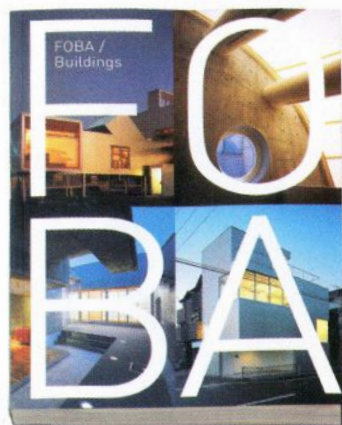


Big in Japan? / The tenets of Western modernism—“less is more” and “form follows function”—can just as easily be applied to centuries of Japanese architecture. Four new books explore the unique nature of the contemporary Japanese home.



Clockwise from top left:

Building the Japanese House Today /

By Peggy Rao and Len Brackett / Harry N. Abrams / \$40 / www.abramsbooks.com

Japan Houses / By Marcia Iwatate and Geeta

K. Mehta / Tuttle Publishing / \$50 / www.tuttlepublishing.com

Modern Japanese House / By Naomi Pollock / Phaidon / \$75 / www.phaidon.com

FOBA Buildings / By Katsu Umabayashi, Thomas Daniell, and Michael Webb / Princeton Architectural Press / \$40 / www.papress.com

Although there is a tendency to think of the United States as a country in the process of continually scraping away at its history through new construction, this is exponentially truer of Japan. There, due in part to continually evolving earthquake codes, the average life span of a building is a mere 25 years. The architectural landscape is a metamorphosing patchwork of small, tightly packed lots.

This context often yields surprising results. Yoko Inoue's House for a Vegetable Seller, featured in *Modern Japanese House*, is a six-story pillar of a home, scarcely wider than a common bedroom, sandwiched between two drab existing structures. Moving away from the dense urban environment, the homes in *Japan Houses* represent an upper echelon of residences—largely unrestrained by budget or spatial limitations. Not so for the buildings created by Katsu Umabayashi's firm, FOBA—each is an endemic response to client and siting. *FOBA Buildings* traces the firm's ten-year history. *Building the Japanese House Today* combines a how-to approach with anecdotes from Len Brackett's decades of experience at the intersection of Japanese and American building conventions. The book thoughtfully explores a culture of building in which even the smallest joinery detail is revered—and features lovely photos by our own Aya Brackett to boot.

