

MOUNTAIN LIVING[®]

WINTER DREAM HOMES

HOME OF THE YEAR
INSIDE THE ULTIMATE SKI RETREAT

home of the year
MAGIC ON THE MOUNTAIN

Designed to welcome three generations of family, a Montana retreat offers a few surprises amid its dramatic architecture and whimsical interiors

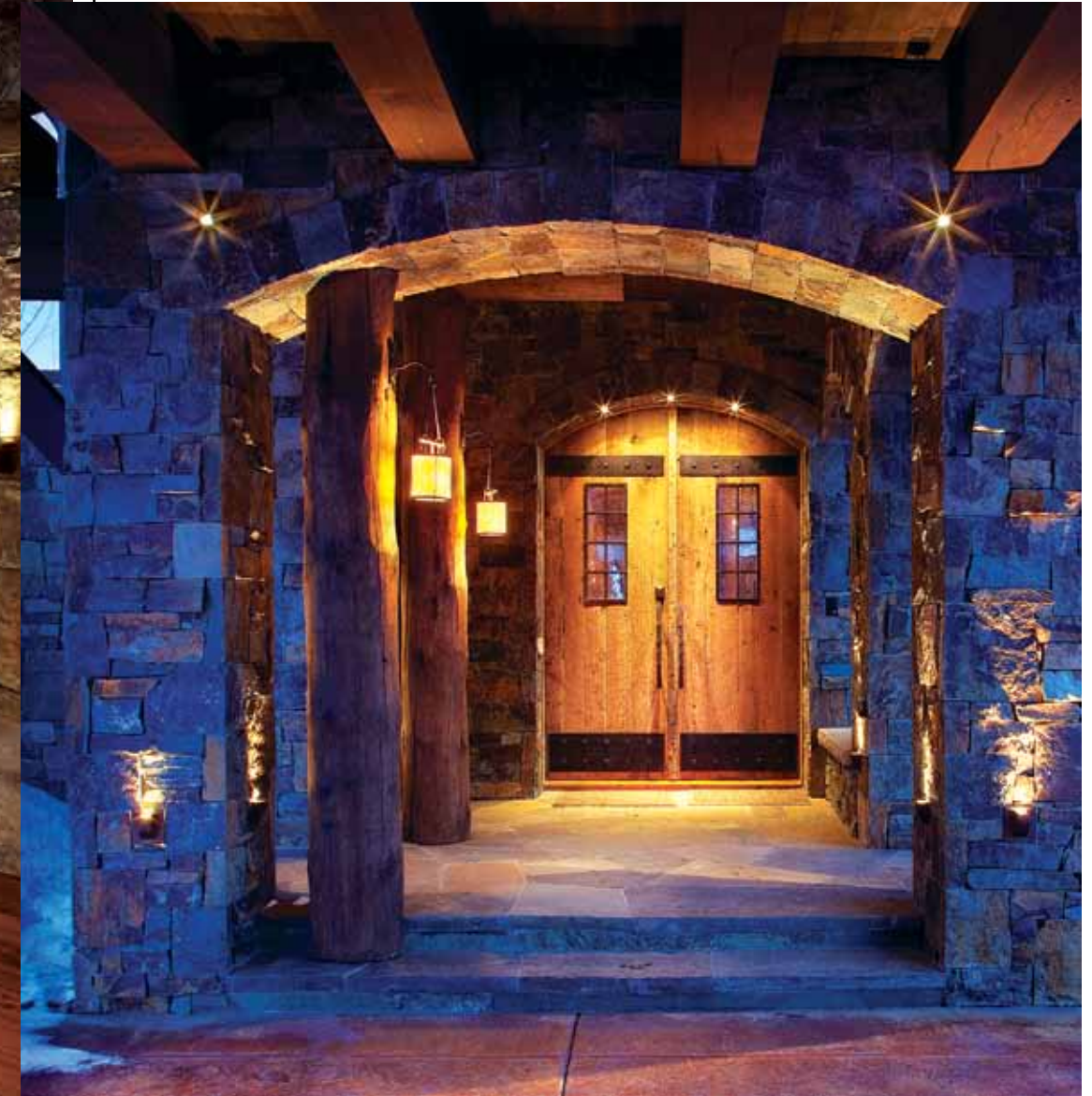
Atop a ridge in Big Sky, Montana's exclusive Yellowstone Club community, this site delivers gorgeous views of Electric and Ramshorn peaks and Sphinx Mountain. But its steep slope posed a challenge. Architect Reid Smith's solution is this dramatic "ski bridge," which extends through the mountain air to a 31-foot-tall elevator tower. At the base of the tower is the family's ski room, where they store their gear for easy ski-in, ski-out fun.

