

SUMMER 2021

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shelter

HOME & LIVING IN THE *western san juans*

The Water Feature

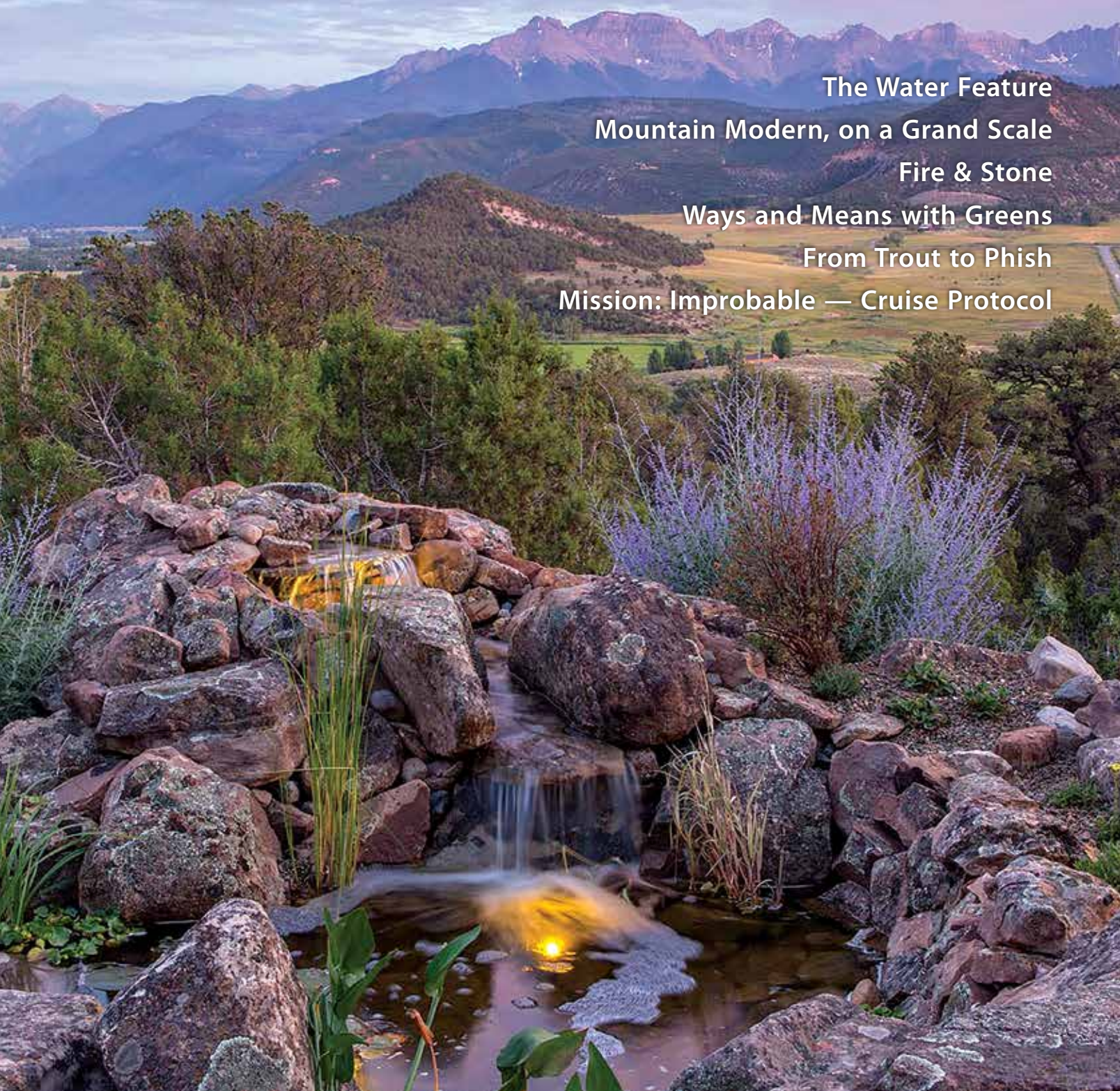
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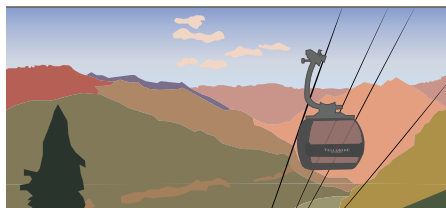
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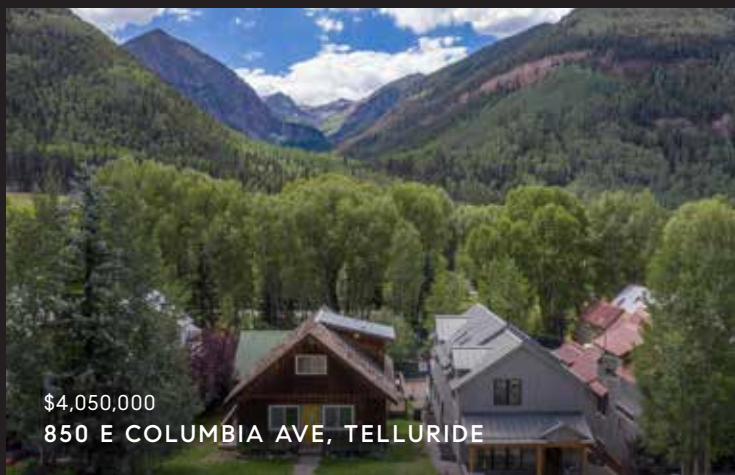


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MOUNTAIN MODERN, ON A GRAND SCALE

By Tanya Ishikawa

*A peaceful Mountain Village escape
is designed for a peak lifestyle.*

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NO MOUNTAIN TOO HIGH

By Elissa Dickson

*The Brown-capped Rosy-Finch is a
challenge to study.*

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THE WATER FEATURE

By Mary Menz

*An essential element offers a
feast for the senses.*

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WAYS AND MEANS WITH GREENS

By Ari LeVaux

Maximizing summer's bounty.

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FIRE & STONE

By Leslie Vreeland

*Taming the landscape to make the
most of nature.*

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FROM TROUT TO PHISH

By Elissa Dickson

Rock art, amplified.

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MISSION: IMPROBABLE — CRUISE PROTOCOL

By Samantha Tisdell Wright

*A local broker sells Tom Cruise's estate
for a record \$39.5 million.*

58

Welcome back! This goes for who all who may be returning to the San Juans for yet another festive summer, and to everyone else — new arrivals, or those of us lucky enough to live here — reemerging at last, after a year of lockdowns.

It's a singular time in the San Juans: Home sales around here are skyrocketing.

We are not alone when it comes to this phenomenon in Telluride, or in Western Colorado, or frankly in the country (prices are taking off everywhere). Yet it's worth noting what's happening here: "The San Miguel County real estate market broke the all-time record in May" of this year "for total dollar volume of sales in a single month," according to the San Miguel County Comparative Sales Report. (The total was \$201 million, up from a previous record \$194 million in sales last October, for those counting.)

We have an exclusive report on the top sale in this record-setting era: Samantha Tisdell Wright chronicles the marketing campaign, and the Realtor, who closed the deal on the Tom Cruise house in "Mission: Impossible – Cruise Protocol."

The home went for \$39.5 million. It's one of two splashy abodes in this issue of Shelter. Tanya Ishikawa writes about Hood Park Haven, a slopeside Mountain Village home with panoramic views of the surrounding peaks that is (as you might imagine) spacious and luxurious, but also offers a sense of peace and comfort, in "Mountain Modern, On a Grand Scale."

The Hood Park place is on the market for \$36.8 million. I shouldn't be surprised if it, too, is sold before this magazine is on newsstands.

Will these extraordinary prices last? A Realtor I spoke with guesses no. "I have a feeling the market will calm down, because of a lack of inventory" in Telluride and Mountain Village, this person said, "and because people will resume their urban or suburban lifestyles once the pandemic fully subsides, and they're able to go back to their workplaces, or their school systems. I believe

not having to go into work contributed to the flow of sales into Telluride, and its more remote areas.

"I feel lucky to live here in my mid-60s, having raised two kids here, living in deed-restricted housing," this person added. "I still see people doing that. I still see people making their way. They're able to live here, if they're really intent on doing so."

This person is Damon Demas, who represents the Hood Park property.



Particularly right now, it's worth remembering that much of what is compelling about Telluride and the Box Canyon is not prohibitively expensive. Hugh Pressman, of Kaibab Landscaping in Telluride, is making improvements to existing properties (and adding to their value) through the addition of custom stonework: furniture, and water features, and outdoor pizza ovens. Read

more about Pressman's work in "Fire & Stone."

In "The Water Feature," Mary Menz details how installing something as simple as "a pond, waterfall, bog or fountain" can reduce the body's reaction to stress, "and have a calming effect on the brain."

Elissa Dickson brings us the story of an elusive, endangered (and very beautiful) native bird, the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, and scientists' determined efforts to study it. Dickson also writes about a new gallery in town, South Fir Street, filled with glittery, artfully-embellished posters of legendary rock concerts. Judy Haas is the creative force behind the posters. You might be familiar with Haas' installations at the popular (and affordably priced) main street Mexican restaurant, La Cocina de Luz — she's reknowned for her gleaming depictions of rainbow and other native trout — or her donations to the Ah Haa School's annual summer art auction. Drop by the Wilkinson Library, along with the kiddos, and view Haas' sparkly public installation, "Little Bear Dreams of Porridge."

The sounds and scents of music, and of summer; adventures in the high alpine; beckoning public spaces, open to all.

So much here is magical, and priceless.

— Leslie

shelter

PUBLISHER

Telluride Local Media LLC

EDITOR

Leslie Vreeland

COPY EDITOR

Leslie Vreeland

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Rick Bickhart

CONTRIBUTORS

Elissa Dickson, Tanya Ishikawa,
Ari LeVaux, Mary Menz,
Leslie Vreeland,
Samantha Tisdell Wright

SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER

Dusty Atherton

ADVERTISING SALES

Dusty Atherton, Lea Battey,
Heather Brown, Maureen Pelison

ON THE COVER

A view of the Sneffels Range from
a private residence above Ridgway.
Stonework by Hugh Pressman
for Kaibab Landscaping, Telluride.
(Photo by Joshua Johnson)

Telluride Local Media LLC

PUBLISHER

Andrew Mirrington

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Maureen Pelisson

OFFICE MANAGER

Shelly Kennett

CIRCULATION

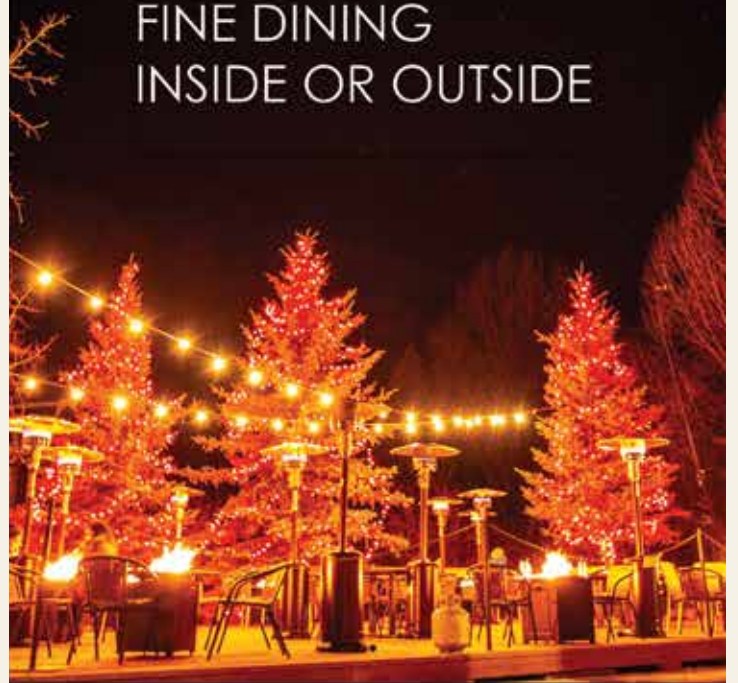
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Elissa



A talented slam poet with degrees in Biology and Environmental Policy from the University of Michigan Honors College, **ELISSA DICKSON** loves stories that meld science, sense of place, and poetry. She served as the San Miguel County Poet Laureate from 2016-2019, teaching and performing poetry in Telluride's schools and community, and worked in programming and outreach at the Wilkinson Public Library for 11 years (where she continues to teach online writing classes). Elissa can be found in Stockholm, Sweden this summer, likely munching on kanelbullar (Swedish cinnamon buns).

