

# PERFECT HARMONY

A MONTANA HOME RESONATES WITH THE SURROUNDING LAND AS MUCH AS IT DOES WITH THE OWNER'S HEART

STORY BY  
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THIS PAGE: The home's post-and-beam construction is understated down to the very last detail. "All of the connections are steel plates or steel angles," says Brett Nave, the home's designer. "They're super simple, very industrial looking, very matter-of-fact." At holiday time, a festively decorated tree pops bright color into the otherwise-neutral living room.





THIS PAGE: "Everything in the house is made of wood, concrete, steel, stone or plaster. Everything's very natural," says homeowner Audrey Hall. In the guest room (left), a splash of color comes from the bedspread—and blankets rolled up and stored in an old washtub. When it comes to combining furniture styles, Audrey has a deft touch; a primitive cabinet (below) is right at home next to her Midcentury Modern pieces.



Audrey Hall's Montana residence isn't your typical dream home. There's nothing grandiose about the structures; in fact, her house, studio and garage intentionally resemble outbuildings. But that's precisely how the homeowner envisioned them.

"She's a photographer by profession and has obviously spent a lot of time looking at buildings on the landscape," says Lori Ryker, who worked with fellow residential designer Brett Nave on this design/build project set in Paradise Valley. "Because this site is open grassland, she knew there was no way to hide them. Plus, this area has a rich ranching heritage."

The resulting agrarian vernacular, adds Nave, isn't unlike the tractor sheds and horse barns that dot the countryside. Even the way the new buildings were sited is intrinsic to the area. "Here, you typically see clusters of trees and clusters of buildings surrounded by thousands of acres," he explains.

Thus, Audrey's place looks like it has been part of the landscape for decades. It's impressive, especially considering that the designers' challenge wasn't limited to a certain exterior look. The homeowner also requested that the interior have the feeling of a New York City loft. >>

OPPOSITE: Atop a dining table that Audrey had custom crafted is a festive tablescape for one of the many parties she's prone to give. "This is such a great place for a party," she says. "It doesn't feel cavernous for one or two people, but it accepts 60 to 85 people comfortably, too." Audrey is more interested in a textural mix than any particular style. That's evidenced in this table setting, where smooth glass juxtaposes with metal napkin rings and flatware, and prickly pine cones and greenery intermingle with shiny apples and pomegranates.

## Holiday Décor, Hall Style

Audrey Hall takes a genuine approach to the holidays, apparent not only in her decorations but also in the way she entertains.

"I draw from nature and try to keep things organic, whether it's fun straw ornaments, pomegranates or mercury glass. I draw more on texture than a certain style. For me, the holidays are about warmth, sharing and entertaining; how to make people feel warm on a cold, snowy night. I put a lot of thought into how I can make friends feel warm and welcome. Sometimes musicians will come with their instruments and jam until 2 a.m.!



The two ideas may have seemed totally incongruous to some, but these design pros quickly found common ground. "Some real creativity came out of thinking about how to marry the two concepts," says Ryker. "Audrey wanted to use as many sustainable materials as possible, and I thought about the post-and-beam aspect of city lofts; I used to live in New York, so I had a pretty immediate reference to that. We thought if we could have the house come out of the idea of a barn structure, which is also typically post-and-beam, that [construction technique] could be our common departure point," she explains. "While it would look like an outbuilding, it would only reference one, not replicate one."

"We began with a traditional barn shell and a post-and-beam structure," says Nave. "We then

shifted the structure to the east, exposing it against the backdrop of the barn shell walls, creating a layer of shadow and depth—something a little more dynamic."

Key to this project's success, too, was that Audrey went into it with few preconceived notions. "I loved Lori and Brett's work and their approach, so I didn't want to meddle too much with my opinions," she says. "I'd been living in a circa-1898 Victorian, but I wanted a whole change in architecture, one more attuned to the environment. What I basically wanted was a three-bedroom, two-bath modernist loft that had warmth and texture. I wanted everything to be natural and true. My mantra was 'if you can avoid any kind of plastic, that would be great!'" >>

THIS PAGE: A silver coffee and tea service adds sparkle to the home's holiday décor as well as a sentimental touch. It's a family heirloom that dates back to the early 1960s, given to Audrey by her mother. OPPOSITE: Whenever possible, Audrey used local artisans and materials, like the neighboring craftsman who constructed this plaster fireplace. A coat of wax gives the surface a soft sheen, and a bent-steel mantel provides a stylish and sustainable—yet inexpensive—finishing touch. Above it rests one of Audrey's own photographs.



