

# Art in the Garden

Tsunagu: Connecting to the  
Architecture of Kengo Kuma

Winter 2016



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## CONNECT WITH KENGO KUMA

The work of Kengo Kuma builds on many spatial traditions in Japanese architecture—most of the projects directly emerge from a very Japanese practice of space, if renewed and reinterpreted. The link is unmistakable. While the content of this exhibition is intended to explain Kuma’s architecture by way of the Portland Japanese Garden’s Cultural Crossing project, the design of the exhibition itself is a chance for you to directly experience modern Japanese space, in the spirit of Kengo Kuma and Associates. As you walk through, be drawn into Kuma’s ideas and be connected to past, present, and future. Spend time, slow down, find your own meanings in the design—connect with Kengo Kuma.



## 入り方

### HAIRI-KATA THE WAY TO ENTER: INDIRECT PATH, DELAY

Entry into buildings, particularly into Japanese homes, is never direct. Entrance is a matter of heightened awareness of one's movement from one place to the next. In the case of the Tsunagu exhibition, the path involves a few turns, with a changing view each time. Part of the joy is in discovery. Here, we have placed a bundle of Port Orford cedar as a bench for waiting, reminiscent of the *machiai* in a Japanese tea garden. This pause gives psychological distance, helping to highlight the gallery not as a small space, but as a microcosm of possibilities.

## 空間の分け方

### KUUKAN NO WAKE-KATA THE WAY TO DEFINE SPACE: INDETERMINATE BOUNDARIES

Most are familiar with Japanese sliding paper doors and various bamboo screens. The important aspect here is not simply lightness in material, but also the vagueness by which these elements define space. These are not fixed, and have the ability to let space flow through or to block it entirely. Even still, light can pass through, and thus a “limit” is never solid. With the Tsunagu exhibition, areas are suggested by the use of *sudare* bamboo screens, hung from the rafters of the space. The height of these drapes depends on what takes place beneath, and is lowered or raised in order to define entry. The *sudare* is a single element that covers many zones, and connects and divides at the same time.

## 材料の使い方

### ZAIRYOU NO TSUKAI-KATA THE WAY TO USE MATERIALS: PARTICLES, SMALLER PIECES

This aspect is not necessarily Japanese in and of itself, but this emphasis is a core notion of the way in which Kuma addresses material: that is, for materials to be made smaller, an act he calls “particization.” On an emotional level, this avoids heaviness or oppressiveness of a given material by minimizing dimensions. There is a practical aspect to this as well: smaller pieces allow anyone to construct architecture, and this speaks directly to Kuma's hope for democratic design—if it can be lifted, then anyone can make something. For the Tsunagu exhibition, all elements are installed by hand, from the screens, to the tatami platform, and even the Baker Blue granite stone. After the exhibition, all of these materials will be reused—including the Port Orford cedar, the granite, the tea platform, the Tyvek *washi*—as materials for the actual buildings within the Portland Japanese Garden's new Cultural Crossing.

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Walker/Macy; Stephen and Melissa Babson/PICA



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*“Tsunagu” – to connect; to  
bridge; to bring together*



📷 All event photos by Jonathan Ley

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