Global Architect's Education
—Tea Room Database of Interactive Online Workshops—

Adriana PICCININI HIGASHINO[1]

[1] *Associate Professor, National Institute of Technology, Akashi College*

Abstract

Educating architects with a global perspective is a challenge that all institutions across the world are now facing. At Akashi College, in the department of architecture we have developed several programs that receive foreign students or send our students abroad to give them a global perspective to architectural training. Among those programs the Tea Room Workshop, where Japanese and Brazilian students work together on the design for a tearoom, was the most successful. As we have experienced during the Tea Room Workshop, working with typical elements of Japanese culture is a good method to instigate international exchange and global education. However, the cost of coming to Japan or going abroad limited the number of students that can participate in these workshops. We expect that by using new information technologies we will be able to develop tools that would permit the realization of workshops online, through which several students could work together on the design for a tearoom. The workshops would take place at an online interactive platform, which would also store tutorials about Japanese traditional architecture and the material produced by the students, such as videos or drawings.

Keywords: International Exchange; Design Workshop; Tea Room; Interactive Interface

Introduction

Due to the globalization of the working market it became very important to train students to work with people from different cultural background. The Japanese Ministry of Education has encouraged the globalization of education through scholarships programs, which receive foreign students at Japanese schools and send Japanese students to study abroad.

Tea drinking is a current practice in several countries and in different cultural context. The kind of tea and the way of drinking it changes according to the cultural context, but the use of the action of drinking tea as a tool for socializing resembles. Therefore, drinking tea as means of socializing is a global concept. However, among the tea drinking country Japan is the only culture that created a space, the Tea Room, specially and only for drinking tea. We chose the Tea Room as main theme for workshops because drinking tea is a global concept but Tearoom is something unique to Japanese Culture. At Akashi College we held several programs to receive foreign students and to send our students abroad. Among those programs the tearoom design workshops with international students had results much better than expected, and our students after participating in these activities have not only increased their communication skills but also showed a wider view and opinion about the world. Unfor-tunately, the number of scholarships are not enough and the cost of coming to Japan or going abroad limits the participation to few wealthy students.

Here we propose an interactive platform to allow the participation of a bigger number of students to participate in international exchange activities. The platform will permit students to works together in the design of a tearoom. In this proposal we will first briefly explain the characteristics of Japanese the tearoom, and later, based on our experience with Tea Room Design Workshops, we will propose the necessary elements of the interactive platform, its working system and preview its impact in our college.

What is a Japanese Tea Room?

Tea was introduced in Japan in the 8th Century but only became popular after the 16th Century. The concept of the tea room is very simple: a beautifully designed space for drinking tea. The idea is that the practice of drinking tea inside this special space makes the tea taste better than, for example, drinking tea on a paper cup at the franchised coffee shop. Yet the design of a tearoom also involves complex

Contact Author 1: Adriana Piccinini Higashino,
Associate Professor, National Institute of Technology, Akashi College
679-3 Nishioka, Uozumicho, Akashi, Hyogo, 674-8501Japan
Tel: +81-78-946-6221 Fax: +81-78-946-6221

concepts, such as Wabi-Sabi, and as the Meiji period (1868-1915) Scholar Okakura explained in his Book of Tea, the design of tearooms and tea related objects, tea ceremony in a whole synthetizes Japanese aesthetics values. Along the history there were several tea masters of strong influence on the development of the tearoom as an architectural style. Sen no Rikyū is the most famous tea master. In his tea rooms Rikyū eliminated not only unnecessary decoration but also unnecessary space, the tearooms had the minimum necessary size. The ultimate minimum tearoom, Taian, had only a two tatami mats size.
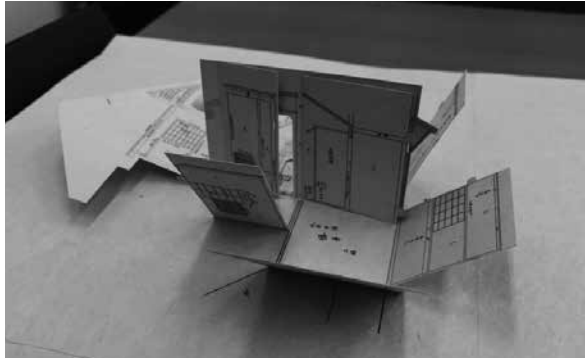

Fig.1. Example of okoshi-e, (1965) Horiguchi Sutemi

Tea Rooms were designed by tea masters and not carpenters, therefore it became necessary to create means for explaining the design of the structure that tea masters conceived and had to be constructed by carpenters. For that the tea masters created the okoshi-e, a set of drawings, including floor plan and elevations that can be pulled up and assembled as a paper model of the structure. (fig.1)

Tea Room: a tool for instigating international Exchange

The use of tearoom as theme for design workshops and international exchange was developed through experience, from various workshops realized at Akashi College. The first time we used "Tea Room" as a workshop theme was in July 2015 when we were asked to interact for one week with 16 Griffith University architecture students coming from. Later the theme was developed into a longer Japanese Architecture course taught for students from Brazil. We also held open lectures and international workshops using the okoshi-e as main theme.

Based on students' surveys evaluating the workshops, all students affirmed that the theme "Tea Room" was very interesting. Therefore, we can say that tearoom has proved to be an excellent theme for international exchange design workshops.

Tea Room Interactive Online Workshops

Design workshops, using tearoom as theme had worked greatly but due to financial restrictions the participation in these workshops is limited to a few number of students. Here we propose a platform that allows more students to experience these international design workshops. The purpose is to develop an interactive platform, which allows students from all around the world to work together on the design of a Tea Room. The platform should also include general information on tearooms and Japanese Traditional Architecture.

