A long time fascination with Japanese design enticed me to visit Japan in the fall of 1995, where in addition to studying prints, screen paintings, and textiles, I encountered the quiet beauty of the Japanese garden.

Although modeled after nature, the gardens in Japan surpass the beauty of the country's natural landscape. The garden designers have achieved a heightened aesthetic awareness of the natural world and have condensed this sensibility in their gardens.

Of the many design features and aesthetic ideals found in Japanese gardens, two in particular, wabi and sabi, can be observed in the accompanying photographs. Wabi is best understood as the austere simplicity exhibited in these gardens – their rustic and plain, yet exquisite and precise layouts, while sabi is observed in the appearance of the process of aging, the patina of use, the irregularities and imperfections of nature. Whether in stroll, tea, or meditation gardens, the concepts of wabi and sabi have guided these Japanese designers in achieving a natural world artfully as well as spiritually crafted.
Dry garden at Nanzen-ji Temple, Kyoto, Japan

Grounds of the Imperial Palace, Kyoto, Japan
Stroll garden at Katsura Imperial Palace, Kyoto, Japan

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