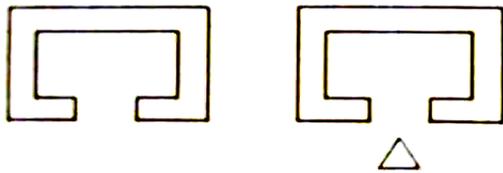


## Introduction

One of the first questions people seem to ask, “How did you end up Japan working on renovating machiya”? There is no simple answer to that question. Life is a continuous web of connections, different for each of us, which can be altered by the slightest change in timing. I consider myself quite blessed that timing seems to have been on my side, and that I am able to present to you my story on the following pages.

I begin with my first exposure to Japan, 15 years ago when I was a graduate student studying architecture in Boston. One of my first experiences of how the perspective can vary from the East to the West was a discovery of how the basic concept of the house can vary from our collective experiences. The image below shows just how different our perception of house can be, with the walls being evident in the Hieroglyphs on the left (representing enclosure), and the roof being visible at the top of the 3 Chinese characters on the right. This manifests itself in our image of nature, with a Western view being a more wild, uncontrollable nature and the Japanese view of a more intergrated nature, which is expressed in something as simple as our symbols.

### Egyptian Hieroglyphs



House

Entrance

### Chinese Characters

家, 堂, 舍

House and Other Buildings

Soon after, I found myself in Tokyo, the capital of the cutting edge of design at that moment when Japan was leading the world, working for two of the greats of modern architecture. First, Fumihiko Maki, who is now working on one of the towers at the World Trade Center, and next Yoshio Taniguchi, whom I was privileged enough to help with the competition for the renovation project at MoMA in New York. I explain in detail how we were not only lucky enough to be invited to compete, but also to provide the winning scheme that was the basis for the buildings that stand there today.

Then I find myself in Kyoto, a move that was as big of an adjustment as the change of moving from Boston to Tokyo! So here I am in Kyoto, the capital of Japan for traditional architecture that has made Japan renowned throughout the world, studying and working with some of the best carpenters in the world at the Sukiya architecture giant Nakamura Sotoji Komuten. At the same time I find a 90 year-old Machiya to live in, with the only drawback that all the appliances, including the bathtub (geomumburo) have to be fired by wood! It has been in a state of disrepair for over 11 years and is on the block to be torn down within the year that I arrive. So with my collection of resources, mostly my stock of knowledge patiently taught to me by my colleagues at Nakamura, I set off to repair my Machiya, with my own hands, bit by bit, returning it to its original splendor.

These experiences, it turns out, were enough to allow me to begin my own design office, based in Kyoto, within a few years. I begin work on an Edo period Kura, a 200 year old Temple renovation and addition project as well as numerous Machiya renovations, most for residences, but some shops as pictured on the book cover. This project on the cover was for a shop on

Marutamchi street in Kyoto that turned a 100 year old Machiya into a Kendo shop that sells much of the goods via the internet.

I am now working on projects in Los Angeles, New York and Japan, all based from Kyoto. I am most recently interested in the “space between” in Japanese architecture that can be expressed most clearly by the veranda for the Japanese. This is an element/concept that I find unique to Japanese architecture and is where the title of this book originated. A modern example of a veranda can be seen in the Kendo shop on the following page. I try to explain all events from the point of view of an architect, but not to an audience of architects. I hope you find it as interesting as I do.

## Afterward

I hope that I have been able to demonstrate through my work, be it a Machiya renovation, or a temple addition, that Japanese culture can continue to develop without discarding the past. Many of the projects that I have renovated were well over 100 years old, but I hope that you can see that it was not impossible to bring these structures in line with today's living standards. I believe that I have been able to do this without compromising the original structural integrity or atmosphere, even though at first these may seem to be at odds with today's living standards. However, there are still many obstacles to overcome.

One of the main obstacles I find is the attitude of the Japanese themselves. I have already pointed out an example of this in the Kondo house that I was able to renovate in Okazaki, Kyoto. In this case the clients and the builder did not even consider trying to renovate the 100 year-old house in which the owner was born. I cannot imagine any place else in the world where the topic of trying to save a house like this would not have at least been broached in the initial discussions between client and builder of what to do with the house. I find this attitude pervasive throughout Japan today.

Unfortunately this comes from the example set at the governmental level, which I experienced first hand once again just last week. The incident went like this: I got a call from one of my clients - who coincidentally also happens to have been raised in New York and wants to find an old Machiya to renovate and inhabit - who had found an old house in Sonobe, Kyoto prefecture which was about to be torn down. He was wondering if there was a possibility of moving it to a different site. When we got to the site we found a house over 200 years old, which was slated by the government to be torn down to make way to widen the road. I looked around the site - which extended over 500 square meters - for about 2 hours and in that time only about 10 -15 vehicles passed the house using the street that the government says needs to be widened. I might point out that this was not the only 200-year old house in that neighborhood that was slated to be torn down. The house next door of the same age had already been demolished. If the street only gets a handful of cars passing every few hours, can be the benefit from making this road at the expense of destroying all this culture really be worth it, other than creating jobs?

While it has been argued that to scrap and rebuild is part of Japanese culture as seen in Ise Shrine, which is rebuilt every 20 years, I think this case exemplifies exactly the opposite. The reason to rebuild the structure every 20 years can be viewed as preserving the structure into infinity, thereby perpetuating the culture imbued within.

Unless these thoughtless decisions by the Japanese bureaucracy do not stop, Japanese culture will stay on the endangered list. I hope that what I have illustrated on these pages can encourage those who have the will to fight to save Japanese culture.

I would like to thank the following people without whom this book would not have been possible. First I would like to thank Fumihiko Maki for supporting me in such a way that has allowed me to continue to strive always for the best. Also, I would like to thank Gary Kamemoto, Yoshiaki Nakamura, Shiro Masuda, Naomi and Hiroto Kobayashi, Mark Mulligan and Kenji Hirano, whom have supported me through my formative years and taught me how to act in a professional manner. The craftsmen who work with me to always come up with new ways of approaching their craft: Yoshito Immabeppu, Hiroshi Motoyama, and Kei Shoya. I would also like to thank Kundo Koyama from Ielab and Kei Yonezawa from Kosakusya, Keiko Kawasoe, Christian Orton for his help as well as his photographic skills, Shodensha for asking me to write this book as well as putting up with my stubbornness, and my staff Koko and Shingo for helping with the difficult parts. Finally I would like to thank my family, the Hata's for their unending support.