Ari



In her daily life, **TANYA ISHIKAWA** is not too focused on shelters; instead, she concentrates on exploring ideas and connecting people and organizations. Based in Ridgway, she provides a range of communications services to nonprofit clients, newspaper and magazine publishers, and book authors. She also enjoys filmmaking including writing screenplays, editing videos, and helping produce public service announcements. Other important activities in her life include supporting her son's athletic and academic endeavors, volunteering for community organizations, dancing, and cultural adventures.

ARI LEVAUX lives in Missoula, Montana, where he writes a column on all things food called "Flash in the Pan." When he isn't penning pieces about pomegranates, perfecting recipes for jalapeno poppers or addressing piecrust paranoia, he is probably out hunting an elk, which he prefers to do on skis in winter.

Samantha



MARY MENZ is a Ridgway-based writer, editor and Colorado Native Plant Master®, who especially loves it when freelance assignments allow her to combine her love of nature and the written word. She's the author of "Common Wildflowers of the San Juan Mountains," available at area bookstores.

SAMANTHA TISDEL WRIGHT lives and writes in Silverton, Colorado. A longtime contributor to Shelter, she has authored stories on everything from abandoned miner's shacks and cozy handcrafted cabins to historic landmark buildings and the high-end homes of the rich and famous. Her favorite Tom Cruise movie is "Mission: Impossible – Fallout."

Tanya



Mary





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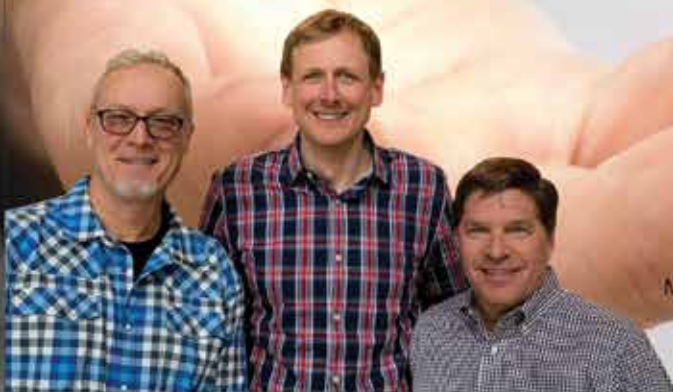
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Three-story, 18,399-square-foot Hood Park Haven is a short drive from the center of Mountain Village and worlds away from urban life, set on a Telluride ski slope with views of the San Juan Mountains on every side.
(Photo by Brett Schreckengost)



Peaceful Mountain
Village Escape Designed
for Peak Lifestyle

Mountain Modern, on a Grand Scale

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>>>>





The home features well-connected indoor and outdoor living spaces with access to the ski hill and open space trails.
(Photo by Steve Munding)



(Photo by Trevor Tondro)

The property offers panoramic views of the entire San Sophia ridgeline, Gold Hill and Palmyra Peak on the ski mountain, 14,016-foot Wilson Peak, and the La Sal Mountains, to the west in Utah.

From floor to ceiling, the great room rises an awe-inspiring 30 feet, enveloped by windows reaching the full height of the north and south walls. To the east and west, the walls are built of light gray, Kansas limestone. The scale is massive — yet the space has a down-to-earth feel.

The room is the interior focal point of 18,399-square-foot Hood Park Haven, the name bestowed on a Mountain Village residence that went on the market this spring. Nestled in the aspen on the edge of Hood Park open space, the location feels both cozy and isolated, yet also open and connected to the high-alpine landscape — sensations evoked not only by large windows in most of the home's rooms, but also the 5,300 square feet of patios and terraces in the front and back.

The architecture is grand, yet honors the surrounding peaks. The property offers panoramic views of the entire San Sophia ridgeline, Gold Hill and Palmyra Peak on the ski mountain, 14,016-foot Wilson Peak, and the La Sal Mountains, to the west in Utah.

Listed for \$36.8 million, the slope-side property boasts three living rooms, eight bedrooms, a double kitchen, and caretaker's quarters. It is a luxurious getaway and entertainment enclave replete with amenities you would anticipate in such a place (ski equipment room, wine cellar, steam room, gym, even a bowling alley). Yet it also offers something more: "It has a global aesthetic that is not typical of a ski home and what people would expect in that environment," explained Ashleigh O'Connor of Thomas Hamel & Associates, the Australian firm responsible for the interior design. "Our clients wanted something different. Together with Thomas, they began researching places as diverse as Lebanon, Morocco and Japan. Finally, the details of the fortress-like dzongs (Buddhist monasteries) in Bhutan, with their clean, impressive scale and wall structures, struck the right note with us.

"This was the beginning," O'Connor said, of a look and feel "we wanted to develop."



The great room's large fireplace and cushy seating options provide the perfect setting for curling up with a book or gathering for conversation.

(Photo by Steve Munding)



Above: The great room is filled with warm light from the custom art fixtures at night and rich, natural light during the day.

(Photo by Steve Mundinger)

Right: The home includes a pair of staircases that connect the first through third levels on either side of the great room, plus an elevator between all three levels.

(Photo by Trevor Tondro)



A LUXURIOUS, INVITING AMBIENCE

The home's handmade and industrial textures were embellished through the designer's use of materials, furniture and décor with unique histories. Together with the stone and wood walls and floors, bronze doors, and high ceilings, the furnishings combine to create a feeling that is, at once, both ancient and modern — exquisitely comfortable, and exceedingly refined.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the great room, where a large antique French art deco textile hanging above the fireplace shares the space with two bespoke lantern-like fixtures commissioned through an artisan based in Brooklyn, who flew to Telluride to install them personally.

The custom coffee table is crafted with special panels of reversed painted mirror, inset into a Chinese-inspired table base. During a shopping trip to Los Angeles, Hamel found two unique Tibetan monk's trumpets, which were then transformed into functional floor lamps and are a wonderful conversation starter.

The great room's antique Chinese cabinets are family heirlooms that have travelled the world. In other rooms, a sophisticated selection of heirlooms, antiques, custom-made and found art and furniture similarly contribute to the tasteful, eclectic sensibility on display here.

Beyond the furnishings and lighting throughout the home, the appliances and plumbing fixtures are from an internationally-sourced collection of brands recognized for quality and innovation, such as Wolf, Sub Zero, Miele, Waterstone, and Rocky Mountain Hardware. Each of the home's 13 bathrooms are delightful, meticulously designed spaces, many with above-counter sinks made of stone, glass, wood and ceramic, and all with unique wall coverings ranging from Hoshi Japanese ceramic tile to repurposed, multicolored rustic license plates.

"Every room is kind of unique but has similar finishes that tie the house together," said Telluride architect Tom Conyers, who was the project architect and coordinated the large team of consultants on the project. "Each family member having their own personal suite with bedroom, sitting area and



The dining room, with its panoramic view of the San Sophia range, has spacious interior and exterior areas for a large family or group of friends to enjoy a meal or a party.
(Photo by Steve Munding)



Above: The main kitchen area offers another table for sharing a meal while enjoying the company of the cook. An additional food preparation area with appliances is next door.

(Photo by Trevor Tondro)



A fully outfitted bar with wine cellar is located on the first level, next to the two-lane bowling alley.

(Photo by Steve Munding)

“Every room is kind of unique but has similar finishes that tie the house together.”

– Tom Conyers, Architect

attached bathroom makes the house really unique. It’s something people are requesting more often.”

It was an ideal place of respite during a pandemic, and is the type of floor plan that is sure to become more common, going forward: a lavish cocoon where a large, extended family can settle in, offering peace, privacy and the ability to work remotely, yet also featuring ample, inviting enclaves to gather for meals, relaxation and celebration.

The tranquil ambience exuded by the shared spaces is even more palpable in the bedrooms. The primary bedroom, for example, offers not only a terrace, sitting area and hallway that leads to his-and-hers walk-in closets, but also includes separate water closets, a pair of showers, and a copper bathtub overlooking the adjoining terrace (as well as gas fireplaces on each side of the tub).

A SHARED DESIGN VISION

“Working with the property owners and consultants all over the world was fun and challenging. We had a great team of consultants,” Conyers said. “Dave Gerber, of Gerber Construction, was the construction team leader. He was very detail oriented, very into the fine finishes in the house, and made sure it came together correctly.”

Others on the team included interior designer Thomas Hamel, lighting designer Robert Singer of Aspen, landscape architect Beth Bailis of Telluride, structural engineer Mike Thele of Carbondale, mechanical engineer Mark Burggraaf from Montrose, and Gerber Construction of Telluride.

Conyers, who has worked in Mountain Village since 1994, said the team collaborated closely with the Mountain Village planning department to ensure the home’s fit within the design guidelines and the context of the neighborhood.

“This was one of the first truly modern homes in Mountain Village,” he said. “The design guidelines at the time were





Above: Every bedroom features a sitting area, full bathroom and walk-in closets, plus amazing views and individually appointed furnishings with subtle styles from southwestern to Asian.

(Photo by Steve Mundinger)

Right: The master bath is centered around a large copper tub with the same layout mirrored on either side: gas fireplace, sink, vanity, cabinets, and shower.

(Photo by Trevor Tondro)




The tranquil ambience exuded by the shared spaces is manifested even more strongly in the bedrooms.

geared toward more traditional mountain homes. The simple ridge line, large steel windows and even the gray limestone required special approval."

Another challenge for the building team was coordinating the installation of invisible heating and cooling systems throughout the house. "The owners requested that all of the mechanical systems be fully integrated into the house. So all the heating and cooling registers were designed into the millwork, beamwork, light slots and other hidden locations," he said.

Such a design required a major effort, but it rewards residents and guests with unexpected luxury that is not readily obvious until it is pointed out: the home's mechanical functions are invisible and unobtrusive. Light switches are discreet, yet offer multiple functionality. The mudroom, laundry room and equipment rooms were planned for ease of use and efficiency as well as beauty. Similarly, the semi-opaque, cloth blinds on the great room windows are tucked out of sight until they are needed. Then, they glide down 25 feet to the floor and create a translucent mural, highlighting silhouettes of mountain peaks against the sky (the perfect backdrop for snuggling inside Hood Park Haven).

The property is offered for sale by Telluride Properties, LLC and Damon Demas. For more information and photos, see hoodparkhaven.com. 

