



SHELTER

Big Skies, Small Spaces

When a Tennessee couple built a ski home in Big Sky, Mont., they chose a low profile—and let the landscape provide the grandeur. ♦ By Everett Potter

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UBTLETY IS RARELY CONSIDERED A VIRTUE WHEN IT comes to ski houses, and modesty even less so. Which is why this house overlooking the village of Big Sky, Mont., is so unusual. Though it's just three years old, it looks as if it grew out of its site a century ago. The home's rusted steel siding blends perfectly with the landscape—even when that landscape is chest-high Montana powder. And because it's neatly tucked

Location Summit View Development, Big Sky, Mont. **Elevation** 8,120 feet **Closest skiing** Big Sky and Moonlight Basin, a five-minute walk away **Square footage** 2,700 **Lot size** 2.4 acres **Architect** Paul Bertelli of JLF & Associates Inc., Bozeman **Builder** On Site Management, Bozeman **Materials** Cor-Ten

steel siding, wood recycled from Montana snow fence, concrete, travertine, marble and glass **Design strategy** The homeowners wanted a low-maintenance, modest and cozy retreat that blended in with its surroundings. They sited the home to take advantage of the spectacular views of Lone Peak.



into the hillside, it bows down before its commanding view of Lone Peak.

"We looked at a lot of property in Big Sky, but we kept coming back to this," says the owner, a freelance writer, of the 2.4-acre site just steps away from a ski lift.

She and her financier husband are in their 50s, avid skiers who, with their teenage son, visit Big Sky several times each winter. She grew up in Tennessee, he hails from Florida, and they didn't take up skiing until they hit their 30s. "I started in Jackson Hole, and it was trial by fire," she laughs. They then skied in Beaver Creek, Steamboat, Crested Butte and, of course, Big Sky, which they fell in love with. "There are no liftlines and no crowds," she says. They spent years searching for the plot that would work for their ideal design. "We wanted a house that was modest and nicely sited," she says.

Back home in Tennessee, the couple lives in a large, contemporary house with

GOOD THINGS IN SMALL PACKAGES Previous pages: Clad in Cor-Ten steel that's designed to rust, the house has a modest profile, yet commands an unrestricted view of Lone Peak. Above: In one of two guest bedrooms located on the ground floor, rough plaster walls add warmth, and the Craftsman-style bed frame echoes the simple geometry of the recycled timbers. Though the room is small, it doesn't feel cramped, thanks to walls made largely of glass that draw the eye outside to the nearby slopes. (The couple didn't start skiing until they were in their 30s, but now they're hopelessly hooked to Big Sky's open bowls and crowdless lifts.) Below: A reproduction clawfoot bathtub and a vintage hand-painted sign are among the few flights of fancy in a house that offers discrete tastes of the Old West. Like much of the home's walls—which are constructed from lengths of recycled Montana snow fence—the silvery-wood door lends a warm, comfortably weathered feel.

walls of glass and ample space for their collection of large abstract paintings. In Montana, they wanted that house's alter ego: intimate and cozy. "A place where you could hide if you wanted to," the wife says.

They hired Paul Bertelli of JLF & Associates, a Bozeman firm known throughout the Rockies for designing elegant, but unpretentious houses. The idea with this house, says Bertelli, was to "convey timelessness with simple materials." For much of the interior, he chose weathered gray



planks. If they seem familiar, it's because they're recycled from Montana's miles of snow fences. The hand-hewn beams were salvaged in the Pacific Northwest. Kitchen counters are acid-etched concrete.

The 2,700-square-foot home is compact: A central stone-floored corridor leads into the main living space, a combination kitchen, dining room and living room. Four huge windows act as a polypptych, framing Lone Peak, while the muted paneling helps diffuse the bright light. The room is too intimate to call a "great

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room," yet all the expansiveness you might require lies outside those windows. "The view is so imposing, we wanted the house to be warm and cozy," says Bertelli.

Above the main floor, a loft beckons for reading and watching TV. Downstairs, two bedrooms share a bath. A master suite sits above the garage. And that's it. "It's an understated house. The statement is about not making a statement," Bertelli says. Even the décor is kept to a minimum, with just enough pieces of Western art: an elk skull on the front door and, on the wall, the divining rod an old Bozeman water witch used to find the house's well.

From materials to art, this house is about less rather than more. A wing with an additional bedroom and a study were in the original plans, but has yet to be built—and probably won't be. "It's amazing to compare what you need versus what you want," Bertelli says. "And this is about not wanting a lot. It's an instant marriage of modesty, size and need." ♦

PICTURE WINDOWS Right: The living room is designed around the interplay between the gray snow-fence roof and the generous expanses of glass that open onto the views of Lone Peak. The builders literally framed the view of the mountain. As for the furnishings, the owners chose them with comfort—and dogs—in mind. The coffee table is creatively constructed from an antique window. Above, left to right: The kitchen is tucked under the loft, where the couple retire with books on a snowy afternoon.

