



home of the year
AS YOU LIKE IT

A Montana home delivers just what its owners wanted: a design that mixes up rustic and modern elements in a space that's as welcoming as it is beautiful

With a mélange of beautiful materials, the entry gives hints of what's to come. A team of craftspeople at Highline Partners, the general contractor, built the iron benches, which are upholstered in leather from Moore & Giles. The entry wall is covered with cowhide panels from USA Rags; railroad spikes serve as coat hangers.

STORY BY HILARY MASELL OSWALD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GIBEON PHOTOGRAPHY



The breakfast area off the kitchen takes full advantage of the site's expansive views. The dining sofa from K&F European Upholstery shows off leather from Moore & Giles and fabric from Donghia. The Live Edge dining table, flanked by Harley armchairs from John Saladino Furniture, comes from Robin L. Dorn & Associates. The reclaimed wood is from Montana Reclaimed Lumber.

ARCHITECTURE BY **KMA, INC.**
CONSTRUCTION BY **HIGHLINE PARTNERS**
INTERIOR DESIGN BY **WORTH INTERIORS**

If you passed by this home

in Big Sky, Montana's Yellowstone Club, you'd admire its low-slung, ranch-inspired exterior. The dwelling is earthy, textured and thoroughly Western—fitting for its location on a 160-acre site that looks out to the Spanish Peaks.

If you were lucky enough to go inside, you'd be in for a surprise. Instead of adopting the style of a typical mountain lodge, the home's interiors are a smart, airy mix of rustic and contemporary elements, carefully orchestrated to achieve one goal: spaces that feel intimate for the owners' family but welcoming when 50 friends show up for a party. "The owners wanted something a little different than what everybody else has," says Todd Thesing of Montana-based Highline Partners, the project's contractor. "So we all got to enjoy a lot more creative liberty than we usually have."

Architect Kirk Michels of Montana-based KMA, Inc., created the design for the home's exterior. Then interior designer Lisa Kanning of Colorado-based Worth Interiors, Thesing and partner Rob McRae dreamed up the interior spaces—with help from homeowners Richard and Barbara Barnhart.

Working simultaneously, Kanning and the team from Highline Partners were able to shape each other's ideas—a collaboration that yielded brilliant results. "The furnishings and finishes definitely influenced the built structure," Thesing says. Instead of building first and designing second, "we thought about the whole project at once."

Part of the team's synergy was necessary: Kanning designed many of the home's furnishings, light fixtures and even architectural details, then turned her drawings over to her favorite fabricators and to Highline's team, who either built them in-house or found local craftspeople to create them. The orbs of the kitchen's pendant lights were blown by a local glassmaker; a Bozeman-based custom fabricator built the glass-and-steel doors outside the den and the master bath. "There's incredible value in custom pieces," Kanning says. "You don't have to settle for something that's not quite right."

That goes for space planning, too. Kanning and the Barnharts decided against a formal dining room—too stuffy for laid-back living—in favor of a lounge area. Instead of a conventional dining table, the room holds hollow concrete tables and a built-in banquette under large windows for cocktail hour. Square iron tables welcome groups of four for a casual dinner; when it's time for a more formal sit-down affair, the tables can be rearranged to seat 14. To create bar storage, Kanning cut into the log walls and slid in glass shelves on stainless-steel pegs. The cut-out space is lined with leather in a playful chartreuse hue. "I threw it in for fun," she says. >>



In the den, tailored furnishings mix with rustic timbers and a few Western-inspired touches: Designer Lisa Kanning covered the custom swivel club chairs from USA Rags with sheepskin seats and trimmed the custom sofa from Fran Don Upholstery with leather cording. The sofa fabric is by Calvin Fabrics from John Brooks in Denver; the masculine lamps are from Visual Comfort in Dallas.

The master suite flaunts the home's clever blend of elegance and rusticity. A stacked-sandstone fireplace with hammered steel doors (not pictured) anchors the space, while a Jean de Merry "Lumiere" chandelier, hanging from a hewn timber purlin, crowns the room. **FACING PAGE:** "The master bathroom just begged for this sculptural tub [from Stone Forest in Santa Fe]," Kanning says. "And I love the hardware that comes up out of the floor." The glass-and-iron doors, made by Kodiak Custom Fabrication in Bozeman, give architectural definition to the opening between the bath and bedroom.



"A good idea can be overdone. You don't want to fall back on the same ideas; instead, your team should find common threads that sew the design together, but keep it from being predictable."

Todd Thesing

The home is a textural marvel.

In every room, layers of materials give the spaces nuance: Rough-hewn timbers stand beside smooth plaster walls. Iron benches in the entry are covered in leather and sit against walls covered in cowhide panels. In one of the bedrooms, the bed rests atop a custom-made platform of reclaimed wood with a wood-and-iron headboard. Topped with pillows in a range of fabrics, the bed is perhaps the ultimate combination of textural opposites.