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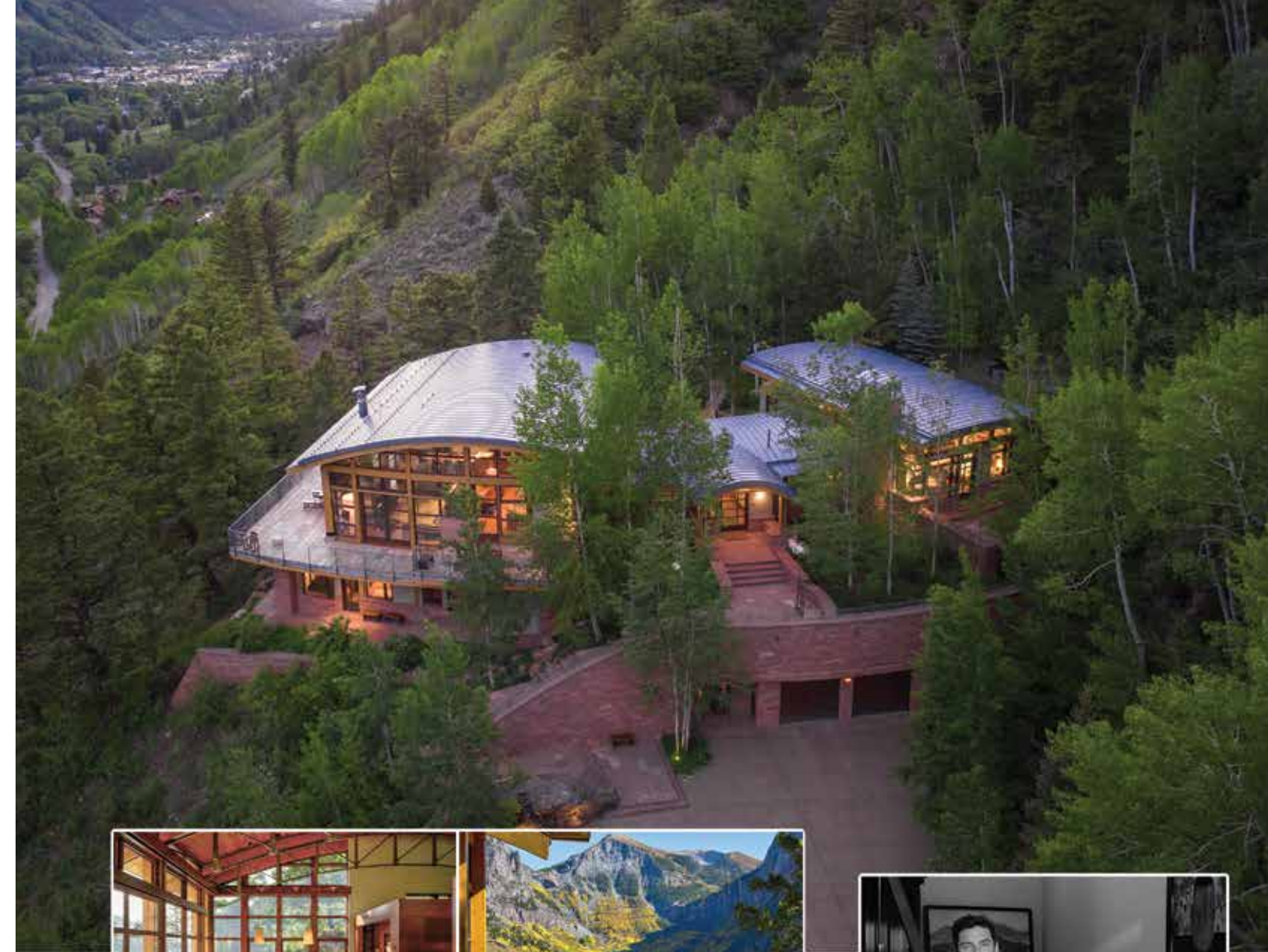
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BY LESLIE VREELAND

Taming a Challenging Landscape,
to Make the Most of the Outside

Fire & Stone

30



Flagstone-capped custom seating surrounds a raised firepit. A circular patio hugs the viewshed (the geographical area visible from this Ridgway home).

Bringing the outdoors in: It is easy enough to do in the San Juans, and everybody seems to want to. Simply design a home with big windows, and sprawling views.

It is trickier to imbue a sense of comfort, and refinement, to outdoor spaces in this region. This is a place where the terrain is rocky, slopes are steep, and sudden thunderstorms (or snowstorms) can quickly put a stop to your installa-

tion project. "Landscaping projects in Telluride usually don't even start until Memorial Day," once the snow is sufficiently melted, and the earth has begun to dry, Hugh Pressman says. From June to December — when the ground freezes again — it's a sprint for Pressman, the owner of Kaibab Landscaping. He's got just seven months to pave driveways and walkways, construct outdoor fire pits and fireplaces, complete outdoor kitchens. Install wood-fired pizza ovens.

>>>

What Pressman prides himself on, perhaps most of all, is his relationships with clients.



A hallmark of Pressman's technique is 'seamless' masonry: No mortar is visible, and each stone appears perfectly placed.



He's busier than ever.

"Initially, it was very scary," Pressman recalled of the pandemic. "For the past 20 years, I've gotten probably five to eight phone calls" offering fresh work (and installation challenges) every day.

"Last March, I didn't get a call for three weeks. I thought my business was done. I wondered if everybody would be shooting each other over a can of beans."

A few weeks later, "once people's fears had lessened, and they'd been spending



Top: Pressman utilized a mix of stones found on this Ridgway property, and incorporated them into the existing hillside, for this design. Custom stonework surrounds the outdoor spa.

Bottom: Relocated boulders and deer-friendly plantings complement a wild setting; subtle installed lighting draws attention (but not too much) to a water feature.

some time at home,” the calls not only came in again: Suddenly, Pressman was twice as busy as before. People spent all that time indoors, “looking out at their yards,” he noted, and they decided they wanted to make some changes. “They wanted outdoor kitchens, and firepits, and barbecues.”

Pressman is respected for his thoughtful design, hard work and quality craftsmanship. Yet what he prides himself on, perhaps most of all, is his relationships

>>>



Top: Pressman works throughout the Four Corners region. At a Sedona, Arizona property, a red-rock firepit and walkway merge with the surrounding geography.

Bottom: Seamless steps seem to disappear into the landscape.



with clients (he's a six-time Excellence in Service award-winner, from 2016-2021, on the home-design website Houzz). "My customers give me a lot of latitude to work on the fly, and I'm grateful," Pressman said. "That latitude is important: most of what we do is semi-planned. At the beginning, we never know exactly where things will go in terms of a project's best possible outcome. At the start of a landscape project, everything is on paper — or these days, on a computer rendering. The best possible outcome

involves being able to make changes as you go along."

It also involves knowing your materials, and sourcing them carefully. Pressman's work is in the Four Corners region, and the southwest Colorado Rockies; his 'tools' are stone, and native plants; his palette is derived from the colors of the surrounding landscape: red rocks, sandstone, dusky earth, verdant moss.

"I'm really visual, and I love working with beautiful things," he says. "I buy stones from different quarries and



Top: Giant slabs of stone are utilized for stairs.

Bottom: Malpais, local volcanic rocks, are the foundation for a sleek, granite-topped bar and grill.

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"The best possible outcome involves being able to make changes as you go along."

sources. I started making firepits out of stone." The work has evolved over the decades he's been in this business. "As far as I know, we're the only ones building fires" that seem to spring up spontaneously out of boulders, a design that joins two seemingly inextricable forces: incendiary flames and cool rock.

"I source different colors of stone for steps, seating, fire-pit boulders and coolers, in addition to detail work around patios and barbecues," Pressman says. The stones are in russet, buff, oak and golden hues to complement the terrain. The result is an outdoor landscape that feels natural and spontaneous, while offering luxurious touches you could never find in the wilderness (such as a beer or champagne cooler that seems to spring up spontaneously from stone, or a pizza oven tucked in surrounding rock). >>>



Top: A custom-cut sandstone beer (or champagne) holder takes advantage of the rock's natural insulation to keep beverages cool.

Bottom: A wood-fired outdoor oven, at the home of a longtime restaurateur. The design utilizes Belgard pavers, customized with stone capping.



A favored quarry for flagstone is in Ash Fork, Arizona, so-called “flagstone capital of the U.S.,” along Route 66. Other rocks utilized by Pressman are “mossy boulders,” stones with intriguing patterns of lichen and moss that he meticulously collects for each project. Larger boulders, also scrupulously chosen, are jackhammered into unique, sculpted objects (such as a firepit). Before the stones can be placed — or the outdoor pizza oven installed — ‘taming’ the landscape needs to happen. Steep slopes

must be secured so underlying erosion, an ongoing challenge in mountainous terrain, doesn’t take place.

The result is a landscape at once natural and manmade, from local materials wrought first by nature, across millenia, and re-shaped by Pressman and his crew.

“I love the permanence of it,” he says. “Things in our society aren’t built to last. It takes a certain boulder millions of years to end up in a landscape we’re building, where people are enjoying their glasses of wine.” 🍷




Top: Pressman’s construction assistant, blasting a custom sandstone boulder to make a suitable shape.

Bottom: A custom fire pit of mossy rock, in a patio surround. At the right rear: an assemblage of malpais, volcanic rock native to the Four Corners. El Malpais (“The Badlands” in Spanish) is a 35-mile region of rugged terrain west of Albuquerque, New Mexico.




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Threatened by Climate Change,
the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch
Is a Challenge to Study

No Mountain Too High

BY ELISSA DICKSON

Brown-capped
Rosy-Finch
(Photo by Joan Baker)



“Nesting” is in. Previously reserved for expectant mothers sprucing up a home for a newborn’s arrival, the term has taken on new emphasis this past year. Today, it refers to anyone focused on enhancing their living space.

One pandemic design vibe you might not be aspiring to, however, is high-alpine mineshaft chic. Yet that’s exactly what the elusive Brown-capped Rosy-Finch gravitates towards. In the height of summer, the bird soars over the alpine tundra of the Rocky Mountains, rose-tipped wings acting as compass points, pointing the

way toward an ideal nesting site.

Sometimes it chooses a locale *au naturel*: a perch in the crevice of a cliff, perhaps, or a nest situated underneath a large rock in a rockslide, or a moraine.

At other times, it nests on the walls of deserted mineshafts or in the rafters of abandoned mining buildings. Hauntingly, as if following in the lost footsteps of the miners who built these structures, the brown-capped rosy-finch is in danger of disappearing. Climate change is causing montane forests to spread to higher elevations, and tundra habitat at the edges of snowfields and glaciers is shrinking. Like the pika, the White-tailed Ptarmigan, and other species that thrive in the remotest reaches of the Rockies,

climate change necessitates that the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch go higher, but there is no higher.

Unlike the two other North American species of rosy-finch (the gray-crowned and the black), the brown-capped variety lives almost exclusively in Colorado’s mountains. It nests above 11,000 feet, making it the highest-breeding bird in the country. It also means this finch is particularly threatened by a warming world. Between 1970 and 2014, scientists believe, the species has declined a stunning 95 percent. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists the finch as endangered; it has been estimated that there are just 45,000 mature individuals alive today



(by contrast, 30 *million* House Finches reside in the U.S. alone).

These are rough estimates, and more data is needed. The high-altitude nature of all three rosy-finch species means that they have been studied very little, leaving aspects of their movement and behavior a mystery. “They breed in these unseen, high alpine locations. They are so reclusive. The nesting part of their life cycle is especially challenging to study,” said Keith Bruno, Community Naturalist for Audubon Rockies.

Even learning how long the birds live is a work in progress. Scott Rashid, Director of the Colorado Avian Research and Rehabilitation Institute (CARRI), has long held the record for the oldest brown-

capped rosy-finch ever observed through CARRI’s banding program. “First, we recaught a banded bird that was 5 years old, then one 10 years old, and recently one that was initially banded 12 years ago. There is so much we still don’t know about these birds,” Rashid said.

In 2018, Dr. Erika Zavaleta from the University of California at Santa Cruz, in collaboration with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, set out to remedy that with a new banding program. All three rosy-finch species were captured and banded in the Telluride, Gunnison, and Evergreen areas using blue, red, and green bands, respectively. After noting each bird’s sex, age, and body condition, it

was released with a tag on its leg. (You can help with this ongoing monitoring program by sharing sightings of banded birds with rosyfinchreports@gmail.com.)

