

BIG SKY JOURNAL HOME

Mountain Living and Architectural Design

Modern WARMTH



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Missoula couple creates a timeless organic style for their mountain home



As the morning light filters through the windows of Paul and Jeannie Moseley's house outside of Missoula, the day breaks with a sweet, easy tempo. The house is oriented to catch daylight as the sun moves across the sky--slipping first into the master bedroom's corner window, then along the high panes of the stairwell, on through to the kitchen and living room. Into the evening the house stays cool and shady, like the forest surrounding it.

Tucked into the slope of the six-acre property, the house maintains a low visual impact on the landscape and is naturally insulated by the site. Absorbing passive solar energy through southern windows, the house utilizes the cycle of the day to stay warm and cool inside. Like many of architect Mike Mora's projects, he foresaw the Moseley house like a flower that follows the sun. His Seattle, Washington-based firm—Heliotrope Architects—is founded on this idea.

"It goes without say that natural light is an important element in architecture—how do you keep it in, where does it come out, how do you site a building," Mora says. "Up here in the Northwest it's a prized commodity, and with this house it was essential to rely on that beautiful light coming in from the south."

Referred by a friend, the couple met with Mora in Seattle, where they had maintained a traditional Capital Hill residence. After a career shift to pursue a passion for fly-fishing, the Moseley's had recently built the successful Ruby Springs Lodge in Montana and now hoped to build a family home near Missoula. The idea was to design a house that was equal parts retreat—from the demands of running the lodge—and family compound, yet they wanted the design to be a complete departure from traditional architectural styles typical to mountain communities.

Defying tradition, the owners of this Montana home opted for a soft modern style that nestles into the hillside, combining strong lines inside and out for a timeless retreat in the mountains.



Inside the living, dining and kitchen area concrete pavers on the floor and the cedar slatted ceiling system balance the potential hard lines of contemporary modern design. Interior designer, Stephanie Sandston of Shack Up in Bozeman helped select furnishings that are comfortable and not too formal.

"There's this whole kind of Rocky Mountain nostalgic log, heavy timber, Disneyfication of this building type that strives for authenticity based on the past," Mora comments, "We were loathe to go there. Instead, the question we asked was how do you design a building not for the place, but for the time and for the people."

After spending hours with the Moseley's, getting to know their tastes and background, collecting drawings from them and perusing design ideas, Mora presented a plan that was nearly twice the size the couple had proposed. But in that initial sketch, he clarified ideas the couple had expressed; and so they moved ahead with the decidedly modern, 6,800-square-foot home.

The result is a thoughtfully designed modern mountain home that does not take itself too seriously. There is no fussy furniture or rooms that are off limits to children. Instead, it's a home that integrates sophisticated taste with everyday life.

"This house is where we plan on raising our children,

we built it for a lifetime of living. So the materials had to be durable, low maintenance enough for kids to kick around in; we wanted to get away from any idea of formal living," explains Paul.

Outside the home's front entry a yellowed, smooth fir log accents concrete elements, wood siding and copper roof, making a statement that this house is a blend of natural materials and modern design. Through the heavy front door and across the threshold a quiet invitation of clear cedar panels and cool concrete pavers greets visitors. A few steps down and the house opens up, like a warm welcome, with 14-foot high ceilings and a wall of windows facing a view that is otherwise hidden from the road. The purpose of the house unfolds here—the living, kitchen and dining areas flow together and wraps around anyone who walks into the room.

"If you are going to use clear cedar and old growth fir and expensive, valuable resources, you have to honor it. In 50 years you have to know they are going to feel the care and

Sandston infused the home with color and texture that was tactile as well as comfortable.

thoughtfulness that was put into it regardless of the style," says Mora.

Designed in line with the building site, the Moseley residence is a long, linear plan with a shed roof open to the south. Mora teamed up with Missoula builder, Sharkey Construction. True to the home's orientation toward the sun's movement, the living design of the house actually begins in the private master suite on the eastern end. From there the design fans out to the public areas where the whole family congregates in the kitchen, living, dining and outside pool areas. The effect is an intimate family home that has room for every social interest, always just big enough and never overwhelming, never sterile.

In the kitchen a central island defines cooking, cleaning and gathering spaces. Vertical grain bamboo cabinets add a soft, organic element to the concrete floors and black granite counter tops. Jeannie's collection of hear-shaped river rocks are lined and stacked on the windowsill above the kitchen sink. Viking appliances hint at a love for cooking; an espresso machine inset into the far wall of the kitchen is another hint at the way the family savors time in the kitchen.

Designed for function, a small interior office conceals the clutter of home computer, bill paying, schedules, calendars and stacks of mail that accompanies a busy household. Around the corner is the "green room," where Jeannie cares for orchids and other plants. This bonus area serves as a hothouse for starting garden seeds or transplanting flowers and is designed to contain messes neatly.

