



Romancing the Stone

BOSS.architecture marries modernism with mother nature for one family's home in Cherry Hills Village—a dream years in the making.

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IT's fairly rare for homeowners to intentionally embrace a rocky road. But in the case of a residential project by BOSS.architecture, that's exactly what they did—quite literally—on a triangular site in Cherry Hills Village. The newly designed home is structurally tied to a 30,000-pound granite boulder the team found at a quarry in Fairplay. “We tested different formed-concrete monolithic ideas and nothing resonated,” says Jessica Hunter, an architect at BOSS. She describes the introduction of the boulder as “one of those moments with this client where they really leaned into the inspiration we brought, and were just all-in.” Adds principal Kevin Stephenson of the choice: it suits the “principle of natural over artificial...using a huge, naturally imperfect object as the spring point for a very perfect house.”

The rock-solid design touch helped engender the home's structure, which is unequivocally serene. “We wanted it to be unassuming, we wanted it to be nonconventional, but we wanted it to also embody all of the principles that they wanted for themselves, which was open space, clean space, organized amenities, organized storage, and a material palette that wasn't contemporary but timeless,” says principal Chris Davis.

It was a long time coming. “I've known these clients for about 20 years, and the entire time that they've owned the property where the house is located, they would ask me to come look at the house every three to five years or so,” recalls Stephenson. “They would be feeling like, ‘Oh, we really want to do something. We really love this site. We love this place.’ But the house that they lived in just never quite fit their dreams: it was a traditional, rambling colonial ranch that had been added on to a lot of times.” That former structure didn't allow for clarity and peace of mind, Davis says. “Early in the process, one of the things that BOSS said to us that resonated with me was that a new home designed with the occupants in mind can really change the way you live,” says homeowner Dr. Andy Fisher. The couple chose the firm for many reasons, he says. “We like their aesthetic, the way they marry East and West design, and how ascendant and innovative their firm is.” Adds his wife, Dr. Tanya Atagi, “I imagine for many, building one's dream home is a monumental undertaking from nearly every perspective—financial, emotional, spiritual, time and energy investment—which implies the need for an enormous component of trust.”

Over the years, the family honed their vision for their dream home, so much so that Stephenson happily scrapped his original plans. “Really what they wanted was an innovative, energy-friendly, earth-friendly, modern piece of architecture that fit that place, site, and location—their desires have really evolved over time,” Stephenson says. Adds Atagi, “I am a homebody and



“We built in a huge concrete base that anchors the table and is permanently affixed to that location,” says BOSS principal Chris Davis of the dining room. “The framework supports the big, sculptural live-edge slab of wood, and also the important nexus of family gathering.” The table was fabricated by CS Woods and Batch & Trowel.

as an engineer and design major, have always wanted to build a dream home for as long as I can recall. I had boxes of articles and clippings of homes, rooms, furnishings, and landscapes that I’d carted around the country with me since college in the 80s.”

The extensive wind-up was worth it to clarify the couple’s interest in Japanese design, which they wished to integrate in honor of Atagi’s heritage. “The aesthetic of the house is a calming, refined Asian influence with expressive comforts and soothing palette,” Fisher says. (And compared to many timeless beautiful projects in Japan, this was quick; Kiyomizu-dera Temple reportedly took at least three decades to build in the 1600s.) To that end, the home that BOSS designed echoes some timeless elements of Japanese architecture in modern ways, including an exterior siding that’s a take on shou sugi ban charred wood siding. “Because that doesn’t hold up very well in Colorado, instead we

used a very heavily wire-brushed Accoya wood with a deep, deep black stain that lasts for years and years here,” Stephenson says. “That’s a material that bridges indoor and outdoor, and helps simplify the geometries of the house.”

The firm drew from stateside icons of design too. “We travel a lot and refer back to some of our architectural heroes,” Davis says. “John Lautner is one—he was a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, and made very sculptural pieces of architecture. Not to say that we are at all in the caliber of Lautner, but we were inspired by the way he thinks about architecture, about it springing from its site. We were looking at some reference projects of Albert Frey, too, a mid-century architect who designed a house for himself where this boulder literally came out of the mountain and into his house.”

One of the biggest challenges, as you might expect, was working with the boulder. “Getting it →%



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– Kevin Stephenson



Airy light fixtures by Morghen Studio have the effervescence of falling leaves, providing a counterbalance to the heavier forms below. The home is open “from the entry through the stairwell to the living room, dining, and kitchen,” Davis says. Dining room chairs are by Philippe Hurel, from MOD Design in Denver. The living room features Poliform’s Bristol sofa and Mad Joker Swivel lounge chair, both from Studio Como.