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has done additional work to learn about Brown-capped Rosy-Finches. “We did breeding surveys at breeding sites,” said Amy Seglund, Species Conservation Coordinator for CPW in Montrose. The good news: rosy-finches were more widespread than researchers might have guessed, observed from Pikes Peak to the La Platas to the Mount Zirkel Wilderness, outside Steamboat. “They’re well distributed across the state, even on isolated mountains and ranges,” Seglund said. “We found them everywhere we

>>>



A rosy-finch researcher looks down on the birds' nesting area. Opposite page: fledgling chicks, a close-up look at a nest, artfully shielded from inclement weather between boulders, and a bite of food offered to a chick by a parent. (Photos courtesy of Amy Seglund/CPW)

looked. Now we have a baseline population estimate, and a baseline distribution so we can continue to monitor them into the future, as environmental impacts become more pronounced."

One state west, researchers also hope to learn more about a related finch, the Black Rosy-Finch, dubbed "the most mysterious bird in America." "We understand little about its reproduction, demography, population status, survival rates, distribution or migratory tendencies," the scientists write on a webpage devoted to rosy-finches. "Rosy-finch citizen scientists" from the Intermountain West are invited to join in the 2021-2022 feeder-count study, which begins this winter (some training is required). If you would

like to help, visit www.wildutahproject.org/rosy-finch to learn more.

If you've spent time above treeline or live in a mountain town, you may already have seen a brown-capped rosy-finch, even if you didn't recognize it (the birds can easily be mistaken not only for other rosy-finches, but red finches such as House Finches, Cassin's Finches, and Purple Finches if you don't know what you're looking for). Keith Bruno recalls spying a flock of 15-20 brown-capped finches while out ski-touring on Wolf Creek Pass one spring. "They were tree-hopping along the ridge, perching for a moment, and then moving on. The rose on their wings was catching the sunlight. It was magical," he said.

If you've spent time above treeline, you know how frigid the nights can be, even in the height of summer. To step into the tiny feet of a recently hatched brown-capped chick, imagine camping in a sleeping bag that has lost much of its loft and warmth (the 3-5 chicks per brood are born with minimal down). The nests offer some protection. They are built exclusively by the females out of grass, feathers, fur and, in one report, even a piece of blasting fuse. It's a hard-scrabble introduction to the world.

One refuge that was observed in nesting season had water trickling down and collecting inside it, Bruno recalled. "This would freeze the nest at night. The parents continued to use it and eked through"

The species nests
above 11,000 feet,
making it the
highest-breeding
bird in the country.



nesting season, and their young “managed to have a successful fledge” (that is, to leave the nest). “They are so tough.” Brown-capped Rosy-Finches co-parent, picking insects, spiders, and seeds from the surface of snow, mud, and tundra to feed to their chicks. Eighteen days after hatching, the chicks fledge, remaining with their parents into the autumn.

Between mating phases, brown-capped finches, as well as the other two rosy-finch species, often assemble in massive flocks, a safety-in-numbers approach to predation. The behavior has also evolved to improve feeding success by collaboratively identifying food sources. “I call it the scout finch. One lone Brown-capped Rosy-Finch will show up at my feeder

one afternoon. The next day there will be 200, and the day after that, maybe thousands. They’re always talking. They can go through 50 pounds of seed in three days,” Rashid said.

If you are interested in attracting rosy-finches to your property, make sure to clean your feeders every couple of weeks (salmonella has been reported in rosy-finch species) and ensure that seeds are visible on the ground or deck. “If the snow is covering the seeds, they won’t come down to feed. In the tundra, the wind is always blowing, exposing grass and seeds. So, they haven’t evolved to scratch,” Rashid said.

Don’t expect consistent behavior from this enigmatic bird. Even when a feeder is

well stocked with food, visits from brown-capped flocks can be erratic from year to year. Some of this variation is because the bird’s migration is mostly altitudinal. Though they move down into broad, grassy valleys in the autumn and winter, how low they descend fluctuates, based on the harshness of the winter season. “It’s not as black and white as them coming downslope for the winter. Sometimes, in warm winters, they’ll stay up high. They bounce around and find short term food supplies on melted-out or windswept slopes,” Rashid explained. “During storms, for sure they are going to come down.”

Burly and beautiful like the state of Colorado itself, these finches would

>>>




make a strong contender for state bird (the dazzling blush of rose on their wings and belly even mirrors the alpenglow of the high country they call home). Rashid, who has rehabilitated several individual brown-capped rosy-finches at CARRI's facility, says, "They are stunning to behold. Males have a purplish belly. Females are more pink." Local birding enthusiast Suzanne Cheavens loves seeing them. "They are such a special bird," she said. "When they show up at my feeder, I'm overjoyed. I wish I spoke their language so I could hear their stories."

This finch is not the only species whose shift in habitat is driven by climate change. And while some species (like this one) will be particularly threatened

by climate change, other species will see their ranges expand. A recent study by the National Audubon Society forecasts that by 2050, a quarter of the bird species in any given national park could be replaced by new species.

The plight of climate change, and what it means for certain species, can evoke feelings of grief and helplessness in humans. Taking action can help (such as by participating in Utah's rosy-finch study). Another wonderful way to participate in the tracking and conservation of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches and other bird species is through the Audubon society's famous Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Now more than 120 years old, the CBC is one of the largest, longest-running

citizen-science efforts in the world. Hundreds of scientists have put CBC's population data to use to help humanity paint a better picture of the avian world's evolving status (register for a count close to you by consulting the Audubon society's online map). Durango, Cortez, and Pagosa Springs all host a December count, and so does the Black Canyon chapter of the National Audubon Society, whose members reside in Ridgway, Ouray and Montrose. "Some people get out on snowshoes. Some get out on skis," said Bruno, who runs the Pagosa Springs count. "We observe what we can during a 24 hour period. It's fun and empowering. If you're new to birding, not to worry — you'll learn along the way." 



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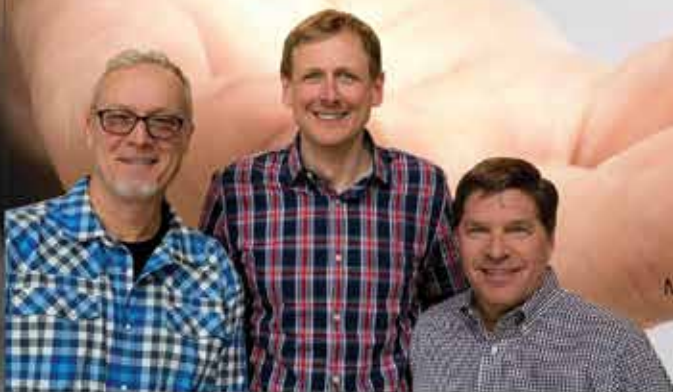
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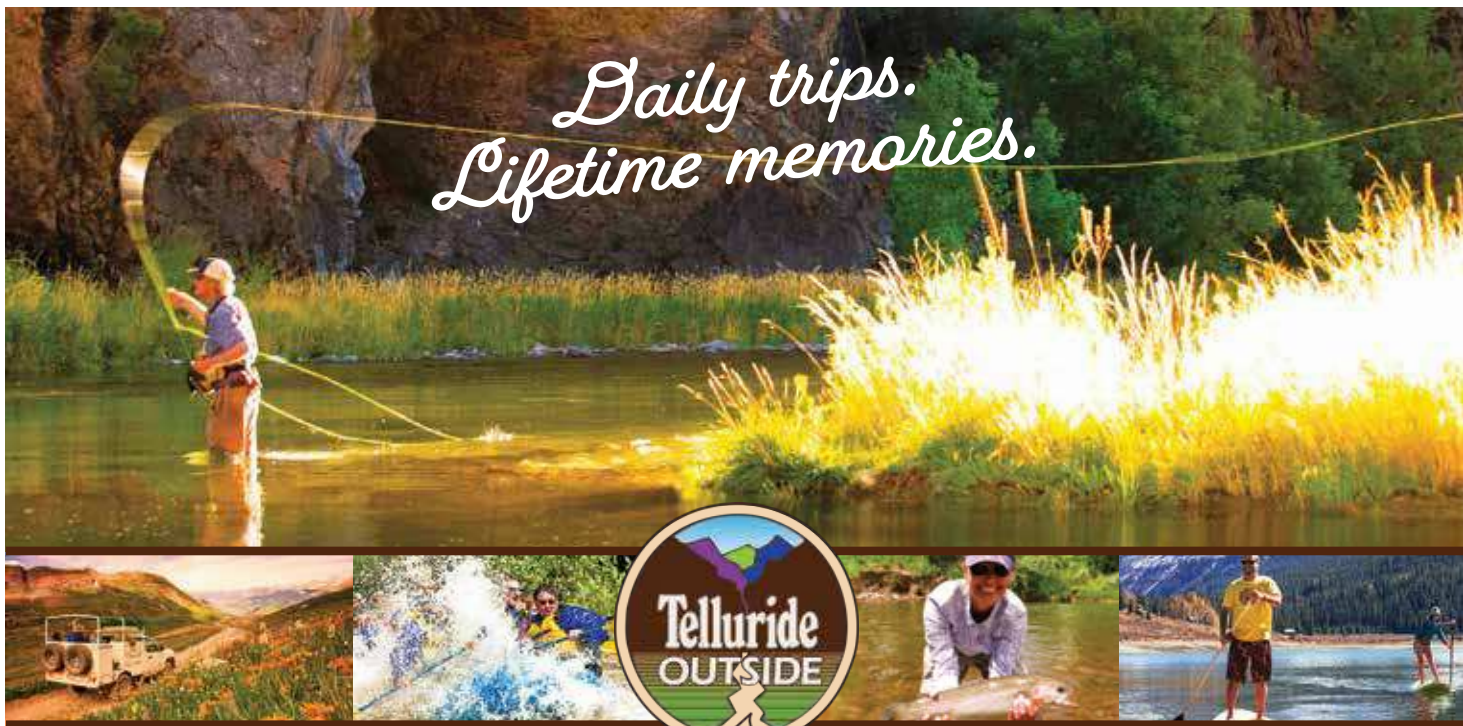
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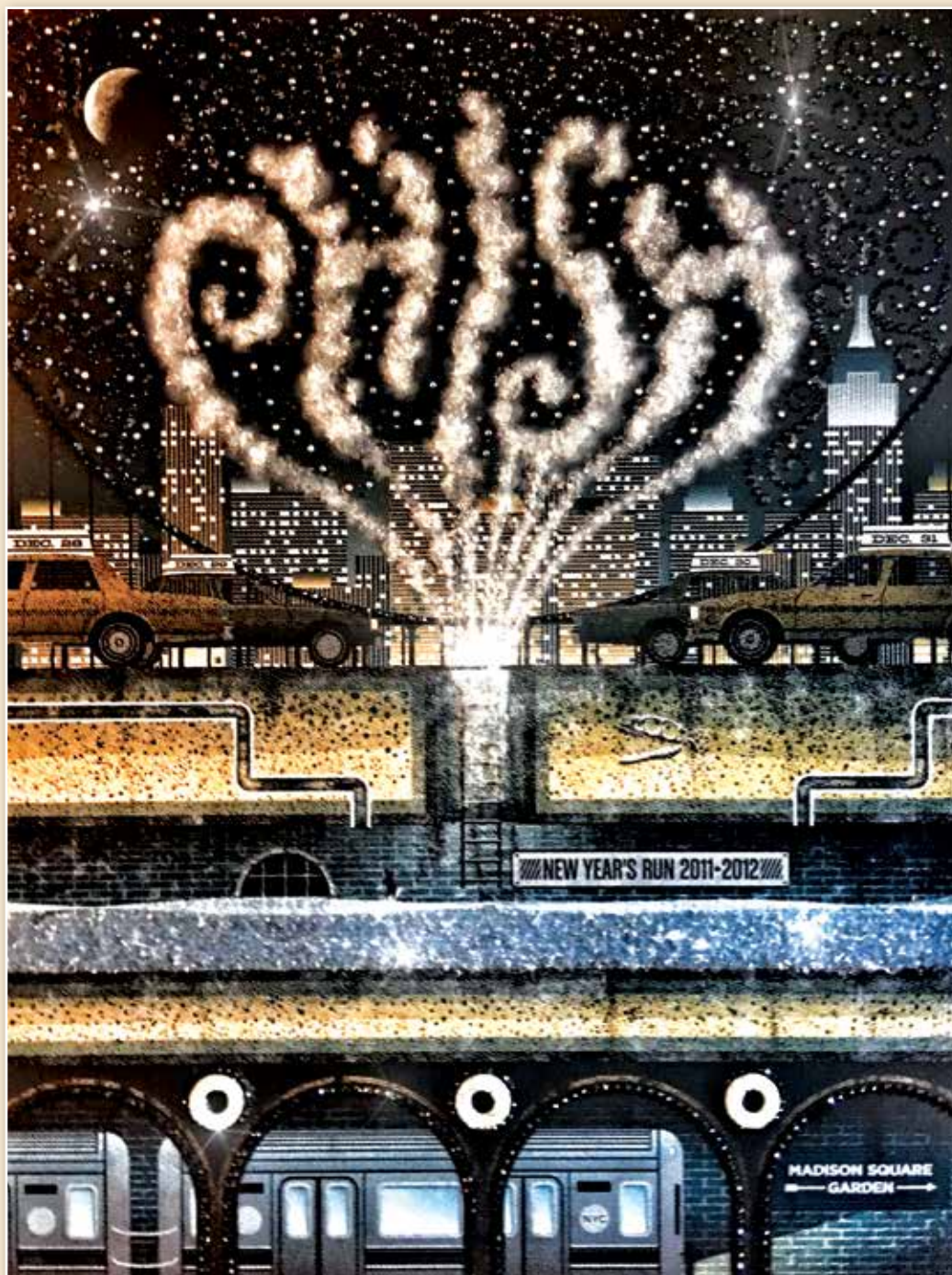
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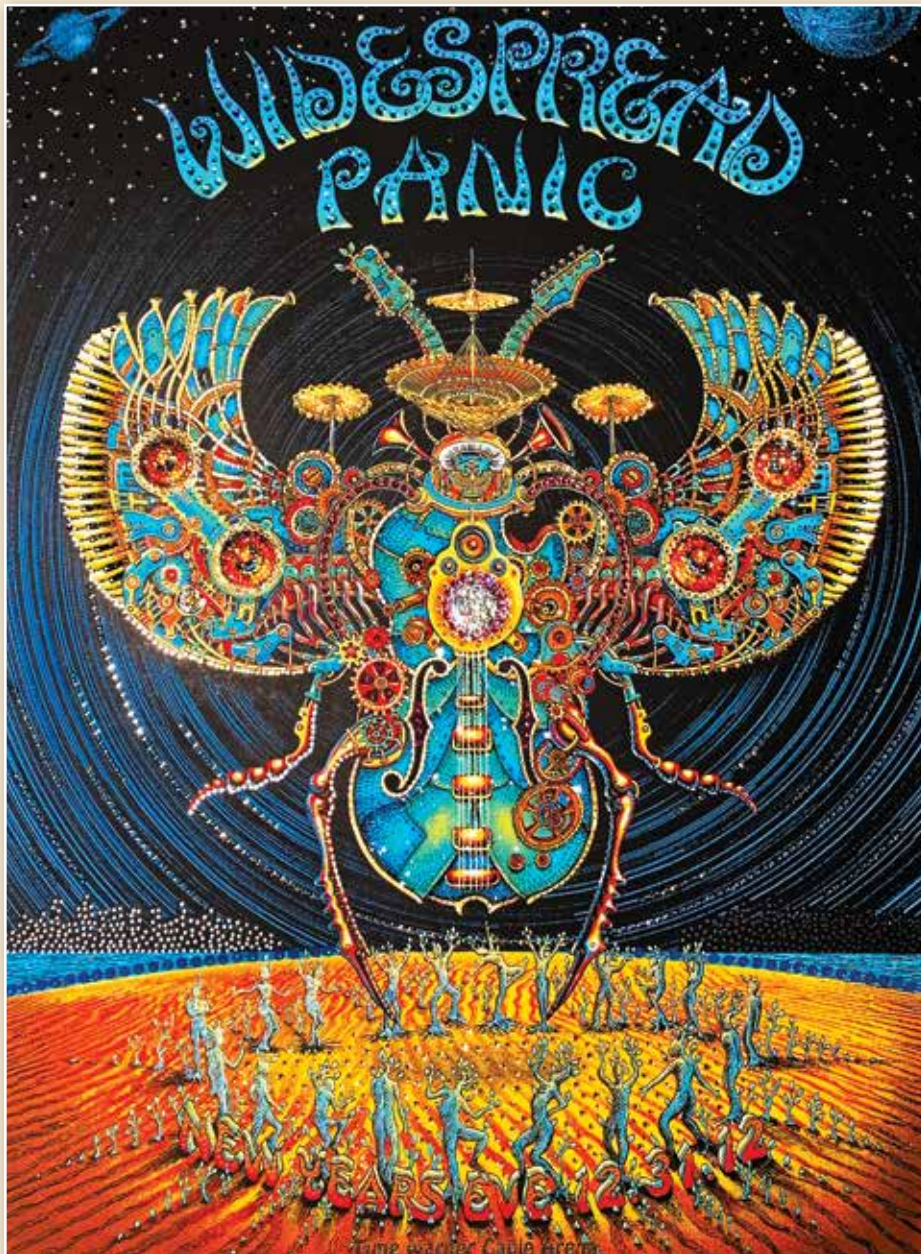
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BY ELISSA DICKSON

