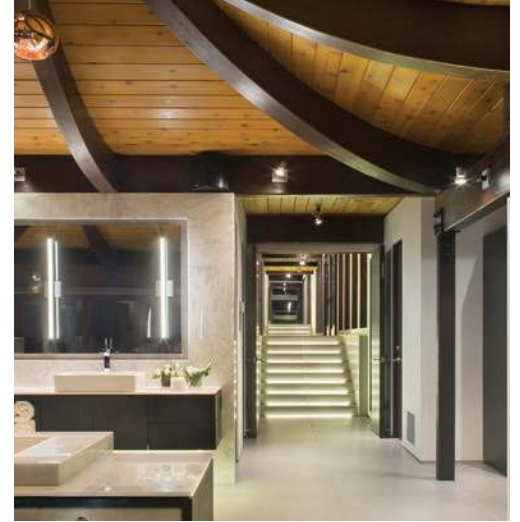


# march features

COLORADO'S DESIGN LEADERS > ARTFUL LIVING > COLORADO, O-K! CRESTED BUTTE




2017  
CIRCLE OF  
EXCELLENCE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BLUEGREEN/JASON DEWEY, EMILY MINTON REDFIELD, BRENT MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY, DAVID LAUER, BRENT MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY.





Left to right: Mikal Otten,  
Miranda Cullen, Sheri Sanzone,  
E.J. Meade, Sarah Broughton  
and John Rowland.

2017  
CIRCLE OF  
EXCELLENCE

# COLORADO'S DESIGN LEADERS

This year's Circle of Excellence recipients continue  
to elevate our landscape and enhance their legacies



STORY BY **JANE CRAIG** + PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JENNIFER OLSON**





**“Good design moves you. If every time you walk into a space, you are moved... that is timelessness in architecture.”**

—SARAH BROUGHTON

## ARCHITECTS JOHN ROWLAND & SARAH BROUGHTON

Co-founders, Rowland + Broughton Architecture, Aspen and Denver

When John Rowland and Sarah Broughton met in design studio class at CU's Environmental Design School in 1993, it was not love at first sight. "There was this woman in class who asked so many questions," Rowland recalls. "I thought, 'Ugh, she is driving me crazy.'" But over the course of that semester, annoyance turned to romance. "The following semester, she proceeded to take me out every single night until my grades were suffering so badly—Sarah can go out and party and have a great time and wake up the next morning feeling fine. She was killing me. I told her, 'OK, in order for this to work, I need a couple nights a week at home.'"

Clearly, things worked—very well. After graduating in 1996, marrying in 1999, and honing their skills in places ranging from New York City to Sydney, Australia (where they worked for competing firms bidding on building the Olympic Village), the two moved to Aspen.

"I wanted to live in a small community, a ski town where we could be active and practice our work, and Aspen was the right place," Rowland says. And in 2003, they also formed a professional partnership, founding Rowland + Broughton, which now has 40 employees in two offices, one in Aspen and one in Denver. "We say we're one studio with two locations and a long haul," Broughton says.

"John and I love being together," she adds, "and a lot of the way we spend our time is thinking about architecture and design. We love what we do. Work doesn't seem like work. It's our passion. We love our team, we love our clients—we lead from the heart."

"We're always trying to get close to the why," says Rowland. "Why are we taking this project or this client, and how is this going to leave a legacy or exceed the client's expectations?"

"We treat every project as if it could be our last; we really give it our all," adds Broughton. Their clients agree. "They are so unique in so many ways," says Rona Citrin, who with her husband, Jeffrey, is working with Rowland + Broughton on a vacation home in Aspen. "They're extremely creative, they're collaborative, they're unflappable, and they are very gifted at making you feel like your project is the most important project they've ever done. When you are working with them, and they are there with you, they are 120 percent there with you. They are present."

