

HOME

SUMMIT
COUNTY

REAL ESTATE & MOUNTAIN LIFESTYLES | DECEMBER 2014/JANUARY 2015

HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTH IS

HOME
FRONT

MARKET
REPORT

DESIGN
& STYLE

INSIDE



PHOTO COURTESY PINNACLE MOUNTAIN HOMES

HOME

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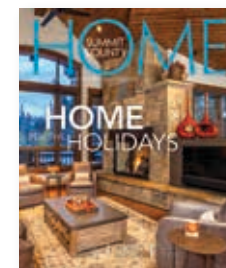
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ON THE COVER

This fireplace has accents of metal I-beams with stacked masonry stone.

PHOTO COURTESY PINNACLE MOUNTAIN HOMES

Your Hearth, Your Home

TAKING ON THE DESIGN OF
YOUR HOME'S CENTERPIECE
IS NO SMALL TASK

by JESSICA SMITH



RIGHT: This living room has sandstone slab hearth with 18" seating height below the fireplace adding additional room seating. Slab sandstone transfers the heat from the fireplace, warming the seating area. Photo courtesy Pinnacle Mountain Homes

BELOW: This photo shows a real wood-burning fireplace with an alcove for wood. Egolf and her team also worked a fossil plaque into the rockwork. photo courtesy Tracey Egolf / Egolf Interiors

OPPOSITE PAGE (TOP): Here, a custom painting has been sized to fit within a recessed art niche built into the rock above the fireplace. Artwork is a popular decoration on fireplaces. photo courtesy Tracey Egolf / Egolf Interiors

OPPOSITE PAGE (BOTTOM): The indirect lighting over this fireplace washes the face of the stone to pick up the texture of the material. This is an example of stacked stone masonry surrounding the TV and fireplace. photo courtesy Pinnacle Mountain Homes



MERRIAM-WEBSTER
DICTIONARY DEFINES:

HEARTH (noun):

1. The floor in front of or inside a fireplace
2. Home
3. A vital or creative center

HOME IS SHELTER, an escape from the elements, a place to feel secure and comfortable. So it was in ancient times and so it remains today — we just have fancier ways of doing it. Yet even with our technological advances in indoor heating, construction and architectural design, the very basics remain the same. Among these, that the hearth, the source of heat, is the center and focal point of the household. It's true in a tiny condo, and it's true in a multi-million dollar mansion. Decisions of both design and decoration have a big impact on the look and feel of a house overall. Fortunately, builders and designers are on hand to help walk their clients through this essential decision-making process.



FIND YOUR CENTER

“Emotionally, the hearth is the center of the home,” said Tracey Egolf, president and lead designer of Egolf Interiors in Breckenridge. “Historically, the hearth literally was the center of the home. You had a small, one-room shack and you might have a 5- or 6-foot wide fireplace that’s almost big enough to step into, because it was the source of heat and it was the source of cooking your food, so it really became the center of the home.”

Nowadays, stovetops and ovens have taken over the cooking aspect, leaving the fireplaces, with their mantles and stone hearths, to great rooms and living rooms, the places of gathering.

Still, that doesn’t mean the kitchen is completely separate from it now.

“I think people emotionally still consider the hearth — or the fireplace with its hearth — as the center of the home,” Egolf said, “and so with an open floor plan, oftentimes you can still see the fireplace in the living room, even if you’re in the kitchen or the dining area.”

As a central aspect of the gathering area, the fireplace and hearth make an impact on the feeling of the room, and even the house, as a whole.

“You want them to be welcoming,” said Christina Romano, an interior designer at Pinnacle Mountain Homes in Breckenridge.

Often, she designs fireplaces with hearths that offer comfortable seating, so that multiple people can sit around and talk together while enjoying the warmth of the fireplace, particularly during cold High Country winters.

FOCAL POINT

Living rooms typically have three main elements competing for attention, Romano said — the view, the fireplace and the television.

“Everyone’s trying to look out the window at the mountains,” she said, particularly in Summit County, which has such grand views on offer. Her job as a designer is to find a sort of harmony between the visual pull of all three.

A lot of that decision depends on the space available, said Egolf. Often, the decision is made to put the television above the fireplace, particularly when space is tight.

“In general, I try not to do that. I feel like they’re separate attractions, and I love it when the TV is off and not the



focus of the room, but we have to be realistic,” she said with a laugh.