STORY BY **HILARY MASELL OSWALD**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GIBEON PHOTOGRAPHY**



“CHALLENGE IS A GOOD THING. IT CREATES GOOD ARCHITECTURE.” *REID SMITH*



ABOVE: A log colonnade and stone archway define the home's front entrance. The dramatic columns extend through the foyer and into the great room, “drawing you into the home,” Smith explains. FACING PAGE: Beneath a red ceiling in the dining room, the hefty fir dining table—custom made in Whitefish, Montana—seats 14 people. On one side, interior designer Hunter Dominick swapped typical dining chairs for settees with seats covered in embossed leather. On the other side, chairs are upholstered with an artsy antler fabric in hues of green and khaki—a fun alternative to the traditional antler chandelier—from Hickory Chair. On the far wall hangs a collection of Bavarian antler mounts.

ARCHITECTURE BY **REID SMITH ARCHITECTS**
 INTERIOR DESIGN BY **HUNTER & COMPANY**
 CONSTRUCTION BY **LANGLAS & ASSOCIATES**

Homeowner Marsha Hill had a clear inspiration

for the Montana home she and her husband, Gregg, built on a ridge-top site in Big Sky's Yellowstone Club: "It's all about our grandkids," she says.

The Hills have five children and six grandchildren (with more on the way), and they wanted a high-country retreat where the whole family could gather to ski in the winter and play golf and tennis in the summer. But the Hills didn't want just any mountain lodge; they wanted a home characterized by whimsy and fun, a place infused with a little magic.

During her first meeting with Bozeman-based architect Reid Smith, Hill explained the ways she envisioned using the home: Her family would come in from skiing, store their gear, change out of their ski clothes, relax in the steam shower or hot tub, and then get cleaned up and ready for a family dinner. The gathering spaces had to be large enough to accommodate everyone but intimate enough to foster conversation. Hill also wanted rooms where everyone could play: a rec room, a theater room, a kids' playroom, an exercise room and, near the top of her wish list, a space close to the kitchen where the littlest kids could play while their parents chatted and prepared dinner. Finally, the house needed five bedroom suites—one for each child and his or her family—and a pair of bunkrooms for the grandchildren, each with its own bathroom, that would adjoin the master suite. "We talked a lot about function," Smith says, "and then Marsha told me to be creative with the architecture."

Smith *had* to be creative. The site is relatively flat at street level, but slopes dramatically down toward the ski access, requiring a clever solution to the challenge of descending the slope—all while capturing views of Sphinx Mountain and Electric and Ramshorn peaks.

Smith delivered: The home's most prominent architectural feature is a "ski bridge" that extends from the main house to an elevator that descends 31 feet to the ski room. "We got pretty excited about this idea," Smith says. "We use the bridge as an opportunity to prepare you for the day's skiing. It's an experience." The first half of the bridge has a bank of windows on the left, facing north and northeast, and a picture wall on the right. At the halfway point, there's a small seating area, and the second half of the bridge reveals views to the southwest with a picture wall along the northeast side. At the end is a daybed that feels suspended in air. "You can't have a fear of heights up there," Smith says. >>

The home's foyer sets the tone for the spaces to come: Handsome wooden doors open to reveal a pinwheel-tile floor that fans out in a traditional pattern. Steps away hangs a rustic swing from La Lune Collection accented with pillows made of fabric inspired by classic Swiss chalet motifs. The stone fireplace is an enormous three-sided structure that anchors the dining room, kitchen and great room.





ABOVE: The great room is boldly decorated with a large-scale print on two oversized sofas. “We chose floral because it’s unexpected,” Dominick says. The moose head is from MacKenzie-Childs. RIGHT: Owners Gregg and Marsha Hill love color, so for the kitchen, Dominick chose fire-engine-red cabinets and a black-and-white backsplash of custom tiles. The table that extends from the island is a casual dining spot—“dinettes-style,” Dominick calls it. The banquette and table to the left of the range are designed just for the grandkids. “It’s tiny,” Dominick says. “No adults allowed.” The turquoise skull is a signature piece from Hunter & Company.



