



Courtesy Berglund Architects

# Divergent Forces

## HANS BERGLUND STRIVES TO BRING ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY INTO THE LOCAL VERNACULAR

BY ANDY STONEHOUSE

While ecologically sensitive home design has been a reality since the granola-fed days of “The Whole Earth Catalog”, you know the world has changed when even resort über-homes are chock-a-block with talk of energy efficiency and green building techniques. Many architects and builders are latter-day converts to the concept, but a few independent players have long made green work their calling card. Since founding his own architectural firm in 2004, Hans Berglund has primarily focused on custom, single-family residences that reflect modern design principles, without being out of place in a traditional mountain community. He’s also careful to incorporate green building systems and materials as much as possible, helping clients create homes that blend comfort and modern con-

Above right and top, architect Hans Berglund’s latest project is the Willow Creek Residences, in West Vail.



Elly Dwan

venience with cutting-edge looks. “I strive to do great, innovative architecture, and make things as environmentally responsible as I can,” Berglund says. “I am happy that I can do projects that show a modern influence and use plenty of organic materials, but still fit in and combine elements of the local vernacular.”

### Blending technologies

Tour one of his projects, such as a 4,500-square-foot home at the new Willow Creek Residences, in West Vail, and the 40-year-old architect’s flair for sculpturally inspired design comes through in spades. From gravity defying, exposed steel staircases with four-inch-thick slabs of rich, rustic wood as steps to stacked flagstone fireplaces with exposed, load-bearing C-channel, the mix of

influences is particularly refreshing. Dramatically curved, super-insulated roofs, beautiful pine ceilings, dry-stacked moss rock siding, and, in a particularly creative, cost-effective measure — cement board siding expertly faux painted so it looks like copper plate — all swirl into a cool, modernistic mix that’s edgy but never overwhelming. “I appreciate the fact that clients in Vail have developed a much more sophisticated understanding of architecture, which is very refreshing, considering the kind of work that I get to do,” Berglund says. “There are more and more independent firms here and they’ve shown people that you can create really beautiful mountain homes that aren’t rustic. We’ve kind of worked on ‘de-barking’ the whole idea of a mountain house.” Berglund’s emphasis on green ingredients ranges from high-quality, energy-efficient windows and paints and stains with low volatile organic content, or VOC, to geothermal heating and photovoltaic and hot-water solar panels, as with a dramatic new home coming to Vail’s exclusive Spraddle Creek neighborhood. “The three technologies work incredibly well together and are really efficient, but still only add a couple of percent to the home’s total price,” Berglund says.

### ‘Hybrid architecture’

Berglund’s interests in contemporary architecture have their roots, interestingly enough, in some very down-to-earth beginnings: pounding nails and hauling plaster while growing up in Branford, Conn., a coastal town outside of New Haven. “As a kid, we had a neighbor in the construction trade. By the time I was 14, I was spending my time framing stuff — which was probably against labor laws — but I really enjoyed the process and the craft of building things,” he says. “Even today, going to the construction site is one of my favorite things.” Berglund went on to study at Cornell University, where the school’s multidisciplinary College of Architecture, Art and Planning crafts graduates with a fine arts-based eye for design. Semesters traveling through Spain and Rome sharpened his



Courtesy Berglund Architects

“I strive to do great, innovative architecture, and make things as environmentally responsible as I can.” — Hans Berglund

appreciation of both Renaissance works and the most modern of architectural creation. Since then, he’s strived to achieve what he calls “hybrid architecture,” taking classical elements and giving them a cutting-edge look. Upon graduation, Berglund spent three years at a large firm in San Francisco, but the prospect of spending his entire architectural career wearing a tie in an office quickly lost its appeal. When he attended a friend’s wed-

Curved timbers and gravity-defying staircases are just two examples of Berglund’s contemporary, sculpturally inspired design.





Since moving to Vail from the Roaring Fork Valley, architect Hans Berglund has focused on exciting, contemporary home design.

“We’ve kind of worked on ‘de-barking’ the whole idea of a mountain house.”

