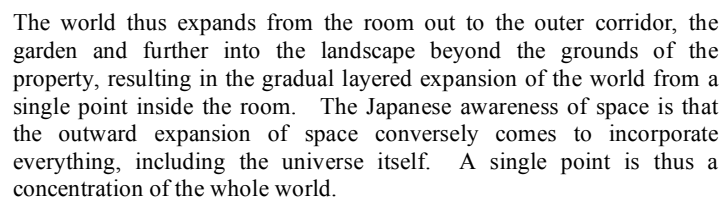
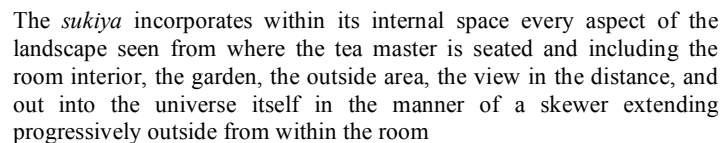
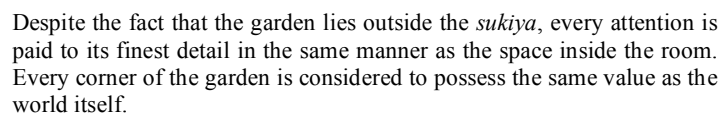


By Masayuki Kurokawa, designer of nextmaruni project

I believe that it is precisely the details (*bi*) that embrace the whole. In terms of people, the idea is that overall harmony is obtained not by people being aware of sin as determined by God, but by their possession of feelings and consideration for others in forms such as shame and obligation, in other words by the individuals who constitute the minutiae of society possessing a social nature.

In the West there is the idea that God is present in the finest details, but in Japan the idea is that it is precisely the finest details that house the whole. The details are not a part of the whole but incorporate the whole within. This is why the *sukiya*—the hut in which the tea ceremony is held—is thought of as a space constituting a microcosm of the whole universe. The *sukiya* projects itself radially out into the garden and further from the garden into the landscape beyond, thus eventually encompassing the whole of the world in its grasp.

(Note: The *sukiya* was a type of building generally in the form of a hut used in the performance of the tea ceremony and originally devised by Sen no Rikyu in the middle of the 16th century.)

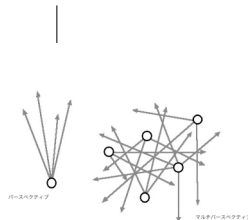


2. Parallel aggregation of details: *Hei*

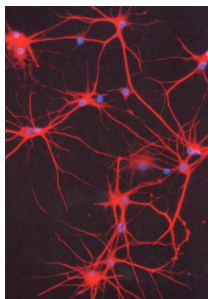
It is precisely because the whole is present in the details that the details are able to keep their distance from one another and harmonize in the form of an aggregate consisting of details alone. If the details are merely parts of the whole, they will need to be mediated by an infrastructure, but they are able to coexist on their own as details when organized in parallel. Parallelism (*hei*) refers to a flat structure without layers, but, in the case of such an organization, the individual details will never get sacrificed to the whole.

In distinction to structures possessing normative values, such as God for instance, the structure of Japanese values is such that norms are created by factors such as consideration and shame that come into play between individual people. This is the mechanism whereby parallel relationships are maintained, and this is how one thing is able to harmonize with another while keeping an appropriate distance.

One might compare the structure of Western cities with their infrastructures as being like a tree, in contrast to which a Japanese village is laid out in the manner of a parallel network. The human brain is similarly organized as a parallel network of neurons, and the world created by the Internet is likewise a parallel network of individuals. Parallel relationships are what democracy is all about.



Japanese spaces are such that each and every one of the details is considered to be of equal importance, and they possess a structure in which perspectives obtained from a variety of individual details are able to coexist in parallel.



The cells, or neurons, in the human brain are independent, scattered units existing in parallel. They establish connections by means of stimuli on each occasion as required.



The Kanazawa 21st Century Museum of Art designed by Kazuyo Sejima is made up of a parallel assembly of rectangular exhibition rooms set inside a circular outer wall made of glass. The inside of the museum is arranged exactly like a village, consisting as it does of exhibition rooms which maintain their distance one from the other. Exhibitions can be held by freely linking the individual rooms.

