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An Afternoon Tea at the Eames House

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In 2012, a tea ceremony was held at the Charles and Ray Eames House, attended by a shy number of guests. The event was intended to recall another that had taken place in the same space sixty years ago, when the Eameses had received distinguished guests such as Charlie Chaplin and Isamu Noguchi. On both occasions, the Eameses' 'select and arrange' aesthetics, together with the artistic interventions of their guests, created a bare scenography, rather Westernised, that served as the basis for the celebration. These events, as well as the elements and guests who gathered there, represent but a small sample of Eames' link with Japanese design and architecture, and particularly the embodiment of some common ideals manifested in their own iconic Californian home, becoming essential chapters in the unique story of this building.



"It is difficult to understand this spirituality as it is not the same for everyone, (...) on the contrary, it is individual. *Chashitsu* (the tearoom) exists as one's spiritual space. And then others arrive, bringing with themselves their own and personal spiritual space. And that's where we gather and talk, sharing the spirituality of the moment."

Terunobu Fujimori¹

On the 10th of March 2012, the Eames House in California once again displayed tatami mats in the living room. The mats, eight, in particular, were laid out on the floor in an almost rectangular shape near the corner most open to the garden.

Nine LTR (Low Table Rod) tables, designed by the couple in 1950, with their black and white surfaces, are arranged in an L-shape, away from the wall, forcing the connection to the outside. Several of the iconic LCW (Lounge Chair Wood) chairs, designed in 1946 in three-dimensional moulded plywood, shown here in natural colour and lacquered in black, red or white, stand behind the nine tables waiting to welcome the guests. Between the chairs and the rear wall, there is an interior garden made of stones and some flowerpots.

On that date, two of Charles and Ray Eames' grandchildren, Lucia Atwood and Eames Demetrios, who are part of the Eames Foundation's management team, organised a symbolic tea ceremony at the house to raise funds for the Foundation, which is responsible for the restoration and conservation of the house. Only twelve privileged people were able to attend the event², which recalled a first ceremony that took place in 1951, and which would be significantly officiated by Sosei Shizuye Matsumoto: sixty years earlier, she had been in the same place with her husband Eddie Matsumoto and the 15th generation Grandmaster of the Urasenke Tea School, Genshitsu Sen³. Sosei had met the Eameses through

Mitsuhiko Sen, friend and architect of the Huntington Library Teahouse and Genshitsu's younger brother.

A folded L-shaped folding screen is arranged in the glazed corner to form a symbolic *tokonoma*. Above it hangs the *kakemono*, a vertically unfolded scroll with calligraphy that reads: "the sound of the kettle is like the wind through the pines"⁴. To begin the cha-ji in the traditional ritual, i.e. tea ceremony, participants must gaze at the laid out scroll, which has been selected according to the season.

In this case, the chosen phrase had been written by the great master of the 14th generation of the Urasenke school, Tantansai, in the 1940s, and it only seemed fitting to recall that first ceremony. A small *ikebana* arrangement was placed directly in front of it, putting the finishing touches to the setting.

Five students accompanied Mrs. Matsumoto on this unique evening, and her niece, Etsuko Ota, performed the tea ceremony using exactly the same utensils that were used the night of 1951: a black lacquered *natsume*⁵ by Kōetsu with the symbol of Kyoto's Kōdaiji Temple (chrysanthemum and paulownia), the main *chawan*⁶ (served to Eames Demetrios as the first guest) which was a black copy in the style of Nonomura Ninsei with bamboo motif made by Kyūho, and the tea spoon, *chashaku*, carved by Tantansai, which was poetically named 'Sai Rai', meaning 'to meet again' (fig. 01).

The Japanese expression *ichi-go ichi-e*, which literally means 'one life, one meeting', describes a cultural concept often attributed to the famous tea master Sen no Rikyū. Frequently associated with transience, it takes on a special significance in the tea ceremony, reminding participants that each meeting is unique and should be treasured in memory as it can never be repeated. Despite the meeting-again connotation, each of these celebrations was undoubtedly an *ichi-go ichi-e*.

