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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Friday, November 20, 2015 | M1

The Ski Homes Issue

AN ARCHITECT'S RUSTIC TOUCH IN ASPEN

Miami-based Chad Oppenheim clad the walls of his unconventional Red Mountain ski home in 8,000 square feet of weathered wood salvaged from barns around the country to create a minimalist family retreat.

BY KRIS HUDSON



DAVID CLIFTON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

IN ASPEN, COLO., the Rocky Mountain capital of glitz and glam, architect Chad Oppenheim has opted for rustic and spare.

Mr. Oppenheim, a Miami-based designer of hotels, residential towers and office buildings across the globe, says he knew when he first visited Aspen to ski as a teen that he wanted a home on the slope of Red Mountain overlooking the city.

Mr. Oppenheim, now 44 years old, found his retreat in 2007 in an enclave of the now-swanky Red Mountain. He spent \$3.3 million to buy the 1970 fixer-upper: a 3,400-square-foot, three-bedroom home—one of the first of the relatively small homes built as the mountain started to gain popularity. The house had gone through several haphazard modifications and expansions from previous owners that left it disjointed.

Mr. Oppenheim launched a \$2 million overhaul of the home, keeping its square footage and five offset lev-

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PEAK SEASON Chad Oppenheim stripped the original stucco and wood exterior from the home and replaced it with weathered barn wood. He spends about eight weeks a year at his house, called La Muna, skiing with his wife, Ilona, and their two children.

MANSION

AN ARCHITECT'S RUSTIC ASPEN TOUCH

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els, that was completed in 2011. He stripped the house to its bones, retaining only the wooden beams and the thick metal plates that fasten them together. Outside, he scrapped the patchwork of stucco and wood siding, as well as the blue aluminum roof.

In their place, he wrapped the home in weathered barn wood and made the roof a dark copper. In all, he covered most of the house's walls and ceilings in more than 8,000 square feet of planks salvaged from dilapidated barns across the U.S.

The result is a four-bedroom, 4½-bath rustic retreat that eschews the snowshoes-on-the-wall décor that lingers in some ski-town vacation homes. He named it La Muna, he says, derived from the word for "stream" in the Hopi language, as a nod to a backyard irrigation channel.

The house is devoid of clutter, inside and out. The thermostat, light switches and even shower drains are hidden from view. Skylights and floor-to-ceiling windows on the home's southwest-facing walls let in natural light and allow wide views of the city below as well as the ski slopes across the valley.

Mr. Oppenheim calls the style "romantic minimalism."

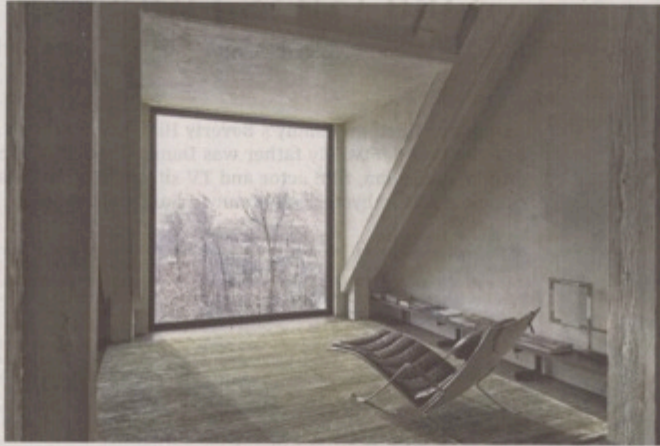
"We wanted a cozy mountain cabin," he said. "We wanted it to be an intimate place where the family can connect."

Mr. Oppenheim, his wife, Ilona, 38, and their children—a 7-year-old son, Hendrix, and a 4-year-old daughter, Lilo—spend about eight weeks a year at La Muna. The entire family skis: Ms. Oppenheim, a native of Switzerland, since she was 2, and both children since they were 2.

The architect, a native of suburban New Jersey, is known professionally for his use of natural elements, as shown by his design for the Wadi Rum Desert Resort carved into sandstone cliffs in Jordan. He became widely known in 2007 for his design of the 50-story residential tower 10 Museum Park in downtown Miami, which helped spark a revitalization of its neighborhood. He went on to design movie-producer Michael Bay's resort-style, 30,000-square-foot home on a cliff in Bel Air, Calif., and the headquarters of landscape-architecture firm Enea GmbH in Switzerland.

In addition to the Oppenheims' homes in Miami and Aspen, Mr. Oppenheim designed the family's retreat on Harbour Island in the Bahamas. The 2,500-square-foot House on a Dune, also minimalist, has much of its central space wide open to the outside.

In Aspen, Mr. Oppenheim again embraced natural elements. Supplier Marcel de Cock, owner of M Design Group & Assoc. Inc.'s Wood, Iron



BEDROOM EYES The architect gave the master bedroom a floor-to-ceiling window that offers a view of the valley and the ski slopes. Inset, a clock given to Mr. Oppenheim on his 40th birthday.



and Stone, did little to the barn wood other than a light cleaning and a heat treatment to remove insects. The rough-textured wood occupies most surfaces in the house, including carved vent screens, kitchen cabinets and the door of the inlaid refrigerator. In the bathrooms, sinks rest atop wood consoles.

Because most of the interior walls are covered by the salvaged wood, the doors to the rooms and closets are indiscernible except for their handles. "The lines are very simple and modest," Mr. de Cock said. "And the wood itself is in its natural state."

Off the back patio, the architect installed an infinity-edge hot tub sunk partially below grade and edged in dark copper. Inside on the first level, he put a bedroom and rec room. The second floor has two bedrooms—one for the children; the third floor includes the living room and an activity room converted from an attached greenhouse, along with a deck; the kitchen is on the fourth level and the master bedroom and bath are on the top floor.

Mr. Oppenheim covered the exterior of La Muna's walkout basement in Colorado granite. His aim, he says, is to make the house mesh with the mountainside and the aspen, pine and spruce trees. "We tried to pick materials that would make the house disappear," he said. "When you're working in a beautiful environment, we want to blend and disappear like an animal camouflages itself in its environment."

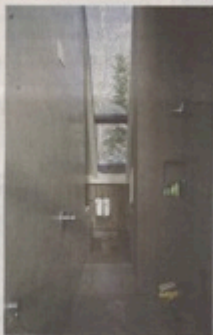
That's not always the case on Red Mountain, where the alpine retreats of the affluent and famous are within easy view of the city below. Across much of the rest of the mountain's southwest-facing slope are mansions as large as 15,000 square feet costing from \$5 million to \$50 million.

Mr. Oppenheim's Red Mountain neighborhood, with its smaller homes on small lots, is what Aspen real-estate agent Joshua Saslove describes as "quaint and cozy."

"It's about how the house frames views of nature, celebrates the views," Mr. Oppenheim added. "It's more of a feeling that we're trying to capture rather than architecture. It's like a base camp for connecting with nature."



FEET TO THE FIRE The living room has its original fireplace, above left, which Mr. Oppenheim outfitted in steel. One of the home's few decorated walls, top right. The walkout basement has a recreation room, above right, and a bedroom.



LETTING IN THE LIGHT The master bathroom, above left, has a large skylight. The dining area, above right, is decorated by a work of art that the architect describes as a painting of living moss.

JAMES GUSTAFSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL