

ASPEN

INSPIRED GRANDEUR

A secluded compound east of Aspen takes its design cues from an enviable riverside setting with stellar mountain views.

By Linda Hayes
Photography by David Marlow

Shannon and Ted Skokos' first experience with living on their land, an 11-acre riverside parcel up Independence Pass, was far from luxurious. Still, it had its advantages.

"We wanted to get to know the property, where the sun rose and set, and see how the house would sit on the site," Shannon recalls. The couple moved out of the home they owned in Aspen and lived in an older house on the site while waiting for approvals to build. "It was tiny, just one bedroom, with mice," laughs Shannon. "But it was so peaceful sitting by the water and enjoying the wildlife. It was magical."

From that experience, the Skokoses, high-powered Dallas philanthropists, established parameters that would inform every aspect of their future home.

"The site dictated so much of the design that decisions became inevitable in a way," explains Arthur Chabon, the project's New York-based architect, who has designed several other Aspen-area homes, along with the new Jewish Community Center in town. "When you decide rooms have to face a particular direction and fill a particular need, the house ends up designing itself."

Fronted by a circular courtyard with an arched porte-cochère, the home's exterior facade is at once formidable and inviting. Natural settlers stone, hand-cut and meticulously coursed to align with windows and other architectural details, mixes grandly with reclaimed, wire-brushed Douglas fir siding and peaked rooflines finished with slate.

"All the materials we selected for the exterior were chosen to blend in with the natural colors that surround the house," says Chabon. "The stone walls blend with the stone outcroppings of the surrounding mountains, with the gray-brown bark of the spruce trees and with the reddish soil of the site. We tried to get the color of the siding to pick up on these surrounding colors as well."

Passage through a relatively simple vestibule to a grand double-height entry hall reveals one of the home's most significant elements: a formal stair that curves gracefully upward, flanked by custom rift-oak paneling loosely inspired by the work of English architect Edwin Lutyens. "The owners wanted grandeur but not flash," says Chabon. "Simple wrought-iron spindles and reclaimed Belgian Black stone flooring gave it a more understated feel."



WATERFRONT LIVING
Spanning the Roaring Fork River, a gracefully arched bridge crafted of rusted Corten beams links the main house and guesthouse.



GRAND ENTRANCE
A dramatic stairway framed by panels of custom rift oak leads to the second-floor master suite.



Off the hall, the ground-level floor plan evolves in multiple directions. The main living room and a media room are separately placed, while a series of generous and functional gathering spaces, including the dining room, kitchen and family room, connect to one another.

“There was a mandate that the main floor had to be on a single level and without any steps,” says Chabon. As a result, the house had to be nestled into the hillside (at 13,500 square feet, no easy feat) and designed according to how guests would move through it during the gala events the Skokoses frequently host.

Everywhere, views prevail. Key rooms, including the living room, dining room, and the upstairs master suite and office, are centered on the highest visible mountain peak and have extraordinary views of the river as well. “The entire generation of the plans was based on capturing those peak and river views,” notes Chabon. “The survey was plotted out within 2 to 3 degrees to nail them perfectly. It inspired a sort of sawtooth plan for the main facade.”

Large in scale to match the scope of the surrounding landscape, the home’s interior nonetheless feels comfortable, with furnishings, notes Chabon, that offer a beautiful contrast to the architecture’s formality. For that, the Skokoses are largely to thank.

“[The construction project] was 8 ½ years from start to finish, so we had plenty of time to collect things,” says Ted. Everything from custom-made couches and club chairs to a massive, four-poster master bed and antiques collected during trips to Europe went into a huge, air-conditioned storage unit in Dallas. To complete the picture, Neal Stewart, of Neal Stewart Designs in Dallas, assisted with finishes, including lighting, cabinetry, bath fixtures and fireplace mantles. Gail Mattice, of Elements Interiors in Denver, helped with additional furnishings and fabrics.

As is commonly the case, the home’s ample kitchen is a major gathering place. “I dearly love to cook,” shares Shannon. “We wanted to make sure there was plenty of space to not only have family and friends



CLASSIC LINES
From top: Guests are often feted in the formal dining room, which features an elegant antique dining table and armchairs discovered by the homeowners in Dallas; the hand-carved four-poster bed is also an antique.



over,” but also for whoever is cooking. Custom rift-oak cabinetry is topped with Shannon’s favorite blue Bahia granite. A large butler’s pantry with a walk-in wine room abuts the kitchen and adjoins the dining room, which all agree is the most formal room in the house.

Across the river, a log-sided 3,500-square-foot guesthouse inspired by historic mining cabins in the area provides an additional two bedrooms. The design of the Corten steel bridge that spans the river, connecting the two houses, was based on details found in historic arts and crafts-style Greene and Greene houses as well as Japanese footbridges. “It’s a distinguished detail of the site,” notes Chabon.

A project of this scale doesn’t happen

without significant teamwork. The strong collaboration between the Skokoses and Chabon, as well as general contractor Briston Peterson, was at the root of the home’s success. “There was a lot of back and forth,” says Chabon. “I tried to crawl into their heads and see things the way they saw them so that what I showed them wasn’t completely alien. They were actively involved and very trusting. It worked.”

“Arthur was an amazing perfectionist, and he takes so much pride in his work,” adds Shannon. “I don’t think we could have had any other architect on this job. He saw little things no one else would see and would make changes if something wasn’t just right. Everything he did made it better.” ■

GATHERING PLACES

From left: Extraordinary views from the living room are complemented by custom furnishings and antiques; blue Bahia granite countertops add a pop of vibrancy to the kitchen, which includes Wolf and Sub-Zero appliances, as well as TurboChef ovens for catering.

DESIGN DETAILS

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