LOCAL ARTIST'S NEW GALLERY OFFERS ROCK ART, AMPLIFIED

FROM TROUT TO PHISH





"Whether we lived through the 60s, 70s, 80s — whatever era we grew up with — I hope the posters rekindle our memories and bring back happiness for the past."

Previous: Phish,
Justin Helton, 2012

Top: Widespread Panic,
Emek, 2012

Top right: Grateful Dead,
N.C. Winters, 2018



Long ago, when local artist Judy Haas was becoming nationally recognized for her vivid pastels of Colorado trout, the jam band Phish asked her to make a concert poster for them. At the time, she didn't know how to design silk-screened posters.

"That opportunity fell away from me and I always wished I'd done it," she recalled.

Today, in a beautiful twist of fate, Haas' newest artistic endeavor has come full-circle: she is amplifying vintage music posters by embellishing them with glass crystals and "diamond dust," shards of glittery glass. "I look at my art as a collaboration. I take the artist's work and add my own artistic quality to it," Haas says of her new work.

Wandering through her new gallery, at 230 South Fir Street, feels like an incandescent journey through the history of rock and roll. Each striking piece suggests the myth, mystery, and magic of musical icons. Shimmering posters of Phish, Tom Petty, Jimi Hendrix, and Led Zepelin transport you back to your own, sparkliest music experiences. Haas fully understands the appeal of these pieces. "There is a nostalgia and a love for our past, the music that we grew up with," she says. "Whether we lived through the 60s, 70s, 80s — whatever era we grew up with — I hope the posters rekindle



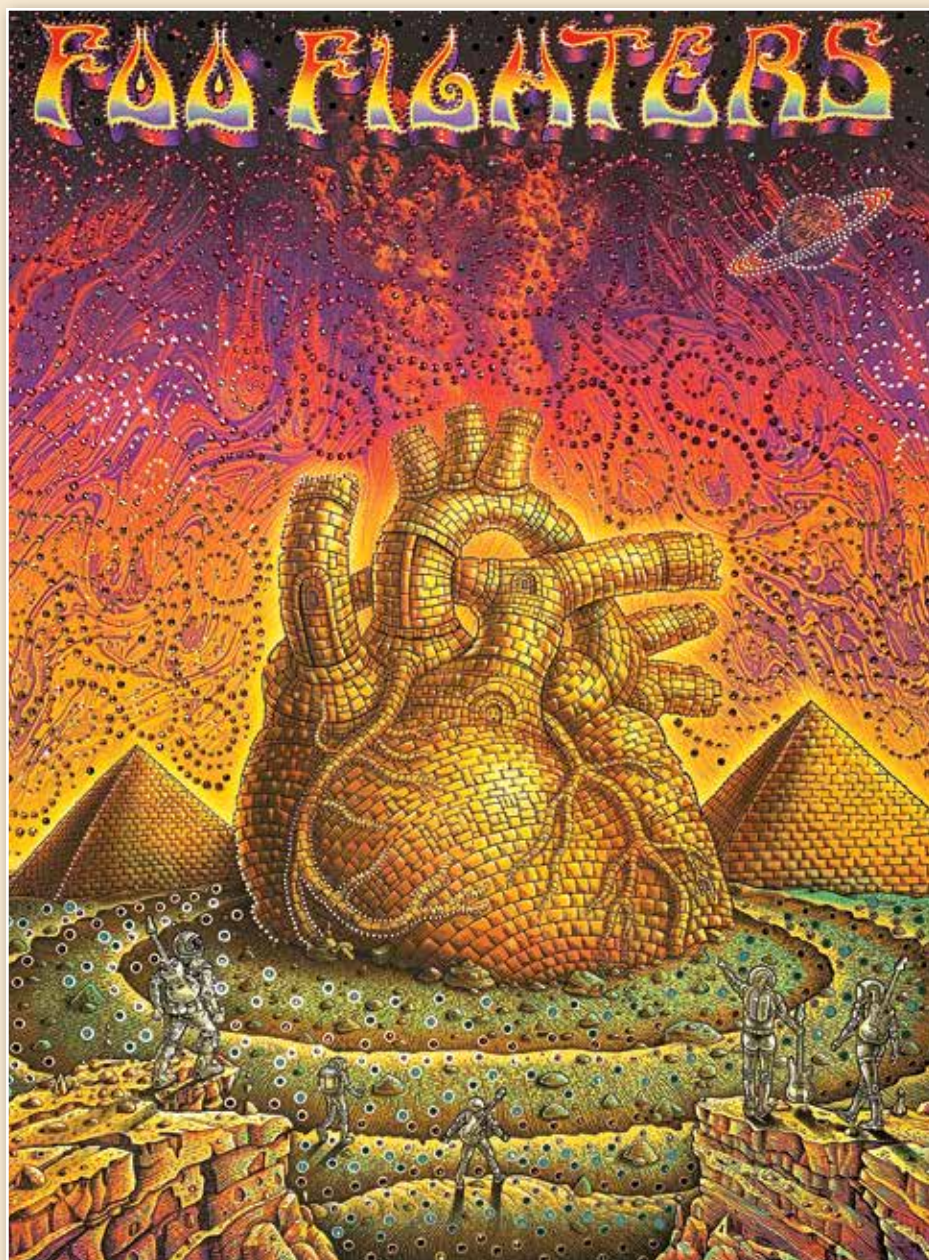
our memories and bring back happiness for the past.”

Born and raised in Aspen, Haas has always loved art. “Ever since I was a child, I’ve wanted to be an artist,” she says. “This is something I came into the world knowing.” She was exposed early to the power of pop posters, working during her teen years at Tom Benton’s gallery. Benton is known for designing and silk-screening the legendary posters for Hunter S. Thompson’s 1970 “Freak Power” campaign for Pitkin County Sheriff. “I would pull finished posters and put them on drying racks. That’s where I met Hunter Thompson,” Haas recalled.

She returned to Aspen in her twenties to open a framing store and continue exploring her own artistic process. In 1985, she held her first solo show at the Hayles Gallery (and promptly sold out everything on opening night). The show included two trout pastels, a look that would evolve to become her signature style. Eventually, her work caught the eye of Patagonia founder, Yvon Chouinard. One of her mahi-mahi pastels became the print for a Hawaiian-style shirt in Patagonia’s Pataloha Collection.

