

H O M E

VAIL
VALLEY

REAL ESTATE & MOUNTAIN LIFESTYLES | FEBRUARY 2014



BEYOND THE CHALET

*LOCAL ARCHITECTS AND
THEIR CLIENTS ARE DEFINING
A NEW 'MOUNTAIN MODERN'*

LUXURIOUS
BATHTUBS

MARKET
REPORT

METALLIC
FABRICS

Visit vvhmag.com to read
our tablet and desktop edition



the **NEW** blueprints

EUROPEAN
DEFINED THE VAIL
VALLEY'S ROOTS,
BUT MOUNTAIN
MODERN IS
MOVING IN

BY KIMBERLY NICOLETTI

To meet Beaver Creek building codes and the client's personal taste, architect Kyle Webb designed a traditionally-framed timber and stone structure with copper roofing and paneling and stylized historical accents. Photo Courtesy KH Webb Architects



CHARMING SWISS CHALETs AND ENORMOUS LOG STRUCTURES: These are often the main architectural styles that conjure traditional, romantic notions of mountain living. But the European feel and the ranch look are only two of three main architectural styles in the Vail Valley. Mountain modern is a classification that allows homeowners and architects to borrow from the two traditions, while designing a timeless and unique home.

EUROPEAN TRADITION

It all began in and around the European mountains: Simple wooden structures popped up in valleys and pastures. As far back as the 1300s, the original term “chalet” described a rudimentary shelter used by farmers a few months out of the year. They utilized the natural resources — wood and stone — they found in the surrounding environment.

The modern term “chalet” refers more to an in-town house designed by French and English travelers who, after visiting Switzerland, romanticized the Swiss homes they encountered by heavily adorning them until they

smacked of gingerbread houses.

Defining characteristics of these mid-19th century homes include: wooden construction with little or no finish; a shallow roof angle (to hold snow for better insulation) that overhangs a prominent, single gable; tiny windows, since glassmakers could not fashion large windows; and small rooms so inhabitants could more efficiently heat them with wood-burning stoves.

“Vail was built with an alpine European vision, so many of the original homes, and even recent homes, reflect that heritage, although they’re often updated with a modern influence,” said

Doug DeChant, president of Shepherd Resources, Inc. AIA Architects.

Modern technology now allows homes and luxury condominiums to employ larger glass windows than any 19th century villager could have imagined, and heating systems provide plenty of warmth to create open floor plans, rather than individual rooms that rely on wooden stoves. This means any European influenced home in the Vail Valley makes a bolder statement, while still maintaining the charm of yesteryear.

When Sonnenalp sprung to life in Vail decades ago, with its decorative balconies, shutters and

rooftops, homeowners followed the European cue.

In the Vail Valley, European architecture dominated architectural styles into the mid-1990s, and some homeowners still opt for the Old World style, said Jack Snow, owner of RKD Architects.

LOG CABINS AND COLORADO RANCHES

Of course, any mountain vision usually invokes at least one image of a log, or ranch-style home.

“It’s just what people’s vision of a mountain house is,” said Kyle Webb, owner of K.H. Webb Architects.

While log cabins have come a

This KH Webb Architects-designed home in Lionshead is both modern and comfortable, capitalizing on the view.



long way in terms of adaptability, Webb says fewer homeowners are choosing to build traditional log homes these days because log homes “functionally can’t adapt” as well as timber homes. However, as architects mix logs with timber, they find “new ways of pushing the boundaries of what timber used to do, in terms of spans, cantilevers (and more),” DeChant said.

For instance, he has used heavy log columns, beams and trusses on a sturdy stone foundation and inserted huge glass windows between the log columns. The latest technology in durable, well-insulated materials like glass has allowed architects to expand the range of possibilities when it comes to log and timber homes.

One of the things architects like DeChant consider when building a more traditional mountain, or Colorado lodge, home is: What did the original Colorado home in the mountains look like, and what can it look like when adapted to the Vail Valley and a specific client’s needs? Then, they tend to push the limits.

One of the grandest examples of pushing the envelope comes in the form of mimicking National Park Service lodges. Bachelor Gulch and Red Sky Ranch mandated the style in their subdivisions, calling for the use of heavy stone foundations, large-scale logs and timbers “that almost exaggerate, to push the evidence of the structure” and a priority upon overt structural expression, DeChant said. Large, open floor plans and expansive windows also became a necessity.

Many neighborhood design guidelines mandate certain adaptations of European or Colorado lodge features, which have greatly influenced much of the architecture, DeChant said. In fact, some of the restrictions have restrained architects when they attempt to build too modern.

“The area is a Colorado resort, so we see traditional mountain homes and lodges that reflect the



“

MODERN ARCHITECTURE GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO (SETTLE) ONTO A PIECE OF GROUND AND, WITH OUR CLIENT’S PROGRAM IN MIND, ASK, ‘WHAT DOES THIS PIECE OF GROUND WANT — WHAT IS IT ASKING FOR?’

heritage of the Rocky Mountains,” DeChant said, “thus the use of log and timber, stone, steel and, of course, glass to receive warming sunlight and take in views.

TRANSITIONAL TO MOUNTAIN MODERN

In the mid-2000s, mountain modern became a buzzword, and it has stuck. Though it seems each homeowner and professional has a slight variation on the exact definition, one thing is certain: It’s an updated version of any European or ranch style architecture that has been going on in the mountains, and it lends itself to stretches of the imagination.



