

BIG SKY JOURNAL

HOME

MOUNTAIN LIVING + ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN



CALM

— on the

LANDSCAPE

WRITTEN BY ALLEN M. JONES

A Bozeman home strikes a balance between privacy and accessibility

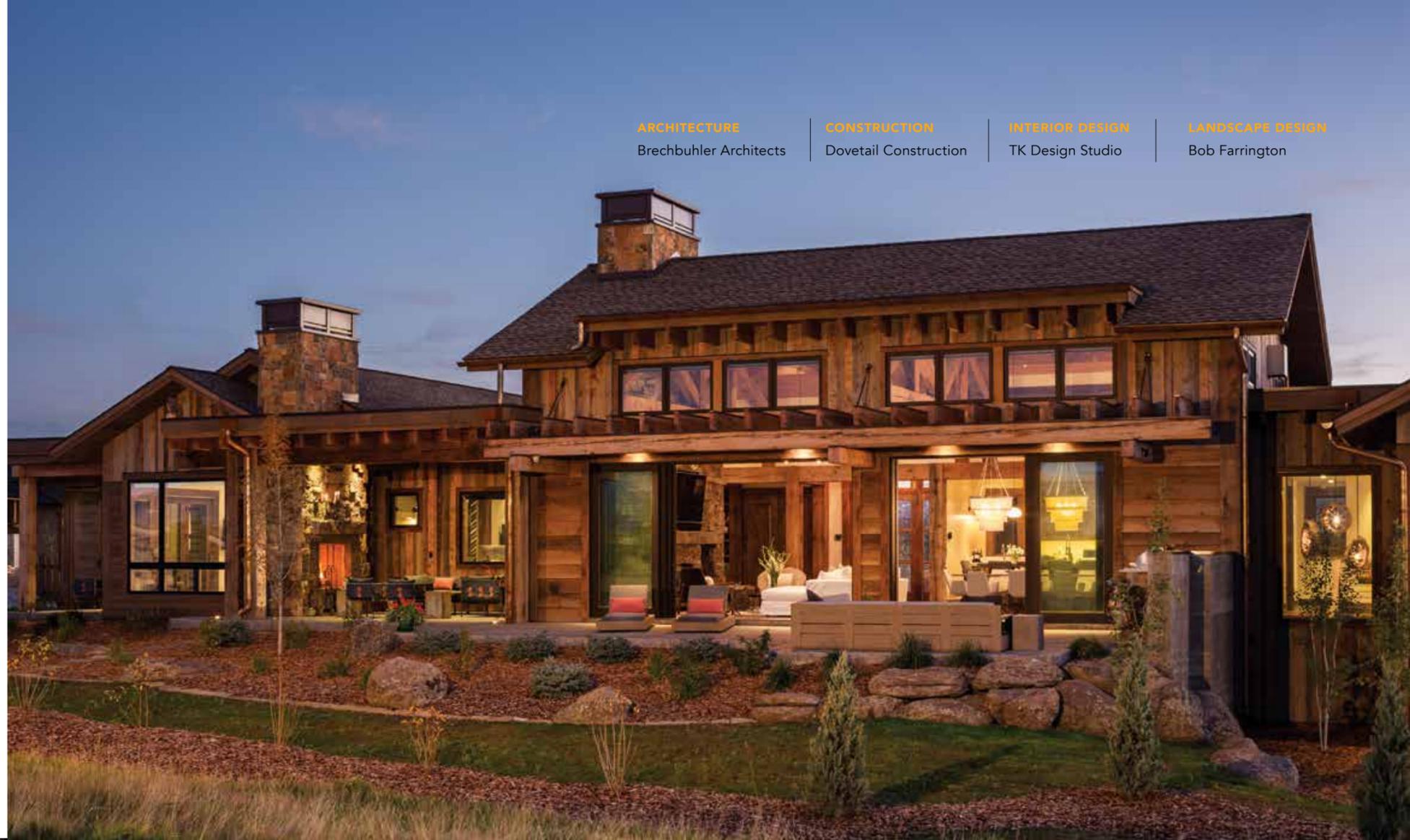
FOR MANY OF ITS RESIDENTS, THE BLACK BULL golf community, a few miles outside of Bozeman, Montana, represents a perfect compromise. It's a way of living in a convenient location (close to town, 15 minutes from the airport) but in a community that encourages creative, custom homes. You can build a very personal abode even while staying close to Main Street shopping.