During that time, Haas also managed singer John Denver’s property, meeting iconic musicians and enjoying Aspen’s thriving music scene. Through John Denver, she met Andy Warhol, whose classic album covers are now some of

>>>



Top left: Dave Matthews Band,
Methane Studios, 2013

Top right: Foo Fighters,
Emek, 2015

her favorite subjects to bedazzle (in one corner of Haas' gallery, you can gaze into the sparkling eyes of Aretha Franklin on the Warhol-designed cover of Franklin's album, "Aretha").

Haas moved to Telluride in 2006, eventually starting Deer, a home consignment store with unique vintage antiques and collectibles. One day, somebody sold her a gorgeous old French stone lithograph poster that enchanted her. "Using tweezers and crystals, I embellished the entire thing. It took me months," she said. "It was so fun! Afterward, all I could think was that I wanted to do another one." She soon got her chance, when a friend asked her to adorn his original Grateful Dead poster from the famous Telluride show in 1987. She was hooked.

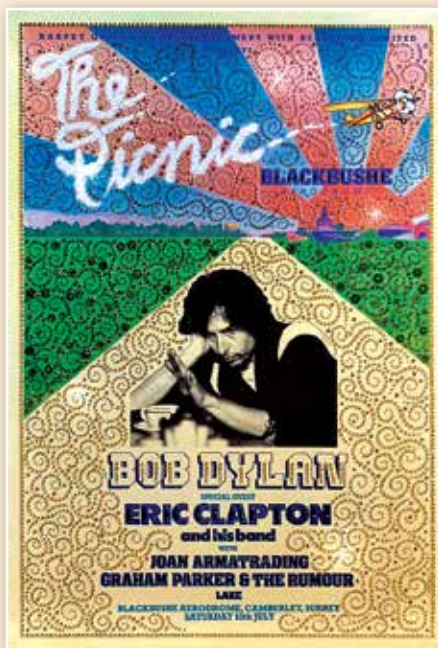
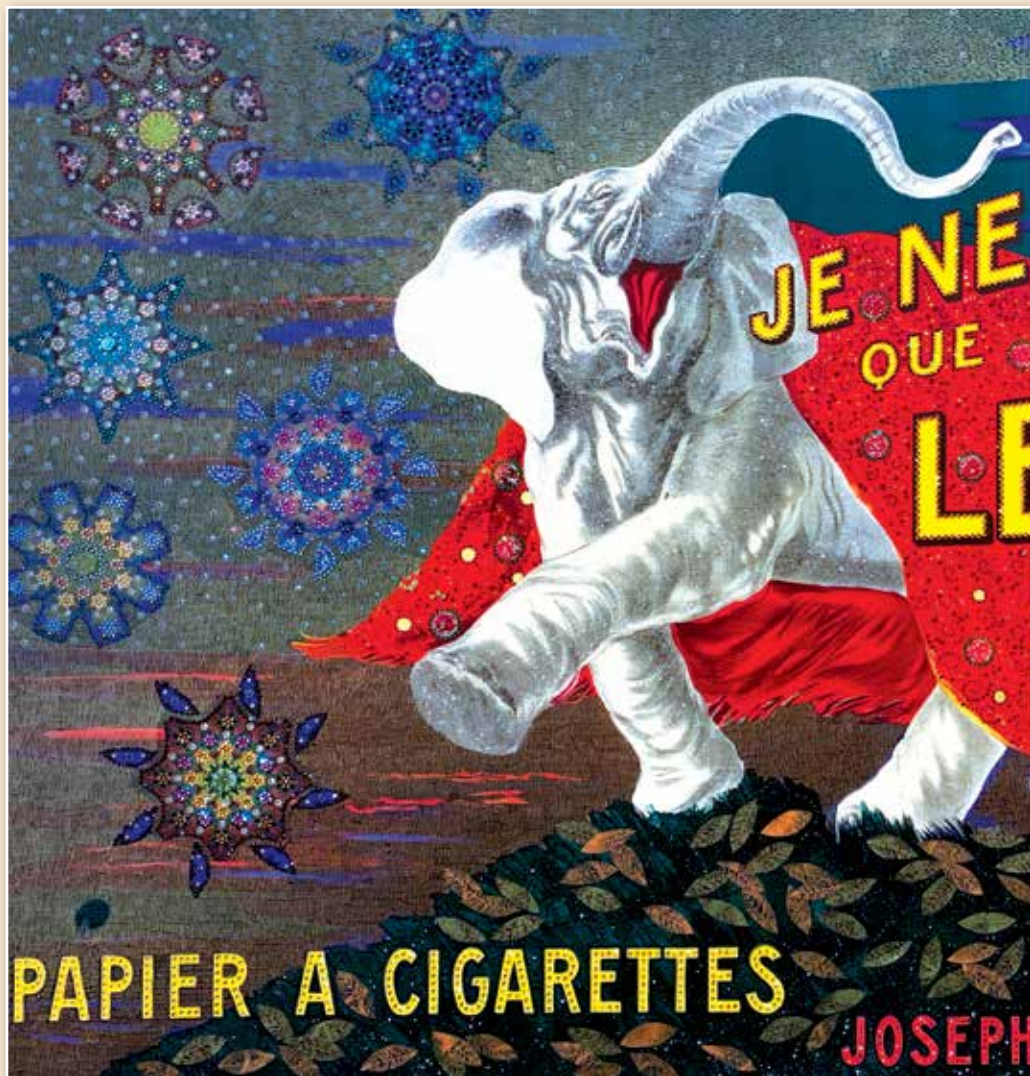
Haas not only enjoys embellishing posters, she has fun searching for which ones to adorn. She finds most of them on the Internet. "I only use original posters. The reproductions don't have the same quality of paper or print. The energy of using the original poster from that time, and not a reproduction, means so much to me."

Sometimes she'll get lucky and make a rare find, fulfilling the dreams of someone who reached out to her for a commissioned piece. "People will call and ask, 'Can you find Bob Dylan's concert at Blackbushe in 1978 with Joan Armatrading and Eric Clapton?' That one took me a few months, but I found one. I've never seen another one since."

Haas' daughter, Roxy, who helps run the store, is a musician and a long-time collector of music concert posters herself. Perfect partners, they both love the history of this artform. From rock posters' humble beginnings as cheap promotional materials, "they've evolved into extraordinary visual equivalents of the music they advertise," Roxy said. "It's a beautiful part of our history."

Haas has shown all over the world, from London to New York, but displaying her work in her own gallery is special. "People come in and share their stories about concerts they went to," she said. "They'll say, 'I remember that concert. I was there for that.' For me, the social aspect of the gallery is really special."

The gallery also features vintage western movie posters, ski posters, and Telluride festival posters. In all, Haas currently possesses a collection of over 500 posters.



Above: Elephant Cigarettes, Leonetto Capiello, c. 1915

Left: Bob Dylan, promotional poster, 1978



Haas has shown all over the world, from London to New York, but displaying her work in her own gallery is special.



Top: Janis Joplin, promotional poster, 1972


Below: John Prine, Chuck Sperry, 2020

Posters are also offered for sale on her website, southfirststreet.com (both embellished and unembellished). Many are rare collectible silk-screens or stone lithographs. She uses glass crystals in many sizes and colors to bedazzle them. When asked how she knows a piece is finished, she replies: “You can never have too many crystals. The more the better.”

Haas appreciates the accessibility of poster art. “It’s a culture,” she said simply. “Within the poster world, people can relate to the image, and it’s often still affordable.” Indeed, a hallmark of Haas’ career has been her work to make art accessible to the public. She created opportunities for artists to show their pieces in restaurants in the Roaring Fork Valley in the 90s. “A lot of us couldn’t get into galleries,” she explained. “So I went around and asked the restaurants, ‘Can artists show their work on your walls?’”

In Telluride, Haas has curated rotating exhibits for La Cocina de Luz restaurant for many years, and has regularly donated her artwork to the Ah Haa School for the Arts since 1994. A custom piece of public art by Haas hangs in the children’s area at the Wilkinson Public Library, where it is much loved by young library visitors. In it, a bear in a whimsical forest sits — drenched, just like her posters — in a dazzling array of crystals.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, her gallery captivates children as well as adults. “They come in because of the sparkles,” she said. “Who doesn’t love sparkles? The interaction of the sunlight on the crystals creates rainbows all over the walls, which enchant them. It is the beginning of an artistic enchantment in the child’s life.”

Music festivals in Telluride’s Town Park are also known to leave visitors awash in rainbows and enchantment, the air electrified by the magic of live music. For Haas, Telluride’s rich history as a bastion of rock-and-roll (and bluegrass, and jazz) is a vibrant source of inspiration. “There’s nothing like the festivals here in Telluride,” she said. “They’re my favorite things. They’re intimate, and the beauty of nature is all around you. You’re totally immersed.” Now, thanks to Haas’ new gallery, you can get a taste of that magical feeling anytime, just by walking through the door and reaching to grab a rainbow. 

The Water Feature

BY MARY MENZ

All living organisms need at least four things to survive: air, food, shelter and water. Large or small, water features help to meet those needs for the birds and other animals that share our habitat in the San Juan region. But it's not just the animals around us who require water in order to thrive.

Water also provides a sensory experience that humans need. Children of all ages are drawn to puddles for play. Recent studies reveal that people with autism benefit from water as a sensory input. And just about everyone will say that at least once in their lives, they've been captivated by the sounds of crashing waves, or steady rain on a rooftop. The marine biologist Wallace J. Nichols, author of "Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do," suggests that people, especially, have an innate love of natural settings — and water.

It's one reason why Wendy Sisler describes the garden outside of her kitchen window as her Zen garden. Here, she sits with her coffee in a comfy loveseat nestled between two extraordinarily large, old juniper trees. An intoxicating waft of early blooming crocus and hyacinth scents the air as she listens to the soothing sounds of

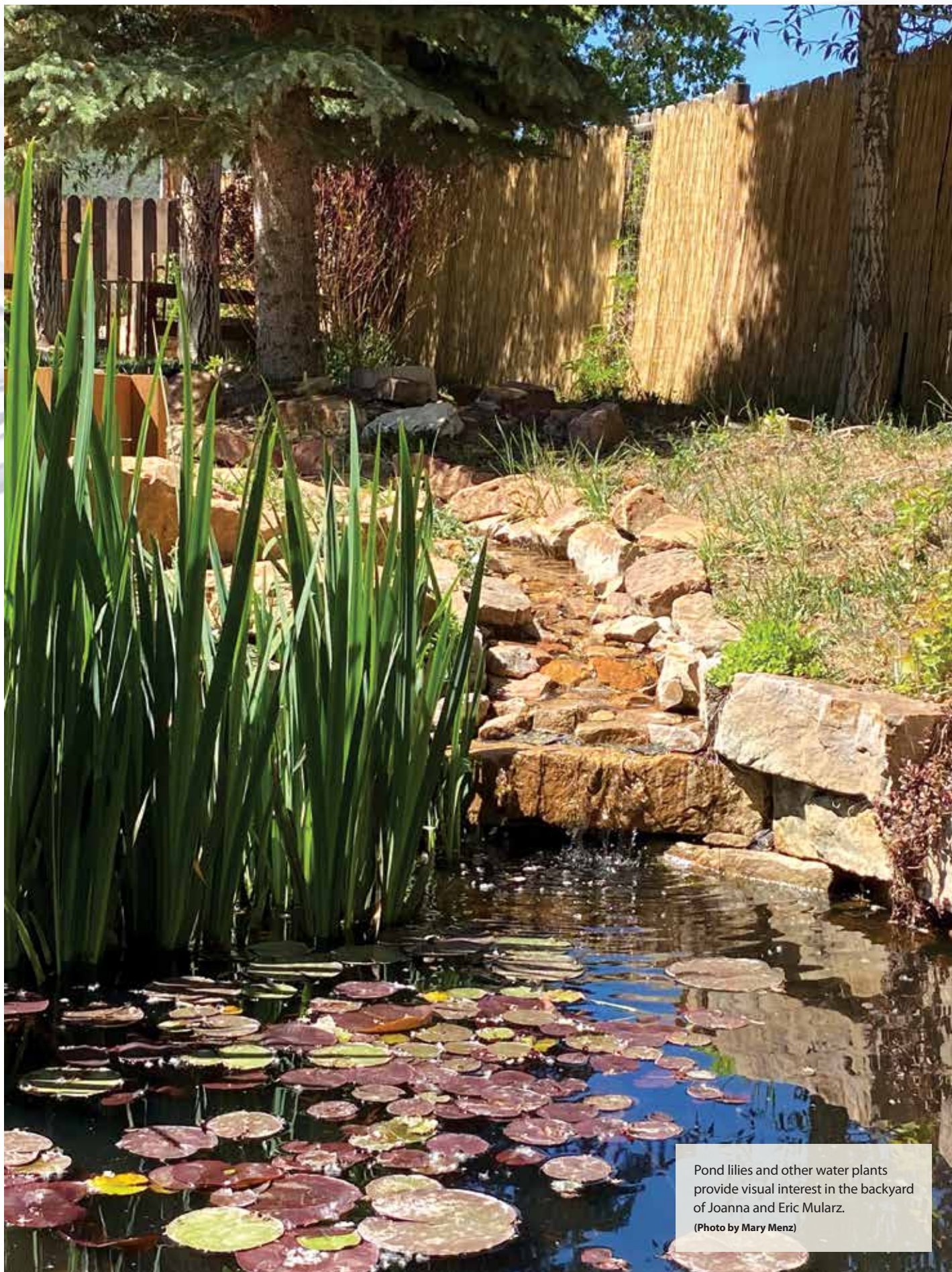
a waterfall built into a gradual slope next to her home. Her eyes rest on the dramatic view of the Sneffels Range to the south, beyond the valley floor.

