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The Very Small Home: Japanese Ideas for Living Well in Limited Space

By Azby Brown



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The Very Small Home is an inspiring new book that surveys the creative design innovations of small houses in Japan. Eighteen recently built and unusual houses, from ultramodern to Japanese rustic, are presented in depth. Particular emphasis is given to what the author calls the "big idea" for each house—the thing that does the most to make the home feel more spacious than it actually is. Big ideas include ingenious sources of natural light, well thought-out loft spaces, snug but functional kitchens, unobtrusive partitions, and unobstructed circulation paths.

An introduction puts the houses in the context of lifestyle trends and highlights their shared characteristics. The Houses section details each project the intentions of the designers and occupants are explained. The result is a very human sensibility that runs through the book, a glimpse of the dreams and aspirations that these unique homes represent and that belies their apparent modesty. The second half of the book is devoted to illustrating the special features in the homes, from storage and kitchen designs to revolutionary skylights and partitions.

Building small can be a sign of higher ambitions, and those who read this book will undoubtedly grow to appreciate that building a small home can be an amazingly positive and creative act, one which can enhance one's life in surprising ways. In *The Very Small Home*, Brown has given home owners, designers, and architects a fascinating new collection of ideas.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"The small abode has become all the rage in Japan," architect Kengo Kuma declares in the foreword to this inspiring book, which should appeal to fans of the small home movement in the U.S. as well. Brown (*Small Spaces; The Japanese Dream House*) presents 18 residential buildings in his photo-packed volume, all of them built within the past five years. Many of them were designed by leading Japanese architects, such as Tadao Ando and Shigeru Ban. And although their actual floor spaces may be too small for most American readers—they range from 540 sq. ft. to 1,730 sq. ft.—the volume is so full of ingenious ideas that it's a good bet for anyone trying to maximize the space and light of a small residence. Architect Hoichiro Itai's house, for example, manages to squeeze a garden deck, a study, three bedrooms and a sunny communal dining space into 995 sq. ft. Another house makes the most of a small footprint by setting the entryway between two glass-walled garages, so that the entrance resembles an elegant auto showroom. And a third fits a workspace, a bedroom and a bathhouse all in a long, narrow lot that was once a driveway. But the most impressive aspect of all these homes is the bright, airy feeling they manage to convey within in their tiny confines. As Kuma explains, "Focusing on the essentials and a strong sense of poetry ... they are creating, within finite quarters, a refined living space, generating new and important ideas." Brown's excellent textual commentary will help readers bring those important ideas into their own homes.

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Review

"Azby Brown has done it again. I loved his first book, *Small Spaces*, and this one goes further yet in helping to demystify the art of the small house. The book is a must for anyone wanting to understand how to do more with less when it comes to home design. These tiny and exquisitely designed contemporary Japanese homes have so many lessons to teach readers around the world about how to make their homes both functional and beautiful, whatever the size. And as for the quality of the houses illustrated, they're extraordinary. I, for one, couldn't put the book down, and I suspect it will have the same effect on a great many readers." -Sarah Susanka, AIA architect and author of *The Not So Big House* series and *Home By Design*

"As houses get smaller, their space gets more intense. People are nearly insatiable in their hunger for urban nesting places, and here we see that marvelously expressed." -Toyo Ito

"Brown's *Very Small Home* provides homeowner-friendly design tips, whether it's a raised kitchen floor that opens to store infrequently used items or general advice on using one or two luxurious details -a fine photograph, an antique bench-to set the mood of a room or entire house. Drawings, color photos and interviews with people living in the homes make it an interesting read." -*Miami Herald*

"I have a feeling that many of us are living in something less than a McMansion. Maybe our homes feel more like a child-size Happy Meal than a supersize Big Mac? If that's the case, you're sure to find some tasty ideas in the new book by Tokyo-based architect Azby Brown, *Very Small Home*." -*Contra Costa Times*

"Those glorious 'McMansions,' large rambling homes with a multitude of rooms, were a craze in the 1990s. Now, the 'small home' is a big idea-at least according to a new book from Kodansha. *Very Small Home* is a big book featuring glorious color photos of 18 'new' (under 5 years old) houses that were designed specifically for small spaces." -*The Star Newspapers*, Chicago

