In Tokyo, the capital of a country steeped in a culture of art that dates back thousands of years, lies the Tokyo Museum of Art. It presents a sheer cliff to the passers-by, a dark and narrow slit of an entrance its only interruption. A feeling of exploration induced by this is continued in the interior, where suspended secret rooms prompt the intrepid museum-goer to explore the building and its contents, even traveling over the river occasionally.

Here the technological advancements of Tokyo are literally joined to the traditional construction practices of ancient Japan. The huge curtain wall is supported by steel joints that intersect the hewn timber columns seen in traditional temple and imperial architecture. The secret rooms are examples of the timber joinery at which the Japanese are so skilled, but are distinctly contemporary forms, hung from the ceiling with steel.

The Tokyo Museum of Art holds exhibitions of traditional Japanese paintings and sculpture.