Back in the kitchen, a round table, where the family congregates most, acts as a casual segue from the kitchen to living area. The custom-designed blackened steel fireplace is a dramatic presence that creates a focus on the sculptural, but

From top: The master bedroom was designed with soothing and simplicity in mind. Morning light filters into the kitchen, where bamboo cabinets, Viking appliances and granite countertops are an aesthetic statement of the couple's love of cooking. The couple was surprised by the effect of the master bath's luxurious design, likening it to the experience of a personal spa.





Above: The tatami room, with a sunken table and built in benches is a private dining area that is a whimsical ode to Paul's time spent in Japan.
Below: The slider doors off the living room open onto a covered deck overlooking the pool area.

comfortable furniture in the living room.

Eclectic furnishings make the sleek architectural lines seem approachable, touchable. This is a house that can handle children, dogs and company with all the requisite spills, romping, and entertaining without seeming overcrowded. Yet there is also a balance of intimate spaces, such as the "tatami room," a dining area enclosed by rice paper doors and influenced by Paul's love of Japanese culture. Or at the far end of the house is what Paul calls his "man room," a dark and wholly masculine space that tips toward his love of hunting and fishing. On the dark, walnut paneled wall a pheasant mount Paul harvested leans toward flight, above the fireplace a massive tarpon stands watch over the room. Leather flooring compliments the bold leather furniture and a wet bar stands in the corner. The room doubles as a theater, when the flat screen and LCD

projector lower from the ceiling by remote control. It's a contemporary version of the traditional gentleman's den.

The master suite is at the opposite end of the house. This room embodies serenity, with earthy, but clean-lined furnishings and a brown and white color scheme. The master bath is the best-hidden feature of the house; Jeannie likens it to a private spa. Crisp white walls and slate tiles finish the sleek bathroom, but the windows on two sides of the space capture soothing views of the thick forest outside.

"My biggest fear about a modern design was that it could be a really cold and sterile house," Jeannie says. "It was a definite shift in style, but now I'm so attached and addicted to the clean simplicity of it."

The essence of this home can be described as modern warmth. That expression is largely what interior designer,

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Stephanie Sandston of Shack Up Designs in Bozeman tried to achieve with her selection of art and furnishings for the Moseley's. She worked closely with the couple to add the fine touches of custom style to the home.

"The challenge was to take the hard edges off the architecture with an organic, accessible feeling that wasn't snobby," recalls Sandston. "I wanted the house to really tell the story of this family and their playfulness."

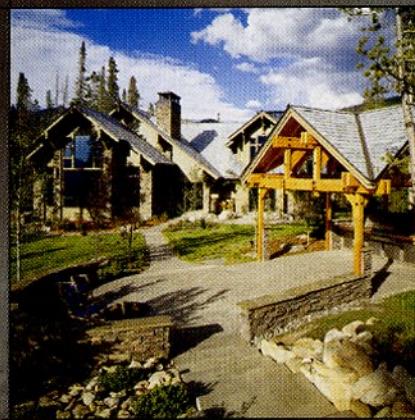
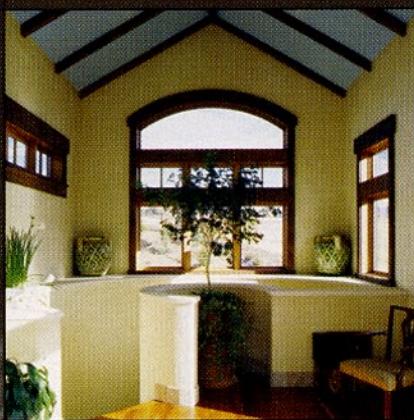
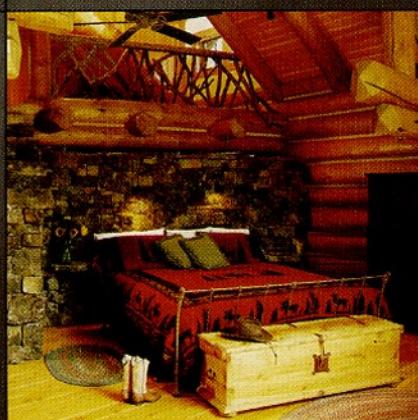
Sandston infused the home with color and texture that was tactile as well as comfortable. She had a sofa custom designed for the living room, brought in some clean-lined Asian antiques and incorporated art and other furnishings the Moseley's had collected over the years.

The lower level of the house is the kid zone, where the rumpus room rivals any adult space upstairs. A map of the

world lines the walls of the room, two kids' bedrooms and a bathroom are down the hall. At the other end the guest room and bath retain a reasonable amount of privacy and direct access to the pool out back.

The family spends summers by the pool—friends and family running up and down the stone steps and up the spiral staircase to the kitchen. The pool house and outdoor kitchen ensconce the fun feature that truly reinforces the indoor-outdoor aspect of the house. From the back yard, the creek is just down the hill and the house yawns toward the openness of the property. In autumn the space grows quieter. Winters are centered on skiing at nearby Snowbowl. Spring brings heavy snows that linger in the shadows of the woods. Throughout the year there is a sense of indoor-outdoor living. The house is truly a gathering place for all seasons. ■

spaces that *elevate the human spirit*



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