



ALPINE ESCAPE

SOPHISTICATED AND SOULFUL,
A COLORADO VACATION HOME
REFLECTS THE WELL-ROUNDED
LIFESTYLE OF A NEW YORK FAMILY.

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ARCHITECTURE / RICHARD MULLEN, DEMESNE
INTERIOR DESIGN / BARBARA GLASS MULLEN, BARBARA GLASS, INC.
HOME BUILDER / CRAIG BARNES, C. BARNES CONSTRUCTION

Skiing, snowshoeing, cycling, hiking and mountain biking—these are not necessarily the kind of outdoor activities you expect of every cosmopolitan Manhattan dweller. And yet it is all of those pastimes that repeatedly lured one New York-based couple and their three grown children to Aspen, making the mountain town, in the words of the wife, “our favorite place to go, both in winter and in summer.” After vacationing there for years, the couple decided to purchase a house in the area that would serve as a gathering place for family and friends. Their search for a home base ended in nearby Snowmass, where they found a 1990s-era house that boasted breathtaking views. “The house is located on a mountain with 360-degree views, which wowed us,” says the wife, adding that “there is a magical, treehouse quality to it.” Another enticement was the fact that the house is situated near hiking and skiing trails, which can be accessed by simply walking or (in the winter) skiing out the front door.

What was not so appealing, however, was the home’s dark, heavy interiors. A cumbersome log staircase, antler chandeliers and a lava-rock fireplace surround were just some of the mountain-house design tropes that the homeowners were anxious to be rid of, prompting what ultimately became a gut interior renovation. Design-savvy and appreciative of both traditional and contemporary styles, the couple envisioned a house that was comfortable yet modern and filled with art—in other words, a mountain house that defies expectations, much like the outdoorsy urbanites themselves. Seeking a local design team that could address architecture and interiors cohesively, the homeowners chose Aspen-based interior designer Barbara Glass Mullen and residential designer Richard Mullen. After having seen their work online, “I understood implicitly that Richard loves modern while Barbara veers more traditional,”

says the wife, who considered their unique points of view an advantage. “We got the benefit of two people who understood each other professionally and respected each other aesthetically,” she explains.

The first order of business was to reshape the interior. The first floor was so chopped up with awkwardly positioned rooms that detours were often required to get from one space to the next. Plus, the kitchen felt cramped and closed-off, which was frustrating for a family who loves to cook and entertain. Working within the home’s existing footprint, Mullen improved the interior flow by opening up the first floor and positioning the kitchen in a central location, between a dining room on one side and the living room on the other. “I floated the kitchen in the middle, so that you can see the entire space in one glance,” explains the Mullen, who was aided in his efforts by general contractor Craig Barnes. “It makes the space feel contiguous.” According to the wife, it also makes for an amazing kitchen, and she notes that she now has room to cook alongside family and friends.

When it came to detailing the interiors, Glass Mullen avoided the expected mountain house clichés, such as dark woods, and instead strove for a clean, sophisticated setting that would provide an appropriate backdrop for another interest of the homeowners: their burgeoning collection of contemporary paintings and sculpture. To allow the art to really shine, the design duo conceived an interior envelope of white oak floors and paneling married with white plaster walls—a sleek combination of materials which perhaps looks its most striking in the reimaged staircase. Spanning three floors and casting filtered light from the top to the bottom of the house thanks to a wood-screened window and open stair treads, Mullen’s remarkably streamlined design has been likened to a work of art by the homeowners. “The entire house was designed around this staircase,” he says.

As pared down and edited as the background became, the sense of hominess that is the mark of all good mountain houses was never compromised. Like its surroundings, the home’s furniture is sleek and, at times, sculptural, but also inviting and comfortable. The same can be said of the fabrics that soften the clean-lined interiors. “For a mountain house, texture means cozy,” explains Glass Mullen, who upholstered furniture in tactile fabrics, such as wool, mohair and alpaca, which had the added benefit of warming up the home’s cool color palette.

Stylishly edited yet warm and relaxing, this Colorado mountain house now suits the homeowners to a T. “A house should reflect a person’s aesthetic vision and be beautiful and comfortable at the same time,” says the wife, who finally has the family gathering spot that she and her husband had hoped for. **LE**