TEA CEREMONY WITH CHARLES AND RAY

In the usual images of the Eames House (fig. 02), the interior is filled with furniture, plants, art objects and assorted collections; items that the Smithsons - friends and ardent admirers of the Eameses - would define as "signs of occupancy"⁷. They

constituted a way of *appropriating* a place and contributed to transforming the living space, to individualising the image of a serialised architecture from which the design of the dwelling had started⁸. Thus, in the original proposal, published in *Arts & Architecture* in December 1945, the living room was described as "pure enjoyment of space in which elements could be put in and taken out"; they spoke of creating "a continually evolving spatial collage"⁹ in their home. Art works were constantly collected, displayed and rearranged throughout the space, on the floor, walls and even the ceiling, from which paintings, plants or other ephemeral decorations were suspended.

It was an attitude that the Smithsons called "the Eames aesthetics", based on the technique of 'select and arrange'¹⁰, which allows us to understand the Eames architecture from the point of view of scenographic design¹¹, as we can appreciate in the indoor photographs of the living room, or the slides of their film *House: After Five Years of Living* (1955); an attitude that portrays the celebration of the quotidian and considers it as something magical, that treasures disparate objects and 'select and arrange' them according to the moment.

Against this cluttered interior, a few black and white photographs taken in 1951 show an unusually bare house. The Eameses' 'select and arrange' has been minimised, for a very special occasion, to just "a few tatamis and akari" strategically placed in the vast living room next to the glazed corner¹² (fig. 03). The Eameses were friendly hosts who welcomed plenty of friends and acquaintances into their home. On this occasion, in keeping with

their admiration for Japanese aesthetics, they held a truly unique traditional tea ceremony on 24 July 1951. Charlie Chaplin and Isamu Noguchi were present as guests of honour, among other attendees such as Christian and Henrietta Lederbom, Iris Tree and the actors Betty Harford and Ford Rainey¹³. Sosei Shizuye Matsumoto would lead the ceremony and his pupil, actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi, would prepare a *sukiyaki* meal for the attendees, at Chaplin's request (fig. 04). Later, he himself, who admired Japan and appreciated the tea ceremony¹⁴, and had even studied *Kabuki*, *Kyōgen* and *Nō* theatre to shape and perfect his own art, delighted the audience with a *Nō* dance¹⁵. Chaplin struck up a lasting friendship with Yoshiko Yamaguchi, who would marry Isamu Noguchi shortly after the tea ceremony on 15 December 1951¹⁶.

The young actress appears in two other unique photographs of the house, dressed in a different kimono from the one she wore at the famous celebration, so we can assume that it was from another date close to the ceremony, or in the moments prior to its preparation. In one of them, Yoshiko is by herself in the middle of the room, sitting on a cushion and meditating at the end of a rectangular composition of eight tatamis. A horizontally suspended panel clearly marks the space in height, and on the wood-panelled wall there is an intriguing composition, "quite Eames", derived from their 'The Toy', a construction game they had created that same year with a language resembling the one from their "Chinese kites"¹⁷. In front of this geometric background, two Akari lamps, designed by Noguchi, dominate the scene. In the opposite corner to Yamaguchi and in the foreground, on a lacquered wooden board, rests the *chagama*, the pot for boiling water at the ceremony, and a floral arrangement (fig. 05).

In the other photograph, the artist is wearing the same kimono (fig. 06), and stands next to Noguchi, who is dressed in more casual clothes than he would have worn at the ceremony. Both are standing in front of the door leading to the event, next to the side courtyard. As it can be observed in this photograph (also in fig. 03), a transverse panel has been placed in the doorway, intentionally lowering the lintel, to form a *nijiriguchi*, the small entrance to the tearoom, making visitors bend down in a symbol of the definitive abandonment of the everyday world.

Once inside, the interior layout corresponds to the first part of the event, i.e. the tea ceremony itself, with the eight tatamis placed together and two clearly differentiated areas on these: the one with the coloured cushions for the guests, further away from the glass enclosures and facing them, and the one in the opposite corner, which will be occupied by the tea master, Sosei Matsumoto, assisted by Yamaguchi (fig. 08). This is a formal and restrained arrangement which emphasises the solemnity of the ceremony as well as its theatricality, with the tea master performing a series of prescribed movements and the guests in front of her observing her contained gestures and losing themselves in contemplation of the scene. In the words of Kakuzo Okakura, "the tearoom was an oasis where weary travellers could gather to drink from the common source of the love for art. The ceremony was an improvised drama revolving around tea, flowers and paintings"¹⁸.