Mountain modern merges organic materials such as wood and stone with modern materials, forms and arrangements, as see below.
Photo courtesy Douglas Miller
DeChant Architects



One subcategory — or style just before a home is actually defined as mountain modern — is called “transitional.”

Transitional style is a progression toward modern, or contemporary. It’s “a little neater and cleaner, but not (mountain) modern,” Webb said.

He distinguishes transitional from mountain modern in the following way: Transitional is clean and simple but still tends to utilize decorative, or ornamental base and case, and can carry lines of old stone mountain homes, while mountain modern is more sleek with a lot of stone and no case or base trim (or very little). The latter employs fewer materials and is overall sleeker and cleaner. It doesn’t have traditional gable roofs and can often feature flat roofs. Transitional may take a timber, ranch style home, and blend steel beam work “to change it up a bit,” Webb said. DeChant

describes it as a mix of traditional and emerging.

When it comes to defining modern vs. mountain modern, there’s also a fine line. Webb describes it by summoning visions of a white, sleek box in Palm Beach, vs. a mountain modern home that “uses natural materials to pay homage to the mountains with modern design.” In other words, it merges organic materials like wood, stone and stucco with modern materials, forms and arrangements, DeChant said.

Color palettes and materials tend to echo the surrounding environment. Smooth stone paneling inside and out, along with larger, smoother wooden panels and much more glass are common elements in mountain modern homes.

Snow explains it this way: Modern employs flat roofs and rectangular boxes, while mountain modern draws from ranch materials like wood and stone but

“Work with a Beaver Creek Resident Specializing in Beaver Creek Luxury Homes”

BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY
HomeServices
Colorado Properties



825 HOLDEN ROAD

\$4,350,000 | 5 bedrooms | 5,300 square feet



349 BORDERS ROAD

\$5,875,000 | 5 bedrooms | 7,600 square feet



Jackie Northrop

Broker Associate

Cell: 970-390-2315

Office: 970-845-8440

www.jackienorthrop.com



“

CLIENTS ARE BECOMING MORE SOPHISTICATED IN ARCHITECTURE IN GENERAL. THEY WANT TO IMAGINE WHAT CAN BE. THEY DON'T JUST WANT TO RECREATE THE PAST. THEY WANT TO IMAGINE.



employs it in cleaner, lighter ways.

“We’re talking the difference between jazz and rock, so there are differences, but there are some gray lines in there,” Snow said.

MOUNTAIN MODERN IMAGINATION

And that’s where the magic comes in. No matter what exact definition or term people use to describe the “mountain modern” trend, one thing is certain: It allows architects to be creative.

“Modern architecture gives us the opportunity to (settle) onto a

piece of ground and, with our client’s program in mind, ask, ‘what does this piece of ground want — what is it asking for?’” DeChant said. “It’s a place to more freely imagine what could be here ... It’s a place where almost any form is worth considering.”

The style lends itself to solar absorption through south-facing windows; stone walls that absorb heat; and sod roofs, where wildflowers and grass help blend the home into its surroundings.

Snow draws from sculpture and art when designing homes; his

goal involves taking advantage of a piece of land and making a piece of art, he said. In fact, he avoids categorizing his homes, instead striving to create designs and features that others are not. Still, most homeowners initially call for mountain modern (and then, possibly push boundaries from there).

“Contemporary is moving to the top of the heap,” Webb said. “As people become more receptive to mountain modern, we’re allowed to do more things that we weren’t able to do before.”

One example involves siding



*Designed by KH Webb Architects, this ranch and equestrian facility accommodates wheelchairs by integrated design, not afterthought.
Photo by Kimberly Gavin*

made of cornhusks and rice. It looks like wood siding but is very low maintenance — it only needs to be cleaned and resealed every few years — and it doesn't rot. Webb calls it a clean version of wood siding. Other options include exterior and interior concrete and steel paneling. The concrete can be tinted to warm up the appearance, and a patinated, bluish steel looks warm as well, Webb said.

Overall, mountain modern encompasses a plethora of design options and materials.

"Clients are becoming more sophisticated in architecture in general," DeChant said. "They want to imagine what can be. They don't just want to recreate the past. They want to imagine."

Fortunately, the merger of technology and inspiration — which leads to more open-mindedness — provides the perfect opportunity to create a true home of your dreams.

"There are all sorts of new things that are on the horizon," Webb said. "Before, we were limited by palettes. But now, it's a work in progress." **VVH**



BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY
HomeServices
Colorado Properties



1877 Eagle Ranch Road | Eagle Ranch **4 Bedroom | 5 Bath | 5,009 sq. ft.**

Gorgeous single family home in Eagle Ranch with many upgrades including slab granite counters, massive stone fireplace, hardwood floors, whole home security system and more. Easy living with and open floor plan, two car garage plus workshop and outdoor living spaces with hot tub, fire pit and custom BBQ. Situated across from the golf course and enjoy direct access to fishing Brush Creek from your back yard.

\$1,225,000

Joy Ortiz CNE, CRE, GRI
joyo@vail.net
joy-of-realestate.com
970-471-1911

6 Offices | 85 Brokers | Vacation Rentals | Since 1971
BHHSColoradoProperties.com
A member of the franchise system of BHH Affiliates, LLC

