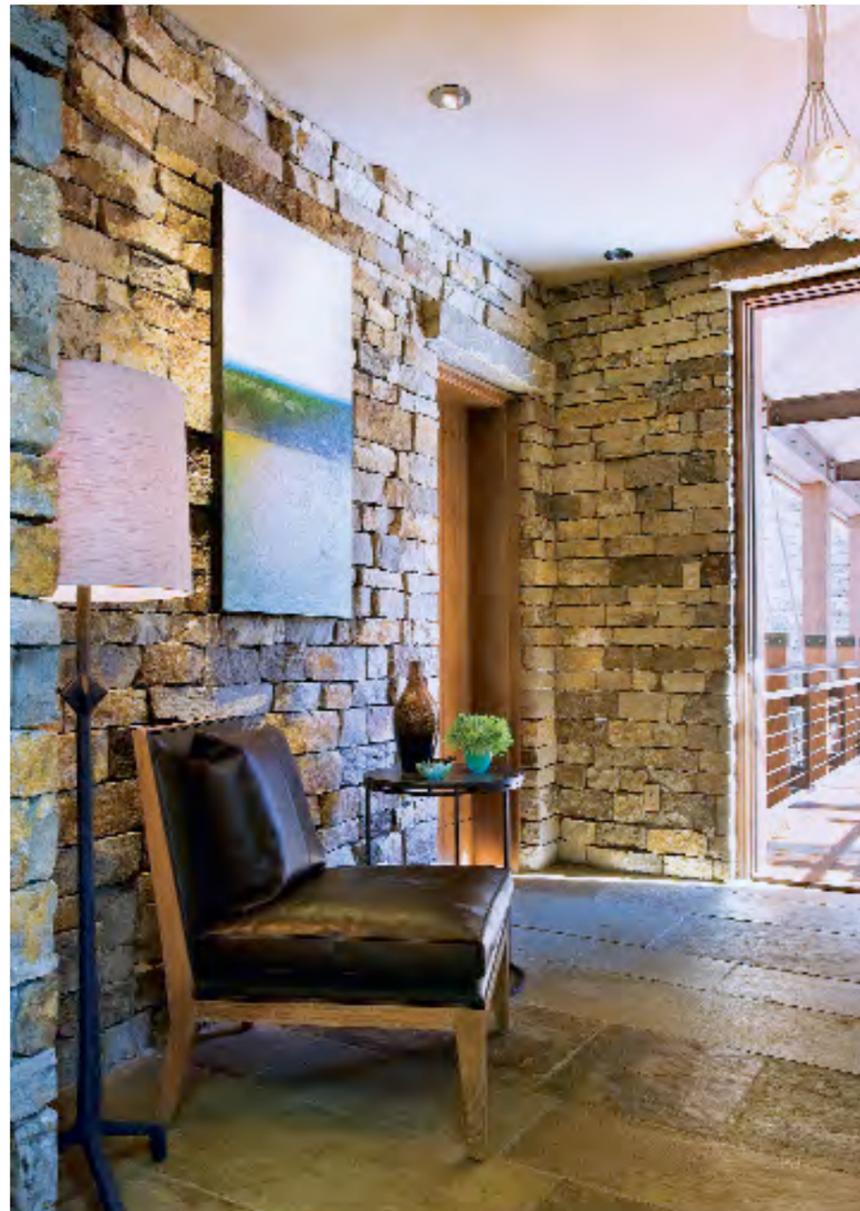


DRAMATIC SUSPENSION BRIDGES INSPIRE ARCHITECT  
TOMMY HEIN'S DESIGN FOR A CONTEMPORARY  
MOUNTAIN RETREAT IN TELLURIDE, COLORADO

# BRIDGE HOUSE

"The view is of paramount importance," architect Tommy Hein says of his decision to site this Telluride, Colorado, house parallel to the San Sophia mountain range. The elongated structure is connected by a series of suspension bridges and anchored by stone towers that ground the design to the dramatically sloping site.