Following Okakura's words again, we see how this ceremony strikes a curious contrast with the traditional idea of the house and the tea ceremony, since, according to him, the house "implies a structure created to satisfy an individual artistic demand" and, therefore, "the tearoom is made for the master, not the master for the room"¹⁹. In this space, however, this artistic individuality has been lost, producing a set of individualities, with related or like-minded sensibilities, in many cases close to or interested in Japanese aesthetics, but with their own characteristic culture and creativity.

Thus, on the wooden wall that acts as a conceptual *tokonoma*, in addition to the Eames decoration, and the Akari, a light Eames centipede is placed in the corner, resembling both his animal

kites, ephemeral and natural elements which hung from the ceiling of the great hall, and the centipede-shaped sculpture, made by Noguchi himself in ceramic during his productive stay in Japan the following year²⁰. The decoration of the scene is completed by yet another singular object which, from then on, 'wanders' around the space of the great room: a miniature garden, a mobile rectangular metal planter, roughly the size of a tatami, covered in small white stones and on which are placed vases and pots with plants, ferns and, above all, *monstera*s or 'Adam's ribs', which will always have a place in the Eames living room, and which will reach considerable size and acquire prominence in their saturated world full of objects.

No other images have survived of the more formal part of the ceremony, apart from the one showing Yoshiko's self-absorbed presence and others displaying the elements arranged in an uninhabited space. On the contrary, there are numerous photographs of the *kaiseki*, the more informal part of the celebration in which food is shared, which allow us to appreciate the arrangement of the elements in space, as well as that of the participants, although some of them will change position throughout the images (fig. 07).

At this point, the tatami that had previously been grouped together are moved, leaving three close to the glass, on which there are three LTR tables occupied by Ray and probably Betty Hartford and Charles, one on each side; although the latter will never be seen sitting on the tatami mats, as he and Noguchi will be the main photographers. On the opposite side of the room, two more tatami mats, almost next to the wooden wall and separated from the previous ones by the distance of another tatami mat, are occupied by whom we can consider the most prominent guests: Charlie Chaplin in the middle, Iris Tree on his left and a space alternately occupied by Yoshiko and Isamu Noguchi on his right. Between these two groups, and following the first three, a tatami occupied by Henrietta and Christian Lederbom, on which the only *Akari* that will remain in this part of the ceremony rests, as the main source of illumination for the space, and then the mobile planter closing the corner. Opposite this tatami, but not quite in line with the others, will be the last of seven tatamis, which will be occupied by Ford Rainey and, at some point, from what can be deduced in the pictures, by Isamu Noguchi. Almost in the centre of the space, under the panel which limits the scale of the room, either in a more comfortable position or in the more formal posture of *seiza*, resting on their knees, is the tea master's space, to be occupied by Sosei Matsumoto and Yoshiko Yamaguchi (fig. 08). Here, the original floor of the house has been left bare and, on it, we see a large circular tray and the mistress, with a small brazier and a pot in which she will prepare the food. The arrangement of the diners and of each element that makes up the scene, the small pieces of furniture and the multitude of containers for the food, do not seem excessively rigid, but undoubtedly correspond to an unmistakable Japanese taste, in which the elements are arranged "for a painter's view"²¹, but with a high degree of naturalness and asymmetry, as Roland Barthes points out, and perfectly illustrates the position of the tea master in the central space. At the same time, it is in keeping with the Eames aesthetic and the configuration of space, with the 'select and arrange' that constitutes the sign of the occupancy of space.

The contrasting reduction and scenographic restraint has been attributed to Isamu Noguchi.²² Yoke-Sum Wong explains that Charles Eames had confessed that after the tea ceremony, the house remained empty, and they had enjoyed the open space, but then over time everything returned, 'little by little', until the images of the house that we were used to were brought back again, full of various found objects, *selected and arranged*. Thus, the scenography of the tea ceremony probably resembles more the initial drawings of the naked container that were printed in *Arts & Architecture* in September 1949²³.

