



202

RURAL MEETS URBANE

It's unusual for an architecture firm to be offered the chance to help re-envision a family's entire life in three successive projects. But that is exactly the opportunity that was presented to Pearson Design Group by a Midwestern couple as they anticipated the empty-nest phase of their lives.

As this suburban Chicago family hit its midstream, with children having grown up and moved out of the house, the husband and wife reexamined their longtime history in the Rocky Mountains and their love of the outdoor lifestyle afforded by it. Although still working, they were no longer tethered to a particular geography or commute. Having purchased a lot in Big Sky, Montana, some years before, their first step was to conceive of a multi-phase plan for their lives going forward. They would commit incrementally, building a guesthouse first so they could experience life in Montana more fully and, while doing so, decide whether the property they'd purchased was the right one for them.

For the first phase, with the guidance of Pearson Design Group, they envisioned a structure containing guest quarters and an après-ski aerie boasting dramatic views situated atop a garage component. The resulting project offered a fresh take on traditional mountain living, with an original aesthetic finding its highest expression in the contemporary lodge-like main room of wood and glass. The couple would use the modestly scaled house as their Montana base while working through the more complicated aspects of what was really a major life change, for they intended to downsize from the family home and purchase an urban dwelling at the same time. This was complicated by the fact that they hadn't yet decided which city would be their base. After they broke ground on their main home in Montana, and after searching various cities for a pied-à-terre, they purchased an apartment in downtown Denver, within easy reach of a major airport and conveniently located near two of their children.



The Montana home was the initial focus. The property, gradually sloped, with a dense stand of lodgepole pines and strategic view corridors, allowed for plenty of natural daylight and far-reaching vistas but gave the sense of being nestled into the forest. Says Pearson Design Group architect Greg Matthews, “There’s a beautiful juxtaposition of intimate wooded forest and expansive views,” and the home was designed to heighten the experience. The master suite has an almost tree house-like feel, while the main living space has a large expanse of glass to take in the mountainscape. The contrast, says Matthews, “reinforces the intimacy in the private spaces and the expansive views in the public spaces.”

The structure, constructed of reclaimed materials, log, and stone, would have an indigenous feel, explains the architect. “Contextually it would feel as if it were a century-old mountain lodge.” It would be big enough for the extended family to gather and to entertain large groups, but was designed so that two people would feel comfortably cozy when alone. By placing the master bedroom suite in proximity to the primary living spaces, the home feels snug when the

▲ The master bedroom of a Pearson Design home at the Yellowstone Club in Montana is defined by texture. Rain Houser and Skye Anderson selected a fringed lounge chair, sheepskin rug, and fur blanket to complement the custom-designed bed and nightstands, which were commissioned through Tim Sanford. The chandelier is from John Brooks, Inc.

► The touchstone of the home is the custom rope swing (through Integrity Builders) that inspired the name Freedom Lodge. The swing and rope-detail chandelier convey a sense of whimsy in the great room while refined casual sofas from Urbaine Home anchor the volume. The buffalo mount is vintage, circa 1940s.







▲ An outdoor room can be enjoyed year-round thanks to the wood-burning fireplace, built-in appliances and seating, and custom-made dining table and chandelier.

► The entry to the Montana home celebrates the mountain modern ethos with a wall of glass and steel abutting the hand hewn log wall. Houser + Anderson chose a vintage rug, velvet wing chair, Swedish log basket, and an antique child's chair belonging to the homeowners to furnish the space. A caribou mount from the 1940s lends a sculptural grace.









◀ A translucent partition creates structure without closing off the staircase. At the landing, an oversized bear painting by Amy Ringholz provides a focal point.

▲ The custom bar and pool table with blackened brass pendants create a room for family fun. The art was sourced through Visions West.

◀ The custom demilune lends a feminine touch to a vestibule outside the master bedroom.



▲ A cozy nook has custom-designed sofas by Houser + Anderson and a vintage table.

► The generously scaled kitchen features custom cabinetry crafted by Integrity Builders and quartzite countertops and backsplash. Open shelving displays featherweight ceramic dishes from France.

◀ Extensive seating with fireside chaises and wildlife mounts provides a comfortable lounging area for the entire family.







▲ In a painted bathroom, a floating vanity, brass accents, and a graceful beaded chandelier lend a feminine touch.



► A sculptural carved marble tub makes a dramatic statement in a master bath with custom vanities and mirrors.



▲ Houser + Anderson designed the bed and finished the room with an angular chandelier and textural rug.



► The bunk room features beds made from oak timbers, industrial pipe-fitting hand rails, and a vintage Moroccan rug.

