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CROWNING GLORY

A house inspired by the Land of the Rising Sun takes root in the American West.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GABE BORDER

Architecture: Jack Smith, Architect, Jack Smith, FAIA, and John Montoya, Ensilio Architecture
Interior Design: David Lucas and Suzie Lucas, Lucas
Home Builder: Adam Elias, Elias Construction



The sun had not yet set as the design team worked feverishly to put the finishing touches on this residence before the owners saw it completed for the first time. As the sky darkened, the large dwelling set in the mountains outside of Sun Valley began to glow like a lantern—just as principal architect Jack Smith and project architect John Montoya had envisioned. Watching the last details come together, Montoya couldn’t help but feel a sense of hard-won pride—after all, this moment was more than four years in the making. “We had asked the owners not to come to the site for a few days,” he says. “Just before they arrived, I took a moment to reflect on one of the most involved projects we had ever done, and the thought ‘We really did this’ kept running through my head.”

The project started as an idea in the mind of the wife, who held fast to memories of a Japanese ski house she had read about in a magazine 20 years earlier. The original article was lost, but the clean-lined images of that home stayed with her. When she and her husband (both of them, by now, had a deep affinity for Japanese design and culture) moved into a nearby house designed by Smith, a student of Japanese architecture, they knew he would be the one to create a very special forever home they aspired to build. Inspired by Japanese as well as Chinese structures, Smith developed a unique building system in which beams are layered to make them strong enough to span great lengths. The result is not only wide-open interior spaces, but also a complex pattern on the ceiling plane. “The building materials, glulam beams in this case, are very clearly expressed,” he says. “You see everything about how the structure is made. But the underpinnings of the house also make an order for the house.”

In addition to the glulam beams, the home hews to a minimalist building palette that includes board-formed concrete and cedar, all constructed under the watchful eye of general contractor Adam Elias. “When you walk in, the order of the grid and the simplicity of the materials—the rhythm and the rules of them—

make the house feel right,” Montoya says. “Irregularities in the natural materials only enhance that feeling.”

The sibling design duo of David Lucas and Suzie Lucas sought to replicate that forthright nature in the finishes and furnishings while also loosening things up. “There is an inherent lightness about this house, and it has enormous views,” David Lucas says. “But we felt that the wrong color or furniture choices could take the rooms in a heavy direction. We wanted to keep things light and bright while introducing a fluidity to the spaces.” That flowing nature can be seen in the wave-like patterns of the stone in the kitchen countertops and backsplash, the serpentine lines of the Vladimir Kagan sofa in the living room and the gently curving oval dining table. “Most of the furniture was chosen in order to break the grid,” David Lucas says. “But we also selected items that had a presence, because you need something that can hold its own in that kind of powerful environment.”

As the house and the grounds, by landscape designer Scott Murase of Murase Associates, came together, it became clear that it was something special, the kind of heritage dwelling that deserves a name. The couple settled on *Kanzan*, a word that can be translated from the Japanese as “bordering mountain.” It’s fitting not only because of the proximity of the peaks, but also because of their nature. “Idaho is beautiful, honest and raw,” says Montoya. “This house is like that too. It was designed to embrace the views, and the building materials speak to this region.”

Which brings us to the night when the design team staged their big reveal. After many months, you might expect tears of happiness or cries of delight over the finished home, but that didn’t happen. “When the owners saw it, it was very quiet, as they were speechless,” says Montoya. “They walked from room to room in nearly silent, but joyous, appreciation. It was like watching people quietly admiring a masterpiece painting. They had created a piece of art, and but this was the first time they had a real feeling of what it was going to be like to live there.” In other words, the moment was less like a triumphant crescendo and more like a gentle haiku. ■



Dramatic views from the living room of a home near Sun Valley are visible through windows from Dynamic Architectural Windows & Doors in Abbotsford, British Columbia. A chair and ottoman by B&B Italia and the owners’ live-edge occasional table are perfectly positioned to take them all in.

DDC lamps top the cerused and stained white-oak console crafted by Jonathan Pauls. Nearby is a dining area furnished with a custom table by Mayer Designs surrounded by Caste chairs in an Opuzen fabric. The live-sawn European oak flooring is from Elliott Bay Hardwood Floors.





Right: Designers David Lucas and Suzie Lucas describe the kitchen as a "beautiful wooden box set within the larger entertaining space." General contractor Adam Elias worked with Taylor Woodworks to fabricate cabinets accented with Mockett drawer pulls and Sun Valley Bronze door hardware.

Opposite: The graceful, wave-like pattern of the leathered Belvedere granite is on full display in the kitchen's backsplash, just below the custom-designed blackened steel range hood by Earth & Structure. A curving Waterstone faucet rises from the island while the owners' Conde House bar chairs were refreshed with Great Plains faux leather.





Above: In the main bathroom, the priority was to incorporate a traditional Japanese soaking tub, and the team selected one by Zen Bathworks. Its sleek lines are matched by streamlined Hansgrohe plumbing fixtures. Mustang marble complements the color of the tub and surrounds the bath and forms the vanity countertop.

Opposite: When creating the headboard wall in the main bedroom, the Lucases were inspired by kimono designs. The central part is upholstered with Fret fabric, and the panels on either side are covered by a Trove wood veneer from Jennifer West. The designers also conceived of the oak-and-metal nightstands with resin tops and the leather-and-wood bench. The table lamp is by George Nakashima.