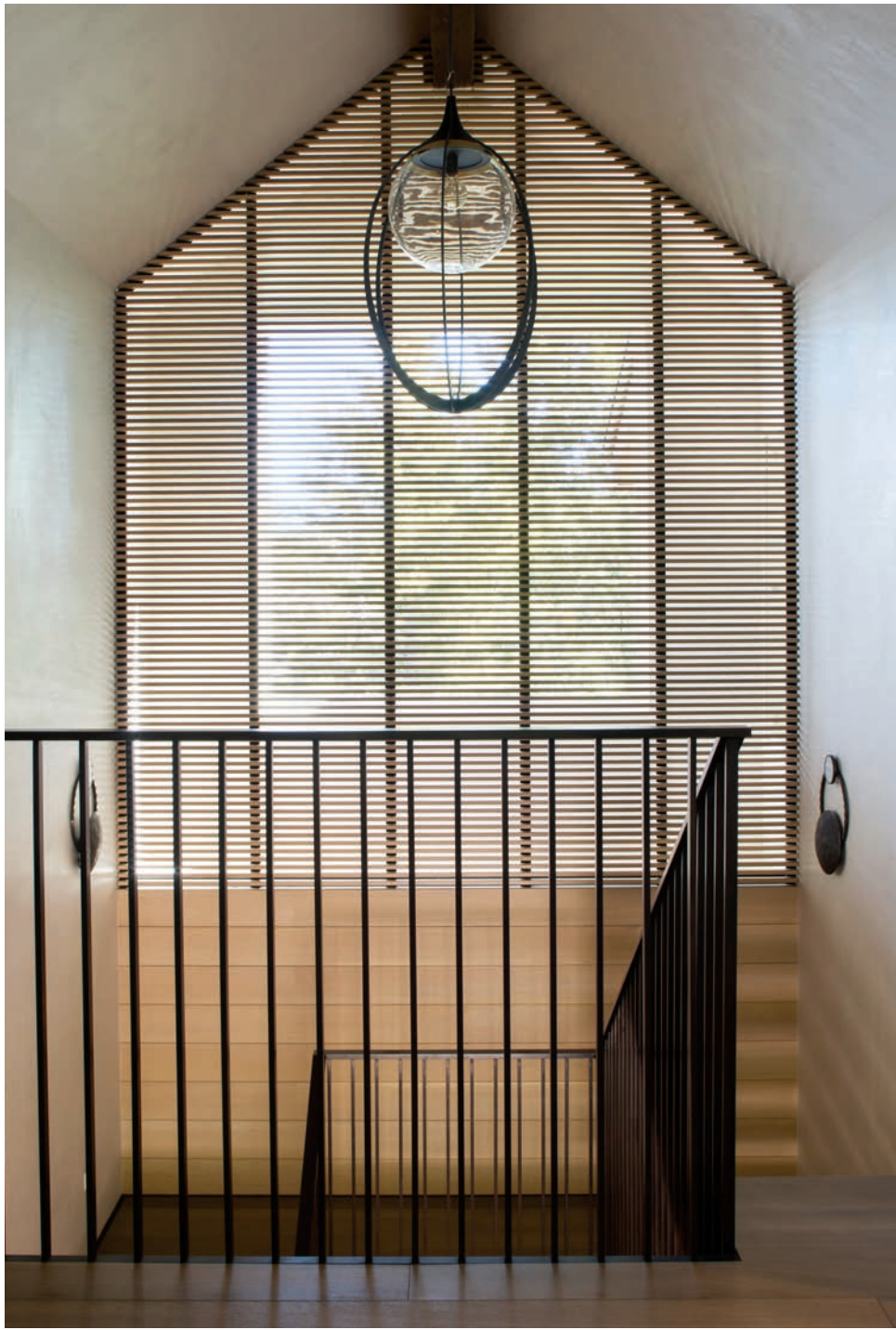


Designed for gathering, this Aspen living room features a Baker game table and seating by Bright Chair Company. The Apparatus Cloud light fixture commands a presence among the homeowners’ art collection, which includes a Richard Serra work (left) and a colorful painting by artist Ian Davenport (right). The homeowners have been guided in their collecting by Albert Sanford of Galerie Maximillian.

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On the other side of the living room, residential designer Richard Mullen created a sleek fireplace with a steel surround that conceals both sliding screen and glass doors. Over the fireplace a quartet of colorful trees by Charles Gaines reference the view through the window. To go along with the homeowner's sofa, interior designer Barbara Glass Mullen selected the curved back McGuire chairs for fireside lounging.



Above: Deemed an architectural gem by the homeowners, the new staircase features a slatted, wooden window screen at the top. Mullen paired white oak stair treads with a bronze-finished steel rail. Additional light—and visual interest—is provided by a ceiling fixture by Avrett and custom wall sconces by Trans-Luxe.

Left: Once dark and dreary, the dining room now boasts natural light and lovely views through the addition of a window where a fireplace once stood. Well-equipped for gatherings, the space features a large Hellman-Chang dining table, a group of chairs by Cherner Chair Company and a custom Trans-Luxe light fixture.



Above: In the master bathroom, art is present in a myriad of forms, from the abstract expressionist painting by the late 20th-century American artist Adolph Gottlieb to the sculptural, freestanding bathtub by Wetstyle. As she did throughout much of the house, Glass Mullen chose soft sheers for the window so as not to distract from the view outdoors.

Left: "I love mixing more modern pieces with traditional things," says Glass Mullen, who treated the master bedroom as an opportunity to inject some classical notes, such as the antique desk chair and a flamed mahogany desk from The CEH in Dallas. More contemporary elements include a curvy bespoke settee covered in a Rogers & Goffigon fabric and a scalloped, cast-stone table from Mecox.