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REASONS WE LOVE IT
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A FAMILY LEGACY

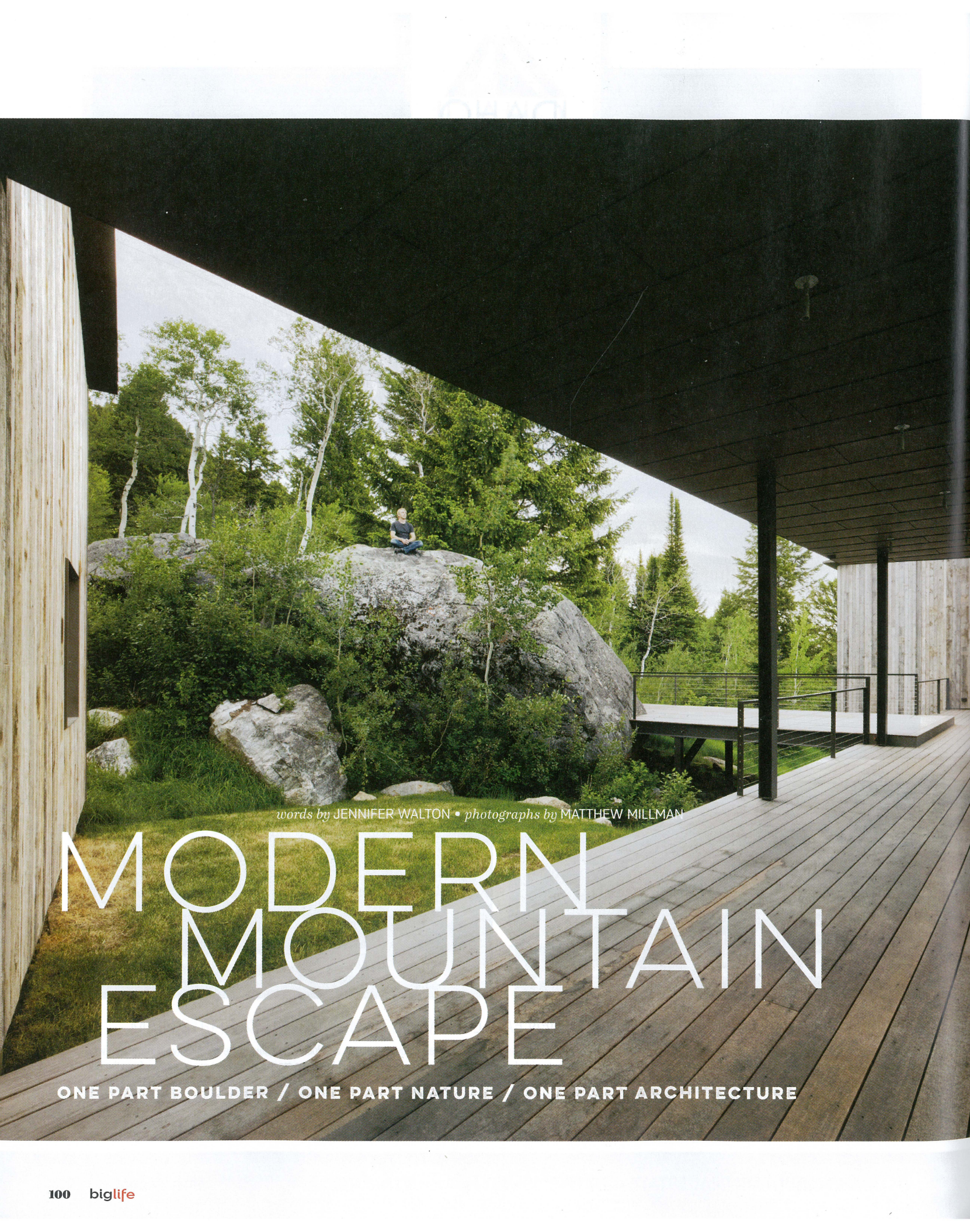
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words by JENNIFER WALTON • *photographs by* MATTHEW MILLMAN

MODERN MOUNTAIN ESCAPE

ONE PART BOULDER / ONE PART NATURE / ONE PART ARCHITECTURE



It was enormous, even by nature's standards. A boulder whose last movement resulted in its final resting place—the side of steep hill in a rocky alpine landscape in an area of Jackson Hole where it seemed nearly unfathomable to move. So the question became how to incorporate its presence, complement its shape and volume, and accentuate its relationship in a natural environment to its future built environment. It influenced a myriad of decisions from the client/owner, architect, and builder prior to applying any concepts in the design process. Its existence upon the site was pure art in the most literal sense but its impression also suggested a philosophical reverence to nature.

The challenges were apparent and prompted lengthy discussions, but what became clear after the architect's initial summer visit was that this mammoth boulder was an integral part of what generated the design response to the site. Eric Logan of Carney Logan Burke Architects in Jackson, Wyoming, advocated for making the rock a focal point without disrupting the dense and mature aspen and spruce trees throughout the rugged terrain. "This was a real adventure and an inspiring one," explains Logan.