THE EAMES HOUSE, A WESTERN TEA PAVILION?

Charles and Ray had not visited Japan before building their home, but there certainly are myriad of aspects of the house which are reminiscent of Japanese design. Among the many visitors to their home, and before and after the tea ceremony

previously described, were several Japanese celebrities who had more than likely nurtured their admiration for oriental art and customs. Through Isamu Noguchi, for example, the Eames met the designer Isamu Kenmochi in 1950 and the painter Genichiro Inokuma, who paid a visit in 1955. In 1951, the year of the ceremony, the 15th generation tea grandmaster of the Urasenke Tea School, Genshitsu Sen, visited the house. In 1952, Torao "Tiger" Saito, editor of Japan Today magazine, visited the house and introduced the Eames' work to Japan through his articles²⁴ at a time when, after the Second World War, Japan was paying particular attention to American design²⁵. In 1953, the renowned ceramicists Shōji Hamada and Bernard Leach also visited the house, as did the thinker Sōetsu Yanagi, a key figure in the founding of the Mingei movement, whose exaltation of everyday beauty and functional objects would probably have been much appreciated by Charles and Ray. The Eameses would later travel to Japan, both for work and leisure²⁶, and the house began to reflect more clearly the architects' admiration for Japanese architecture and culture, to the extent that, as Alison Smithson, who would soon recognise the Japanese influence on the house²⁷, would say, much of Japan's influence came to the West through the Eameses²⁸.

This influence had been evident in Los Angeles architecture since the beginning of the 20th century, especially in the way interior and exterior spaces were linked²⁹. Pat Kirkham underlines the reminiscence of traditional Japanese architecture in the Eames House by its emphasis on lightness, elegance, simplicity and geometry³⁰. The structural grid is key in this respect. Plyon's wood-framed screens³¹, which slide along the façade, were placed at the top of the house and at the bottom of the studio with the initial aim of providing sun protection and privacy. Their appearance and function are therefore similar to the characteristic translucent *shōji* panels of the Japanese house, and in the same way they allow one to particularly enjoy the shadows of the eucalyptus trees dancing around them as the light changes.

The constant connection between the inside and the outside, framed by this almost invisible structure of steel and glass, is also a common feature between the Eames House and the Japanese house. The two courtyards of the Santa Monica house, one between the house and the studio and the other to the south of the house, are defined by fine wooden lines and configured with a modular grid, inside which grass, red brick, marble or wood can be seen. Planting in the courtyards is restrained, emphasising the textures of the elements surrounding the plants, as in a traditional Japanese garden. Interestingly, in the south courtyard a single, small bonsai stands out among the red bricks³².

Even more striking is the way in which the house is placed in its surroundings, resembling some of the traditional teahouses described by Kakuzo Okakura or the drawings of Bruno Taut (fig. 09). According to Okakura, "the *sukiya* consists of the tearoom itself (...), an antechamber (*mizuya*) where the tea utensils are washed and prepared before being brought into the room, a veranda (*machiai*) where guests wait until they are ushered in, and a path (the *rōji*) connecting the *machiai* with the tearoom". Similarly, the entrance to the living room, which will be used for the tea ceremony, is not near the entrance to the site, but on the opposite side, which means a route flanking the side of the two constructions, the house and the studio, along a path delimited by tall eucalyptus trees. In the 1951 ceremony, the access path would therefore serve as the *rōji*. The double-height entrance portico would act as the *machiai*, and a raised tatami was positioned in front of the door, which, like

the stones placed at the entrance to the teahouses, would mark the end of the *rōji* and the necessary mental separation from the outside world before entering the teahouse. At this point we find the *nijiriguchi* transposed to the Eames House, the access of reduced dimensions developed by Sen no Rikyū, which equalises the status of the participants, as they must bend down and practically crawl to enter the room.

The constant scenographic change that the interior of the house undergoes to accommodate different moments, situations and domestic celebrations can also be linked to what happens in the tea pavilion, an "Abode of the Void", as Kakuzo Okakura would say, which takes delight in the ephemeral: "The term 'Abode of the Void', besides conveying the Taoist theory of the inclusiveness of the whole, conveys the idea of a continuous need to change decorative motifs. The tearoom is absolutely empty, except for the changing elements, arranged to satisfy a temporary, almost momentary aesthetic taste". However, as he later points out, "... the way we decorate our tea rooms is in contrast to the Western system, in which the interior of an ideal house often resembles a museum"³³. Thus, we can speak of a "Westernised Japaneseness" in the Eameses, a similar attitude but one that employs juxtaposition rather than "centrality" as a compositional method, where "all other elements are selected and presented to enhance the main one"³⁴. It is no coincidence that the Smithsons similarly alluded to the fundamental difference between Japanese and Western homes: "storage goes unnoticed in the spaces and at the same time defines them, unlike the Western house, which has always tended to show everything"³⁵ (fig. 10).

In any case, the flexibility sought in the interior of the home, the search for a lower point of view to enhance the enjoyment of the space, with its usual scenographic changes, are also features shared with Japanese design. The Eameses emphasised this with the double height in both the studio and the living room, the use of carpets (if not tatamis) and low furniture: Indian seats in carved and painted wood, or directly on cushions in a variety of colours and patterns, and the versatile LTR side table which, with its 25 centimetres of height, would become the undeniable protagonist of the tea ceremony.

Beyond the formal evidence and parallels we can discern, it is probably Charles' own words that shed more light on the connection between the Eames House and traditional Japanese architecture, particularly that of the teahouse. In an article published in *Architectural Forum* in 1953, Charles points out how traditional Japanese constructions, whether objects or buildings, seem to make use of the humblest materials to provide solutions that imply a heightened understanding of human needs, as well as the relationship between these creations and the scale of the body itself³⁶.

Even more enlightening is the letter he wrote to Genshitsu Sen³⁷ on the occasion of the tea ceremony in 1951. "Any feeling I may have about the relationship of this beautiful and ancient ceremony with the architecture it harbors can only be based on an intuitive feeling, since I have no extensive knowledge of either"³⁸, Charles writes with some humility, but allows himself to draw what he sees as the greatest parallel between the two: "The most important thing (the house) has in common with the Japanese teahouse is the fact that it uses extremely humble materials in a natural and uncontrived way. The bare, unadorned I-beams and the open, latticed steel beams largely serve as the bare wooden structural elements of the teahouse", nuancing how, in this simple, bare space, "the intrusion (...) of tables and chairs in a westernised version seems to me quite shocking"³⁹, reflecting on the need for the space to retain its essence, and probably also on the furniture and objects he and Ray designed for the famous ceremony; a reflection that could be extended to the even more westernised 2012 ceremony.

In these statements we can see that there is a common essence, something that goes beyond mere appearance

and approaches a form of understanding, a shared attitude.

This is summed up by Charles in the following sentence, which is enlightening: "Conceptually, the environment must be modest, sensitive and discreet"⁴⁰.

According to Okakura, "(the tearoom) is an Abode of Fancy inasmuch as it is an ephemeral structure built to harbor a poetic impulse. It is an Abode of Vacancy inasmuch as it is devoid of ornamentation except for what may be placed in it to satisfy some aesthetic need of the moment"⁴¹. These beautiful descriptions could well have been written for the Eames House. The 'magic factory'⁴², which hosted both ceremonies is configured as a container in which the aesthetic impulses of its owners are collected and displayed through the objects arranged there and their ever-changing character.

It was also a shared space in which these poetic impulses could be given free rein, with some found objects and others created by the authors or by those who visited the house and temporarily made it their own, and which, arranged in heterogeneous groups in this empty space, revealed all their aesthetic potential. Above all, however, the house is a simple container, built as a shelter with humble materials and on a human scale, a sensitive space that is a faithful reflection of a way of life and a showcase for the elements that make up its unique way of inhabitation. These moments of life, when the house becomes a real tea pavilion, reinforce the successful enjoyment of its spatiality.

