

COLORADO CONTEXT

RUSTIC MATERIALS MEET
SOFT CONTEMPORARY
ELEMENTS FOR A REFINED
MOUNTAIN RESIDENCE WITH
A TRUE SENSE OF PLACE

STORY BY **NORMAN KOLPAS**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **RIC STOVALL**

For a home created to showcase contemporary art, architect Hans Berglund designed the 20-foot-tall sandstone fireplace itself as a sculptural element, complete with a mantel ledge to hold a painting. The gentle contours and soft fabrics of Holly Hunt sofas comfortably contrast with stone, steel and wood surfaces.



THIS PAGE: At one end of the great room, off the foyer, a freestanding wall was built specifically to display a large acrylic-on-canvas figure painting by Nathan Oliveira. OPPOSITE: Viewed from the double front doors, that same wall forms the right-hand side of an entry hall that serves as a gallery for a collection of lithographs by Gino Fornica and, at the end, a portrait by Lucian Freud.

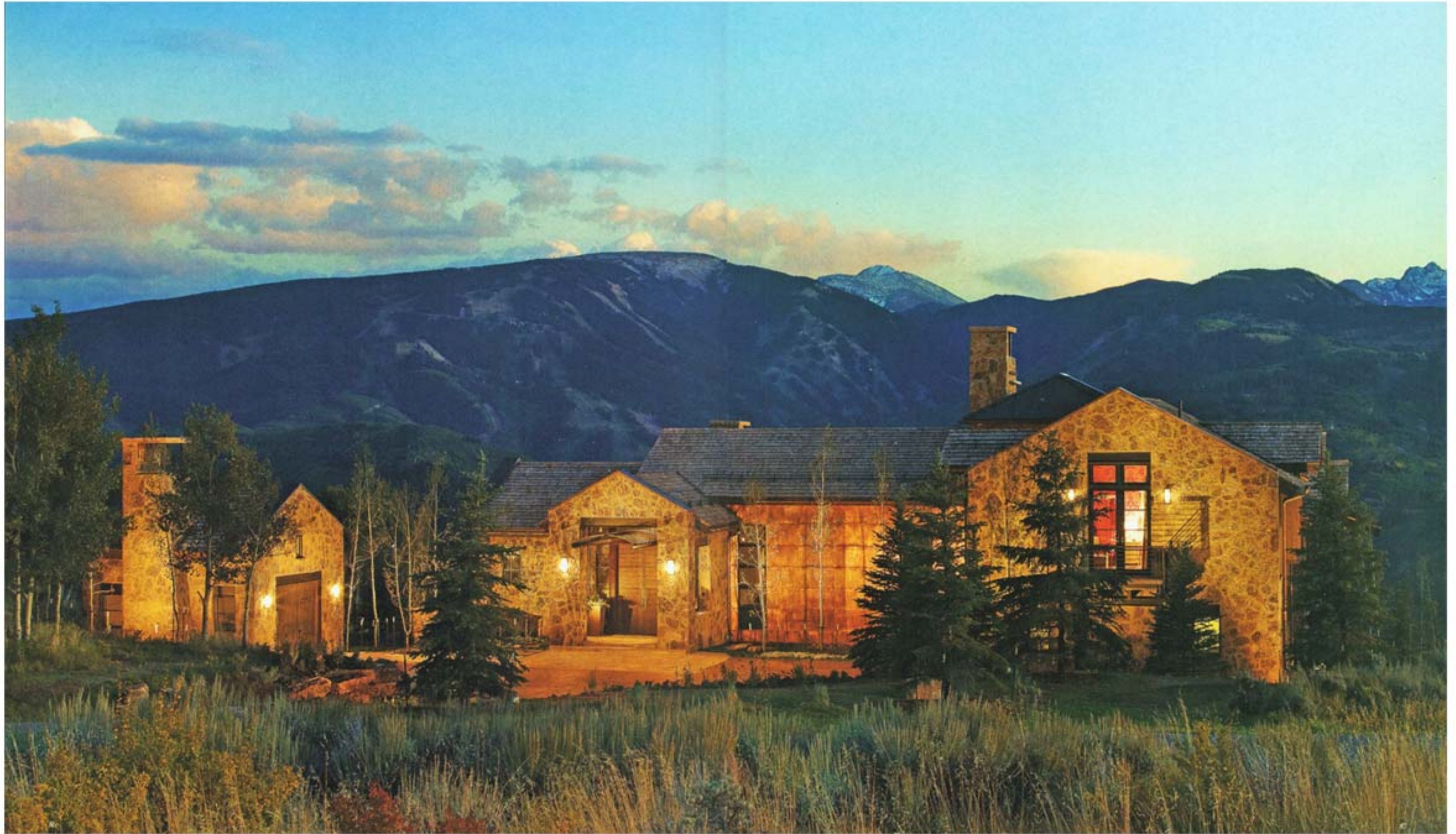


ARCHITECTURE BERGLUND ARCHITECTS INTERIOR DESIGN SLIFER DESIGNS

From afar, the 10,000-square-foot home in Avon, Colorado's, elite Mountain Star community blends with its surroundings as perfectly as any mountain lodge should. Multiple peaked rooflines, which suggest the home might have grown section by section over decades, echo the Vail Valley's lofty mountain peaks, while local stone and wood, along with richly burnished copper, express the region's unique vernacular.

