

DESIGN & DECORATING

HOUSE TOUR

One Cozy Cabin, Hold the Clutter

In a lakeside getaway in Montana, an interior designer avoided the hodgepodge-lodge look by going easy on the rustic clichés

BY CARA GIBBS

FOR A LAKESIDE compound perched in the northwest corner of Montana, Juan Montoya accepted that the interiors should acknowledge and reflect the vacation home's imposing surroundings. Still, the New York designer resisted the rustic tropes of axe-hewn furnishings and antler chandeliers—taking cues from nature rather than mimicking it. He brought in wood furnishings but leaned toward more contemporary ones. His version of coziness comes from layering not animal pelts but subtler textures such as leather, wool, rattan, copper and glass. "I used durable materials and lots of cottons that can be cleaned and changed out easily," said Mr. Montoya. But, he added, "the project as a whole is very tactile."

Mr. Montoya has earned a reputation for casting homes in the likeness of their owners, playing off their preoccupations and pastimes. But he does so with a light hand. In one room here, for example, he flicks at the family's love of fishing by dropping a single netted glass-buoy pendant from the ceiling. More explicitly, two canoes hang in the great room (not shown), but they aren't mere decoration. They easily unhook for use.

Dating from 1920, with even-more-historic outbuildings, the compound comes with boatloads of character, including its chinked-log interior walls. "I love the warmer elements that make this home so inviting," said Mr. Montoya, "but I'm also careful not to stray into clutter. Cozy is not derived from too much stuff." One's belongings, he said, "should never distract from the overall space."



Dining That's Not Too Fine

In this circa-1920 home situated on a lake in Northwest Montana, interior designer Juan Montoya created an inviting but contemporary fishing retreat. Simplicity plays a leading role in the petite dining room. Mr. Montoya did without warming window treatments to highlight the sweeping views, and practicality called for an easily swept bare floor. He left the walls nearly naked, but

touches of snugness and texture appear in the upholstered chair seats, the copper milk pail and the nailheads on the round Belgian dining table that's partially clad in touchable leather. A 19th-century sideboard procured in Oklahoma adds a more predictably rustic note: Its Native American motifs and bark insets might skew a little corny, but in the spare context of the rest of the dining room, it works.



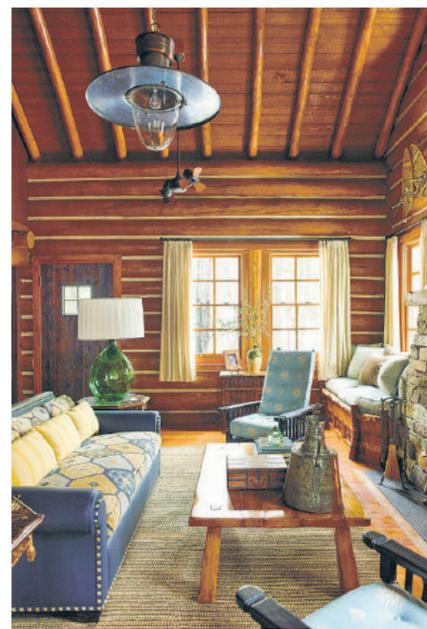
Two-faced Facade

In this locale, the winters are relentless and the summers magic. The home had to play well in both season's landscapes, not competing with lush lake views in July and appearing as a haven amid the heavy snowfalls of January. Siding painted with Farrow & Ball's Studio Green and detailing picked out in the brand's Green Ground did the trick. "The exterior is instantly heartwarming in the cold winter months due to the contrasting paint tones that pop against the snow," said Mr. Montoya. "In the springtime the exterior does just the opposite, molding into the landscape."



Sweet Retreat

Tightly peaked ceilings, painted white to offer a respite from wood, define an intimate seating area where the family's teenagers pursue R&R. "When the family is here they are completely disconnected from technology—there isn't one television throughout the entire home," explained Mr. Montoya. "It was important for the children to have an alluring space dedicated to reading or resting they could retreat to outside of their respective bedrooms." In this cubbyhole hideaway, he didn't overdo the quaint coziness factor. The modern, frankly linear striped rug and bamboo shade offset the woody chest and chair, and even the congenial banquette with its bounce-house worth of throw pillows—flocked in velvet Lee Jofa textiles—sits in a red-lacquer, geometric frame, an unexpected Asian note.



Unforced Comfort

"This is a particularly warm and cozy space," explained Mr. Montoya, "but again I didn't want too much stuff around." The granite fireplace projects from a wall unadorned apart from a pair of snowshoes, which hang inconspicuously on its wooden surface. Instead of traditional cabin décor (faux fur and blankets, for starters), Mr. Montoya drafted less predictable materials: an oversize translucent green-glass lamp, an industrial metal ceiling fixture and the nailheads of the sofa. The blue leather of that sofa, custom crafted by Anthony Lawrence Belfair, will become more textured and distressed as it ages. Its cushion is upholstered in a soft-to-the-hand cotton with a pattern that captures the folksiness of a country quilt. The unadorned Persian Gooneh wool rug from Orley Shabahang adds another layer of warmth without creating visual static.

Serendipitous Cocoon

In the home's master bedroom, Mr. Montoya added ceiling beams with rattan between them to enhance insulation and soundproofing, he said. The unintended outcome: "It made the room feel even more intimate." Other factors contribute to the space's enveloping nature. The Montoya-designed bed frame, trimmed in teak and upholstered in the same Dualoy leather that lines the wall behind it, creates a tactile anchor for the room. Underfoot lays a chevron wool rug by Stark Carpet that adds nubby braiding and a western vibe. The irregularly shaped side table counters the traditionalism of the venerable Morris chair it sits next to. And the geometry of the bedside chest, a Lane "Mosaic" night stand that dates to the 1970s, exemplifies Mr. Montoya's use of wood furniture that is warming but not stodgy. "Cozy elegance came to life in the master suite," he said.



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