

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

THE CUSTOM HOUSE

A power couple, a powerhouse designer, and the new HOLY GRAIL in design: the bespoke home.

By Erik Maza Photographs by Michael Mundy

HIGHER GROUND
A cliché of modern design is the premium on one-note statement pieces. In this entrance hall, individual items—a patinated brass chandelier by Michael Anastassiades, a runner woven in Nepal—are “part of a collective whole,” says interior designer Michael Smith.

TWIN PEAKS
“Everything in this room, though kind of deceptive, was commissioned for the space,” Smith says. The screen by Mira Nakashima was made with asymmetrical slabs from the same maple burl root.

RADICAL TRANSPARENCY
Nancy Lorenz, a New York-based abstract painter, was asked to create a wall panel that resembled a glacier, a reference to the wintry Rocky Mountain landscape outside.

SLOW BURN
A typical stainless fireplace would have been a failure of imagination. Instead, the metal artisans at Moorland Studios created a surround consisting of 67 lacquered and waxed bronze panels. "It's beautiful during the day," Smith says, "but at night, with the candlelight and the fire going, it takes on a whole new character."

CLASSICAL ELEMENTS
The great outdoors come inside with a two-tone dining table by Brooklyn-based Uhuru Design: one half claro walnut and the other stone, with a bronze base. The hurricane lamps are early-20th-century, products of Smith's foraging. "The process is so much about hunting—hunting things," he says.

HOT SEATS
The impact of the chairs—made by Chicago-based Mattaliano in the style of the French design great Paul Dupré-Lafon—is enhanced by a singular fabric, woven horsehair by John Boyd Textiles.

GIMME SHELTER
The tree branch chandelier, by artist David Wiseman, is inspired by the natural setting without being too literal. It's a sculpture in bronze with white porcelain buds in a shape made especially for the space.

GAME OF TONES
A Dupré-Lafon-style sofa in a subtle tweed—complemented by Fortuny throw pillows in tan and gold—and a silver travertine coffee table by Philip Nimmo swell to a harmony of color and texture. The vintage George Nakashima sofa in black walnut adds an element of surprise. "Everything has its own small voice," Smith says.

SPLIT SCREEN
Views are a two-edged sword: In the living room Smith filtered the majestic panorama with curtains in custom patchwork panels from Holland and Sherry and a fishbone-style screen in stoneware and steel by Italian artist Clara Graziolino. "You always see the view, but you see it in different ways," Smith says.

In the most comfortable reaches of the northern Rocky Mountains, within the exclusive Yellowstone Club near Big Sky, Montana, sits a home that at first glance looks much like its palatial neighbors. But in this part of the country, and certainly in such a closely guarded world, still waters run deep. For this utopian getaway, with its deceptively spare Tadao Ando-inspired façade and expansive views, is the height of bespoke design, customized and sculpted around its owners, a California media mogul and his wife, a philanthropist.

"The new luxury," says Michael Smith, their interior designer, "is something that's built completely for you, and tailored for you." Smith had teamed up with the couple on an earlier prebuilt property that they tweaked to their liking. But this one, a collaboration with Pearson Design Group that began about three years ago, is the difference between a suit off the rack and Savile Row. "This is extreme because it has so much craft," Smith says. "Whether it's the concrete or the wood or the bronze, you get a sense of the richness and luxury of all the materials." In style and function, too, the home fits the lifestyle of two busy travelers who enjoy active sports with their three children—its position on the mountain allows them to ski in and out at leisure.

There is one caveat, besides the cost, to working with a designer in this way: It's not for everyday homeowners, just for design obsessives who relish sweating every choice. In that respect Smith lucked out. "They know about everything they have, and they're interested in the process and in each craftsman," he says. "They derive joy from it." «



MOUNTAIN HIGH
The master bedroom is a Chinese box of frames within frames, with a canopy bed by Holly Hunt that looks at its own reflection in the custom mahogany Jasper mirror and at the cinematic vista of the Rockies. "A view can lose its power over time. If you frame it differently, it holds your attention longer," Smith says.

MOOD LIGHTING
The fireplace, with a gilded metal screen by the California artist Del Williams, is an alternative focal point when the curtains (in matching gold beadwork by Templeton) are drawn.