"It's truly a meditative space," explained Sisler, of the water feature and its place in her garden. "This is a place where the senses are stimulated."

Sisler worked with mason Richard Roper to create the pond-less waterfall last year. Like a natural seep hikers might find in a number of places in the San Juans, Sisler's water feature emerges at the top of a rockfall, and tumbles down a three-foot spillway into a reservoir buried below surface gravel. Surrounding the water feature are native plants, including a large mound of white-blooming candytuft, and cultivars such as bulbs and peonies that provide season-long color. The rocks used for the waterfall were sourced on-site.

"This naturally-formed sandstone is perfect for this kind of project," said Roper, referring to the rockfall he and Sisler co-designed. The owner of Mountain Valley Landscape and Masonry in Montrose, Roper's been developing water features for clients for more than 18 years, first in California and now on the Western Slope.

Sisler said she operated the 1200-gallon recirculating water feature until Christmas of 2020, when she finally turned it off for the winter. The reservoir is hidden below a layer of mixed-size rock and gravel, and the pump and other hydraulic fittings are housed in a rustic metal-clad structure near the waterfall. >>>



Pond lilies and other water plants provide visual interest in the backyard of Joanna and Eric Mularz.
(Photo by Mary Menz)

A waterfall built into the slope behind the home of Dan and Wendy Harris brings bobcats (left) and bears (right) to the yard.

(Photos by Wendy Harris)



"I love that the sound of water flowing brings the birds to the yard and provides a needed water source for the Italian honey bees we have housed just yards away," said Sisler.

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

Sisler's nearby neighbors, Dan and Wendy Harris, enjoy the wildlife that their waterfall brings to the yard.

"We've had bobcats and bears — with and without cubs — visit our water feature," Wendy said. "Our domestic cat also likes to enjoy the outdoors. We're fortunate to be able to turn the feature on and off at will, so we can be there to 'supervise' him when he heads outside to explore." Harris suggested that it is the splashing of the waterfall on flagstone that attracts wild cats and bears to the property.

Dan Harris designed and installed this waterfall himself, using rock hauled from another part of their property, along with purchased flagstone slabs for use as the treads between sandstone risers. The 150-gallon pool at the base of the roughly 12-foot sloping waterfall provides a water source to feed the cascade when they turn it on.

"We built it in 2008," explained Harris, who demonstrated how he concealed the pump and electronics behind metal cutouts that blend with the surrounding hillside. Thoughtfully placed shrubs like Russian sage, potentilla, and yucca, along with a purple-blooming and mostly evergreen common periwinkle, decorates the incline on either side of the waterfall. Other plants grow in around the waterfall during the summer.

Wendy Harris said watching the bear-cubs frolic offers a special memory. "Like children, they find joy in water — and pushing each other into it!"

The natural stone and rock used in Sisler's and the Harris's water features complement the landscape and look like they were meant to be there. So, too, does the small pond behind the home of Log Hill residents Cyndi Nelson and Scott Thorburn.

"This was actually a natural depression in the ground," said Nelson, who explained that lining it was a simple way to keep the water from going stagnant. "We noticed when the depression was filled with water, the birds really enjoyed it. We wanted to keep it natural."

Nelson and Thorburn lined the depression with an impermeable pond skin, and then arranged rocks that they found on their property around the edge. The roughly 12-x 6-foot pond is filled entirely with snowmelt and rainwater harvested from the rooftop of their home. The pond provides habitat for the water-dependent native cattails that grow on one end.

"The cattails surprised us when they established themselves," said Nelson, who thinks they self-seeded from a small, nearby lake. "Now they reseed every year, providing shelter and a food source for birds and insects."

To keep the pond clean, the two introduced a few goldfish that not only eat the microorganisms and invertebrates that make their home in the small pond, but also serve as an occasional meal to passing raptors and snakes.

"Last year, I witnessed a garter snake eating a big fat goldfish," Nelson recalled with a grin. She and Thorburn enjoy watching the flocks of Evening grosbeaks that sporadically settle in the cattails and drink from the pond. They also enjoy visits from a black bear that occasionally ambles through the property.

"The animals get thirsty, too," said Nelson, "especially with the increasingly dry weather we've been experiencing." >>>



Wendy and Dan Harris enjoy their low-water cascade when they turn it on. They especially like the wildlife that it brings to the backyard.

(Photo by Mary Menz)

WETLAND PLANTS PROVIDE FOCAL POINT IN A BOG

Retired farmers Sandy and Albert Dick enjoy working outside on their seven-acre property. They have numerous gardens, fenced and unfenced, with and without native plants, in both dry and moist areas. They love growing plants, a passion which likely stems from a lifetime of farming in North Dakota. In retirement, however, they can be more creative. Gone are the days of planting by the calendar and in neat rows.

In 2019, the Dicks completed installation of a small pond with a unique bog component, and have made it a little better each year since — all while experimenting with wetland plants.

The pond, filled with water captured from rooftop rain and snowmelt, is occasionally topped off with a fill from a hose. This keeps the fountain running and the bog healthy.

“The bog is planted with prolific yellow marsh marigolds, specialty reeds, and irises to name a few,” said Sandy, a native plant enthusiast. “We even have monkey flowers that pop up later in the season, along with spiderwort and other colorful species.” The bog is surrounded by other non-water gardens that feature seasonal bulbs, a plethora of perennial herbs and medicinal plants like echinacea, lamb’s ear and lemon balm.

Sandy explained that their bog is mostly a submerged garden with water on top of small gravel, and plant roots with soil and gravel tied into hosiery beneath the surface. The hosiery holds the planting medium in place and prevents erosion into the attached small pond that provides habitat for goldfish. A second-story deck and large ponderosa pine keep the area shaded enough to prevent too much algae growth from the natural plant nutrients released into the water.

“It’s so peaceful to sit out here and watch dragonflies visit the plants in the early evening,” said Dick.

WHEN THE HOUSE COMES WITH A POND

Eric and Joanna Mularz weren’t crazy about the creek bed and recirculating pond that came with the house they purchased in Ridgway in 2015. It meant

valuable time and energy would be spent blowing out the system each fall and setting it up each spring — time they’d rather spend gardening and hosting backyard gatherings.

“We love to work outside and the water feature was already here, so we’ve lived with it,” Eric said.

Despite the square footage it took up that might otherwise be allotted to additional raised beds, he and Joanna have learned to appreciate the water feature as a soothing, and beautiful, addition to their in-town landscape.


“The birds and our dogs love it,” said Joanna. She referenced the chute of water that falls from the nearly imperceptible slope of the backyard creek bed. The water is recirculated from the small pond and back through the two-foot-wide chute that feeds the one-foot drop into the pond. Last year, they shortened the reach of the creek bed by about 15 feet so that they could install a horseshoe pit in their yard amid the strawberry patch and existing raised vegetable beds.

“We do enjoy the pond lilies and the other plants that grow in the water and outside the pond’s edges,” she said, “and the pleasant cascade obscures noise from neighbors.” A professional landscaper owned the property prior to their purchase and they’ve benefited from other unique plantings, too, including plenty of shade-providing aspen and spruce trees that prevent algae from growing in the warm, shallow pond.

She joked, “It’s not always easy keeping the dogs out of it, however.”

PUTTING WATER TO WORK FOR YOU

A common theme for each of these water features is the quietude they bring to property owners. As Wallace Nichols writes in “Blue Mind,” numerous studies suggest that “even something as modest as a tiny fountain can be enough” to markedly reduce the body’s reaction to stress and have a calming effect on the brain.

Perhaps it’s time to follow the lead of the birds, bees, bobcats, and bears. Install a pond, waterfall, bog, or fountain and see what happens. In addition to watching the living things around us frolic and forage there, you might just feed your own senses. 



A natural depression near their house provided the inspiration for a small pond fed entirely by rain harvested from the rooftop of Cyndi Nelson and Scott Thorburn. (Photo by Mary Menz)

Mission: Improbable — Cruise Protocol

Local Broker Sells Tom Cruise's Telluride Estate for a Record \$39.5 Million

58

If this story were a summer blockbuster movie, Tom Cruise would be the star. Love him or not, his name always goes on top.

Cruise's mountain sanctuary in the exclusive Aldasoro subdivision near Telluride is the setting where the action would unfold: a 320-acre estate with a luxury mountain home and guest house situated at the end of a gated, mile-long driveway winding through mountain meadows and aspen glades.

Here's the scenario:

The property is up for sale, but has languished under a private listing for seven years, with no buyer in sight. Can a talented team of Telluridians HALO jump into the situation and find a buyer, against all odds, at the height of a deadly global pandemic?

Spoiler alert:

By the time the final credits roll, we'll come to see that such missions aren't impossible. The good guys will win, the estate will sell for its asking price of \$39.5 million, and the celebrity-obsessed weirdos that briefly swarm the scene will meet their maker. It's a classic Telluride real estate adventure.

YOU HAD ME AT HELLO

Just for fun, let's say our blockbuster premieres in an actual movie theater — like the long awaited, pandemic-delayed sequel to "Top Gun."

As we settle deeply into stadium chairs and the lights go down, sweeping views of the 14,000-foot peaks of the Wilson Group fill the screen, and rippling piano music swells as we dip our sanitized hands into a giant tub of buttered popcorn. (Don't worry; there's enough to go around.)

A richly charismatic male voice-over artist starts to spin the story. "Tucked away in the majestic mountains of Telluride..." he begins, as golden-hour sunlight graces a rather large house onscreen, clad in bleached cedar timbers and native stone with generous banks of picture windows.

"Legend is created here," the narrator says. "Memories are made here."

Snowflakes fall gently through the air. The camera closes in on an elegant threshold. This is the entrance to the 10,000-square-foot custom-built abode that sheltered Cruise through two marriages, three children, and a hit parade of movies spanning over two decades of his career.

