

Architect Candace Tillotson-Miller designed this Big Sky, Montana, home, built from stone, hewn logs and vertical boards, to sit on a “knob” at the highest point of the 160-acre property. The water features, all manmade, revealed themselves as the home was being built: The large pond behind the house, fed by a small pond higher up on the site, was originally the staging area for the construction equipment.

BUILDING A LEGACY

THE ROMANCE OF THE WEST MEETS THE REFINED TRADITIONALISM OF THE EAST COAST IN A FAMILY'S INVITING MONTANA RETREAT

STORY BY HILARY MASELL OSWALD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID O. MARLOW

Interior designers Debra Shull and Phoebe McEldowney combined the home's rustic architecture with city-sophisticated furnishings and details, such as the living room's classic wingback chair by Edward Ferrell+Lewis Mittman and the custom coffee table, a replica of an antique. The two-story ceiling height allows room for clerestory windows, through which natural light shines.



ARCHITECTURE BY **MILLER ARCHITECTS**
 INTERIOR DESIGN BY **HAVEN INTERIOR DESIGN**
 LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY
BETH MACFAWN LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Architect Candace Tillotson-Miller had a design challenge on her hands: Her clients, an East Coast couple with four adult children, wanted a rustic-but-gracious mountain getaway near Big Sky, Montana. It had to be spacious enough to accommodate the friends who often join the children on vacation, and yet it couldn't overwhelm the couple if they wanted to escape there for a quiet retreat on their own.

Miller delivered a romantic design that responds to the home's site: 160 acres of alpine pastures with a "knob" at the highest point, where she set the home. She tucked the back of the structure into the hillside, giving the initial impression that the eight-bedroom house is smaller than it actually is. "It reveals itself as you walk around the property," she explains. Inside, Miller created a feeling of intimacy by carving out smaller hideaways—like a cozy breakfast nook and a snug reading spot just outside the library—amid the large public spaces. Playing with ceiling heights helped too: "I try to keep the roofs fairly simple and then manipulate the interior ceiling height to create intimate spaces," she says. For example, a wraparound shed roof provides a small seating area, the dining room and a breakfast nook—"rooms designed for connection," Miller says—with a lower-pitched ceiling. The adjacent living room, which has a two-story height, has a more open, airy feel.

The home's cozy spaces are perhaps even more charming given the site's expansive beauty, which the design team enhanced with several water features. The back of the home looks out onto a large pond, which is fed by a stream that originates in a smaller pond uphill. "It looks like a spring," Miller observes. "It has a natural sense about it." Along the lower level of the home, >>

TOP: Shull's favorite space is the library, a hallway the design team transformed into a place to hide away with a book. LEFT: The viewing tower is the fourth level of the home. From here, guests get a 360-degree panorama of the surrounding landscape.



RIGHT: The upper patio is just outside the living room and kitchen, making it an ideal spot for outdoor dining. Off the patio is a pond that feeds a stream connecting to the large pond below. BELOW: A pizza oven in the corner of the breakfast nook adds warmth, charm and function. The antler chandelier's Western style pairs well with the dining chairs by Collection Reproductions and the antique Turkish kilim.



SCALE SAVVY

Make your rooms feel just right by paying attention to scale. Here's how:

CREATE A SPACE PLAN "I plan everything," says interior designer Debra Shull. "I'm not just responding to furniture; I'm looking at windows and architectural details." Your designer should give you a very clear understanding of how furnishings and accessories will fit into a room.

GO BIG More often than not, furniture is too small for a space. Rather than filling a room with a lot of diminutive furnishings, find a few large statement pieces. The same goes for accessories: Make a statement with one gorgeous large-scale accent on a coffee table rather than many tiny ones.

CUSTOMIZE "The trusses in this home are really large in scale, so we had to make sure the antique pieces didn't feel too small and fragile," says Shull, who had larger replicas of antiques made to get the scale right. Don't settle for a puny light fixture or an armoire that gets dwarfed by a 12-foot-tall stone fireplace.

The viewing tower is a popular hangout spot, with its wrap-around bench made of reclaimed wood (and a small beverage fridge, not pictured). A door leads to a small "lookout" porch, where guests can take in glorious views of Big Sky.





Designed for one of the owners' daughters, this bedroom feels feminine with its sheer gathered dust ruffle and custom duvet made from Jane Shelton's Highland Paisley fabric. The window seat is the width of a full-size bed and is topped with a custom mattress for comfy sleepovers. The sconce is from Reborn Antiques & Reproductions.

BELOW, LEFT: The master bathroom blends rustic and refined good looks with a classic bathtub and Rohl faucet, reclaimed-wood wainscoting and a custom pendant from Fire Mountain Forge. BELOW, RIGHT: The wine room has an Old World feel, with flagstone floors intersected by hewn logs. A chandelier by Reborn Antiques & Reproductions hangs above the table and chairs by Collection Reproductions.



Phoebe McEldowney: For a guest room, they tracked down the delicate, flowered Brunswick & Fils wallpaper that had been in the childhood bedrooms of both the owner and her mother. "It's heart-clutchingly beautiful," Shull says. "I love the mix of this very traditional English wallpaper with the hewn walls."

Such touches make the space feel comfortable and inviting, as does the designers' understanding of scale. "In a house this large in scale, dainty furnishings would have looked dwarfed and silly," Shull says. To accommodate their clients' love of antiques, the duo had reproductions made in appropriate sizes. To wit: The coffee table in the living room is a custom piece modeled after an antique. Shull and McEldowney copied the legs and table height exactly, then beefed up the width and length. The duo also customized light fixtures so that they didn't get lost amid the home's substantial hewn beams. (The iron pendants in the kitchen, which a local blacksmith made to order, are 10 inches in diameter—hefty, but just right for the large area.)

near several bedrooms, landscape designer Beth MacFawn created a retaining wall of stone—dubbed "the weeping wall"—down which water trickles with soothing gurgles before collecting in a small pool and then recirculating. Steps along this wall of water lead up to the home's front door, creating a dramatic entry.

Inside, the home's aesthetic is a thoughtful combination of rustic materials and East Coast style. Hewn logs and threshing floor planks—reclaimed from old barns—are a handsome backdrop for traditional furnishings: wingback chairs, rolled-arm sofas, primitive antiques and reproductions, gathered bed skirts, and bandana-bright shades of red and blue. The details were important to interior designers Debra Shull and

The whole home works for everyone—and will for a long time to come. Shull sums it up best: "One hundred years ago, people thought about building a legacy with their homes. This home is in that tradition. Our clients and their family will own this home for lifetimes, which is just how we designed it." ○

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