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Notes

- 01.** FUJIMORI, Terunobu, "Chashitsu: Camere da tè. La camera da tè, lo spazio minimo", in *Casabella*, February 2008, n° 763, pp. 40-60. Translation and text in brackets by the authors of this text.
- 02.** Each of the attendees paid \$5,000 for their entrance to the event. See RAWSTHORN, Alice, "Preserving Fragile Memories of Genius", en *The New York Times*, 22/01/2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/23/arts/design/preserving-fragile-memories-of-genius.html?_r=0 (retrieved on: 20/01/2023)
- 03.** As was customary in traditional Japanese culture, males, especially those from families of a certain social status, would acquire different names throughout their lives. In this case, all the heads of the Urasenke tea school in Kyoto, one of the three main schools and direct descendants of Sen no Rikyū, share the name of Sōshitsu Sen (Sōshitsu being the first name and Sen the "family name", or surname according to Western nomenclature) at the time they hold that position. Genshitsu, would be the name that the 15th generation master adopted when he retired from his position, and Hōunsai is his appellation or title as a Zen practitioner. In addition to the above, he has also been known as Masaoki, as his birth name, and as Soko Sen, the name by which Charles Eames will refer to him. Throughout the article, he will be referred to as Genshitsu, to differentiate him from the current Grandmaster, the 16th generation, who goes by the name of Sōshitsu Sen.
- 04.** GARCÍA, Dan, "Invitation to Tea", en *The Rafu Shimpō*, 4/11/2012. <https://rafu.com/2012/04/invitation-to-tea/> (retrieved on: 20/01/2023). This expression also appears in Kakuzo Okakura's well-known reference work "The Book of Tea". OKAKURA, Kakuzo, *El libro del té*, Olañeta, Palma, 2011, p. 60.
- 05.** *Natsume* is the vessel containing *matcha*, which is traditionally used in the Japanese tea ceremony.
- 06.** The tea bowl, or *chawan*, is always the 'ultimate work of art' in the tea ceremony and is often priceless.

- 07.** SMITHSON, Alison; SMITHSON, Peter, *Signs of occupancy/ Signos de ocupación*, (CD) Ala+2, Barcelona, 2003.
- 08.** For the construction of the Eames House, the architects selected the metal parts from a steel manufacturer's catalogue. The original plan for the house, usually referred to as the "bridge house" in explicit reference to Mies van der Rohe, was modified because of the difficulty of obtaining the steel in time, so they designed a new layout using exactly the same parts that had been ordered for the previous project. The new proposal, which took only a day and a half to assemble structurally, was published in *Arts & Architecture*, May 1949. FERNÁNDEZ VILLALOBOS, Nieves. "House of Cards: el 'continente' Eames en una baraja de cartas", en *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, May 2019, n° 20, p. 91.
- 09.** KOENIG, Gloria, *Eames*, Taschen, Colonia, 2005, p. 47.
- 10.** SMITHSON, Peter, "Concealment & Display: Meditations on Braun", en *Architectural Design*, julio 1966. Quoted in SMITHSON, Alison & Peter, *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, p. 79. See also *Without Rethoric*, Latimer, 1973 (In Spanish: *Sin Retórica*, Puente Editores, Barcelona 2023, p. 53).
- 11.** COLOMINA, Beatriz, "Reflexiones sobre la casa Eames", en *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, 2007, n° 9, p. 6.
- 12.** In Noguchi's own words, "All you need to start a home is a room, a tatami mat and an Akari". <https://shop.noguchi.org/collections/akari-light-sculptures>
- 13.** According to Yoke-Sum Wong, Iris Tree's son, the screenwriter Ivan Moffat, was also in attendance, although it is impossible to say for certain as he does not appear in any of the photograph. WONG, Yoke-Sum, "The Future is Hybrid: Isamu Noguchi and the Mid-Century Modern", in *Feelings of Structures*, MQUP Press, Montreal, 2018.
- 14.** CHAPLIN, Charlie; GÓMEZ DE LA SERNA, July (traducción), *Autobiografía*, Lumen, Barcelona, 2014, pp. 527-529.

