

# COLORADO HOMES

JUNE/JULY 2019

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# features

ASPEN REVIVAL + ONE-MAN SHOW + FROM THE GROUND UP + A SENSE OF AHHHHH

2019  
HOME  
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## *Home of the Year Fireplace*

Although the scale of the rooms is large, the mood is both elegant and cozy. “It’s wood, wood, wood and fireplaces—there are so many elements bringing warmth to the kitchen and living spaces,” architect Sarah Broughton says.





# ASPEN Revival

Architect Sarah Broughton of Rowland+Broughton helps a globe-trotting family return a **COLORADO LEGACY** property to its glory days.

*Story by* JENNIFER DRAWBRIDGE  
*Photography by* BRENT MOSS

◀ *Back View* "The garden beds are lined with the same steel used to frame out the doors and windows," architect Sarah Broughton notes. »





▼ **Front Entrance** “The exterior architecture is entirely new,” Broughton says. “We wanted it to feel substantial and private as you approached the front. You walk through the dappled light of the aspens—we worked hard to keep those trees—and the meadow grasses, and come to the dark front door and the sandstone walls. The stone was meticulously laid out to perfectly frame the entrance. And then you open the door, and the views just open up.”



▲ **Front Door, Living Room** The black-steel surround serves as an ideal frame for the alluring mountain views. “This was the original living room, but before the remodel there was an overhanging roof on the window wall that partially blocked that view,” Broughton says. The architects used white oak, limestone and plaster integrated with Benjamin Moore’s China White to create the calming palette found throughout the house. “It just feels right for the light and the landscape,” Broughton says. “The neutrals provide a perfect space for the Wesners’ large art collection. We wanted to create a backdrop for the landscape, for their art and for life happening.”

THIS REMARKABLE, 8,200-plus-square-foot home, just a few miles from downtown Aspen, *bad* to be our 2019 Home of the Year. The combination of the land—the ridge offers a panoramic view of surrounding peaks—and the building—a generous reimagining of a storied

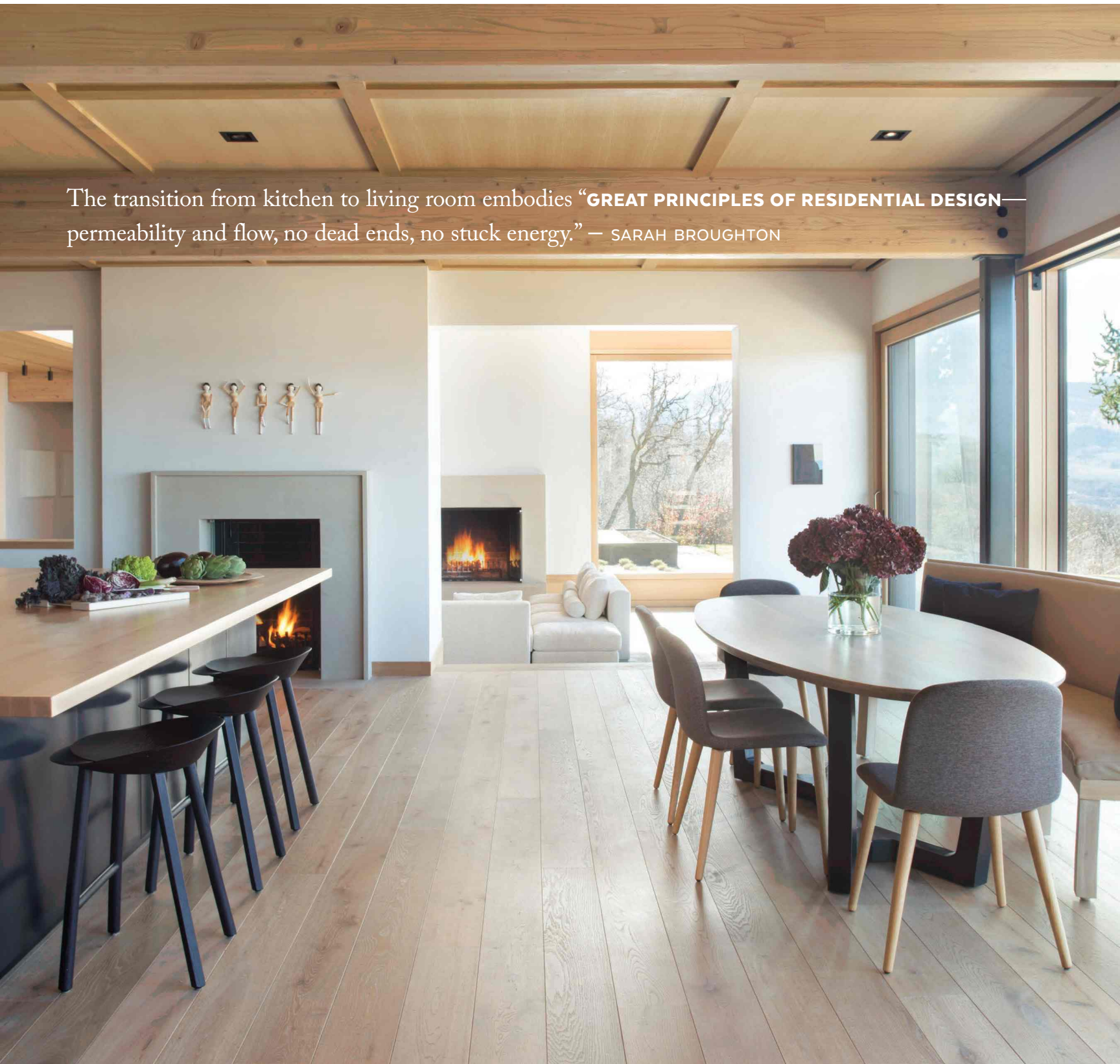
landmark—are a perfect match.

