DEAN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
STUDENT VENTURE GRANT APPLICATION

Please read all instructions and regulations on the reverse side of this sheet prior to the completion of this form. The 8 copies of your proposal are due in the Dean's Office on the 2nd Friday of the Block by 1:00 p.m. If you have questions, please contact Rita Zook at x6686 or email rzook@coloradocollege.edu.

DATE SUBMITTED April 4, 2011

NAME ___________________ CLASS _______ WORNER BOX _______ EXT. ______

ID # ___________________ HOMETOWN (Not Address) ____________________________

NAME ___________________ CLASS _______ WORNER BOX _______ EXT. ______

ID # ___________________ HOMETOWN (Not Address) ____________________________

STUDENT RESEARCH _______ LIFE OF THE MIND _______ CONFERENCE _______

PROJECT TITLE __________________________

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INTENDED USE OF FUNDS

The funds will be used to purchase a plane ticket to Tokyo, Japan and back again.

PROPOSED DATE/BLOCK OF USE _______ Block ______

NAME OF FACULTY SPONSOR __________________________

HAVE YOU BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF A PREVIOUS VENTURE GRANT Yes No

IF SO, WHAT AMOUNT? _______ WHEN? _______ REPORT SUBMITTED? _______

TOTAL AMOUNT OF VENTURE FUNDS NOW REQUESTED $1,000 $936.00

ARE YOU SEEKING OTHER FUNDING FOR THIS PROPOSAL? Yes No

IF YES, WHAT IS THE SOURCE? __________________________

If this proposal is approved, I understand that it is my responsibility to notify the Dean’s Office immediately if I do not pursue my project as proposed to the Dean’s Advisory Committee. I further understand that all funds are to be used according to the proposal as submitted and approved by the Dean’s Advisory Committee. Any changes to an approved project must be submitted to the Chair of the Committee for approval. Please note: the IRS requires that we report Venture Funds as taxable income.

SIGNATURE __________________ DATE ___________________
I am applying for a venture grant to assist me in traveling to Japan. The purpose of the trip is to research the intersection of the philosophy and art of the Japanese culture. This trip represents a critical piece of my thesis work and the independent study I am organizing for 6th block. During my travels and independent study, I will be working to find and analyze physical representations in design, architecture, and art of Zen Buddhist beliefs. Exposure to the day-to-day culture of Japan, such as visits to specific architectural sites, art exhibits, and artist's workshops, will help inform my work.

My interest in embarking upon this trip to Japan was spurred by a Columbia University magazine published by the Columbia Laboratory for Architectural Broadcasting (C-Lab) given to me by my sister years ago. The issue was called *Agitate*. Inside were articles on architecture, tension, philosophy, and the sociology of space, place, and buildings. I found a fascinating article on the architect/poet duo Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins called "Architecture as Hypothesis". The article describes a hypothetical house constructed of an impermanent material, which changes its form as the inhabitants change their function. Included was a short description of a past work, a public park set in the hills of the Gifu prefecture in Japan. Though most of it was over my head, the concepts took root in my imagination.

It was not until my sophomore year at Colorado College that I took another look at this magazine and the concepts it presented while doing research for a paper. It was then my passion for the intersection of philosophical ideas of architecture and design, especially the idea that we are all "architectural bodies", became central to my academic endeavors. The concept of "architectural bodies" has influenced and inspired me from the day I read the words in Arakawa and Gins' celebrated Guggenheim publication "We Have Decided Not to Die".

My love for philosophy stems from a preoccupation with knowing what it means, or can mean, to be human, and my love of architecture from a love for
the visual, beautiful, tactile, and various forms of power. To me, the two disciplines complement each other so profoundly that they seem inextricably linked. From basic shelter to a habitable work of art, architecture's power influences on a phenomenological level so much so that successful buildings are often the ones where the unconscious experience has been considered. Our culture's built environment is based on a complicated set of practical needs, theories, and environmental limitations. From the books and articles on Japanese design aesthetic I have read, I know that their built environment is strongly tied to the natural world and Zen-based beliefs. Few civilizations' physical environment appears as Japan's does, and this unique difference does not happen by chance. Experiencing first-hand the architecture of Japan will provide me the opportunity to become better versed in its design philosophy and how it is translated from objects to the spaces and places they live.