- 15.** WONG, Y, *op. cit.*
- 16.** DOVAL, Gonzalo (coord.), *Metamorfosis en barro: Noguchi en Kamakura* [exhibition, fundación ICO, Madrid, from 10th October 2006 to 7th January 2007], Fundación ICO, Madrid, 2006, p. 15 y 102.
- 17.** EAMES, Charles, ©Life in a Chinese Kite: Standard Industrial Products Assembled in a Spacious Wonderland", in *Architectural Forum*, September 1950, pp. 90-96.
- 18.** OKAKURA, K, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
- 19.** *Ibid.* p. 62.
- 20.** DOVAL, G., *op. cit.*, p. 113.
- 21.** "Totally visual (conceived, arranged, managed for the eye, even for the eye of a painter, a graphic artist), food here claims not to be profound: the edible substance lacks a precious heart, a buried strength, a vital secret: no Japanese dish has a centre [...], it is all an ornament of another ornament: first of all because on the table, on the plate, food is always a collection of fragments, none of which seems privileged". BARTHES, Roland; GARCÍA ORTEGA, Adolfo (foreword), *El imperio de los signos*, Seix Barral, Barcelona, 2007, p. 30.
- 22.** WONG, Y., *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 23.** EAMES, Charles, "Case Study House for 1949: the plan", in *Arts & Architecture* 66, September 1949, n° 9, p. 38-39.
- 24.** NEUHART, John; NEUHART, Marilyn; EAMES, Ray, *Eames Design. The work of the Office of Charles & Ray Eames*, Harry N. Abrams Publishers, Nueva York, 1989, p. 167.
- 25.** KIRKHAM, Pat. *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 2001, p. 365.
- 26.** In December 1957 Charles and Ray travelled to Japan for the first time; in 1961 Ray travelled to Japan alone; in 1978 Ray travelled to Japan three more times.
- 27.** Alison Smithson stated in a brochure printed for the opening of the Eames IDZ exhibition, Berlin, 5 September 1979, that they had "recognised the Japanese influence" in the Eames House as early as 1958, when they first visited and photographed it. SMITHSON, Alison, Opening of the Eames exhibition, IDZ, Berlin, 5 September 1979, extract from a brochure printed for the occasion. In "Eames' Dreams", *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, p. 83.
- 28.** "Suddenly Japan realised its West Coast influence, the luxury of simplicity and orderliness of the interior, the beautiful wrappings, the Kleenex. And the West Coast influence came to us through the Eameses". SMITHSON, Alison, "Eames and now Dharmas are dying out in Japan", *Architectural Design*, September 1966. In: *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, p. 77.
- 29.** STEELE, James. "The Japanese influence". In *Eames House. Charles and Ray Eames*, Phaidon, Londres, 2004, pp. 20-24.
- 30.** KIRKHAM, P., *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 31.** Plyon is a material produced by Swedlow Plastics Company during the Second World War, originally used as a plastic support for self-sealing fuel cells in aircraft. By the end of the war, the material was in surplus, and its lightness, flexibility and translucent appearance were exploited for use in industrial partitions.
- 32.** WILLIAMS, Kelsey Rose, "A Feeling of Japan", en *Eamesfoundation.org*, <https://eamesfoundation.org/news/three-elements-that-make-the-eames-house-feel-japanese> (retrieved on: 20/01/2023).
- 33.** OKAKURA, K., *op. cit.*, p. 65.
- 34.** *Idem.*
- 35.** A comment they made as an explanation of their Appliances Houses. SMITHSON, Alison, "The Future of furniture", in *Interior Design Supplement, Architectural Design*, April 1958, Vol XXVIII, Wiley, Londres, 1930, pp. 175-178. Quoted by FERNÁNDEZ VILLALOBOS, Nieves: "Japón y occidente. Encuentros y desencuentros tras la II Posguerra", in *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura*, November 2015, n° 13, p. 61.
- 36.** This issue contains the opinions of sixteen Western architects who were asked about Japanese architecture. EAMES, Charles, "Japan Architecture and the West",

in *Architectural Forum* 98, January 1953, n° 1, pp. 143-148. Quoted in EAMES, Charles & Ray, *An Eames anthology*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 111.

37. The letter is addressed to Soko Sen, dated 26 October 1951. EAMES, C. & R., *An Eames Anthology*, p. 92. In addition to the above text, in the letter, Charles thanks her for the fan and yukata that the tea master gave them through Sosei Matsumoto (whom he refers to as "Susi"), and in this outfit he can be seen in some photographs.

38. *Idem*

39. *Idem*.

40. *Idem*.

