

elemental equation.

WRITTEN BY LINDA HAYES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID O. MARLOW

PATTI AND THOMAS WHEELER’S CONNECTION TO THEIR SIGNIFICANT OLD SNOWMASS HOME BEGAN LONG BEFORE ANY ARCHITECTURAL PLANS WERE DRAWN. Just northwest of Aspen, the home’s site was part of an 860-acre ranch that had originally belonged to Thomas’ dad. The inspiration for its design was taken from ideas and experiences collected during 30 years of world travel combined with a desire to connect with the local surroundings. “It was important for the house to feel at one with nature,” Patti reflects. “Earth, fire and water were all key elements.”

From afar, the house appears to rise out of the landscape—a feat attributed to the team effort of architects Bill Poss, Chris Ridings and Mike Hamberg. “Mike spread the house across a ridge line and terraced it into the hill,” says Poss. “The architectural structure is a roof canopy supported by tapered wood columns and brackets that allows the floor plan to flow underneath, similar to a forest canopy. Like the historic ranch compounds in the region, the house is organized around a central courtyard and responds to the views.”

Sensitive use of natural materials furthers the effect. “It was all about the articulation of materials,” says Ridings. “Working with large beams and timbers that are part of the Western vocabulary, and juxtaposing reclaimed wood against simple, broad pieces of new wood, created interest around the house.”

ARCHITECTURE Bill Poss, AIA, Poss Architecture + Planning		
INTERIOR DESIGN Eric C. Jirgens, Eric Charles Designs		
HOME BUILDER Shane Evans, Structural Associates		
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Dave Carpenter, DHM Design		
BEDROOMS 7	BATHROOMS 10	SQUARE FEET 17,500







BACK-UP PLAN

Giorgetti sofas set back-to-back allow the family to enjoy hearthside warmth or relish the view from the living room. An oval ottoman by Peter Alexander Furniture softens the straight edges of Michael Berman nesting tables and a Tuell + Reynolds cocktail table. The painting is by Hamilton Aguiar.



INTO THE WOODS

A post-and-beam structure with branch-like columns and braces houses the home's central stairway. The steel railing was custom forged and fabricated by Myers & Company Architectural Metals using a blackened-steel finish, and it was topped with bronze handrails and post caps.

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Interiors are dramatic, yet refined. Within the post-and-beam structure, tapered columns and braces create treelike forms that define interior spaces and frame eye-popping views. Beyond the mid-level entry, where a massive stairway connects the several layers of the home, main living areas unfold, creating an environment that Patti calls “clean, contemporary, artistic and not too fussy.”

Michigan-based designer Eric C. Jirgens, with whom the Wheelers had worked on prior home projects, was enlisted to tackle the interior design. “The Wheelers have twin teenage boys,” Jirgens says.



COOKING SHOW

Berman Rosetti barstools pull up to an island beneath Hilliard pendants and a Fuse Lighting chandelier in the kitchen. Sub-Zero, La Cornue, Miele and Wolf appliances came from BAC Appliance Center, with the oven hood from Purcell Murray Company. Colorado Architectural Millwork Supply fashioned the cabinetry.

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“The furnishings we selected needed to respond to the geometry in the building, yet still support their active lifestyle. They also needed to address the movie that’s playing in the landscape and sky.”

The color scheme is organic, vibrant and warm, influenced partly by the mighty moss-rock fireplace in the living room and partly by vistas of Snowmass Creek Valley, Elk Mountain Range and Mount Sopris. Furniture, such as custom silk-mohair sofas near that living room fireplace, is both visually soothing and comfortable, while mixed media accents add detail and interest.





WATER PLAY

Defined outdoor living spaces surround the indoor-outdoor pool by Colorado Pool + Spa Scapes. Stone walls form planters, seating areas and a tiered fire pit. David Sutherland and Janus et Cie furnishings wear Perennials and Great Plains fabrics. The umbrellas are from ShadeScapes USA.



STONE WASHED

Castleton Masonry used moss rock to form the fireplace surround in the dining room. A Fuse Lighting chandelier hangs over a Dakota Jackson table surrounded by Berman Rosetti chairs in Coraggio Textiles' fabric. An Edward Fields rug anchors the scene.



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Textural play continues in the kitchen and dining room, where sleek, polished surfaces blend with rough-hewn, rustic features. Upstairs, the master suite is a true sanctuary; the highlights are a double shower room behind a custom onyx wall and Patti's boutique-style closet. A lower level is pure play, housing a theater, game room, bar and wine cellar, as well as a fitness center, spa and access to the indoor-outdoor pool.

In fact, the concept of indoor-outdoor living is an integral part of the home's design. Entertainment areas include an outdoor kitchen, amphitheater-style fire pits, a putting green and clusters of seating areas within the terraced gardens. "We defined outdoor spaces in a more architectural way, then transitioned to the natural environment," explains landscape architect Dave Carpenter.

LEISURE WEAR

Wood paneling provides the backdrop for A.E. London's art in the family room, where lounging on the Nancy Corzine sofa and ottoman and Bright Chair seats is a common pastime. Holly Hunt lamps peer over the sofa, while a Baker lamp from Town perches atop an occasional table.



VISION QUEST

The intimately scaled master bedroom has a stunning view of Snowmass Creek Valley, seen through windows from Dynamic Architectural Windows & Doors in Abbotsford, British Columbia. The Sun Furniture bed pairs with a Holly Hunt leather bench and Mattaliano chairs. An Allan Knight floor lamp from Egg & Dart stands watch.



JEWEL BOX

His-and-her vanities, one with a Michael Smith chair sitting in waiting, feature raised sinks and Phoenix Day sconces. A book-matched Inca onyx wall from Balentine Collection International divides the entry and the walk-in shower.

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Though the site presented challenges, builder Shane Evans and superintendent Duane Golden answered the call to bring the design team's plans to fruition. "This was different from a typical house," Evans says. "A poor soil report meant we had to sink piers to bear the house. Retaining walls needed to be built and irrigation ditches dealt with before excavation and foundation work could begin."

In the end, the collaborative efforts of all involved resulted in the realization of the Wheelers' vision. "Every detail on every floor is of the same fine quality," Patti says. "I'm passionately in love with every element of the house." Earth. Fire. Water. Home. **L**

