

TIMELESS & INSPIRED

A Modern Approach to
Interior Design in Mountain Homes

BY BRITTANNY HAVARD



Like the feeling of possibility the presence of mountains often inspire, interior design styles of mountain homes in Colorado are similarly embracing a lighter, more modern approach to interior design. Where for the past ten to fifteen years, mountain motifs were brought into high-country homes in a literal sense, today, the interior design style of mountain homes is being influenced more by the sentiments that living among mountains evoke, rather than by incorporating a physical representation of mountains into the home.

Pinnacle Design Studio, based in Frisco, Colorado, and Vail Valley-based, Casey St. John, are two premier interior design firms with a focus on luxury residential

home design. Specializing in the interior design of mountain homes, both teams of experts have noticed a remarkable shift in the interior design style of mountain residences within the resort communities they serve. Where interiors of homes in many of Colorado's resort communities once showcased a distinct, mountain-rustic style of interior design, today, mountain home interiors are embracing a lighter, more modern approach to design.

"In my thirteen years of interior design in Summit County, there has been a huge shift from the typical mountain home décor people envision— homes styled with browns, plaids, and leather, toward a more mountain-modern look," said Lisa Yates, lead designer



their home, they would ask for recommendations for an interior designer in Summit County, and there wasn't really anyone locally we could refer our luxury clientele to, so, we stepped in to fill that void," said Yates.

Sharing a similar design aesthetic and passion for uniting resort-based clients with timeless and inspired home design, Amy Casey, Courtney St. John, and Joanne Brutsch joined forces and founded Casey St. John, an interior design firm specializing in luxury interior design services in Vail, Beaver Creek and Denver, Colorado, in 2013. In the same way that Pinnacle Design Studio recognized the need for quality interior design services in Summit County, the trio stepped in to fill a similar void in the Vail Valley, where the shift from a rustic to modern style of interior mountain home design was also occurring. Just because a home was built in the mountains, it was no longer necessary to be so literal with the interior design of mountain homes.

"Today's mountain interiors have a lighter feel all around," said Amy Casey, principle at Casey St. John. "People are relating interior design in their mountain homes, more to the feelings inspired by nature, than to literal interpretations of figurative mountain elements, like [incorporating] pines cones, moose, bears, fish, or tree elements, into their home."

The same can be said for new color choices in mountain homes; instead of choosing shades that literally represent nature, individuals are seeking hues that are reflective of the inspired state they feel like they are in when they are among nature.

"People are gravitating toward lighter colors," said Yates. "We're seeing a lot of what we call the gray trend within mountain residences. Incorporating gray or taupe colors into a mountain residence gives the home that mountain-modern feel, without being committed to being super contemporary."

Contributing to the less-is-more-approach to interior design in mountain homes, is the trend of clients in both Summit and Eagle County selecting lighter weight and smaller scale furniture for their home. "You're not seeing dense, heavily carved furniture anymore," said Yates. "Cleaner lines in furniture, and in décor in general, throughout the home, is what's trending."

ELEVATED DESIGN AESTHETIC

Also elevating the sophistication level of mountain home interiors, is the trend of incorporating unique art into mountain homes. "Ten to fifteen years ago, in Vail, you were seeing design styles repeated over, and over, again," said Casey. "Today, clients are seeking a style of art that is unique to them, and art that is not in everyone

else's home. That level of sophistication did not previously exist in mountain interior home design."

Designers at Pinnacle Design Studio and Casey St. John collect and curate art from galleries all over the country, and the type of art they source is not limited to painted canvases.

"With the new approach to art, we're trying to incorporate not just framed paintings and wrapped canvases, but sculptural pieces— shadow boxes featuring geodes, or shadow boxes with feathers," said Yates. "There are ways to bring the mountain feel into the home with artwork, without the style being so literal, like it used to be."

AN EXCLUSIVE BENEFIT

Interior designers' ability to source art and furnishings is extremely valuable to clients with homes in the mountains, where access to goods can be especially limiting.

"Anyone can go online and buy a piece of furniture, but it will likely look like what everyone else has," said Courtney St. John, fellow principle at Casey St. John. "Online shopping is an amazing resource, but what happens a lot of times, is that we'll get calls from a client that has ordered something for their space, and it is too big or the wrong color, and they find that they are out \$2,000."

Not only can interior designers source furniture, art and housewares from hundreds of vendors, from all over the country, their ability to order, manage and strategically time the shipping and receiving of goods is a benefit to clients who may be moving into, or visiting, their mountain home and restricted by a specific timeline.