— Hans Berglund

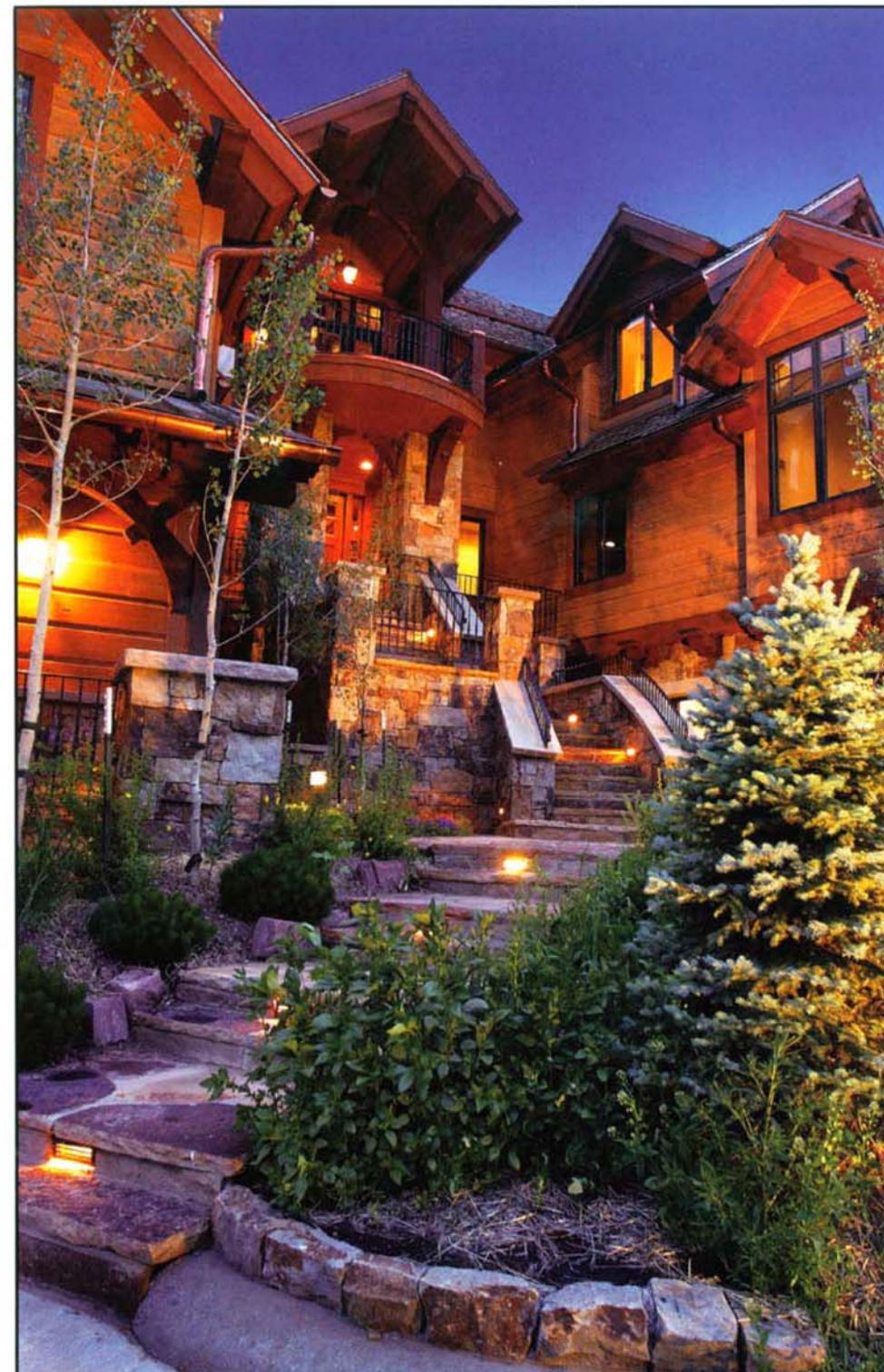
ding in Aspen, he was hooked on the mountain lifestyle. Relocating to the Roaring Fork Valley in 1994, he landed a job with Cottle Graybeal Yaw Architects Ltd., with whom he designed projects such as the Aspen Highlands base area and the first three buildings at Keystone’s River Run.

**Traditional vs. contemporary**

Three years later, Berglund began a seven-year stint at the firm’s Vail offices, working on projects across the Rocky Mountains region, including a spectacular, contempo-

rary residence on the Vail Golf Course. Built in an avalanche debris zone, Berglund says, the home is the result of several sets of divergent forces: traditional vs. contemporary; nature as beauty vs. nature as foe; rustic materials vs. high-tech construction. The glass-enclosed great room, framed by giant timbers that create a cascading roofline, glows with ambient light. Nowadays, with a staff of three architecturally trained designers working out of the airy surroundings of Berglund Architects LLC office at Edwards’ Commercial Park

*continued on page 68*



DIVERGENT FORCES from page 50

— where you’ll find a minimum of two or three dogs hanging out every day — Berglund has been busy focusing on contemporary, exciting homes, with approximately two dozen projects completed since launching his own boutique studio. His collaborative office setup is also a family affair, with his wife, Alix, working as business manager.

“She previously worked in corporate finance for Vail Resorts, but when her job was sent to Boulder she decided to do something about the fact that I was trying to handle my job and do all the books at the same time,” he says. “It’s worked out great — I think we really complement each other.”

**Green commitment**

Berglund Architects LLC’s undertakings have run the green gamut, but a project currently on the books could produce one of the valley’s first projects certified to the standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED. Berglund is crafting a not insubstantial home that blends resource-efficient materials — trees harvested from “blowdowns” in Alaska, plus reclaimed chestnut flooring — with the newest in heat and cooling conservation.

“Even though it’s a big place, the home will use dramatically less energy than a typical place of that size, with much better indoor air quality,” he says.

Beyond a personal commitment to the environment, Berglund says he’s committed financially, as well. Following the lead set by Yvon Chouinard, the founder of the Patagonia sports clothing company, and his business model, 1% for the Planet, Berglund donates 1 percent of Berglund Architects LLC’s gross income to two local programs, the Eagle Valley Land Trust and the Gore Range Natural Science School.

“I consider it kind of a ‘sin tax’ for the kind of work we do, but it feels good to give back to environmental causes,” Berglund says. “(Chouinard’s) philosophy of life and business working for the environment really struck a chord.”

**THINK GREEN  
THINK LIFT**



flooring  
studio

Vail Valley’s  
premiere selection  
of sustainable finishes



featuring EcoTimber products

970.949.5658 • fax 970.949.1555  
40928 Highway 6 & 24 Avon, Colorado 81620

Open Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm Saturday, 9 am to noon



Avon, Colorado | 970-949-1502