



# ELEMENTAL STYLE

Reclaimed wood and native stone join forces to dramatic effect in a Montana lodge by architect Paul Bertelli and decorator Markham Roberts

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**Y**ou won't find many fast-food chains or big-box stores on the drive from the airport near Bozeman, Montana, to nearby Big Sky. Winding along the Gallatin River valley, toward the majestic peaks of Yellowstone National Park, the road seems to lead out of the 21st century and into a primeval wilderness of alpine meadows and staggering precipices.

"This is one of the few places left in America where you still experience the raw power of nature," says Julie Frist, a former investment banker who is a prominent philanthropist in Nashville, Tennessee, her home for the past 11 years. "You feel like you're in uncharted territory." Nearly a decade ago, after years of vacationing in Colorado, she and her husband, investor Tommy Frist, shifted their focus to Montana and decided to create a family retreat in Big Sky. "The idea was to build something relatively modest in scale and spirit," the mother of three preteens says. "A comfortable, woodsy ski house."

The Frists didn't need to search long for a sympathetic collaborator. After visiting the home of friends in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, that had been designed by Paul Bertelli of

**Left:** A Remains Lighting chandelier hangs in the living area of Julie and Tommy Frist's Big Sky, Montana, home, which was designed by JLF & Assoc. and decorated by Markham Roberts. Displayed above the fireplace is a photograph by Roberts from James Sansum Fine and Decorative Art; the George Smith sofas are covered in a Pierre Frey wool, and the carpet is a Roberts design for Doris Leslie Blau. **Above:** A rough-hewn timber ceiling crowns the room. For details see Sources.





**Clockwise from above:** Alongside the staircase, a settee in an Edelman Leather cowhide is flanked by a pair of garden seats used as end tables; the sconce is by Paul Ferrante. The house at dusk. Julie Frist stands in front of the entry. **Opposite, clockwise from top left:** A seating area contains several Roberts designs, among them a sofa in an Old World Weavers fabric, faux-horn side tables, and a set of chairs in a Jasper stripe; Yuji Obata prints hang above the mantel, and the abaca carpet is by Stark. A trestle table and benches anchor the dining space. The kitchen features a Sub-Zero refrigerator, Wolf range, and Waterworks sink; the sink fittings and pot filler are by Rohl.



Bozeman-based JLF & Associates, the couple knew they'd found their architect. "Julie and Tommy wanted to build something understated in a community that isn't known for modesty," Bertelli says, with a conspicuous note of approval. "Our approach—using antique reclaimed materials in a restrained, contemporary way—dovetailed neatly with their vision for the house."

Recycled materials may have become all the rage in recent years as a badge of design integrity and environmental sensitivity, but the architects at JLF could hardly be accused of hopping on a bandwagon. The 34-year-old firm's roots are grounded in utilitarian ranch projects that embrace the virtues of weathered barn siding and wood snow fencing. "These are essential elements of our design language," Bertelli says. "The challenge is to not get too precious and simply let them express themselves."

Indeed, the unpretentious character of the Frist residence, at once rugged and unmistakably refined, is enhanced by the use of humble local materials: flat-textured frontier stone, repurposed corral boards, century-old hand-hewn beams, and moss rock selected from scree fields—the piles of fragmented stone at the foot of mountain cliffs. All this has been incorporated into a three-story, 11,000-square-foot lodge, which, because of an ordinance





limiting construction on mountain slopes, actually contains two 5,500-square-foot dwellings (the couple sold the matching half to another family). The entrance level of the Frists' home is a voluminous sweep of open living, dining, and kitchen spaces; two master suites occupy the floor above, and guest accommodations—including a bunk room that sleeps six—are nestled into the slope below.

To furnish the house, the Frists turned to Manhattan-based interior designer Markham Roberts, who had worked with them previously on a residence in Southampton, New York. "My goal in Montana was to add softness and texture without competing with the incredible architecture," he says, noting that his job was made easier by JLF's efforts. "I am never shy of expressing an opinion, but here I had absolutely nothing to say. The building made everything I did look great."

Roberts calls his multicultural decorative assemblages "distinctly American," with vintage pieces from Asia, Europe, and the U.S. mingled with contemporary furnishings. In the entrance hall the designer deployed several custom-made pieces—a graphic black-and-white-striped rug, crisp white cylindrical ceramic lamps, an oak console modeled after a 1930s Jean-Michel Frank cocktail table—as foils for the rustic stone floor and board walls. Visitors proceed from that transitional space to a double-height living/dining area, a barnlike room crowned by well-worn beams, anchored by a stone chimney breast, and graced by a span of windows that overlooks ski lifts rising above acres of conifers. Rolled-arm sofas covered in red wool warm up the space's otherwise neutral scheme, which includes tailored gray club chairs and a fluffy chalk-color carpet. Accents that once embellished a Saint Moritz chalet where Julie's mother spent many winters (among them a coyote throw and Bavarian antler trophies) bring fond memories into the mix.

The dining area features a custom-made oak trestle table that is as suited for intimate dinners and large buffets as it is for homework assignments and jigsaw puzzles. Upstairs, in the Frists' master bedroom—the other master suite is used by guests—Roberts's melting-pot vision encompasses a 19th-century English hall chair, a 1940s French oak writing table, and an Anglo-Indian chest of drawers. None of these pieces, however, reads as exotic or out of sync with the relaxed aesthetic.

"Aggressive eclecticism wasn't the point," the designer explains. "All the furnishings choices were calculated for comfort, not drama." Which is exactly as his clients would have it. "We were very wary of square-footage creep and show-off spaces," Julie says, adding, "With stunning mountain views and great skiing to enjoy, who needs a tricked-out home theater?" □



**From top:** A guest room features headboards and bed skirts in a John Robshaw print and a Stark jute carpet. The bunk room is partially sheathed in reclaimed corral boards. **Opposite:** The photograph in the den is by Roberts, who also designed the sofas, covered in a Clarence House print; the armchair is clad in a Brunswick & Fils faux suede, and the carpet is by Stark.



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**Above:** A lantern by BoBo Intriguing Objects was installed in the master bath; the tub, its fittings, and the towel bars are all by Waterworks, and the towels are by Pratesi. **Right:** The Frists' bedroom features a pendant light by Vaughan and a 1940s French writing table and chair from James Sansum Fine and Decorative Art; the bed linens are by Pratesi, the throw is faux chinchilla, and the carpet is by Thomas Jayne for Stark.

