

SKI & MOUNTAIN HOMES

INSIDE STORY

A Home With a Hint of Monastery

A Colorado couple with a passion for Japan and climbing builds a quiet home

BY CANDACE JACKSON

NORIE KIZAKI AND DAVID WOLF

knew just what they wanted for the house they were building in Colorado: a home that reflected Ms. Kizaki's childhood in a Buddhist monastery in rural Japan, where her father was a monk.

But they also wanted a light touch: a relatively modest size and an exterior that wouldn't stand out too much in their Boulder neighborhood, with its mix of 1950s-era ranch houses and colonial bungalows. "We wanted to incorporate the stuff we liked about Japanese houses, but we didn't want people to say, 'turn left at the Japanese house,'" says Mr. Wolf.

The result is a 1,800-square-foot, two-story, three-bedroom, 2½-bathroom modern minimalist home. It has a typical gable roof but with an enameled-steel wrapper that folds onto the flat top surface. A contemporary porch swing sits out front. "I think porch swings feel really neighborly," says Mr. Wolf.

The Japanese element is visible, but subtle. The front door and part of the facade is shou-sugi-ban cypress, a Japanese charred-wood technique that preserves the wood. The home was completed in 2015 at a cost of \$750,000 to \$800,000.

Ms. Kizaki, a ski and climbing guide, and Mr. Wolf, an avid climber who runs a wealth-advisory firm, hired architect E.J. Meade of Denver- and Boulder-based Arch11 to handle the design. As it happened, Mr. Meade was familiar with many of the principles of Japanese design.

The couple reused the foundation of the original home they had purchased in 2010 and torn down. They bought the 1/3-acre property for about \$600,000.

The home's interior has many traditional Japanese elements. The small entry room is inspired by a traditional *genkan*, where guests can slip off their shoes and change into house slippers.

The main living space is set up around a tatami room, surrounded by sliding shoji screen doors. With no furniture except for the rice straw mats on the ground, the couple uses the space for meditation, dining or watching TV on a set tucked behind a door, along with silk pillows for sitting. Ms. Kizaki's mother sleeps in the tatami room when she visits, using a trifold Japanese futon.



To fit three bedrooms and two bathrooms into the 700-square-foot upper level, Mr. Meade says they kept hallways and corridors to a minimum and ceilings high to create a feeling of space.

Off the master bedroom is a cantilevered bathroom that holds a wet room, or Japanese *ofuru*, with a shower and a deep Japanese soaking tub. A window placed above the tub allows a view of the Flatiron Mountains. "It's the Japanese sense of a privileged view of nature, versus a wall of windows," says Mr. Meade.

The same is true of a front garden visible through a pair of low windows in the tatami room.

The home has white oak floors and white walls throughout. Furniture and decoration are kept to a minimum, and include a couple of paintings by friend Craig Muderlak. One, in the kitchen, shows Mount Yotei, where Ms. Kizaki spends three months a year as a backcountry ski guide.

Ms. Kizaki moved to Colorado about 20 years ago to attend graduate school at Denver University for international communications. She took up mountain climbing as a weekend hobby and soon left a consulting job to pursue guiding full time. Mr. Wolf,

SUBTLE Norie Kizaki and David Wolf, inset, built a home with subtle Japanese style on the facade, top, and rich traditions inside, above and below.



who grew up on the border between Iowa and Illinois, also moved to Colorado for school, earning a master's in business and a law degree at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

The two met in 2002 through a mutual friend with whom they traveled to Ecuador for a month-long climbing trip. They married in 2008 in a ceremony at the monastery where Ms. Kizaki grew up.

They say they were drawn to the Boulder property by its proximity to the mountains, to Mr.



WOODWORK The kitchen, left, has a painting of Japan by the couple's friend Craig Muderlak. The wood facade and door are made of shou-sugi-ban cypress.

Wolf's office downtown, and to a favorite market. In addition to the 1950s teardown ranch house, the lot had a 575-square-foot guest cottage, where they lived during construction of their home.

Today, they use the second floor of the cottage as a guest space. The ground floor also holds their Volkswagen RV camper, and all their ski and climbing gear.

A central design element of the home is the floating staircase of plate steel and tension wires in the living room. The room also has big glass doors that open to a deck and a large backyard. Outside, is a lawn, vegetable garden and Concord grape orchard that has been

on the property since the 1950s. Mr. Wolf also planted Japanese kabocha squash and, out front, there is a large rose bush that the couple liked so much they insisted Mr. Meade take it into account when designing the house.

With a baby due early next year, the two plan to stay put this winter. They have yet to decorate the nursery, across the hall from a bedroom used as a home gym.

Mr. Wolf says the Japanese sensibility in their home design is also related to their passion for climbing, where "fast and light" is the name of the game.

"It's everything you need but nothing more," he says.