Draw closer, however, and a more contemporary sensibility quickly becomes evident. Copper doesn't cover the roof, as it might in more traditional mountain homes, but instead forms panels that glow warmly on the front façade. And those angled rooflines top equally bold, geometric living spaces crowned by sleek steel girders and square-cornered wood beams stained black to match the metal.

The home's furnishings also express a modern aesthetic. Spare but comfortable seating upholstered with neutral, well-wearing fabrics replaces the overstuffed sofas and armchairs you might expect to find covered in plaids or tribal patterns. >>





PREVIOUS SPREAD: From the front façade, the new home looks as if it grew over decades. Copper panels on the exterior wall to the right of the entry echo the setting sun's glow. THIS PAGE: The master suite occupies the ground floor of the wing to the left of the entry, with a 14-by-10-foot window and private deck overlooking the Vail Valley. Behind a minimalist canopy bed of wood and white-lacquered metal by Christian Liaigre, a task wall with aluminum accents "helps to ground" the airy space, the architect says.

But the most unexpected details hang on the home's great expanses of wall, which have been smoothly finished in integral-colored plaster with an off-white linen tone. Here, a superb collection of contemporary art—each piece as bold as the views from adjacent window-walls—is displayed with all the drama of a world-class museum exhibit.

"My clients really wanted to design the home around their art collection," explains architect Hans Berglund, AIA, of Berglund Architects, who began work on the project in the summer of 2007 and saw it through to completion in the spring of 2008. A specialist in the modern architectural style, he saw the assignment as an opportunity. "My goal was to create a hybrid by using traditional forms and materials in a more contemporary way, with cleaner detailing and much larger expanses of glass," he says. >>

HOW TO GET THE LOOK

Whether you're building from scratch or remodeling what you've got, keep these expert tips in mind if you aim to give your home a contemporary mountain look.

GO NATURAL "Using natural woods and stones in a clean, contemporary way" effectively expresses a modern mountain look, says Yvonne Jacobs of Siffer Designs. "Many people react negatively to modern architecture because stark white surfaces feel cold and uninviting," adds architect Hans Berglund, "but using very warm, natural materials will warm up the design."

PARE THINGS DOWN "Less is definitely more" when it comes to contemporary design, Berglund says. "Have fewer design elements"—whether architectural details or furnishings—"but make each one stronger."

ADD COLOR Choose colors for walls and furnishings that relate to the surroundings, opting for earth tones or the soft greens of trees and meadows.

CELEBRATE THE VIEWS If your home has beautiful mountain surroundings, focus on them, either by creating window walls or simply by orienting seating toward existing windows. "Let the views envelope you so it feels like the mountains are right there with you inside the house," Jacobs advises.

LIVE OUTDOORS Facilitate a natural flow between indoor living spaces and outdoor decks and patios. While living in the mountains often means a short summer season, Jacobs recommends making the most of it with comfortable-but-durable outdoor furniture.



Creating a series of gallery-like spaces to showcase the homeowners' collection was also a primary goal for Yvonne Jacobs, president of Edwards-based Slifer Designs, the firm that collaborated with Berglund on the home's interiors. She selected furniture with sleek, straight lines, covered in cozy chenilles, velvets, wools and other fabrics that feel organic, like they were meant to be in the mountains. "It's a modern house with modern furniture and modern artwork," she says, "but there's nothing about it that feels cold."

The team at Slifer Designs arranged the furniture in groupings that focus on the artwork and views. The arrangements also break up the large gallery-like spaces into more casual areas that are equally well suited for quiet conversation or entertaining a crowd. "You can sit on a sofa and not worry about putting your feet up on the coffee table," Jacobs says. "It's all very comfortable."

Indeed, the overall effect feels more like a comfortably elegant family retreat than a grand mountain lodge or minimalist art gallery. "I think we've struck a balance here between dynamic modern spaces and rich natural materials to create a space that's very inviting," Berglund concludes. "People feel very much at ease in this house."

AT HOME WITH ART

Showcasing art in any home calls for strategic thinking. But when that home is a spacious contemporary residence surrounded by mountain views, even more considerations must come into play.

DON'T OVERCROWD DISPLAYS "Give your artwork a space on the wall that's appropriate to the size of the piece," designer Yvonne Jacobs recommends. "Don't try to crowd things. The eye needs room to wander."

MIX UP THE BACKGROUNDS Art doesn't always have to be displayed against a drywall or plaster background. "You can use softer stones, such as a sandstone fireplace, to display artwork very well," Jacobs says.

HARMONIZE WITH THE VIEWS Art shouldn't compete with nature's beauty. Instead, says architect Hans Berglund, aim to display key pieces on walls opposite, framed by, or at right angles to large windows.

PROTECT ARTWORK FROM SUNLIGHT Especially on windows that get a lot of direct sunlight, use window glass that has been treated to filter out ultraviolet rays that can harm artwork. Consider exterior overhangs to block the light on especially sunny windows, or install translucent shades that can be lowered to moderate the sunlight at certain times of day.

DISPLAY COLLECTIONS STRATEGICALLY Create arrangements of smaller, related pieces—whether print series, photos or collections such as baskets—for self-contained areas such as hallways or staircase walls.

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