

MOUNTAIN LIVING[®]

REMODELING ISSUE

20 rooms with fresh
new looks from

Madeline Stuart
David Lake
Carter Kay
and more



BEFORE & AFTER

DRAMATIC MAKEOVERS FROM THE WEST'S DESIGN STARS

RANCH HOUSE RIFF

A SOUTHERN DESIGNER, A MONTANA ARCHITECT AND TWO TEXAS COUPLES TRANSFORM A WORN-OUT RANCH INTO A LOW-KEY HOME WITH HIGH STYLE



STORY BY **HILARY MASELL OSWALD** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **EMILY MINTON REDFIELD**



Interior designer Carter Kay hung framed African bean pods in the foyer. "So much of this area of Montana feels like Africa—everything is so big and neutral and wild," she says. "We thought these pods would be the perfect graphic representation." Adding to that wild feeling, a Tucker Robbins light fixture casts spider-web-like shadows on the walls. **FACING PAGE:** To protect the back porch from Ennis' legendary wind, architect Van K. Bryan added a wall of windows. A wraparound bench offers plenty of room for the owners and their guests to lounge and take in the views.

g/dining area makes the most of
ble seating. The caramel leather
ow chairs "swivel on a dime," Kay
red with the deep Edward Ferrell
large tweed Donghia chairs, they
cozy scene. FACING PAGE: The
the home glows in the late-day
n a little help from the cozy fire pit.



"YOU DON'T HAVE TO ADD A LOT OF SQUARE FOOTAGE TO
GIVE A HOME A SENSE OF EXPANSIVENESS." —VAN K. BRYAN

The West is chock-full of beat-up ranch houses

occupying gorgeous pieces of land. This Ennis, Montana, home was once such a place—before two couples from Texas bought it and gave a thoughtful design team one directive: keep it simple.

"Ennis is a laid-back place, nothing fancy," says interior designer Carter Kay of Atlanta-based Carter Kay Interiors. "The home needed to feel like it belonged there." But that didn't mean Kay had to rely on typical tropes of Western design. In fact, there's not a stitch of plaid or a hint of antler-inspired kitsch to be found.

Kay had visited this particular plot of Montana paradise long before she began designing the home's interiors. Years earlier, her college roommate had invited her to the adjacent fly-fishing club on the famed "Channels" of the Madison River. It became a Labor Day weekend tradition. When the roommate and her husband, along with another couple, bought a mangled ranch on an adjacent property years later, they asked Kay to revitalize the interiors.

But first, architect Van K. Bryan of Van Bryan Studio Architects in Bozeman, along with builder Ron Pack of Sheridan-based JDL Construction, had to fix the home's layout and flow. Bryan and Kay both remember the home the same way: "ugly." Views were clipped, windows were small, and the ceilings hung low, making the spaces cave-like.

"One of our first conversations was about how to create private spaces for each of the couples," Bryan says. The solution: build one master suite over the garage on one end of the home, and the second suite above the deck on the other end. In the process, Bryan raised the ceiling over the deck to expand the views. Thanks to enlarged windows throughout the house and glass doors off the dining room, the home now glows with natural light.

To expand and warm up the shared spaces, Bryan eliminated the room atop the living room and vaulted the ceiling. He also scrapped a wall that separated the kitchen from the living/dining space. By

opening up the stairway and railing in the living room—with a metal mesh reminiscent of fencing—"we captured as much volume as we could," Bryan says. "We revitalized every square inch of the home."

The design team used other tricks to make the interiors feel generous but cozy. They minimized the appearance of sheetrock whenever possible to play up the feel of raw wood and stone. "In a Western home, you need textures and depth to match what you see when you look out the windows," Kay says. She painted the living room's vaulted ceiling a dark color—"totally counterintuitive," she admits—to keep it from feeling too lofty. In most of the rooms, the casework around the doors and windows is painted the same color as the walls; the uniform color draws attention to the view, not the trim.

Varied ceiling heights keep the scale in check. In the kitchen, for example, Bryan preserved the low ceilings. Says Kay of his decision, "Even though you have this fabulous open area for living and dining, the kitchen feels wonderful and quaint, like an old ranch house." The foyer ceiling is also low, which offers an intimate welcome before guests step into the voluminous living room.

Kay capped off the design with furniture that's ample and comfortable. In the living room, she opted for a large Edward Ferrell sofa—"that feels like a bed"—flanked by tweed Donghia chairs on one side and caramel leather swivel chairs from Rose Tarlow on the other. The custom-built dining table from Tucker Robbins easily seats 12 people. In the bedrooms, she chose bed frames from a mid-range retailer and then splurged on high-end linens that wear well and feel good.

The home's triumph goes beyond its livability. Though it's rustic and contains elements you'd expect to find in a Montana home, Bryan says, it proves that "designing in the West doesn't have to mean the same old thing. You can still develop an appropriate aesthetic with a more contemporary blend of attitudes. It's refreshing." ●

ARCHITECTURE BY VAN BRYAN STUDIO ARCHITECTS

INTERIOR DESIGN BY CARTER KAY INTERIORS





ABOVE, LEFT: Once a dim, unfinished space (pictured below, left), the remodeled basement, dubbed "the barn," includes a media room decked out in large-scale furnishings: chairs and a sectional sofa from Lee Industries, and a hefty table from Bobo Intriguing Objects. Don't miss the apropos sliding barn door in the background. FACING PAGE: Low ceilings made the original living room (pictured below, right) feel cramped and claustrophobic. Architect Van K. Bryan expanded the space by eliminating the room above the living room, vaulting the ceiling and opening up the stairway with metal mesh. A bar makes good use of the space beneath the stairs.

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—CARTER KAY



BELOW, LEFT: In one of the master bedrooms, Kay's team hung French pie pans, found at an antique market, to resemble chimes above the bed. The bench, from A. Tyner Antiques in Atlanta, is made of cowhide woven strips—a nod to the West—and the bed linens came from Mary Cates and Co. in Dallas. BELOW, RIGHT: The window placement was perfect for the home's exterior, but inside, "it was a disaster," Kay laughs. To preserve the natural light in this master bathroom, she got creative and hung the mirrors from an iron rod.



Get the Goods

Designer Carter Kay shares her secret sources for the perfect finishing touches:

THE LOCAL FLORIST "Believe it or not, we found some really good, 'permanent' items there—for example, an antique wooden lunch pail on the porch that doubles as a wine cooler."

THE FLEA MARKET Kay scouted Scott Antique Market in Atlanta and found the antique French pie plates she hung in one of the master bedrooms (pictured above) as one-of-a-kind wall art. "Don't have a theme in mind when you go," she says. "It will find you."

THE FABRIC BOUTIQUE Kay punched up duvets and shams from a chain store by fronting them with high-end fabrics. For example, she created accent pillows for each bunkroom bed (see them at mountainliving.com) by pairing a Peter Fasano fabric with burlap backing.

THE LANDSCAPE "We're always finding ways to incorporate local grasses, greenery and plants into our homes. We want to make a home, especially a vacation home, feel grounded and connected to its surroundings."

more 

See more before-and-after photos, plus a guide to this home's products and pros, at mountainliving.com.



The kitchen shows off Western style with a contemporary kick. Kay designed the thick open shelves with guests in mind. "When you're visiting someone, you never know where to find the cups and plates," she says. "Here, anyone can empty the dishwasher." To give the small space an airier feel and make the island pull double-duty, the team supported the island's bar-level wood countertop with iron legs. **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM:** A window connects the outdoor eating area with the kitchen. The Sutherland tables "are heavy as lead," Kay says, making them the perfect pieces to endure the region's high winds.