"Good design moves you," says Broughton. "If every time you walk into a space, you are moved—whether it's 'Gosh, I'm excited to be here' or 'I'm excited to produce here' or 'I'm excited to meditate here' or 'I'm excited to break bread with my family here'—that is timelessness in architecture." »

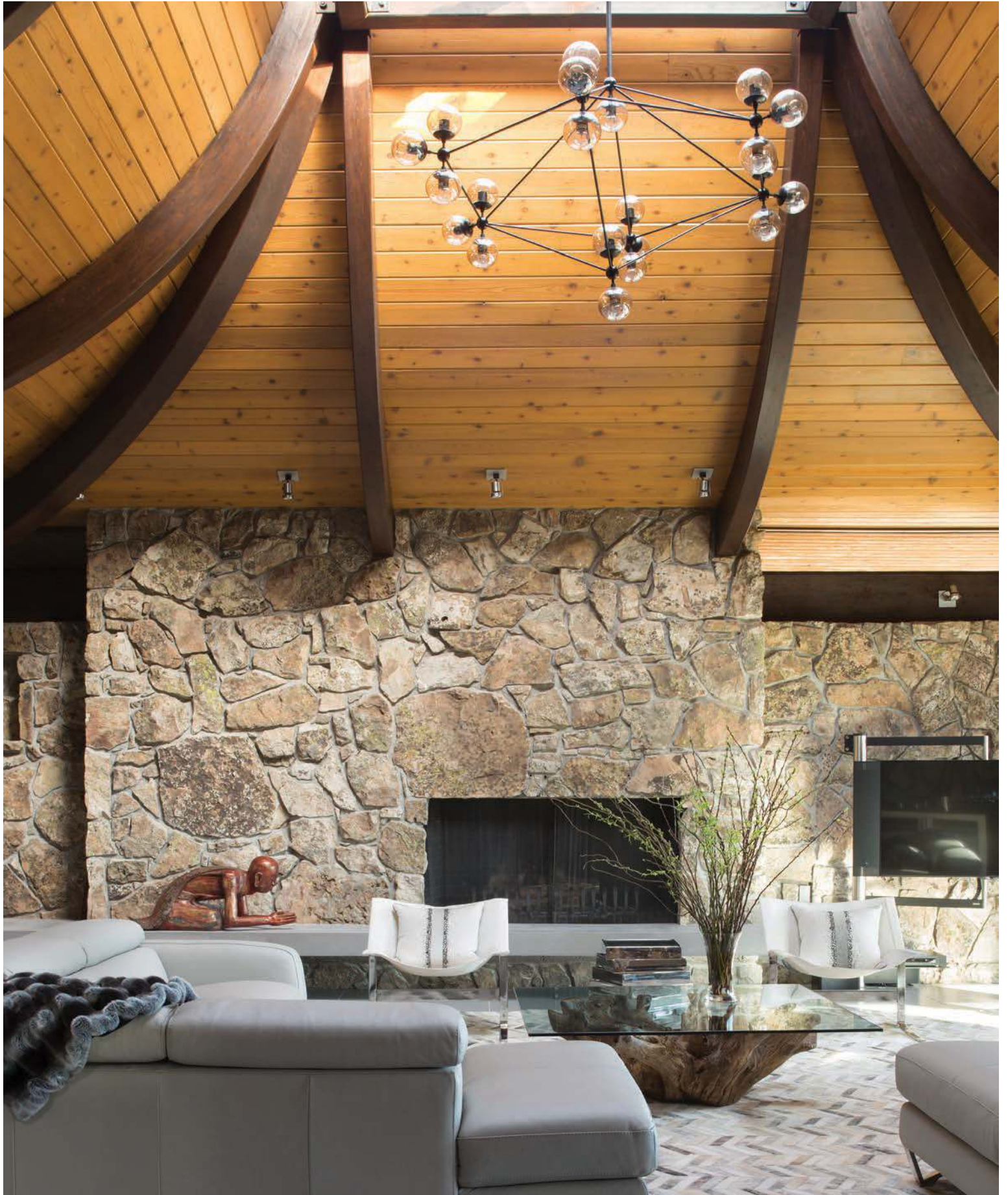




BRENT MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY

This LEED Gold-certified home, dubbed "Game On," offers a modern twist on the historic mining cabins in the Aspen neighborhood surrounding it. Rowland and Broughton designed their home to be intimate yet still have an open floor plan connecting indoor and outdoor spaces to accommodate a large number of guests.