"This is the most fascinating, the most delightful architecture book that I've read in years! Here are spectacular, dramatic small houses. 320 square feet, 1268 feet of living space... These houses are indeed tiny. But this does not mean crude, cheap, old. The oldest of the houses shown was five years old at the time of publication... I would strongly suggest that anyone thinking of a house in a metropolitan area read this book." -www.books-on-line.com

"A small but growing group of architects and homeowners is rejecting the notion that bigger homes mean better lives and for economic, environmental and aesthetic reasons is embracing mini houses, which are often under 1,000 sq. ft. Books like Alejandro Bahamón's *Mini House*, Michelle Kodis' *Blueprint Small*, Azby Brown's *The Very Small Home* and Ricorico's *Mini House Style* explore how small spaces can be put to ingenious uses." -*Time Magazine*

"As Americans begin to absorb the notion that big homes are not necessarily better, we're naturally looking to Japan, where architects manage to create livable, modern homes that are in some cases tiny, but that are flooded with light and seem much bigger than they are. The *Very Small Home* by Azby Brown is a double-barreled book-with highly practical drawings and inspirational photography of 18 great recent houses." -*Metropolitan Home Magazine*

"Inspiring... the volume is so full of ingenious ideas that it's a good bet for anyone trying to maximize the space and light of a small residence... But the most impressive aspect of all these homes is the bright, airy feeling they manage to convey within in their tiny confines... Brown's excellent textual commentary will help readers bring those important ideas into their own homes." -*Publishers Weekly*

"Although floor space is at a premium, Azby Brown illustrates the surprising possibilities of tiny spaces, in which a book collection can grow, or a music room can be quaintly tucked away. The beautiful materials, fluid shapes, and clean spaces are enviable; *The Very Small Home* works equally well as either a dream book or a blueprint for home renovators." -*Kirkus Reports*

"The Japanese are nothing if not innovative and stylish, and this look at some bold architectural and design ideas proves that just because you live in a shoebox, it doesn't have to look like a shoebox. All of these homes breathe with a surprising openness, and are blessed with copious amounts of sunlight. Personal accumulation is kept to a minimum and stashed in inventive ways, so not only are these homes aesthetically pleasing, but they also insist that your home should not be defined by the amount of stuff you can pack into

it." -Orlando Weekly

"It's amazing what a good architect can do to make a small space elegant, attractive and full of light, as well as highly functional. Even if you have a larger home, many of these ideas can apply to a small room in it. If you dare to be small, as Brown suggests, then have a look at *The Very Small Home* - it's an informative and engaging presentation." -BookLoons.com

"[Azby Brown] hopes *The Very Small Home* will enlighten English readers on how to live contentedly in a tight situation. He even suggests that the small house is actually superior to its larger incarnations and that, given a choice, the truly discerning are opting for life on the squeeze." -The Daily Telegraph (UK)

"Japanese homes are the epitome of compact and efficient design and in Azby Brown's forthcoming book, *The Very Small Home*, he explores the attitude in Japan towards efficient and functional design... Japanese design patterns are bound to be adopted by Western architects and this book makes a point to showcase some of the finest small home design that Japan has to offer." -Land + Living Modern Lifestyle + Design

"Experience in Japan shows that it is possible to live well and meet most of the needs of the modern world without thinking big." -Kateigaho Magazine

"If you don't think you can find room on your coffee table for yet another hardcover book focusing on design (let alone anything else), think again. This not-so-wee gem might just have the answer you've been searching for." -J Select Magazine

About the Author

AZBY BROWN was raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. He studied architecture at Yale College. In 1985 he received a grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education to do research at the Architecture Department of the University of Tokyo, where in 1988 he received a master's degree. He is the author of several books, including *The Genius of Japanese Carpentry*, *Small Spaces*, and *The Japanese Dream House*. He became Associate Professor of Architectural Design at the Kanazawa Institute of Technology in 1995, where he has also accepted a position in the Department of Media Informatics. He opened the Future Design Institute in Tokyo where he currently serves as Director. Brown lives in Yokohama with his wife and son.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Curt Roepke:

Now a day people that Living in the era exactly where everything reachable by connect to the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not need people to be aware of each information they get. How individuals to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Examining a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information specially this The Very Small Home: Japanese Ideas for Living Well in Limited Space book because book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it everbody knows.

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