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Teiji Itoh

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Teiji Itoh : The Imperial Gardens of Japan: Sento Gosho, Katsura, Shugaku-in before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Imperial Gardens of Japan: Sento Gosho, Katsura, Shugaku-in:

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From the front flap of this 290 page book: "More than three centuries ago, when Kyoto was the capital of Japan, three magnificent gardens were created for the imperial court - gardens intended for such elegant pastimes as tea ceremonies, poetry contests, and moon-viewing parties and, in general, for the appreciation of nature in its various manifestations and moods. Today these three gardens - those of the Sento Imperial Palace, the Katsura Detached Palace, and the Shugaku-in Detached Palace - are among the most celebrated in Japanese garden art, and here, for the first time in a book designed for Western readers, their beauty is revealed in striking photography and intimate detail. All of the gardens were designed to a great extent by members of the court; all are much larger than the average Japanese garden; all are stroll gardens in which the visitor is charmed by an almost endless succession of delightful views; and all date from the middle seventeenth century, when the stroll garden emerged into prominence. Emperors and princes, deprived of all political power by the ruling shoguns, turned to artistic pursuits, among them the art of garden design. Today these gardens, reverently preserved and universally admired, stand as monuments to their discriminating taste, outshining all surviving gardens created by the military rulers and their vassals. Through the

photographs and the accompanying essays the reader is invited not only to see these gardens in a variety of seasons and moods, but also to have a look at their history and the distinguishing features of their construction and design: the ponds, waterfalls, and streams; the bridges and islands; the teahouses; the steppingstones, paths and lanterns; ornamental rockwork; the trees and shrubbery, but more important than this, it conveys the spirit of the gardens themselves and the aesthetic philosophy that went into their making."