BRENT MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY



# 2017 CIRCLE OF EXCELLENCE



**Opposite:** The team refined a 1969 home by highlighting the roof lines and using a restrained palette of materials.

**Left and below:** They modernized a traditional lodge-style house in Aspen, retaining iconic gables but filling them with glass to let in natural light. Reclaimed barn wood blurs the line between interior and exterior.



passionate about interior design, we're all passionate about lighting and plumbing."

**IN THE STARS:** "I'm a Taurus," says Rowland, "so I'm super loyal but also a bit stubborn. I don't give up; a project can always get better and better. 'Tenacious' might be a better word for it." Adds Broughton: "And I'm an Aquarius. I'm loyal, too, but I think I also have a very engaging personality, so I can immediately make a connection with clients."

**LIGHTBULB MOMENTS:** Says Broughton: "Every other Monday, we have an inspiration meeting for both the Denver and Aspen offices. Somebody might say, 'Hey, I have a TED talk I want to share with everybody.' Or 'I wanted to tell everyone about a website for a new product I just discovered.' Sometimes people just share their trips abroad."

**ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON:** "We don't walk into any project with a predetermined style," says Broughton. "That's very much at our core, so part of how we start a project is what John and I call Sherlock Holmes-ing—really dissecting things so we understand the parameters and opportunities surrounding the project. Say we're building a home for a family; it's a lot more than just bedrooms and a kitchen and a living room. How does the family want to interact?"

**A COLORADO STATE OF MIND:** "Even in our modern work, we bring a feeling of warmth, which goes back to the Colorado environment," says Broughton. "We have long winters, so we like to have natural wood in every room, because it feels good and it speaks to our environment. Of course, the biggest response to Colorado is our natural light. We have amazing blue skies and 300 days of sunshine, but it's really important to use that sunlight properly."

**BIGGEST COMPLIMENT:** "When we finished a house several years ago, the client told us, 'I've never been able to live so freely and so organized. You made a place for everything in my life.' " »

**TO THE DRAFTING TABLE BORN:** "I grew up in a wonderful house in Portland, Oregon—a 1920s English Tudor with great, classic design—so I was always spacially aware," says Broughton. "From a very early age—I'm talking 5 years old—I would draw floor plans. I took a lot of art classes, and by my senior year in high school, I went to my calculus teacher and we agreed that my interest in art and math was a perfect mix for a career in architecture."

"I had a big LEGO fetish," says Rowland. "I was an only child until I was 9, so I had a lot of opportunity to be in my own thoughts. My parents were really into design, and we'd go to an event in Cincinnati called Homearama, where you could tour new, modern homes. Also, a lot of my dad's friends were in construction, and I remember going to

houses as they were being built. That made a lasting impression on me."

**THE MINIMALIST LOOK:** "The first three years after starting our business, we worked out of our condo in Aspen," Broughton says. "We literally moved our living room furniture out, and our kitchen table was our conference room. One of our first clients was like, 'I'm going to remember sitting here one day.' We saw him recently, and we chuckled about it."

**STAYING SHARP:** "Our team shares a passion for all types of design," says Broughton. "We really are all Swiss Army knives—we believe in being generalists. There is not one person in our studio who does only one thing. We are all passionate about furniture, we're all



**Left:** These three townhomes fit on what had been an underused single-family lot in west Boulder; all have a southern exposure, private outdoor spaces and views of the Flatirons. **Opposite:** The indoor-outdoor dining spaces of Arch11's modern "Dihedral House," on a downtown corner site in Boulder.

## ARCHITECT E.J. MEADE

Principal, Arch11, Boulder  
and Denver



"Hands on" could well be the mantra of architect E.J. Meade. "I like making things. I like the assembly, the notion of two things meeting, and how that can be expressed," he says. "At Arch11, there's a strong notion of craft and assembly and attention to the joint."

