



# Building with Intention

The homeowners knew they weren't in California anymore when they came home from a trip and found that an elk had attacked their house. Their first floor windows were shattered. Deep scratches were incised on the walls. Apparently, a large bull with an imposing set of antlers had mistaken his own reflection for a challenger. Their next surprise came during the call to their insurers. Yes, in fact, they were covered for wildlife damage. Not only that, in a new home made from recycled and repurposed materials on a historic ranch, the “elk patina,” as the homeowners call it, merely added to its authenticity. Welcome to Montana!

The Los Angeles transplants were longtime outdoors and wildlife enthusiasts who had always loved the mountain West. Though they both enjoyed their work in the entertainment industry, they wanted to spend more time outdoors and in beautiful places. They had an epiphany around 1989, recalls the wife and designer/director of the project. “We were at the top of our game, but we felt there must be something more.”

They looked to Montana, where their first home was large, custom-built and guest-filled—but only enjoyed as a weekend retreat. Over time they realized that they wanted to move to Montana permanently and become part of the community. They made a complete lifestyle change, with their primary goal being to live there full time. “The truth is, it took twenty years,” says the wife.

Their second goal was to be part of the history of the region; this compelled them to buy a historic 300-acre ranch outside Livingston. The house came with two century-old log cabins, one of which they lived in for the first couple of years. “We toyed with the idea of staying there, updating and adding more light, but my husband had to bend over to go from room to room, the house wasn't fully insulated, wires were literally on the wall, the heating was with a wood stove, and you can't get rid of the mice.” They also felt that since the original cabins were built on the edge of the property they weren't taking full advantage of the land.

Wise new westerners who take time to get to know their land, walking it seasonally and daily, are spared the long-term consequences of enthusiastic but hasty decisions. Ultimately the pair identified three sites for a new home. One was located on a bend in the creek—a gorgeous spot, but it had the potential to flood and would have necessitated cutting a lot of trees. Another was on an upper bench, a working hay field. The site had 360-degree views

and looked out at four mountain ranges. But Paradise Valley is known for its wind, and the site was deemed too exposed.

Ultimately they selected a natural clearing identified on topographic maps as the Little Meadow. It's an open oval surrounded by trees. “We have no wind here, we don't get the flooding, and we don't have to worry about cottonwood trees falling down. Also, in the meadow there's lots of wildlife seeking refuge from development in the valley—bears, mountain lions, wolves, deer, and beaver. It's like a mini Yellowstone Park.”

The next step was to choose an architect. The couple knew they wanted their home to have sense of place and gesture to history. At the same time, they wanted a home comfortable enough for year-round living. In grappling with the question of how to design for both, they came across the work of Candace Miller.

Although Miller's office is just a short drive away, the wife recalls, they had never met. “I wanted to design a house but I needed help because I'm not an architect. I started looking through books and every house I loved had been designed by Candace Miller. We met and became instant friends. I was very involved, probably more than she's used to,” she laughs.

She was involved because the couple, a professional producer and director, knew exactly what they wanted. “I wanted a house that was going to embrace me. Winter is long here. Everyone says summer



lasts three months and winter lasts nine months. In summer, you're outdoors all the time; in winter, you're indoors. Coming from California we were used to light. Here we have true divided light windows running from floor to ceiling. It was a big concession for us because we have a lot of art, but we opted for windows over art."

It was a perfect job for the Livingston-based architect, who loves ranch architecture. "We worked closely with these homeowners on everything," Miller says. "They had lived on their land in a log cabin, a round-log building with peeled logs; it was very bright and yellow. She said she'd like something with patina. We went to view a couple of projects and started figuring out her desired palette. They wanted to bring in things they had found on their travels. She had lived in France, so blues and yellows were important. She was very sensitive to creating intimate spaces."

The clients had begun collecting materials and interesting items long before construction began, from reclaimed timbers and galvanized steel to found pieces from their ranch. Soon they were looking at whole buildings from which to construct their home, as well as lichen-bedecked rocks—found, not quarried—from Harlowton, Montana.

