



LOG CABIN HOLIDAY

Nothing says “Welcome home for the holidays” more cheerfully than a log cabin, with its interior glowing, its front door draped with an evergreen garland and framed by lanterns while thick snowflakes fall from above. For the new owners of a home in Alta, Wyoming, this Norman Rockwellian picture was not at all what they’d envisioned for themselves. But that fact does little to detract from its appeal now. There’s a reason this enduring style feels like home.

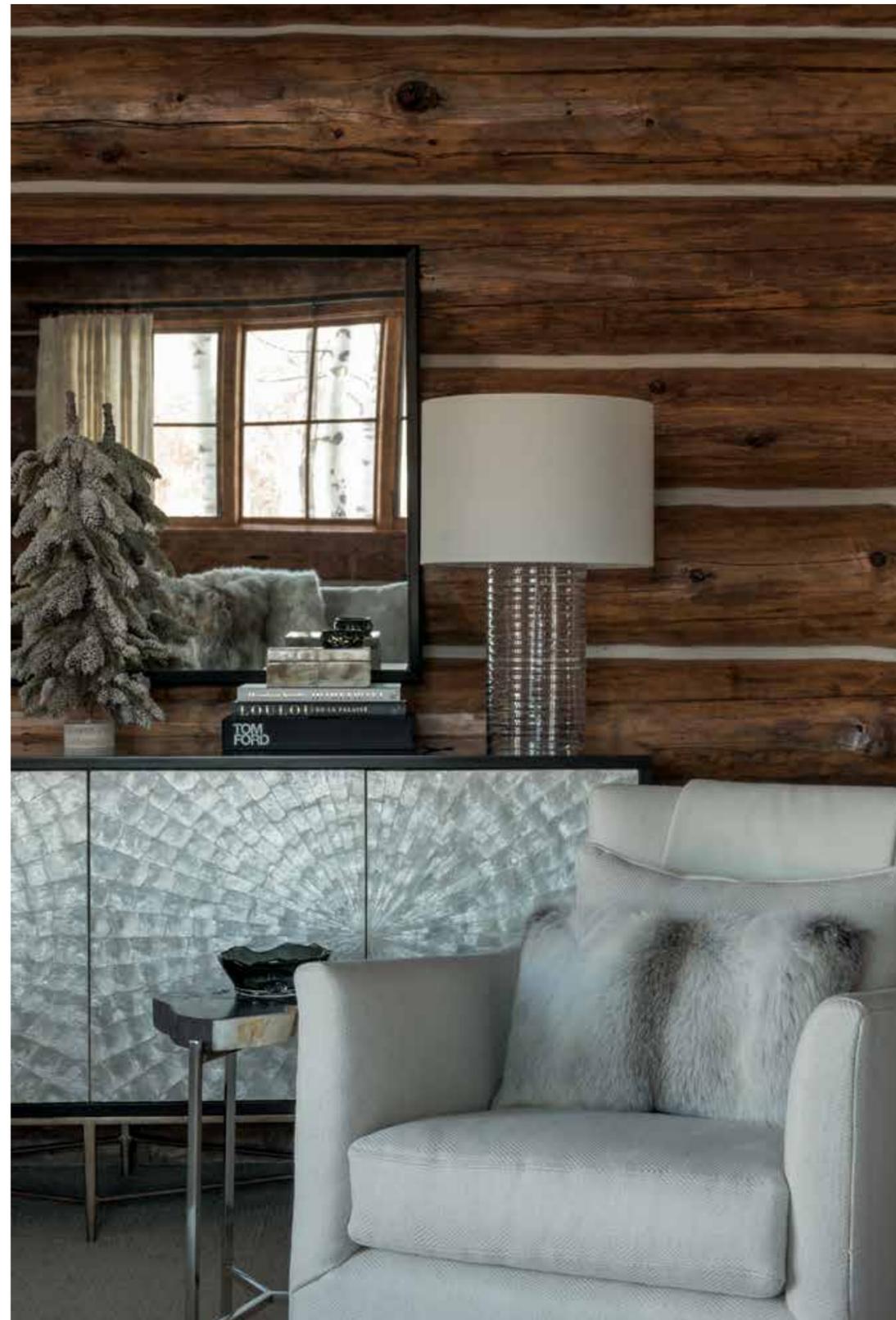
The couple had been living in the Grand Targhee area for some years and had planned to build a new home in a rustic modern style with light-filled contemporary interiors. But then they saw a four-bedroom log home on a ten-acre property that had no visible neighbors. With mountain views, mature trees, a live creek, and space for a barn, guesthouse, and ponds, it exemplified rural peace.

