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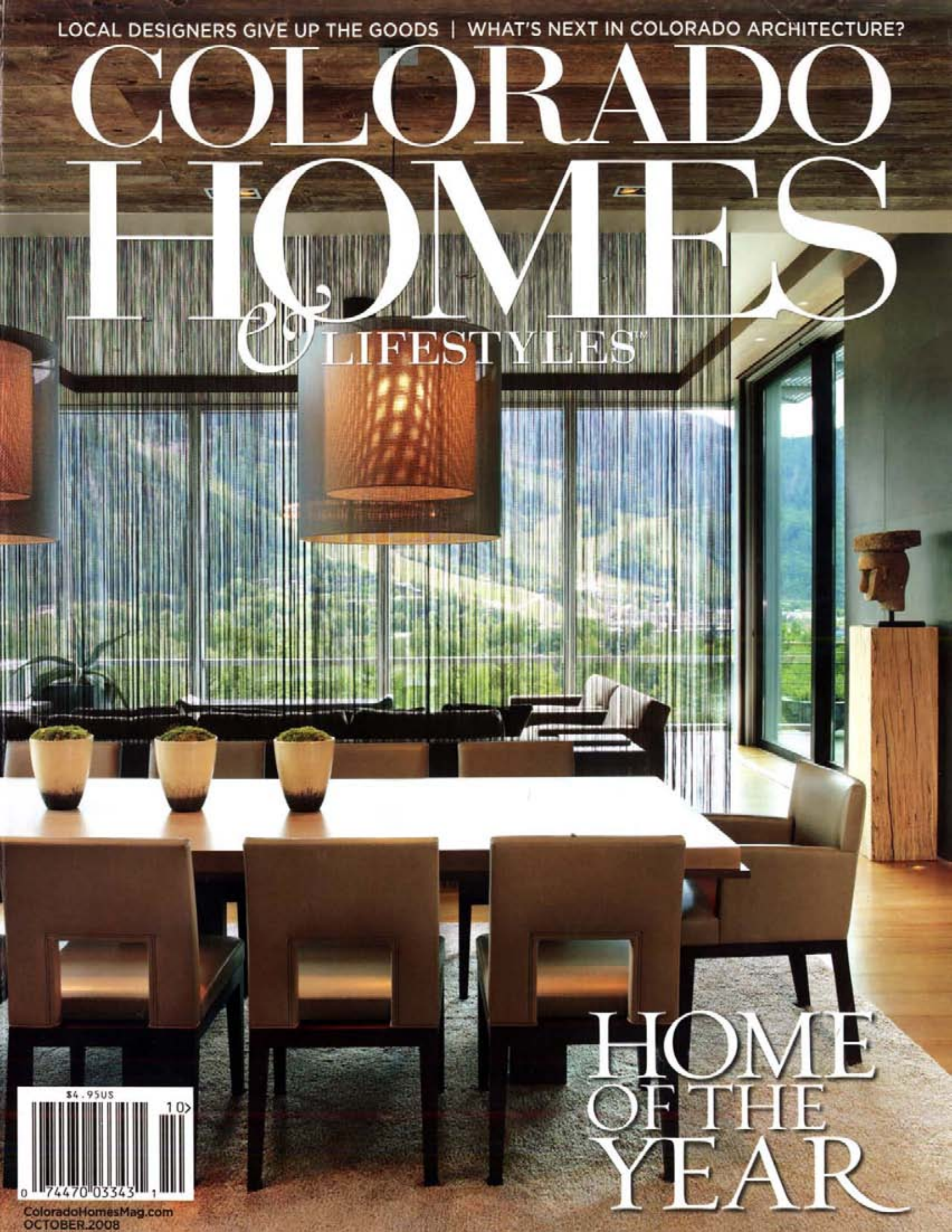

HOME OF THE YEAR

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JASON DEWEY

Our 2008 Home of the Year

ON THE COVER: Inspired by colors and textures drawn straight from nature, our 2008 Home of the Year is modern and organic, sophisticated and sustainable. The dining room (pictured) is separated from the living room by a transparent curtain that circumscribes the space but allows for natural light and mountain views. PHOTO BY JASON DEWEY