"I wanted rustic-French-farmhouse-meets-western-with-modern-aesthetic," explains the wife, "and I wanted to incorporate all parts of our lives." They were able to do that by using beams and natural plaster in French provincial tones. They were also strongly influenced by "parkitecture"; they looked at lots of buildings with big stone bases for reference, and to decide on appropriate scale.

The resulting home takes as its starting point two vintage hand-hewn cabins; one forms the living room, one the guest suite. Additional rooms and hallways—a bright airy kitchen with unique creative features, a cozy TV room—join them together. These are made from historic square log buildings purchased for the project. Says the owner, "They'd take them apart log by log, number them and put them back together like a jigsaw puzzle. They'd get sawn

in half lengthwise then use traditional framing. There's a layer in between which makes the house airtight."

All the timbers in the home come from a friend's barn, which in turn had been constructed from old railroad bridge timbers that had been floated down the Yellowstone River. Every piece of wood in the house—the floors, stairs, molding, window trim—is recycled, with one exception: the walnut butcher block island. Almost every ceiling is different, too. The couple heard the old rodeo seating in Ennis, Montana, was being torn out; they procured the wood, and now one ceiling is made of rodeo benches. They bought a derelict barn that was completely unusable except for the galvanized steel of the roof. They left some of it natural and rolled some of it and used it in different ways.

"There are stories for everything," says the wife. "The huge sink in the utility room came from a friend's place in eastern Montana. It weighed about 500 pounds, and has giant porcelain legs. We needed half the community to get it onto the truck. It's beautiful and I use it constantly. In Montana you have to wash off your boots all the time."

They tried hard to incorporate things they found on the ranch, and used a lot of found and repurposed antiques. An old metal sanding table, now occupying pride of place in the front hall, for instance, was found lying on its side in a field. The couple worked directly with artisans as well on such projects as welded rods for the stairwell. "This is a house about materials more than anything else. It's truly a handcrafted house. It doesn't have the high drama of our house in Malibu. It's really about embracing, which you need here. It's November and it's 5 degrees out. It was minus 15 the other night. It's probably going to be like this until May. So you really need a warm environment."

In this they have succeeded. Built with intention and meaning, the house does appear part of the landscape and part of its history. Comfortably weathered, it is sturdy enough to withstand long Montana winters—and even the occasional elk attack.

Reclaimed materials and large expanses of glass characterize a home that's at one with its environment. The owners take advantage of the outdoor dining area all summer, while a balcony off the master bedroom is the perfect platform for wild-life viewing and afternoon naps.

The library, designed to be small and cozy, is furnished with antiques (a barrel from Maine, an old pine chest from Montana) and lined with bookshelves made of reclaimed wood. A Robert Bateman painting hangs under ceilings made of galvanized tin recycled from barns.







FACING: The living room, made from a reclaimed cabin and anchored by its fireplace made of Harlowton stone, is furnished with antiques and a Jerry Iverson oil painting. The chandelier comes from the Long Branch bar, a longtime local institution; its original Edison bulbs were procured from the movie set of *A River Runs Through It*.

ABOVE: The homeowners chose to set the large industrial artwork, enamel laid down on aluminum by Timothy Tompkins, against the lichen-covered stone for a surprising juxtaposition. A cowhide lies under crossed beams and a glass light hand-crafted by a local artisan.





ABOVE: Polished aluminum chairs by Philippe Starck surround a table designed by the homeowner; the glass top rests on two concrete bases. The antique rug is from Santa Fe, while a dry sink found in Montana serves as a bar. An art piece made of strands of antique barbed wire collected from different regions of the country is echoed in the large lighting fixture made by Fire Mountain Forge.



FACING: The home's walls, pigmented plaster applied in two coats and then waxed, are inspired by French farmhouses and lend a warm glow. The kitchen features an English farmhouse sink, old wood pulleys found on the ranch, and a backsplash and breakfast bar wraparound made from parts of a rolled-out and flattened galvanized roof. The magnetized metal wall is the back of an old billboard—and still has the bullet holes to prove it.





