

INSIDEOUT

BOSS.architecture's design of a new house in Cherry Creek South takes its cue from residences around the world, focusing inward toward an open, light-infused interior.

WORDS: Alison Gwinn

IMAGES: Justin Martin



WALK DOWN A STREET IN MOROCCO OR MEXICO, AND YOU'LL OFTEN SEE TALL, UNADORNED WALLS WITH UNASSUMING DOORS HIDING THE RESIDENCES INSIDE. BUT OPEN THOSE DOORS AND YOU'LL FIND THAT THE HOMES, LIKE CHINESE BOXES, REVEAL SURPRISING TREASURES JUST WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED.

“Whether it’s Marrakesh or Madrid, you have no idea what’s on the other side of those walls,” says Chris Davis, cofounder of BOSS.architecture. “But then you walk through and there’s a garden. And you walk through the garden and there’s another entry point into a courtyard. And you realize that these places are filled with vibrancy and life.”

That was what Davis and BOSS cofounder Kevin Stephenson wanted to accomplish with this house, situated in a small, new Cherry Creek South neighborhood called Cedar Estates. “Our intention was to create an international flavor with this home,” says Davis. “We wanted it to be a sanctuary.”

“It’s introverted,” says Stephenson of the 7,000-square-foot house, which is designed around a central courtyard. “It’s inwardly focused and opens up to itself.”

There are actually no windows visible on the front facade. “That’s super unusual,” Stephenson says, “but you don’t feel confined by the move. In fact, once you are inside, it feels like a very open, light-filled home. Creating moments when you can look across the courtyard into another room and beyond allows you to focus on internally and on the living condition.”

The house, completed in 2019, was the first of eight built on what had previously been an undeveloped lot. For the BOSS team, that was both a blessing and a challenge. “At the time we were designing it, the lot was isolated, with no adjacent homes,” says Stephenson. “There wasn’t any context, which

Dominating the left front facade is a perforated metal screen by Taylored Iron that allows changing patterns of textured light to fall inside the entryway, as if through the leaves of a tree. The second-floor deck off the primary suite, trimmed in wood from Delta Millworks, gives the homeowners a place to relax and connect with the neighborhood.



“WE WANTED THE LANGUAGE OF THIS HOUSE TO BE POSITIVELY DISORIENTING, EXOTIC, AND LUXURIOUS IN A WAY THAT WOULD HELP ELEVATE THE ARCHITECTURE IN DENVER.” —BOSS cofounder Chris Davis

made the project more challenging.” But it also meant that the architects didn’t have the baggage of an established neighborhood. “That gave us the luxury of saying, ‘We can create the context and define some of the rules and set the standard high,’ ” says Davis. “We wanted the language of this house to be positively disorienting, exotic, and luxurious in a way that would help elevate the architecture in Denver.”

That’s why Davis and Stephenson and the entire BOSS team, avid travelers all, looked to global

