

WESTERN ARCHITECTURE: TIMELESS DESIGN AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

CLIMATE, LIFESTYLE AND RESPECT FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BLEND TRADITIONAL STYLES AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY FOR A WESTERN APPROACH TO RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

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From the Colorado Rockies to the Oregon desert, design of single-family homes in the American West remains as varied and eclectic as the landscape, history and lifestyles in Western states. Whether traditional or contemporary, simple farm ranch or elaborate mountain chalet, the use of powerful forms, natural light, local materials, craftsmanship, respect for the environment, regional history and connection with the outdoors remain universal themes among architects designing Western homes.

Climate, construction methods and homeowner goals are always important residential design factors. However, Western mountain and desert homes must also address protection from sun, wind, snow, and extreme temperature swings, which impact material selection and spatial relationships. In recent years, sustainability, energy efficiency and green design principles, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), as developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, are merging with traditional design elements for contemporary design solutions.

The Western aesthetic reflects an informal lifestyle and relates indoor spaces to the outdoors. Some builders are marketing traditional styles and labels, from Spanish to Cape Cod, hoping to appeal to a broader audience. But most architects aren't buying this approach, and neither are their clients.

The five very different projects that follow, in Colorado, Oregon and Utah, reflect a design approach that respects nature and indigenous materials, resulting in a uniquely Western architecture, in harmony with the environment.

COURTESY JOE DESGORGES PHOTOGRAPHY



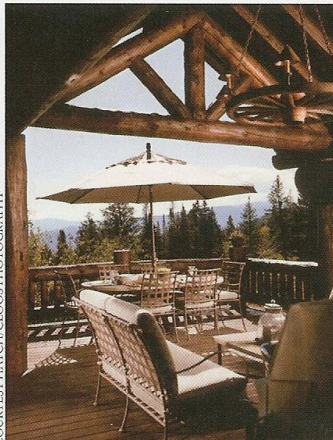
This night view shows an outdoor fire pit, upper and lower porches, and an outdoor sleeping porch at the upper left.

COURTESY DAN TYRPAK



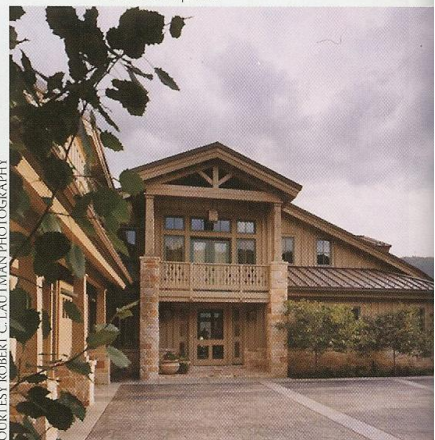
The house borrows from traditional Western ranch forms to respond to the regional climate.

COURTESY HATCH GLOOS PHOTOGRAPHY



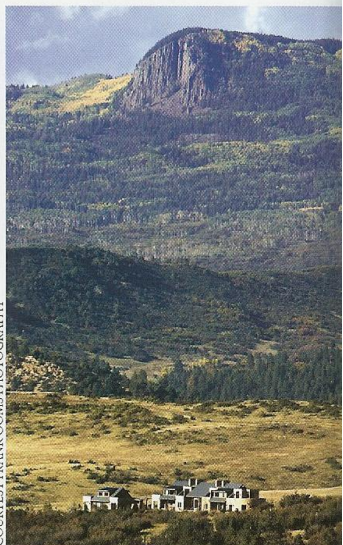
This covered outdoor dining and seating area is an extension of indoor living spaces.

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Snow-sensitive design includes low roof pitches and entries below gables to avoid falling snow mass.

COURTESY FRANK OOMS PHOTOGRAPHY



A big sky and dramatic landscapes form the backdrop for outdoor spaces.

TRADITIONAL STYLES & MODERN TECHNOLOGY

THE FOLLOWING THREE HOMES APPEAR TRADITIONAL, BUT RELY ON MODERN DESIGN CONCEPTS, SUCH AS SUSTAINABILITY AND SMART TECHNOLOGY, FOR MEETING HOMEOWNER NEEDS.

COLORADO COUNTRY HOUSE ARCHITECT: LAWRENCE AND GOMEZ ARCHITECTS

"Western architecture provides shelter from harsh elements, allows the visual and physical experience of grand landscapes, and incorporates local materials and techniques. The Pole Creek house, in Winder Park, Colo., combines Eastern country house refinement with Western rusticity," says Juana Gomez, AIA, principal of Lawrence and Gomez Architects, in Boulder.

Gomez designed a second home for a Denver couple, using a natural granite exterior, combined with contemporary tensile rods and exposed steel connections that tether the eaves to the ground. Passive and active solar systems provide indoor temperature control. The stone exterior, metal roof and trimmed vegetation provide effective fire mitigation techniques, an increasing concern in dry, rural areas.



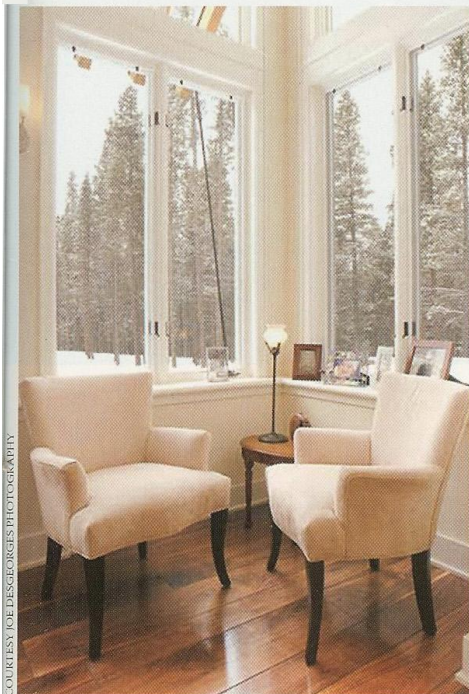
COURTESY JOE DESGEORGES PHOTOGRAPHY

Evening view from the south shows large windows and trellises.



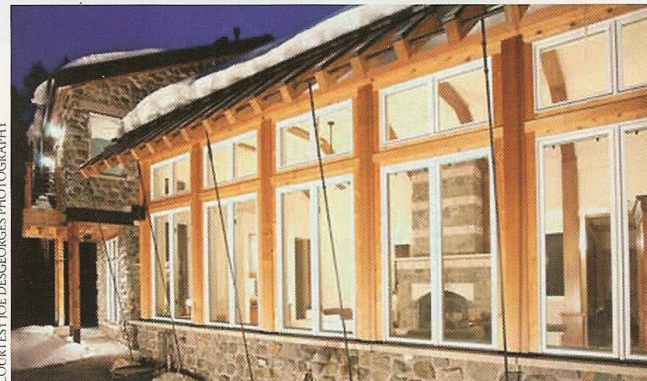
COURTESY JUANA GOMEZ

View from the southeast illustrates the rusticity of the house and how it blends comfortably into the surrounding wooded environment.



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Large windows at a seating area provide opportunities to enjoy the outdoors from inside the house.



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Evening view illuminates natural materials, eaves and the fireplace.