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THIS TEAM CREATED A CULTIVATED BACKDROP FOR ART AND SCULPTURE AND KEPT IT KID-FRIENDLY WITH DURABLE MATERIALS.



Ask anyone on the design team of this refined remodel in Boulder, Colorado, what the spirit of their process was, and owners, architect and interior designers alike chime in with the same word—collaboration. “We enjoyed getting together and sparking each other’s creative energy,” says owner Michelle Osterman.

Indeed, the team had many day-long marathon meetings. They sat around the table and toyed with idea after idea. Concept would build on concept, and before day was done they had solved some knotty problem with a creative solution everyone was delighted with. “The owners didn’t want to do anything average or expected,” says architect Hans Berglund, AIA, with Cottle Graybeal Yaw Architects of Vail.

They certainly hadn’t expected quite this much remodel. They were close to signing when they realized that the only

thing they really liked about the house was its panoramic vistas. “Every time we visited,” says owner Michael Osterman, “we walked right through to look at the views.” How bad can a bad house be? “This place was a mess,” says Berglund. Built in the 1970s, it had been added on to with several not-so-thoughtful additions. To get from one end of the lower level to the other you had to walk upstairs, pace the whole length then head back down. “The whole thing jiggled where it should have jogged,” chuckles Berglund.

It’s no wonder they loved the views, though. From its perch the couple can see Denver International Airport far in the distance on clear days. Their foreground is a shimmering lake, and filling the middle vistas are Boulder itself and an unusual, side-on view of the famous Flatirons. “The site and the community found its way into our hearts,” says Michelle.

## CREATIVE COLLABORATION





The team developed the floor plan during a day-long meeting. Berglund brought out his architect's rulebook of basic design. He drew the kitchen near the garage and the family room adjacent to the kitchen. He configured the living room to overlook the dramatic views. Then he anchored the fireplace on one end and the dining room on the other. Finally, he dug out some of the basement to install a single stair right where it belonged, in the center of the home.

Not just a single stair, but a singular stairway. This walkable sculpture ties the lowest to the uppermost levels in a swirl of cool stainless steel and warm beech. The steps actually cantilever off of two tall tubes. Nothing touches the walls at all—for three full flights. "It's quite an experience to walk it," says Berglund.

But it couldn't simply float in space, it had to have a handrail on the open side. Here's another case of idea augmenting idea. The Ostermans collect glass, and the interior designers, Associates III in Denver, had worked extensively with glass-crafter Judy Gorsuch Collins. Voila! No handrail at all, but three panels, each eight feet high, of cast glass patterned with wire mesh and textiles. "That's not a wall," says senior interior designer Annette Stelmack with Associates III, "that's art."

So the strategy became solving challenges with art-based

**"We think of our houses as art forms for living," says architect Hans Berglund.**

OPPOSITE: Interior designers created furniture that worked perfectly for each specific space, such as the hand-sculpted, solid ironite dining table. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A contemporary fireplace serves as a focal point in the living room. Kitchen countertops are concrete, while the island is topped with glass. The Ostermans' remodeled home is a study in art and architectural detail.

components on an architectural scale. In other words, built-ins become important focal points. "We think of our houses as art forms for living," says Berglund of his firm's approach to home design. Challenge: china storage needed, but big cabinet not wanted. Solution: built-ins spanning the columns in the living/dining area. Challenge: fireplace desired to display art yet also house entertainment system. Solution: Cubist-style planes of limestone holding up a crisp curl of stainless steel and concealing a walk-in closet. The whole approach blurs the line between furniture and architecture.

Challenge: What is now the entry was once the dining room. It was a nice enough space but boring, and cutting out a corner for a new closet and powder room would push it to

the "expected" end of the design spectrum. Solution: Start tossing ideas around. "Next thing we knew," says Angie Pache, a project designer with Associates III, "we were floating a cone in the middle of the room." Covered in wood, the truncated tepee envelops the powder room and disguises the entry closet. The vanity inside is a six-inch-thick slab of ancient mesquite wood. "It was old and natural, but we polished it to give it a contemporary feel," Angie adds.

Maintaining a connection with nature was the thinking behind the living room. The architects put large windows facing the views, so they became part of the space. Tough natural limestone and dense European beech make the room child- and dog-proof



THIS PAGE, BELOW: The master bedroom features a serene color palette and minimalist design. THIS PAGE, RIGHT: The glass theme is continued in the master bath: a glass countertop holds a collection of perfume bottles. The cabinetry is English sycamore. OPPOSITE PAGE: A floating cone in the entry way contains the powder room and disguises the entry closet. For resources, see page 76.



yet will age with expressive character. An expansive deck lets family members enjoy Colorado's fair weather as much as they please.

Associates III prides themselves on creating furniture that is the perfect size and scale for each specific room. Here in the living area they designed custom pieces to make certain everything feels just right. Coffee table, sofa and ottoman are all crafted specifically for this space. They used a subtle palette to bring the outside in: taupe, copper, sand and bronze. "Flashes of sage green and bright blue catch your eye like a single wildflower would in the wilderness," says Angie. Nearby, the dining table is solid bronze—hand-sculpted from Corbin Bronze. The chairs are maple Mirak designs with stainless steel legs.

The kitchen is all about being creative. The Ostermans responded strongly to a frosted glass tile during a design presentation, so Associates III used it to wrap the island. They floated glass sheets at breakfast bar height, shaped to that gentle curve that mirrors the living room mantle. The countertop is concrete, and they used it as inspiration to create an "infinity" window sill. It's difficult to tell where kitchen ends and the outside world begins. Michelle can watch the night sky and the afternoon storms. "The kitchen window is my conduit to nature," she says. "Every day it's like looking at a different painting."

In the family room Associates III used more saturated colors.



In this more relaxed space, with fewer windows, richer colors and rougher textures keep it lively.

Upstairs a beech and cherry built-in contains the television and fireplace of the master bedroom. The rest of the space is as simple as possible, with a wavelike headboard from Ruth Livingston and custom nightstands.

The master bath develops the glass theme even further. First, a pair of glass doors let light illuminate the windowless space. Plus, the mirrored vanity wall is contrived with nooks and crannies to contain the ultimate form of art glass—perfume bottles. The sinks are single sheets of cast glass with integral bowls. The wood dressing up the bold cabinetry is English sycamore.

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The Ostermans' tastes are definitely contemporary and minimalist. They like rooms that don't feel cluttered so their lives don't feel cluttered. But they have a couple of higher-minded principles as well. First, they insisted that everything be earth-friendly. Second—and they don't mention this; only their designers do—everything from the existing house was pulled out with tender care so it could be donated to local building charities. Built-ins, appliances, heating and cooling units, lumber and anything else that could be reused was spared the dumpster's humiliation. "Basically," says Berglund, "they paid the contractor to dismantle by hand, not demolish by sledgehammer."

"For us it was a joyful journey to make something so perfectly expressive of who we are," Michelle says, "and to make life-long friends in the process." **ML**