Arch11, the Boulder firm co-founded in 1993 by Meade and James Trewitt, now has 20 employees in two offices, in Boulder and Denver, and does 90 percent of its work (both commercial and residential) in the Rocky Mountain West. "We've really tried to get a collection of people at Arch11 who are makers," says Meade. "We've got cabinetmakers, people who make wedding cakes, so in addition to their architecture education, they have an engagement with the tactile qualities of the world. We also always try to have a leg in academia."

Meade, who grew up in New Jersey with views of the Manhattan skyline, always loved making things, whether he was helping his grandfather do construction as a teen, working at an antiquarian book bindery during his last year at Colby College or earning a living as a carpenter around New England after graduation. He then went

on to study architecture at the University of Washington before completing his master's at the University of Colorado. "I came out to Boulder on vacation and was like, wow, I'm never going back East," he says.

As a principal at Arch11, Meade aims to achieve architecture as "unrepeatable as a cloud," as poet W.S. Merwin might put it. "If we were just selecting details from previous projects in order to solve a problem, that would be less than satisfying," Meade says.

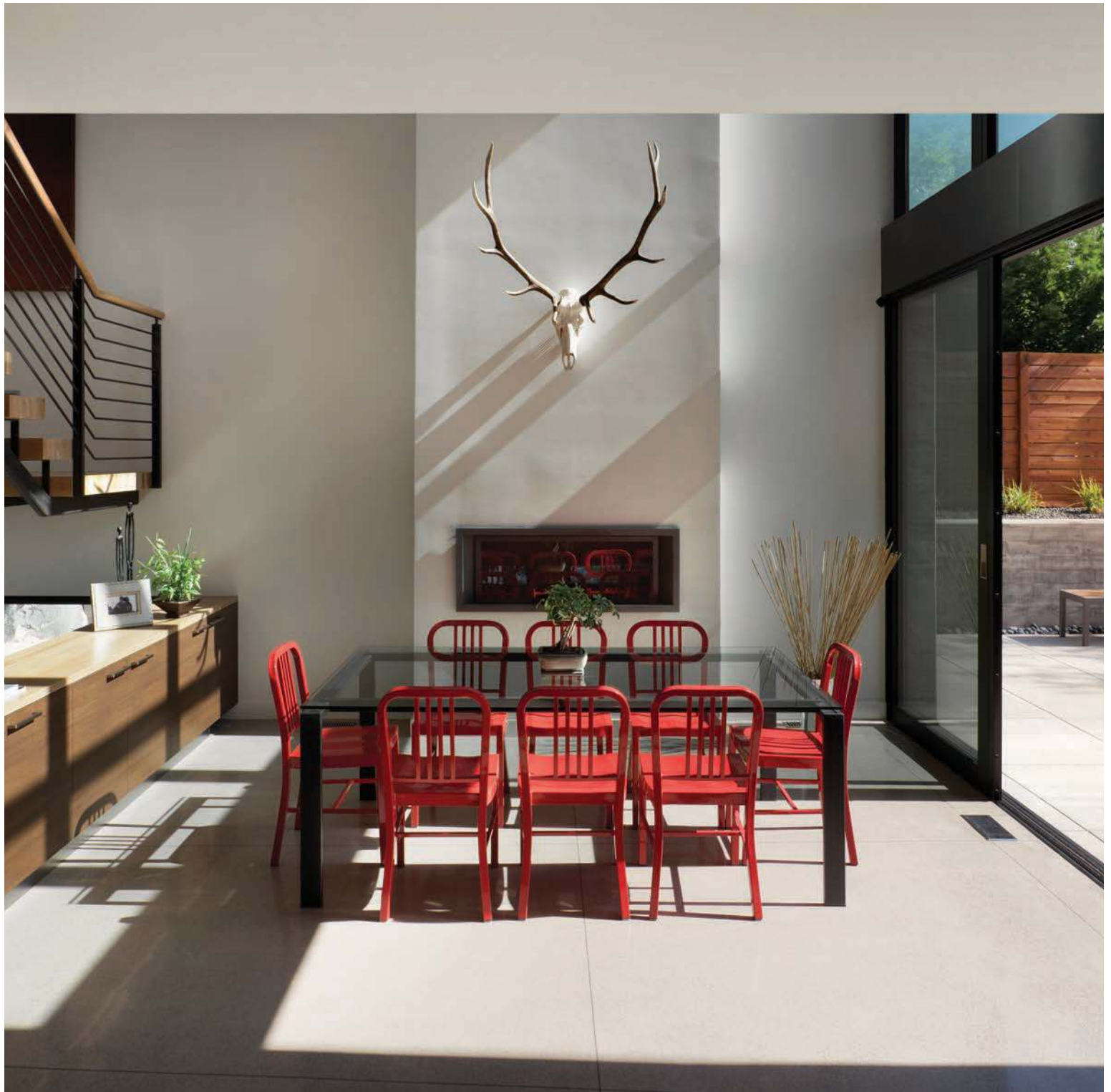
A fully committed client helps. "I'm looking at three models right now, and all three clients were really engaged in the process. The result is that they got architecture out of it—not just a house."