ARCHITECTURE
Brechbuhler Architects

CONSTRUCTION
Dovetail Construction

INTERIOR DESIGN
TK Design Studio

LANDSCAPE DESIGN
Bob Farrington



LEFT: Sited on adjacent lots in Bozeman's Black Bull development, the Gordon's home was positioned to create a sense of solitude.
ABOVE: The great room is the home's center, intended for both entertaining and relaxing with family.
RIGHT: The front door is made of custom walnut and fitted with custom glass work.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARL NEUMANN

Black Bull is a platted subdivision, however, and so doesn't necessarily provide the sense of privacy that you might find in other locations. If you're an architect, how do you make a project in Black Bull feel like it's a little bit removed from its neighbors?

Wendy and Keith Gordon had been coming to Montana for years. They loved the area, but had always been tourists, mostly visiting friends in Big Sky. When they acquired a Bozeman business, however, they started looking for a home in the Gallatin Valley. "We couldn't find a home that we liked well enough to purchase," Keith said. Instead, they bought adjacent lots in Black Bull, and then approached Andrew Brechbuhler of Brechbuhler Architects and builder Dovetail Construction to fill the space with a home they could love. They had earlier toured a residence in Black Bull designed by Brechbuhler and built by Dovetail, and appreciated the work. "We already had ideas about what we wanted," Wendy said,

“and we really liked the feel of what Andrew and Dovetail had done before. This isn’t our first rodeo. We’ve built several houses. And what also jumped out at us about the home we saw was the quality of the craftsmanship.”

Six years before, the Gordons had transitioned from a large, secluded home outside of Atlanta, Georgia, to a smaller home in the Los Angeles area that had very little privacy. “One of the things that was very important to us,” Wendy said, “was some feeling of solitude. That was a big thing. We wanted to make sure that we had an area to retreat to even while we were entertaining. Just to have our own thing.”

These three aspects of the project — a desire for privacy, space for entertaining, and attention to high-quality craftsmanship — came to define the finished home. Coming into the residence, you are



LEFT: The dining area in the great room opens to the outside through large, lift-and-slide doors. **RIGHT:** The covered porch boasts its own stone fireplace and outdoor heaters, making it comfortable even on chilly evenings. **BELOW:** On the lower right, the guest dwelling, their “casita,” is attached seamlessly to the main house.



presented first with the great room, an area that was also a priority for the owners. “It was important to have a great room that was one space,” Brechbuhler said, “in the sense that it’s a kitchen, dining, and living room in one volume. That was a little unique for us. We usually have those somewhat separated.”

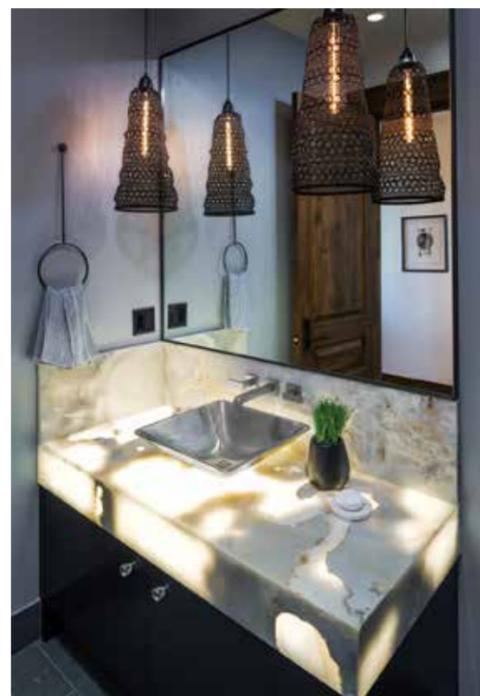
Standing in the great room, considering the view of the

Bridger Mountains through the large glass doors that access the patio, you are struck first and foremost by the sense of privacy. The windows are positioned to eliminate competition from other houses. You have the Bridger Mountains, and you have the room you’re standing in, and that’s it. “Those lift-and-slide doors allowed us to have a fluid connection between the interior spaces and the exterior,”





ABOVE: The dark, textured, fir flooring complements the stonework on the fireplace and the reclaimed timbers overhead. **RIGHT:** Each guest room has its own private bathroom.



Brechbuhler said. "They removed the barriers between inside and outside."