FACING: Colonial American coverlets add color to the wall and bed and work well with the French fabrics. An old painted chest at the foot of the bed still bears the name of its original owners.

LEFT: The master suite opens onto a balcony, where the owner likes to play his electric key-board. An artwork by Joe Amrhein, *The Screen Kiss*, is a nod to the couple's work.

BELOW: The husband/producer designed the bathroom with its free-standing tub, generously proportioned shower and dry-stacked, honed, tumbled slate. The sink is set in an antique top with steel legs. A skylight offers glimpses of passing clouds from the shower.





# Fresh Take on Traditional

Those who are drawn to the Mountain West today usually want a home that speaks to the great outdoors and references regional vernacular. But they also want clean lines, modern amenities and, most importantly, plenty of light. In short, they want a fresh take on traditional.

In response, accomplished architects combined with thoughtful clients are collaborating on homes throughout the region in a variety of expressions of the “new old.” The most successful such homes are driven by clients who invest not only their passion but also their time in the project. Personal history plays an important role too. As the saying goes, the more you give, the more you get.

New York resident Kirk Davenport is a self-described frustrated architect. He studied architecture at Brown University, then considered attending Rhode Island School of Design for a graduate degree but went to law school instead. He had been involved with some renovations, but never a design-from-scratch project. When the time came to design a family home in Wyoming, then, he was more than a little involved.

As architect John Carney remembers it, “Kirk’s wife said, ‘I’m not sure you want to get this job. He’s going to drive you crazy.’ But we loved it. He gave us the opportunity to do a completely rustic house.” Over the past twenty years, CLB Architects has designed everything from commercial and mixed-use projects to residences, including affordable housing. They recently completed the LEED-Platinum-rated Interpreter’s Center at the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve. Their work for the most part has skewed modern, with a long-standing commitment to sustainability and a consistent emphasis on building site-sensitive structures in tune with the delicate ecosystem and natural beauty of the land.

The Davenports’ property had natural beauty in spades. An elevated site situated up off the valley floor at the end of a road and backed by forest, it boasted sweeping views to the south toward the valley’s famous Sleeping Indian mountain. Passionate backcountry skiers, the Davenports loved its proximity to Teton Pass as well as to the local saloon. “We have one foot in the wilderness and one foot in the little town of Wilson, and that seemed perfect to me,” says Davenport.

With a shared vision for honest construction, sustained effort and the clients’ unwavering commitment (manifested in weekly conference calls and the willingness to put work aside whenever a question came up), the project was completed in eighteen months. “I

was involved in every single decision,” says Davenport. “I wanted the place to look like it had been here fifty years from the moment we moved in. We picked out all the timbers, all the stones, all the hardware. We never had any problem, any friction. And that includes all subs. We had a party in June for everyone who worked on the house. The guy who made the doors came all the way from Idaho with his family. Everyone was really proud of the job. People say construction is hard,” he adds, “but for me, I was sad when it was done.”

Ultimately the emotional investment paid off in a home that is as original as it is beautifully crafted. Unique features—a fire pole, a bridge to a tower housing the guest suite, a secret passageway accessed by a hidden door, and a ladder from the billiards room leading into the closet of the son’s room above—add whimsy and fun. This balances the gravitas exuded by the house itself, which makes a significant architectural statement with its massive structural timbers, monumental stonework and visually arresting bridge. Lead architect Andy Ankeny, whose twin Jake Ankeny headed the team from Ankeny Construction Management, credits Davenport for pushing everyone involved to do his or her best work. “He was keen to challenge us in that way,” Ankeny says. “He brought a level of fun to the project from the beginning.”

On the opposite side of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, an equally committed husband and wife were making their dream a reality with the help of Livingston-based Miller Architects and interior designer Laura Fedro. In this case, the Connecticut family was emotionally invested in the project due to their long history in the area.