"E.J. offers a rare blend of vision, pragmatism, artistry, perfectionism and Zen-like calm," says client Sue Heilbronner, CEO and co-founder of startup accelerator MergeLane. "All of these qualities run throughout my home, making it a stunning, organic, livable space."

And how would Meade himself define his style of architecture? Ultimately, he says, paraphrasing Bob Dylan, "I'm just trying to make it mine." »



“Architecture is like any creative endeavor. It can tell a story; it can have a narrative to it.” —E.J. MEADE



RAUL J. GARCIA



**THE POWER OF ONE—PLUS 10:** "Twenty-some years ago, we were trying to come up with a name for our firm. We had a Latin dictionary out, we were thinking of Gaelic words, and then someone blurted out a line from Rob Reiner's movie *This Is Spinal Tap*: 'How about Arch11? It's one more than 10.' We paused and said, 'Wow, it sort of works. It's got a humorous underlay but also strikes at what we're really trying to do, which is go beyond. Why not?' "

**IF I HAD A HAMMER:** "As a kid, I liked to build things. I took a ton of art classes, and my grandfather was an epic finkerer, always putting an addition on the house or something, and I worked with him a lot when I was a teenager. I remember as a child meeting [architect] Ben Thompson and seeing one of his buildings. My father said to me, 'Here's the man who drew that building.' I was like, 'People draw buildings? That's amazing.' "

**VALUE ADDED:** "My family moved to a 1740 farmhouse that was exactly the halfway point between New York City and Philadelphia, and my parents decided to put on a small addition. My mom, who was an antiques buff, wanted it to look exactly like the original house, but my dad said it should be a white abstract cube. I can remember him explaining to her how making the addition look exactly like the rest of the house would devalue the quality of the original, and by doing something that was of its time, it would give the original more value. He was right."

**ROOM WITH A VIEW:** "I was a philosophy and American studies major at Colby, which makes perfect sense. I remember reading [German philosopher Martin] Heidegger, who was talking about technology being able to explain the phenomenon of nature. That's what architecture tries to do: be a viewing lens to the phenomena around us."

**PLAYING THE ANGLE:** "In Colorado, we're constantly working against the topography. Everything's sloped, or you're looking at a slope. How does the building, either by contrasting it or emphasizing it, allow you to experience the topography? Colorado also has amazing light, but it washes out just about every kind of small detail you put on the house—it's almost Mediterranean in its intensity. We look hard at how the light penetrates a house throughout the year and throughout the day. How does the house admit it, reflect it and protect you from it?"

**TAKE IT TO THE LIMIT:** "Ours is a practice that always pushes against the limits. It could be an economic limit, it could be topography . . . And it's great to all of a sudden have a new set of limits to push against. We produced a net-zero house at about 9,300 feet elevation in Colorado, and we heard from different people who wanted to do it elsewhere: One was in the Appalachian forest in northern North Carolina, and one in the high desert of California. How do we start



RAUL J. GARCIA



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TOP: MICHAEL SHOPENN; BOTTOM: RAUL J. GARCIA



**Opposite and left:** Arch11's Syncline House was designed with retracting glass walls to capture the views, as well as innovative renewable-energy systems and rooftop gardens. **Below:** For the energy-efficient "6th Street House" in Boulder, Arch11 strove to make every space, including the kitchen, "active" and connected to nature.

looking at where they are and adjust the house for that? It's a great intellectual puzzle."

