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WESTERN TRADITION

A HANDS-ON HOMEOWNER BLENDS CLASSIC STYLING WITH FUNCTIONAL DESIGN AND A FEW RUSTIC TOUCHES IN HER FAMILY'S MONTANA ESTATE



“ONE OF THE JOYS OF BUILDING YOUR OWN HOME

is that if you pay attention, you can get all the details right,” says Sally Uhlmann of Bozeman, Montana. Her family’s home is a testament to that philosophy: from a custom fireplace built to exacting specifications for displaying an oil painting to a living room designed to accommodate a large heirloom rug, the traditionally styled home is classic and elegant, yet perfectly at home in its Western setting. At the heart of the spacious family- and dog-friendly home is a thoughtful approach to space planning and design.

The Uhlmanns were living in Kansas City when they found their Bozeman property back in 2002. “The land is at the top of a ridge with phenomenal views of the entire Gallatin Valley and five mountain ranges,” Sally says. “After we bought it, my husband, Robert, and I went and sat at the site many times to consider the design of the home. We knew we couldn’t impose a European or California aesthetic on the setting; it had to be a Montana house, and we wanted it to blend into the hillside. We looked for an architect who would have a dialogue and collaborate with us, someone who could listen to what we were envisioning and improve on that vision. After interviewing a number of architects, we both felt that Van Bryan embodied that more than anyone else we met.”

Bryan designed an 8,000-square-foot home with living spaces on the main floor, private bedrooms and living areas on the upper level, an office in the upper “tower” and recreational and guest areas on the lower level. Sally traveled to the site each month to oversee the building of the home, which was constructed by Bozeman-based Langlas and Associates. She moved nearby to be on-site for the last five months of construction and was intimately involved in the decisions and details, even working side by side with some of the craftspeople who did the structure’s finish work.

The home blends traditional features like stained woodwork, stone columns and hand-plastered walls with softer details like curved niches for art and high ceilings with arched beams. Sturdy honed Montana slate covers the front entrance floor, while the living area floors are hand-rubbed, distressed cherry—topped with an unusual trim. “Baseboards collect dust, and Montana is a dusty place,” Sally says, “so we used a honed travertine marble for the baseboards.” >>

TOP LEFT: Arched beams and stone columns define the living area, which was designed to accommodate a large Oriental rug that has been in the family for generations. During dinner parties, guests often gather to hear Robert Uhlmann play the grand piano. TOP RIGHT: In the dining room, a 16th-century English crewel wall tapestry hangs above an oversized sideboard graced by antique silver candlesticks and a blue porcelain vase.

{DESIGN BOOK}

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THIS PAGE: The Uhlmann family hosts dinner parties three to four times a week, so a smart and stylish kitchen was a must. Soft overhead lights and a cozy wood-burning fireplace warm the high-functioning space, which contains three separate ovens, each designed for a different cooking purpose.

The family formerly lived in a historic 1928 Italianate home, so Sally knew they wouldn't feel comfortable in a rustic house. "I was a clothing designer, have owned my own clothing company and helped found an equestrian boot company. Maybe because I've always been in the design world, I've developed my own preferences for interior design."

"For example, the 'great room' is a wonderful concept, but I don't want guests looking at dirty dishes after dinner," Sally says. "The public space on the main floor of our home is very open; the living and dining areas and kitchen all connect to one other, but each space is designated. My husband often plays the piano after dinner, and we aren't interrupted by the noise of dishes being cleared and washed in the kitchen. The fireplace is open to both living area and kitchen, and there's a bar in the kitchen that opens to the living room. The spaces meld together, yet they're still separate."

"We brought some art and furniture here from our previous home," Sally says. "Space and proportion are crucial, so I photographed the important pieces for the architect so he could design the space accordingly. The living room rug has been in my husband's family for several generations, and we knew that the living area had to be large enough to accommodate the rug. Even the bench in front of the foyer was planned for; I wanted the entry hall to accommodate it with the right sense of scale."

Above all, the furnishings are high on comfort and functionality. "Some houses are so beautiful, but you're afraid to touch anything," Sally says. "I don't want a house where the scale or furnishings intimidate people. For instance, the stone coffee table in the living room is very heavy and sturdy, and you can put your feet up on it without worrying about a thing."

"I've always done my own interiors, but I design them to be lived in," Sally says. "We have two teenage boys and we use every room in our house. On any given day there might be a dozen teenagers down in the lower level while we're having a dinner party upstairs, and the space functions beautifully." ■

PARTY PLANNING

"I love to cook, and we host three to four dinner parties every week," Sally says. "I planned the kitchen with entertaining in mind, and it's the best-functioning kitchen." Some of her must-have features include:

A TRIO OF OVENS "The biggest oven has a rotisserie that can handle an 18-pound turkey," Sally says. "We also have a steam oven, which can be used for canning, to proof bread or poach fish, as well as a convection oven for baking."

TWO REFRIGERATORS There's a main refrigerator in the kitchen for everyday food; a back-up cooler in the pantry and built-in refrigerator drawers in the kitchen island to store drinks.

A CUSTOM SINK SPLIT INTO THREE PARTS The center of the sink is shallow and houses the garbage disposal, and there is a basin on either side. "That way, when there are things in the sink you can still get to the garbage disposal," Sally says.

A POT FILLER Designed to fill pots and pans as they rest on the stove, this handy faucet means fewer trips across the kitchen—and fewer splashes on the floor; the six-burner Thermador range is also fitted with a griddle for easy cooking of grilled sandwiches and pancakes.

A BUTCHER BLOCK-TOPPED ISLAND This durable and beautiful surface allows the Uhlmanns to chop ingredients right on the countertop and adds warmth and a rustic texture to the kitchen.



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