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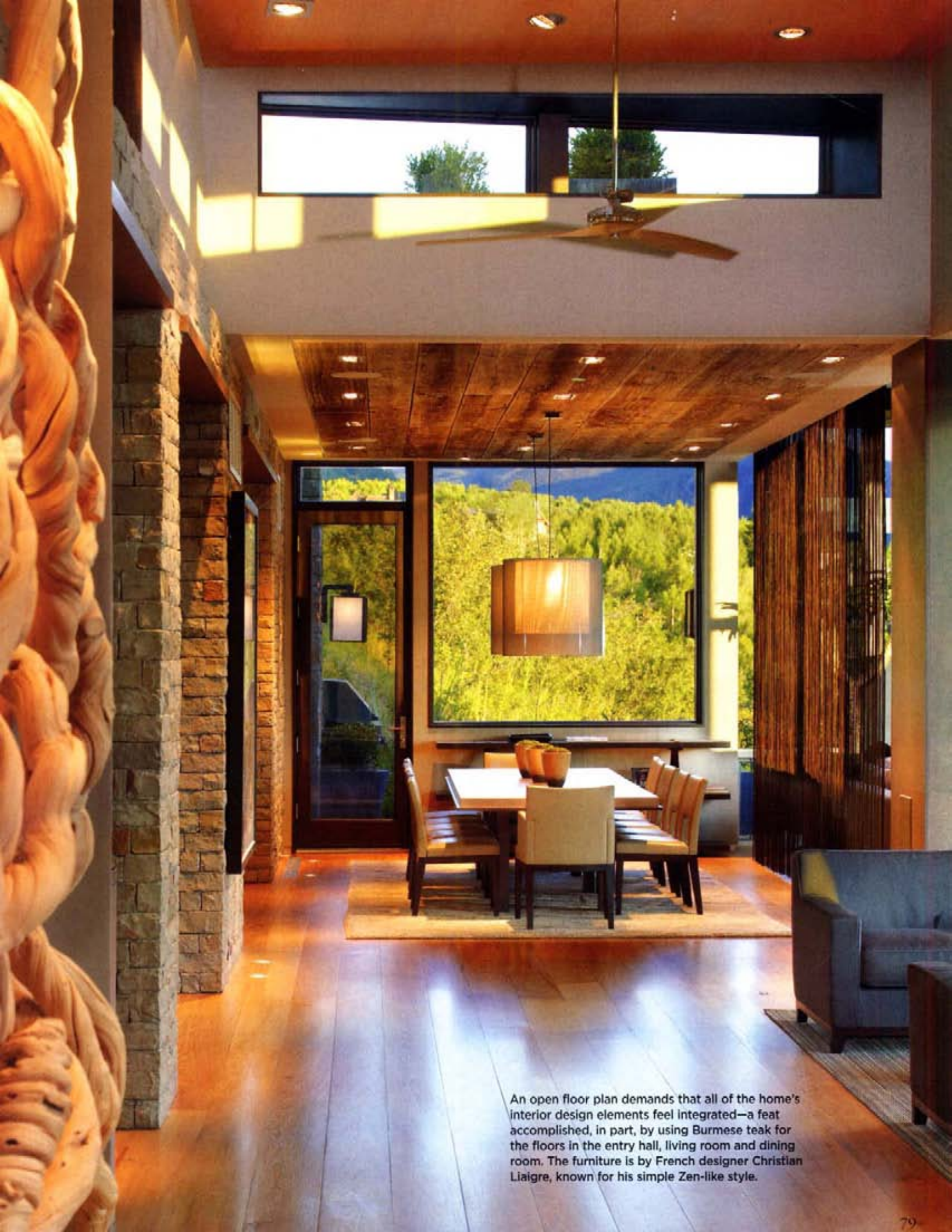
A **STUDY** IN MODERN ORGANIC **STYLE**

OUR HOME OF THE YEAR HAS IT ALL: NATURAL MATERIALS, BEAUTIFUL FINISHES AND WARM COLORS—ALL INSPIRED BY THE MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE

BY IRENE RAWLINGS · PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON DEWEY · STYLING BY ELAINE ST. LOUIS



An open floor plan demands that all of the home's interior design elements feel integrated—a feat accomplished, in part, by using Burmese teak for the floors in the entry hall, living room and dining room. The furniture is by French designer Christian Liaigre, known for his simple Zen-like style.

A thin silk curtain separates the living room from the dining room while still allowing for natural light and mountain views. The Christian Liaigre table is made of book-matched wood that complements the chairs, dressed in a grainy, taupe-colored leather. Above the table hang moiré chandeliers designed by Antoni Arola.

Comfortable chairs, big enough to seat two, are framed by a rug woven of leather strips. Up two stairs sit a leather chaise for relaxing and a striking work of art, "Dancing Vines," by Jerome Abel Seguin. Burmese teak floors gently lead the eye from one area to the other.

Overlooking all of Aspen, our 2008 Home of the Year winner also has views of Mt. Sopris to the west and Independence Pass to the east. The home is a unique collaboration between homeowner, architect and landscape architect. "I don't think I've ever worked as closely with a client," says Bill Pollock, a partner at Zone 4 Architects and senior associate at Poss Architecture + Planning, two firms located in Aspen. Dylan Johns of Zone 4 Architects was also a partner on the project. "This was definitely a labor of love for my client, and the house reflects his personality so well," Pollock adds.

"I lived the project 24 hours a day," says homeowner Alain DeGraeve who, in addition to working with Pollock on the overall design, was the home's builder and interior designer. "I would wake up during the night and start planning the kitchen or thinking about wall color," he says.

The building site was both amazing and problematic. The lot is an odd size and shape, but the views in all directions are truly breathtaking. "We 'pushed' the house into the hill in order preserve as much land as possible for outdoor living areas," Pollock says. "The footings are 24 inches thick and, during construction, it looked like we were building a 40-story tower because, of course, the footings are holding up the hill behind the house."