## Elements of Sustainable Style

Inside and out, the Hall residence incorporates green elements to the nth degree:

- The wood used in the post-and-beam system is Douglas fir, harvested less than five miles from the homesite. It was select-cut on private land and even pulled out of the forest by draft horses.
- UltraTouch recycled denim insulation, made from the leftover strings of newly made jeans, was used throughout the house.
- The floors are radiant-heated concrete, stained to give them a mottled appearance.
- The studio cabinetry is made of reclaimed wood from an old garage. The cabinet boxes were made of wheat board, which, says Nave, smells like Cheerios when you cut it.
- Walls throughout the house are natural pigment plaster, as is the fireplace, which is finished with a coat of wax and a bent-steel mantel. The plaster is not only beautiful, says Ryker, but also very durable; because there's a skim coat of cement just beneath the surface, any nicks can simply be buffed out with sandpaper.



The biggest challenge, perhaps, was the budget itself. “We were committed to making this house as close as possible to what Audrey wanted it to be,” says Ryker. “Audrey understood that the core of the house was where the bulk of her budget would go. When it came time to finish, where budgets can often be blown, we had a clear sense of what the house was supposed to feel like and we were relentless about finding things that were the essence of what we wanted—within her budget. Audrey was willing to look a long time for just the right thing. None of us wanted people to look at the house and say, ‘Oh, *that’s* where they saved the money.’”

The homeowner takes precisely the same approach when it comes to the interior design,

waiting until she finds the perfect piece for each nook and cranny.

“This really is a very modern home, so I approached it with modernist basics and added rustic elements,” she says. “When I moved here, I kept only a few pieces from my former home—like a primitive cabinet that we turned into a TV/stereo cabinet. Then there’s the coffee table and end tables in the living room. They were my father’s, from 1960s Brazil. They have a very clean design with marble tops, true Midcentury Modern pieces!”

What does she love most about the house? “The sum of the parts,” says Audrey. “You walk in, and right away feel like you’re at home. This house has a personality of its own; it’s a member of the family.” ●

ABOVE: Set against majestic snow-capped mountains, Audrey Hall’s residence looks more like outbuildings from another century than a cutting-edge example of sustainable architecture. “There aren’t that many windows in the house, but the ones that are there are in the right places,” says designer Brett Nave. “It feels like it’s half glass!” That’s especially true when the house is lit up against the Montana night sky, evoking a warm and welcoming mood. OPPOSITE: Suspended over the dining table, a candelabra specially crafted by Fire Mountain Forge casts a glow on the table below. It’s a bit of a job to light the candles each time, says Audrey, “but it’s worth it!”



{ DESIGN BOOK }

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

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# ml sources

Your guide to the places, pros and products found in this issue

## HACIENDA HOMESTEAD pp. 94-101

*Architect:* John Johnson, John Johnson Design, (505) 753-6818. *Interior Design:*

David Heath, (505) 753-6818. *Builder:* Karl Sudberg, Karl W. Sudberg Designs, LLC, (505) 490-0833. *Kitchen cabinetry & custom woodwork:* John Egan, (505) 989-9189. *Oriental antiques, furniture*

*and doors:* Asian Adobe, (505) 992-6846, asianadobe.com. *Paintings and fine art:* Doug Coffin, (505) 685-4510. *Windows and sliding-glass doors:* Pella, pella.com. *Shutters:* Hunter Douglas, at Discount Blinds & Shutters, (505) 982-6610, discountblindsandshutters.com.

### Living Room p. 95

*Leather sofa:* Baker, Knapp & Tubbs, (310) 652-7252; *Large fabric-covered chairs:* Ethan Allen, ethanallen.com; *Eames chairs and ottoman:* Herman Miller, hermanmiller.com; *Oriental rug:* Serafian's Oriental Rugs, (505) 255-2694, serafians.com; *Triangular cocktail tables:* Steve & Maureen Rosenthal, Hand Arts Gallery, (505) 689-2443.

### Kitchen p. 98

*Appliances:* G.E. Monogram, at Showcase Appliance Center, (505) 982-5563; *Refrigerator/freezer:* Sub-Zero, at Showcase Appliance Center, (505) 982-5563.

## CHRISTMAS IN COLORADO pp.102-107

*Architect:* Rudi Fisher (deceased), Rudi Fisher Architects. *Builder:* Beck Building Company, Vail, CO, (970) 949-1800, beckbuilds.com.

## PERFECT HARMONY pp.108-115

*Design team:* Brett Nave, studio.bna, (406) 222-7488, studio-bna.com; Lori Ryker, studio\_ryker, (406) 220-1099, studioryker.com. *Reclaimed Douglas fir planks (entry doors) and reclaimed fir (kitchen bar counter):* Matt Ridgeway Milling, Livingston, MT. *Natural pigment plaster:* Tim Jacobsen, Livingston, MT. *Custom candelabra over dining table:* Fire Mountain Forge, (406) 222-9732, firemountainforge.com.



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