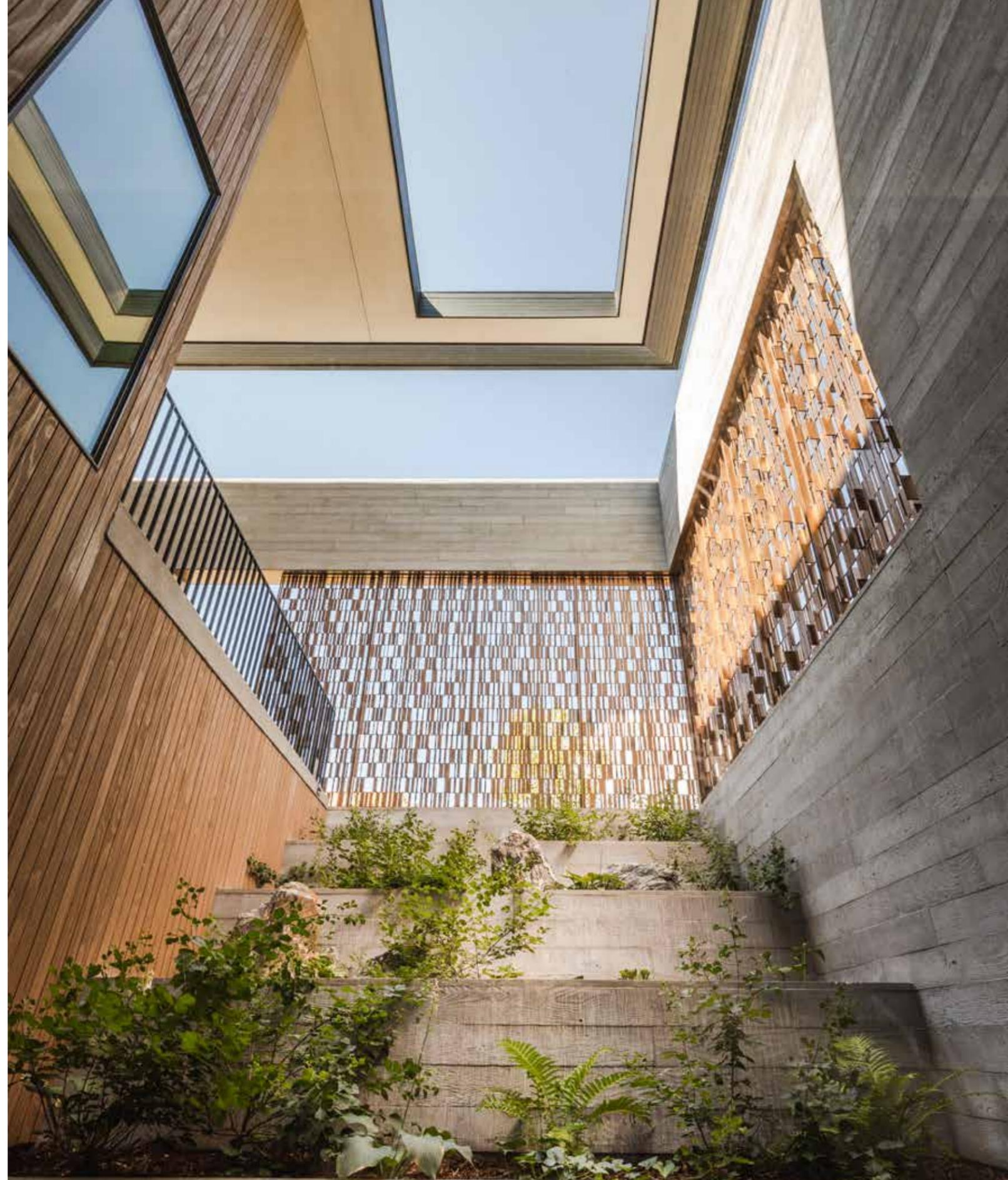
influences for inspiration. “One thing we’ve always valued as owners of the firm is international travel and exposure to different kinds of architecture, public spaces, people, values, and culture,” Davis says. “There are so many different kinds of spaces around the world, so we encourage people in our office to travel and bring back that knowledge and inspiration to their work.”

Creating a home that focused on the interior made for a more intimate project. “This house is meant for the owners to experience,” says

Stephenson. “It’s a different way of looking at a home—not as an object on a site. Most suburban houses look out to the perimeter—the edges of the yard—rather than looking inward or across. It’s a fundamental difference in how to approach the design of a residence. It’s what makes this house feel more like a retreat for the owners.”

To that end, every room was carefully thought out, with a palpable sense of restraint. “We wanted to make every space something that was super usable and enjoyable and for each to

An exaggerated, terraced window well (seen close up, opposite page, and from the dining room, above) sits adjacent to the front entry courtyard, topped by a roof 25 feet above that includes a large oculus. The space is visible from the basement, bringing in light and “making the basement not feel like a basement,” says BOSS cofounder Kevin Stephenson. “We wanted to bring landscape into the house as much as possible.”





The sunken dining room is framed by a glass wine cabinet and fireplace, a long planter (sitting under a skylight), and the main stairway. The massive Bocci 73 chandelier is, says BOSS cofounder Chris Davis, "probably the coolest light we've ever done on a project." Topping off the space: an abstract portrait of Kanye West by Denver artist Andrew Jensdotter.