We propose a platform composed of three different levels of interactions (table1).

The first level of interaction with the platform is what we named as "passive user". Here are exposed information about tearooms and Japanese Traditional Architecture. The access to this level is open to the public in general and the information contained here is fed by students, who are expected to upload their tearoom designs and information they have researched on traditional Japanese architecture. The second level of interaction with the platform is called "semi-active". This level is also open to the public in general, but here the user can participate more. The platform would include quizzes about Japanese traditional architecture, where the user can check how much he or she has learned. It would also include sets of okoshi-e to be downloaded. The user can print out the okoshi-e sets and build paper models of famous tearooms and Japanese traditional architecture buildings. The information in this module is also fed by the students. Based on their research about tearooms the students elaborate okoshi-e drawings sets (Fig 2) that can be downloaded and printed.

The third level of interaction with the platform we called the "active" level and here only registered users can participate. This is the design workshop level and it would include an interactive chat window, something similar to SNS applications such as Line or Whats app, together with a sketch pad window, were students can add hand drawings and discuss about their design project (fig 3).

Types of Users	Level of Engagement	Evaluation	Participation Certificate	Who Can Participate	Upload Materials
Passive	👀	✕ NO	✕ NO	All	✕ NO
Semi-active	🧍	◯ YES	✕ NO	All	✕ NO
Active	👥	◯ YES	◯ YES	Associated Schools	◯ YES

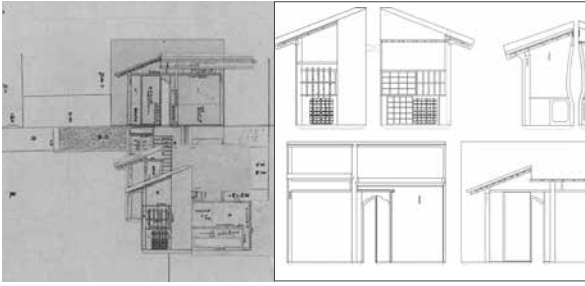Table.1. Levels of interaction and accessibility to the platform

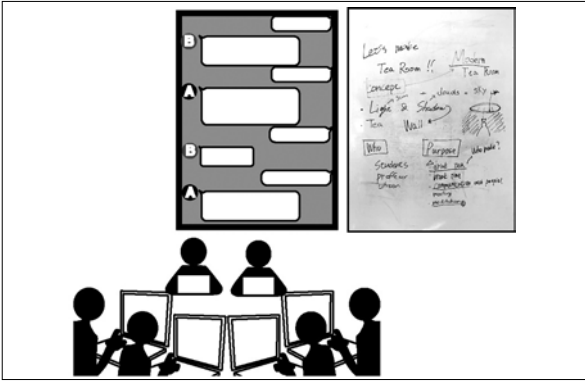Fig.2. Elaborations of downloadable okoshi-e drawings

Fig.3. Image of the Online Design workshop

In the workshop level the students work in groups under the orientation of their design teacher. The platform should allow several groups to work at the same time. The students would have to elaborate drawings, build models or 3G representation of their tearoom design. Using as reference the workshop we realized in the past years we estimate the necessity of eight workshops sections, with approximately 60 min. duration each, to finish the design of a tearoom. We also observed that after the students decide about their design, they divided the drawings and the work that must be prepared. In addition, according to our experience long periods of engagements tend to demotivate the students, so we suggest intense and short workshops. The workshop could be realized twice or three times a week, and the project should be finished in less than two weeks.

Finally, the students should gather and organize the information about their tearoom design in an explanatory video. The teachers in charge will evaluate the workshop results (video) and the students' engagement (upload of researched material). The students may receive a participation certification or course credits for their participation. The online workshop can be included in design studio activities.

Conclusions

As we have seen tearoom is a great subject for short-term international design workshops. By combining new IT technologies and mounting an inter-active platform we can create a space for students to work on design projects with students from abroad, and bring international experience to a larger number of participants.

References

1.Scholarships for visiting students are sponsored by the students' country or JASSO. Scholarships for studying abroad are all sponsored by the Japanese Government: JASSO and the Tobitate program from the Ministry of Education.

2."Wabi" means sober refinement and is associated to the idea of simplicity. It is expressed by the elimination of everything that is unnecessary, a concept similar to Mies van der Rohe's "Less is more". "Sabi" incorporates the idea that beauty can only be achieved through the passage of time, which explains why tearooms always incorporate materials from older structures.

3.Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913), Book of Tea first ed. 1906 http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/769

4.Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591) is famous for his Soan style tearooms that incorporate the concept of wabi-sabi, and because he worked for famous historical figures, such as Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598).

5.Tearooms were the first structures in Japanese traditional architecture that were not designed by carpenters. Since antiquity the buildings in Japan were planned and constructed by carpenters, and the elaboration of drawings or anything similar to transmit information about how the building should be built was not necessary. The family of carpenters had their secret treaties, which explained the proportional system they used, but those did not contain more than floor plan drawings.

6.A.P.Higashino, K.Kudoh, International Exchange x Architectural Design Education:Akashi College and UFRGS Tearoom Project Workshop Case Study, Proceedings of the 11th ISAIA, Sept.20-23, 2016, Miyagi, Japan

7.Drawings executed based on Horiguchi Sutemi (1963-1967) Okoshie Zushu (Vol. 1-12) Bokusui Shobo. 茶室おこし絵図集 堀口捨己監修 墨水書房 全12集1963～1967年刊