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Master bedroom design by Circle of Excellence winners Rowland + Broughton

BRENT MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BLUEGREEN/JASON DEWEY. EMILY MINTON REDFIELD. BRENT MOSS PHOTOGRAPHY. RAUL J. GARCIA PHOTOGRAPHY. BLUEGREEN/JASON DEWEY. EMILY MINTON REDFIELD. 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

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.

NICK JOHNSON

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 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.' " »