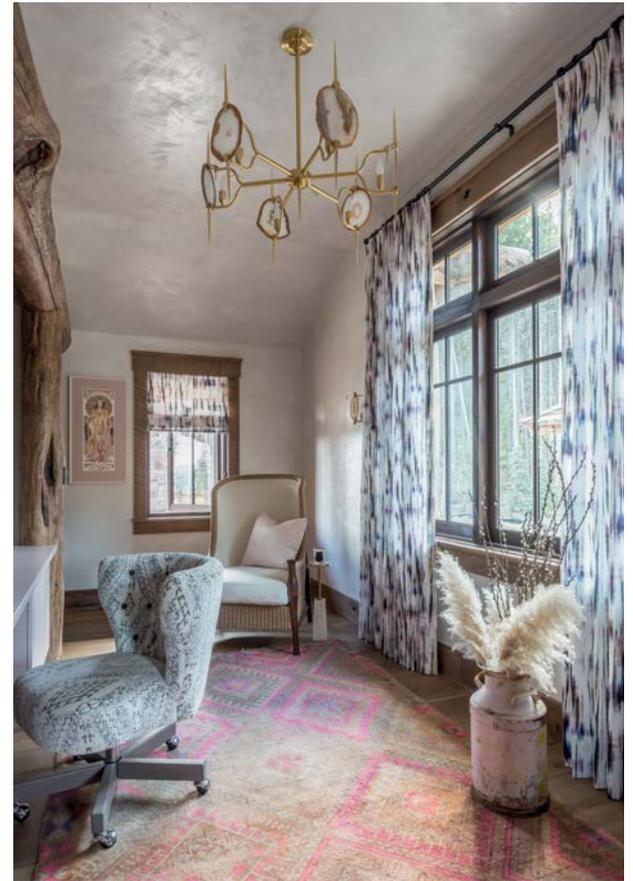




▲ A soft color palette, carved headboard, and over-scaled paper flower pendant create an eclectic guest room aesthetic. The Moroccan pom-pom blanket and alpaca rug add texture while the gilded European elk mount injects an unexpected touch of rustic glam.



▲ The functional workspace is finished with a custom-designed desk, vintage rug, and Verellen sofa.



▲ A feminine office with pinks and blues features a vintage rug and a chandelier made of agate.

couple is in residence but effortlessly expands for a crowd when the family gathers. Although many Big Sky homes are designed with the winter experience in mind, this makes the most of outdoor living, with easy access to the yard and the outdoor dining/living area. The open-air room has a wrap-around bench and fireplace incorporated into its design, and a large dining table, built-in grill, and cooking facilities for outdoor dining in all seasons.

The home celebrates local materials where possible while incorporating steel and other contemporary touches—a semi-transparent glass partition along the base of the stairs, a rope chandelier and swing in the living room, cool steel piping and plates for railings and steps in the bunk room. “They wanted something lighter, brighter, and a little more light-hearted,” says interior designer Rain Houser, who collaborated with Skye Anderson in working with the couple on all three projects over

a five-year period. “They wanted a house that portrayed their personalities.”

Successfully crafting a home that fits in such a rugged environment while still conveying a contemporary spirit, says Matthews, requires a thoughtful process. Their success lay in staying true to traditional forms but striving to apply some modern concepts while creating something playful and unique.

As the mountain home took shape, the Denver apartment, for use primarily during the shoulder seasons and as a convenient launching pad for work-related travel, was to be a true pied-à-terre, designed to fulfill the couple’s needs rather than accommodate a family. In contrast to the mountain home, the urban loft would be compact, its style more contemporary, with some rustic touches in a nod to the mile-high mountain locale. Most unusual for city living, it would celebrate an indoor/outdoor



ethos via an open rooftop living area that accesses a guest room casita and office.

Located close to restaurants, cultural opportunities, and mass transit, the apartment was perfect in theory but stark and unwelcoming in real life. “It was a builder’s box, with less than desirable finishes at first glance,” recalls designer Rain Houser. Asked to complete the job quickly, she created a foyer-like area by placing a screen made of live-edge walnut slabs between the elevator and living room, applied grass cloth to cover the dark tones on existing columns, installed motorized shades for privacy and a live-edge-topped bar for character, and worked to incorporate the clients’ antiques from their home in Illinois. Houser and her clients turned a small existing office into a bar area, warmed the spaces using

tones that were compatible with existing materials, infused varied textures, and added some sculptural pieces with character in order to create a cozier, more home-like and welcoming feel while still tapping into the energy of city living.

The result is a clean, fresh, stylish oasis of calm in the heart of a dynamic city. The Montana dwelling, in contrast, “is fresh but timeless, with one foot in traditional roots and one in a modern lifestyle,” according to Matthews. Together, the two homes—one small, one large; one city, one country; one modern with rustic details, one rustic with modern details—provide the perfect juxtaposition for a couple embracing their next phase of life with passion, with clear-eyed vision, and with an unbounded love of the West.



◀ The interiors of a Denver pied-à-terre were updated by Houser + Anderson for turnkey city living.