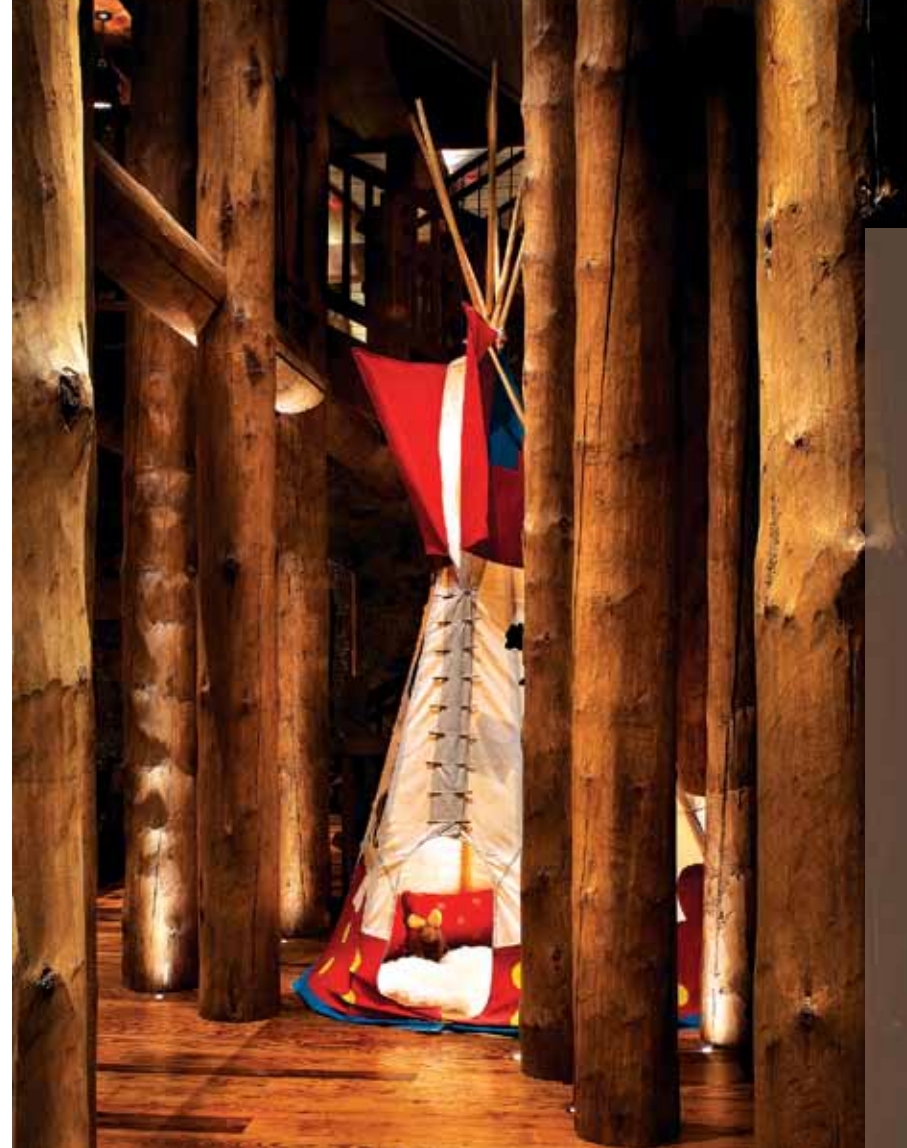
“MARSHA TOLD ME SHE WANTED A SWING IN THE LIVING ROOM, AND I KNEW THEN THAT WE WERE GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF FUN.”

HUNTER DOMINICK

Smith’s design, built by Bozeman- and Billings-based Langlas & Associates, includes a few more grand ideas: He created an observation tower with a wraparound deck that captures views of Lone Mountain to the north—“a bonus view,” he calls it. On the main floor, he designed a massive three-sided stone fireplace that anchors the dining room, kitchen and a great room that juts out to reveal a 180-degree panorama. Downstairs, Smith designed the two bunkrooms to be connected by a secret passage. And to satisfy Hill’s request for a kids’ play area near the kitchen, he dreamed up a teepee in the middle of a log “forest.”

