

Japanese exhibition house, the Museum of Modern Art, summer, 1954. Designed by Junzo Yoshimura. Sponsored by the America-Japan society (Tokyo) and private citizens in Japan and the United States, and the Museum of Modern Art

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C.2 **Japanese Exhibition House****THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, SUMMER 1954****Designed by Junzo Yoshimura****Sponsored by the America-Japan Society (Tokyo) and private citizens in Japan and the United States, and The Museum of Modern Art, New York.**

The Museum has chosen a Japanese building for its third *House in the Garden* because of the unique relevance to modern Western architecture of traditional Japanese design.

The characteristics which give Japanese architecture this interest are post and lintel skeleton frame construction; flexibility of plan; close relation of indoor and outdoor areas; and the ornamental quality of the structural system.

Modern Western practice, with its general use of the steel skeleton frame, has developed many effects known to Japanese architecture since the eighth century. For example, walls which do not support a roof, but are instead hung like curtains on the structural framework, are today a commonplace of Western architecture. Before 1900 Frank Lloyd Wright made fundamental to his work the Japanese respect for the beauty of natural materials, as well as the massive, hovering, insistently horizontal roofs essential to the Japanese conception of a house. The twentieth century taste for open interiors and plain surfaces, as in the work of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, are other characteristically Japanese ideas which we have begun to develop in our own way.

Japanese architecture is based on skeleton frame construction, with isolated columns supporting the roof. Walls are sliding screens of paper or wood, with only an occasional thin wall of plaster. Consequently a Japanese house is extremely open in plan and light in appearance.

The Japanese do not use furniture. A house is equipped, of course, with such things as low tables, portable screens, chests of drawers, boxes and bedding, but all these articles are removed and stored away when not actually in use. Cushions, instead of chairs, are placed directly on the floors—which are covered with rice-straw mats, called *tatami*. Aside from the fact that shoes damage the *tatami*, it is considered unsanitary to wear shoes indoors and they are always left in the entrance hall.

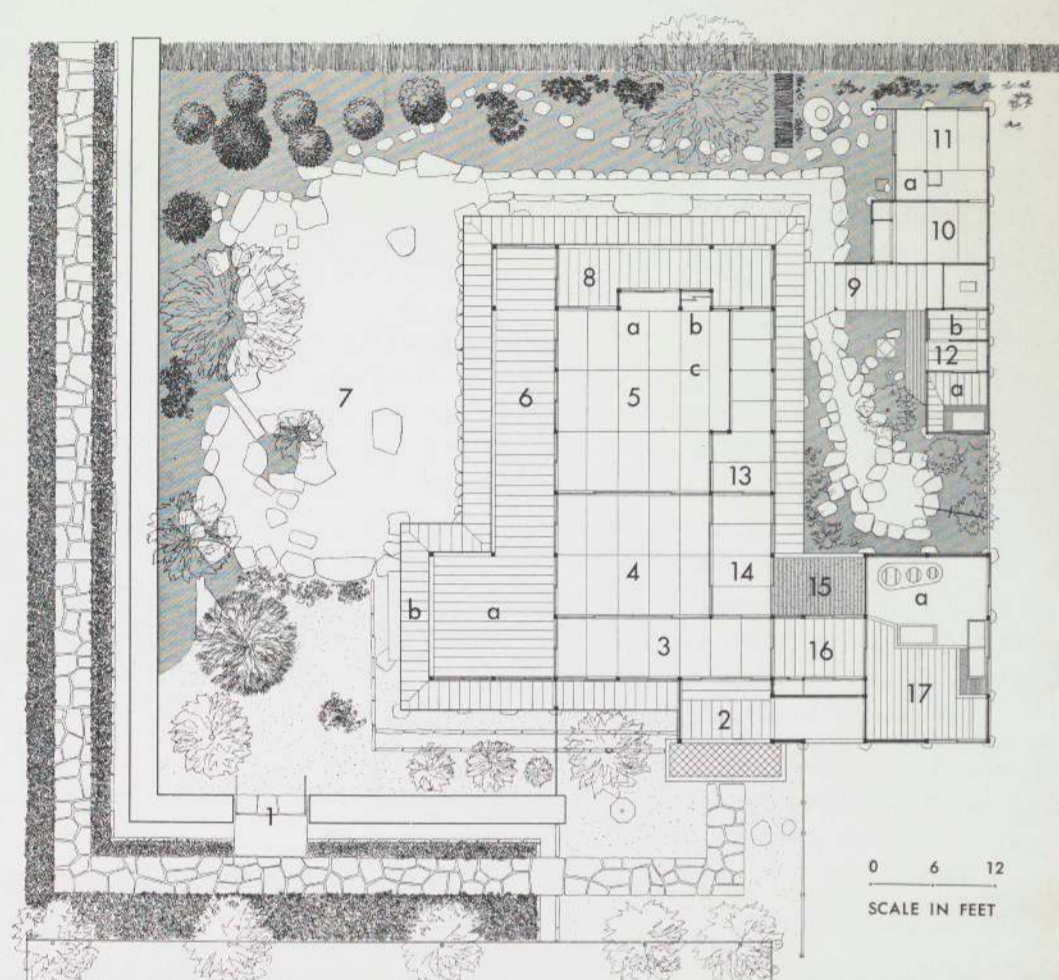
The rooms of Japanese houses are flexible both in their arrangement and in their use. Rooms are often grouped asymmetrically, and the plan of a house does not depend on formal balance. Since the sliding paper screens which separate one room from another may be completely removed, all the rooms of a building may be quickly combined to make one large, unbroken space. When the sliding screens are closed any room may be used for several different purposes: sitting, dining, or sleeping.