**OODLES OF DOODLES:** "For one of my very favorite projects, the client came to us with a really rugged, barren site—I don't know if there was a single tree on it. He said, 'I have these seven pieces of art that I want to house' and more or less left it at that. Part of my nightly ritual is that I sit down after dinner and do one very abstract charcoal drawing. I showed the client one drawing, which didn't even resemble architecture, and he got it. He said, 'It's like a Donald Judd piece.' He was able to let us have enough leeway to find the right path to the solution for the house, which puts the art forward and is in itself artful but super minimalist."

**ALL OVER BUT THE SHOUTING:** "At this point in my practice, I'm more interested in architecture that starts to disappear rather than be fully in your face, so it can recede and the way in which you live can be present, or the site can be present. It's very easy to make something complex and visually stimulating—maybe overstimulating. It's very hard to do something that is quiet, understated and articulate without shouting." »





## INTERIOR DESIGNER MIRANDA CULLEN

Co-founder, Duet Design Group,  
Denver

"I've been a designer exactly half my life," says Miranda Cullen, co-founder of Duet Design Group. "I got my first internship when I was 21, and now I'm 42." Having to choose between a couple of options after junior college, she says, "I was true to myself. I said, 'Design is really what I need to do.' And I never looked back."

A whole range of clients, from homeowners to corporate offices, celebrate Cullen's decision. "Miranda has an innate ability to understand a client's style—which is extraordinary—and she is adaptable," says Nancy Buese, for whom Cullen has worked on a Denver house, a Vail house and a large office space. "And even though she's not the architect or kitchen designer or lighting designer, she will add something incredible to what they've come up with, so her finished product is truly a finished product. She thinks of every detail."

After graduating with honors from the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles, Cullen worked at a design firm in Southern California and then at HRI Design in Denver before co-founding her own firm, MOD Interiors. She teamed up with Devon Tobin in 2011 to launch Duet Design.

Since then, the firm has earned a reputation for its



DAVID LAUER



uniquely beautiful commercial and residential spaces. "We try to create a timeless aesthetic—not just pushing trends—so clients won't get tired of a house after a couple of years. We like design that is subtly understood—there's no one overpowering thing in a room. We like to work closely with architects and builders, so that when you walk into a space, it's a beautiful symphony. Everything complements. Everything's beautiful. Everything just feels good."

**WRITTEN IN THE STARS:** "I recently found a little journal I put together when I was 10 or 11. It's hysterical. I literally wrote: 'My future family and life' and painted a picture of who I would be as an adult, who I'd be married to, what my kids would look like, the cars I would drive, my china pattern, the furniture in my house, as well as the floor plan. It was my destiny to create homes."

**COLORADO, THEN AND NOW:** "The evolution of design here is amazing, and I like to think that a part of what I did when I came here from California was to push that envelope. Today, Colorado has no specific aesthetic. This is such a transplant state, with people coming from

**"We like to work closely with architects and builders, so that when you walk into a space, it's a beautiful symphony."**

—MIRANDA CULLEN

the East Coast, the West Coast, the South. So there are all these opportunities for people to bring those distinct personal elements to their houses. And for me, well, I never thought in a million years I'd own a cow hide, and now I do."

**BIGGEST LESSONS LEARNED:** "One thing that Devon and I say all the time is that there is no life and death in interior design. When you're starting out, everything is so traumatic. 'Oh my god! A sofa came in and it's the wrong color.' Now I know that—you know what?—we'll just fix it."

**PIÈCE DE RÉSTANCE:** "We just installed a home for a young family who recently had their fifth child, all under the age of 7. And watching the kids skipping through the house, going, 'Oh my gosh! This is so fun! Look at this room—it's my favorite!' Their little faces—just seeing how we were affecting their environment—was a pretty big deal. Once you have children—my husband and I have two adopted kids—they do such amazing things for you. They really ground you in the important things in life." »



"A designer should be able to do any look," says Cullen. These three Duet Design Group projects—from left, a soft modern dining room, the hall of a historic Denver residence and a library wall in a midcentury modern Greenwood Village home—reflect that philosophy.

