



c. 1917

Wood, bamboo, stone, metal,
rush, plaster, paper, ceramic,
fabric, and mulberry bast cord

DESIGNED BY ŌGI RODŌ
Japanese, 1863–1941

LOOKING QUESTIONS

How would you describe
this building?

What do you think it
was used for? Why?

What materials did the designer,
Ōgi Rodō, use?

Where can you see bamboo
(fence, gutter)?

Do you think Rodō wanted the
teahouse to stand out or blend in
with the garden? Why?

How does looking at this
make you feel? Why?

CEREMONIAL TEAHOUSE: *SUNKARAKU*

Imagine that you are a guest at this Japanese teahouse set in a tranquil garden. Before the tea ceremony begins, you wait in the building on the right to quietly prepare for the ritual. After a signal from the host, you walk slowly along the stone path to a mossy stone basin and wash your face and hands. Before entering the teahouse, you must remove your shoes and bow, then crawl through a small door. Its low height is meant to remind you and the other guests to enter the tearoom and the ceremony with humility and respect. Once inside, you may notice that there are no chairs. Instead, there are three *tatami* (mats made of rice-plant straw) on the floor. The entire teahouse is made from natural materials such as cedar and bamboo, creating a sense of **harmony** with nature. A branch of Japanese evergreen extends along the half wall inside the house as a reminder of what grew there before.

The Japanese tea ceremony engages all five senses: you can smell the woody scent of the surrounding garden, hear the wind in the trees outside, feel the teabowl and *chakin* (napkin) in your hands, see a beautiful painting or ceramic pot in the *tokonoma* (alcove), and taste the hot green tea and sweets. During this detailed and elegant ritual, each movement is performed with careful attention to four spiritual qualities: respect (*kei*), harmony (*wa*), purity (*sei*), and tranquility (*jaku*). With these in mind, the tea ceremony becomes a contemplative, calming experience.

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