Because the outer walls may be opened to the view, or even removed, the landscaped garden with its plaster wall or bamboo fence ensures privacy. Many Japanese gardens are designed to be seen primarily from the rooms and verandas of a house, and such gardens are seldom used as outdoor living areas. Ample outdoor space is provided by verandas sheltered under broad eaves. Often the trees and ponds in a garden represent on a small scale mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and forests. And just as we would exercise great care in the choice of sculpture to be placed in a garden, the Japanese select large stones for their sculptural qualities, grouping them in compositions remarkable for effects of depth and scale.

The nature of its design and the meticulous craftsmanship with which it is built make a Japanese house seem like a huge piece of furniture. Incorporated in the structure itself are many minor functions for which the West traditionally requires furniture and decoration. Of course the Japanese use paintings and small decorative objects, which they place carefully and frequently change. But, significantly, the empty interiors of a Japanese house are made decorative by the structure itself. Except for the roof beams every part of the structural framing is exposed, and even those parts which are not entirely necessary for structural purposes are made to look as if they were. In reality the exposed structural framework of a Japanese house includes decorative elements, so that the entire structure itself acquires the richness and variety of an ornament.

ARTHUR DREXLER

The Japanese Exhibition House was made in Nagoya in 1953. It was shipped to the United States with all accessories and stones for the garden, and reassembled in the Museum with the aid of Japanese craftsmen under the supervision of the architect, Junzo Yoshimura. Heizaemon Ito was chief carpenter. The wood used for the main building is hinoki, a species of Japanese cypress; shingles of hinoki bark are used for the roof. Although every part of the building is new, the design is based on 16th and 17th century prototypes. A house of this style might have been built by a scholar, a government official, or a priest (in the latter case the house would have adjoined a temple). All of these people would have had the training and the leisure for reading and writing, and consequently the main room of the house is equipped with a desk called *shoin*. Until recently the Japanese language had no exact equivalent for our word style, and buildings as well as paintings were named for specific methods of construction or design. Houses containing *shoin* were designated *shoin-zukori*, which means, literally, the *shoin* way of building.



- 1 GARDEN ENTRANCE originally used by honored guests
- 2 GENKAN family entrance
- 3 GALLERY
- 4 SECOND ROOM The sliding interior wall screens of paper are called *fusuma*. Exterior wall screens of paper are called *shoji*; sliding wood weather-doors are called *amado*.
Landscape paintings in black ink were made by Kaii Higashiyama.
South Wall: *Plum trees*; North Wall: *Bamboo*.
The lattice above the north *fusuma* is called *rama*.
- 5 SHOIN ROOM a—*shoin* (desk); b—*chigai-dana* (shelves); c—*tokonoma* (alcove for the display of works of art)
This is the main room of the house. On special occasions it may be combined with the Second Room by removing the *fusuma*.
- 6 VERANDA a—*chumon*: originally a vestibule for the garden entrance; b—*nure-en*: outer or "wet" veranda.
- 7 GARDEN Designed by the architect and Tansai Sano. Consultant: Ethelbert Furlong. Executed in the *sansui* style, the garden represents a Buddhist image of Paradise with heaven symbolized by a mountain in water. The composition is based on stone formations in water, and cryptomeria, pine, moss, and white sand.
- 8 SIDE VERANDA
- 9 BRIDGE to tea house and bath. Guests enter the tea house from a formal entrance in the garden. The stone basin holds water for washing hands before the tea ceremony.
- 10 MIZUYA Tea house pantry used by the host to prepare the materials of the tea ceremony.
- 11 CHASHITSU 4 mat tea ceremony room built of cryptomeria, pine, bamboo, and Kyoto earth.
The tea ceremony is a ritual designed to encourage the contemplation and intelligent appreciation of works of art, including the objects used in the tea service.
a—*tokonoma*: alcove for display of paintings or flowers; adjoining the *tokonoma* is a hearth.
- 12 BATH The main room (a) has a sunken wood tub. Above it is a sliding lattice to permit a view of the garden; *shoji* are of waxed paper. A toilet (b) adjoins the entrance hall.
- 13 STORAGE ROOM
- 14 GALLERY
- 15 SERVICE VERANDA
- 16 PANTRY
- 17 KITCHEN a—The stove is made of earth and waxed plaster.