3. Intimations created by details in their vicinity : *Ki*

There are two points of departure for architecture: caves and pillars. Caves form clear, tangible spaces inside themselves, whereas pillars form spaces with intimations of vagueness and uncertainty. Japanese architecture came into being as space formed by pillars. This is why there is no concept of the room in Japanese traditional architecture; space is entirely vague and uncertain, partitioned off by means of sliding doors (*fusuma* and *shoji*). Both people and things are imbued with such intimations, and Japanese awareness of things and people includes the surrounding space. Japanese people place the greatest importance on this vague atmosphere generated by people and things. The consciousness possessed by Japanese people may seem to be lacking in any firm sense of self and to be devoid of autonomy, but this is because the Japanese consciousness is a manifestation of this spirit of intimation and places importance on the continuity of intimations with others. It is this sense that gives rise to the idea of *ma*.

Modern architecture created pillar and beam structures in which walls are freed from structures, as typified by the domino system, but the starting point for this development is the space of vital energy created by these pillars as they are used in Japanese wooden architecture. As in the case of Japanese traditional architecture, there was from the outset a type of architecture created by intimations alone whereby structures are formed exclusively by pillars and beams and space is not enclosed as within a cave. This is the aesthetic created by the culture of building in wood.

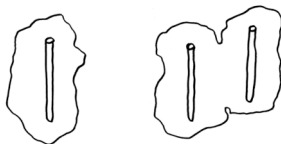


Physical architecture



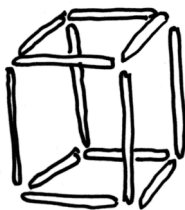
Architecture of intimations

There are two basic forms of architecture, caves and pillars. Pillars possess intimations in their vicinity, and people feel a sense of security when enveloped in such intimations.



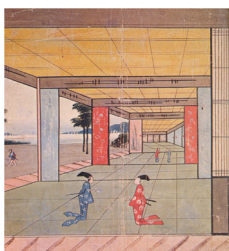
Intimations born in the vicinity of pillars

Japanese architecture is based essentially on *ma*, manifested through the intimations created by pillars. Japanese houses tend to be open, fluid and continuous and not to distinguish between inside and outside. The freedom of Japanese houses is a product of this structure based on the use of pillars and beams.



Japanese architecture is "*Ma*" created by the intimations formed by pillars.

Western architecture takes the cave as its starting point, while Japanese architecture begins with pillars. Japanese traditional architecture entails spaces created by the intimations formed by pillars and beams.



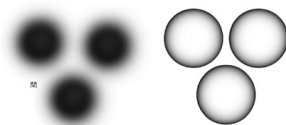
Spaces created by intimation are fluid and contain no opposition between inside and outside.

4. Mutual harmony created by the appearance of details: *Ma*

Social harmony in Japan is created by factors connected with the way that people relate to others, for example feelings of consideration and shame. In order for people to coexist and harmonize with one another, norms based on absolute values are employed in monotheistic societies, but such norms do not arise in a polytheistic country such as Japan where gods have traditionally been thought to exist in nature and in things themselves. The key to obtaining harmony so as to facilitate coexistence between people is consideration for others. For Japanese people, who have an aversion to shame, who value harmony, who place importance on obligation, and who, in generalized terms, take joy in the fusion with nature, it is precisely this distancing with things and with nature that provides an important norm under which they can lead their lives.

As in the case of relationships between people, things, sounds and pictures are arranged in such a manner as to place importance upon their mutual distancing. This is considered to be the way in which harmony can be obtained through the world as a whole. The space required for obtaining this harmony is known in Japanese as *ma*.

Ma is created by those appearances that one might refer to as “consideration” or “allure” that appear in the vicinity of people, things, sounds and pictures. The sense of shame and harmony gives rise to the appearances generated by people. These appearances respond to the appearances of other people, things, sounds and pictures and harmonize with them. This concept of *ma* is unlikely to emerge in the Western world, where absolutism is the dominating principle.



周辺の曖昧な存在や周辺の意味をまといつたモノが集まると、その周辺部が
周辺に属するようになる。境界の曖昧な存在や明確なモノは関係ない。

The names, the existence, and the periphery of separate parts of the world are unclear. It is not clear precisely where a mountain ends. People possess a sense of appearances and territory in their vicinity, and there are no clear borders existing between people and things. *Ma* results from this gathering together of appearances on the periphery.



身体の美しいところは腰と股の境の曖昧なところである

Where a person's bottom ends is unclear. The bottom is vaguely linked to the back. The beauty of a woman's body lies in this sense of *ma* projected by this vagueness of meaning.



