

Kengo Kuma Refreshes Exquisite Paris Residence Designed by Kenzo Takada



The house, set in the courtyard of an 18th-century building, is flanked by an authentic Japanese garden. Photography by Jimmy Cohrsen.

The cedar siding and the beauty of the Japanese garden guided the atmosphere of the interior. Natural materials such as wood, stone, and soil-based plaster—applied by artisans from Japan—were used to bring warmth and texture to the updated part of the house. Towering planks of French oak, their edges left natural, were used as a screen of vertical louvers between the living room and the elevated dining room, where a pair of the same planks serve as a long refectory table. The exposed beams spanning the split-level space are also oak, as is the flooring (which complements existing oak parquet elsewhere in the house) and new paneling in the entry hall. Japanese ash was used for massive new pivoting doors at the entry and in the master bedroom.

Most of the changes are subtle but have brought a cleaner, more modern feel to the interior such as the wood floating staircase that connects the first and second levels or the fine aluminum frames on the sliding doors to the new terrace.

Kuma partnered with a local architect, Loïk Corre of Atelier Kiol, who had worked closely with Kenzo on the original house and whose anecdotal knowledge proved invaluable. For example, Corre was able to advise that the pale-green paint covering some ceilings and walls should be replaced with Kenzo's preferred shade of pure white.



The stair wall in the living room is finished with soil-based plaster, applied by artisans from Japan, while the other walls were simply repainted Kenzo's preferred shade of pure white. Photography by Jimmy Cohrsen.

The Japanese garden needed very little work. A wood deck was replaced with travertine from Italy and square-section solid-oak slabs installed as benches. Likewise, the tatami-floored portion of the house—whose traditional tearoom, Kuma notes, "is of a quality that would be hard to find even in Japan"—was refreshed but otherwise left intact.

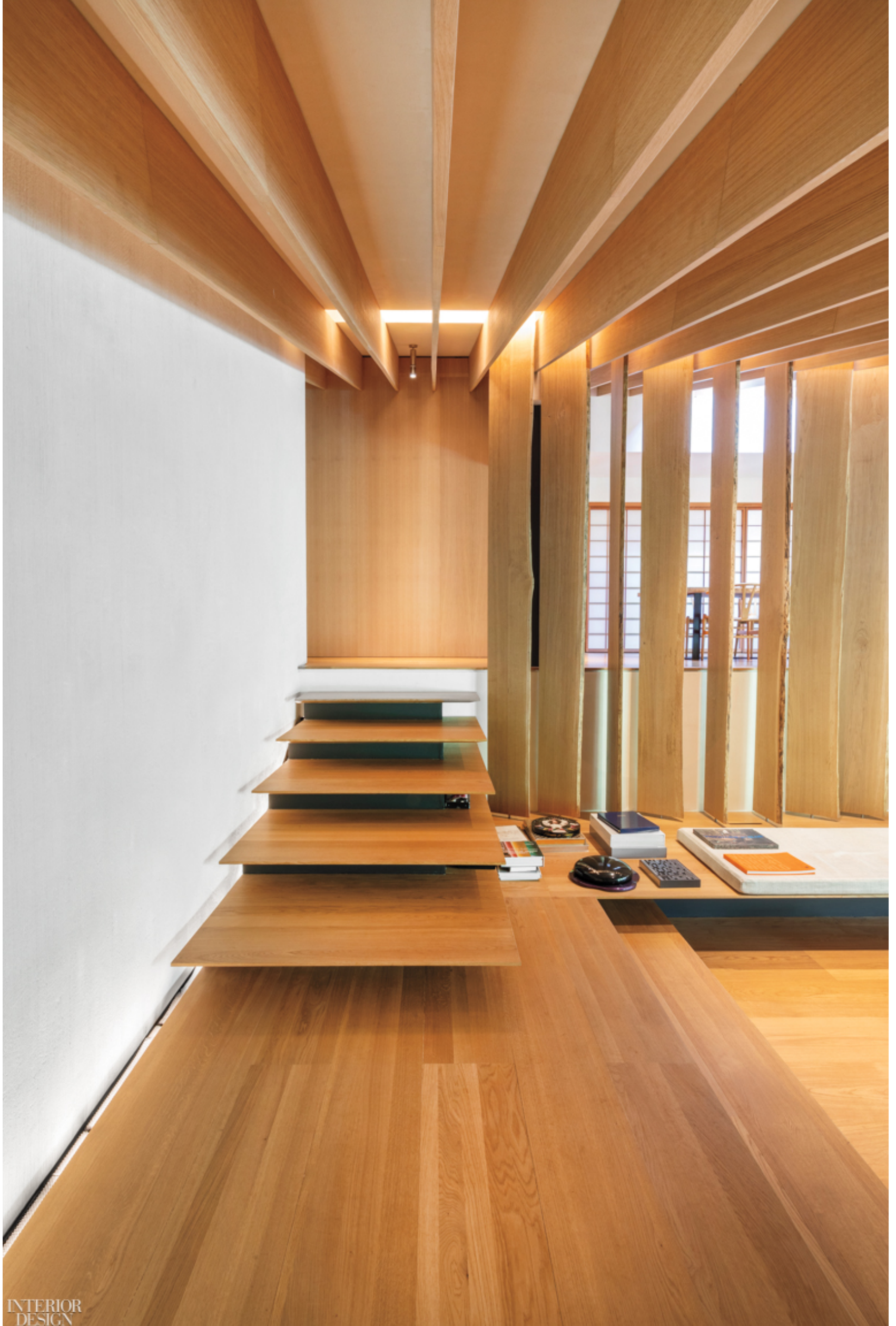
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Design Group: 2018 Best of Year Winner

