

An aerie on a mountainside near Red Lodge, Montana, celebrates place

# TAKING TIME

A home designed by Pearson Design Group integrates into its mountainside site outside Red Lodge, Montana. With materials that speak to the surroundings, nature takes center stage.

STORY **CHASE REYNOLDS EWALD** PHOTOGRAPHY **AUDREY HALL**  
ARCHITECTURE **PEARSON DESIGN GROUP** INTERIOR DESIGN **ALICE CRAMER**  
CONSTRUCTION **OSM CONSTRUCTION** LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE **FIELD STUDIO**



A mountainside home that seems a perfect fit for its place may have a sense of inevitability about it now, but it was a long time in the making. The homeowners had spent a decade vacationing in Jackson Hole before pursuing their own home. They then visited mountain towns all around the greater Yellowstone area, searching for the right property. They'd not considered Red Lodge until a friend waxed poetic about its attributes: great skiing, a vibrant town with good restaurants, proximity to Yellowstone and, best of all, an off-the-beaten-path vibe. But even after buying property, they didn't start a project right away. They waited, and they acquired more land, until they had just the right configuration for building.

"The final piece we bought was key," says the husband. "We built the house on that piece to face the rest of the property we'd bought earlier, then we nestled it back into the mountain to make it disappear."

The clients envisioned a clean mountain look with large expanses of glass warmed up by rustic materials. (By the time they designed the home, the wife laughs, "We'd had fifteen years to think about what we wanted.") They chose Pearson Design Group to conceptualize the house, OSM Construction to build it and Field Studio landscape architects to help integrate the structure into the landscape. The client's Atlanta-based interior designer, Alice Cramer, visited Montana for the first time to help realize clean, livable interiors in a subdued palette enlivened by pops of color.

What's striking about the home, other than its siting—anchored into and embraced by the mountain, yet offering its residents an edge-of-the-precipice exhilaration—is its appropriateness. At 4,800 square feet, with a material palette of regional stone and natural weathered wood, it is human scaled and keeps its focus on the outdoors.

"There's an inherent challenge in building on a mountain and not skylining a project," notes Pearson Design Group Principal Justin Tollefson. "The house wraps to the hillside, and, especially when viewed >>



LEFT: The entry highlights the conscious minimalism of landscape architect Charlie Kees of Field Studio, whose design defers to its alpine meadow environment. The custom door is reclaimed wide-plank white oak; custom hardware by Brandner Design. THIS PAGE: The kitchen marries book-matched marble and a custom light fixture with rustic materials.

“WE’D HAD FIFTEEN YEARS TO  
THINK ABOUT WHAT WE WANTED.”

-THE HOMEOWNER



Built of regional stone and natural weathered wood, the home is very much of place and commands views up and down the valley.



## A FRESH APPROACH TO MOUNTAIN MODERN

The phrase 'Mountain Modern' may be overused, but it serves an important purpose. It captures the essence of a style defined by a contemporary sensibility combined with rustic-leaning materials. As architect Justin Tollefson says, at Pearson Design Group they think about Mountain Modern differently, taking as their starting point how to bring a fresh perspective while still being appropriate to place:

Focus on **BEING INDIGENOUS** to a region in architecture, referencing forms that are found locally and using materials that are native to the area. Create **AN INDOOR/OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE** with materials running from outside in and from inside out. Celebrate **HANDCRAFTED APPEAL**. Use **MATERIALS THAT TRANSCEND** their purpose, such as large expanses of glass, which reflect and refract. Pay close attention to how a structure **TOUCHES THE TOPOGRAPHY**. Seek an **APPROPRIATE BALANCE** between scale and understatedness, and between ruggedness and refinement. >>



LEFT: Designer Alice Cramer paired the custom dining table with West Elm chairs and Ochre lighting. Artwork by Montana photographer Stephen Shore. ABOVE: Minotti living room furniture lends a clean, neutral look and keeps the focus on the views. BELOW: The outdoor dining area, tucked between the house and a wooded hillside, was conceived on a windy day, when the importance of shelter was obvious. The furniture is from Home Infatuation.



from downhill, it blends into the hillside and the topography with the rock outcroppings. The driver for us was to make it a dynamic modern piece of architecture while not forgetting its place.”

The house aligns almost entirely on one level at an elevation of 6,500 feet and contours with the mountain. It's defined by one long graceful line of a shed roof lifting up and out toward views of the Beartooth Mountains, with the cabin-like forms of the guest room and owners' suite protruding in different directions from the main volume and a deck off the great room cantilevered into the view. Utility spaces and a bedroom are anchored into the hillside end of the house; the open kitchen, dining area and living space, unified by concrete floors and an open three-sided fireplace, embrace 180-degree views.

Multiple exterior spaces offer varied views and shelter depending on which way the wind is blowing, while intrusions into the landscape are minimal. The main bedroom's sandstone terrace, for instance, is just large enough for two chaises, while an outdoor room with a stone fireplace and reclaimed wood ceiling nestles into the hillside, hidden from view and protected from the elements. The landscape palette is designed to naturally blend into the native sagebrush and prairie grasses.

“We talk a lot about being indigenous to a region,” says Tollefson. “The [home's] architecture and materiality are local, and while there are aspects that might look elegant, such as the double cantilevered roof and deck, we never forget craftsmanship. This house is grounded in the ruggedness of the materials: the strength of the steel and stone, the texture of the wood. These ingredients are enough.” ○

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LEFT: In the serene powder room, the concrete counter with integrated sink is illuminated by a pendant light from Palecek. THIS PAGE: In the primary bedroom, a graphic Patterson, Flynn and Martin rug grounds the room. The light is from Arteriors, the bench from Robert James. A small patio barely protrudes into the landscape and is minimally furnished with Restoration Hardware chaises.