

Japan-bound University prof to study unique house design

The unique design of the Japanese folkhouse makes it a worthwhile model for contemporary housing, says a University architecture professor.

Guntis Plesums will do intensive research on the structures this summer while in Japan on a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. He will research and document the structural and spatial qualities of the Japanese folkhouse or minka.

Known only to a handful of specialists, the minka design method retains the ancient forms of Japanese architecture used in the 17th to 19th centuries. Its design is unique, allowing for adaptations and changes in the inner structure of the house without changing the main frame.

"This concept supports current housing theories which emphasize owner-controlled, adaptable structures. I plan to demonstrate how this design method can serve as a model for

contemporary high-density housing," Plesums says.

Plesums earned a \$10,000 Individual Project Fellowship which he'll use to cover travel expenses and accommodations for his three-month stay. While setting up base at Fukui University, Plesums will travel to remote areas of rural Japan to conduct his research, he says.

He plans to survey 30 varied and accessible folkhouses, document them through photographs and drawings, identify the permanent and changeable features, and then show the adaptations that have occurred over time.

Plesums hopes the project will result in a series of articles on the space-structuring principles of the folkhouse as well as form the initial chapters of a subsequent book on contemporary housing strategies.

A native of Latvia, Plesums has taught at the University since 1969.

University production wins award

The University Theatre production of "Bent" has been selected as one of the eight outstanding college theater productions of 1981-82 in the United States.

Robert Barton, the play's director and a University theater professor, was chosen for outstanding play direction.

Winner of the Northwest regional American College Theatre Festival, "Bent" received praise for its "exceptional humanity and professionalism" from Larry Devine, an ACTF judge and Detroit Free Press drama critic. Nearly 400 colleges nationwide competed for ACTF honors.

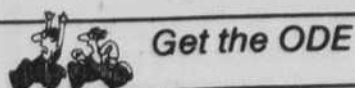
As a result of funding cutbacks this year, only four of the outstanding productions will participate in the ACTF national conference during April at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Designated an alternate, "Bent" is among the four productions not scheduled for a performance there.

"Bent" is the second University production cited for excellence by ACTF. "Our Town" was a finalist in 1975 and was performed at the Kennedy Center.

The University Theatre production of "Bent," presented on campus last October, is Martin Sherman's account of the persecution of homosexuals in pre-World War II Nazi Germany.

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