This materials palette could have felt disjointed, but instead it gives the design depth. “When you walk through the house, there are vignettes that tie together because of materials and themes,” Thesing says. “There’s enough surprise to keep you interested, but nothing feels random.” Kanning struck the perfect balance between hints of Western style—leather trim on lampshades or a faux-fur throw on a bed—and clean-lined furnishings that give the home its modern kick.

And then there’s the color factor. “When we first started talking about a color palette, we were on-site and it was summer,” Kanning says. “I looked around and knew we’d pull the colors from nature but funk ’em up a little, let them play.” She began with a relatively neutral palette. The reclaimed wood beams on the ceiling and walls were refined with a wire wheel, a process that cleans the old wood, bringing out its color and character. For the floors, the team chose wide-plank oak that arrived whitewashed; the builders sanded the planks and then applied a black wash to achieve the soft, weathered look they wanted.

Then Kanning introduced a few bold colors. She designed an eye-catching red leather-wrapped console that floats on a wall in the den and is visible from the kitchen and living room. In the breakfast area off the kitchen, she chose Harley armchairs from John Saladino Furniture in New York and covered them in mustard-yellow suede from Moore & Giles. The accompanying dining sofa from K&F European Upholstery nods to the home’s site with a leaf-inspired fabric from Donghia, paired with leather also from Moore & Giles. “My designs are much more about texture than color, but there’s a reason for that: You want a lot of texture in a home; with color, you can throw in a few accents and they’ll go a long way,” Kanning says.

The home’s not-so-hidden secret is the balance—between surprise and tranquility, rustic and modern, texture and color. “If I had to use one word, I’d say it’s accessible,” Kanning says. “There’s so much detail, but nothing is in your face. It takes time to notice the materials and the layers. The home really reveals itself over time.” >>



ABOVE: The home relies on typical Western materials, applied in both conventional and uncommon ways. The double-sided fireplace is made of Harlowton Stone from Montana. LEFT: The lounge takes the place of a formal dining room, which the owners felt they’d rarely use. The square iron tables were built by Custom II Manufacturing in Bozeman. BELOW: Embodying the home’s rustic-contemporary vibe, the chainmail chandelier was custom-made by CP Lighting in Milwaukee.



it feels so good: high-impact texture

The West is a richly textured place, so instead of adopting the typical tricks that define high-country design, the design team played up the materials that define life here. The result: a home that feels layered and comfortable—and begs to be touched.

1. **BIRCH TREES** lining this hallway were adhered to the plywood wall, covered in a light coat of plaster, with hidden screws. The team at Highline Partners sourced more than 100 trees with a three-inch diameter—“not as easy as you might think,” Thesing says.

2. **COWHIDE PANELS** in the entry and railroad-spikes-turned-coat-hangers make it fun to hang your hat. Covering a wall in any fabric—consider leather, grasscloth or linen—gives a room subtle warmth.

3. **PATINATED STEEL** at the end of a hallway gives a contemporary feel to a space that often gets overlooked. Use small spaces, such as hallways, to add surprising texture or color to your home without going overboard.

4. **RECLAIMED ASPEN TREE SLICES** against a black wall in the media room give earthy balance to the high-tech gadgets. A high-texture wallcovering like this one doubles as art, delivering visual interest in a less conventional way.

5. **FAUX-FINISHING** on the ceiling looks like genuine leather and gets a tactile boost from metal rivets. The original design called for real leather, but Kanning got almost the same effect with this look at a fraction of the cost.



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START A DESIGN FILE.

Every time you see a picture that appeals to you in a magazine or catalogue, tuck it away in your file. When it comes time to build, remodel or redecorate, pull out your file and decide which pictures you still love. Toss the rest.

PAY ATTENTION TO FUNCTION, NOT FORM.

"If you like how a piece functions, but it's not the right material or look, remember that anything can be reinterpreted for your lifestyle or your needs," Kanning says.

DON'T ASSUME THAT "CUSTOM" MEANS "PRICEY."

You can often save money by hiring someone to create a furnishing or light fixture for you. (Kanning says that was often the case for this project.)


ASK YOUR DESIGNER ABOUT HER CADRE OF CRAFTSPEOPLE.

What types of custom pieces has she designed, and who has she worked with to execute them? Show her your ideas, and ask for hers, too.



PHOTO BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER

Reclaimed hewn siding from Montana Reclaimed Lumber and a low-slung roof give the home's exterior a weathered, ranch-inspired look. The 160-acre site in the Yellowstone Club looks out at the Spanish Peaks. FACING PAGE: "The kitchen is all about the view," says Kanning, who skipped upper cabinets to make the most of the panorama. The space is also the home's most strident interpretation of contemporary design. Quarter-sawn oak cabinets are stained dark gray and topped by a Caesarstone countertop. A team at Highline Partners built the steel hood, which can be pushed up and out of the way when not in use.

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"The design is really all about texture first. I get that right, and everything feels calm and tranquil. Then I pop in some color."

—Lisa Kanning