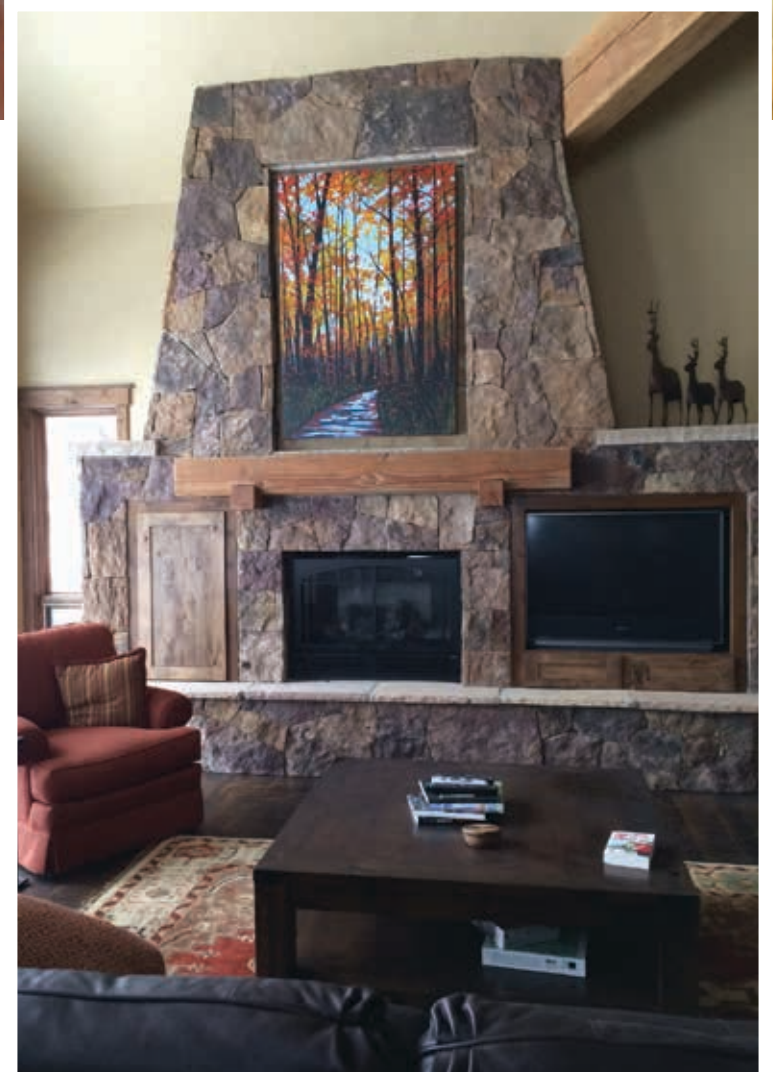
If someone is planning to put the television set above the fireplace, she recommended being aware of the angle, so people aren’t craning their necks to see the screen.

Egolf also likes to connect the hearth and fireplace materials to other rooms throughout the house.

“Usually we spend quite a bit of time thinking about how that fireplace is going to be, and the rest of the home starts to fall into place,” she said. “It will tell me where to go with my other materials. If I want to use heavy, massive stone then I might go lighter in scale somewhere else, but I might add that same stone somewhere else so it doesn’t look out of place.”

She’s done that before in the kitchen, using the same rock in the countertop design, for example.

“I’ll pull that main rock into the kitchen somehow,” she said. “It’s been very effective.”





MYRIAD MATERIALS

“You’ve got such cool materials, being in the mountains,” said Romano, about the options available. They range from stone of all kinds to porcelain tile and metalwork. “We’ve got a lot of artisans that work with us, too, that have great ideas.”

Stone is, of course, one of the most popular materials, but simply the word “stone” isn’t enough. The options expand to what type of stone, how that stone will be cut

and whether it will be mixed with any other material.

“It’s actually the exterior stone we use a lot on the interior,” Romano said, explaining that it’s a good idea to use the same type of stone in the fireplace that can be seen on the outside of the home. “It’s bringing the outside in.”

Egolf agreed.

“One thing that I feel is important is to tie the interior finishes somehow to the exterior finishes, and so then the home becomes

more intuitively connected, and the architects are happier when I’m not doing really wildly different things inside,” she said. “Oftentimes I’ll take a version of the outside stone, maybe it’s one version outside, but maybe I clip the edges and cut it into different pieces, so even through it’s the same stone, it appears differently.”

Romano has also worked with porcelain tiles and metallic elements, while Egolf mentioned working one time with bricks, and trying to find the right texture of stone. One of her favorites was a cleft stone that was slightly polished.

“So you had the roughness of the cleft and little bits of it had been polished, and people could not walk by this without looking at it and going over and touching it; it was so beautifully tactile,” she said.

One of Egolf’s favorite fireplaces she designed combined natural rock with a leftover metal I-beam as the mantle.

“It became this rock and steel combination and I was really pleased with how it came off,” she said. “It’s way more fun to combine ingredients, kind of like a chef,” she added with a laugh.

ABOVE (2): This fireplace is an example of bringing the exterior stone into the interior living space with a skylight featuring the architectural detail. The style of the living room fireplace is more architectural than decorative. The treated copper fireplace surround matches the copper exterior. The boulders surrounding the fireplace are sourced from southern Colorado.

OPPOSITE PAGE: This fireplace uses a slim stone hearth, and instead of a mantle there are stone ledges jutting outward to create a simple, mountain contemporary fireplace. This example comes from a master bedroom.

Photos courtesy Pinnacle Mountain Homes

GROWING TRENDS

Both Egolf and Romano have noticed trends that fall under the “mountain contemporary” category, mixing rustic, natural touches with some sleek, clean modern elements.

While many modern fireplaces are leaning away from the traditional look, they’re not ditching it completely. “You’re letting the natural textures of the stone come out,” said Romano. “We’re kind of letting the stone speak, and highlighting it.”

Egolf added that she’s not a fan of the ultra-modern fireplaces. “They’re very stark, very sleek.” She’d rather see something more warm and inviting as the center of a home, “things that will still draw you into that fireplace so you’re still really

attracted to it, instead of it being too sleek and too blank. Where is the charm and where is the coziness, if it’s all too crisp?”

Romano said she enjoys working with the architects and builders, and taking on the challenge of creating just the right fireplace and hearth.

“It’s a creative process,” she said.

Overall, Egolf likes to remind people that it’s worth it to take some extra time when thinking about the design of fireplace and hearth.

“Be sensitive so that it meshes well with the architecture of the space, because it is such a focal point,” she said. “Plan it carefully, plan it sensitively, and give it the prestige that it deserves, because it really is the emotional center of the home.”