To these architectural feats, interior designer Hunter Dominick, principal of Hunter & Company in Whitefish, Montana, added exquisite—and playful—details. The interiors feel both Western and new-fashioned. For one of the guest suites, Dominick designed a contemporary cowhide bed, which she paired with a chunky black chest and a green chair with heather-gray upholstery. “The key to the room—to the whole house, really—is that there are unexpected design elements,” Dominick says. “You give your eye much more to enjoy when you skip the matching suites of furniture.” Another eye-catching choice: The dining room showcases antlers—but not in a chandelier. Instead, the dining chairs and benches are upholstered with a large-scale antler-print fabric in hues of green and khaki. >>

The daybed at the end of the ski bridge is accented with fabrics in ski-inspired patterns. The raw metal elevator doors got an alpine update when Dominick painted skis on them. **FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** An indoor teepee is surrounded by a log "forest." The ski room offers space for every family member's gear—and a hot-chocolate station; the ottomans are reproductions of antique sleds. A bunkroom (one of two) adjoins the master suite.

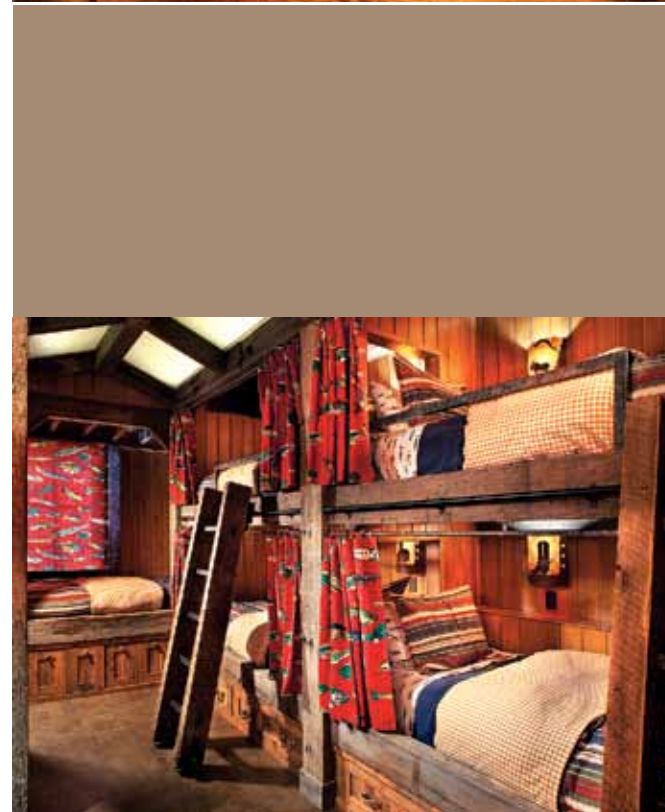


FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND FABULOUS

How to Design with the Kids in Mind

GIVE 'EM SPACE It sounds simple, but spend time thinking about how your kids will use the house. What will a typical day look like? What kinds of spaces do they need—and how can you make those rooms feel special? In this home, the teepee (left) near the kitchen gives the grandkids a place to play while the adults make dinner. A tiny table and banquette are the perfect eating nook for little ones, and for more formal meals, the design team had a kids' dining table made.

MAKE MUCH OF MATERIALS Ask your designer to use materials known for durability: Twill- and velvet-upholstered pieces are better choices than silk. Sisal rugs add texture and hide dirt. Leather looks even more beautiful after a little wear and tear. And tailored slipcovers in washable materials help parents relax when the sippy-cup spills.





ABOVE: For this powder room, the design team converted a piece of furniture into the vanity and selected an onyx vessel sink. The walls are covered in a textured paper in a modern animal print. The vaulted ceiling gives the small space a feeling of grandeur. RIGHT: Smith designed the textural log wall—“it’s a natural material used more playfully than we usually do,” he says. Dominick had the door painted green to keep the space from feeling too brown and added a little fun with leopard-print needlepoint on the stools.

Such bold color choices are especially brilliant against the textural backdrop of stone and timber. Yet instead of feeling unwieldy, the palette is unified in subtle ways. Fire-engine-red cabinets in the kitchen echo the red ceiling in the dining room and the fabrics that accent the daybed at the end of the ski bridge. The grass-green hue of the great room’s rug is repeated in the floral print on the oversized couches, the painted bed frame in a guest room and a plucky fringed ottoman in a seating area. “The key to using color well is having some common threads throughout the house,” Dominick says.

There’s plenty to admire, down to the tiniest details: metal cowboy-boot hooks in the bunkrooms’ adjoining bathrooms, the cozy glow of the teepee, the glam gold-and-black pulls on the kitchen cabinets. But the Hills’ favorite part of their home suggests the design team succeeded in achieving their primary goal: “I just love to watch the grandkids play,” Hill says. “I love that they’re happy here.” ◦