BELOW: BOSS.architecture cooked up their first-ever cooking island in this home. “There’s an island in the center of the kitchen that has cooking appliances built into all sides of it,” Davis says of the multi-functional marvel. “Two or three people can be sitting there talking, engaging, facing each other and each cooking on their own, rather than just having a range against the wall or the typical ways you see a kitchen.” **LEFT:** Rooster Socks Furniture outfitted what’s lovingly referred to as “the mosh pit,” with cushy, expansive seating. **RIGHT:** “I’m Japanese American, so we thought it would be great to have Asian influence, although we weren’t looking for an obviously Japanese/Asian home,” says Tanya Atagi. Subtle nods to her heritage include this hall tucked under the stairs, which recalls a karesansui, or rock garden.

“[THE KITCHEN’S] CORE IS A TWO-SIDED ISLAND IN-THE-ROUND, CAPTURED BY A PAIR OF ISLAND BOOKENDS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS ORGANIZATION IS TO CELEBRATE THE PERFORMANCE OF COOKING.” – Jessica Hunter





transported was its own adventure, and our contractor was just an incredible champion of finding the right teammates, both to load it and transport it, and unload it,” Hunter recalls. “It maxed out our crane capacity on site structurally. Our engineer was also game; the site has expansive soils and this is tied to the major roof of the house.” Most of the boulder is, incredibly, subterranean. “It’s about probably two thirds buried, but it was all about finding something that took up enough mass across the floor of this garden so that it would interface correctly,” Hunter says. “But also that roof point comes down pretty close to the ground; you can hardly even tell that there’s a post connecting the boulder and the steel roof, because they held it all so tight. We had an incredible team on the steel side—ultimately they core drilled the top of the boulder six inches and set the steel post in epoxy, and then formed the roof from there.”

The steel screen above—which echoes many Lautner designs, was derived from the intrinsic geometry of the building site, Davis says. “Its engagement with the boulder celebrates the genesis of the diagram and signifies the touch point of the building meeting the earth.” Adds Atagi, “The triangular, trellis roof echoes the shape of the site and is a beautiful defining feature of the exterior where the build materials themselves are showcased.”

In retrospect, it looks like magic—and it worked. The home is organized around a central dining space complete with a custom concrete table base that’s permanently affixed to the nexus, where the family can gather. “Even though it’s asymmetric in shape, [the house] has this sort of beautiful crossing of axes that go through the center of the house and have huge windows at the ends of each of these axes that are north, south, east, and west,” Stephenson

In the primary bedroom, “you feel like you’re on the prow of a ship,” says BOSS principal Kevin Stephenson. “You oversee the property and it’s one of the spots in the house where you have intimate and also long views.” A custom bed by Aspen Leaf is positioned to take full advantage. **OPPOSITE:** In the primary bathroom, tadelakt plaster provides an ancient energy. “What’s really cool about this material is not only its history—originally used in Moroccan baths—it’s such a clean and healthy material,” BOSS architect Jessica Hunter says, noting that it was used inside water cisterns. “It’s antibacterial and antimicrobial, and our clients are both doctors and this was the middle of COVID, so it all really resonated. It’s also an incredibly low carbon material, so it really aligned with their aspirations from an environmental standpoint.”