The homeowners needed a place that was cozy for two but could easily expand to accommodate additional numbers. And because they’re avid travelers who follow global designs and trends, they were interested in a more contemporary aesthetic. “It was the property that spoke to us,” recalls the owner. “We had zero interest in a log home. We felt it was too much wood, was too rustic, and would require too much maintenance.” Longtime acquaintances of Rush Jenkins and Klaus Baer of WRJ Design, they asked the designers to take a look at the house, wondering whether, despite the logs, it would be possible to create a modern and contemporary feel. The designers were enthusiastic, pointing to the strong bones of the house, its open floor plan, and its beautiful river rock fireplace.

Rush Jenkins says he enjoys the log-home challenge. The main question is always how to move the house toward the light, which means working against the logs’ heavy, dark propensity. The orange hue of the standard log homes from the 1980s now looks dated, he adds, so changing the tones is crucial. His first move in these cases is to stain the floors to gray or middle brown tones and bring the aesthetic of a lighter color palette, typically grays and blues. This is not as invasive or expensive as changing the color of the logs themselves (which is possible, as cumbersome and expensive as it is), yet can achieve close to the same effect.

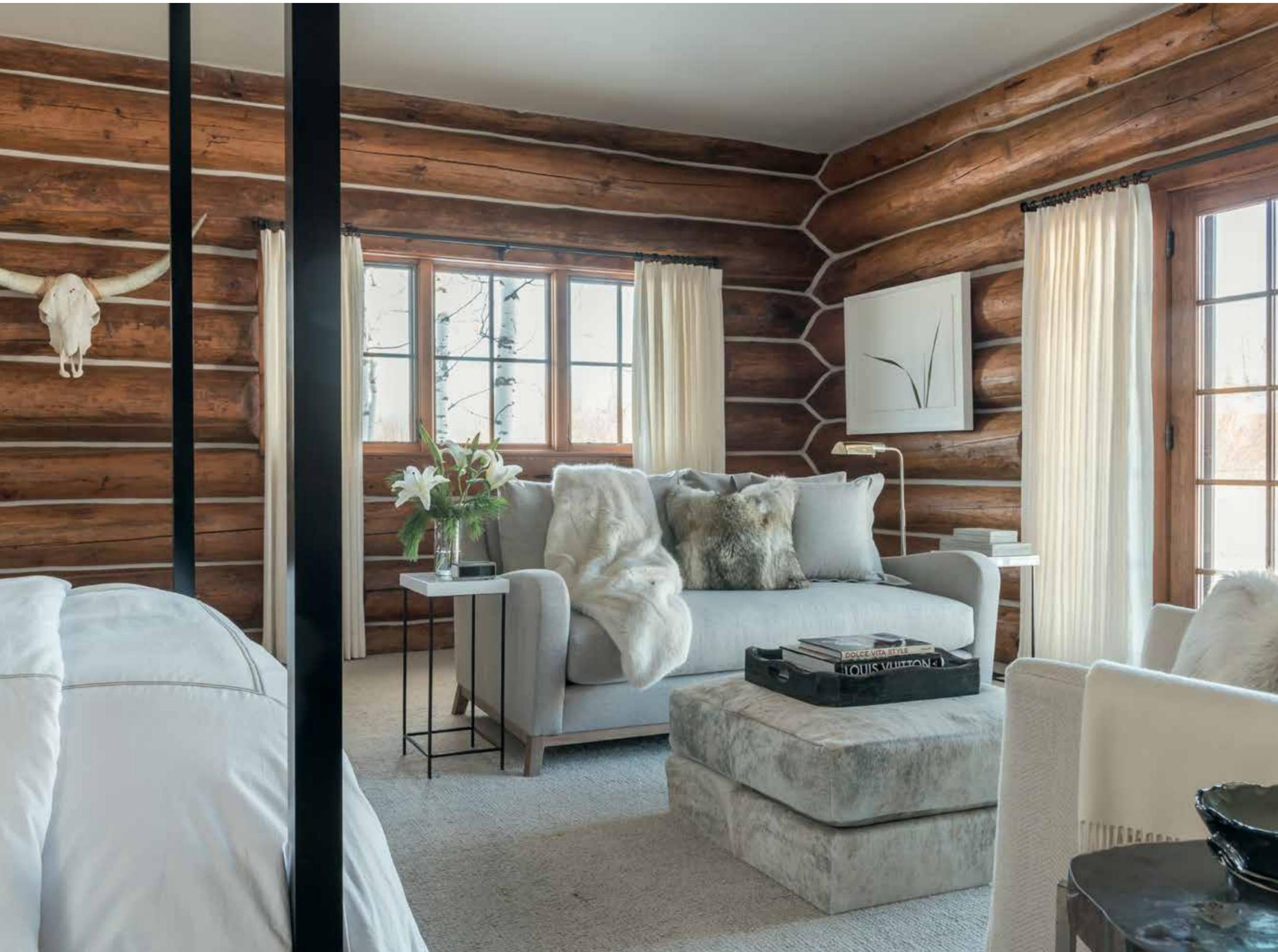
Once the home’s overall palette was refined, the front door was replaced and the entryway made brighter and grander. The kitchen was redesigned and the bathrooms updated. Drywall was repainted from a