LEFT: EMILY MINTON REDFELD; RIGHT: DAVID LAUER





## KITCHEN DESIGNER MIKAL OTTEN

### Owner and lead designer, Exquisite Kitchen Design

You could say that kitchen design is in Mikal Otten's blood. His father was a kitchen designer in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area when Otten was a child—a time when, he says, "There were no stone countertops—Corian was the new invention. And kitchens were utilitarian and placed in the backs of houses—not nearly as grand as they are today."

"In college, I studied computer science, mainly because I wanted to do something different from what I grew up with," Otten says. "I don't know why. Dad asked me to come back and help him with his company, and now I look back and go, 'Wow—how could I have ever thought that I would do something else?' But I was young and I didn't know."

Now, Otten's company includes four designers, his younger brother Marcus

among them. "I'm still amazed at how many times we hear, 'Oh, this kitchen is the heart of the home' or 'Everything happens in the kitchen,'" he says. "That has never been more true. It's enjoyable to see how we can change a life for somebody just by creating a space their family enjoys. Our kitchens are a piece of art, but a piece of art you live in and enjoy every day."

One thing that makes EKD unique is the team Otten has built. "We have an awesome group," he says. "It doesn't matter how well we design a kitchen; if we don't have an incredible team around us—project managers who order the materials and get them to the job site, installation crews that understand the details of design—the kitchens just wouldn't happen."

"Mikal is that guy," says Kyle Webb of



EMILY MINTON REDFIELD





**Opposite:** For a long-overdue kitchen remodel in Arvada, Otten created an inviting but functional space, with a walk-in pantry, large island and classic aesthetic. **Left:** The kitchen of a home in Vail combines a palette of stone, metal and wood to integrate with the natural surroundings. The space is meant to accommodate the family's casual schedules, with a large hidden pantry and wine storage flanking the kitchen.

## “I’m still amazed at how many times we hear, ‘Oh, this kitchen is the heart of the home.’ ” —MIKAL OTTEN

KH Webb Architects in Vail. “One of my favorite stories about him involves a project we did in Aspen. The homeowners were having a Christmas Eve party, and one of the kitchen cabinets broke, and Mikal had someone out there to fix it within three hours. That says all you need to know. He takes care of everything. He’s both detail-oriented and service-oriented. He’s a rock star.”

**DEMO DAYS:** “I had to start at the bottom and work my way up. Back in college, I spent my time tearing out kitchens, and it wasn’t long before I was running a couple of crews. At some point, I kind of got bored with that, and there was an opportunity to move into design, and I grabbed it.”

**LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON:** “From my dad, I learned a really strong work ethic. Every once in a while, he would come home in the morning having spent the night at the office. I have no idea how he did it. I also learned the precision of German engineering from him. He would ask me, ‘How do you measure these projects?’ He would measure everything to 1/32 of an inch. Sometimes he would take something down to a millimeter. That was just ingrained in me.”

**GOD IS IN THE DETAILS:** “My love was always the details, like the crown moldings and how everything fits together. We named the company Exquisite Kitchen Design, but what does it take to create an exquisite

kitchen? First of all, it’s Kitchen 101: The space has to function, no matter what. Second is interior architecture, and third is interior design. There’s also a little bit of fêng shui in there too. We aren’t just cabinet designers. It’s really a matter of looking at a space holistically and creating something that’s a special piece of art.”

**BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN:** “A lot of our kitchens have this layered effect, and that often relates to the exterior, to the landscaping around the home, from the greenery to the boulders to the water. It’s just layer after layer. None of it is exactly the same, but it’s like what you see in nature: a gray pebble against a stone against a boulder. They are slightly set off from each other, but when it’s all together, it’s beautiful.”

