

Western Interiors

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A house by architect Harry Teague and designer
Marcia Weese takes its cue from the Aspen landscape

AHEAD OF THE CURVE





previous pages: Architect Harry Teague designed a contemporary wood, glass, stucco and steel house with a rolling roofline for Paula Zurcher at the foot of Red Mountain in Aspen, Colorado.
these pages: A grey stucco wall runs the length of the interior and interrupts the rusted metal and the barn wood of the front facade. Situated on an old ranch property, the structure is flanked by a meadow and the mountain's scrub oak and wild sage.



opposite and above: In the living-and-dining area, designer Marcia Weese offset a muted wool-and-silk Tibetan rug with orange sofa fabric by Donghia and red leather by Great Plains, which covers Christian Liaigre chairs from the Holly Hunt Collection. Pre-Columbian pottery is on a walnut table customized by Weese.

"IT HAS TO DO WITH THE WAY THE WIND MOVES ACROSS THE LAND,"

HARRY TEAGUE SAYS OF HIS HOUSE FOR PAULA ZURCHER—a wood, stucco, metal and glass structure set at the base of Aspen's Red Mountain. The roofline of the elongated residence starts low and gradually swoops skyward before settling back down. "I was trying to acknowledge the bigger picture and the openness of the West," he explains.

Situated on an old ranch property, the contemporary design is somewhat of an anomaly in a town where residents tend to build sprawling log homes that resemble Adirondack lodges. Teague thinks the romance of the lodge has its place—but not on the wild, exposed western landscape. "It's a sentimental response to living here that comes from the East Coast aristocracy," he says. "It's not terrible but it isn't honest either. We no longer have to protect ourselves so thoroughly. Houses should engage the full expanse of their surroundings and experience everything the landscape has to offer. The two should flow together."

Teague integrated the design into two ecosystems that bifurcate the property. The building, dubbed "the border house," emerged as a demarcation between the meadow and the scrub oak and wild sage of the mountainside. "The house is a boundary, and because boundaries are more interesting than the things they separate, it's an exciting place to be," he says.

