



Photo by Rick Stovall

NEWLY *Defined* MOUNTAIN ARCHITECTURE

Written by Leigh Pezzicara

Architecture in the Rocky Mountains is no longer primarily about rustic cabins or European chalets, just as western lifestyle is not simply defined by short-term ski vacations anymore. As more urbanites flock to Vail and the surrounding mountain communities becoming transplants and second homeowners, they bring new requirements for the design of their mountain homes. Looking to move beyond the traditional and sometimes imposing mountain residences, they want a more

refined home that incorporates cleaner lines, open floor plans, expansive outdoor living spaces, and green design.

Hans Berglund of Berglund Architects, a local Vail Valley architect who has been creating mountain contemporary homes in the valley for more than a decade, finds that his vision for “New West” architecture is more closely shared now than it was when he first entered this market in 1994. “We have more and more clients with very sophisticated taste, great contemporary art collections



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and a desire to be at one with the environment in a casual but elegant home,” states Berglund. “They want dynamic spaces that capture the essence of the mountains in an informal retreat for their family. We do this by using beautiful indigenous natural materials, lots of glass, open floor plans, and comfortably scaled forms composed with modern influences.” The firm’s portfolio of projects is characterized by innovative, high-quality architecture blending local style and natural materials with contemporary influences.

Past impressions of “modern” design included unpleasant visions of austere glass homes with flat roofs and stark white walls. Unwelcoming and foreign in the beautiful surrounding environment, it is no small wonder that these homes quickly created a negative connotation. By contrast, homes designed in the more contemporary “New West” style by Berglund Architects are anything but bleak. “We spend a lot of time on the site sketching concepts and figuring out how best to take advantage of the views and solar exposure to integrate the house with the natural topography. This approach assures that our houses are very dynamic yet harmonious in the surrounding landscape. It also creates numerous opportunities for indoor/outdoor living, which is generally one of the top requests from our clients.”

Berglund recently incorporated a 28-foot-long sliding door system in a house that creates a 14-foot-wide by 10-foot-tall opening to a patio and pool, blurring the distinction between indoors and out. “We are constantly striving to create a powerful connection with the outdoors by incorporating techniques including interior stone walls, which are also used outside as landscape walls; large

areas of glass; stone flooring, which is continuous with outdoor patios; and wood beams that extend out over outdoor sitting areas, making a Zen-like interior environment, which is tranquil as well as uplifting. We want our homes to be sophisticated, yet playful.”

Designing a home to sensitively blend with the natural site is not only for aesthetic purposes, but environmental as well. Green design requires that a greater visual impact be achieved with fewer materials used and less waste over the life of the home through minimal replacement and renovation. “We avoid designs

and material that could feel outdated and need to be replaced before the end of their useful lifespan,” states Berglund. “Using a palette of natural materials helps create more timeless designs. We often incorporate organic elements such as a giant boulder hearth and large reclaimed beams to contrast with exposed steel or a contemporary fireplace.” Hans has been incorporating reclaimed timbers, standing dead, and salvaged blown down trees into his houses to create rich designs that are also greener as recognized by the LEED—

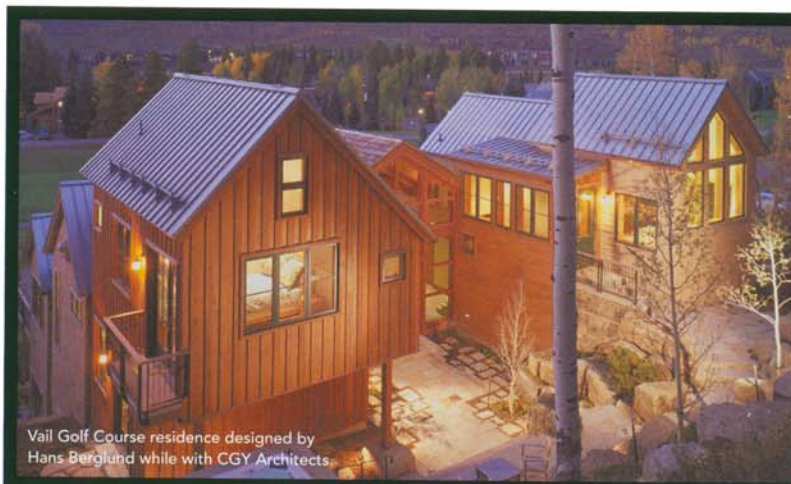
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—rating he is seeking on several of his homes.

While there seems to be a lot of “green washing” these days, Berglund is committed to providing and promoting environmentally responsible design and has put his money where his mouth is, so to speak. Berglund Architects is a member of 1% For The Planet, donating one percent of gross revenue to environmental causes. ■

Berglund Architects is located in Edwards, Colorado, and can be visited online at www.BerglundArchitects.com.



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Vail Golf Course residence designed by Hans Berglund while with CGY Architects.

Photos by Dan Coffey

