



## HOME ABOVE THE RANGE

**UNDETERRED BY A DAUNTING CLIFF-SIDE SITE, DURANGO DESIGNER ALIX KOGAN DELIVERS A CANTILEVERED MASTERPIECE INSPIRED BY COLORADO'S MINING HISTORY**

Every great love affair starts with an undeniable attraction. For the Florida-based owners of this Durango, Colorado, home, the initial attraction to a cliff-side site with killer views of the Needles Range has blossomed into a full-blown love affair with their one-year-old second home. It is a relationship built on respect for natural elements, appreciation of complex architecture and a sense of awe that something so beautiful can also be so easy to maintain. "We love it here so much," says the husband, "we just might move here permanently."

As with many modern romances, this one started on the Internet. "After the hurricanes of 2004, we decided we wanted a second home in a ski area," says the husband. The loca-

tion had to be family friendly, sunny, accessible to an airport and full of charm. After a year of online research of every ski resort in North America, the couple decided on Durango. For them, it was like hitting the trifecta.

The 23'-wide-by-19'-deep rim building site presented an architectural challenge, given that the homeowners wanted more than 4,000 square feet of living space. Enter >>

THIS PAGE: Like the inside of a nautilus, this striking spiral staircase takes up very little space but adds a beautifully curved functional element to the dining room. OPPOSITE: Two Pacer leather chairs (from Artesanos) create an intimate conversation area in the two-story great room.

STORY BY SALLY STICH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS GILES





THIS PAGE: The kitchen's center island of distressed knotty alder looks more like a piece of furniture than kitchen cabinetry and features an industrial-size Wolf stove. Up above, a stainless-steel hood is accented with straps of hammered wrought iron, while the pressed-tin ceiling mimics a turn-of-the-century saloon. OPPOSITE, TOP: A doorway in the master bedroom is modeled after a passageway in a mine, with timber beams and kickers "supporting" a stone wall.

#### VIEWS ARE ONLY PART OF THIS HOME'S CHARM. THE DETAILS—A MIXTURE OF NATURAL AND MANMADE

designer/builder Alix Kogan and his Durango-based home-design team of Kogan Builders, Inc. "We wanted to use local talent," says the wife, "people who were familiar with the mountain vernacular."

Kogan conducted a feasibility study and determined that the family could have a spacious home if it were cantilevered over the mountainside, much like a tall, narrow mineshaft. Preparing the site meant blasting out the top of the rim before pouring the foundation, into which steel I-beams were embedded. To further support the house, rock

anchors were set into the side of the cliff. Kickers, which add to the mining theme and lend additional support, are embedded in the rock anchors.

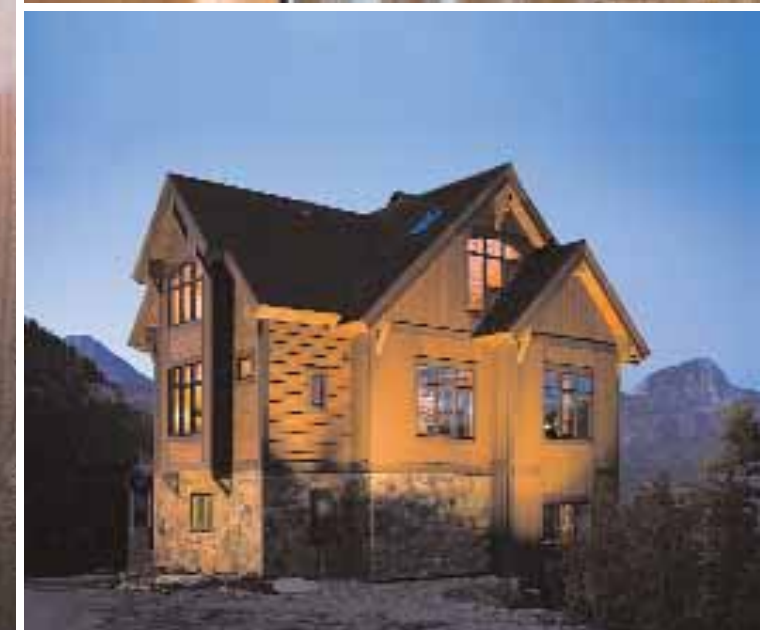
Because the site is so narrow, much of the construction required a tower crane—assembled on-site—which allowed the workers to access all four sides of the house. Ultimately, the three-story-plus-a-loft structure makes a perfect mountain retreat with panoramic views from every room.

