

# BIG SKY JOURNAL

ARTS 2024

LIFESTYLE IN THE NORTHERN ROCKIES



Caleb Meyer's  
Mountain West

The Warrior Art of  
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ARCHITECTURE  
LOCATI ARCHITECTS  
CONSTRUCTION  
ROBERT WEBSTER CONSTRUCTION  
INTERIOR DESIGN  
COLLINS AND SWEZEY

FROM LEFT: The living room of this Stock Farm home is emblematic of the overall ethos: refined yet comfortable, with a quiet nod to Western aesthetics and a focus on fine art. • The home's exterior is a showcase of locally quarried Chief Cliff stone.



## Stock Farm Foothills

Restrained intentionality of size and structure  
in a Hamilton, Montana home

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**SOMETIMES, BIGGER IS** not better; bolder is not more beautiful. Sometimes, the most impressive quality about a home is its restraint and intentionality.

Nestled into the rolling contours of Stock Farm outside of Hamilton, Montana, the Foothills Home displays this level of meticulous detail and consideration. “I think one of the biggest things we really focused on was creating a home that didn’t get too overstated or too grand,” recalls Locati Architects’ Darin Hoekema. “That was one of the owners’ big requests: to make sure that it stayed modest in a lot of ways, and that the spaces were just right in every regard. ... They wanted to maximize the use and feel so there wasn’t a space that they felt like they’d never experience because it wasn’t useful or functional.”

Bob Webster, owner of Robert Webster Construction, agrees: “Things [in home construction] got a little weird over the past 20 years. [People thought,] ‘Build bigger! If a great room should be this big, let’s double it!’ People are missing, I believe, the importance of volume. But they got this one right. Between the owners and Locati, they pulled this house into a realistic space. I don’t feel that any rooms are too small. I don’t feel that any rooms are too big. Which is pretty cool, and something you don’t often see.”

This is another way of saying: The house actually feels just right. The interior finishes and furnishings, while quietly striking and unique, imbue the space with subtle warmth and comfort. The rooms are proportional to their



intended purposes. Everything feels of-a-piece. “We put a lot into many small areas,” says Webster. “There’s a tiny bar off of the kitchen that faces the great room. It’s tiny, but when you’re entertaining, why do you need a big bar? There’s a little wine cellar in the basement that’s cool as hell. I’ve built giant wine cellars before — what is it for? Are you going to have dinner in a wine cellar? No! It’s 56 degrees! This is small, but it’s all you need.”

Hoekema shares a similar sentiment about the function and volume of a space. “There’s a little office that’s off the great room. It’s probably one of the smallest offices we’ve ever created, and

**FROM LEFT:** A bird sculpture by Helen Altman graces the entryway. • The small office space adjacent to the living room allows for solitude and focus, without being fully separated from the rest of the home.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** A striking walnut countertop on the island anchors the modestly sized kitchen. • Ample windows showcase views of Blodgett Canyon to the west and the Sapphire Mountains to the east. • Paintings by Wendy Red Star brighten the dining room.



yet it has a really great, unique vibe to it. It has a great view, it’s also right off of the main space, so you can be involved with what’s going on in the rest of the house, but at the same time, you can have some privacy.”

While words like “modest” and “realistic” may suggest certain restrictions or limitations, don’t be fooled. The team behind Foothills didn’t cut corners in design and construction, working with the owners to create precisely the home they envisioned. “The owners had a property basically neighboring this one that really didn’t fit their lifestyle,” says Hoekema. “It was a home that had been remodeled three or four times, and they wanted to start from the ground up with this property. They had a good grasp on how they live in the area and what’s important to them, which is a major advantage and made it an extremely collaborative process.”





Architects from Locati visited the property, siting the house to ensure the design took full advantage of the location. Flanked to the east by the Sapphire Mountains and to the west by the Bitterroot's Blodgett Canyon, the home's ample glass and outdoor living spaces allow the landscape to play a starring role throughout. "We wanted to create views specific to the property," says Hoekema. "There are really unique views in opposing directions, so there was a lot of discussion as far as the western versus eastern views, where the sun is located at different times of the day, and where you'd want to be in the house during those times. I think the one space that captures that most is the dining room because it flows out to patios in two different directions."