The current owners plan to use the house for entertaining, just as Kenzo always did. The beguiling network of courtyards and terraces is a delight for visitors and the update has integrated the garden even more intimately with the newly pared-down interiors. Kuma chose a few key pieces of furniture such as a handsome set of Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs in oak for the dining room and a Walter Knoll sofa and rug for the living area. When the views are this good, you don't need much inside.

Kuma's sensitively blended renovation is a perfect tribute to Kenzo, who was born in Himeji in 1939 but has lived in Paris since the 60s. The architect, known for his soft-spoken modesty, was eager for the original owner's verdict. "I was so happy to hear that Kenzo loved the renovated house," he reports, beaming.

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INTERIOR
DESIGN

A new flight of oak steps connects the living room to the dining room, one level above. Photography by Jimmy



Overlooking the living room and opening onto a terrace, the mezzanine study has a free-standing stove. Photography by Jimmy Cohrssen.



The “Japanese” wing of the house includes a traditional dining room, left largely untouched in the renovation.

Photography by Jimmy Cohrssen.



An indoor lap pool was removed and replaced with a glass-roofed accoya-decked terrace beside the inner courtyard. Photography by Jimmy Cohrssen.



Seating in a fourth-floor lounge area includes a Marc Newson woven-rattan lounge chair and a rare Pierre

Paulin side chair. Photography by Jimmy Cohrsen.



A natural-edge French oak table surrounded by Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs, also in oak, graces the “European” dining room; the sliding shoji screens conceal a kitchen. Photography by Jimmy Cohrsen.



INTERIOR
DESIGN

Pierre Paulin's Dune modular seating sits under a skylight in the media lounge. Photography by Jimmy



Apart from a trio of pivoting Japanese-ash doors at the entry, the third-floor master bedroom remains untouched. Photography by Jimmy Cohrssen.



The traditional tea-ceremony room looks down the length of the Japanese garden. Photography by Jimmy



Strings of washi-paper lanterns hang in a glass-wall corridor overlooking the inner courtyard. Photography by Jimmy Cohrsen.



A stair hall also serves as an art gallery. Photography by Jimmy Cohrsen.



INTERIOR
DESIGN

Most of the materials for the original house, including the rocks for the koi pond, were imported from Japan.

Photography by Jimmy Cohrssen.



Black granite and honey-toned wood clad the Japanese-style master bath, which was not renovated.
Photography by Jimmy Cohrssen.



On the lowest level, a corridor leads from the main entry to the central courtyard. Photography by Jimmy

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