced him as a modernist. Although his inclinations toward colors were conspicuous, they had not been recognized as modernism features because his supporters wanted to view him as a modernist with an International or Constructive style (Inoue, 2016). This chapter will conclude by discussing Taut's colors and significant work in Japan.

CAREER AND COLOR CONCEPTION

It is essential to study Taut's biography to understand how he became interested in the use of color in architecture. Born in Königsberg, Germany, Taut attended an architectural school, *Baugewerkschule*, from 1897 to 1901, as a mason apprentice after his high-school graduation (the Gymnasium of Kneiphof. cf. *Baugewerkschule Königsberg*, 1901 and 1917). The school required two-year apprenticeships; therefore, Taut worked in concrete architecture and as site foreman at the office of architect Theodor Gutzeit before his enrollment in 1899. Concrete work and masonry provided Taut with valuable knowledge about architectural materials (textures and colors) and the ability to contrast those materials with their surroundings. After completing his training in 1902, Taut worked in Hamburg-Altona and Wiesbaden.

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