The spaces constructed in Japan effect people on a phenomenological level way, differently than built environments in the United States. For instance, the basic fact that traditional Japanese architecture is built from wood. Wood is abundant in Japan, and the post-and-beam style of construction allows for an open floor plan, free of load bearing walls that permanently divide a house. This and the use of light in traditional homes are physical examples of the "man with nature" design approach, rather than the commonly Western "man vs. nature" view.

Much of Japanese design is rooted in traditions of Zen Buddhism, specifically the acknowledgment that nothing lasts forever and nothing is perfect. This acceptance of impermanence translates into design far beyond our culture of convenience and the ubiquitous "single-use object". While product impermanence is a profit generating idea in most of the Western world, Japanese design sees impermanence more closely related to mortality in life and objects. This disparity is paramount in beginning to understand where their style stands, and is something I would pay close attention to while in Japan.

I find the tea ceremony to be of particular interest – the architectural space, the manner in which you conduct yourself, and the utensils and cups
used, there is reason relating back to cultural beliefs, particularly *wabi* and *sabi*. *Wabi*, a term to describe an austere, understated beauty, and *sabi*, a term describing the look, or patina, of an aged or experienced object, are ever-present and exemplified in the tea ceremony (Hammitzsch, Horst).

The body and its motions are predetermined in the ceremony, and are arguably the most important element. Movements are entirely shaped by the ceremony's Zen Buddhist origin and revolve around four concepts: 'Wa' - harmony; 'Kei' - respect; 'Sei' - purity; and 'Jaku' - serenity. Although I have never experienced a proper tea ceremony, from what I have read and seen in images, the four concepts are mirrored in Japanese ideas of design and architecture. The clean, often simple, and poetic divisions of space intrinsic to Japanese architecture is intentionally designed to influence our bodies and the way in which we move throughout a space. It is in this way that I see the tea ceremony as a reflection of the central concepts of Japanese and Eastern architecture.

In many of the studio art and design courses I am taking, I am reminded of the philosophies I learned about in Professor Jonathan Lee's *Indian Philosophy* class. Though not specifically Japanese, many of the ideas we explored are shared by other Eastern philosophies. However, it is not enough for me to read articles and look at images from a culture that so captivates me. This is why I am proposing a trip to Japan to observe firsthand the public park of Arakawa and Gins, participate in tea ceremonies, visit old landmark buildings in Kyoto, travel to furniture and ceramic workshops, and visit contemporary art museums in Tokyo and Nagi. This will further my education on Japanese aesthetics and philosophy, something I am fascinated by and continually incorporate into my art. By receiving funding from the venture grant, I will be able to travel to Japan and have an experience that I view as the culmination of my CC career.

Experiencing Japan would enrich my current studies and contextualize abstract concepts I have only touched upon in my Art Studio education. One example is the concept of the body in the built environment. This concept is paramount to my thesis work, and making a trip like this represents an invaluable opportunity to me. For the past four months I have been investigating the
positions and spatial relationships our bodies procure throughout our lives. My purpose is not only to create a cohesive, well thought out, and intriguing work of art and performance, but also to formalize a concrete understanding of how the spaces we conduct ourselves in affect our minds and bodies.

From the exquisite wood joinery to the specific movements of a ceremonial tea ritual, the materials and one's interactions with them are always critical to how design comes to fruition. Only until I walk down an unnamed street in a small, rural community or pass through the gates of an ancient temple, or even see, firsthand, the way in which people navigate city plazas and crowded sidewalks, will I be better versed and more confident. It is a passion of mine, and I would like the chance to pursue it as far as I can.

