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IN BOZEMAN

FURNISHING
YOUR DREAM

ON THE HUNT FOR
WESTERN ART

PLUS: **RUBY SPRINGS**
LISTEN TO YOUR INNER LODGE

 **REAL ESTATE ROUND TABLE**

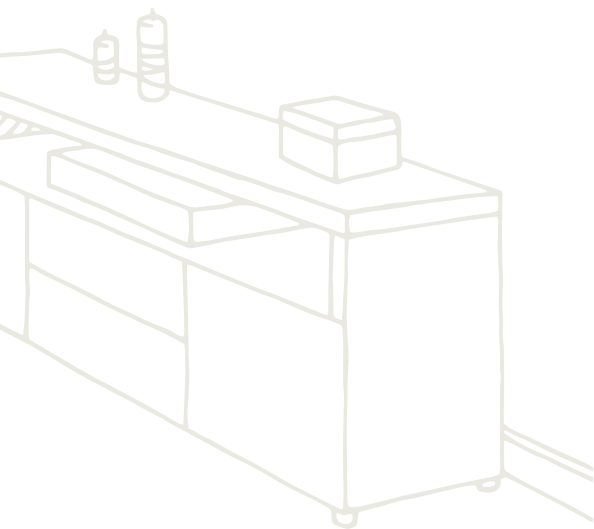
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FURNISH

YOUR DREAMS

-ANNIE POKORNY



IF THE WALLS ARE THE BONES OF A HOUSE, AND THE UTILITIES ITS VEINS, THEN THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF FURNITURE MUST BE THE ORGANS. FURNITURE MAKES A HOME LIVABLE; IT MAKES IT COMFORTABLE AND USEFUL. A MORE APT, AND TASTY, METAPHOR MAY BE THAT OF AN ICE CREAM SUNDAE, WHEREIN THE BOWL IS THE HOME, THE ICE CREAM THE FURNITURE, AND PAINTINGS AND ACCESSORIES THE CHERRY THAT MAKES A SPACE TRULY BEAUTIFUL. AS THE FINAL STEP IN THE HOME DESIGN PROCESS, THE CHOICE OF FURNISHINGS DESERVES THE SAME PRIORITY AS ANY PROCEEDING INITIATIVES, FOR WHICH THERE IS AN ENTIRE INDUSTRY OF PROFESSIONALS TRAINED TO HELP.



TIMELESS ELEGANCE

ELIZABETH ROBB
INTERIORS



into a house. Antiques have a depth and spirituality that you don't get with mass-produced furniture," she says. "You feel like you're surrounded by a story. They bring life to a house."

Like her grandmother, Robb sources only high-end fabrics. She then artfully crafts them to fit into the lives and styles of her clients. She loves mixing and matching patterns and pieces and instilling them with a sense of polish which, ultimately, will need to suit the tastes of the homeowners. "These pieces remain grounded in history," she says. "They just bring you to another place."

When designing a home, everyone has a favorite space in which to start. "I love bedrooms," says Robb, who enjoys blending fabrics and patterns—taking classic styles from old Europe and modernizing them—and joining them in one of the most intimate spaces in