Before the architects put pen to paper, a surveyor was hired to map the view planes. "I wanted the full experience of mountain and sky through every window of the house," DeGraeve says. He succeeded beyond his wildest expectations. "In winter, it feels like I'm living inside a snow globe," he says.

Sustainable materials—Spanish cedar, natural stone, slate, aluminum and zinc—were chosen for the exterior of the home. "We chose zinc for the roof because it lasts for generations, is very low-maintenance and ages well, to a lovely matte-gray patina," Pollock says. ▷

(opposite, from top to bottom): Particular care was taken to orient this home to the views. The living room has windows on three sides and looks across the rooftops of the town to Aspen Mountain. The suspended lighting fixture, Nimba by Santa & Cole, produces an almost transparent circle of light that does not interfere with the view. The wool-and-silk rug (along with all of the other rugs in the home) was hand-woven in Belgium.

Designed by Aspen landscape architecture firm Bluegreen, this 8-by-40-foot infinity-edge pool doubles as a water feature. Dark tiles absorb heat from the sun when the cover is retracted and from solar-heated water when the pool is covered. The plantings include low-water species like Lamb's Ear, switchgrass, mugo pine and Blazing Star (liatris). The grassy areas contain a bluegrass blend that's highly drought-tolerant and ideally suited for high-altitude environments.

(left): DeGraeve's wine cellar houses 6,000 bottles—mainly Burgundy. Modern versions of the classic club chair, reinterpreted by the Italian design company Promemoria, provide comfortable seating.

Because windows are such an important element in the design of this home, energy efficiency was a must. Pollock chose a Low-E window glass that's one-quarter of an inch thick.

The most difficult part of designing this four-level, 12,000-square-foot home was not the unusually shaped lot or the engineering of the foundation but the "entry sequence," where the challenge was to make a smooth transition from vehicular traffic to pedestrian traffic. "The client didn't want to drive by the house in order to park," Pollock says, "so we had to decide where to put the garage before we even designed the house." The result is a transition from public to private spaces that is gentle, yet creates a sense of arrival that continues all the way up the Pennsylvania bluestone stairs leading to the home's front door.

Inside, tranquility reigns. The colors are taken from nature's palette—warm browns, taupes and ivories, with just a splash of minty green. Lines are clean but not sharp. Fabrics are linen, leather, wool, cashmere, angora and silk. DeGraeve calls his style "modern-organic." While he likes the cool contemporary look, he wanted to use fabrics and woods that would make the house feel warm and welcoming "because we have long winters." He chose teak, wenge and anegre for the floors, ceilings and some of the walls. "I've always been fascinated with wenge for its clean lines and with anegre because it is golden but not too yellow," he says. "Teak has a soulful, Zen quality," he adds. Recycled wood from dismantled Amish barns was applied to the walls and ceiling of the kitchen and to the ceiling of the dining room. ▷

Stainless steel and Portuguese limestone define the ultra-contemporary, Boffi-designed kitchen. High-performance kitchen appliances are from Gaggenau and Miele. In the niche over the sink, notice sculptural woven baskets by artist Jonathan Kline. The painting over the breakfast area is a version of Monet's famous haystacks, made using Pantone color chips, by contemporary artist Vik Muniz.

DESIGN DETAILS

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Landscape architect: SHERI SANZONE
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Most of the furniture in the home was created in Paris by Christian Liaigre, interior designer to celebrities such as Karl Lagerfeld, Marc Jacobs and Rupert Murdoch. "I liked the simplicity, the quality of his pieces and, especially, his use of materials," DeGraeve says. In the living room, for example, the coffee tables and side table are covered with a linen that was stretched taut and finished with a polymer so it has the texture of linen but the hardness of wood. To select rugs, DeGraeve traveled to the Limited Edition showroom in Belgium with samples of the wood, stone and fabric he was using in the home. "They make a pom-pom out of silk and wool fibers that match the materials you've brought with you," he says. "Seeing all the colors and textures together brings them to life and helps you visualize your finished rug."

Bluegreen, an Aspen firm known for its modern and sustainable landscape designs, created a low-water, high-style planting plan. "We sourced plants that don't need a lot of water," says Bluegreen's Sheri Sanzone. Because of the horizontal lines of the landscape's structures—the walls, terraces, pool and planting beds, all designed by Bluegreen—she specified strong vertical plants like Lamb's Ear, switch grass and liatris to create an interesting rhythm in the landscape.

"We completed the home in 20 months because I was on the job site every day," DeGraeve says. "I drove myself and everyone else pretty hard but, in the end, we created something truly beautiful." □

(*above*): Burmese teak walls and wenge wood floors give warmth to the master bath. Linear limestone sinks, a leather-covered bench and, in the shower, tiny mosaic tiles custom-made in Italy give the room a clean, horizontal look.

(*right*): Cool neutrals define the master bedroom. Classical yet contemporary, a pair of Maxalto chairs creates an inviting seating area in front of the limestone fireplace. The coffee-colored floor and wood walls are wenge, and the honey-colored ceiling is anegre. Both woods are sustainably grown in Africa.