

Dark Matters

Bold use of black enlivens the contemporary spirit of this Sun Valley retreat.

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Architect: Mike Brunelle, Brunelle Architects, Inc. **Interior Design:** Shannon Wollack and Brittany Zwickl, Studio Life/Style
Home Builder: Chris Hoy and Nathan Adams, Magleby Construction-Sun Valley



Designers Shannon Wollack and Brittany Zwickl nodded to the alpine surroundings of this Sun Valley, Idaho, getaway, but with a twist. Reduxr's O'branch V chandelier in ostrich-egg shell, brass and resin from Stahl + Band in Venice, California, serves as an artful centerpiece in the stairwell, where the homeowners' dog, Henry, stands watch.

It was supposed to be brown. That's how one of the owners initially imagined the exterior of his Sun Valley, Idaho, vacation retreat—clad in weathered barnwood, typical of many mountain homes in the area. But his design team, Shannon Wollack and Brittany Zwickl, as well as his wife all pushed for an edgier black hue. And once he saw it, the burnt wood exterior proved so captivating that they all agreed to pull it inside, too. Now, the structure's charred exterior panels also serve as the dramatic unadorned lining of the two-and-a-half-story stairwell entry, a signature moment in the residence. "That's the only wall that's completely art free—the surface itself became the art because the black is so striking," says the husband. "We opted to leave it as it is because that wall made such a strong statement about the house, about being here in Idaho, and about bringing the outside in."

His confidence in the designers' color sense, though, comes from a long relationship with the duo. The clients have worked with Zwickl and Wollack multiple times throughout the past 10 years, from remodels to new construction projects. "They may be our longest standing clients," says Zwickl. "We have a trust relationship built over years, and we know their aesthetic."

Zwickl, who grew up in Wyoming and calls herself "a mountain girl at heart," took point on this ground-up build. The couple had purchased the lot with a set of plans by architect Mike Brunelle, and then modified them—extensively—with the designers, general contractors Chris Hoy and Nathan Adams, and Brunelle himself, who the husband says has "great vision." The roof was raised a few feet to create an even more voluminous great room, and allocation for an elevator was scrapped in favor of a laundry chute, built-ins and a powder room, but largely, the architect's vision of a reverse floor plan, "one that really capitalizes on views of Mount Baldy and accentuates the light," Brunelle explains, held true. The interior architecture and finishes, on the other hand, were thoroughly reviewed by the client and designers. "We went through over 20 different plans, and nothing was left the same," the husband recalls with a laugh.

Black, used both outside and in, serves as an attention-grabbing yet grounding through line. It's high impact but, Zwickl stresses, any darker hues and materials were carefully chosen to never read as cold or flat. In the kitchen, for instance, the black-stained cabinetry is topped by black quartzite countertops veined with zings of white, while the eye-catching steel hood has a hand-rubbed patina that adds depth and warmth. That hood, which extends up to the ceiling in a grand gesture, is echoed by the living area's fireplace, clad in the same patinated steel, which similarly rises to the ceiling beams. "We wanted those two to speak to each other in big moments," says Zwickl.

Otherwise, fresh white paint and natural woods take center stage, providing necessary contrast. "There are so many windows, and the walls are so bright that our use of black never feels grim," explains Zwickl. The light and visibility are of major importance to the couple. "There's so much glass that you're never really indoors," the husband notes. "You always feel like you're engaging with the outdoors."

The homeowners' overarching goal was to create a dwelling spacious enough to comfortably gather with their sons—two college-age boys—that would still feel cozy when only one of them was in residence. Zwickl answered that request by largely using plush fabrics, rugs and leathers. Her sense was to nod to the alpine surroundings, yet not lean on rustic "mountain-y" tropes; a clean, casual, modern aesthetic was the plan. "We've got a lot of texture and cozy materials, but it's definitely not super traditional," she says, "and it's not a sleek contemporary either." Pattern, when it does appear, walks the line between styles. The living room lounge chairs' houndstooth print, for instance, "feels approachable but could also be a suiting material," Zwickl points out. On the other hand, the wallpaper in the powder room features a vibrant floral flecked with red and gold. Surprises are sprinkled in too, like the use of upcycled mail bags as the upholstery for a sofa in the bunk room, alongside a selection of whimsical contemporary artwork throughout the abode.

Thanks to the designers' efforts, the couple's Sun Valley escape has become a favorite destination now, particularly for the husband, who joyfully embraces his time there. "It's my happy place," he declares. ■



A fireplace clad in a patinated steel is the eye-catching focal point of the great room. The dark hue is echoed by the Armadillo rug and contrasts with the walls, painted in Benjamin Moore's Alabaster. The Egg Collective sectional is upholstered in a wool bouclé from Holland & Sherry.



Right: Directly opposite the great room's fireplace, the kitchen's hood is wrapped in the same patinated steel. Rich Brilliant Willing's Gala chandelier lights the quartzite-topped island. Rocky Mountain Hardware knobs and pulls accent the cabinetry, stained an ebony hue that speaks to the dark shade on the home's exterior.

Opposite: Thomas Hayes Studio's Iron and Rolled stools, covered in a curly white shearling, add a plush, inviting touch to the kitchen. A stainless steel Rohl sink is fitted with a Galley Tap faucet from Earth Elements. At the window is a shade in a tumbled linen by Lino Textil.





Right: The great room's comfortable window seat is upholstered in Pierre Frey's Byron wool, found at Kneeder Fauchère. Apparatus' Cylinder sconce provides ample light for reading. The pillows, of cashmere wool and shearling, are by Ralph Lauren and United Leather. Nearby is a custom dining table and Wdstck chairs.

Opposite: The solid ash coffee table in the great room is by Stahl + Band. Cassina's Lady chairs wear Holland & Sherry's Westminster Houndstooth.





Above: The husband, a passionate collector of contemporary art, commissioned a piece by Adam Daley Wilson for the main bedroom. The wording, "I could not care less more," embodies how he wants his family to feel when they're in Sun Valley. The custom bed is made of walnut and bleached white oak, and the nightstand is wrapped in leather. Matthew Fairbank Design's Giotto Pendant adds bedside light.

Opposite: In a guest bedroom, a custom lounge chair upholstered in Great Plains' Stonehenge from Holly Hunt, is paired with Apparatus' Metronome articulating reading lamp to create a cozy nook. The white linen draperies are from Lino Textil, and below is an Armadillo rug.