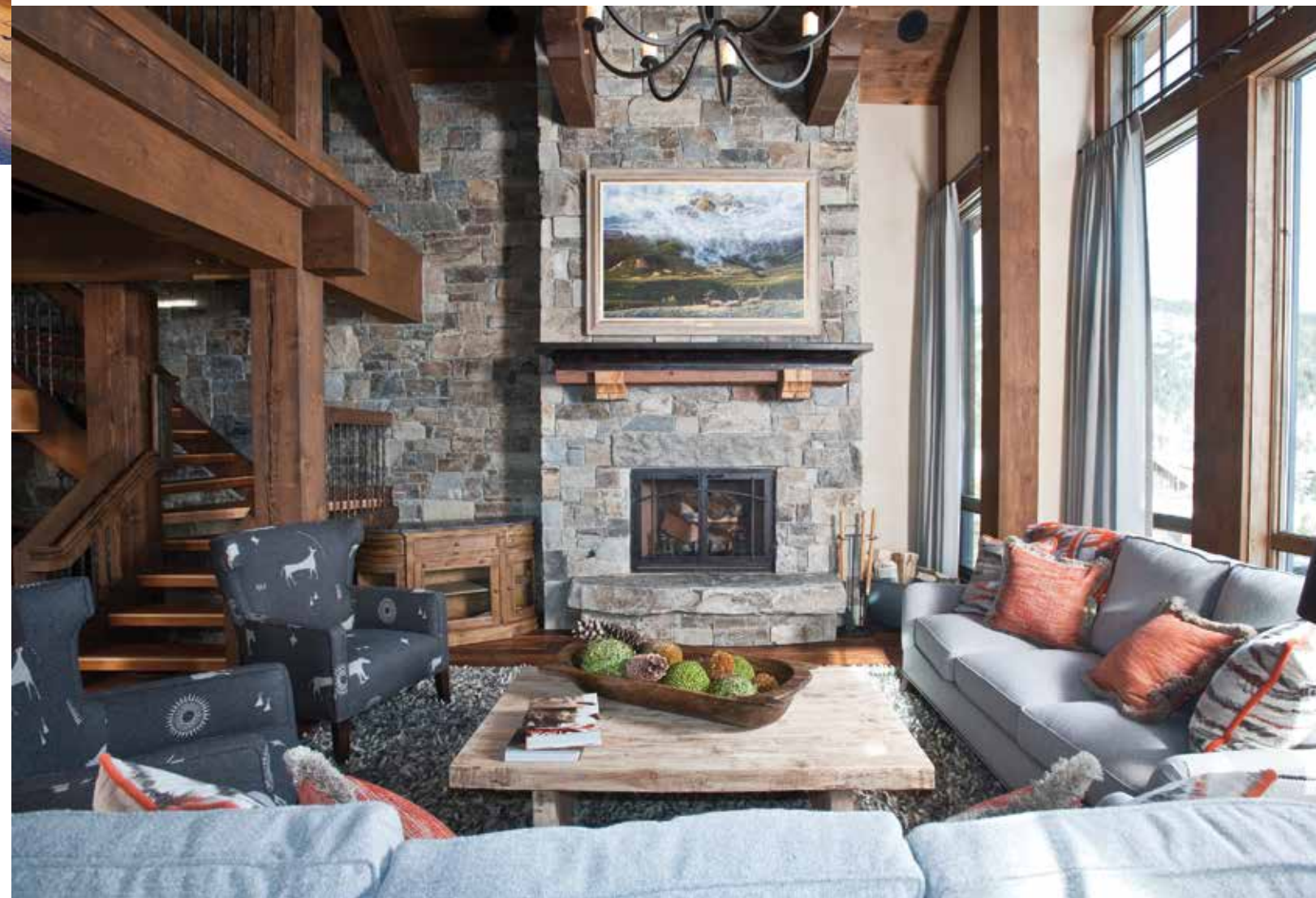
At eight years old Elizabeth Robb of Elizabeth Robb Interiors began her interior design career. After spending time at her grandmother's home where she was surrounded by tasteful antiques adorned in Scalamandré or Brunschwig and Fils fabrics, she got a sense for how experiencing beauty could positively affect a person. She spent the remainder of her childhood rearranging furniture in her parents' house, studying the details at her grandmother's home, and filling her spaces with distinct pieces she found at boutiques or thrift shops.

Years later, after pursuing her teaching degree and beginning a job teaching high school English, she finally made a phone call (from the school library) to the American Society of Interior Design to find out how she could pursue her lifelong passion. "In a lot of ways, I have been doing interior design since I was a kid," says Robb. "It took trying another career to find out that design was what I needed to do."

After over nineteen years in the business, Robb continues to love anything with a history and is still in tune with the little things she noticed in her grandmother's home as a girl. Inspiration can arise from reclaimed wood, distressed leather, and materials that can be detailed and made modern. "Antiques bring a spiritual element

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Elizabeth Robb Interiors





the home. "The bedroom is where you can integrate the most beautiful fabrics. People are open to softer, floral patterns. You can incorporate an updated upholstered bed frame and antique piece and the resulting combination looks stunning."

In conjunction with the mountain modern trend, much of the West has taken on an industrial, contemporary design. Robb sees a great deal of opportunity for integrating classic fabrics and elegant antiques into these designs to instill a sense of authenticity in aesthetic. "Sleek, modern design

can end up looking generic. Adding a thoughtful, classic floral or an antique armoire creates a classic beauty."

"The most important thing a designer can do is listen," says Robb. A self-described "spiritual artist-psychologist," her job is to learn what her clients need and use her work to fill that need. "For a long time I questioned whether or not my job was important. As I get older and am more in tune with what's happening in our world, I'm more in tune with how important art is. It's really rewarding to be able to bring art into someone's life."

CONNECTION THROUGH COMMUNICATION

VARDA GROUP

Varda Group has been in the Gallatin Valley for nearly twenty years. Michelle Varda herself grew up in the home industry as the daughter of a custom homebuilder in the Midwest. She pursued her interest in architecture before choosing to set her sights on interior design. "I loved architecture and landscape design, but eventually found my way to interior design. Architecture was a little too black and white for me," she says. After earning a formal degree in interior design and beginning work in that field, Varda found that her architectural background helped her communicate with subcontractors and clients in a language that everybody could speak.

Michelle Varda says, "When the team sits down with a client, we ask them how they plan to use each room in their home. Ultimately, they will need to actively connect with the space we help create. This process begins with communication."

"WE CONSTANTLY CONSIDER ALL OF THE ELEMENTS OF A ROOM TO FIND BALANCE."

-Michelle Varda, Varda Group





"A lot of times a client will not understand the on-site jargon and our team can help define all of these bulky structural words to relate it back to the space they're eventually going to be enjoying," she explains. The ultimate goal of her business is to design spaces to capture the enjoyment of her clients. That process can take up to two years start to finish and is punctuated by furniture, a core component of any home's interior.

