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COWBOYS & INDIANS

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Michael
Greyeyes

Beyond
Stereotypes

Indians of the Wild West Shows ★ Fashion in Monument Valley
Whitewater Rafting in Idaho ★ Irene Bedard ★ Thomas Moran

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SILVER REFLECTIONS: The ranch's main house overlooks water, sky and mountains
Opposite page - OUTSIDE IN: Montana's hues splashed on the couch, curtains and pillows warm the main house's living room

Home in the Valley

Starting from scratch, a team of designers and builders created a stunning Montana ranch on short order

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EVERYBODY GATHERED in a shiny-brass lounge with Formica tables in Bozeman, Montana: the architect, the accountant, two interior designers, and an Oklahoma couple who had just purchased a cattle ranch in Southwestern Montana. In the next few weeks, this group needed to cinch a deal. The couple was taking off for a trip around the world with their four children for 16 months. Upon their return, they wanted to enjoy a ranch home and "the smell of chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven."

Despite the tacky saloon decor, a first-class team, including award-winning designers and cowboy carpenters, formed. "This project was one of excitement and fear," says Atlanta designers Charles Gandy and Bill Peace of Gandy/Peace, Inc., who have worked closely with the family for over 15 years

and were to be in charge of the project. Creating an inviting, functional working ranch facility for an active family and ranch hands inspired them; completing the project on time meant a lot of work.

Decisions had to be made quickly.

After seeing a few snapshots of Michael Keaton's home, designed by Candace Tillotson-Miller of Livingston, Montana, Gandy and Peace felt that they could work with architect Tillotson-Miller, who is also a rancher. "I was hired," she says, "and I was running to keep up with the demands."

With the clients, Gandy and Peace selected the rest of the team, Yellowstone Traditions in Bozeman, engineer Ed Matos of Bozeman, and Joe Urbani, the pond designer, a few days later.

Finishing the project in 16 months was a tall order, considering the project in-

This project was one of excitement and fear







SCOUR-PROOF: Designers Gandy and Peace place a piece of whimsy in the powder room

volved more than just a brand new log home. The ranch needed a calving barn, a shed for the ranch hand, a building for machinery, more jack-leg fences, a driveway, ponds and waterways, and a playhouse. A turn-of-the-century schoolhouse was moved and turned into an office and fishing cabin, and the two outhouses turned into potting sheds. Towards the end of the job, scraps from a wood pile were used to build a storage shed.

And all of this was occurring in a spectacular valley, surrounded by the Tobacco Roots, the Rubies, and the Snow Crest Mountains, where fields of hay interrupted by red willows stretch from the main house, eagles perch in the cottonwoods, and lots of deer jump in and out of cow pastures.

The objective for everyone on the design team was to create a place that be-

longed in this setting. "We wanted to make the place quiet and understated," says Gandy about his first Western home.

The designers rusted a bucket and turned it into a sink, which shocked the cleaning lady

"We didn't want to be copycats or create cowboy kitsch. We wanted something comfortable but not too flashy," Gandy and Peace, well-known for their minimalist spaces, wanted to make this home cozier and more textured. From a Western point of view, the simplicity of the colors and the furniture is down-right refreshing.

The rest of the team understood the importance of understatement. "My concern is the relationship of the building to the landscape," says Tillotson-Miller. "And the structures are just contributions to it," adds Harry Howard of Yellowstone Traditions.

Tillotson-Miller believes homes should-

A SWEET RETREAT: Take a seat at this woody island in the home's rustic, yet modern, kitchen



MAKING AN ENTRANCE: Tree trunks lead the way to the second floor of the main house

n't intrude, and all ranch buildings should relate to one another in a pleasing scale. She insisted on a meandering driveway relating to the swells and dips of the terrain.

Although the clients wanted a log home, the team decided on a frame home with log accents, a new trend in the Rockies. "By using a frame building, we have no settling and far less vermin," Howard says. "In traditional log homes, you get flies and mice, and you pay extra for them."

By not building a traditional log home, Tillotson-Miller could also create a more interesting and diverse space. Rooms are intimate and well-connected, and a wonderful screened-in porch makes an alternative seating area during a chinook. By using a series of clerestory windows just under the ceiling, she added light and variation to the

log structure. Divided windows, traditionally used in the West, create an intimate living space. Tillotson-Miller doesn't like the more typical contemporary picture window. "I can't do that uninterrupted view."