But views are only part of this home's charm. The details found in this residence—a mixture of natural and manmade

#### ELEMENTS—ARE EVERY BIT AS MAGNIFICENT.

elements—are every bit as magnificent. The exterior, dramatic from every angle, showcases custom-milled pine and cedar siding, and Telluride stone. Mimicking the functional kickers that support the house, decorative kickers connect the wood and stone and strengthen the architecture's ties to the historic mining buildings that inspire it.

The home's main entryway leads into the second floor (the master suite is below grade and literally hangs out over the cliff), where a curved stairway to the third level's great room, dining room and kitchen combines two >>



#### MASTERING THE MIX

Designer Alix Kogan is a pro when it comes to successfully combining a variety of materials. The key to mixing materials, he says, is to keep the overall finishes rich and simple and keep the following guidelines in mind:

**USE MATERIALS THAT CONTRAST WITH EACH OTHER** in terms of color, texture and weight to balance space.

Example: The slate floors originally specified for this home's kitchen were just too heavy when coupled with the room's stone walls, so "softer" hardwood floors were installed instead.

**USE STRONG MATERIALS AND TEXTURES IN KEY AREAS.**

Example: The stone wall in the dining room is not only functional but, when illuminated by track lighting, also acts as a piece of art.

**CHOOSE MATERIALS THAT TIE IN WITH THE REST OF THE HOUSE.**

Example: The slate risers and wood treads on the stairs that lead from the foyer to the great room highlight both the flooring material used in the entryway at the bottom of the staircase and the flooring found in the great room at the top.





## DELIGHTFUL DETAILS

Three striking architectural details help take this Durango home from fine to fabulous. Designer Alix Kogan explains what makes them so effective.

**A COPPER-INLAID WATER FEATURE** in the entry hall. “Always think about adding details in important areas like the entry, the kitchen or the great room,” says Kogan.

**AN EXTENDED HEARTH** Located on the backside of the great room’s two-story fireplace, an extended hearth of Kogan’s design carves out a small reading nook, adding a more intimate space to an otherwise large, open room.

**THOUGHTFUL LIGHTING** “We used indirect lighting—track heads pointed up toward the ceilings and trusses—to give rooms a sense of warmth and depth while highlighting architectural features,” says Kogan.



important materials: the slate found in the foyer and the hardwood found in the great room. This repetition of materials occurs throughout the house, combining its separate parts into one cohesive aesthetic.

Care was also taken to connect the home’s interior with its high-country surroundings. Deliberately placed windows in the great room make the most of the views outside, but it is the materials chosen for the room—natural stone combined with wood flooring, beams and a gorgeous inlay in the fireplace wall—that really tie the interiors to the great outdoors. “I wanted a house that was ecologically friendly and super easy to maintain,” says the wife. “What could be easier than natural stone and wood?”

This marriage of form and function is also evident in the dining room, where the warm glow from carefully placed downlighting transforms a wall of Telluride stone into a dramatic work of art. White-oak floors provide a counterbalance to the stone in both weight and texture.

The homeowners currently use their second home during the winter holidays, for part of spring and all summer long. And the love affair continues. “The views are incredible,” says the husband, “and the details, amazing.” This home is about a lifestyle, he adds, not an investment, which may explain the nickname he’s coined for his cantilevered mountain home: “The Can’t A Leave Her Lodge.” ●

## { DESIGN BOOK }

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THIS PAGE: Imported from India by Artesanos, a local home furnishings boutique, this Sedona table and chairs provide a simple wood contrast to the dining room’s natural stone wall. OPPOSITE, TOP: A two-person tub, equipped with light therapy, is surrounded by a Telluride stone deck. At this elevation, window coverings aren’t necessary.