

MOUNTAIN WEST MENTALITY



FOR HOMEOWNERS AND THEIR ARCHITECTS, THE CHARACTER OF A NEW BUILDING MAY BE DEFINED BY THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT IS TO BE BUILT.

THIS RESIDENTIAL PROJECT IN KETCHUM, IDAHO, posed many challenges for architect Nic Holland, starting with the lot. Although it sits on a serene creek-side property with panoramic views, the lot is small, oddly shaped and lies within a very restrictive and sensitive environmental setting and zoning situation.

By **Claudia Alarcón** | Photography by **Paul Bardagjy**





The architectural team had to work in compliance with an extremely limiting building envelope within mandatory setback constraints on each of four sides of the complex shaped lot, as well as the riparian zone setback along Warm Springs Creek to the rear. Each constraint informed the allowable building height for the project, and resulted in varied building forms which responded to each geometrically complex setback line.

The residence is relatively compact and efficient, with 3,249 square feet of conditioned space accommodating four bedrooms and four-and-a-half bathrooms, along with 681 square feet of covered terraces and 773 square feet of garages. With the city-mandated allowable footprint for the lot restricted to 0.35%, the actual footprint occupies 0.34%.

Design inspirations originated from Mountain West architectural vernacular traditions, including various ski lodges, a deep history of mining, ranching and rural barn structures, as seen around Ketchum and the west in general. “Although no single source inspired and led to the building form, each variable above was managed sculpturally in order to coalesce,” says Holland, “resulting in what the client believed to be appropriate architectural form, character, texture and materiality for the residence, while speaking to the various contributing sources.” Holland adds, “Incidentally, the first ski lift ever built was erected at nearby Sun Valley, which, although indirectly, contributes to a certain mood and feeling for the project as well.”

For this project, Harvest Timber Specialty Products’ Windswept Weathered Wood material became the logical choice. The stone veneer applied inside and out originates from Kalispell, Montana. Seen throughout the Mountain West, it is referred to as Montana Moss. “In a similar way, and further referencing local building material traditions, wood timber columns and beams at





both interior and exterior specified rough sawn Douglas Fir, reflecting the feeling of the sawmill, unrefined and rugged, which, together with the stone, contribute to a sense of warm, easygoing informality,” says Holland.

Further respecting its unique location and surroundings, the house is LEED silver rated. The heating is delivered through a combination of both radiant in-floor heating on each level and carefully calibrated conventional furnaces and cooling systems. “The building is at 5,500-foot elevation in a high, very dry desert environment,” says Holland. “Here, it can be freezing early and later a hot 90 degrees within a single day.”

Inside, the space is efficient and minimalist but filled with bespoke details that enhance its unique character. A show-piece blown glass pendant fixture in the Foyer, produced by an artisan in Murano, Italy and sourced in San Francisco, adds a splash of vivid color to the earth tones and natural materials throughout. In the dining area, a recessed niche is backed with Aspen log butts, following a local example which resembled an ongoing tradition of firewood storage. “It became an opportuni-

ty to introduce a textural articulation in this and several other locations in the residence,” says Holland.

Custom elements are abundant in the kitchen. The range hood was designed and custom fabricated from blackened steel, with stainless steel strap work to complement and extend the palette of backsplashes, countertops and appliances. Black shelving and perforated steel cabinet fronts work together, not only with the palette within the house, but also in reflection of the blacksmith and metal working traditions in and around the area, from rural mining to ranching and skiing structures. The farmhouse sink is cut from a solid block of black granite.

The kitchen island bar top is made from sustainably sourced Costa Rican timber known as Monkeypod, supplied by Impact Imports of Boise, Idaho. This company also sourced reclaimed wood salvaged from old Indonesian fishing boats for some of the outdoor furniture in the front courtyard, as well as an Indonesian basalt firepit on the rear covered terrace.

Holland’s team designed the hardscape, integrating it seamlessly with the outdoor living spaces of the residence, while the

natural-looking plant materials and complex series of dry wells were designed and selected by Ketchum landscape architect Kurt Eggers. The native plantings at the riparian zone along the creek’s edge were specified by Sawtooth Environmental Consulting’s Trent Stumph in conjunction with the city of Ketchum, and are appropriate to the surrounding natural setting.

Not only respecting the natural surroundings but embracing and incorporating them into the design, Holland and team succeeded in creating a comfortable, stylish space that combines a rustic aesthetic with modern yet timeless touches. ♦

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