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Refresher Course

A California family updates their Montana vacation abode with a bold new outlook.

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Architecture: Richard Beard, Katherine Schwertner and Rebecca Lischwe, Richard Beard Architects
Interior Design: Kelly Hohla and Alana Dorn, Kelly Hohla Interiors **Home Builder:** Todd Smith, OSM Construction



Architect Katherine Schwertner and designer Kelly Hohla remodeled a family's Montana vacation home with subtle but impactful changes. In the stairwell, a John Pomp sconce from De Sousa Hughes and vintage lamp from Jay Jeffers illuminate a BDDW credenza.

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or a decade, this stone-and-timber Montana retreat on the edge of Yellowstone National Park was the site of large family gatherings during the summer hiking season and winter ski holidays. But after the owners built a new, modern Bay Area

home, they decided to reengage that design team to renovate their Big Sky residence in a manner that felt similarly open and contemporary to better reflect who they are today.

The dwelling was built in the early 2000s and “needed a refresh,” says architect Katherine Schwertner, who worked on the project in concert with architect Richard Beard. “Often, clients want to update a traditional home with a modern twist, so we help bring that freshness by adding clean lines, more daylight and increasing the views,” she explains. “This family enjoys the remoteness of this location—it’s a totally different world from the Bay Area—but they needed it to be lighter and brighter while still feeling like a mountain home.”

The architect first turned her attention to removing an obtrusive stone fireplace on the deck that blocked the living room’s views. She then added more windows to further the expansive feel of the space. “Montana is such a beautiful state,” she says, recalling her enjoyment at seeing how different the quality of daylight is at that altitude. Schwertner also appreciated the opportunity to think about things like snow—something she and project architect Rebecca Lischwe had to keep front of mind as they redesigned the hot tub area just off the new mudroom, a tidy, weatherproof space designed with lockers and benches that now make the ski-in, ski-out nature of the abode seamless.

With the help of builder Todd Smith, the architect opted to replace heavy wood beams with tie rods. “The beams were just a little too chunky and clunky,” she notes. “The thin rods really help open up the view.” The team also redesigned the exterior railings with a slimmer profile. “We maintained the home’s rustic character and just modernized those traditional forms,” Schwertner explains.

Along with redoing all the bathrooms (they each received new cabinetry, lighting and a strong dose of color), renovating the kitchen was a primary focus. “The new stone mosaic backsplash looks like ikat,” says designer Kelly Hohla, who had also worked with the owners on the original iteration of the abode. “The previous kitchen felt dark, but the tile adds visual interest and some whimsy.” The existing cabinets were painted a blue-gray that complements the focal point backsplash, while a new island, hood and pendant lighting foster a rustic-modern aesthetic. The team also took this opportunity to create a pantry, blackened-steel bar, and a breakfast nook with a little sitting area and additional windows that flood the space with natural light. “It’s a hangout spot and a place for the kids to eat when the adults are in the dining room,” Hohla explains.

For the couple’s ground-floor bedroom suite, the designer specified a new wallpaper (“They wanted a calmer pattern than we originally chose,” she notes), and completely reworked their bathroom and closets, all of which were given horn drawer pulls in a subtle nod to the mountain environs. In the downstairs recreation room, the team replaced a large built-in bar with a pool table and a smaller, more convenient cocktail cabinet.

“The architecture still speaks to the vacation feel, but the furnishings are clean, colorful and contemporary,” continues Hohla, who worked with senior designer Alana Dorn. And while many of the pieces have been in the home since the couple first bought it, they feel revived in their fresh surroundings. A vintage swivel chair by the living room fireplace now stands out like a kinetic sculpture, and the dining table—a wood slab inset with bronze butterflies—is a perfect nod to the extraordinary setting. Even the zebra-print chairs in the family room suddenly seem more playful. “Everything we originally chose needed to be fun and durable to stand the test of time—and it has!” Hohla says.

“Throughout the home, we made smaller moves that really made a big difference,” Schwertner adds, noting how much better the dwelling now reflects the owners’ personalities and sensibilities. “Making a few strategic modifications can open up a house and make it feel substantially changed.” ■



A Hudson Furniture sofa, Coup Studio swivel chair and Ferrell Mittman ottoman covered in Holland & Sherry leather rest on the living room's Kyle Bunting rug. Just beyond is a BDDW table and Lindsey Adelman Studio fixture.



Above: The kitchen cabinetry was refreshed up with a coat of Farrow & Ball's Plummett and bronze Rejuvenation hardware. New Ravenna backsplash tile and a Zak+Fox linen Roman shade add a dose of pattern. The faucet is by Waterworks.

Opposite: Paneled in reclaimed wood, the new breakfast nook is outfitted with a table from Big Daddy's Antiques and a Merida rug. Above the de Le Cuona-upholstered A. Rudin armchair is artwork by Terry St. John.





Behind the media room's sofa and ottoman from C. Mariani Antiques, Restoration & Custom is a photograph by David Maisel. On the mantel, a Katy Grannan photograph overlooks armchairs from Coup D'Etat. The chandelier is by Jonathan Browning.

“Everything we originally chose needed to be fun and durable to stand the test of time—and it has!”

—KELLY HOHLA



Right: An upstairs guest bathroom features an Egg Collective mirror flanked by Apparatus sconces. A Kallista faucet and Buster + Punch hardware add to the modern farmhouse aesthetic. The floor tile is by Ann Sacks.

Opposite: In the upstairs family room, a Holly Hunt sofa and Ironies armchair gather around ottomans from Jay Jeffers. Draperies in a Lee Jofa fabric complement the Jean de Merry chandelier from De Sousa Hughes.

