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ARCHITECT MERGES NATURAL MATERIALS AND SOPHISTICATED TEXTURES INTO COLORADO HAVEN

by *Melissa Fears*

Architect Bill Rangitsch may use his home as a tester for new ideas, but that does not mean he would not live in any of the spaces he has created over the past 28 years. Each space he creates is as unique as the client he is designing for.

"I always tell clients I have very thick skin," Rangitsch, lead principal and owner of Steamboat Architectural Associates, says. "You can tell me anything you want about the design and the ways things are going; I won't be offended. At the end of the day it's your house and we want to make it right for you."

Not regretting a decision in the long-term is very important to SAA, and they always stand behind their work.

"I'm more than happy to speak up to clients if they have an idea or want something I think won't work," says Rangitsch. "Most clients can appreciate that."

Honing in on that attention to detail made this Colorado-based architect and designer first come to prominence in the 1980's. Since the firm was established in 1983, they have been striving not only to create immaculate views, but also to offer extremely livable and sustainable spaces. "Cookie cutter" homes are a thing of the past. Looking at each space individually, SAA offers the idea that a house is very unique to each client.

"Something at the end of the day that works specifically for them," says Rangitsch. "Whether it be they have extended family over a lot and need extra

bedroom space or they have a collection of art that needs to be kept safe and visible to everybody; we offer it."

Style is more than just having good looks; it is about having sustainability and purpose. Using natural and borrowed lighting is crucial.

"Sometimes you have a view that is not so good, but that's where all the good light comes from," says Rangitsch. "We find ways to get it into homes without having to look at the neighbor's garage."

Using energy saving ideas is nothing new to this company, as it has been working with passive solar design and green construction since the mid-eighties.

"We don't actively do sustainable architecture," he says. "We just incorporate it into everything we do."

Working with natural materials, such as stone and reclaimed wood, SAA offers long-lasting durable materials that look good, and are appropriate for the environments they work in. Environments near the oceanfront or mountain ranges have issues like humidity, salty air and UV rays. Materials such as reclaimed and recycled materials can withstand a lot, as they don't need to be refinished year after year like stained wood.

The Scully residence, a SAA design, was completed in 2009 and is a prime example of using innovative techniques and materials. This project was a challenge as it was one of the first homes built in the area.

Scully Residence

The homeowners imagined an informal, light-filled dwelling in which they could simply relax. "They wanted something very livable," says Rangitsch. "They had a number of friends who have contemporary homes where everything has to be staged or placed. It's hard to keep looking good." Behind the home's weathered wood and stone façade (need link) lies a series of informal rooms enlivened by diverse textures. It is not so much a single home as it is several structures of varied personalities unified by their high-ceiling hallways and open spaces. A game of constant and subtle inflection is being played—weathered-wood paneling, warm stone and an exposed metal staircase. Any color present comes from the art, natural wood hues and from the luscious front garden's shades of green. The restrained palette accommodates the home's relaxed feel without imposing the formality of a contemporary residence. "We tried to work with warm colors because six or seven months of the year it's white outside," he says. "We used spectrally correct fluorescent lights to be not only energy efficient, but to give the home warmth."



PHOTOS: JOHN ROBLEDO PHOTO



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“You have to design with that in mind,” says Rangitsch. “We had discussions about, so you have this great beautiful view now, but what about when the neighbor blocks that?”

With beautiful views of Fish Creek Canyon and a mountain valley, they kept an open floor plan with plenty of indoor/outdoor space. Bringing elements from the exterior of the house, interior designer Leslie Haradin from Silver Creek Design worked with a lot of gray and metal tones.

A unique wood finishing technique called sabb adds character to the home. Adding steel wool to white vinegar, it reacts with the natural acids in the wood

to create a living finish. Wood may add a look of warmth, but in reality it gets 40 below in the winter months so the home relies on a supplemental heating system.

“Using radiant heat, in which lightweight concrete distributes heat within the floor, can keep your house cooler, but still keeps you warm and have no drafty spots,” says Rangitsch.

Large overhangs resist solar gain; while in the summer months lower windows can be opened to vent out the home at night so the house stays cool all day. Using innovative sustainable products give this residence and this firm the upper hand. ■