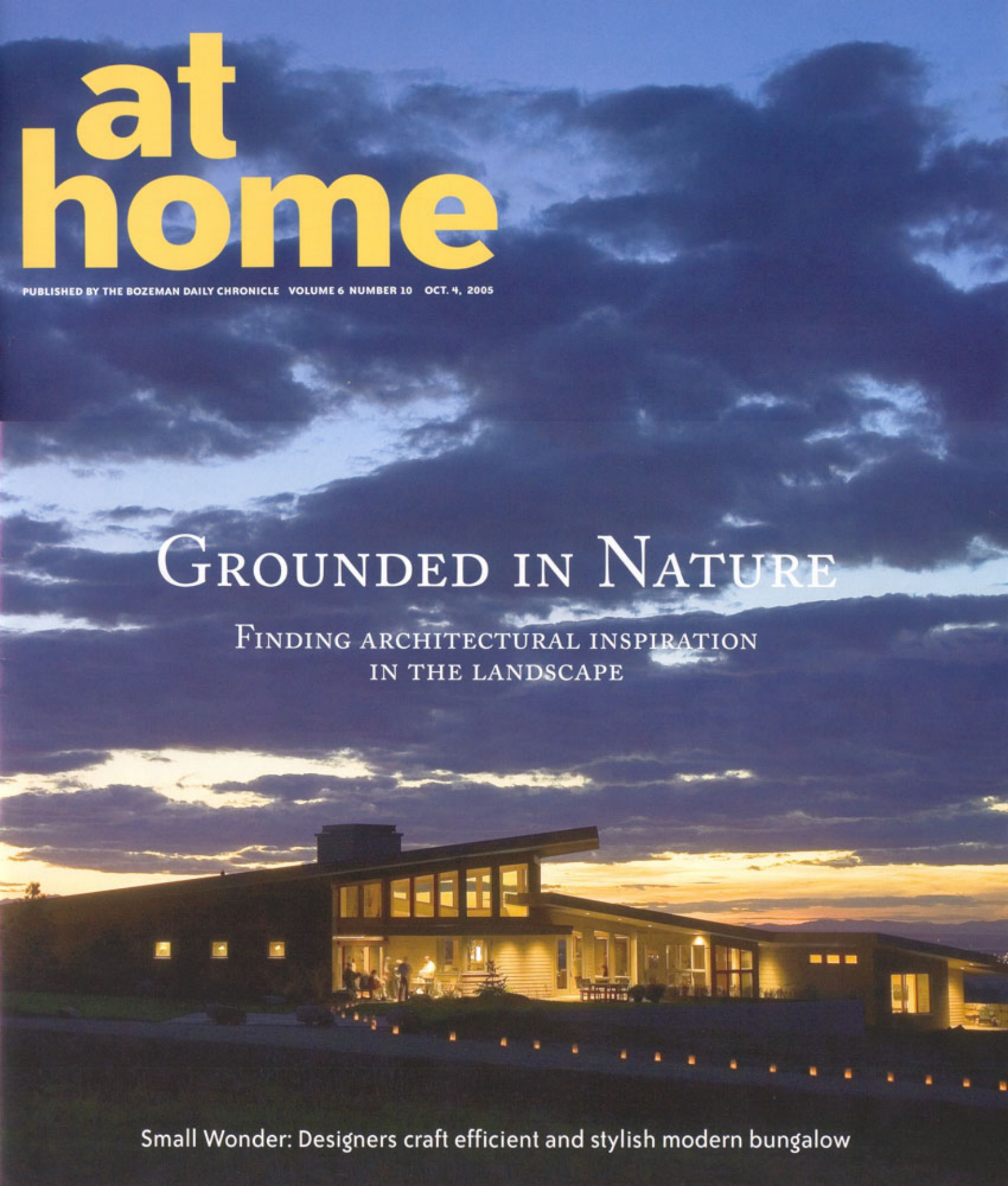


at home

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GROUNDING IN NATURE

FINDING ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION
IN THE LANDSCAPE



Small Wonder: Designers craft efficient and stylish modern bungalow



A Rumford fireplace provides a bold focal point for the living room.