Simply being in the country will be an extraordinary experience. On many levels, the culture is nothing like ours, making simple experiences such as buying food, riding the subway, or people-watching in a park completely new. After a recent conversation with Professor Carl Reed on this, I'm confident in saying that I will learn just as much from visiting and taking note of everyday activities as I will in visiting specific locations.

In The Eyes of the Skin Juhani Pallasmaa writes, "The dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tend to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority," (Pallasmaa, 19). To me, this bold statement on vision, like the rest of the book, make it clear to that it is never enough to just look.

**ITINERARY**

To prepare for the trip, I will fully immerse myself in texts on Japan and design in general. Designing Design by Kenya Hara is top on my list, along with Modern Japanese Architecture by Marianne Ibler, The Unknown Craftsman by Soetsu Yanagi, and Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice by Dale S. Wright. All of these books are available at Tutt library or through Prospector.

This trip will begin during the first week of 6th block and continue into the second. I will fly from Denver to Tokyo sometime in late February. I will stay in Tokyo with a friend of mine, visit museums and a building by Toyo Ito, sketch and
photograph public spaces, architectural boundaries, transitions, and any physical representations of their design philosophy. What is commonly referred to as a feeling of "culture shock" will be advantageous, as I will be in the right mindset for comparative evaluations and can use them to my advantage to discover differences.

From there I will head north. I will stay with [name redacted], a recent graduate of Colorado College who is currently an English teacher, in Kurihara City, in the Miyagi prefecture. Her neighbor and friend, Kudo Shuji, is a potter practicing an ancient style of Japanese pottery. Pottery is only one example of Japan's technical brilliance and is an interconnected art form with ancient beliefs. This will offer me a chance to experience more than one Japanese city and a chance to see the mountainous landscape. As [name redacted] says the Japanese put it, I will see "inane no bunka", the country lifestyle and culture. Her comments on the place she lives compared to her experiences in the city tell me it is very different and worth visiting. The country is the landscape that inspired traditions in design thousands of years ago, which are still practiced today. I will focus on finding relationships between the geography, on a micro and macro level, and the design aesthetic.

My final destinations before leaving will be Kyoto and the Site of Reversible Destiny, a park in the Gifu prefecture. Kyoto plays host to a myriad of the best-preserved ancient wooden structures in Japan, and the Site of Reversible Destiny is by far the most important of all. It is this work and few others, which have inspired my thesis work. It is a modern artist's representation of a unique philosophy on immortality through architecture. I will be staying at a hotel of a family friend, in a city nearby Yoro and the Site of Reversible Destiny.
PRESENTATION

Aside from my thesis show for Studio Art, I will present a slideshow of photographs and sketches, along with written observations, on the relationship of aesthetics to Japanese philosophies. The purpose of the presentation will become more specific after the time I spend in Japan, as I will be better aware of valuable distinctions between Western and Eastern aesthetic.

BUILDINGS TO VISIT

Tadao Ando buildings are famous: Art Museum in Kyoto
Toyo Ito: Library Green Avenue in Tokyo

RELEVANT READING: THE LIST.

Designing Design by Kenya Hara,
Modern Japanese Architecture by Marianne Ibler
The Japanese House by Inge Marie Daniels
The Unknown Craftsman by Soetsu Yanagi

RELAVENT COURSEWORK

Art History 111: History of Architecture - Ruth Kolarik
Philosophy 281: Indian Philosophy - Jonathan Lee
Art Studio 212: Design Workshop - Carl Reed
Art Studio 110: Environmental Design - Carl Reed
Art Studio 401: Independent Study: Architecture and Space in Theory and Practice - Scott Johnson
Art Studio 201: Intermediate Topics in Studio Art: Public Spaces

Bibliography

Pallasmaa, Juhani, 2005, The Eyes of the Skin, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
BUDGET

1 Round trip ticket through Japan Airlines - $936.00