

Special Home Design Issue

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Left: A new home in Snowmass Village expresses a modern sensibility. Below: A high-mountain stream tumbles over rocks and under the entry bridge.

+ MODERN

MOUNTAIN

CAN A FAMILY RETREAT BE BOTH WARM AND CONTEMPORARY? ARCHITECT JOHN COTTLE PROVES IT CAN IN THIS NEW SNOWMASS VILLAGE RESIDENCE.

BY **CAROLYN HINES** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PAT SUDMEIER**

Suppose in these complicated times, that you could create a lasting gift for the people you love best. It would be a sanctuary, a place to get away from the demands of daily life and to focus on what really matters: each other. That's exactly what one family has created in Snowmass Village, setting the scene for gatherings that bring together three generations under one roof.

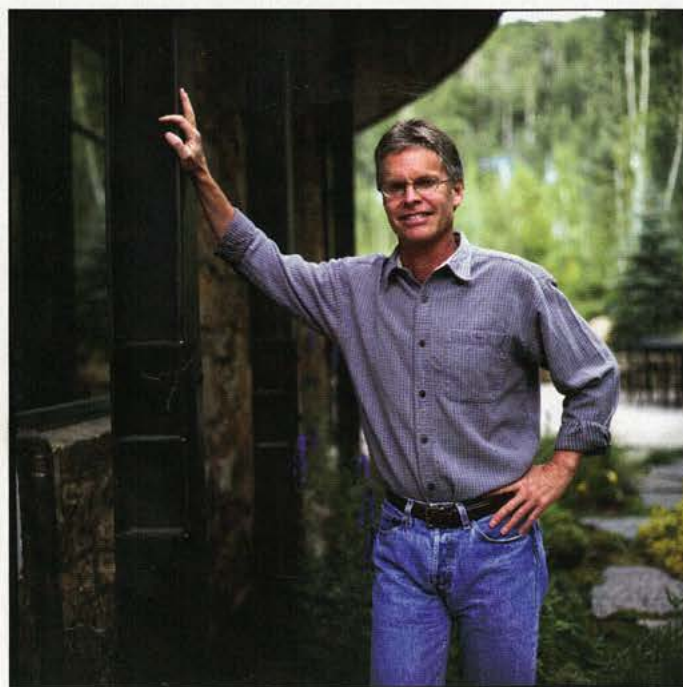


Right: Wood planks made from recycled Guinness brewery vats alternate with stone floors to lead into the living area and kitchen, and beyond to a family room. Below: John Cottle of Basalt-based CCY Architects, which is led by principals Cottle, Rich Carr, and Larry Yaw

Wait: three generations? Two parents, eight children, a gaggle of grandchildren? What house could truly meet the needs of all those people at once?

The answer lies just off a ski run, sheltered by aspens and a gentle hillside. This remarkable structure gracefully welcomes all the extended family, and does it within a relatively (for this area) reasonable size: 4,900 square feet. It's a house that manages to do the impossible: handle a crowd and still feel intimate. What's the trick?

"Inclusive design," answers John Cottle of CCY Architects in Basalt, who designed the home. The owners, an accomplished couple from Minnesota, were intimately



involved throughout. The goal: a warm house that was also spare, modern, and contemporary. "These are loaded terms," Cottle admits. "People think, 'Modern—that means cold, unfriendly.' But the owners wanted a spare environment because, they said, 'the people fill it in.'"

"A trend that I think we will see continue for a while is an interest in a less cluttered or more spare life, experience, and design attitude," Cottle continues. "Spareness is twofold: It can be used to create some very beautiful spaces; 2,000-year-old Japanese design is one enduring example. And it is also being rediscovered as a reaction to our cluttered lives."

Here in Snowmass Village, it's hard to believe that this is the Colorado home base for upwards of a dozen active, busy people of all ages. There's no evidence of the detritus of