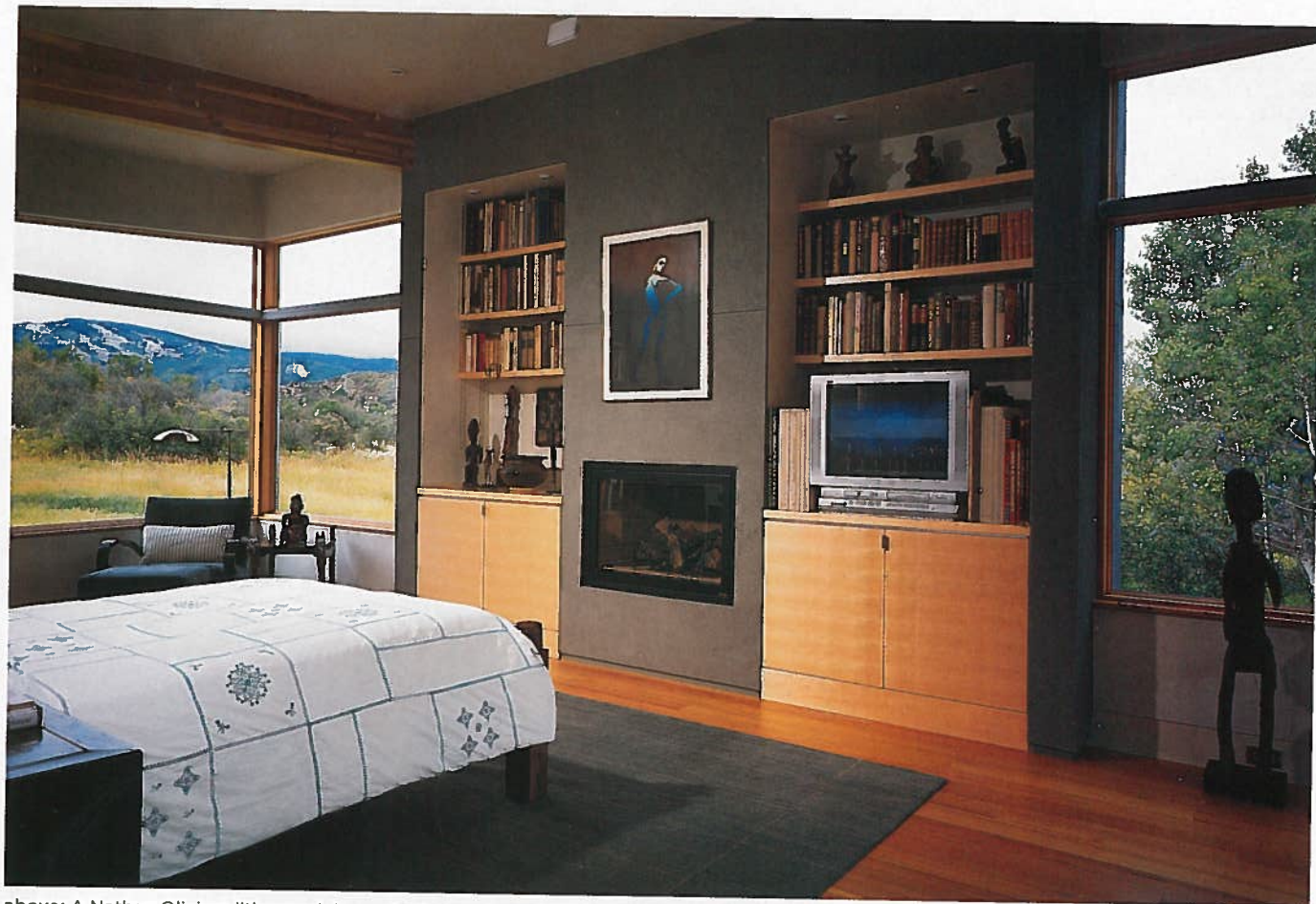


opposite: A steel awning and cedar trellis shade the side elevation's terrace, where red sandstone flooring continues from inside. **above:** Fir ceilings, marble countertops and custom cabinetry with maple veneer warm the kitchen, which opens to the family room.

Zurcher chose Teague (an old family friend) based on his award-winning local projects, which include Harris Concert Hall and the Benedict Music Tent. The enviable site was purchased in the late 1940s by Zurcher's parents, Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke, who developed the old mining town's first ski area and founded the Aspen Music Festival and School and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. Prior to breaking ground, Zurcher and her two sisters donated a sizable chunk of their 350 acres to the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies, another Paepcke legacy.

Different programmatic elements prevent the 7,500-square-foot structure from appearing too large. "Big houses are difficult, and if you make them all one architectural style, they get really big," says Teague. From the approach, the interplay of old barn-wood siding and rusted metal roofing pays homage to the site's history. The south-facing elevation reveals the rolling roofline that caps the building's more contemporary steel-and-glass facade before quietly returning to vernacular references established at the entrance. At the core of the design is a grey stucco wall that starts at the threshold and runs the full length of the interior. "If you were making up a history for the house, this wall would predate everything," says Teague of the massive parapet. Outside the master bedroom, a cantilevered stair glides down the wall to an archway that leads to the hot tub. "You're always aware of the wall because you pass through its openings constantly," says the architect. "The experience of it is different depending on where you are and what part of the landscape it's revealing."

Banks of voluminous two-story windows flank the living room, the one place where the grey wall is interrupted. The grandeur of the forest is displayed on one side and the



above: A Nathan Oliviera lithograph hangs in the master suite, where a Weese-designed wool-and-silk Tibetan rug echoes a grey stucco fire surround. Beside a Nancy Corzine chair and an ottoman by Weese (opposite), both covered in velvet from Rose Tarlow, is a sculpture atop a reproduction Egyptian side table.

meadow and Elk Mountains on the other. "Because of the open plan and extraordinarily high ceilings, I arranged the living room seating as a grid to make a more intimate space within the larger envelope," explains Chicago-based interior designer Marcia Weese, whose parents, Harry and Kitty Weese, the renowned Chicago architect and interior design duo, were friends of the Paepckes. She selected fabrics in rich, saturated reds, rusts and oranges for their ability to stand up to the Colorado sun. A materials palette of steel, stone and wood recurs throughout. The fir of the vaulted living-room ceiling is repeated in the flat ceiling of the dining room, which has a ten-foot-long walnut table designed by Weese. "I knew everything in this interior would really get used," she says. With that in mind, the designer chose clean, modern—but practical—furnishings. Built-in shelves display pieces of pre-Columbian art collected by the homeowner and her late husband, Victor Zurcher, a museum curator with a passion for anthropology. Weese also designed handwoven wool-and-silk Tibetan rugs that add warmth and texture. "I looked at the process as drawing and painting on the floors," she says. "My patterns were inspired by the owner's African sculptures. The carvings have such interesting lines."

Fir ceilings reappear in the kitchen, where marble counters top custom cabinets with maple veneers laid horizontally to create a distinctive wraparound effect. Teague determined that the red sandstone floors should flow into the sun-filled terrace that extends to the meadow. "It was another way of blurring the distinction between inside and out."

According to the architect, it was always his intent to enable anyone walking through the structure to experience the interior and exterior worlds simultaneously. "The job of a house is to make you aware of your surroundings," says Teague. "This house succeeds because it attends to both the site and the views." ++





Teague designed the roof with a central curved form that undulates with its dramatic backdrop. Zurcher, like the architect, envisioned her house back against the mountainside rather than out in the meadow. "I wanted it to be part of the surroundings, not in the middle of things," she explains.