Joe Roodell, project manager for Miller Architects, explains, “The wife’s family had been Elkhorn Ranch guests since 1969. It had been



their dream for the longest time to have their own place. Their children love the West; in fact, one son was living in Jackson, outfitting. Now the husband is retired, and they're moving to Montana as their primary residence."

The site is private, surrounded by forest. "What's great about this design is that it lends itself to that sense of discovery," says Roodell. "They're looking toward Ramshorn Peak and the Gallatin Range. In the distance is a meadow they've spent time in. In the living room they've set up a spotting scope to focus on the meadow for observing elk and other wildlife." The design process involved its own sense of discovery. Site visits to other Miller homes were key; they helped the architects get a feel for what the clients responded to volumetrically. By the end of the process they had decided on a three-bedroom house. A guest barn offers the opportunity for people to visit on their own without having to open up the main house.

Stylistically, their vision evolved throughout the process. Originally they had wanted a round-log home, but ultimately they chose a combination: hewn for the majority of interior and exterior walls, and round logs for rafters, trusses and posts. Using reclaimed materials from the area gave the home a sense of history. At the same time, the chosen materials would continue to weather gracefully through time.

Understandably, the couple didn't want the house to be too dark. They chose a lighter palette for the floors and trim, while Candace Tillotson-Miller designed a kitchen with open rafters and a dormer above to flood the space with light. Interior designer Laura Fedro says that with this group the design process was a pleasure. "The wife was involved in all the decisions. It was such a delight to talk with her about all the options available. Because of her love of the Elkhorn, she didn't want to re-create a turn-of-the-century cabin, but she wanted the comfort and familiarity of one. Specifically, she didn't want to live in a gigantic volume."

The house unfolds in a series of livable spaces with grand views. These begin at the front door. "The clients were clear that they wanted to be able to walk up to the main entry and see into the space that then looks out to the landscape," says Miller. "The effect it gives is one of transcending space."

The house features a generous but not over-scaled living room, dining area and kitchen; a serene master bedroom; a six-bed bunk room designed around a 1940s "Cowboy High Style" dresser; a cozy sitting room tucked behind the living room fireplace; and a killer mudroom with plenty of room for skis, snowshoes and fishing gear. Ample outdoor spaces include a screened porch with dining table and fireplace, and open porches and patios overlooking a pond and waterfall designed in collaboration with the husband. A passionate fly-fisherman, he wanted to have live water on the property; the pond then became a natural attractant for moose, elk and other fauna.

"The intention was for the house to be used and loved. It's a generational home. We chose good pieces, but nothing you can't put your feet on," says Fedro. "The wife is a voracious reader. She has two big swivel chairs facing a beautiful view to the south and east. It's important to have a workspace where you can collect things you need for your life. But she said all she needs is the big chair in front of the window."

A home designed by Miller Architects and built by On Site Management for a family with deep personal ties to the Big Sky area references dude ranch cabins and rustic living while being carefully integrated into a forested site that boasts dramatic mountain views.







## Sense of Discovery



ABOVE LEFT: Square logs suggest timelessness, while extensive use of local stone grounds the building to its site.

ABOVE RIGHT: A screened porch makes the most of indoor-outdoor living in the best rustic tradition.





ABOVE: The lower media room provides a quiet getaway to watch a film or play billiards.

FACING: The great room is a central gathering space for the family, with upholstered seating, a live-edge table by Brandner Design and a custom wool carpet by Tai Ping. Views of Ramshorn Peak dominate the graciously scaled paned windows.







A Corbin Bronze chandelier centers the dining area, while a Ted Waddell painting hangs on the hand-finished plaster wall.





FACING: The light-filled mudroom with its oversized upholstered ottoman offers ample storage for summer and winter sports gear.

ABOVE: A bunkroom takes its design cues from an antique “cowboy high-style” chest of drawers, a gift from the wife’s parents.





ABOVE: Laura Fedro Interiors specified the Victoria and Albert tub for its depth and dual ends. It's the perfect place to soak after a day on the slopes. Custom cabinets built by Crown Creations and a warm, rich mohair runner finish the space.



FACING: Layers of textures create a comfortable bedroom retreat.