41. OKAKURA, K., *op. cit.*, p. 52.

42. Alison Smithson would refer to the Eames House as "a secret home of the magic factory". SMITHSON, Alison, Opening of the Eames exhibition, IDZ, Berlin, 5 September 1979, extract from a brochure printed for the occasion. In "Eames' Dreams", *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*, Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2001, p. 83.

Images

01. On the left. Utensils for the tea ceremony on the tatami, with the folding screen, the calligraphy and the flower arrangement in the background.

On the right. Image of the tea ceremony held at the Eames House in March 2012, with the guests seated on the LCW chairs and the LTR tables in front of them.

Photograph: Eames Foundation. © 2012 Eames Office, LLC.

Published in: <https://eamesfoundation.org/events/japanese-tea-ceremony/>

02. Charles and Ray Eames in the living room of their California home, filled with furniture, rugs, lamps, plants and other unique objects selected by them.

Photograph: Hap Johnson para la Eames Office. © 2012 Eames Office LLC. Published in: DEMETRIOS, Eames, *Beautiful Designs*, Ammo Books, California, 2012, p. 341

03. The Eames House living room prepared for the tea ceremony, that took place on 24 July 1951. We can see on the right two Akari lamps by Isamu Noguchi. and on the left, the tatami and cushions for the guests, and near the corner of the room, the *chagama* and flower arrangement.

Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37419>

04. Tea ceremony held at the Eames House on 24 July 1951. Attendees, from left to right: Isamu Noguchi, Ray Eames, Yoshiko Yamaguchi, Sosei Matsumoto, Charlie Chaplin, Henrietta Lederbom, Iris Tree, Betty Hartford, Christian Lederbom and Ford Rainey. Photograph by Charles Eames. Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37431>

05. Actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi, fiancée of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi, alone in the living room of the Eames House in the run-up to the tea ceremony on 24 July 1951. Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: EAMES, Charles & Ray, *An Eames Anthology*, Yale

University Press, New Haven and London, 2015.

06. Isamu Noguchi and Yoshiko Yamaguchi in front of the entrance to the Eames House, California (1951). Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37434>

07. *Kaiseki* from the tea ceremony held on 24 July 1951 at the Eames House, where we can see some of the attendees seated on the tatami and surrounding the central space occupied by the tea master, in this case, Yoshiko Yamaguchi. Photograph: Charles Eames. Published in: © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York / ARS <https://archive.noguchi.org/Detail/archival/37429>

08. Above. Arrangement of the interior space of the living room during the ceremony: white rectangle_tatami / grey square_cushion / black circle_akari / dark grey rectangle_chagama / green line_interior garden.

Arrangement of the attendants:

1. Position of the tea master / 2. Below. Arrangement of the interior space during *kaiseki*: white rectangle_tatami / light grey square_cushion / black circle_akari / dark grey rectangle_LTR table / in green line_interior garden.

Arrangement of assistants: 0. Position of the tea master (Sosei Matsumoto and Yoshiko Yamaguchi) / 1-3. Charles Eames or Betty Hartford / 2. Ray Eames / 4. Christian Lederbom / 5. Henrietta Lederbom / 6. Alternatively, Isamu Noguchi, Yoshiko Yamaguchi or Sosei Matsumoto / 7. Charlie Chaplin / 8. Iris Tree / 9. Ford Rainey / 10. Isamu Noguchi. Drawing made by the authors of the article.

09. Above. Eames House roof plan casting the shadows of the eucalyptus trees. Below. Bruno Taut. Diagram of a tea house and garden, with a side path lined with trees. Above. Published in: EAMES, Charles & Ray, *An Eames Anthology*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2015. Below. Published in: TAUT, Bruno; GAROÍA ROIG, José Manuel (ed). *La casa y la vida*

japonesas. Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, Barcelona, 2007.

10. Alison & Peter Smithson: Two diagrams showing the Western organisation space (left) and the Japanese house (right). In the latter, the storage space is separated from the living space, which flows freely through the volume of the house, hiding what is not of interest.

Published in: SMITHSON, Alison: "The Future of furniture", in *Interior Design Supplement, Architectural Design*, April 1958, Vol XXVIII, pp. 175-178. Frances Loeb Library. Harvard University Graduate School of Design.