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STORY **LAURA BEAUSIRE** PHOTOGRAPHY **HEIDI LONG** ARCHITECTURE **MILLER-RODELL ARCHITECTS** CONSTRUCTION **NORTH FORK BUILDERS**

AT HOME IN A ... MONTANA BARN

TRADITIONAL ON THE OUTSIDE, UNCONVENTIONAL ON THE INSIDE—THIS SANCTUARY INSPIRES AN ARTIST'S NEW WORK

Not your grandpa's barn: Architect Matt Miller played with the notion of longitudinal openings typical in barns by installing large steel windows to brighten the interiors.



Sometimes it takes an artist's eye to see potential in a run-down property.

This mid-1990s-era red barn—in an enviable setting beside the Yellowstone River in Big Timber, Montana—had just that kind of luck: It's owned by an artist who could envision a finer (and sweeter smelling) future for the classic ranch building. Splitting her time between L.A. and Montana, the artist/owner was already living in her home within a minute's walk from the barn when she started to formulate a plan for its rebirth as an art space and guest quarters.

"The structure existed when I bought the house, and there was an apartment there that was very Motel 6," she explains. "The rest of the barn was storage rooms and a tack room and a stall and a garage—just a hodgepodge of

kind of gross, dark spaces—and then a big closed-in staircase that led to an upstairs loft that smelled really bad," she recalls. "Nothing was in it but mice and bugs."

She brought in local experts—including Matt Miller, a principal at Bozeman's Miller-Roodell Architects, and Keith Goodhart, a local sculptor and carpenter—to help reimagine the spaces. The artist gladly took the reins of the interior design herself, sourcing vintage finds in both L.A. and Bozeman.

The main workroom would have the adaptability of a contemporary gallery, with high ceilings and abundant natural light, thanks to huge new steel-framed windows >>



*LEFT: Miller designed a minimalist stairway with wide-plank treads supported by what he calls "a wisp of steel."
RIGHT: The guest kitchen/dining space has vintage red chairs and a Rejuvenation red light, with reclaimed wood countertops.*



Beadboard and a crisp black-and-white palette run throughout the guest apartment. The owner chose the sisal carpet, wood stove and cozy furnishings for their simple comfort. BELOW: The red barn's classic silhouette makes for a picture-perfect Montana scene.



“IT’S KIND OF A FUN LITTLE TREASURE THAT YOU DISCOVER WHEN YOU GO IN.”

—ARCHITECT MATT MILLER



LEFT: The bathroom's space-saving sliding barn door conceals a Kohler pedestal sink. RIGHT: The Restoration Hardware bed is flanked by Rejuvenation sconces and a bedside table fashioned from a stump found on the property.

on either end. After repairing some water damage and rebuilding broken barn doors, Miller removed the original low ceiling and upstairs ranch manager's quarters to create a bright two-story studio. "We stripped all of that out to allow the space to flow," he explains. The room's centerpiece—a large antique chest—came with a doozy of a backstory. "It belonged to a famous heiress," the artist explains. "She had a kind of a zoo on her property, and she used to feed her giraffes on it."

A minimalist wood-and-steel stairway leads to a multi-purpose loft space, while a simple main-floor apartment welcomes houseguests. "The furnishings were chosen to be

neutral and comfortable and nothing really precious," the artist says. "Just things I find and I pick up—flea market finds and that kind of stuff."

In the end, the barn's carefully edited farm, industrial and contemporary elements harmonize perfectly. "It's kind of a fun little treasure that you discover when you go in," Miller reflects. "The studio space totally transforms your expectations of what a barn is—this is kind of an artistic sanctuary." It's no wonder the artist has found new inspiration there. "It's a place that's so beautiful and so quiet that you just sit and things come into your head," she says. "The space itself exudes creativity." ◉