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PHOTO BY PAUL WARCHOL

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**ON THE COVER** An open-back sofa draws the eye to the striking fireplace in a room designed by Andrea Schumacher of O Interior Design. Meet the Top 20 Under 40 on page 64. *Photography by Rhonda Grimberg Douglas*

THIS PAGE: Along the southeast-facing elevation, a home library opens through glass doors to a small concrete patio overlooking a reflecting pool and a patch of lawn, embraced by native grasses and aspen trees. Beams of Douglas fir evoke local lodge architecture, while rusted-steel siding recalls the barns of area ranches.

# A New Look for the Old West

A RESIDENCE WITH BOLD CONTEMPORARY DESIGN AND WESTERN ROOTS MAKES THE MOST OF A COMMANDING SITE OVERLOOKING JACKSON, WYOMING, AND GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

ARCHITECTURE Stephen Dynia, AIA & Lisa Carranza-Habib, AIA  
CONSTRUCTION Kurt Wimberg Construction & Jacobsen Construction

INTERVIEW BY **NORMAN KOLPAS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PAUL WARCHOL**

A successfully designed home works on multiple levels at once, not only meeting the day-to-day needs of the people who live in it but also responding dynamically to the geology and history of its surroundings. Above Jackson, Wyoming, a contemporary 7,000-square-foot house achieves both of these goals, incorporating elements of local mountain-lodge tradition in living spaces crafted to combine privacy and open entertaining—all within constant sight of the breathtaking Grand Teton.

**MOUNTAIN LIVING:** How does this residence respond to both its location and the needs of its owners?

**STEPHEN DYNIA:** The amazing 10-acre site looks over Grand Teton National Park from a plateau on the ridge of a butte 500 feet above the valley floor. That's a heroic landscape, with views in almost every direction that were so dynamic that we realized the house needed a kind of transparency to it, with lots of glass and the ability for its owners to move in and out through sliding doors at various locations. They were willing to do a building that, by traditional standards, was more progressive. It was as if we were putting a Bermuda-style house in the middle of Jackson, Wyoming.

**ML:** How did such an unconventional design approach manage to stay true to Jackson's Western mountain spirit?

**SD:** Traditional mountain lodge homes in this area express muscularity through massive timbers. We used timbers, too, but in a very different way. A network of trusses bridges concrete-slab walls on the non-view side and concrete columns along the view side that provide support for the structure, a necessity in an area with substantial earthquake and snow-load requirements. That structure, in turn, provides a framework in which the living spaces the owners wanted could exist, making it possible to have non-load-bearing exterior glass walls on three sides.

**ML:** With so much glass, how do the owners maintain a sense of privacy?

**SD:** The house is laid out on a 16-foot-wide grid of rooms, each of which has a pivot door that allows you to close off the house in segments. With all of the doors open, you can look along the entire length of the house from the living room at one corner to the master bedroom at the other, or you can close off any of the doors for privacy. >>



THIS PAGE: Fitted with cherry cabinets, the kitchen takes in vistas of Grand Teton National Park. From the living room, visible at the far end, to the master suite at the opposite corner, a gallery runs along the window wall, allowing uninterrupted views; strategically placed swinging doors can be closed to create private sanctums. Concrete columns outside the glass wall work in concert with a concrete wall on the opposite side and fir timbers with steel tension rods to support the structure.



THIS PAGE: In the living room, the window-walls slide back to bring the magnificent mountain views even closer. Viewed from this exterior elevation, the home's structural design becomes all the more evident, like a work of modern sculpture. The ceiling curves upward from 9 feet on the view side to 15 feet at the opposite wall, where a continuous clerestory window allows the sun to trace its path through the living spaces from dawn to midday.



THIS PAGE: The structural concrete-slab wall on the home's southeastern side includes an integral fireplace with concrete chimney rising through the curved Douglas-fir ceiling. Just on the other side of the wall is the home's entry, with firewood storage next to the chimney's exterior, and the foyer, visible through a portal in the concrete.

ML: It's surprising how a home that seems so resolutely modern can at the same time feel like it pays tribute to the region's mountain lodge vernacular. How did you achieve that feat?

SD: If you enter a traditional lodge-style dwelling in this area, you'll see massive timber trusses, which give the architecture a rustic heaviness. In a way, this house is an interpretation of that sensibility, with Douglas fir timbers and steel tension rods that help support the structure. As a result, the design has an almost geological muscularity that complements but doesn't compete with the surrounding landscape.

ML: For all its muscularity, though, the house feels remarkably light and airy, and not only because of its expanses of exterior glass. What else did you do to emphasize that effect?

SD: The way in which the house interacts with natural light was critical to its design. Oriented roughly on a north-south axis, the house acts as a kind of filter for light. It has transom windows along the high end of its eastern wall, which allow southeastern light to wash the ceiling with light and shadows, for a very pleasant morning experience. As the sun moves around to the south and then to the west, it becomes focused on the view side and creates a very different quality of light.

ML: Does that abundance of light also help bring a feeling of approachability to what some people might regard as cold, industrial-style building materials?

SD: I think that warmth isn't necessarily created by the materials themselves but by the contrast of materials. Put naturally warm materials like the fir beams and the fir and cherry cabinets against harder industrial materials like concrete and steel, and they strengthen each other. We also lightly acid-stained the concrete floors to an earthy color reminiscent of soil and the concrete walls to a slightly greenish color. The human proportions of the space itself and the play of light within it also warm it up.

ML: So do its surroundings. What role do the outdoor living areas play?

SD: We've blurred the distinction between interior and exterior. The poured-concrete floors extend outside into the garden, which is composed entirely of indigenous plants. In the end, this house is about the landscape, and allowing the people who live here access to it. ●