

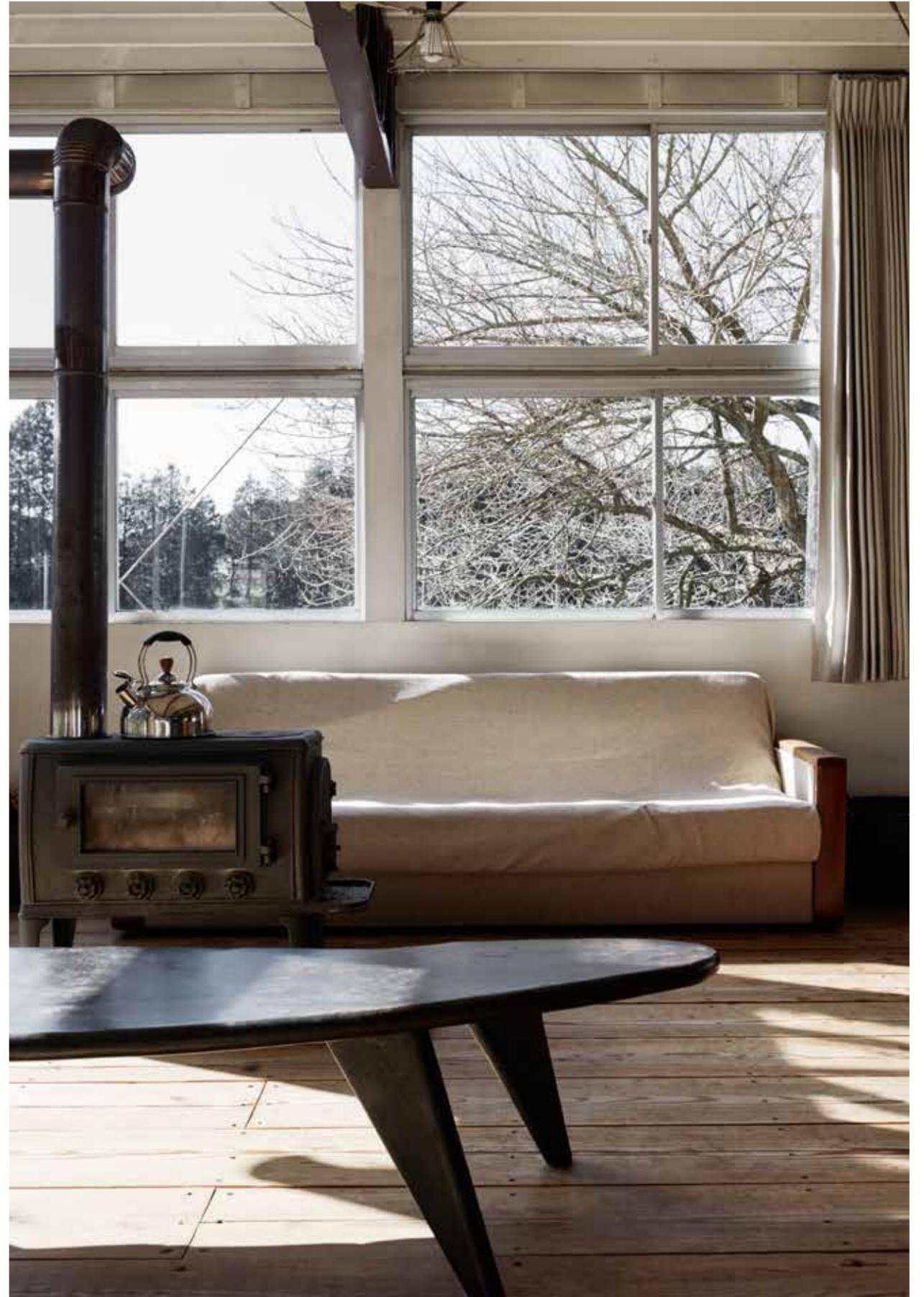
# HIDEKI & JUNKO TAKAYAMA

Hideki and Junko Takayama traded urban living for life in rural Japan to feel more in touch with their senses. Their home in Mashiko, a small town in the Tochigi prefecture 50 miles north of Tokyo, is surrounded by rice-paddy fields and undeveloped woodlands that go on for miles. “There are no other houses near us, which has really helped us slow down, calm our minds and appreciate the changing seasons,” says Hideki, a woodworker and furniture maker. The lack of man-made construction intensifies the beauty of the natural landscape, especially on snowy winter nights when the stars shine bright in the absence of artificial lighting. “I love standing by the rice fields in early summer, watching as the reflection of the sunset makes its way across the lake,” he says. “In the fall, the ripened rice branches sway in the wind and look like the waves of a golden sea and teach us about the various wind patterns.” Living here also gives the couple access to the beautiful plum and cherry trees that are scattered across the nearby mountains: The plum trees start flowering in the spring and the cherry flowers appear just as the plum blossoms begin to fall. Junko loves decorating their house with beautiful ikebana flower arrangements and believes that they’re the perfect expression of each season. “We often invite our friends over for a celebratory banquet to watch the plum flowers blossom,” Hideki says. Building their house from the ground up was an arduous task—after friends helped lay down the building’s foundation, the pair went about

assembling the house bit by bit. “It’s been 13 years since we started the building process and, to be honest, it’s still a work in progress,” he says. While friends gifted a few household items, Hideki made most of the furniture himself. “The thing I value most when making furniture is the sensation you have when interacting with its textural elements,” he says. “I always finish a piece of work by touching it intently and only stop working when it feels perfect.” Mashiko is home to many potters who flocked to the area to learn from the late acclaimed Japanese ceramicist and former resident Shōji Hamada—the couple’s home contains many ceramic home wares, including works by Harvey Young, Akio Nukaga and San Francisco-based company Heath Ceramics. In keeping with the uncluttered, meditative lifestyle they’ve cultivated in Mashiko, Hideki and Junko don’t own a television. Instead, they love gathering for a meal at the end of the day to talk and connect with each other, especially when their teenage son, Genki, is home visiting from abroad. “A house truly becomes a home when you fill it with people’s feelings and stories,” Hideki says. “Living here means I don’t have to be tied down by the values of urban cities, my time is my own and I get to savor the changing of the seasons with the ones I love.”

*In the following essay on page 348, we consider how a home changes form and meaning throughout the year’s seasons.*







Previous Page: Hideki and Junko found their antique wood-burning fireplace at a nearby home store. The sofa was a gift from his parents and the bench is one of his own creations.

Above Left: Hideki designed these wooden bottle sculptures and the table was made using various pieces of old materials.

Following Page: The couple enjoys spending time in the kitchen. This is one of their creations, a daikon salad with rapeseed oil and plum vinegar.