For Varda Group, those choices must match the lives of her clients and the vision of their spaces, both inside and outside of the home. Selections include a sense of balance in tone and material, to connect the home to its landscape and make people feel nestled in their environments. She seeks for that feeling to roll off one surface and onto another seamlessly.

"In one home, we desired a subtle mountain elegance," says Varda. "We worked to balance the scale between hard and soft materials so that they answered each other consistently throughout the entire project." For her, that balance means designing light fixtures to accentuate and soften large wood beams, or finding curved furniture to communicate in the lines of the trusses.

In another more industrial inspired home, the client was looking for a contemporary look that would answer to the surrounding landscape as it acted as an accessory to the room's furniture. "Their artwork is 260 degrees of views. The softening element there was the landscape, which answered back to the steel and the structure," says Varda, whose interest in landscape design no doubt informs her inspiration from outdoor spaces.

"The best part about working in Montana is the relationship with the landscape," she adds. "That relationship starts with the architecture and ends with the interior design. We feel it; the clients feel it. What makes our job so incredible is getting to do what we love in this Rocky Mountain region." In these ways, Varda Group acts as a communicator. They connect industry professionals and clients, design and architectural elements in a residence, and the land and the people who make it home.

On Varda Group's website are "Galleries" that showcase the team's interior design work. Each "Gallery" is titled by an active verb that represents a room in the house. Enter (foyers and hallways). Dwell (living rooms). Serve (kitchens and dining rooms). Slumber (bedrooms). Renew (bathrooms). The end result of the design process is not passive or stagnant rooms, but spaces that are actively used- to enter, dwell, serve, slumber, and renew.

"THE BEST PART ABOUT WORKING IN MONTANA IS THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LANDSCAPE. THAT RELATIONSHIP STARTS WITH THE ARCHITECTURE AND ENDS WITH INTERIOR DESIGN. WE FEEL IT; THE CLIENTS FEEL IT. WHAT MAKES OUR JOB SO INCREDIBLE IS GETTING TO DO WHAT WE LOVE IN THIS ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION."

-Michelle Varda, Varda Group



LA MONTAGNA MODERNA

STUDIO COMO



As the Gallatin Valley continues to grow and expand, so does its cultural, intellectual, and architectural identity. Custom homes continue to reflect the themes occurring in their communities. In Bozeman these themes include sustainable products, durable materials, and contemporary design. After building his business sourcing high-end European furniture and cabinetry, Brad Fentress knew that Bozeman would be the perfect place for Studio Como.



“THE AESTHETIC OF THE MARKETPLACE HAS CONTINUED TO SHIFT AND HOMES ARE NO LONGER SEEN AS RUSTIC LOG CABINS BUT HAVE A MORE FUNCTIONAL MOUNTAIN MODERN VISION.”

—Brad Fentress, Studio Como



"The aesthetic of the marketplace has continued to shift and homes are no longer seen as rustic log cabins but have a more functional mountain modern vision," says Fentress. "I don't mean glossy lacquer, shiny chrome contemporary, but rather spaces filled with beautiful woods, natural fabrics, and products of great quality and craft."

Fentress started Studio Como fifteen years ago in Denver with those themes in mind. He began sourcing Italian kitchen cabinetry for multi-unit loft projects in the growing Denver industrial district. As he developed relationships with architects and designers, he began researching manufacturers and sourcing luxury furniture from the best craftsmen in the world.

"From a design standpoint, it's in Italian DNA to be at the forefront of the industry- whether it's cars, or fashion, or furniture," says Fentress, whose style has been inspired by contemporary homes in the Alps. "Our furniture represents the generations of family businesses that have perfected their craft. Many of the clients that we serve have traveled and experienced the Italian lifestyle and are willing to invest in pieces that tell a story and last a lifetime."

Intrinsic in the Italian culture is an emphasis on living, eating, and enjoying life. Not surprisingly Fentress chooses the kitchen as his favorite place to design. "I personally love to be involved in

our kitchen projects because those spaces are the heart of the home," he says. "I have a wife and two boys and that's where we spend our time. Whether we're eating, doing homework, or enjoying a glass of wine after a long day, the kitchen is where our family comes together. For those reasons, it's critical to take the time to listen and collaborate with our clients to insure we are creating a space that conveys function and design in one cohesive space."

Sourcing products from companies like B&B Italia, Minotti, Flexform, and Poliform gives Studio Como the elements they need to design a contemporary home that can still be warm, welcoming, and lived in. "There are beautiful details in all of our pieces, but they are also approachable for the majority of the market," says Fentress. He and his team strive to connect their clients with the manufacturers that will best produce quality products and good fits for homeowners.

While the contemporary style is initially the most noticeable part of Studio Como's products, the functionality and durability bring them home to Montana's mountain landscape. "Details from an aesthetic standpoint are important to us, but most important is comfort and quality. We only choose pieces that are intended to last a lifetime," says Jessie Troester, the Bozeman studio's design consultant. As evidenced by the work, in both style and durability, Studio Como does just that. ■



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