GROUNDING IN NATURE

*Finding architectural
inspiration in the
landscape*

BY CARLA LITTLE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS LEE

Over the years, Mike Simmonds and Terry Thompson had remodeled a lot of homes together, but they had never designed and built one from the ground up. "When you start from scratch," said Mike, "you get to set up the house exactly the way you want, and you also get a chance to try out some new ideas."

So two years ago, when they purchased 20 acres of land in the rolling hills of Sypes Canyon, they seized on the opportunity to create something different. "We wanted the house to look like a beautiful sculpture on that piece of property," Mike said.

To help with the design, Mike and Terry turned to architect





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Brendon Beyers, who shares their desire to explore new architectural directions. "My architecture doesn't have a name," said Brendon. "I'm searching for a new design aesthetic — a melding of the building and the land."

Mike and Terry gave Brendon a diagram showing the rooms, functions and basic connectivity they had in mind. Mike also developed a list of design goals, which included creating an asymmetrical and complex structure, using materials and design elements from the exterior of the house on the inside, and integrating an adjacent business office with the design of the main house. "They wanted the two buildings to work together as one composition," said Brendon.

With all these considerations in mind, Brendon developed a scale model of his preliminary design to ensure that he had captured Mike and Terry's vision. Builder, Jeff Aldworth, was then entrusted to build this cutting-edge structure. "Fortunately for us, Jeff was tireless and a perfectionist about this project — from both an engineering standpoint and an appearance standpoint," Mike said.

The result is a bold and dramatic home with strong rooflines that seem to rise naturally from the contours of the land. For Brendon, the lines of the house seem to "fly out of the landscape. It's what I call 'earth-integrated architecture.'"

The interior of the main house consists of two large bedroom wings connected by a central living area. But neither the size nor the layout of the house are immediately revealed upon entering. "I wanted to create a house that intrigues you to explore it further," said Brendon.

One element that does draw the visitor in is the compelling use of light.

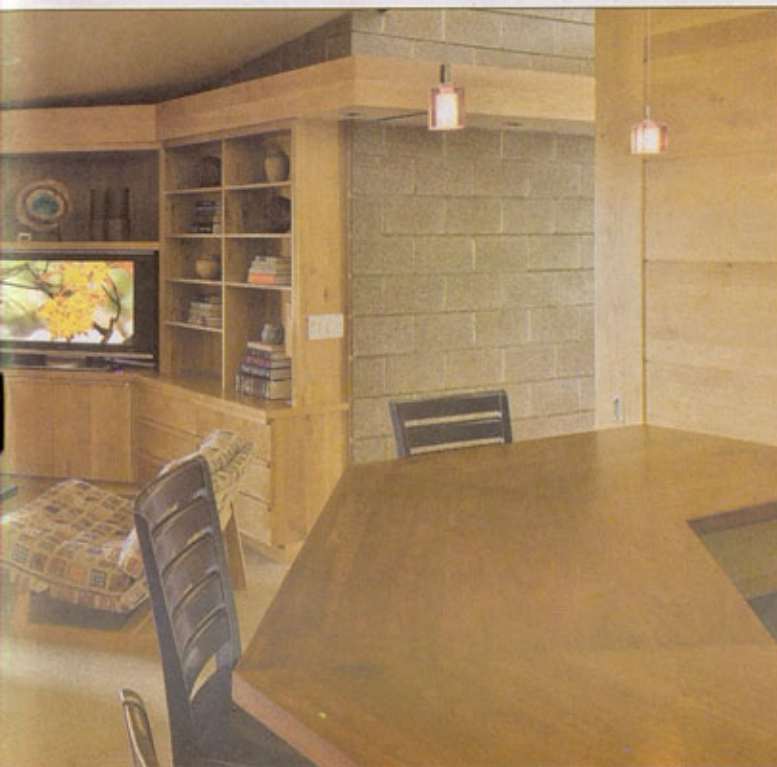
"When folks come in, I want them to see light coming from lots of different directions," said Brendon. "It makes them curious."

