

Bridge House

Dramatic suspension bridges inspire architect Tommy Hein's design for a contemporary mountain retreat in Telluride, Colorado

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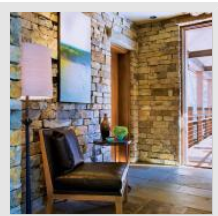
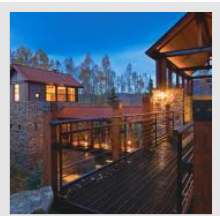
For architect [Tommy Hein \(http://www.tommyhein.com\)](http://www.tommyhein.com), intriguing architectural design isn't about style. In fact, he doesn't believe in categorizing architecture as a particular "style" at all. Instead, it's simply about the process. A self-described philosopher and dreamer, Hein approaches every project with the same core principles: acknowledge history, discover the site's uniqueness and allow the shelter to grow from that context.

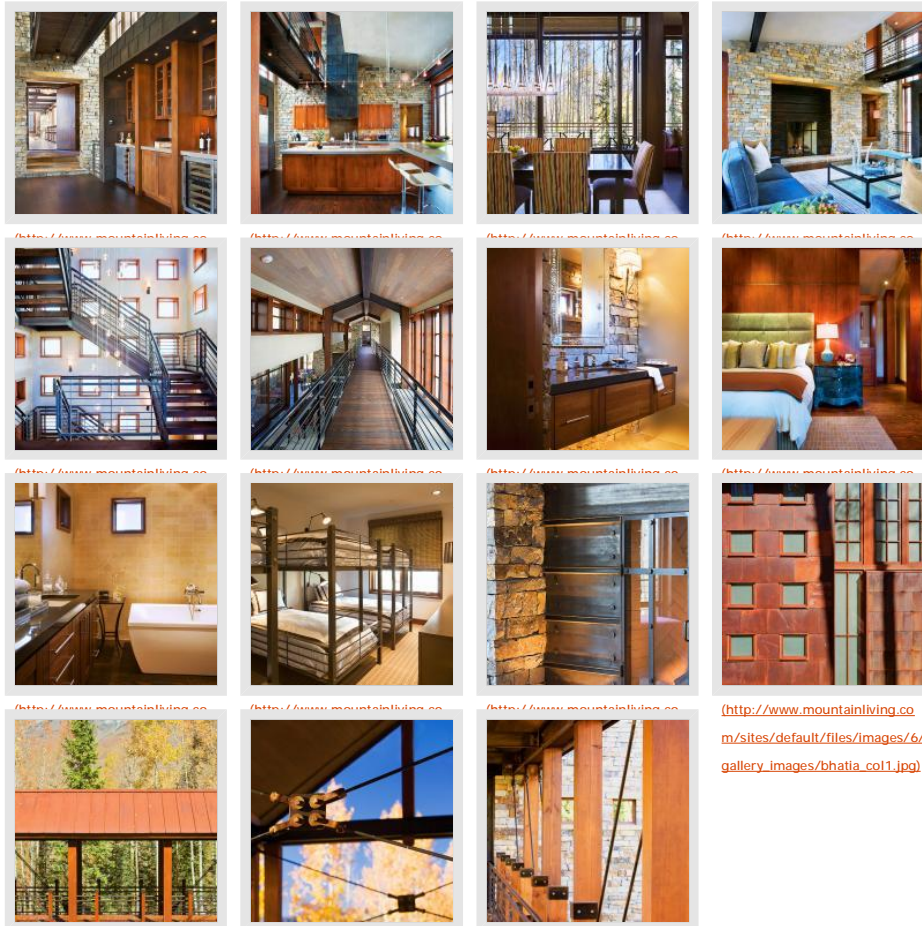
Before Hein even created his first sketch for this dwelling in Telluride, Colorado, he lived off the land, learning its secrets and nuances.

"The site is very long and narrow, and there is a natural draw where water runs down the mountain through the center of the property," the architect explains. "From the beginning, this natural draw spoke to me, inspiring the bridge concept that functionally and visually links the two sides of the property."

Sitting parallel to the San Sophia mountain range, the elongated structure juxtaposes lofty suspension bridges with chunky vertical towers that anchor the design to the earth. The home's public spaces are defined by floor-to-ceiling windows that capture the striking view. Raw vertical timbers outline the windows and bring the forest inside, strengthening the indoor-outdoor connection.

In contrast, the home's private chambers are enclosed in the stone towers, providing an air of intimacy. "When we decided to build our second home in Telluride, we knew we wanted a structure that was more modern and unique than our Houston residence," homeowner Vineet Bhatia says. "Although we never conceptualized a bridge house, now when we look out over the mountains we feel as if we're floating among the trees in our own mountain penthouse."





(http://www.mountainliving.com/sites/default/files/images/6/gallery_images/bhatia_col1.jpg)

Every detail, from a simplified materials palette to the placement of fixtures, was chosen to highlight and complement the topography. Using just four distinct materials—wood, stone, steel and glass—Hein created a cohesive design that seamlessly blends interior and exterior elements. “I don’t think people use enough restraint in their choice of materials, and that tends to date the design,” he says. “When you simplify your palette, you create calmness, allowing the structure and the space to speak for themselves.”

On the home’s facade, mill-finished steel artfully mingles with stone, glass and wood, providing a rustic yet durable finish evocative of the area’s mining history. Inside, steel accents everything from walls, doors and railings to the massive fireplace. Although the fireplace’s composition is simple, the depth achieved by stacking the horizontal steel planks adds distinction, creating an elegant focal point in the living room.

Above the family room, a sleek interior bridge serves as a passageway that links the private chambers. Bisecting the bridge’s expanse, an angular staircase leads down to the main floor. Composed of steel and timber, the staircase’s hard demeanor is softened by the elegant chandelier that descends through the center volume. “When we designed the staircase, we wanted it to feel like you were climbing up to a tree house,” Hein says. “Every detail was purposefully configured to extend the idea of the floating bridge, both inside and out.”

Embracing the land’s natural attributes, the home appears to have grown directly from the site, inspiring the notion that it couldn’t exist anywhere else. “To me, architecture is simply a mixture of people and place,” Hein says. “In essence, it’s the client’s personal piece of sculpture that is shaped by its surroundings.”

A PROCESS IN PERSPECTIVE

Determined to highlight the site’s most distinctive features, architect [Tommy Hein](http://www.tommyhein.com) (<http://www.tommyhein.com>) envisioned a home that would complement the landscape and embrace the area’s most impressive assets. “My process is about context,” he explains. “I like to create buildings that fit their place, fit the site and fit the client.”

Gaining architectural perspective from the bridge concept, Hein focused on modernizing the structure to capture the breathtaking view of the mountains. Banks of windows on the north-facing wall parallel the mountain range in the distance. Calculating the exact angle for ideal viewing, Hein found the perfect formula for balancing peaks and sky. “The view is of paramount importance,” he says. “It’s why people build homes in the mountains. Capturing that ethereal beauty and framing it within the context of the structure creates natural art and an intimacy that is beyond compare.”

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