



TAIGA 大河
PROJECT MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

玄関 ENTRANCE/GENKAN



A sense of arrival is key to a home - you step into someone else's world, and take in the character of the house.

The genkan was perhaps the only place I had a defined idea about from the beginning, and it was gratifying to see that idea come to fruition.

A niche ('tokonoma') is normally never found in the entrance, but I couldn't resist. One of the original supports, the post is filled with nail holes, and reflects the starting point of the project. Now home to a shodo/calligraphy, this is the first stop for your eyes as you walk in the door.



外壁 EXTERIOR

Basically, we started with a rotten, warped box. Working with a limited budget, we chose to focus most of the resources on the interior, but still wanted to dress up the outside. Pulling out the rotten mudsill took far longer than anticipated, as each internal post had to be jacked up individually. The roof was painted, chimney capped, new/recycled windows added, new front porch, trim, cedar siding on the front and back, and paint on the old concrete siding. The original idea for the colour changed as we watched 4 concrete buildings go up around us... the cream paint, reddish-brown trim, and blond cedar stain serve as a warm counter-point to the cold grey exterior of the neighboring houses.



和室 TATAMI ROOMS



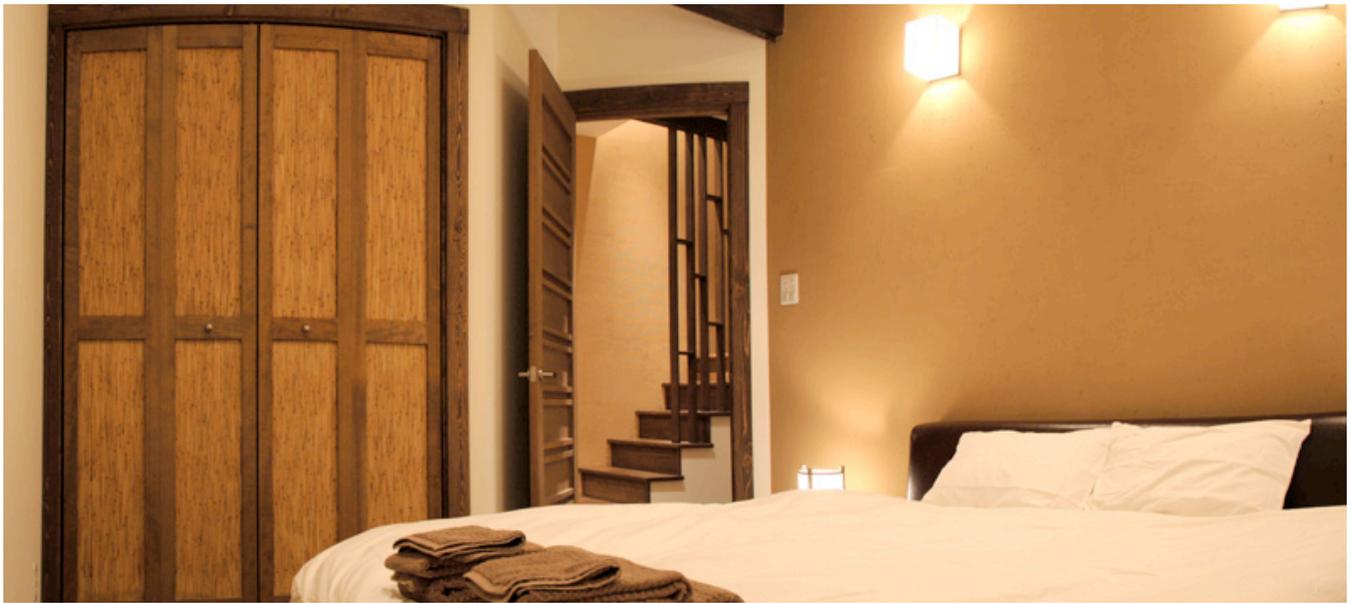
A tatami room, done properly, should be experienced by anyone coming to Japan. Too often visitors to Hirafu make a judgement based on a ratty old hotel room, so we set about to create a space anyone could enjoy. The central post of the original living room became the dividing wall between the two tatami rooms, which features hand crafted doors made locally.

風呂 BATH

To understand Japan, first you should take a bath. This country has elevated bathing to an art form, and for Japanese the bath ('furo') is the anchor of the day. The bath is usually separate from the shower, so that you enter the furo squeaky clean. The sanitary division allows a whole family to use the same bath-water - economical and eco-friendly.

We decided early on to turn the kitchen space into a moody bathing area, and make this the focal point of the first floor. The traditional hinoki (cyprus) wood ceiling and wall lets off a spicy aroma, and is accented by the darker tiles. The counter top was purchased from a local lumber yard - Japanese Elm, which has a beautiful reddish grain.





The master bedroom faces south, and fills the space once occupied by the bathroom sink, boiler, laundry, and drop toilet. One generally does not think *closet doors* could be a focal point in a room, but the quality of these custom doors shines through. All of the doors in the house were hand built in Niseko - these are alder based with bamboo accents.

Nurikabe (earthen wall texturing) is a traditional form in Japan, and I used this for all of the wall accents. It is visually rich, because beyond the colour there are textures to play with - I chose hay, rake, and brush, which all catch the light in a unique way.



REVERSING THE FLOORPLAN



Originally, the house had this big open room upstairs, and the 4 families who jointly owned the place would rock up on weekends and throw down a bedroll.

The openness certainly helped to free our imaginations. The photo at left is looking towards the back of the house, and where we built the living room and horigotatsu.

Two new large windows on the south east wall were salvaged from a tear down, and dramatically changed the light upstairs.



This opening was a vent space, to let up heat from the *massive* brick fireplace. Sometimes I think it would have been easier to open a pizza joint.



One quarter of the room was divided, but the half wall seemed a little odd - hardly enough to block out any snoring.



Looking towards where we built the kitchen and dining. Heavy snow loading had warped the walls outwards, so we built the new stair and toilet walls to double as structural support.



OPEN SPACE

The exposed trusses are the real reason I bought the house. The dark colour is reminiscent of a traditional home, where the ceiling is often blackened by cooking soot. This is balanced by the golden bamboo flooring,

Lighting is essential to mood and creating a unique space. The end result achieved what we hoped with the floorplan - 4 distinct areas within one large room.

The dining table is solid elm, and the kitchen counter tops hard wearing granite.





掘りごたつ Horigotatsu

Most visitors to the house sit first at this space, and I would say it is the most unique part of this project. Chatting, dining, drinking, napping, typing... the one space does it all. The table top is Niseko birch and the legs are elm - all masterfully put together on site. The square shoji screen hides a round window, a silhouette during the day. Around the shoji and steps is a river wood, birch bleached grey after several hundred years submerged.

Purchased on a whim at the lumber yard - I new immediately it needed to be incorporated.