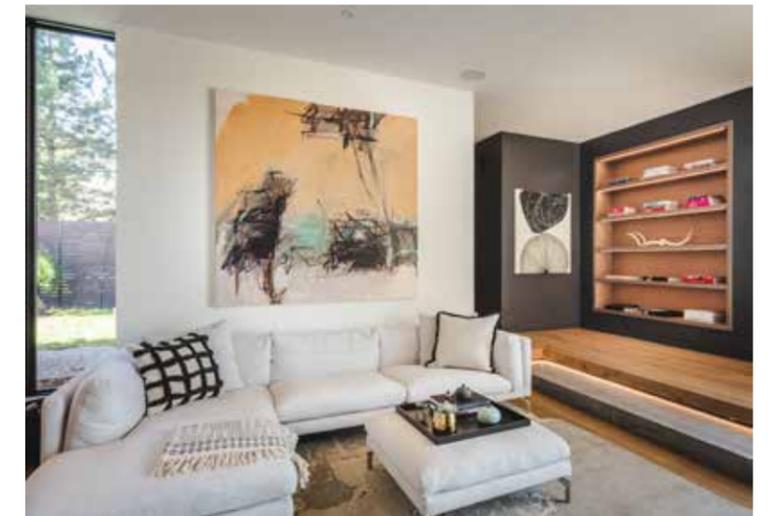
“ONCE YOU ARE INSIDE, IT FEELS LIKE A VERY OPEN, LIGHT-FILLED HOME. CREATING MOMENTS WHEN YOU CAN LOOK ACROSS THE COURTYARD INTO ANOTHER ROOM AND BEYOND ALLOWS YOU TO FOCUS INTERNALLY AND ON THE LIVING CONDITION.” —BOSS cofounder Kevin Stephenson



offer a different experience,” says Davis. Adds Stephenson: “Some houses have big spaces just to be big. We tried to balance creating a comfortable scale, using higher-quality materials in smaller, more intimate, more useful spaces—and to not have a lot of redundancy so the homeowners could live in the whole house.”

That’s exactly what homeowners Josh and Katy Whalen, who were introduced to BOSS by milehimodern’s Peter Blank, were looking for. “We didn’t want formal everything,” says Katy. “We wanted usable space where we could entertain and really raise our family” (including their young daughter, Lennon). Adds Josh: “We also knew we wanted a modern home that lived and breathed outside.”

The home’s singularity is clear from the instant you approach through the stunningly unique entry. “It’s important to think about how you want people to enter a space,” says project architect Dave Rittinger. “For the entryway, we wanted to create a sequence of experiences.”



Above, the living room, with an arced floor lamp by Roll & Hill, is meant to be intimate and accessible. “We wanted to create a private space that is pulled back away, to be used by the family.” Opposite, the interior stairway by Taylored Iron is sculptural, Davis says, “like a piece of art inspired by Alexander Calder or Richard Serra.”



(One source of inspiration, he notes, was the work of sculptor and environmental artist Michael Heizer, specifically his “negative space” installation titled “North, East, South, West” at Dia: Beacon, north of New York City.)

“The courtyard and foyer make the dialogue between the exterior and interior spaces and the visual depth of the house so much more interesting,” says Davis. “To the left of the front entry courtyard is a huge, terraced window well that’s covered by a roof 25 feet

above, embedded with a big oculus. The ornate metal screen that we designed around that space filters light. When you see the light come through in the morning or afternoon, it’s almost like light through the leaves of a tree. It looks like a piece of jewelry.”

Step inside the home, and you pass through a foyer that also links to the garage and serves as a mudroom. Walk further in and the home quickly opens up onto the central courtyard (including a pool and hot tub), from which all of the

main rooms radiate. “The original thoughts about how to organize the house included positioning the pool and courtyard space in the center and establishing a strong west-to-east axis, allowing Josh to have an office on the south side and putting the kitchen on the north side, with the primary suite above the kitchen and the kids’ bedrooms above the office,” says Rittinger. “The stairway was also a strong, reinforcing element, serving as a light well and providing circulation up and down through the house.”



The kitchen (all photos this page) is very simple and sculptural, with no visible hardware on the cabinetry (by Vonmod), countertops by Colorado Stone Limited, and a wooden kitchen island by Taavi Designs. It can be seen across the courtyard (right), which forms the core of the house and includes a pool, hot tub, fire pit, and pizza oven. “We open up the big doors every morning, and our daughter and dog start running in and out,” says homeowner Katy Whalen.



