

Luxe.

interiors + design®



\$ 9.95 A SANDWICH PUBLICATION | LUXE SOURCE® 1 2



0 09281 03220 5

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 5 | DISPLAY UNTIL 01/11/16

CLEAR CONNECTION

AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN ALLOWS A VAIL VALLEY HOUSE TO ENGAGE ITS SITE AND OPEN UP TO FAR-REACHING VIEWS.

WRITTEN BY **KIMBERLY OLSON** / PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NICK JOHNSON**

ARCHITECTURE / **JOHN R. COTTLE AND SIMON ELLIOT, CCY ARCHITECTS**
INTERIOR DESIGN / **DOUGLAS WITTELS, DOUGLAS WITTELS LLC**
HOME BUILDER / **DAVID HYDE AND ROB FAWCETT, SHAEFFER HYDE CONSTRUCTION**
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / **GLEN ELLISON AND KATHY AALTO, CERES LANDCARE**

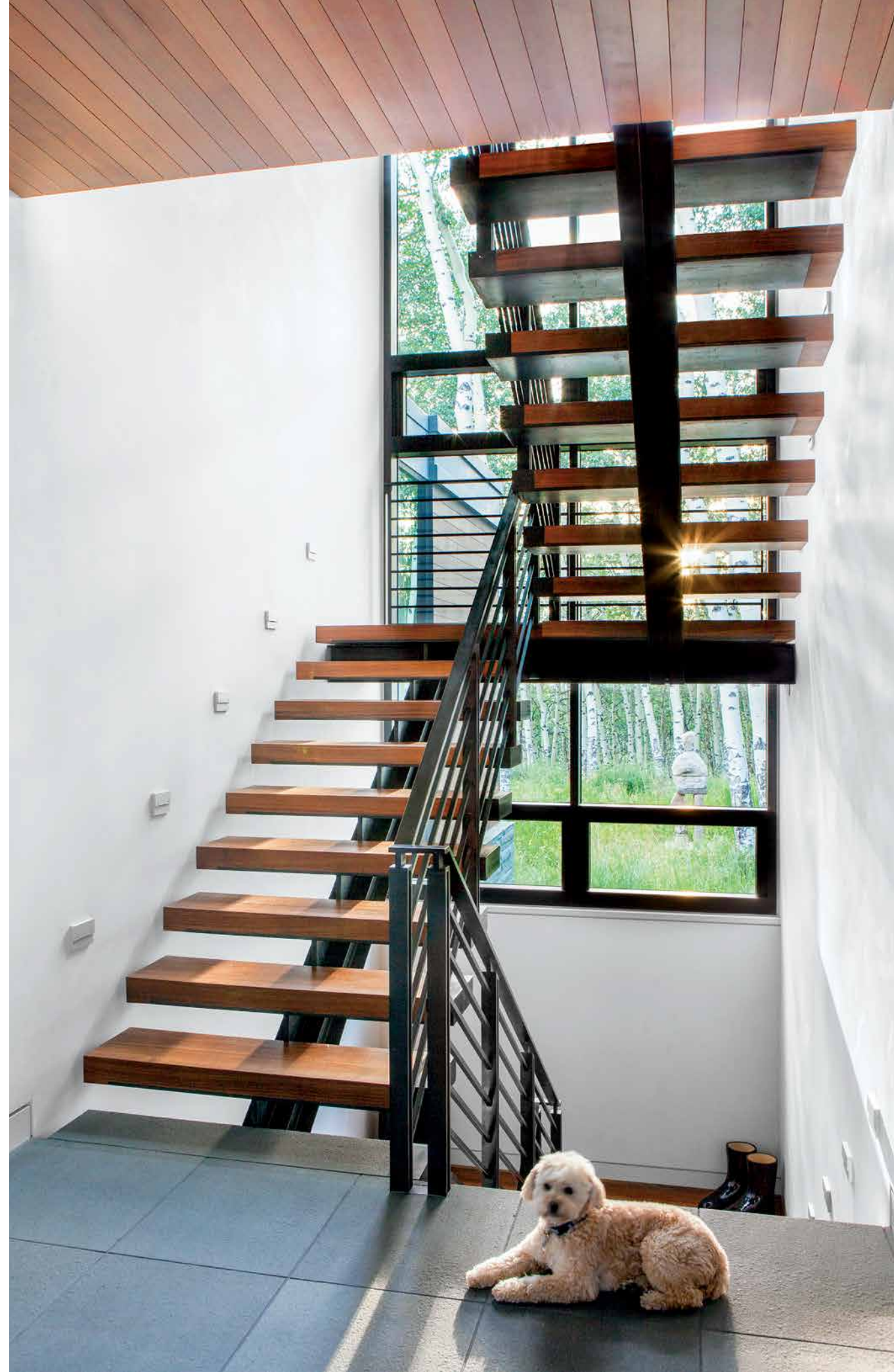
When a couple decided to build a home in Vail Valley—a place they had both visited since they were kids—they found a pristine lot surrounded by aspen groves that opened up to cinematic mountain views. They imagined capturing those vistas with an airy, modern structure that spoke to the mountain vernacular, so they turned to architects John R. Cottle and Simon Elliot to help realize that vision. To start, the architects and the couple embarked on a three-day charette, during which they brainstormed, shared ideas and walked the property. Inspired by an image they'd seen, and brought with them to one of the meetings, the couple suggested the concept of having part of the home act as a bridge over the property. That notion provided the project's catalyst. "The forest has such a strong presence that the design response needed to be as poetic and powerful," says Cottle. "When we started talking about a bridge, we all agreed that it could be magical."