In a world where some of us cannot decide what color to paint our bathroom, Alexa and Blaine Wesner, owners of the house, count as a home-design power couple. While Alexa was serving as U.S. Ambassador to Austria, the couple found

and purchased this gorgeous Aspen property and decided to undertake the rebuild of a historic home—all while working and living with their three young children an ocean away.

How did they do it? “Confidence in your architect makes all the difference,” »





The transition from kitchen to living room embodies “**GREAT PRINCIPLES OF RESIDENTIAL DESIGN**— permeability and flow, no dead ends, no stuck energy.” — SARAH BROUGHTON

▲ *Kitchen to Living Room* This view is one of Broughton’s favorites. “We really studied the opening between the living room and kitchen,” she says. “I keep thinking of the word ‘permeability.’ In this house, each space flows into the next.”



Blaine says. The Wesners had previously worked with Rowland+Broughton on their Aspen summer home. “We love Sarah’s work and her aesthetic, and she is a great communicator.” Sarah Broughton, a partner with her husband, John Rowland, in their Denver/Aspen firm, laughs. “They are good deciders! They flew over from Austria and fell in love with the place. We met them at the house and sketched out some thoughts. And they bought it, and we got started.”

The house in question was a modern structure built in the 1960s by Ellie Brickham, Aspen’s first female architect. She designed it for another Aspen legend, skier Stein Eriksen. Originally, the plan was to renovate, but “years of renovations and additions had turned the interior into a rabbit warren, with low ceilings and little rooms—and it did not take advantage of the views,” Broughton recalls. Brickham’s original concept of an elegant north-to-south hall, an architectural spine curving along the top of the ridge, “was a zigzag when we saw it,” Blaine recalls. “It was like looking at a picture hanging crooked on a wall. You can’t put your finger on it, but you know it’s wrong.” »

◀ *Kitchen* “The Wesners were living in Austria during the design process, and they wanted to bring some of the Old World Austrian touches to this home in a more relevant, modern way,” Broughton says. “We rendered the ceiling design several different ways and finally decided on this pattern. It adds texture and character and a nod to Old World detailing.”





◀ **Dining Room** The black pendants of the Vibia Wireflow chandelier match the blackened-steel accents throughout the house. The vivid blue butterflies under glass formerly decorated their Austrian residence. “I can’t recall where in Europe we found them,” Blaine says. “It’s funny. After more than 20 years of collecting together, you look around and think, ‘We have a lot of stuff.’”