Having prioritized the great room as the living and entertaining space, the rest of the design, in Brechbuhler's words, "radiates out" from there. "The house has about every amenity that you can think of," he said. "It's got a bar, pantry, large mud room. It has a nice utility room, two guest bedrooms with *en suite* bathrooms, a large study with its own bathroom. It's luxurious in the sense that it's fully featured."

In addition to the fully appointed amenities, the Gordon residence also includes an expansive basement wood shop, allowing ample room for Keith's carpentry tools and for the storage of an "eclectic collection of beautiful wood species," according to Wendy. Keith, an avid woodworker, collaborated with interior designer Teresa

RIGHT: The private office looks out past the covered porch toward the Black Bull golf course. **BELOW:** The great room opens into the kitchen. "We wanted a contemporary design to suit our tastes," Wendy Gordon said, "but rustic enough to make every space have an earthy warmth and encourage relaxation."



Kessler-Prond of TK Design Studio to design and craft several light fixtures for the home, with other furnishings to follow once the family settled in.

The two partners with Dovetail Construction, Tim Rote and Kevin Sullivan, have been in business for 12 years now, but they've both been part of the industry since they were kids. Their work includes projects around Southwest Montana, including Livingston and Big Sky. The Gordons' home was their third project in Black Bull. "A fun and profes-

sional experience is always a primary goal. Working for the Gordons was really rewarding in that they appreciated Dovetail's commitment to quality and service," Rote said.

The trusses in the great room were made from reclaimed lumber, and they were used "as is" rather than resawn, which presented its own challenges. Incorporating reclaimed into new construction, with all the warps and bulges of aging lumber, is "definitely an art form," Sullivan said.

Both men also mentioned the home's mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (or ME&P in the industry) as being something exceptional. "The home is cutting-edge with a fully automated Savant control system," Rote said. "All of the lighting complements the architecture and textures, and the home automation allows sole control of things such as window treatments, heating and air conditioning, lighting, and the audio/visual components. What's really cool about it is that our homeowners are able to access and control their home from anywhere through their smart devices.





The 732-square-foot "casita," complete with a full kitchen, offers private quarters for guests.

They really know their music, too, and when the music's flowing, it's just superb."

When discussing what it was like to work with the Gordons, Kessler-Prond brought up the kindred nature of the relationship. "Wendy and I had a similar aesthetic throughout the project. We had a great time going through Earth Elements, going from one finish to the other, rolling off each other's ideas. She's a lively, joyful person, and it was great getting to know them as a couple, and having the opportunity to help express their lifestyle."

Kessler-Prond mentioned the balancing of the Gordons' beach aesthetic, the influence of their California lives, with the mountain vernacular. "They came to love the darker finishes and selected a character-grade fir wood floor for their home. Very textural. It's meant to look aged and lived in. But they were drawn to a lighter, more soothing aesthetic



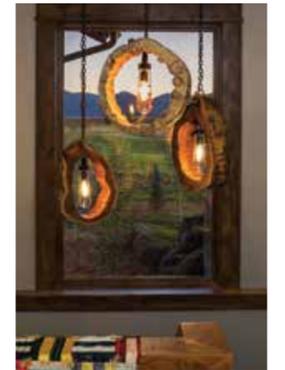
LEFT: An avid woodworker, Keith Gordon collaborated with the principals to create a 1,167-square-foot wood shop. BELOW: Custom lighting fixtures created by Gordon hang over a staircase.

with available privacy. Like the Black Bull development itself, it's the perfect compromise.

Kessler-Prond said, "Most of all, I hope this ends up being a joy-filled and comfortable, inviting space as the Gordons start their new life in Montana. A place

where they can grow their friendships."

Brechbuhler added, "I want people to realize how comfortable and detail-oriented the spaces are in a house with a large footprint. It's bigger on the inside than the outside. And it sits very calmly on the landscape. That was very important to all of us." 



as well." She also pointed out the custom lighting fixtures created by Keith. "I came away with a deep respect for the project, and wanting to honor the Gordons, and give them the opportunity to keep living out their story."

It was important for the Gordons that they be able to share the space, not only to entertain comfortably but also to receive overnight guests. To that end, they included a 700-square-foot attached guest dwelling, what the team took to calling the "casita." Coming complete with a stand-alone kitchen, living room, and full bath, the casita is an extension of the Gordons' personal philosophy regarding entertaining. Accessible, but

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