**GOING AU NATUREL:** “Of course, kitchen layouts are still fairly similar to when I started more than 20 years ago, but now we let the materials be true to what they are. If it’s oak or pressed oak, it’s natural. We’re letting each of the materials stand on its own, and when materials are chosen correctly, you can create something wonderful.

**FAVORITE COMPLIMENT EVER:** “We did a huge renovation for one client, and I remember her original space was so nasty. After we did the redesign, we were sitting and having a glass of wine, and she said, ‘Mikal, it’s like a breath of fresh air.’ That kind of summed the whole thing up.” »





## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT SHERI SANZONE

Founder, Bluegreen, Aspen

Listen to Sheri Sanzone talk, and she can sound more like a writer than a successful landscape architect, using terms like “editing,” “clarity” and “legibility” to describe her work.

What Sanzone, whose Bluegreen studio is celebrating its 15th year in 2017, is referring to is the ability to “distill a landscape design down to its essential components and stay true to it, so there’s a clarity to the spaces, not a lot of extras, and yet there’s still a sense of discovery as you move through it.”

Sanzone took a circuitous path to landscape architecture. “When I was growing up in Washington, D.C., my dad was a general contractor, so I was always interested in the details of how things were put together,” she says, “but I took this really long, roundabout way to get to this profession.” She earned an undergraduate degree in science, geography and regional planning at Maryland’s Salisbury University before getting a master’s in city planning at Penn (while there, she and her dad designed and built their family’s beach house) and then moving to Aspen, where she worked for five years at Design Workshop before launching her own firm.

Bluegreen, which now has five employees (“the sweet spot where I can stay intimately involved in every project”), does 90 percent of its work in Colorado, from the Aspen Art Museum to transit stations to residential design. “I’ve known

**Right:** Bluegreen established a framework to spotlight pieces in an existing sculpture garden. **Opposite and below:** The outdoor spaces of a limestone and slate home

above Castle Creek take advantage of views near and far. **Bottom:** Bluegreen strove to honor the agrarian history at the Double Bar X residential community near Aspen.



“Being very curious has served me well, and it’s what I look for in others joining me at Bluegreen.”

—SHERI SANZONE



BLUEGREEN/JASON DEWEY (4)





Sheri for 15 years," says client Paul Nicoletti. "She's very attentive, listens well, is fun to work with and is progressive in her thinking; she knows, for example, that I don't want a lot of maintenance in my yard, and she understands the minimalist look. She is very talented."

"We bring the same approach and philosophy to every project," says Sanzone, "but the problems are different and the people are different and the perspectives are different. That's what makes it really exciting."

**THE MEANING OF BLUEGREEN:** "I didn't want to name the company after me because I wanted it to have a studio environment feel, where everyone would be collaborating in the design process. For me, the colors blue and green felt very fresh, very clean, very modern, and strongly related to ecological stewardship and sustainability. The name conveyed an emotion to me."

**OPEN-DOOR POLICY:** "Our studio is intentionally made up of people who are very creative and inherently curious, so it's rare to be doing a project and not have someone say, 'Hey, what are you working on?' And we don't have cubicles, so it's hard to hide anything from anybody. It's all here—pinned up on the wall, laid out on the middle island table. Even if we're working on our computers, someone will say, 'Hey, can you come down and take a look at this for five minutes because I'm kind of stuck.' "

**CAUSE AND EFFECT:** "The environment in Colorado is so beautiful and so sensitive, it's much more apparent why we should be protecting it. On the East Coast, where I grew up, it's not as easy to see the cause and effect: If I do this, then this is going to happen. Here, everything is so much more intense. If you don't get the irrigation right, your plants are going to fail or be severely compromised."

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY:** "Just as people have different perspectives on what landscape architects do, so are there different perspectives on what sustainability is. Some folks say, 'Oh, I did these three things, so that's enough.' But our approach is to integrate sustainability into everything we do. If we're designing a planting bed, we want to make sure we're capturing rainwater to help supplement the irrigation. If we're doing a design, we'll try to do it so we're only moving dirt on a site once so we're not running equipment unnecessarily. As long as sustainability is not costing a client any money or added construction time, we'll build in those sustainable features. It's fundamental to who we are." ❖