

BIG SKY JOURNAL

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LIFESTYLE IN THE NORTHERN ROCKIES



Gordon McConnell's Iconic Cowboy
Yellowstone Film Ranch is Ready for Action
The Jackson Hole Five Depict One Unique Place
M.C. Poulsen Captures Yellowstone's Waterfalls





ARCHITECTURE
Studio EA

CONSTRUCTION
Continental Construction

INTERIOR DESIGN
James Thomas Interiors

High-Elevation Experience

A home at 8,000 feet balances comfort with grandeur

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WHITNEY KAMMAN

SCENERY AND LIFESTYLE ARE TWIN DRIVERS behind many of the homes in Big Sky, Montana, which is known for being a world-class ski area and a summer playground for outdoor enthusiasts. For a structure that was to be located at 8,000 feet in elevation, those elements were the starting point for the overall design. “This property is on top of the ridgeline with direct views of Lone Mountain, and the house is ski-in, ski-out,” says architect Carl Erickson of Studio EA, a firm that’s based in Naples, Florida. “It’s the best of both worlds, and

Strong forms, rugged materials, and steep rooflines that echo the peaks of the surrounding mountains define this high-alpine home in Big Sky, Montana.

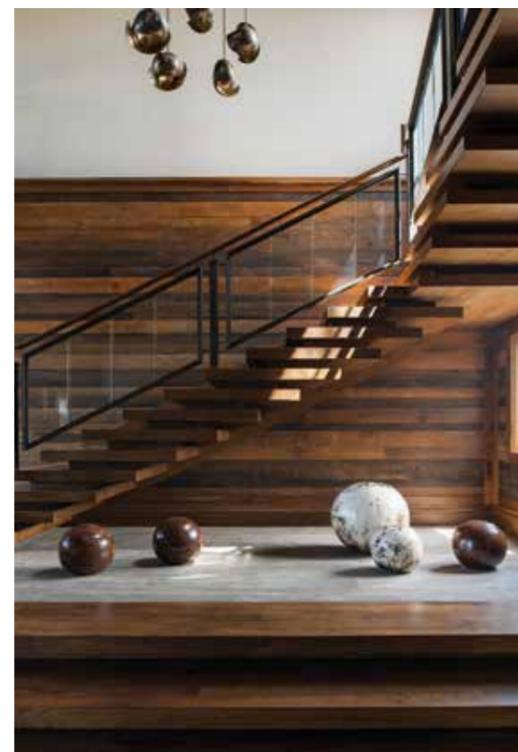
we wanted to play with that, and make it a magical canvas for family memories, and a reflection of who our clients are and how they could build memories around the place.”

Studio EA’s design was a collaborative effort between the architect, the team at the Chicago, Illinois-based James Thomas Interiors, Jim Murphy of the Naples and Bozeman, Montana-based Continental Construction, and the family. The result was a two-level gabled wood, timber, and Montana moss rock home with multiple access points to the outdoors on both levels, including a ski room on the ground floor to provide direct access to the slopes.

With all parties working cohesively, the design process was an organic experience, which even included the family’s two daughters diving in and helping to design their own spaces. As the project evolved, the daughters chose to forego Lone Mountain views and Juliette balconies that would overlook the great room, and opted instead for a cozy bunkroom with a loft and a sunken play area



FROM TOP: Even in the interiors, bold architectural touches complement the grandeur of the views. The guest suites feature Juliette balconies that overlook the great room and offer a unique perspective of the elaborate truss work and the alpine vistas. • A dramatic floating staircase creates an artistic touch at the home’s front entry.



on a side of the house that offers sweeping views of other surrounding mountains.

“I like to work with narrative,” Erickson explains. “I like when a house has stories to tell, and it allows the user to live in it in a way that builds on how they interact with the views, to remember things that happened around those views. That’s what makes a home personal. That legacy living is really what it’s all about.”

The interior of the home was thoughtfully conceived and carefully curated, from the library-like paneled foyer and hallway with sculptural floating walnut stairs to the monumental great room that features a dramatic interplay of timbers and trusses. More intimate spaces include the cozy gathering room off the kitchen — with deluxe seating, abstract art, and pops of color — and the guest suites, each with balconies: one that overlooks the great room and the other that



FROM TOP: The open-back chairs and globe pendant lights lend an airiness to the kitchen, which is grounded by quartzite countertops and backsplash tiles from Ann Sacks. The cabinets are reclaimed French oak. • A Gabriel Scott chandelier, featuring cascading chain mail in the form of a waterfall, adds an artistic flair to the dining room.

projects toward the Lone Mountain view. In the kitchen, reclaimed French oak cabinets, Ann Sacks tile, quartzite countertops (chosen by the clients long before the house was built and held in storage until the right opportunity), and a coffered ceiling create a sense of warmth and welcome.