松林が二つ、微妙な差金いで構成されている（長谷川等俊、松林図）

In his picture entitled “Pine Forest” (*Shorin-zu*), Hasegawa Tohaku sets out in parallel two pine forests with vaguely delineated peripheries, with the result that the empty space between them gives rise to a mysterious sense of space. This is the power of *ma*.

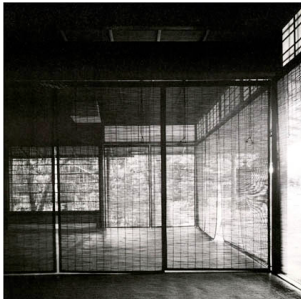
5. Splendor created through concealment: *Hi*

Japanese people place importance on mutually connected overall harmony by means of consideration paid to others. Accordingly, expression is judged on the basis of the reaction it is likely to provoke in the mind of the recipient. Expression of beauty and strength of artistic impression are not things that need to be stressed; the idea is that efforts should be made so that such reactions are forthcoming from within the minds of the people who come into contact with the work in question.

No work of art is necessarily interpreted by the recipient in accordance with the intentions of the artist. The recipient interprets the work in the light of his own beliefs and mood. This can be regarded as the way in which the recipient takes part in the very creation of the work. The important matter lies on the side of the thoughts and feelings generated in the mind of the person who comes into contact with the work.

In this way, it is precisely by suppressing and concealing the main point of a work that it becomes possible for the recipient to play his own spontaneous part in the creative process. What happens as a result is that the form of expression becomes vaguer rather than clear, the work stimulates the recipient's imagination, and it becomes depicted under the effect of the autonomously exerted imaginative power of the recipient. Zeami's famous maxim *Hi sureba hana* ("The flower emerges through concealment") refers to this process.

(Zeami: A celebrated playwright and theoretician of the Noh theatre, author of the aesthetic treatise on the Noh theater entitled *Fushi-kaden*, who was born around the middle of the 14th century.)



The interiors of traditional Japanese houses are spaces created with lavish materials from which all superfluities are rigorously excluded. The partitions known as *sudare* break up space in a vague manner and have a sparkling sense of mystery similar to being caught up in mist.



This shows a typical interior space of a Japanese traditional house. In the background can be seen the outer wall made of movable wood and paper known as *akari-shoji*. The things and people seen reflected on the wall look beautiful against the light. The floor also shines against the light, creating a lavish interior space.



This is a watch designed by Masayuki Kurokawa. While pursuing the limits of simplification, it also shows evidence of intricate detail, evoked especially by the sense of mistiness generated by the vague frosted glass and the mirror face.

6. The world was originally harmonious: *So*

There is an intrinsic belief among Japanese people that nature is in essence harmonious. The Japanese approach to nature is not confrontational, and importance is placed on an appropriate distancing from nature, which sometimes causes us harm and at other times brings us its blessings. This is the same sense as evident in the distancing that Japanese people set between themselves and others.

While distancing themselves from nature, people form part of the harmony of nature and they sense that unadulterated nature is a wonderful thing in its own right. Accordingly, nature should as far as possible be left to its own devices, an attitude which provokes a dislike of fiddling around with nature.

A kimono is a garment consisting of fabric which has been shaped with the most minimal degree of cutting and sewing, while a *furoshiki* cloth consists of a single piece of fabric which can be used to wrap objects of any shape whatsoever. The *sukiya* forms part of a continuum that links the room itself with the garden. The series of garments design by Issey Miyake under the title of *Ichimai no nuno* were produced merely by cutting “single sheets of cloth” and attaching sleeves.

The Japanese climate, in which each of the four seasons make themselves clearly felt, might be considered to be the background to which this approach to “nature as it is” emerged. The *sukiya* is not set up in opposition to nature, and the garden is considered to form part of the *sukiya*. This approach surely comes from the intrinsic awareness that the world was originally harmonious.

(Issey Miyake: One of Japan’s foremost contemporary fashion designers.)



Japanese houses are made from wood, bamboo, earth and paper. It would seem that an attempt is being made to fuse with nature through the use of materials in their pristine form. Repaired walls are made use of to reflect their natural beauty.



On the left we see the stencil used to produce a Japanese kimono and on the right is a stencil of the type used in the production of Western clothing. The black sections are discarded, but, in the case of the Japanese kimono, there are almost no sections of discarded cloth. This shows how the kimono is made using fabric in its natural state.



This is an example of a garment from the *Ichimai no nuno* series designed by Issey Miyake. It has been produced with almost no additions made to the cloth, merely by cutting the fabric in two places and then adding sleeves to it.

