

The Great Escape

Seeking to recreate a connection with nature, city dwellers build a mountain retreat.

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Architecture: Kevin Burke and Sam Ankeny, CLB Architects **Interior Design:** Sarah Kennedy, CLB Architects
Home Builder: Rob McRae, Highline Partners **Landscape Architecture:** Charlie Kees, Field Studio Landscape Architects



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hat to do when you live in Manhattan but long to be close to the land? One city dweller who grew up spending time on his grandfather's tree farm in New

Hampshire worried his children were missing out. His answer: Build a family home in Big Sky explicitly designed for communing with the great outdoors. "They're raising their kids in downtown New York City, which couldn't be more removed from his childhood memories of being outside," says architect Kevin Burke. "He had this early love affair with the restorative power of nature and wanted that experience for his children." Burke joined forces with architect Sam Ankeny, designer Sarah Kennedy, general contractor Rob McRae and landscape architect Charlie Kees to create a residence that so tightly embraces its forested location it makes the family feel as though they are outside even when indoors.

At first, the abode keeps its glorious views of the surrounding mountains and nearby lake close to the vest. From the driveway, the building appears to be just a single story, but all is revealed upon walking through the front door and into the main level. From the entry, two wings with long shed roofs outstretch into the landscape and down the sloped site to seemingly become one with the environment. Natural interior materials, such as quartzite surfaces and hemlock-paneled ceilings, further enhance the illusion.

Each wing opens to a large deck, with the one off the great room having direct access to a lower-level outdoor living space featuring several seating areas, a two-sided fireplace and a hot tub. Not only are the homeowners surrounded by nature, but they are also funneled toward it. "We are trying to push our clients' experiences from inside to outside by having that direct connectivity primarily at the public spaces," Burke explains. "Here, for example, if you're entertaining in the living room, you can easily move into nature."

Aside from the kitchen, living and dining areas of the great room, the main level also plays host

to a large mudroom, which serves as a beginning and ending point for adventures. "That space becomes a launching pad for whatever endeavor is on the morning's docket," Burke says. "At day's end, it is the place of return where you shed all your gear and slip into comfy slippers. Then, you're off into the main house to hang out by the fire or have a cocktail."

Just as Burke and Ankeny kept the environment front of mind when designing the structure, Kennedy took her color cues from the landscape, using the stone and wood tones of the forest as a jumping-off point for the interiors. As such, she selected a rich, dark walnut for the kitchen cabinetry and oak flooring. The hues found in the great room's evergreen chairs and rust-colored chaise can be spotted in the trees directly outside the window, and the gray shade of the sofa reflects the exposed rock in the distant mountains.

The family leans contemporary in design aesthetic and wanted livable furniture, meaning nothing that would require a delicate touch. Kennedy opted for clean-lined pieces with textural elements, including wool, leather and metals, purposefully selected to fade into the backdrop of the surroundings. "The materials and the simple forms allow the owners to feel like they are submersed in nature," the designer notes.

The lower level is home to the three children's bedrooms and a bunk room for company. The sleeping quarters are intentionally modest in size—only a place to rest between outdoor adventures. But there is also a game room where the kids can spend time together, sans parents, at day's end.

All these spaces, of course, open wide to the outdoor living area and beyond. To make use of the expansive property, Kees designed a private trail system. The family can use it for hiking, biking or snowshoeing, and it connects to the nearby Spanish Peaks public paths.

"For most of our clients, it's about taking the experience outside," Burke says. "It becomes our job to help them engage with their landscape and enjoy what they have." So, although the New Hampshire life of the owner may be many miles and years away, that same spirit is, by design, very present for his family in Montana. ■

At the end of a passageway leading to the bedrooms and an office is a painting by Pamela Gibson. The ceiling is crafted with hemlock, and the wall paneling is made of blackened steel. Underfoot is a Woven rug.

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The living area's gray sofa from Room and rust-hued Dmitriy & Co daybed draw their colors from the landscape. Perfect for company, the Cassina coffee table pulls apart for additional seating.



Right: A floating staircase set against a silver quartzite stone wall leads down to the game room. Garza Marfa saddle leather chairs surround a custom table designed by CLB Architects and fabricated by Ty Loyola Design.

Opposite: In the dining room, Rudi Broschofsky's *Annie Oakley* hangs above a black walnut console with leather hardware by Michael Robbins. Elliot chairs by De La Espada pull up to a table from the same collection.



Architect Kevin Burke says the shed roof brings a sense of intimacy to the great room while the surrounding windows create an open feeling. The Shirr rug mimics a comfy sweater, and the light fixture from Room reflects the mountain range beyond.





Left: Designer Sarah Kennedy selected the primary bath's Hachi Collections light fixture, Mosa tile backsplash and Wetstyle tub to blend with the natural environs. The vanity was crafted by Mountain High Woodworks.

Opposite: To accommodate younger guests, the lower-level bunk room is outfitted with RH beds. A Blu Dot bench rests atop a rug by Marc Phillips. The wallcovering by Jean Paul Gaultier adds a whimsical note.



With its quiet color palette and layers of inviting textures, the primary bedroom is a serene retreat. The Thomas Hayes Studio bed is dressed in a Pottery Barn duvet. An Alpaca Wacaya rug from Organic Looms grounds the space.

