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All About That View

After losing their home in the Waldo Canyon Fire, one couple created a spectacular dream house.

by Cameron Moix

Many structures in Colorado Springs have been designed deliberately to take advantage of their natural surroundings, but few have done so as effectively as one home overlooking the Garden of the Gods—and its origin story is equally beautiful.

When the Waldo Canyon Fire tore through northwest Colorado Springs in 2012, it destroyed hundreds of homes and thousands of acres. Among those displaced was a couple who had planned to live out their days in a Mountain Shadows townhome, but destiny had other plans for the couple to rise from the ashes in a new home nearby.

“While staying at the Garden of the Gods Club after the fire, they decided to go for a walk and sort of stumbled upon this site—they just fell in love with it,” designer Larry

Gilland of LGA Studios says of the couple, who prefers not to be identified. “I was familiar with the lot, and I was familiar with the view. I knew that we had to really capture that.”

The 1.15-acre lot lies in Cathedral Ridge, a gated community located west of Mesa Road with panoramic views overlooking Rock Ledge Ranch, Garden of the Gods and the expanse of the Front Range. It was there the couple began to dream of an ideal home they would build.

“We wanted a modern home with a flat roof and single-story construction,” the owner explains. “We wanted simple lines that would complement the mesa—nothing that would detract from it—and to maximize the view with an abundance of glass.”

The couple purchased the lot and immediately selected Charlie and Nancy Shea, owners of C.R. Shea Homes, to serve as general contractors. The Sheas got to work with the Gillands—Larry’s wife, Mary, is co-owner of LGA Studios—to design a home that would meet the couple’s expectations of a sleek-yet-livable modern home with an Asian influence.

“We wanted to do something much more modern than what was being done in Colorado Springs,” Gilland says. “It was a pleasure to work with clients who were interested in doing something more contemporary.”

The fact that the owners were unexpectedly starting over after losing their Mountain Shadows home also made the experience unique. “What stood out most was the relationship we had with our clients who had just been victims



of the Waldo Canyon Fire,” Charlie Shea says. “To share that with somebody we didn’t know before the fire, who all of a sudden became clients, and to see the open perspective they had about starting new, especially when being retired—everybody pulled together; it was a magnificent experience.”

After the initial design phase, the Sheas and Gillands worked with a team of other Colorado Springs companies to bring their vision to life: interiors by Senger Design Group, custom woodwork and cabinets by Woodworks Millshop and Plush Designs, landscaping by Green Scapes Landscaping, lighting, security and sound by HomeRun Electronics and window coverings by Contact Coverings.

“Unless you work together like a team, you won’t get the kind of results that we got with this home,” Gilland says. “There’s such a synergy created when we all get together.”

The stunning results became clear when the 4,800-square-foot home was completed in early 2014. The home’s two-tone gray

exterior and geometric design stand out beautifully from its surroundings but manage not to undermine them. Visitors pull into a circular drive, walk through a Zen garden and arrive at a massive, white-oak front door as if returning from a grand journey. Surrounded by Asian design elements, the home’s entryway smoothly transitions into a spacious living area with floor-to-ceiling sliding glass panels. The effect is an entire open wall that marries the indoors and outdoors at the altar of a breathtaking Garden of the Gods vantage.

Along with all of the standard accommodations—a sleek and accommodating kitchen, casual and formal dining areas, an elegant master suite and office—the home also includes a private wing for guests, as well as a separate bedroom and living area for the couple’s half-dozen grandchildren.

“They just love it here,” the owner says while pointing to a few framed pieces of his grandchildren’s art, which is hung throughout the house.

The walls are peppered with a few other pieces from the couple’s collection—maps, paintings and landscape photographs—but they all seem to point back to the centerpiece: that magnificent view.

“Minimalism as a design style really requires a balance of restraint and honoring the void in the space,” says Cindy Senger, owner of Senger Design Group. “Our clients are minimalists, and we wanted to make sure we weren’t just filling that space—we wanted to make sure we were honoring it, as well as the natural view.”

From the elegant arrangement of modern leather furniture in the living room, clean lines and high ceilings guide your eyes out beyond a large back patio. The architecture creates an illusion that the walls have all dropped away, and you feel as if you’re suddenly standing in the open space with which the couple first fell in love.

“We took a big step when we decided to build,” the owner says. “But we know that this was the right place to do it.”