Throughout the home, attention to scale was of the utmost importance. This was especially true in the great room with its soaring ceilings, varicolored paneling, and powerful truss work. Balance, tone, and volume were also key, explains Tom Riker of James Thomas Interiors. The rooms had to be comfortable and not too dark or heavy. “There’s a nod to the Western architecture,” Riker says, “but the client really wanted interiors that were light and bright and going a little more contemporary, with a fresh, inviting, and youthful feeling.”

Blues and greens speak to the outdoors as well as to the homeowners’ preferences. A mix of textures and materials

— including leather, cashmere, and linen in unexpected treatments — creates a dynamic dialogue. Walnut and oak are used extensively throughout the house, and the oak floors were rendered in a driftwood finish. In the paneled great room, the flooring takes on a darker tone due to the ubiquitous woodwork; in the bedrooms, the treatment transitions to a herringbone pattern, which gives those rooms their own identity. The ground floor master suite is a refuge, with a fireplace, an intimate seating area, and a private patio with a hot tub. The luxurious master bath resembles a serene spa, with a nickel-clad stand-alone tub positioned in front of a large window, and a dramatic glass shower that’s centered on a stunning book-matched slab of quartzite.

The clients took a particular interest in the lighting, some of which works as statement pieces that create sculptural elements throughout the house. In the jewel-box powder room, for example, a custom pierced globe from Paul Ferrante spotlights the rivet details in the Phillip Jeffries wallpaper. In the dining room,

In a quiet bedroom, rustic refinement is expressed in a crisp-edged metal-and-wood headboard. The tones in the carpet and ottoman are complemented by Josh Elliott’s painting, *Wilsall High Rise*, which speaks to Montana’s agrarian roots.



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a Gabriel Scott chandelier comprised of waterfall-like cascades of chain mail adds drama without interfering with the alpine views.

The designers helped curate the art collection, working hand-in-hand with local galleries Creighton Block and Tierney Fine Art to collect both contemporary and traditional works that reference place. A mix of styles, media, and vintages include a tipi scene by Tom Gilleon in the powder room; Western landscapes, such as a grain elevator scene by Josh Elliott; colorful abstract pieces by David Michael Slonim; and an equine photograph by Ali Darvish. The art engages with the design of the home, such as in the main living area, where a large contemporary landscape by James Cook asserts itself within the volume. "The scale of this room is huge," says interior designer Jim Josephson. "The chandelier is six feet in diameter but doesn't even look big.

Two large-scale artworks draw the eye and inject energy into the transitional interior of the great room. A richly colored high-country landscape painting by James Cook sits above the fireplace, and a wild horse photograph by Ali Darvish hangs off to the left.



The serene master bathroom is centered on a wall of book-matched Taj Mahal polished quartzite. The quartzite slabs were purchased by the owners before the house was even designed. The floor tiles are from Ann Sacks.

The trusses are very heavy but also unusual, and a little more interesting than those in a typical Montana lodge. The architectural moves break from the typical Western mix in a really cool way. It's Western with a contemporary edge, which creates beauty and excitement."

The range of artwork blends with the architecture and other interior touches, lending the home a collected-over-time feel. This is an important aspect of the story of a home that was designed as a series of spaces that range from grand to intimate, spaces that are storehouses, says Erickson, for memories that haven't yet been created.

"I want these homes to be places clients can go back to in their minds when they're having a tough day," Erickson explains. "To be able to make a space that can bring peace of mind, that's the driving force in what I try to achieve. We want it to be something the family treasures, a place they can live in as though they're going to hand it down to their grandkids, a place that's charged with memories."▲

Chase Reynolds Ewald has been writing about Western design, food, art, travel, craftsmanship, and rustic style for more than 25 years. Cabin Style, her 10th book and 5th collaboration with photographer Audrey Hall, was released in August 2019; chasereynoldsewald.com.

Whitney Kamman is an architectural photographer based in Bozeman, Montana. Her love for design came naturally, growing up with an architect father and interior designer mother. Kamman's work has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, Architectural Digest, Robb Report, and Mountain Living, among others.



Photo by Whitney Kamman

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