PHANTOM THREAD
A custom Frits Henningsen wing chair, in Fortuny's Rondo in Dune pattern woven from merino wool, is a study in understated luxury. "At first glance it's very neutral, but when you actually look, every single thing has an artisan's craft to it," Smith says.

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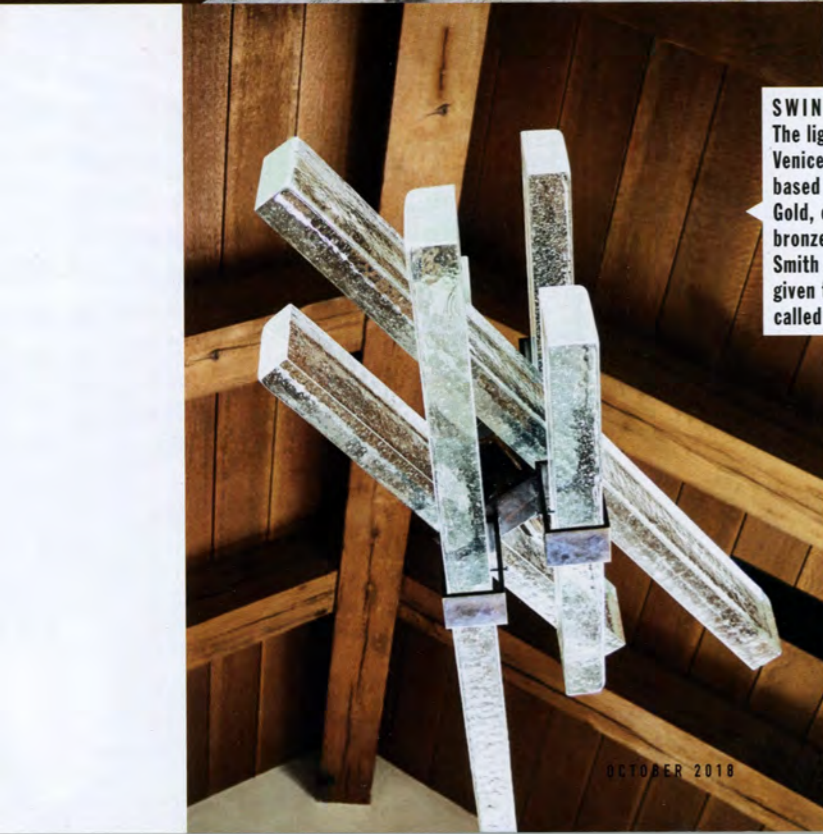
THE MIX
The artwork too offers a master class in contrasts—an Ed Ruscha painting foregrounds a 19th-century Japanese screen from Naga Antiques over the fireplace. "The analogy in fashion would be someone who wears one label all the time. The reality is people are more complex. An outfit or a house might be great, but if it's not personal it's not going to hold your interest for long. How you interpret something and make it your own is more interesting."

MOMENT OF ZEN
Off the bedroom lies an inner sanctum, a sitting room away from the kids, far from weekend guests. Juxtaposed materials and finishes—the custom copper of the light fixture against the smooth texture of the wood, the shearing upholstery on the bronze Christian Liaigre St. Germain chair—"work together as a kind of immersion," Smith says.



VARIATIONS ON A THEME
The room is anchored by shades of blue, with an azure handwoven Aspen runner from Orley Shabahang setting the stage for the deeper hue of a vintage Scandinavian rug just steps ahead.

PRIVATE DOMAIN
One of the pleasures of a second home is the novelty of its secret corners and unique features, a pleasure magnified in a property with intense work evident in every surface. Smith's clients have been making use of their mountain manse for the better part of a year, and they frequently text the designer with details they have just noticed. "They love that there's a sense of discovery. It's not something they see every day, so it's special." FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 190.



SWING TIME
The lighting fixture by Venice, California-based artist Lianne Gold, cast in glass and bronze, was a touch Smith couldn't resist, given the location: It's called Little Sky.

STILL WATERS
During the day the owners have a priceless view. For nighttime Smith sought to give them another, a luminous Mediterranean seascape by photographer Jack Pierson. "It's incredibly still and restful, like a dream."



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