Logan relied on more than 20 years of experience as an architect to design an upside-down home, lifting the main living areas into the treetops and allowing the natural light to fill the pods of space linked by an outdoor walkway upon an enclosed linear library below. "When you arrive to the home at the lower level and get rid of cars, bags, and gear, you ascend to the upper level and experience this connection to the uphill side of the site. It's almost like a Japanese garden, although on a different

LEFT: The boulder, large and in charge of creating the atmosphere, is a central focus of the home. The deck affords views of the boulder and the alpine terrain. ABOVE: The office, where the outside is inside.



scale. As we were developing a relationship with the boulder and concerned about being too low and having the feeling of the boulder rolling into the living room, we were sure to get up high enough so the feeling is more like yard art.” On the downhill side of the site, the home takes on a treehouse feel with an expansive and dramatic view across the valley. It’s this contrast between nature and the interior and exterior spaces that make the home wildly impressive.

Don Frank of Dembergh Construction Wyoming, collaborated with Logan. Dembergh is a highly respected company that specializes in contemporary, mountain modern, and traditional custom residential homes. “Every site has specific method and practice solution opportunity and the Boulder Retreat, while highly

technical, well matched our unique mountain experiences,” states Frank. He adds, “The home’s design is geometrically pure and an imaginatively restrained modern expression set in a rugged, forest landscape.”

Logan and the team prioritized sustainable materials and the creation of a low-maintenance building. Logan requested reclaimed barnwood (regionally-sourced), naturally patina-ed Bonderized metal siding and roof, as well as durable ipe wood decking. Huge units of glass are protected to the south as shelter from the summer sun but invite winter rays for welcomed solar gain. About the high-performing building envelope, (which included R-40 walls with one-inch continuous exterior insulation), Logan emphasizes, “An inspiring



ABOVE: A dramatic view into the kitchen and main living space from the deck. BELOW: Reclaimed wood siding, which was removed from old barns located in the region, requires no finishing or staining.



LEFT: The bathroom is peaceful and luxurious in its simplicity. The tub is arranged on a platform and looks out onto a valley view. RIGHT (top and bottom): The home's entrance is just left of the garage. The buildings are pods connected by the covered outdoor walkway at the upper level and by the linear library on the lower level.



house is sustainable because it helps keep the inhabitants motivated to maintain and preserve the home. A place that is loved will perform and last much longer than one that is not."

The main living and dining area is open and appealing with space to let the eye rest or gaze at nature's gifts. The use of texture and color is "quiet, elegant, impeccable. It calms the soul," affirms Frank. From the dining room, there is a room designated for tea and reflection. The master bedroom is positioned to take full advantage of the view to the boulder's adjoined conifer. The private living area also includes his and her baths and closets.

In the Japanese culture, the practice of architecture is to work with nature. Always. One of the homeowners took a thoughtful approach to the design of the bathroom by providing references to Logan, as he had spent a significant amount of time in Japan. The trend towards bathrooms functioning as wet rooms may be recent, but in time-honored bathhouses, the use of Hinoki soaking tubs and wet-proofed

floors is well established. From the Hinoki tree, which emits a lemony fragrance when cut or scrubbed, comes a light-colored, almost white, straight-grained cedar wood, which reflects its own Zen vibe, one that Logan implemented in the compact space by extending its use on the cabinets. The tub, arranged on a platform, is a "nod to keeping materials simple in the room," states Logan. From both shower and tub there is a view southeast over the valley. The plaster on the walls is waterproof to accommodate the steam from the deep tub's warm temps. The overall ambience is of entering a small private sanctuary filled with light and warmth.

In the adjacent pod, where the guest bedroom, bath, and office/ yoga room are located, the trees' leaves flutter and produce a bucolic atmosphere. Moving across the elongated walkway between the two pods is almost like walking a fashion red carpet with the boulder and its environs as the audience. Along the lean, sleek walkway, one appears to float. The living area and kitchen glass sliders



connect inside to outside and the boulder is the consummate partner to the structure's angular lines.

Overcoming the tests of building a home that "doesn't look like the other kids in the neighborhood," states Logan, "was not easy. And yet, it is a beautiful addition to the landscape." Often other homes' design challenges in the area result in misplaced missions. This one, with its boulder-licious offerings, is one for the history books. When extremely difficult conditions exist, creativity and collaboration are the answers. "Working with these owners' discerning tastes in color and texture and Carney Logan Burke's masterful vision of the spaces, views, and light was and is deeply satisfying," claims Frank. The result is a home that strikes an effortless balance between that rock and a lovely place to live. 

THE PROS

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TOP: Large units of glass connect the interior with the exterior. ABOVE: The "James Bond-style" spiral staircase is a work of art that connects the guest pod to the lower level linear library.