Part of what makes this home so quietly striking is the color palette's continuity from exterior to interior. "We had a lot of fun with paint colors and the subtlety of changing colors, but having them be nuanced, from room to room," says Martha Sweezy of the Dallas-based design firm Collins and Sweezy. "It makes the space so interesting. I think it's the use of different colors and textures that makes it so warm and inviting. They can easily entertain in rooms, or they can just as easily cocoon in those same rooms."

For the exterior, locally sourced Chief Cliff stone is paired with fir that was intentionally weathered. "My painter put together a very credible aging process for the wood," says Webster. "It gave it that incredible color." The same aged wood and stone are utilized extensively throughout the interior, effectively blurring the line between indoor and outdoor. Inside, it provides a neutral backdrop, allowing furnishings and fixtures to shine.

"We didn't want it to be what you think of when you think about the traditional Western-

**FROM TOP:** A neutral color palette throughout the home creates a calming continuity and allows the owners' art collection to truly shine. • Travertine, hemp wall covering, and an antique rug bring softness to the primary bath.



The adjoining guest house also plays host to a fine array of art, and invites visitors to relax and socialize.

decorated house with the big logs and all that stuff," says Sweezy. "We wanted to go in a completely different direction. The owner kept saying, 'No orange wood!' So we used a beautiful gray that isn't too blue, that has undertones of brown, and I think it made the house feel very different from any of the other properties at Stock Farm." The design draws a bit on the owners' Texas roots while residing comfortably within a modern Montana vernacular.

"As far as materials go, they didn't want to just go for the typical Montana reclaimed ultra-rustic materials," recalls Hoekema. "They envisioned something that was slightly more refined than that but still definitely feels like Montana. It has some vibrancy and some warmth. The typical Mountain Modern aesthetic carries through a lot of contrast, and I think this one has some modern characteristics but is more traditional. It has a lot of brightness and life, and a lot of that came through in the artwork and furnishings. It's always fun to design a home for a client that has specific art pieces in mind or desires to involve art in their project."



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**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Surrounded by subtle native landscaping, the house nestles into the terrain. • The dining room flows out to patios in both directions. • An intentional weathering process resulted in pale fir timbers and trim throughout the interior and exterior. • A small gazebo provides a place to relax in shade along the creek.

“The owners love art,” says Sweezy. “Their collection is very beautiful. They’ve enjoyed discovering Montana artists,” and also incorporating pieces from their existing collection into the home. A striking multi-piece wall-mounted sculpture of birds by Texas

artist Helen Altman graces the entryway, balanced by a large painting by Montana’s own Russell Chatham. The dining room showcases paintings by Anne Appleby and Wendy Red Star, while a Frankenthaler brings brightness to a corner of the great room.

Throughout the home, the details speak volumes about the team’s meticulousness. The kitchen cabinets are expertly painted with a faux ceruse finish. The herringbone floor creates a kind of “rug” in the dining room, crafted out of reclaimed wood. The 5-inch-thick walnut island countertop anchors the kitchen. “In the primary bath, we did insets with small pieces of travertine, which forms a really nice backdrop to the vanity mirrors,” Sweezy says. “That, combined with the fine hemp wall covering — it’s earthy, and it’s warm; it’s not too dark; it’s not too light — it just envelops you.” Fixtures and furnishings from Gregorius Pineo, Urban Electric, Jamb, Formations, Carol Piper, and other bespoke sources adorn the space with a finely curated hand.

Separated from the main house by a breezeway, the guest house strikes a slightly different tone. “The finishes were more Swedish — Gustavian, if you will. The light painted surfaces and soft greens all relate really well to the outside and bring the outside and nature in,” says Sweezy, adding that the structure still complements the main residence.

Lush landscaping ties the home to its surroundings. The soft purples and greens of echinacea, aster, Russian sage, bunch

grass, and delphinium accent the natural setting. Where a creek meanders onto the property, the team designed and built a small, simple gazebo so the owners can relax in the seclusion of nature.

And ultimately, that’s what this home is about: a haven, a quiet space of beauty and respite, close to the natural world and the parts of Montana that the owners love. A home with balance and intention, where every space functions just as it should.▲

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*Peter and Kelley Gibeon began their path of collaboration in 2003. Based in the Mountain West, this husband-and-wife duo specializes in luxury architectural and interior design photography. Featured in numerous publications, their passion for their clients and craft shines through in every frame.*



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