



Photo by Draper White.

# WEDGE HOUSE

CCY Architects designs a dreamlike residence in Aspen, Colorado, for jewelry designer Jane Berg.

By Andrew Huff

Building a home from scratch can be a relentless, stressful undertaking. But does it have to be? With the right team of designers and clients, creating site-specific architecture can be an incredibly rewarding and energizing experience.

When jewelry designer Jane Berg wanted to find a place to live in Aspen, Colorado, after many years in Chicago, she turned to the Colorado-based design firm CCY Architects to realize her unique vision. With more than 50 years of experience working throughout the Rocky Mountain region and beyond, CCY was well positioned to create a space that carefully reflected Berg's dream home for entertaining and relaxing, that respected the site upon which the house sits. Wedge House, named for the geometric form of the home, is a ski-in ski-out residence that was carefully crafted to speak to the clients' edgy design preferences and reflect their personality in this jewel-like structure.

We spoke with Jane and architects John Cottle and Simon Elliot of CCY Architects, who worked closely on realizing this project, about the process of designing this home, some of the key influences, how art plays a role in the design, and more.

**WHITEWALL:** Can you tell us about the process of building this home and how you found the property?

**JANE BERG:** Before moving to Aspen, my husband and I were living in Chicago. We both fell in love with this part of the country, and specifically the Highlands, which is where we were lucky enough to build this house. It was a very long process looking for this particular site, almost seven years of searching until we found this lot to build on. When we first moved to Aspen, we purchased a townhouse located very close to our current home, and we can actually see it from our living room, which we love.

**WW:** Art seems to be an important component of the project, both through the work you collect but also the way art manifests itself through various zones throughout the home. Can you discuss your influences and passions as they relate to art and design?

**JB:** I am very influenced by my brother, who is an abstract sculptor and artist with a remarkable sense of perspective and ability to create three-dimensional forms. There are artworks and design elements that he made, such as the scrim wall at the entrance and other sculptural pieces throughout the home. He has also had a major influence on the way I have collected art over the years. I've always been drawn to photography, both black-and-white and color. I've always been drawn to clean, geometric lines. Even if you look at some of my jewelry designs, there is a parallel in



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architectural forms. Some of my earliest collections were inspired by a trip I took to New Orleans, and the wrought-iron fencing throughout the city.

**WW:** The shape of the house is so compelling. Was this your idea from the start?

**JB:** I can't take much credit for the shape of the house, as it was really CCY who came up with that decision. The form was realized after many conversations and a really in-depth charrette process led by the design team to figure out what we were looking for, and how this could be materialized. But here, too, I see a connection between the exterior of the house and some of the interior design considerations and influences from my brother's art practice.

**JOHN COTTLE:** Jumping off from that, the house is situated on a surprising site, and really a memorable place. You don't really expect it upon approach. When you are standing on the site of the house, it's magnificent. The idea for the shape of the house was also inspired by Jane, who mentioned an interest in clean lines, so we looked at a lot of different forms of the house and got really intrigued by the idea of a simple, opening up, wedge-shaped form that respected the scale of the neighborhood and was one strong movement opening up to the mountains. The design was all about studying the site, the neighbors, and the views, and how we could emphasize the place as much as we could.

**SIMON ELLIOT:** We also did some early work with VR and Lumion, which allowed us to position ourselves in the design and see how the angle of the roofline, and window placement, could open up views to the ridge and make the wedge shape that much more dynamic. The shape also informs the experience of being inside the home. The way the roofline angles, how the ceiling extends to outdoor overhangs at the entrance and deck, and the carefully crafted views out to the mountains all enhance this gemlike structure.

**WW:** How does the home function in different seasons?

**JB:** People are attracted to Colorado and living here full time because it provides an opportunity to be outdoors for all four seasons; a lot of people don't just come here to ski. We are always thinking about our homes, not as ski or summer houses, but places that can be fully functional

year-round. The deck is a perfect example of this because it can be used twelve months of the year. It gets tremendous sunlight in the winter, when the sun is at a low angle, and in the summer it is also a gathering space, protected from the direct sun by the projected roof above. We're always thinking about how the spaces will be living throughout the year, not just at one time. It utilizes every aspect that the site has to offer, and all the different environments that surround it.

**JC:** Jane and her husband are big skiers, and during the design process, we talked a lot about how the home would function during ski season. Now, they're essentially living there year-round. How wonderful a result is that? I love that.

**WW:** What were some of the defining characteristics of this collaboration between architect and client?

**JC:** One of the things that I found so productive and enjoyable about this design process was the healthy friction we were able to create. I would say that during many creative processes, you need healthy friction, because you can challenge convention and the solution, which might come easily, but there's enough back and forth to make it better. We had a great time working with Jane to capture her interests and making sure they all tie together in the end. The result is that the house has more unique qualities and spaces than most in Aspen.



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