A dated 1990s-era log cabin was the last thing the owners envisioned for themselves in a new home. Rather, they had in mind one that was light-filled and rustic modern in style. But after finding the perfect property in Alta, Wyoming, and bringing in Vera Iconica Architecture and WRJ Design to update the structure, they became log-home converts due to the form’s charm, solidity, and appropriateness and for its enduring appeal in a Rocky Mountain setting.



FACING: The purchasers of a home on the Idaho side of the Wyoming Tetons hired WRJ Design to renovate their log cabin in time for the holidays. The new front door, designed by WRJ, transforms a traditional entry. The designers added interest through the addition of fur pillows on a Poltrona Frau woven-leather bench and the Visual Comfort Cubist chandelier in aged iron and glass.

LEFT: A shell-fronted cabinet adds a touch of brightness and a decided glam factor to the master bedroom, while the mirror invites light into log-walled interiors.



yellow tone to a creamy white, while the floors were refinished. The new dark grayish hue created a strong contrast to the walls and made the white chinking pop. Strong, rustic western statement items like elk antler chandeliers were replaced with cleaner, lighter, and more modern fixtures, which went a long way toward transforming the ambience. A bar and wine refrigerator were installed for effortless, more welcoming entertaining. A stylish and functional mudroom was added to accommodate all the necessary accessories for the homeowners' favorite outdoor pursuits, such as skiing, biking, and fly-fishing. Sumptuous fabrics were introduced throughout in cream, gray, white, and blue tones to create a quiet backdrop for carefully curated contemporary art pieces.

Jenkins and his colleague Sabrina Schreiber oversaw the transformation, with WRJ's Amanda Jordan helping with the holiday styling for the couple's first Christmas in the new-old home. First they selected a color palette that harmonizes with the room. The combination of white, silver, and crystal references the snow on the nearby Teton peaks while creating a sophisticated fairyland feel. Then they sought to engage all the senses. Luxurious textures like sheepskin throws and woven blankets in rich jewel tones added coziness and warmth, providing a contrast to sleek metallic items. White lilies mixed with cedar boughs contributed seasonal scents and established a connection to nature. In an original variation on the tried and true, they incorporated baby's breath into the classic evergreen boughs on the mantel, which introduced texture and scent while having a softening effect. The tabletop at the center of the festivities was deliberately kept simple and elegant, with antler candleholders, uncomplicated place settings, and a variety of candles to foster an intimate conviviality for those gathered around the table.

In the heart of winter, when darkness falls early and the valley is covered with snow, the dwelling glows with seasonal spirit. It is then that the charm of the transformation is most fully appreciated by its new owners. Early in the process, the wife recalls, they had envisioned a structure of stone and reclaimed lumber with steel windows. What they ended up with was almost the complete opposite. To the homeowners' surprise, the resulting rooms enjoy the warmth of logs and the aura of a mountain home, yet feel current and sophisticated.

For Jenkins, every log saved, every home reconfigured for today, brings great satisfaction as a move toward more sustainable living. "Log homes are really wonderful," he says. "And kind of like restoring old cars, once you go in and redo the components they can be really beautiful as well."

A mix of textures and luxurious fabrics, such as Loro Piana drapes, creates cozy, inviting interiors. Says WRJ Senior Designer Sabrina Schreiber, "We like to use neutrals and add texture with furs, wools, linens, and natural fibers."



FACING: The Belgian dining table, with a bluestone top and fumed teak legs, is overhung by a chandelier from the owner's collection. Wool upholstered chairs were made in the US; rug is a mosaic mix of cowhides from Brazil. A holiday palette of green, white, and glass creates a simple and elegant tabletop.

ABOVE: The kitchen and butler's pantry achieve a sense of airiness with glass-fronted cabinets, Taj Mahal quartzite countertops, smoked-glass pendants, and a light palette juxtaposed against dark floors. WRJ reupholstered existing counter chairs to match the drapes.



ABOVE: White caulking between the logs and furniture with slim-profile legs help lighten the home's mass. The introduction of natural materials through the wicker basket and wood trough with pine cones adds texture.

FACING: Seasonal greenery and a river rock fireplace create an inviting backdrop for a pair of luxurious chairs with leather armrests, linen upholstery, and fur pillows. The custom coffee table was designed by WRJ and made by Packsaddle Road. The artwork is by abstract painter Bradford Stewart.

