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Southern Accent

A New Orleans family creates their dream snow country getaway in Bachelor Gulch.

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Architecture: Patrick Melancon, Melancon Ortega Designs **Interior Design:** Madeline Stuart, Madeline Stuart Associates
Home Builder: George Roberts, Double R Contracting & Development, Inc.

Skiing may not be the most common recreation choice in New Orleans; after all, the Big Easy is flat and surrounded by water. But a New Orleanian couple was drawn to Bachelor Gulch for just that purpose. “Skiing is a wonderful sport,” says the wife. “The Colorado mountains are a restorative and nurturing place for the soul.” That feeling led them to commission a Swiss chalet-inspired home. “This is a skiing family, and Bachelor Gulch is where they can enjoy themselves,” says their designer, Madeline Stuart. “Because they love entertaining their friends here, they wanted a home that encouraged joy and fun—something sophisticated and elegant, but not overly stuffy.”

To build this dreamed-of Rocky Mountain getaway, the clients worked with architect Patrick Melancon. “They are well-traveled,” he notes. “Swiss mountain architecture inspired them, so we created a house that reads as a series of gabled cottages connected by hallways. This spot has panoramic views in every direction, and the home’s forms take advantage of them.” Although the project turned the Southern architect into an avid skier himself—“I spent a lot of time here in the winter during construction,” Melancon notes—he relied on general contractor George Roberts and his team (based in nearby Eagle) to build the snow country house. “I have a reverence for people who build in extreme climates,” he says. “George and his team know these mountains and have developed some kind of scar tissue that allows them to work year-round—and they make it look easy.”

When the stone-and-timber home was nearly complete, the owners brought Stuart to the project—not the point the designer generally enters the picture. “They were 90 percent done and hoped to have the interiors complete by Christmas—six months from the time they hired us,” Stuart says. “For our office, this is an extraordinarily abbreviated timeline. But they are wonderful people and the location is beautiful, so we went for it.” The designer began the project with a speed she describes as befitting a “reality television decorating show.”

Melancon set the interiors framework with Montana Chief Cliff stone, rich wood ceilings and

sizable beams. “I introduced a textural materiality, selecting elements with warmth, substance and weight to stand up to the scale of the house,” Stuart notes. “You can’t have items that are too refined or understated here. Instead, we opted for chunky rugs, handwoven textiles and grass cloth.”

For designers like Stuart, it’s not enough to simply furnish a home. “There’s a French phrase, *l’objet juste*, that means ‘the right object.’ That’s the feeling I strive for in design,” she says. “It’s important to assemble unique items that speak precisely to a place. I’m not a designer who presents a design scheme as a complete package, instead I find things as I go.” Without the luxury of time, Stuart relied on trusted craftspeople and vendors and, as she says, “called in more than a few favors.” For example, the spiky, agate-studded chandelier that hangs above the dining table. Crafted by artisans at Tuell and Reynolds, it’s what Stuart calls a “special piece” that sets the tone for the rest of the interiors.

But a number of vintage touches provide the “distinctive and quirky” notes Stuart was also seeking, such as the rare Eternal Forest coffee table by Philip and Kelvin LaVerne in the living room, the 1950s-era ski posters hanging over the fireplace and in a hallway, and the carved cabinet—something Stuart says looks like it was crafted by a “hippie artisan”—in the dining room. “Discovering things is the fun part,” she says with the tone of a person who relishes the hunt. “I love finding pieces that are full of interest, movement and life. These are the kinds of items that once placed, no one would ever want to replace.”

Thus, a tailored home was delivered on time, making it something like a proverbial holiday miracle. “The time constraint was a challenge, and it wouldn’t have been possible if the beautiful canvas of the structure wasn’t already there,” says Stuart. “We were able to quickly create something lovely and appropriate to the client. I can’t say I’d want every project to be like this, but we had a blast working on this one.”

Now that they are in part-time residence, it’s possible the Bayou State owners might find fellow Southern ski enthusiasts as neighbors. “When I’m skiing during the first part of the year, it’s impossible not to notice all the Mardi Gras beads,” says Melancon. “I look at it as a tip of the hat to New Orleans culture in the mountains.” ■



Architect Patrick Melancon designed this Bachelor Gulch house in the style of a Swiss chalet with an eye to capturing the views. On the central staircase, warm-toned wood composes the ceiling and Montana Chief Cliff stone lines one wall. Designer Madeline Stuart selected a grass cloth from Kneeder Fauchère for a soft texture, and a Tuell and Reynolds light fixture glows overhead.



Above: An Eternal Forest coffee table by Philip and Kelvin LaVerne holds pride of place near the living room windows. It's surrounded by a quartet of Baril swivel lounge chairs by Mattaliano that are upholstered with Classic Cloth linen. Behind the seating area is a vintage table with a bronze antler pedestal.

Opposite: Stuart says that the Tuell and Reynolds bronze chandelier studded with agate and rock crystal was a catalyst for the interior design. It hangs over a long dining table she designed and 10 A. Rudin chairs covered in Jerry Pair Leather. A vintage geometric wood-and-leather mirror is placed above an antique Chinese console.



Above: The entrance to the main bedroom displays one of Stuart's favorite finds. "This is a ski print from the 1950s," she says. "It is part of a set, and all of them have a wonderful composition. They are perfect for this house." It hangs above a vintage travertine table and a collection of rustic pottery.

Opposite: A collection of leaf imprints by Formations hanging in the media room reflects the wooded site. Here, the family can relax on the A. Rudin sofa or armchair and rest their drinks on the coffee table by Uhuru. A custom, hand-knotted rug by J.D. Staron and a pair of Rose Tarlow Melrose House stools complete the look.



Above: Stuart likes to equip bedrooms with desks, allowing people to comfortably work should the need arise. The main bedroom's desk is outfitted with a midcentury chair by Grete Jalk. The abstract painting and vintage pottery are from BK Antiques in New York.

Left: In the second bedroom suite, a Holly Hunt metal-and-wood bed is fronted by a pair of Cordell lounge chairs from the Madeline Stuart Collection. They all rest on a bespoke wool rug by J.D. Staron. A vintage mirror hangs between two Roman shades crafted with Rose Tarlow Melrose House fabric.