photo courtesy **PEACE DESIGN**

INTERIOR
DESIGNERS
OF THE WEST

CREATING FEELING

by **CASSIDY MANTOR**

Interior design is an ethereal and complex art. At the most basic level, an interior designer produces the end-product of a room accessorized with tastefully appointed furnishings. A more sophisticated aspect of interior design involves the intentional mood-setting of a space. Designers frequently reference the idea that good design is not a particular style or object, but it is instead identified when one enters a room or building and it feels good. There isn't one specific element that can be pinpointed but in its totality, the vibe is right. The space flows with joy.

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–William Peace, Peace Design

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William Peace

For decades, William Peace and his firm Peace Design have been serving clients across the country. Their offices in Atlanta and Bozeman allow the team to take a regionally appropriate approach while also considering broader design principles for each project. Whether the property is a cosmopolitan pied-à-terre or a sprawling ranch residence, a coastal bungalow or a ski-in/ski-out alpine home, two guiding principles remain fundamental for Peace Design: authenticity and environment.

A native of the South, Bill grew up in the crossroads of the bluegrass horse country of Lexington and his roots in eastern Kentucky. After studying architecture, design, and fine arts at the University of Kentucky, he began his career working in Atlanta. In the 1990s, he began to put down roots in the West. Peace says, "Though I thrive in a city and I'm inspired by urban design, the Rocky Mountain West is where I'm most grounded."

Peace Design creates elegant and harmonious environments by prioritizing authentic relationships between people and the land. Bill's design considers the history and culture of the West that evolved over hundreds of years, from early European influences and local building resources to agrarian lifestyles. He draws from a global perspective combined with a regional sensitivity that bridges the traditional and the modern.

Peace reflects, "Design in the American West didn't originate in a vacuum; it evolved over hundreds of years with disparate influences. Native Americans knew the raw materials of the land and the power of nature. Their wisdom and worldview influence how things are in harmony with the land. Europeans via the East Coast arrived as explorers and homesteaders, bringing their own influences of building techniques. As a designer, I am charged with how to honor the diverse cultures that comprise Western history in a meaningful expression today. The combinations are endless. We start with the location and the client's vision."

The Peace Design team members continually seek out new artisans and artists to work with them. Bill inspires fabricators—such as furniture builders, lighting designers, sculptors, rug makers—to create custom pieces that are destined for a specific home for a specific client. He designs environments in the same way a painter works on a canvas, incorporating visual elements of art—line, shape, tone, color, pattern, texture, and form.

For projects throughout the West, Peace pays particular attention to the environment. With the wide diversity of landscapes within the region, the site's specific location and how a client relates to it is core to his process. Among his Montana portfolio are sportsmen's lodges, ski homes, saloons, restaurants, and guest ranches. Peace says, "Interiors are contextual—true to people and their environments." As he begins a project, he asks, "What is the essential nature of this particular property? What is true for the client and what is authentic for the location?"

Having studied fine art in college, Peace has a deep appreciation for how great art can elevate a space. In one Big Sky area residence, the owners desired a home that was "true Montana" and "classic ranch." Peace says, "Traditional Western design originated from practicality. Exposed logs in buildings became standard because homesteaders didn't have many other options. They filled in gaps in between the logs with various types of chinking, depending on what was available. After a while, this became not just the go-to building technique, but the aesthetic, and eventually became established Western vernacular. Even in a more contemporary rustic home, this still influences the design."

Peace Design delivers a professional design experience without any pretense or ego. Working with architects, builders, artists, and artisans, Bill and his team engage their clients in a hands-on, and sometimes delightfully fun, collaboration. His focus is always on human relationships and facilitating the connection between people and their environment. Peace says, "At the end of the day, it is not only about how a room looks but how it feels. And the process of getting there is just as important." ■