

A GORGEOUS NEW BOOK SHINES A SPOTLIGHT
ON WRJ DESIGN'S MODERN MOUNTAIN STYLE

NATURALLY ELEGANT

STORY **TATE GUNNERSON** PHOTOS **WILLIAM ABRANOWICZ**

*Inspired by
tumbleweed,
a hand-wrought
bronze mirror by
van der Straeten
complements
the stone walls in
this handsome
Montana project.*





Streamlined, elegant and incredibly tactile: Jackson-based interior designers Rush Jenkins and Klaus Baer's

modern, internationally influenced style quickly found a receptive audience after the spouses and longtime collaborators relocated to the area from Manhattan in 2011—the fulfillment of a longtime dream. We talk with Jenkins and Baer about their new book, *Natural Elegance: Luxurious Mountain Living*, which showcases some of their favorite mountain projects.

What drew you to Jackson Hole after so many years in Manhattan?

RJ: After 13 years in New York City, we asked ourselves what we wanted to be doing for the next 20-30 years, and

where. Though we both loved our NYC experience for various reasons, we felt a strong pull westward and felt inspired to relocate our design firm to Jackson, Wyoming. It not only offers spectacularly inspirational outdoor beauty, but we also felt it had the clientele that would appreciate what we hoped to bring.

KB: I remember working many late nights in our NYC home office, dreaming about living in the mountains >>

ABOVE, LEFT: Wool sofas, sumptuous throws and linen draperies create a cozy spot to converse in front of the stone fireplace of this Jackson Hole home. ABOVE, RIGHT: A nod to the rustic architecture, an antique mirror framed in faux bois branches reflects light into this stonewalled space.

rather than the concrete canyons of the big city. I grew up in the mountains and had always felt a pull to return. There's a majesty to the Tetons that you can see and experience from almost anywhere in the valley—a perpetual sense of inspiration.

You describe your style as international mountain. How does it differ from the traditional Western aesthetic?

RJ: Western interior design has stereotypically been characterized as having a heavier sensibility—both in the furniture as well as overall palette. We place a high level of importance on travel in order to see and experience what is happening around the world and try to integrate aesthetic inspiration from other areas such as the Alps and East Coast into the mountain aesthetic and lifestyle.

In the book, you mention the Japanese concept of half hidden, half seen. How does that influence your work?

RJ: My approach to design was forever changed after learning about this design philosophy in Japan. The best way to explain this philosophy is the metaphor of a good book—whose story should unfold chapter by chapter. Similarly, a home tells a story of the family who lives there, and the discovery of quiet corners, beautiful views and special collections should unfold like the chapters of a good book. >>

BELOW, LEFT: Illuminated by a contemporary metal chandelier, a built-in banquette and slipcovered chairs soften the traditional wood table in this light-filled space with stunning mountain views. BELOW, RIGHT: Blue-green upholstery and a photograph by William Abranowicz establish a soft, soothing palette that juxtaposes this home's stone walls.





ABOVE: The kitchen's white cabinetry and solid-surface countertops pop against the palette of predominantly earth tones in this loft-like project in Jackson Hole. BELOW: In this dining room, linen-covered armchairs, and a leather banquette draped with reindeer hides, surround a custom oak table underneath a metal-and-rock-crystal chandelier.





How is designing the interior of a mountain home different than designing one in an urban setting?

RJ: Having designed the interiors for residences in both urban and mountain environments, it's important to note that the underlying design principles for interior architecture, scale, space and proportions are all critical no matter the location. What makes designing in the mountains so incredible is that we have the privilege of using the natural elements directly outside the windows on the inside of the home: beautiful stone, reclaimed timbers, cozy cashmere and beautiful wools.

You also often incorporate custom pieces by local craftsmen. What do they add to an interior?

KB: When we have the opportunity to utilize local craftsmen to create custom pieces, it not only creates the obvious one-of-a-kind piece of furniture or metalwork that has been carefully designed for that home, but it also allows us to help support local and regional artisans, who are an extraordinary resource for us. >>

ABOVE, LEFT: A sculptural tub takes advantage of the natural vistas in the spa-like bathroom, which boasts heated stone flooring and a double shower. ABOVE, RIGHT: Wicker dining chairs and a simple wooden table create a lovely spot for outdoor meals on this stone patio in the Tetons.

What is your favorite Jackson memory?

RJ: The 2018 eclipse was without a doubt one of the most spectacular events I've ever witnessed—made only more special by spending it at a client's home along the Snake River in Jackson. We were under the 100-percent totality band—and it was a perfectly clear day. Incredible!

KB: I would say second to the eclipse was our wedding, which was held at the Snake River Sporting Club. We had a rockin' celebration that went to 3 a.m. Awesome fun with friends and family.

Where would you send a visiting friend to eat in Jackson?

RJ: A locals' favorite is the super cozy and fabulous Persephone Bakery. The owners spent time learning the trade in Paris and mastered the craft of baking at altitude. Your taste buds say Parisian cafe while the surrounding mountains say Jackson.

What is your favorite menu item?

KB: Their cinnamon brioche is off the charts!

What is your favorite mountain town outside of the United States?

KB: I'm a little biased to the Tyrolean Alps of western Austria, primarily because my father's family is from there. There is nothing like skiing or hiking the Alps. The Dolomites are equally spectacular, which is where we spent our honeymoon.

RJ: The Dolomites are kind of like the Tetons on steroids. Incredibly charming while magnificent at the same time. ○

BELOW, LEFT: Collected over the years, the vintage and antique furnishings and decorations perfectly suit the weathered wood walls in this charming guest cottage. BELOW, RIGHT: A collaboration with architect Shawn Ankeny, the creek-side guest cottage is clad with old-fashioned dark wood and wide chinking.

wrjdesign.com