▼ **Living Room** Warm limestone surrounds the home’s four fireplaces. The floating lower mantel gives the substantial living-room hearth a feeling of lightness.



In the end, after uncovering serious structural problems with the additions, the design team and owners decided to start from almost the beginning. Blaine, although a longtime architecture buff, was unfamiliar with Brickham’s work. “After we bought the place, I researched her history, her design, her aesthetic, and we decided to rebuild, while honoring

her design and influence in our version of the home,” he said. They preserved the placement of the four wood-burning fireplaces, followed much of the building’s original footprint, and repurposed and refinished original timbers for the new construction.

For an architect known for her very modern sensibility, Broughton’s

architectural inspiration is surprising. “I was fortunate to grow up in a 1920s English Tudor home. It embodied great principles of residential design. There were multiple ways into each room, and there were never any dead ends. There was great flow—no stuck energy—and I tried to bring that to these spaces.”

The generous, light-filled rooms »



serve as a gallery for the owners' ever-expanding art collection, but the house is not a museum. It was designed with family in mind. "Our Austin home [the striking Floating Box House designed by Peter Gluck] was beautiful, and a wonderful place to display art, but it wasn't really built for children," Blaine says. "With the textured floors and stone and steel, this place is really very rugged."

"We are so proud of this work," Broughton says. "The passion of our excellent team and the vision of the owners took this build from good to great. We created a home that honors the views, the land and the history of this place."

Blaine agrees. "We're happy that their work is getting this attention," he says. "We feel like the house truly fits the land and fits us. It's really a very simple house. It's just ... right."

**Master Bedroom ►**

This ingenious chimney design allowed the architects to preserve the master bedroom's original wood-burning fireplace without losing the wraparound mountain views.



“Wood, wood, wood and fireplaces. There are so many elements **CREATING WARMTH.**” — SARAH BROUGHTON



▲ **Hall** “The elegant spine of Brickham’s design had been lost, so we looked at the structure and decided it made sense to recreate one long, unbroken hallway,” Broughton says. “We widened and lengthened it; it’s 8 feet wide and 126 feet long. The hall functions as an art gallery. You could see someone running down the hall—and the kids do. We’ve been over there when they’ve been riding scooters down the hall. It has become its own room, integral to all of the rooms.” The flooring here, and throughout the home, is Hakwood European Oak. »



“An important part of our design process is to create storage customized to the owner. Because we **CREATE A PLACE FOR EVERY SINGLE THING**, our clients don’t have to live a cluttered life.” — SARAH BROUGHTON



▲ **Master Bathroom** This fireplace was a happy accident. “It was originally a random, weird fireplace stuck in a hall,” Broughton says. “When we rebuilt that side of the house and reconfigured the floor plan, we thought, ‘How cool to have a fireplace in your bathroom!’” A toe-kick light that also serves as a night light underlines the floating cabinets.



◀ **Reading Nook** “The nook anchors the hall, the spine of the home,” Broughton explains. “We built that space by the kids’ bedrooms, a super cozy place to hang out, read and unwind at the end of the day. The window is actually aligned with the hall, keeping the light flowing through that space.”



▲ **Media Room** Even the media room delivers a view of the mountains. The built-in couches and cabinets are a signature of Rowland+Broughton’s interiors. “It goes back to our love of custom furniture. We love custom millwork and built-ins. The pieces are built with the space in mind, and they maximize the use of space.”



◀ **Details** The bird-foot candleholders are typical of the owners’ appreciation of humor in design. “They gravitate to classic design and simplicity,” Broughton says, “but they also have an eye for the unusual—the small, unexpected detail. The effect is really very witty.” »



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► **Back View** The entire mountain side of the home is open to the spectacular view from the ridge. “It is a beautiful spot. It was very important to all of us that the house blend in with, and not detract from, the natural surroundings,” says homeowner Blaine Wesner. ❖

“We feel like the house fits the land and fits us. **THE TRUTH IS: IT’S NOT A VERY COMPLICATED HOUSE.** It’s modern and clean and simple. It’s just right.” — BLAINE WESNER

