



BETWEEN A ROCK AND A GREAT PLACE

Visionary Cashiers home was made
to meld with the landscape

By Mary Jo Padgett
Photography by David Dietrich

Architect Keith Summerour has designed a number of the second homes that dot the hillsides in Western North Carolina. Not surprisingly, most of his city clients have preferred a traditional “mountain lodge” design, he says.

But one couple who envisioned their 3,800-square-foot Cashiers retreat wanted something different. They requested modern — and Summerour was happy to oblige.



Architect Keith Summerour designed the bar-height kitchen table with steel legs and frame topped with walnut. The table was fabricated by Morgan Harrison of Morgan Creek Cabinetry, and seats 12. Adjacent to the kitchen is a screened porch with comfortable chairs and a wood-burning fireplace.



The entry mezzanine overlooks the living room/kitchen area. A silent hydraulic elevator is enclosed in the column on the left. Across the open space of the living room, a wall of glass frames the hills and forest beyond; to the right, the terrace and outdoor fireplace are just outside. The home furnishings are simple, tastefully textured, and unobtrusive. This fine minimalist décor gives a sense of quiet and peacefulness.

The house and landscaping were designed to blur the lines between interior and exterior living spaces. Beyond the living room is the outdoor terrace and, within a few feet, the Pavilion. Environmentally-sensitive and rich with local materials, this home was built to be both stylish and sustainable.

“I liked what they wanted to do,” says Summerour. “This is a house with two faces, but the line between them is intentionally blurred. There is a strong connection between the outside and the inside, and the transition between is almost indistinguishable.”

Indeed, it’s easy to move from the living room/kitchen level across the intimate Crab Orchard stone terrace to the pavilion, an 800-square-foot structure for recreation and exercise, without feeling like you’ve gone outdoors. But the view from all is the same — forested hills and mountains that roll into the horizon, glistening with stars at night.

Summerour was interior designer as well as architect, responsible for the look of the cabinetry (some of which was custom-built on site), the kitchen and bath tile, the lighting, the ceiling, finish material and most of the furnishings.

Located in the Chinquapin development near Panthertown Valley, a geologically extraordinary gorge with a history of its own — it’s a Blue Ridge Natural Heritage Area and a North Carolina Mountain Treasure Area — this granite-and-concrete home seems at one with its surroundings. It’s nestled into a hillside to optimize the views from the house and terrace, minimize the visual presence from the road, and protect the viewscape of surrounding properties.

Builder Ken Berry, of The Berry Group LLC, knew exactly where to get the stone that makes this home mold into the landscape: Glenville granite was used for the exterior and Gray Crab Orchard slabs from Tennessee for the entryway, the terrace, and exterior stairways.

“It took 20 months to build the house,” Berry says. “It has a steel frame with poured concrete floors and roof, granite





The kitchen's 18-foot-long window-wall is just a few feet from a moss-covered granite outcropping capped with mountain laurel. Cabinets were made by Morgan Harrison. The frosted glass, wood-framed door leads to a walk-in pantry.

veneer, and occasional stucco finish. The owners wanted this house to be environmentally sensitive, so we used Icynene insulation, left off the air conditioning, installed radiant floor heating in every room, used low-VOC paints, and on the poured-concrete roof a green roof is planted with sedums. Overhangs and orientation support passive-solar heating, cooling, and lighting.”

Entering from the drive and parking area, one steps

under a magnificent rock porte-cochère, which serves as the terrace for the master bedroom on the upper level. A double door, each section made of eight large panes of double-pane insulated glass in a steel frame, allows entry into the cool quiet of a hallway. Walking sticks, hiking boots, jackets, hats, and rain gear are arranged near the door of the adjacent mudroom/laundry, easily accessible when stepping out.

Reclaimed planks of thick, character-laden, heart-pine

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The TV room, filled with soft, colorful, square cubes that can be casually arranged, is the centerpiece of four bedroom suites on the lower level.



The aged patina of the reclaimed heart-pine flooring — in the master bedroom and throughout the house — offers a sense of timelessness.



Over the double sink in the master bath, a sliding mirror can be moved where it's needed along the 7-foot window. The counter is of poured concrete.

flooring, lightly sanded with only a clear finish, cover the short hallway to the mezzanine view over the living room below. Sturdy heart-pine steps to the right lead up to the master bedroom, and to the left, down to the living room/kitchen/great room.

The master bedroom occupies the third level, enhanced by a cozy, light-filled sitting area. Tall glass doors open to the rock terrace/walkway, providing a crosswalk over the porte-cochère to the woods and native landscaping beyond.

Flooring in the living room and kitchen downstairs is also reclaimed heart-pine, while the four bedroom suites and TV room on the lower level are carpeted. The lower-level baths have slate floors.

The Pavilion, across the terrace from the living room, was built first, so the owners could sleep there when they visited while the house was being built. A heated Badu Jet lap pool, with a rollaway wooden cover, and an outdoor fireplace topped with three incredible rocks makes the terrace an active part of the living spaces.



Two large trees — a beautiful Fastigiate Blue Atlas Cedar, next to the house, and a Honey Locust — grow out of the jagged, amorphous shaped, random stone slabs of the terrace.

Landscape architect Jeremy Smearman, who sited the house and designed the landscaping and gardens, says the home was set to optimize the view, which looks down the length of Panthertown Valley.

He worked with the builder to maintain minimal site disturbance, so that upon completion, the site looks immediately lived in. This approach helped preserve most of the trees and shrubs on the property.

An excellent strategy, one that reflects the owners’ desire to connect with the beauty of the valley. As Smearman says, “The design of the entire site was centered on an old gnarled wind-blown oak tree that stands at the end of the terrace. This structure looks like it grew out of the rock.”

RESOURCES

The Berry Group LLC, *Builder*, [see inside front cover](#)

Summerour Architects, *Architect*

Planters, Inc., *Landscape Architect*

Thermacraft Energy Services LLC, *Radiant Heat System*

Morgan Creek Cabinet Co., *Cabinetry*

ProSource, *Plumbing Fixtures*

Classic Lighting & Design, Inc., *Decorative Lighting*

Plastering by Orciani, Inc., *Stucco*