The stackable doors on downstairs rooms are often open, with Josh’s office (which doubles as a guest space) looking across the courtyard to the “very simple, very sculptural” kitchen. “There is a solidity to the kitchen space,” says Davis, “with very little hardware because cabinet hardware is the first thing to date a kitchen. We wanted it to be a simple, timeless composition.”

Indeed, that restraint in materials—and a certain harmony between the natural materials used both inside and outside—is evident throughout the home. “We love texture and materiality, so a lot of thought goes into our materials palettes,” says Davis. “We don’t want the materials to be flashy; we want them to be ambient so that art and furniture and lighting become the personality of the project.”

“BOSS.ARCHITECTURE’S ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND USE OF RESTRAINT, IN BOTH THEIR MATERIAL CHOICES AND SPACE, ELEVATE THEIR DESIGN TO THE SUBLIME.”

—Peter Blank, milehimodern



The Whalens' daughter, Lennon, in her second-story room, above Josh's office. One of two identical bedrooms with en suite baths on that floor, it overlooks the central courtyard instead of having windows that face outward onto other properties. Instead, that outside wall is painted with a mural by Minted.



Sitting on the side of the courtyard that runs perpendicular to the office and kitchen are a cozy living room as well as a showpiece dining room that BOSS cleverly sunk down below the grade of the main floor. "We've designed a lot of restaurants and have discovered that to be successful in both public and private spaces you have to create changes of scale and changes of intimacy," says Stephenson. "The stepped-down dining room alters the volume that it sits in and creates both a grander experience and a sense of containment." A fireplace and wine wall create an edge on one side, with an opposite wall of long, deep planters that blur the inside with the outside.

But the pièce de résistance of the room is a striking Bocci 73 chandelier that looms over the large dining table. "Lighting was particularly important to Katy," says BOSS interior designer Jessica Doran. "That room flows into the entry and the kitchen and stair area, so we needed something that could create volume and scale over the table but not be too linear or structured, because we already had that feel in the kitchen. This fixture makes a really beautiful statement." Equally statement-making is the adjacent stairway, which runs from the second story (which includes a primary suite and two kids bedrooms with baths) down to the basement, which gets light from

the graduated entry window well and includes a TV area, a gaming room, a gym and sauna, and two additional bedrooms. "We wanted the stairway to feel like a piece of sculpture versus just a set of stairs," says Davis. "The idea was to have a stringer that looked like a big steel wedge, almost like a piece of art inspired by Alexander Calder or Richard Serra."

For the Whalens, who previously lived in a century-old Park Hill home, the new house—like a Chinese box—has revealed unexpected pleasures, from being able to talk to each other across the courtyard during the day to watching glorious sunsets at night.

"The house is way more than we imagined," Katy says. "I don't know how it gets any better than this."

Friends who appreciate good architecture "have a jaw-on-the-floor reaction to the house," Josh says. "They're amazed with both the sense of detail and the overall

magnitude of the home. One of the advantages of working with such thoughtful architects—the BOSS team played the role of architects, friends, and shrinks throughout—is that now we shut our door to the outside, and it's like being in our own little kingdom." ■

The primary bedroom and bath continue the use of grooved oak on select walls, with Melt pendant lights by Tom Dixon over the bed. "We love sitting in bed and having coffee in the morning," says Katy Whalen, so they added a coffee station to the room. The bathroom is finished in Iris Black Cottage marble from Decorative Materials.

PROJECT CREDITS

- ARCHITECTS
BOSS.architecture
- BUILDER
Montare Builders
- EXTERIOR WOOD
Delta Millworks
- EXTERIOR BOARD FORM
2Stone
- MILLWORK
Vonmod Ltd.
- KITCHEN COUNTERTOPS
Colorado Stone Limited
- KITCHEN ISLAND WOOD TABLE
Taavi Designs/Ezra Darnell
- INTERIOR STEEL STAIRS AND
EXTERIOR ENTRYWAY SCREEN
Taylored Iron Inc.
- INTERIOR WOOD PANELING
SJS Construction/BMC/
Fine Line Painting
- INTERIOR FLOORING
Rock Solid Hardwoods