



# MOUNTAIN MUSE

A WHIMSICAL ASPEN HOME CONNECTS TO ITS SURROUNDINGS WITH NATURAL HUES AND MODERN FORMS.

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There are few homes as ethereal as the one architects Seth Hmielowski and Richard Seedorf and designers Joe McGuire and Matthew Tenzin created on a small lot in Aspen. This one, charmingly, has a moniker befitting its light and graceful character. “We call it the butterfly house,” McGuire says. The name is appropriate, because the structure’s shape mimics that of nature’s most beautiful insect. In this case, the wing-like roofline allows the landscape to become part of the interior by rising up to take in mountain vistas. “The roof forms open up to the views,” Hmielowski says. “There’s Aspen Mountain to the south and Red Mountain and Smuggler Mountain to the north.”

The residence boasts a robust central volume—what could be considered the body of the butterfly—clad with phenolic panels and glass. That core is flanked by two volumes wrapped in cedar, limestone and more glass. It’s a design inspired by not only Aspen’s dramatic landscape but also the compact site. “There are a lot of challenges with a tight piece of property, but this is a corner lot, so we didn’t have to deal with houses on both sides,” Hmielowski says. “There’s an art center with a great park across the street. The clients figured that’s where their children would play, so we tried to open the house to that.” The architects joined the dining and kitchen area to a large terrace and the landscape beyond via massive sliding glass doors that pocket into walls. The effect is of a disappearing corner that

ARCHITECTURE / SETH HMIELOWSKI AND RICHARD SEEDORF, Z GROUP ARCHITECTS  
INTERIOR DESIGN / JOE MCGUIRE AND MATTHEW TENZIN, JOE MCGUIRE DESIGN  
HOME BUILDER / CRAIG BARNES, C. BARNES CONSTRUCTION LLC  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / GYLES THORNELY, CONNECT ONE DESIGN

PHOTO: PETER GIBSON

In an Aspen home by architects Seth Hmielowski and Richard Seedorf and designers Joe McGuire and Matthew Tenzin, a hallway has a molded-plastic rocking chair by Charles and Ray Eames and an ombre rug. The console holds a Schoolhouse Electric lamp and a vase by Liz Quan. Cerno's Plura light fixture hangs overhead.



leaves no boundary between interior and exterior space. "The outdoor entertainment areas wrap around two sides of the house," says landscape architect Gyles Thornely, who designed the grounds. "The terraces are paved with two different colors of porcelain tiles by Porcelanosa. They are interrupted every so often with planting strips filled with bright green low-growing sedum, which intercepts surface-water runoff and melting snow."

To highlight mountain views and obscure urban scenes, the architects lifted the ground floor. "When you're in a city, there are parked cars, people and businesses," Hmielowski says. "We elevated the main level so when you sit in the dining area or outside on the patio, you are looking over the cars instead of into them. Raising it a foot and a half takes you off the street level." Once they found the optimal height for the overall structure of the house, the architects created a soaring ceiling plane for the living room. "Because it's such a small lot, it's all about having a grand experience and

bringing natural light deep into the structure," Hmielowski says. The two-story space is marked by expansive windows and a bridge with a glass rail that overlooks two sitting areas and accesses the bedrooms, which are housed in the so-called butterfly wings.

When it came to furnishings, McGuire and Tenzin selected muted tones and low-slung silhouettes to accentuate the airiness of the architecture and the cinematic views it captures. "The landscape inspired a more subdued palette," Tenzin says. "We're drawn to harmony and flow between the indoors and the outdoors, so we thought about neutrals and light blues and greens." The designers outfitted the living room with a contemporary white sofa, a marble-topped coffee table and a pale blue Tibetan silk-and-wool rug, crowned by a statement lighting piece. "The chandelier is by Lambert & Fils and has all of these little brass bars and globe-like bulbs," Tenzin says. "It's magical there, because it fills the space and has a lot of volume and pattern, but it isn't overly busy."

Viesso's Miku sectional sofa offers plenty of seating in the living room. The swivel chair and the coffee table, which has a marble top and a gilded base, are from HD Buttercup. The Tibetan silk-and-wool rug and the throw pillows are custom.



In the double-height living room, a burnished-brass chandelier by Lambert & Fils hangs above white-oak floors. The velvet-covered Swoon lounge chair by Space Copenhagen, custom Tibetan wool-and-silk rug and floor-to-ceiling sheer-fabric curtains add warmth and balance to the industrial exposed-steel beams.

The dining area ties to the terrace via glass doors by Pacific Architectural Millwork that pocket into the walls. The table is by BenchCraft Custom Woodwork, and the chairs—which feature vinyl cushions—are by sohoConcept. The ceiling LED light fixture by Fort Standard provides illumination that’s even and warm.



Bright white plaster walls and sheer drapery panels lend softness to the room, while steel structural beams and the sculptural stair—a large metal frame strung with vertical cables—provide industrial and artful notes. “The rail frame was built off-site while we completed the framing of the house,” says general contractor Craig Barnes, who managed the home’s construction. “When the time came, we temporarily removed some of the framing, lowered the stair rail in through the roof using a crane and then replaced the framing.”

The dining area, too, displays both muscular and art-like qualities. McGuire and Tenzin hung a lighting piece that’s a counterweight pendant crafted with white oak, marble and brass. “The fixture can be raised and lowered by hand, which provides a certain flexibility,” McGuire says. A custom white-oak table and white-oak chairs provide a rich tactile nature for the space. “Texture was really important

because of the house’s modernist bones,” he adds. “The plaster on the walls is a diamond-coat finish that has movement and kind of an earthiness. It brings warmth to the walls, even though they’re light and bright—and that’s necessary to balance all of the glass, steel and volume.”

The serene aesthetic McGuire and Tenzin created for the light-filled home’s architecture feels nothing short of celestial—and, as it turns out, that’s not surprising. “Matthew used to be a Buddhist monk, and we both meditate,” McGuire explains. “We think it’s important to connect with nature.” And it’s just as important to create balance, Tenzin adds. “Because this home is on a visible corner in an area where people are coming and going, we wanted the clients to feel safe and comfortable,” he says. “We thought they should have a sense of being held by the space.”

Designed to be beautiful and practical, the Poggenpohl Kitchen features light-colored walnut lower cabinetry, white acrylic upper cabinets and a dark brown central island. The stainless-steel range is by Wolf, and the faucet is by Blanco. Milking stools by LAXseries pull up to the island, and a back-painted glass backsplash adds lightness to the space.

White mother-of-pearl Seychelles mosaic tile by Ann Sacks from Aspen Tile & Bath Gallery makes up the backsplash in the light-filled master bathroom. Walnut cabinetry lends warmth, and Sonneman's contemporary Stiletto sconce hangs between a pair of floating mirrors. The Caesarstone countertop is in a shade called Shitake, and the Allure sink hardware is from Grohe.



The master bedroom ceiling is paneled in cedar, and the floor is covered in Masland's Mesa Verde carpet in Rain Dance. The bed is dressed in custom linens and throw pillows from HW Home. Cornering the Benson U Turn armchair, glass doors open the space to wraparound decks and views of Red Mountain and Hunter Creek Valley.