One thing Tillotson-Miller learned from the designers was to avoid doors at the end of hallways. Downstairs, a painting by local artist Tim Shinabarger makes a more attractive statement than a doorknob.

Of utmost importance throughout the project, both inside and out, was the palette of materials. Yellowstone Traditions provided logs from the area which were used to accent this frame home. Bits and pieces of old wood from a woodpile made pleasing

doors, trim, handles and even thresholds. Twisted driftwood made unusual screen door handles, towel racks and shelves.

Wood-pile creations are a Yellowstone Traditions trademark. Gandy and Peace loved these unusual Western accents and chose to carry this borrow-from-the-environment theme throughout the interior design. So inside this luscious home of chenille sofas, rustic antiques and English leather club chairs, there are some innovative surprises. Gandy and Peace rusted a bucket and turned it into a sink, which shocked the cleaning lady.

The designers also used old fishing rods for towel holders and placed a long, skinny

"We didn't want to be copycats or create cowboy kitsch"

wooden bowl with pebbles from the stream on the robust oval dining room table. In all of the bathrooms, flattened corrugated roofing material from old barns was used on the walls or in the showers to create real bunkhouse appeal. Vintage Yellowstone photographs hanging over a ranch gate headboard make a stunning local statement.

"Part of what we like to do is take the ordinary and make it extraordinary," Peace says. "I think we did that with the bucket and tin and cowboy hats in the living room."

Farm implements from the ranch were also used for hooks and accents. So when one carpenter created a sconce from an old



PERCHED AMONG THE WILDFLOWERS: The fishing cabin provides a welcome retreat for the dedicated fisherman

plowing disc and a tobacco can, the designers loved it. Another carpenter understood the importance of age. When new fans arrived, he dismantled them, strapped the blades to his feet and stomped around grounds doing his work, buffing the blades with an old-time patina.

One element that threw the local team a

fish, just to get a feel for the environment.

"The palette was drawn from a walk through the ranch, where we collected samples of sage, willow, stones and bark," says Gandy, who even went so far as to have rocks from the ranch Fed-Exed to their Atlanta office. Hand-peeled log walls, barky-olive sofas, burlap draperies, and a

bit was the colors the designers chose for the interior: A variety of muted colors from barky olive to musty sage to willowy red. "Oh Lord, was that a big hurdle," Gandy says. Both Howard and Tillotson-Miller were dubious, but the designers had collected the hues from the outside. They even studied the color of the

COZY COMPANY: The lichen-covered fireplace provides a focal point for the bunkhouse's living room





SLUMBER PARTY: Tree trunk bunk beds sleep six in the bunkhouse

lichen-covered stone fireplace, built by master craftsman Phil Cox, as well as hand-crafted cabinetry by Todd Gardenier, were obvious complements to the colors outside. In the end, everyone appreciated the look and couldn't imagine using any other colors.

As Tillotson-Miller says, the interior decor is simple, in line and elegance — “No cowboy cut-outs.” But even in this well-designed home, Gandy and Peace couldn't help embracing a little kitsch. “We do love whimsy,” Gandy admits. In the kids' room above an exquisite rustic card table and chairs from Yellowstone National Park, Gandy and Peace placed a papier-mâché moose clock that wags its tongue every second. Downstairs in the living room, a tramp-art frame

holds a romantic picture of Dale Evans. Vintage bat-wing chaps decorate either side of the fireplace, and in the bunk room, tree-trunk bunks sleep six. The designers were also delighted to pick up a badge

A VIEW TO REMEMBER: It's an easy walk from the fishing cabin to the river

from Virginia City in an Atlanta flea market, of all places, which now hangs in the fishing cabin.

When the clients returned from their travels, they were delighted with their new home and immediately enjoyed freshly baked cookies. Gandy and Peace attribute the success of the project to the collaboration of many talents. “The one thing I learned was respect. I think that was the common word,” Gandy says. “We really did learn to respect each other. I learned to respect what the workers did, how well they did it, and that they did it in minus 10° weather.

And the locals respected the Atlanta designers. When Tillotson-Miller was asked about the decorative balls on some of the tables, something one rarely sees in Montana, she responded very politely. “It's a Charles and Bill thing.”

