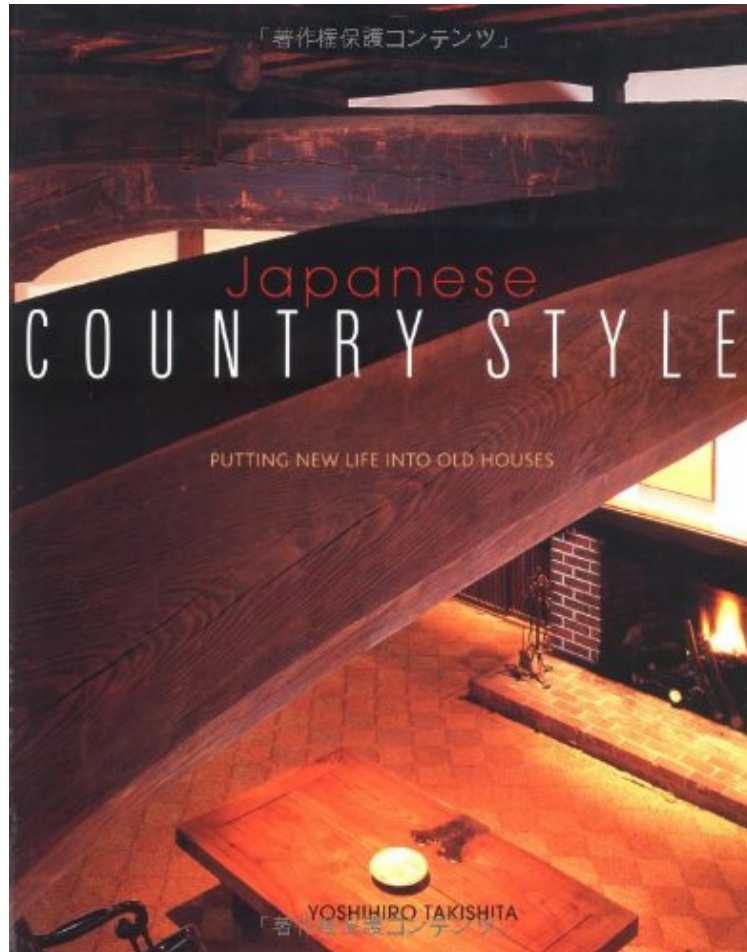


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Yoshihiro Takishita

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Yoshihiro Takishita : Japanese Country Style: Putting New Life into Old Houses before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Japanese Country Style: Putting New Life into Old Houses:

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Japanese Country Style: Putting New Life into Old Houses By Not So Secret Shopper Enjoyable reading. The author lovingly describes how he relocated and remodeled a selection of traditional Japanese farm houses that otherwise would have been destroyed. The descriptions of each house includes anecdotal notes as well as beautiful photos of the houses interiors exteriors. Thank goodness there are people who are interested in preserving a nation's cultural heritage. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great Detail By Ronin Very nice book with many examples of traditional rural Japanese homes including minka and gasho styles, timberframes and lots of tatami. Many of the homes are traditional with modern infusions, and may have furniture. If you are designing a new home, there are many excellent ideas displayed throughout the book. There are also many

