



The Contemporary Tea House: Japan's Top Architects Redefine a Tradition

By Arata Isozaki, Tadao Ando, Terunobu Fujimori, Kengo Kuma, Hiroshi Hara

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The tea house is one of Japan's most original buildings—a very small, very simple space consisting of tatami mat, tokonoma (the alcove where wall scrolls are hung and flower arrangements placed), ro (the sunken stove where tea is heated) and nijiriguchi (the half door through which guests enter). For generations, Japanese architects have embraced the challenge of the tea house despite severe formal constraints.

Now, this beautiful and fascinating volume takes the traditional tea house and turns it on its head. An informative introduction explains the history of the tea ceremony and the tea house. Then, in chapters written by three of the world's most renowned architects -- Arata Isozaki, Tadao Ando, Terunobu Fujimori as well as a fourth with text by Hiroshi Hara and Kengo Kuma, the book looks at twenty modern tea houses in Japan. Here are five men who share a fascination with exploring architectural space limited to the smallest possible spatial unit -- and the tea house is the perfect medium for satisfying this passion and curiosity.

Most of these structures are used solely for the tea ceremony, but a few have become spaces for meditation, or for simply spending quiet time alone, with a drink or a good book. Through insightful text, superb photographs and detailed drawings, *The Contemporary Tea House* introduces each architect's philosophy and creative concerns, as well as the artistic techniques behind their constructions in materials ranging from wood and titanium to concrete, stone, and paper. The book also offers the specifications of each building, a glossary and profiles of the architects.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This vibrant, relevant study from architects Ando, Fujimori and Isozaki looks at the present moment of a centuries-old Japanese tradition, the chashitsu, or "tea room." In first-person narratives, leading Japanese architects discuss their contemporary take on the classic tea ceremony space. Full-color photographs, design sketches and polished plans are clearly laid out along with text, and each chapter focuses on a number of works by a single architect. Fujimori's chapter, for example, includes an elaborate tree-top tea house, an "enormous woven bamboo birdcage" called The Forum and a room built especially to host France's President Chirac. Ando gets to the heart of the matter in his statement of purpose: "not to dwell solely on the abstract; but to explore abstract concepts by expressing them through material phenomena." Three more architects—Isozaki, Kengo Kuma and Hiroshi Hara—discuss their designs, and how they relate to the genre's traditions, in similar terms, focusing on the "tension between abstraction and representation." Especially fascinating are discussions of materials used: for Fujimori, the most important components are "raw, unworked materials" and "amateur artisans" to do all the building. Throughout, the houses' elegance and simplicity are reflected in the text; lush images, meanwhile, provide tranquil warmth and a real sense of place.

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Review

"Sumptuous look at one of Japan's most ancient architectural forms."--Financial Times."..visually stunning book." Celebrated Living "Whether you're interested in tea, architecture, Japanese gardens or simply beautiful things and spaces, this intriguing, elegant book is likely to capture your sensibilities. Minneapolis Star Tribune" Through insightful text, superb photographs and detailed drawings, The Contemporary Tea House introduces each architect's philosophy and creative concern, as well as the artistic techniques behind their constructions in materials ranging from wood and titanium to concrete, stone, and paper. TEA Magazine

About the Author

Recognized as one of the world's leading architects, ARATA ISOZAKI is a frequent and sought-after lecturer who has been a visiting professor at UCLA, University of Hawaii, Rhode Island School of Design, Columbia, Harvard and Yale Universities. Among his projects are a large number of public and cultural buildings, including The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the COSI museum in Columbus, Ohio and Team Disney in Orlando. TADAO ANDO has served as a visiting professor at Yale, Columbia, and Harvard Universities and now holds the chair of a Special University Professor Emeritus at the University of Tokyo. His work in the U.S. includes the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, St. Louis; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Morimoto restaurant in New York City; a house, stable and mausoleum for former fashion designer Tom Ford, near Santa Fe (in progress); the expansion of the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts (in progress); as well as the new Tokyo Tower, which will be the tallest structure in the world upon completion. Ando was awarded the AIA Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects in 2002. TERUNOBU FUJIMORI is presently a professor at the Institute of Industrial Science, University of Tokyo. His major research was in architectural history and design and he has written many essays and books. He began designing buildings only when he was in his 40s. His first piece was the Jinchokan Moriya Historical Museum in 1991. He is also known for his Grass House, the Akino Fuku Museum and the Yoro Insects Museum, among others.

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