"The majority of our clients don't live in Summit County full time, and when they are here, they want to be here on vacation, not stressing about buying new couches and sourcing housewares," said Yates. The Pinnacle design team jokes that they furnish entire kitchens down to the can opener— a detail some might deem as minor in relation to a full kitchen remodel, but for second-home owner clients, is an important detail.

A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

The majority of both Pinnacle Design Studio and Casey St. John's clients are second homeowners, and often, not locally based, making the execution of mountain-inspired interior design both unique and challenging.

"Many of our clients don't live in the Vail Valley full-time. Typically, we are designing their vacation home," said St. John. "We live in an area, especially in the mountains, where a lot of what we do as designers is done digitally."

PICTURED OPPOSITE PAGE:
Designs by Casey St. John,
photo credit - Gibeon Photography.

PICTURED THIS PAGE:
Designs by Pinnacle Design Studio,
photo credit - Kimberly Gavin.

at Pinnacle Design Studio, serving greater Summit County. "Homes still might incorporate plaid, but with much lighter colors. We still incorporate antlers into a mountain home's design, but instead of an oversized antler chandelier, we'll create a more modern looking installation wall that includes antlers."

Developed in partnership with Pinnacle Mountain Homes, a luxury home builder in Summit County, Pinnacle Design Studio was established to fill the need clients in Summit County had for quality interior design experts after the build-out of their new home was complete. "Once a client completed building

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-AMY CASEY





Technology plays an important role in achieving successful outcomes in interior design in the mountains, and fortunately, the resource is making it easier for interior designers to do business in resort communities than ever before.

“I never like to be out of reach,” said Yates. “If a client is second-guessing something, I want them to feel comfortable telling me that. They are the ones that are going to be living in the house, so it is my job to give them the vision of that they want, and then exceed those expectations.”

Despite phone calls, texts, and video conferences that help to bridge the distance gap between clients and mountain interior design specialists, some tasks prove more difficult than others. “When you’re trying to pick colors, that’s where trust really comes in,” said Yates. “Every job has its own set of challenges, but choosing colors over email and having to describe colors in words, instead of having clients here to view them in person, makes trust in the designer very important.” Along with the obstacle of overcoming these challenges, comes an opportunity for a unique benefit; a superior client/designer relationship, not often forged outside of mountain interior design relationships where trust is so vital to success.

A UNIQUE BOND

When it comes to superior residential design, establishing an excellent client/designer connection is vital to the success of any design project, especially in the mountains.

“Residential design is very personal, and for me, specifically as a designer, it’s important that the client trusts me to run with their vision,” said Yates.

“The client/designer relationship is vital to the successful outcome of the project, especially in residential design, because it’s the client’s home, it’s not mine.”

Interior mountain home design typically



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-LISA YATES



begins with a consultation between the interior designer and the client. “We always do an in-person meeting to dig into what clients like and don’t like,” said Yates. “It’s easier to start with what they don’t like, because people are more easily able to tell you that. If I have a feeling of what they don’t like, and also a sense of the style that they do want to achieve, we get to what they do like much faster when it comes to presenting options.”

Often, after many residential interior design projects are completed in the mountains, an excellent designer/client relationship is established, which leads to further collaboration among the designer and client. Where in most residential markets, interior designers are called upon to design the interior of a client’s primary residence, first, in resort communities, the opposite trend is true.

“We may start out by working on a remodel of a client’s ski condo in Vail, or a new construction project in Beaver Creek, but by the time the project is completed, our clients trust us and our vision, so many times, we are asked to come and design the interior of their primary residence, whether it’s their home in Palm Springs, California, or in Chicago,” said St. John.

UNPRECEDENTED VALUE

Using an interior designer is proven to lead to achieving a cohesive, balanced look in your home, while also creating value. Homes that have been designed professionally typically sell for significantly more than those that have not been professionally designed. In the mountains, where design styles are shifting away from traditional mountain motifs toward more mountain-modern styles, good interior design remains about functional, well-designed, timeless, and beautiful spaces.

“The common thread that has remained consistent in regards to interior design style in the mountains over the years, is that regardless of what the interior of a home looks like, people want to feel relaxed and comfortable in their mountain home,” said Casey. “That element has not changed, and I don’t think it ever will.”

Embracing mountain-modern design trends in the interior of your Colorado mountain home will keep your home’s look both current and fresh, while remaining respectful to the most important principle of interior design— creating timeless spaces within the home.

PICTURED ABOVE, LEFT:
Design by Pinnacle Design Studio, photo credit - Kimberly Gavin.

PICTURED ABOVE, RIGHT:
Designs by Casey St. John, photo credit - Gibeon Photography.