▲ A rooftop terrace with sculptural lounge chairs and comfortable sectionals becomes the ultimate refuge in the heart of the city.

▶ Vintage leather club chairs offer the perfect spot to relax in the glass-walled office/casita accessed from the rooftop terrace.

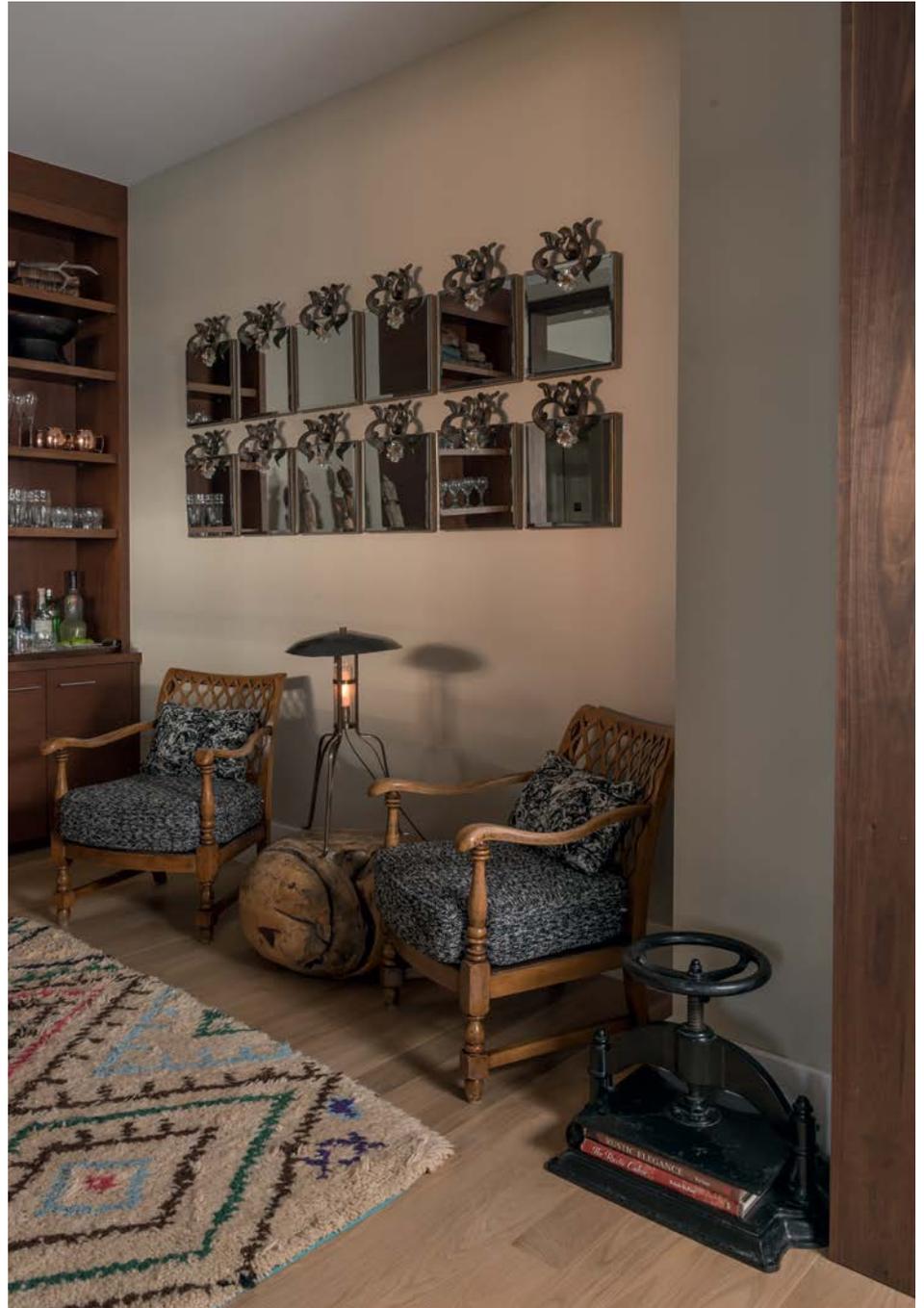






◀ An ochre chandelier hovers above a round McGuire dining table; the equine photography by Tracie Spence makes a dramatic statement and serves as a reminder of the apartment's place in the West.

▲ The kitchen is brightened by white cabinetry and countertops and an artistic pendant array.



▶ A mirror installation hangs above the clients' vintage chairs. An antique book press adds interest to the space.



◀ The designers created an opening in what had originally been a small office and installed a live-edge slab as a bar top to expand the entertaining possibilities of the suite of rooms.

▶ A down sofa, fur throw, organic coffee table, and textured details create a cozy den.

▶ Serenity was the goal in this urban master bedroom. Soft fabrics and tones with organic bedside tables, a plush lounge chair and wool drapes transform the room into a true retreat.