7. Flowing beauty with no resistance: *Ka*

Human life and the universe continue to mutate constantly and are thought of as essentially impermanent. This sense surely originates in the Japanese climate, with its strong sensation of the four seasons. Spring eventually turns into summer, which in turn gives way to autumn and winter, when life temporarily sleeps. The Japanese aesthetic of impermanence is a reflection of such changes.

Moreover, this vivid sense of constant mutation is by no means conceived negatively: on the contrary, people take pleasure in entrusting themselves into this flow of constant change.

Houses made out of preference from easily inflammable, easily decaying materials such as wood, bamboo, earth and paper rather than from permanent materials such as stone, and devices such as *fusuma* sliding doors and *byobu* folding screens, which are movable and form part of a continuum with the area outside the space in which they are located, possess an uncertain quality which the Japanese aesthetic is happy to subsume.

The sense of the temporary and transient (*ka*) reflects a willingness to live positively by entrusting oneself to the flow of nature while at the same distancing oneself appropriately from nature. It comes not from a feeling of being resigned for the time being to the way things are but from a view of the universe and a sense of order which accepts that everything is essentially temporary and transient.

We see here an aesthetic awareness that is prepared to accept things as they are and is willing to trust to the flow of nature. This approach is wholly different from that adopted in the West, where life is conceived as being led in opposition to nature.



The *sukiya* is a building made principally from wood, bamboo, earth and paper which is able to evolve naturally through its fusion with nature. We see here the spirit of taking pleasure in natural decay rather than any aspiration toward permanence.



This is a typical interior space in a traditional Japanese house. As in the case of the *akari-shoji* doors which constitute the outer walls, the *fusuma* sliding doors, which partition off the interior space, are made of paper. The idea is of a temporary space in which the interior space as a whole is linked to the outside.



This is a *ryurei* (a table with a seat as used in performance of the tea ceremony) designed by Masayuki Kurokawa. It is a piece of furniture made of an *akari-shoji* in the manner of a traditional Japanese house turned inside out. Made from wood and paper, it lets in light and serves itself to provide light. If a tabletop made of *washi* paper gets dirty or breaks, it can be simply replaced.

8. Destruction is creation: *Ha*

There is another aesthetic approach that exists side by side with the approach that emerged from this way of living in which people are prepared to entrust their lives to the flow of nature. This other approach is based on the belief that creativity becomes possible precisely by resisting and destroying existing concepts and preconceptions that people have previously created. The aesthetic concept of *ha* (“destruction”) has invigorated and revitalized the other Japanese aesthetic that I have described here.

The idea of *ha* as it appears in the tripartite concepts *jo-ha-kyu* and *shu-ha-ri* is a revolutionary one. In this context it is considered to be a device that interrupts (destroys) the current flow and permits a major leap forward.

The idea is that life forces are stimulated by defiance and are realized precisely through the process of destruction.

Catastrophe is a vital force which comes into being at the moment of destruction, and the idea that it was destruction itself that constituted the essence of beauty was present in the *sukiya* tea huts created by Sen no Rikyu in the middle of the 16th century. The idea of displacing modules, copying the image of a ramshackle cottage, and using the most basic and elementary materials and forms of expression constituted a form of resistance to the military samurai class, who placed importance on extravagance and order.

Ha might be described as a kind of life-inducing device that lurks behind Japanese ways of thought.

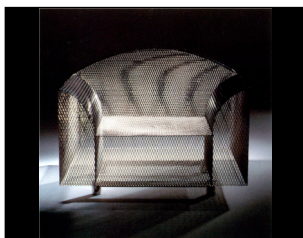
(*Jo-ha-kyu* and *shu-ha-ri*: The aesthetic concept of *jo-ha-kyu* is the principle of acceleration used in Gagaku and other forms of Japanese traditional music. *Shu-ha-kyu* denotes the three-stage principle underlying traditional study methods whereby the student initially adheres to the knowledge he acquires from his teacher and then discovers himself by breaking away from this knowledge and creating his own unique world.)



The *sukiya* was a message of revolt directed by the merchant Sen no Rikyu against Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who stood at the pinnacle of the military class. This destructive message directed against the ruling class resulted in the establishment of one of the key aspects of the Japanese aesthetic.



Cherry blossoms are manifestations of the Japanese aesthetic not at the moment they come into full bloom but when they begin to fall. The vicissitudes of nature symbolize death and, at the same time, the advent of a new season.



A chair designed by Shiro Kuramata. One senses the designer's strongly destructive intent, which suggests revolt against the very nature of being.