The impact of light is especially pronounced in the living room, where the two major rooflines intersect and form a soffit encircled by windows. "When we uplight this room at night, it seems to glow," he added.

Living room guests are also drawn to the huge Rumford fireplace. "It's a classic, masonry fireplace that's been around since colonial times," said Mike. "Terry and I wanted to make it the centerpiece of the house." Visible from the living room, dining room, and kitchen, the fireplace is the focal point of this area, particularly because a skylight directly above floods it with natural light.

The kitchen provides another natural gathering place. Mike and Terry are both avid cooks who want to interact with their guests while they're preparing food. "We knew we wanted an island and we knew we wanted an eating bar," said Terry. "We designed the island to have three sides for bar stools so you can sit and really converse."

All aspects of the kitchen were carefully crafted with both function and aesthetics in mind. The custom cherry cabinets with



Far left: The kitchen island provides ample space for meal preparation and a natural gathering place for entertaining. Top left: The bathroom is a tranquil oasis. Bottom left: The family room area features built-ins for display and storage.



Grounded in nature

exterior glass panels were built by cabinet maker Steve Gray, but designed by the architect, who also conceived the unique cantilevered lighting above the island. "We wanted to light the workspace without blocking the views with hanging fixtures," said Brendon.

Views were an important consideration throughout the house. An eastern patio off the dining room highlights Bridger views; a western patio off the living room looks out onto expansive valley views. Each bedroom has its own terrace, offering additional private vantage points to everyone in the house.

The master bedroom wing, which features two bedrooms, an office and a sitting area, was designed as a private retreat for Mike and Terry. This sanctuary even includes a Zen garden, a peaceful courtyard that is sheltered from the wind, but trellised above to let in the sunlight.

The guest wing also offers a sense of privacy. In fact, a sliding door can be closed to further separate this area of the house from the main living areas. In addition to two large bedrooms, each with private baths, this wing contains an entertainment room with a home theater system, and a wet bar with a

sink, fridge and microwave. "It's a self-contained area," said Brendon. "It's like having a separate guest house within the house."

Although each wing of the house has an independent feel, a uniform interior design look was achieved by using similar materials and repeating design elements. White oak flooring is used throughout much of the house, and linear patterns in wood and glass are evident in many rooms. A guest bath near the living room, for example, was designed to emulate the style of the nearby fireplace. Terry also worked with designer Laura Fedro to keep the paint and tile colors consistent throughout the house.

Adjacent to the house is Mike's 1,200-square-foot design studio for his business, Quantum Design. With enough space for a private office, a conference room, and a research and testing lab, Mike and a few employees can work remotely on new product development. "Sometimes it's easier to be creative and try out unusual ideas away from the main factory," said Mike.

From a design perspective, the office building is integrated with the house through continuous rooflines and complementary landscaping. Mike explained how low rock walls were

Subtle lighting and modern fixtures blend stylishly in the home's powder bathroom.

constructed to run parallel with the wings of the house: "They were built on a slope that exactly matches the rooflines. They carry out all the way until they disappear into the ground. They look like tree roots and make the house look like it grew out of the ground."

This integrated approach to landscaping also extended to plant selection. Grasses, shrubs and trees were carefully selected to complement the home and blend with the surrounding environment. Kentucky blue grass was chosen for the yards, because it provides a natural, visual transition to the views of prairie grass beyond.

And it is these spectacular vistas that Mike and Terry look forward to most as they settle in to their new home. "I can't wait to go out on the terrace and enjoy a fabulous view," said Terry. "I want to watch the weather roll in and take in all the sunsets." 🏡

Carla Little is a freelance writer living in Bozeman. This is her first contribution to At Home.



Windows frame the dramatic views from the dining room.