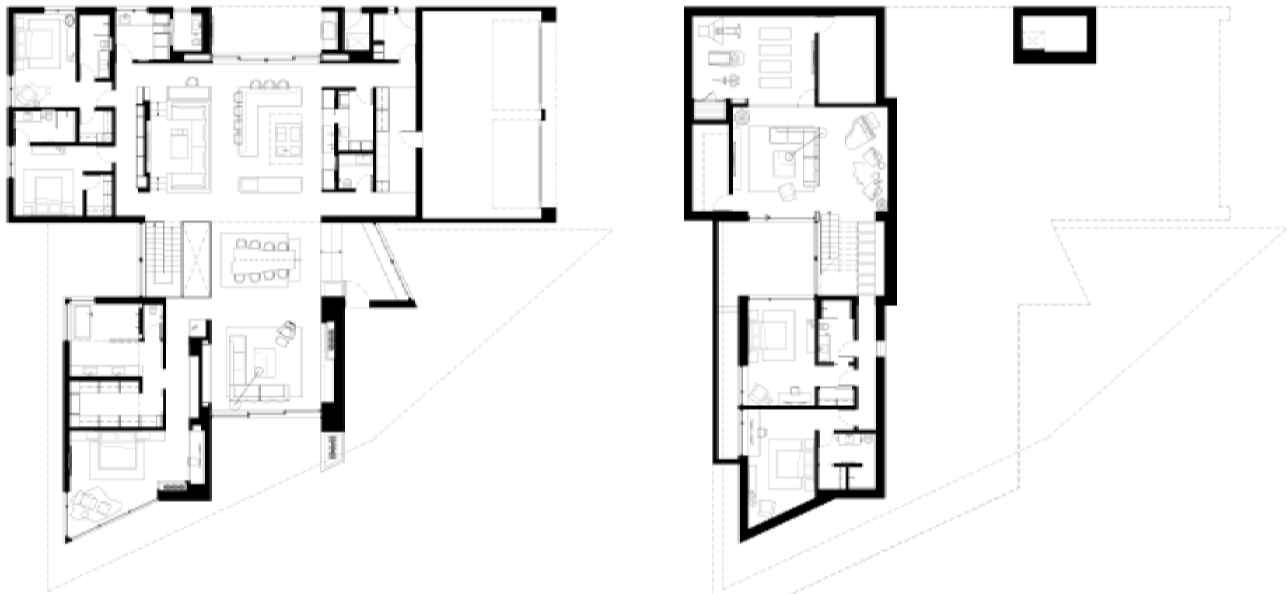
says. The kitchen is clad in shinnoki “milk oak” wood, and is unlike any BOSS has designed thus far, Hunter notes. “Its core is a two-sided island in-the-round, captured by a pair of island bookends,” she says of the islands overlooking the pool. “The purpose of this organization is to celebrate the performance of cooking.”

“Our family is in transition as we have three daughters who are in some stage of leaving the house but

still with a home base here, and the house lives very well for us,” Atagi says, noting that they also kept aging-in-place top of mind for themselves as well as their parents. “I would say our home feels spacious and generous without being a giant echo chamber with a lot of impractical and unused space (again, the engineer speaking!). At the same time, we easily accommodated a graduation party of nearly 200 people.” She appreciates the versatility, especially compared to their prior home. “We

had a ‘nice’ older Cherry Hills home but our daughters never really wanted to bring friends over,” she says. “Now, it’s the place to be. Our youngest was coming home during lunch break to have lunch and a splash in the pool. I think this speaks for itself—who could want more as a parent?”

The longing to enjoy the house extends to the couple, too. In the primary suite, which is just off the dining space, serenity reigns. The





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bathroom in particular is “very spa like,” Davis says. With a Japanese wood soaking tub tucked before a low window at the foot of the shower, and below a botanical shelf, it “evokes a sense of calm.” Atagi calls the whole house their sanctuary. “We have an oasis around us with the mature trees, country feel, and only rare glimpses of neighboring homes and neighbors.”

The abundant glass puts an emphasis on the surrounding plot, much of which the team intentionally designed as a state of arguably unkempt, native wildness. “The structure unfolds out of the landscape and to keep the lion’s share of the site ‘wild’ was intentional,” Stephenson says. There were two reasons for that, he notes: “One, the natural landscape requires much less maintenance and water consumption, and two, the juxtaposition of architecture and nature is stronger than an overly-manicured solution.” That earthy approach extends to the

home’s systems as well. “We love that we were able to incorporate geothermal, and we’re wired for solar,” Atagi shares.

Finishes include earthy choices, including tadelakt plaster and rough concrete. “I wouldn’t call it a warm materials palette,” Davis says. “It’s more like a distilled materials palette: the woods are a little bit more yellow, or they’re black. They’re not what you would see in Colorado architecture.” One wood of particular note: the live edge dining table, made of elm sourced from Idaho, a reference to the wife’s childhood on a family farm in the state. In the central courtyard, when rain is falling and snow swirling, it becomes a moment of art. “It really feels like you are in the elements,” Davis says. “The feeling of it is that you’re in a snow globe.”

The rock feels right at home. ■

Allowing the grounds to remain seemingly untouched in portions let an untrammelled-looking landscape juxtapose beautifully against the clean-lined exterior. **OPPOSITE:** A serene and streamlined pool, al fresco shower, and fire pit emphasize the home’s design- and comfort-forward focus.



PROJECT CREDITS

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BOSS.architecture
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Montare Builders
INTERIOR DESIGNER
Dialect Interior Design
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER
Henderson Engineering
CIVIL ENGINEER
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ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
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