Following that idea, the architects sketched a design that entailed building foundations on two spots. Between those two foundations, an elevated connector space holding the living and dining areas—and marked by walls of glass—would bridge through the forest. "The transparency of the bridge emphasizes the continuity and connection from the entry side through to the tremendous mountain views to the south," says Cottle. "It also minimizes the house's footprint on the land." That goal of treading lightly on the land was driven by the owners and shared by the whole team. Landscape designer Glen Ellison and landscape architect Kathy Aalto utilized native and ornamental plantings, and, notes Ellison, "particular attention was taken in the preservation of the natural grade and the existing aspens." The builders were careful to minimize their impact, as well. "We took great care to preserve as many trees as possible," says builder David Hyde, the firm's president, who worked with project manager Rob Fawcett.

In devising the home's three-level layout, the architects maximized the light and views not just within the bridge, but also throughout the house. The couple wanted to live primarily on the main level and have the second level accommodate visits from their two grown sons. A central stairway, made from walnut and steel, ascends all three



Architects John R. Cottle and Simon Elliot designed a contemporary house that treads lightly on its Vail Valley site. The entry door, made in collaboration between Woden Woods and Myers & Company Architectural Metals, pivots open next to the structure's steel-and-glass bridge, which offers views through the house out to the mountains.



Left: A narrow window follows the central stairway to bring in natural light and provide a glimpse of the aspens outside. Myers & Company Architectural Metals fabricated the custom steel frame and railings with a blackened finish to match the living area's fireplace hood.

Opposite: Artwork by Friedrich Kunath hangs in the hearth room, just off the kitchen. Designer Douglas Wittels custom-designed the rug—made by Stark—and the chairs, which he had covered with a textured stripe by Old World Weavers. The custom coffee table is by Joseph Jeup.



Set within the bridge, the living area—anchored by a fireplace of board-formed concrete and hot-rolled steel—enjoys sweeping views through floor-to-ceiling windows. Wittels designed a custom rug and sofa for the space. Chairs from Artistic Frame in New York face a custom coffee table from Brueton in New York.