STORY BY **TARA N. WILFONG** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JENNIFER KOSKINEN**



**F**OR ARCHITECT TOMMY HEIN, 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. >>



The large open kitchen is easily accessible for entertaining—a priority for the homeowners—and showcases the architect's creative use of materials and textures. Using the colors in the quartzite stone as a template, Hein incorporated silver, charcoal, walnut and honey hues to create depth and drama. **FACING PAGE:** In the main entryway, a vignette of contemporary furnishings provides a refreshing contrast with the stacked-stone wall.

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efore 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.”

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.”

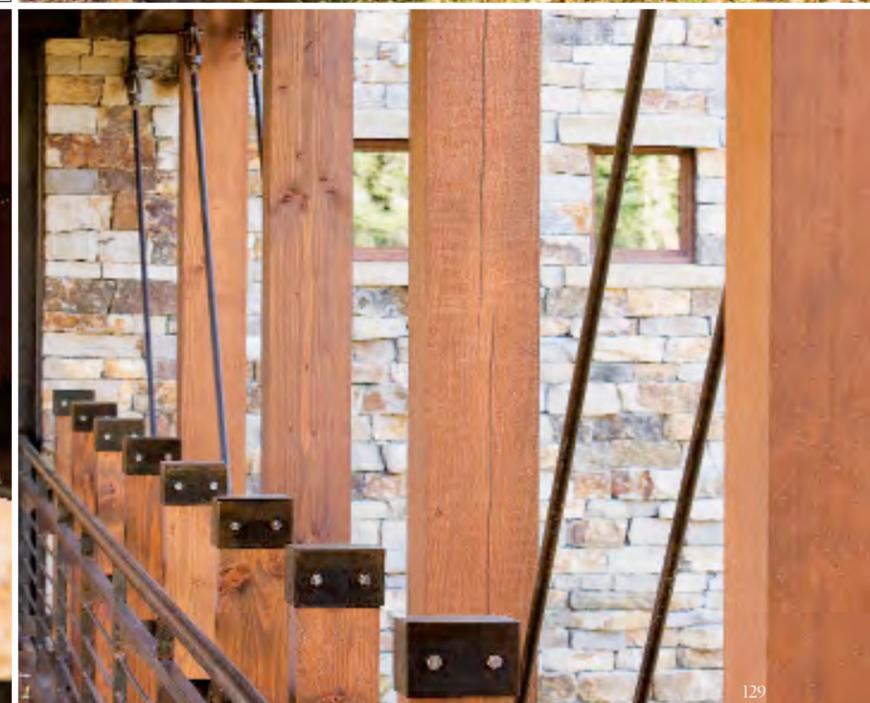
On the home’s facade, mill-finished steel artfully mingles with stone, glass and wood, providing a rustic yet durable finish evocative of the area’s mining history. Inside, steel accents everything from walls, doors and railings to the massive fireplace. Although the fireplace’s composition is simple, 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.” >>