architectural schematics, and the text is presented in both English and Japanese. I also recommend "Japanese Folkhouses", by Carver, which I prefer between the two. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Charm of Old Houses Rediscovered By Rongo From a vantage point on wooded Mt Genji overlooking the ancient city of Kamakura, Yoshihiro Takishita relaxes in his stately antique home after returning from a U.S. book tour. His book, Japanese Country Style: Putting New Life Into Old Houses is the culmination of his career to date as a rescuer and restorer of old Japanese minka (farmhouses). His life's work has been to preserve the grace and style of traditional Japanese architecture for future generations to appreciate, enjoy and admire. The positive response of audiences on his U.S. tour gave me confidence in what I'm doing, that I'm doing the right thing and that's so important for Japanese people, he said. The book is essentially a collection of excellent architectural photographs that capture the splendour of 16 of the minka homes Takishita has rejuvenated. But it also includes insight into his life and his passion for minka, background information on the buildings, tips for modernising the homes, hints on joinery, advice on suitable interior decorating and details on dismantling, transporting, and reassembling the structures in separate locations. Takishita has saved 30 such homes so far, dismantling the buildings, transporting the materials to new locations and reconstructing them to live on as examples of a bygone age when elegance, refinement and grandeur were more highly regarded than purely economic considerations and rationalisation. People today buy houses like they're buying (a new car) from a catalogue: fast and cheap. Takishita claims it is reasonable to expect a reconstructed minka home to provide comfortable living for at least 200 years, and that minka themselves actually become more beautiful with age, unlike contemporary Japanese homes, which begin to deteriorate and become grimy and unattractive within a few years. Government statistics show that the average lifespan of a new house in Japan is 26 years. People say economy comes first, but what kind of economy is it when a house only lasts 26 years? In the long term, minka are much more economical, Takishita said. To sit chatting with Takishita in the spacious living area of the more than 200-year-old minka annex to his Kamakura home, surrounded by sturdy, solid wooden uprights and majestic overhead beams blackened by centuries of wood smoke and the patina of age, is truly awe-inspiring. He uses the building as a showroom for his separate, but complimentary, business as an antique dealer. What could be better to display antiques in than an antique building? he asks in his book. Takishita fears the nation is losing its way culturally and is allowing the West too great an influence. We are losing our sense of beauty and sense of value. We are losing the beautiful things in this country. We are ruining and destroying it. He said. Japanese are group-minded and community minded; they lack the ability to make individual judgements it's a shame, Takishita said. Losing (World War II) was a denial of our cultural heritage and we lost confidence in our traditions. It is now time for us to rediscover Japan and it is my mission to spread this message, he said. There seems to be a popular misconception among Japanese that old houses are cold, dark, dirty, damp, uncomfortable and expensive to maintain. Worse, they carry the stigma of penury in the Japanese mind-set, in which keeping up with the Watanabes is essential. For Japanese, to live in a farmhouse is a symbol of poverty. A thatched-roof house is considered shameful, Takishita said. This may have been valid 100 years ago, but Takishita's homes have every modern convenience from flush toilets to Jacuzzis, as each home can be tastefully modified to include any amenity required in the process of disassembly and reconstruction. Incorporating fireplaces, air conditioning, and subfloor heating panels that warm the entire home from the bottom up solves the heating problem, skylights improve lighting and security is enhanced with locking doors and windows. Takishita appears to have a solution for every objection and a visit to his comfortable Kamakura home quickly dispels minka misconceptions. Takishita looks to the past for a vision of the future and his excellent book redefines the word progress. Modern buildings become inconsequential, regressive and artless beside the splendour of minka, serving as a reminder to us all that we can still learn from our ancestors.

Japanese Country Style introduces sixteen unique and sumptuous homes rescued by Yoshihiro Takishita, a professional antiquarian, and illustrates how his renovations rejuvenated these all-but-forgotten architectural gems. Takishita candidly discusses the thoughts and inspirations that led him to adapt and convert these centuries-old farmhouses for modern living. Chapters on their unique history and construction demonstrate the value of these towering traditional homes, and illustrate their place in Japanese rural life, where several generations often lived under the same roof which allowed for a horse in the stable area and silkworms in the attic. Japanese Country Style also showcases the artful blending of traditional Japanese elements with modern lifestyles. Tatami rooms, Japanese antiques, traditional wooden furniture, and other treasures fill the rooms of these homes, and evoke the understated elegance of country-style living. With over 200 photographs and illustrations of beautifully refurbished folk homes, this volume presents a portrait of a sublime yet simple way of life that will give anyone interested in design and architecture a host of useful ideas. This book adopts a bilingual format, providing both Japanese and English commentary.

"[Takishita's] work is not only interesting and stimulating -- it is inspiring." -- Donald Richie, The Japan Times "showcases the artful blending of traditional Japanese elements for modern living." -- Associated Press From the Publisher FOREWORD Over the last three decades or so, casual visitors to Kamakura (and longtime residents as well)