The dining area, also situated within the bridge, is separated from the kitchen by a Pennsylvania bluestone cube. Artwork by Anish Kapoor hangs on the stone wall above a custom buffet. Wittels designed dining chairs, made by Artistic Frame in New York, and paired them with a custom table from Hudson Furniture in New York.



floors alongside a window, which faces the trees outside and lets light spill in. "Having the verticality of that slot of glass reinforces the appearance of the verticality of the trees," Elliot says. Within the main living spaces, Cottle and Elliot found another way to promote the flow of natural light. They positioned a Pennsylvania bluestone cube—containing the pantry—between the living and dining areas in the bridge and the kitchen volume, which contains a hearth room. "The cube doesn't reach the ceiling," says the wife, "so it delineates the rooms without blocking them off from each other; it's brilliant."

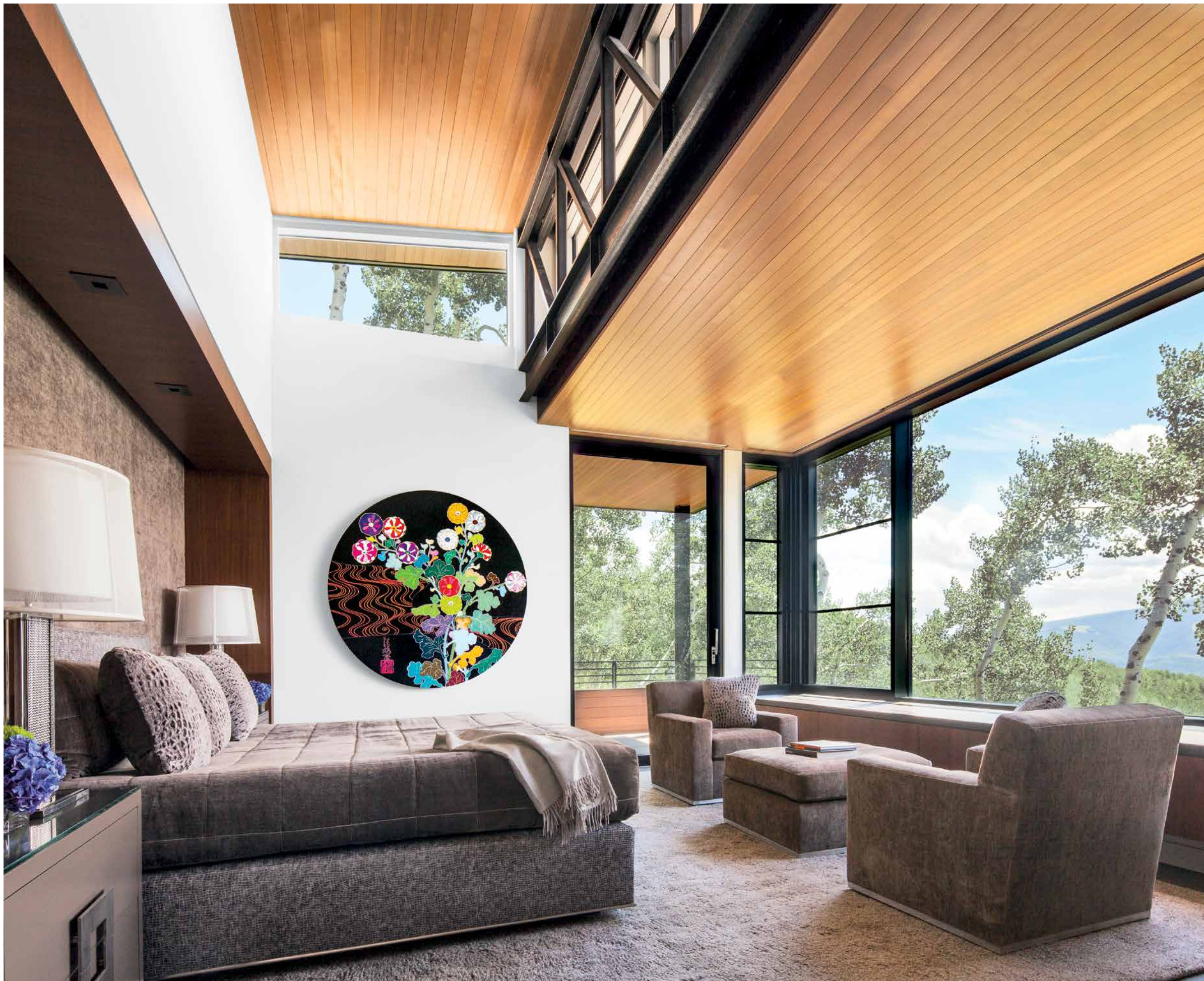
To keep the open spaces feeling unified, simplicity was key when it came to culling the material selection. Throughout the structure, the architects—whose team also included Chris Touchette and Erica Golden—stuck to cedar and walnut in coordinating finishes as well as Pennsylvania bluestone, glass and steel. "There was a desire to make the material palette very cohesive, from exterior to interior,"