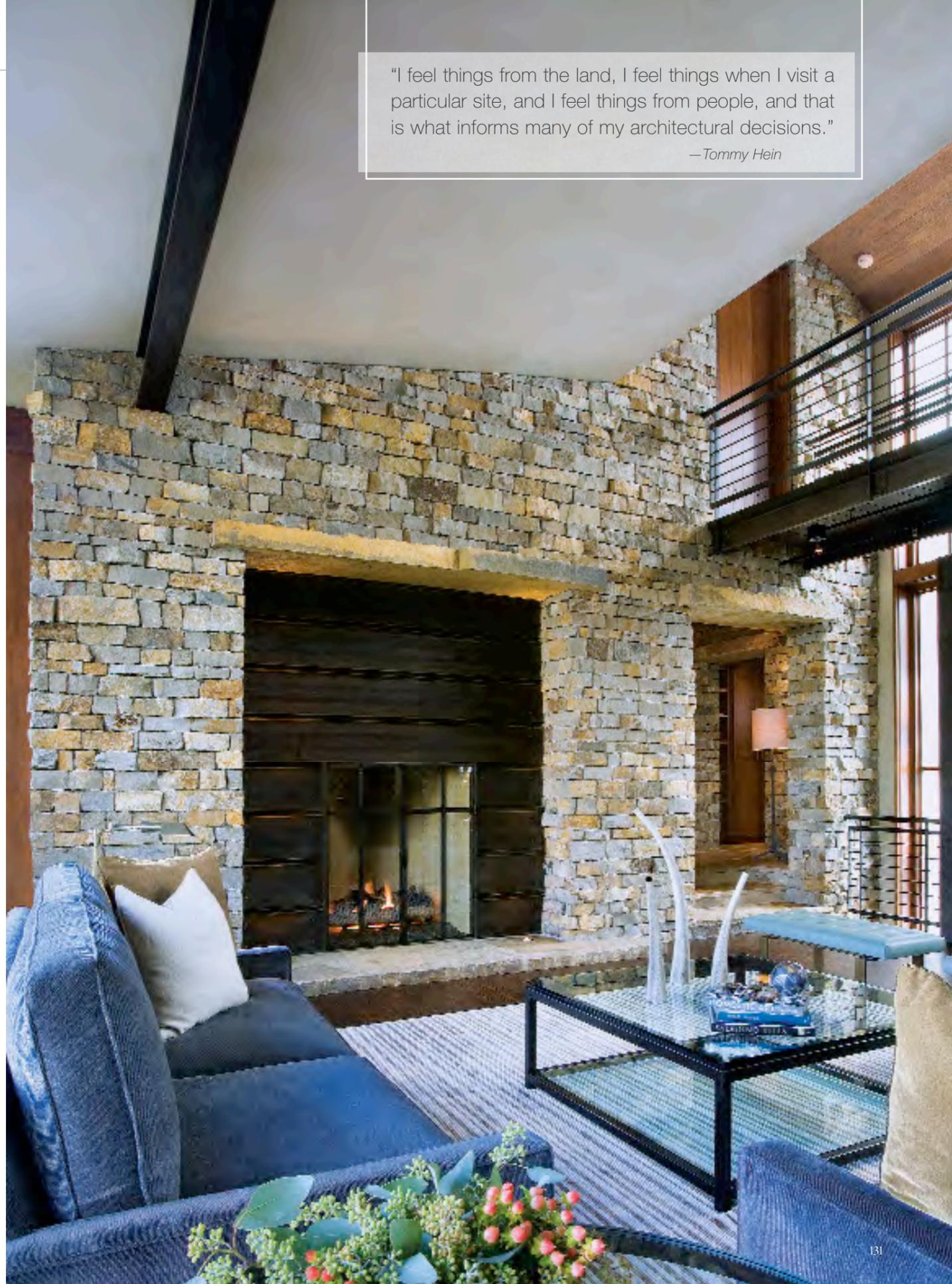
CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: A portion of the facade clad in pre-rusted steel panels is punctuated by a grid of small square windows; frosted glass allows indirect natural light to filter through the southern exposure into the home’s central stairwell. Mill-finished steel “shingles” look weathered, easily blending with the wood casements and softening the exterior’s stone forms. A suspension bridge links the home’s two primary structures: the eastern side (pictured here), where the homeowners and their guests enter by car or on foot, and the larger western side, which contains the main body of the home. Hein carefully edited his palette to just four materials: wood, stone, steel and glass. The open-air bridge showcases fine craftsmanship and detail, yet allows the site’s natural beauty to take center stage. The structure sits high above the roofs of neighboring homes, allowing for spectacular views of the San Sophias.





Gracefully extending through the center of the stairwell, a custom-designed Bocci chandelier elegantly blends form and function. The round globes, which were hand-placed by the homeowners, are the perfect foil for the frosted angular windows that provide indirect natural light through the southern exposure. FACING PAGE: Oversized yet understated, the massive steel fireplace draws attention, while the living room's plush furnishings provide a feminine touch.

"I feel things from the land, I feel things when I visit a particular site, and I feel things from people, and that is what informs many of my architectural decisions."  
—Tommy Hein



## A PROCESS IN PERSPECTIVE

DETERMINED TO HIGHLIGHT THE SITE'S MOST DISTINCTIVE FEATURES, architect Tommy Hein 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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The long, narrow homesite is bisected by a natural draw. This feature inspired Hein's bridge design that literally and visually links the two sides of the property. The suspension bridge pictured at left connects the vehicular and guest entry points with the main body of the home. In the background, a grove of aspens and the San Sophia mountain range are illuminated by the late-afternoon sun. **FACING PAGE:** In the master bedroom, plush linens and an upholstered headboard temper the room's palette of wood and steel.