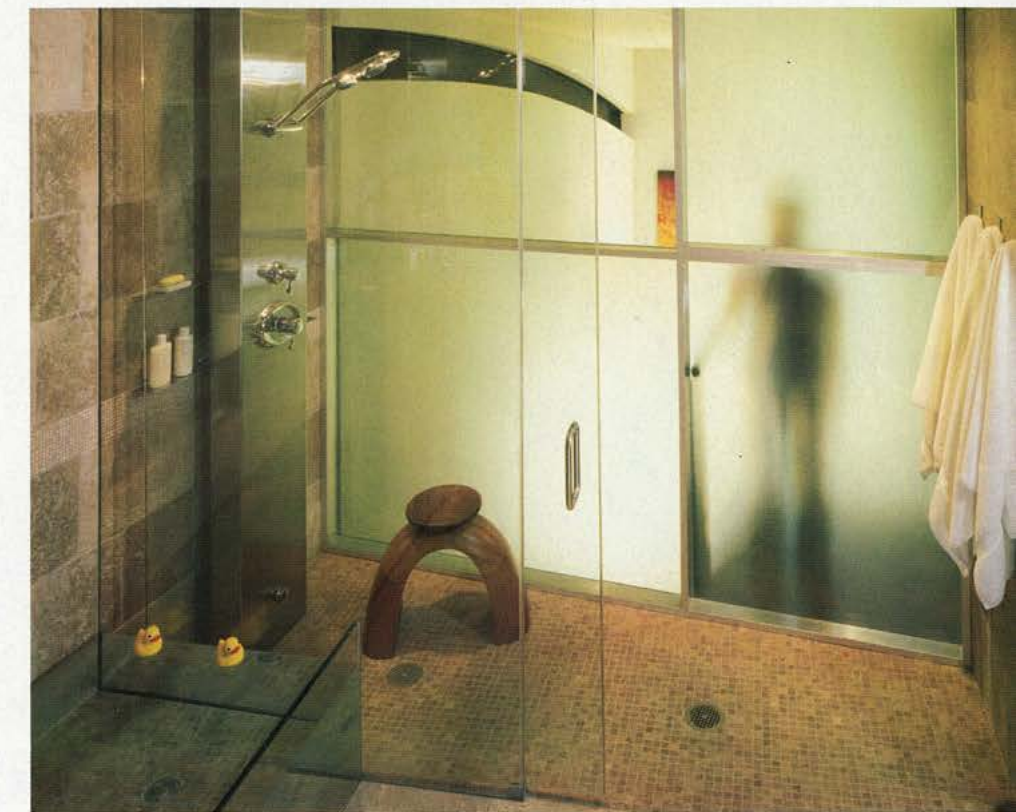
family life—toys, snacks, and gadgets are stored out of sight. Yet this is not some grandparents' do-not-touch house. Clean and inviting, it seems a place to just be yourself, surrounded by nature and the people you love.

"I can't live with clutter," says the wife, who is a full-time parent and, according to Cottle, talented enough to be a top design director. Her husband is in development and construction. She explains the family philosophy: "Less is more for us. When it's clean and pure, you enjoy it more."

The family chose Snowmass over Vail, where they had vacationed for many years, "because while the skiing was wonderful, Vail just wasn't someplace we wanted to live. Snowmass is more private, more family oriented." The wish list for a home here aimed high: a ski-in/ski-out lot, a big view, and a stream. Cory Ferguson of BJ Adams and Company found an old '60s house on an out-of-the-way street, and the decision was clear. The site, however, was *not* clear. Mature trees surrounded the existing house, and no one wanted to destroy them. So demolition was like a game of pickup sticks, and excavators for builder Blue River Construction struggled to remove the old house without disturbing the wooded setting.

The owners and the architect spent three days in an intensive design charette, reviewing the choreography of the space. You approach the house from above and are guided down the slope by a stream that flows beside the steps. Repeating rooflines curve in soft arcs, creating a pattern that gives the house a poetry all its own. The stream brings the sound of water through every window and door, creating an almost magical connection to the landscape. As you cross over the entry bridge, a generous living room opens up. It's large, but not aggressively grand in the manner of so many Aspen mega-houses. The stonework echoes the colors from outside, and a lively serenity prevails.

Not only is the house a collaboration between architect and owners, it also blends the tastes of husband and wife. "I would have had concrete floors, and I wanted glass treads



Left: The master bedroom features partial walls to the bath and dressing areas, "borrowing light" to make the space feel more open. Above: The master bathroom makes innovative use of clear- and frosted-glass panels to frame a cool retreat.



The Pattern of Intimacy: A curved ceiling arc repeats throughout the house, and light streams into the living room, where everyone congregates. The family can dine or relax on the welcoming south-facing patio in every season.

on the stairs," she recalls. His more traditional tastes brought warm wood into the home, including the floorboards that were recycled from (of all things) old Guinness vats and cider barrels. You can even see some carved numbers from the vats.

An artist friend, Darcy Farrel of Minneapolis, created a dramatic glass countertop and backsplash for the kitchen. All the tables in the house are by noted Roaring Fork Valley woodworker Jeffrey Mann, and there is work by several local artists, including ceramicist Michael Wisner

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—John Cottle

and painter Chris Cox. Everything is in its place, right down to the built-in steel bunk beds with snow-white duvets that must make children feel they are in a very cool dormitory. Throughout the home, materials—including metal and stone, wood and glass—are strong, confident, and not at all fussy, and are free of decoration or ornament.

Contemporary design, for all that it is misunderstood, actually works well in a mountain home, says Cottle. Clearly, as this house proves, "design can be spare but also rich and warm and full of laughter and fun." ♦



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