Elliot says. "On one side of the living room, the cedar siding comes from the outside, pulls through the house and goes out the other side."

Executing the crisp design required a meticulous approach. In the master bathroom, for example, the builders perfectly lined up the Pennsylvania bluestone flooring with the center of the bathtub and then continued the alignment all the way through the main level of the house, including both sides of the pantry cube. But that rigorous attitude didn't stop with the floor. "This project demanded a level of precision and exactitude that challenged everyone involved," says the husband. "I don't think there was a single detail that wasn't obsessed over." Even the wood surfaces for the vanities and the media cabinets were hand-selected from the same flitches.

The couple's longtime designer, New York-based Douglas Wittels, was equally committed to creating a clean, geometric aesthetic. "An interior like this, where the

The streamlined kitchen features Bulthaup cabinetry complete with a laminate countertop and raised aluminum bar on the island. A stainless-steel backsplash complements the custom walnut cabinet wall containing the Miele ovens and refrigerator. Hefferan Partnership Lighting Design, the project's lighting designer, selected the ceiling fixture.



Above: A custom tub by Apaiser was positioned to align with the Pennsylvania bluestone flooring in the master bathroom. The ceiling's vertical-grain hemlock was supplied by Schacht Mill Works and continues to the exterior soffit. The sliding door is by Schüco.

Left: In the master bedroom, Wittels custom-designed the bed, which stands against a wall upholstered with chenille by Bergamo Fabrics. The custom nightstands have a satin lacquer finish and square metal pulls. The *Korin Dokuro* piece is by Takashi Murakami.



A Janus et Cie sectional appoints a terrace off the lower-level recreation room and offers a comfortable spot for enjoying the site's sweeping vistas. The fire pit and flooring are both made with Pennsylvania bluestone from The Gallegos Corporation.

lines are so crisp and straight, needs to be edited," he says. Working off the angular aesthetic of the architecture, Wittels drew inspiration from the grid-like forms of artist Piet Mondrian when designing the main living spaces. "The carpet and the coffee table in the living area, as well as the dining table and chairs, are all part of that concept," Wittels says of the pieces' reappearing square elements. "The nightstands in the master bedroom, with their beautiful bronze square pulls, also continue the geometric theme."

Although many of the furnishings are made of wood, glass and steel, in a nod to the architecture, Wittels custom-designed the upholstered pieces to be soft and inviting. Scale was also carefully considered. "I wanted the sofa to be very long so it could seat many people and also give the room some drama," he says of the living area. "The furniture is all the same height—the back of the chairs, the back of the sofa and the console—so nothing is too jarring; it's a soothing marriage." In arriving at a color palette, Wittels took into consideration the homeowners' extensive collection of contemporary art. The designer kept the background neutral to showcase pieces by such artists as Takashi Murakami, Anish Kapoor and John McCracken, among others. "The interiors are a great foil, not just for the art but also for the views," he says.

In all, the home took 30 months to build, with every detail painstakingly attended to. "We were not going to compromise on the design," Cottle says of the efforts of everyone involved. "The challenge was executing on that. When you raise the bar, you set the goal that this is going to be a fantastic piece of art. And a lot of the art of architecture takes time to appreciate, to see how the materials are handled, to notice the details and to see how light moves through the space. Architecture can be transformative; maybe you even see the forest a little differently when you live in a bridge in the midst of it." ■