have wondered about a large, steeply sloped roof that seems to "grow" out of the top of Genjiyama, one of Kamakura's highest hills. Walking through the ancient town's leafy residential lanes or hiking along one of the many trails leading up into the hills, one's eyes are drawn, as if by a magnet, toward the powerful sculptural form of that roof that seems to crown the hilltop and the town itself. When I lived in Kamakura during the early 1970s, I was amused by the rumors circulating down in the town about the structure on the peak of Genjiyama and the identity of its inhabitants: some claimed it was the mountain villa of a former prime minister; no, said others, it was the sanctuary of a religious sect or a cult that worshipped the gods of the sea stretching out far below it. Once, with unimpeachable authority, I was informed by the proprietor of a little restaurant near Kamakura ! Station that the hilltop was actually the temporary asylum of a foreign ruler, living in exile in Japan but planning a revolution that would restore him to power in his homeland. This theory gained in credibility as local residents observed occasional motorcades of black limousines accompanied by motorcycle police traveling up the steep hill toward the mysterious building at its peak. I listened to these rumors with keen interest, but said nothing, of course, because I knew that the magnificent roof, which was all that was visible from the valley below, actually sheltered the home of my friends Yoshihiro and Reiko Takishita and Yoshi's adoptive American father, the journalist John Roderick. To me, there was no mystery about the place because I had visited it often and had frequently enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of the Takishitas. Still, I enjoyed participating in the mystery surrounding one of Kamakura's best-kept secrets because the real story of the mountaintop house, though lacking in sinister intrigue, is far more interesting and compelling than anything the rumor-mongers could cook. I am delighted that Yoshi Takishita has finally told the story of his own house as well as the history and traditions that produced it. In this book he also tells the stories of a number of similar homes that he has created for friends and clients in Japan and abroad. With or without mysterious overtones, his own house atop Genjiyama is, quite simply, one of the most magnificent abodes I have ever visited. Its power stems in part, of course, from its lofty location and the extraordinary vista of hills and ocean that it commands. But even more impressive is the building itself, the all-embracing unity of its architectural components, and the obvious affection that has been lavished on it by its present owners. The house that now commands the most exalted hilltop in Kamakura traveled there from much humbler origins far away, and this book recounts that journey -- a story that offers compelling messages about preservation and craft, about man's place in his natural surroundings! , and about an aesthetic that transforms shelter into art. Yoshihiro Takishita is a visionary who saw, with an eye untutored at first by architectural sciences, that the proud but crumbling old farmhouses of his childhood in the remote mountains of Gifu could be transformed into great homes that satisfied the needs for comfort and convenience of twentieth- and twenty-first-century dwellers. Where others saw only hazard, discomfort, and inconvenience in ancient structures built of heavy wooden beams and straw thatch, Takishita saw enduring beauty and strength. When others were ready to destroy the old farmhouses, trashing their proud traditions and exchanging them for the illusory convenience of prefabricated steel and plastic, Takishita stepped forward to rescue them, to preserve their majestic authority, and, by dismantling and reconstructing them, to transform them (in countless unseen ways) into warm, comfortable, and astonishingly beautiful homes. Takishita's mission is fully in accord with the principles of the modern mingei, or "folk-craft," movement that has reintroduced to contemporary Japan the simple beauties of its agrarian past. His farmhouse-homes were originally crafted by hand, by carpenters and farmers whose hard work was motivated not by ego or enrichment but rather by function and necessity. Takishita's dwellings were restored by the same hands, guided by a similar spirit of dedication, and he has furnished them with a superb array of antique objects -- ceramics, paintings, lacquerware, and metal crafts -- all made with comparable craftsmanship and zeal. That spirit was perhaps best expressed by the ideals of Yanagi Soetsu, the philosopher and aesthete who attributed the enduring beauty of ancient crafts to "the hand of the Buddha": "If there is beauty here, it does not stem from the power of a single individual but must be seen as the work of a power surpassing the people involved, operating behind the scenes to endow the object with beauty. To put the matter simply, the other power, the hand of the Buddha, is at work in the beauty of the anonymous object." This book recounts Yoshihiro Takishita's discovery of the ageless beauty of craft in Japan's rural traditions and his remarkable dedication to giving modern meaning to ancient architectural truths. The "story" of the book is the process of rebuilding and restoring his own home and fifteen other old Japanese farmhouses. But there is much more here than an account of foundation-posts and roof-beams and joinery. Takishita's personal story is a journey of self-discovery with deep significance for modern Japan's confrontation with its own past. His vision, craftsmanship, and dedication have brought these farmhouses back to life, giving them a new identity and new meaning. There can be no question that guiding his handiwork and inspiring his efforts has been something more -- perhaps, indeed, "the hand of the Buddha."

Peter M. Grilli President, Japan Society of Boston

About the Author YOSHIHIRO TAKISHITA was born in Gifu Prefecture in 1945 and graduated with a law degree from Tokyo's Waseda University in 1967. While still a student, he learned of a 250-year-old farmhouse (minka) near his home town that was about to be submerged in the construction of a local reservoir. Impressed by the dignity of the structure, he arranged to have the house moved to a site in Kamakura, where it was rebuilt as a home for his American foster father. He then took eighteen months off and hitchhiked around the world, visiting thirty-six countries. On his return in 1971, he established The House of Antiques, where he sells furniture, ceramics, and other antiques. After enthusiastic clients praised the reconstructed farmhouse in

Kamakura and urged him to build more, he began rebuilding and renovating other traditional farmhouses. To date, he has carried out thirty renovations, four of them overseas.