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The 320-acre estate is situated at the end of a gated, mile-long driveway winding through mountain meadows and aspen glades in the exclusive Aldasoro subdivision. (Photo by Brett Schreckengost)



The tranquil great room where Oprah Winfrey once interviewed Tom Cruise is marked by a striking wood-burning fireplace and floor-to-ceiling views. (Photos by Joshua Johnson)



This is the place where he brought his family to escape from it all, to catch his breath between blockbusters, to get out from under the sweltering gaze of the public eye, to take in sweeping views from Ajax Peak to the Wilsons and beyond.

Violins urgently begin to play, as the front doors swing open of their own accord to reveal the interior of the house. “Welcome to 115 Francisco Way,” the narrator intones.

We’re waiting now for Cruise to slide across the polished wood floor in his socks and boxers. But the “Top Gun; and “Mission: Impossible” star, now 58, has long-since moved on from his floor-dancing flicks and halcyon Telluride days.

What we see instead: intimate glimpses of the warm, wood-clad interior, a fire crackling in the fireplace, a bluish bluster of snowy weather brewing outside.

“This one-of-a-kind property is much more than a home,” the narrator tells us, as the camera’s gaze smoothly sweeps across a game room that contains an elegant pool table (could that be the pool table from “The Color of Money?”) with a cue laid just so across the green felt expanse, balls racked and at the ready.

“It’s a way of life,” he continues. “The promise of a new mountain lifestyle that can be passed down through the generations.” (If you happen to have a spare 39.5 million dollars.)

The music swells again as we glimpse a gleaming dining table, a wide wooden staircase that rises from the great room to the generous master wing upstairs.

Cut to the master bedroom now: warmly illuminated, a king-sized bed, adorned with plump pillows and crisp white sheets. An exciting little staccato drumbeat underscores the soundtrack. Through the windows, the evening darkens. Fire dances in yet another hearth.

The camera sweeps back downstairs and down a hallway. We steal quick glimpses of several more luxuriously appointed bedrooms.

Cut to the outside. Three wood-clad garage doors rise simultaneously. And the camera sweeps up to the cloud-strewn sky as the setting sun perches atop Mt. Wilson on the far horizon.

“Unspoiled natural beauty. Sweeping mountain vistas. And miles of scenic trails...” the narrator purrs as we glimpse a family trekking on snowshoes in slow motion through a gently rolling snow-pillowed landscape, “...allow one to truly escape into the rich storied past of the San Juan Mountains.”

Ready to pull out your checkbook yet?

The music swells again to a final crescendo. We can’t help but sigh, as we lick our salty, buttered fingers. The camera zooms out to reveal a drone’s-eye view of the beautiful house within the context of the rugged landscape, its windows gleaming gold in the lavender dusk.

“Just minutes from historic downtown Telluride” — the family gathers cozily around a fire pit on the escarpment — “world-class skiing, and golf.”

The camera sweeps back toward the house again, nestled there among tall



pinetrees and mature aspens. “The opportunities to enjoy outdoor adventure from this exceptional estate” — the music pauses dramatically — “are endless.”

A final wistful piano chord plucks at our heartstrings as the camera pulls back to reveal the snow-clad mountains that rise above the house on the far horizon. The music fades on the wind. The credits (to filmmaker Brett Schreckengost) roll.



Five seconds later, the password-protected video self-destructs.

A TARGET-RICH ENVIRONMENT

In the real-world real estate business, these types of things are called marketing collateral: highly polished promotional videos, glossy property books, slick copywriting and social

media campaigns, all designed to make just the right buyer fall in love with the property in question.

In the case of Cruise's Telluride estate, there's a lot to love: the meticulously maintained house that somehow pulls off the feat of being really huge yet cozy; the assemblage of property that is beyond anything else ever put together this close to Telluride; the unobstructed,

360-degree mountain views; the solitude; the sports-oriented amenities (including a large sports court, a dirt bike and snowmobile track) and an extensive network of private trails for hiking, snowshoeing, and all-terrain vehicles.

Aldasoro, a 1550-acre subdivision developed in the late 1980s, plays host to all this splendor, carved out from a beautiful historic sheep ranch and farm

>>>

“I just started going, ‘My God, this is beautiful.’”

– Oprah Winfrey

originally owned by Joaquin and Serapio Aldasoro, brothers who came to the Telluride region from the Basque Pyrenees of Spain in 1926.

A drive from any home in Aldasoro is less than 15 minutes to downtown Telluride, the ski resort, and the golf course. And yet, rimmed by national forest on three sides, it offers extraordinary privacy.

Cruise purchased his first parcel here around the time “A Few Good Men” was released in 1992. He hired Fortenberry Construction, Telluride’s premier high-end residential construction contractor, to build a home for him in 1994. Sources say the codename for the project was “Bond.”

Over the next eight years, Cruise acquired four more adjacent parcels of some of the most exquisitely beautiful land Telluride has to offer, just minutes from the highest commercial airport in the country and well-shielded from the ravenous gazes of tabloid media, and prying eyes of the public.

THE OUTSIDERS

While Cruise fiercely guards his privacy, he did agree to do an interview and televised tour of his Telluride retreat with Oprah Winfrey in 2008 for all the world to see.

Oprah loved the place. “I swear, I started driving up here and my heart started palpitating, and it wasn’t the altitude,” she told Cruise as she stepped out of her car. “I just started going, ‘My God, this is beautiful.’” (She would later buy her own house in the Telluride area.)

As they padded on stockings feet through the well-appointed kitchen, the game room with the pool table, the cozy den, the playroom under the stairs, Cruise recounted the “moments of sheer joy” that had unfolded here at 115 Francisco Way. Horseback rides and barbecues with his older kids Bella and Connor. Dressing up as Santa for little Suri on Christmas Eve.

Tucking her feet beneath her on Cruise’s couch, Oprah shifted into inter-



view mode, grilling Cruise about family, friendship, Scientology, his controversial views on postpartum depression, the upside and downside of celebrity, the beauty of this land.

After the interrogation wrapped, Cruise took Oprah for a spin on his snowmobile. They zoomed full-throttle into a well-tended aspen forest, out to the edge of everything, where the world fell away from the escarpment overlooking Telluride and its lovely jewel-box canyon.

“This is beautiful,” Oprah said. “This was worth the trip.” Her voice dropped to a whisper as the land and the wind and the wild sunlight worked their magic. “Oh my god. This is unbelievable.”

“I know,” Tom Cruise, the world’s biggest celebrity, whispered back.

“Do you know what I wish for you?” Oprah said, the wind playing with her loose curls. “I wish for you the peace this mountain can bring. I wish for you all of this, that this has to offer. I really do.”

“Thank you,” Cruise whispered again.

IT’S CLASSIFIED

Six years later, on the heels of divorce, the peace was gone. Cruise decided to sell the Telluride estate in a private listing for an astronomical (by Telluride standards) asking price of \$59.5 million. We know this because the Wall Street Journal ran a story about it in 2014, but there is actually no other public record that the property was offered at this time.

It was strictly a word-of-mouth affair —



never advertised, never listed in the MLS, never found a buyer.

“Everybody was on non-disclosure agreements. And we can only speculate what those reasons (for the private listing) are,” said Dan Dockray, the 42-year-old broker for LIV Sotheby’s International Realty who eventually sold the property. “It could be that the broker thought that was the best way to make it more exclu-

A billiards room beckons with balls racked and at the ready. Built by Fortenberry Construction, the home's architecture is elegant and timeless, blending in with the natural environment. (Photos by Joshua Johnson)



sive. It could be that the seller didn't want it to be public. It could be a combination of those two things."

Seven years slid by, with no action on Cruise's property, even as the regional real estate market fully rebounded from the market lows of 2012.

Then along came the white-hot seller's market of the pandemic — which prompted Cruise's team to consider a new

tactic. Through a competitive process, Dockray was selected to become the new listing agent.

His mission, should he choose to accept it: find a buyer for Cruise's Telluride estate.

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

Tan, fit, and relaxed in his glass-cube office not far from the Sheridan Opera

House where once upon a time he tended bar and honed his people skills, Dockray recalled how he got his start in Telluride, and the hoops he had to jump through to get the listing for Cruise's property.

A native of New York State, Dockray moved here 20 years ago, ski bumming by day, sleeping in his car by night.

"I've always had a theory that Telluride embraces you, or it doesn't embrace

>>>

you,” he said. “You either stay because it embraces you, and it continually gets better. Or it just doesn’t work out, and those folks leave pretty quick.”

Clearly, Telluride embraced Dockray, and vice-versa. One thing led to another: bartending at the Sheridan, guiding with Telluride Outside, and finally, striding into the wild world of real estate.

Dockray poured his energy into building his business and reputation, actively networking wherever he got a chance: Los Angeles, Vancouver, Las Vegas, Denver, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth. He joined a referral group, called Colorado Ski Towns, comprised of market leaders in ski towns across the state. Eventually, he became a top producer with LIV Sotheby’s.

When the pandemic sank its fangs into the spring of 2020, brokers around town believed Covid-19 would be bad for business. “Because who knew how long things would be closed? Who knew how severe the disease really was? There were a lot of unknowns in the first month or so,” Dockray recalled.

By May, though, it was clear that a lot of people wanted to come to Telluride when things opened up, and that they were definitely still interested in buying property here.

At some point that month, Dockray decided it was going to be a good summer. Maybe not great, but good. By July, he could tell it would probably be the biggest summer in real estate that Telluride had ever seen.

The raging pandemic transformed Telluride’s already booming real estate market into a feeding frenzy of buyers with massive amounts of liquidity who had reassessed their priorities during lockdown, and realized that life was too short and precious to delay their dreams of living in the mountains any longer.

Ultimately, Telluride saw about \$1.1 billion in real estate sales in 2020 — more than a 40 percent increase over a normal year. Dockray said he’s typically busy with maybe eight to ten contracts at any given time. Last summer, he was juggling up to 20 contracts at once, at all different price points.

In November, things got even weirder, when he found out he was one of three Telluride-based, LIV Sotheby’s International Realty brokers selected to compete

for the Cruise listing. (The referring agent was a Sotheby’s colleague from Los Angeles — a connection Dockray had made on a networking junket there several years ago.)

Each candidate had to present their own strategy for how they would market the property. Dockray whipped out a couple of reports, summarizing what he had to offer as a listing agent, how he’d handle the property, how much he thought he could sell it for.

In early December, he found out he’d get the listing, and the clock started ticking toward a March 1 launch date.

A NEED FOR SPEED

To pull off the sale, Dockray had to quickly assemble a top-notch marketing and production team.

He knew right away who he wanted for video and photography: that would be Brett Schreckengost and Josh Johnson, respectively — the best Telluride had to offer.

Meghan Pittenger, owner of Green Gal Creative, did the copywriting for the video. More copywriting help came from the corporate marketing mothership at LIV Sotheby’s, which got to work composing sparkling blurbs and seductive social media posts, pitching an exclusive article to the Wall Street Journal — and when the time came, fielding and vetting media inquiries.

“There were a lot of fun sessions that we had with these people, mostly over Zoom,” Dockray said. “They thought it was a cool project. Everybody involved was excited to be part of it.”

After an intense two-month process of compiling photography, video, talent, direction, and then putting it all together, they sent the package for approval from the marketing side of Cruise’s public relations team. It came back a week or so later with barely any changes.

The home was lightly prepped, but not elaborately staged, and involved putting books out and removing window treatments, and changing bedding. “We cleaned up the look essentially, modernized it a little bit,” Dockray said.

Finally, after nudging the launch date back just a little bit, everything was ready to go.

Ironically, for the privacy-obsessed



Cruise, it took a very public listing and a worldwide publicity blitz to finally lure a buyer.

Dockray interviewed with the Wall Street Journal about three days before launch. The listing went live on Thursday, March 11. The story went online March 12, and appeared in print in the Wall Street Journal’s real estate section the day after that.

At the heart of the home is a gourmet kitchen, fit for a chef and fully equipped with top-of-the-line appliances including a commercial gas range, oversized built-in fridge, ample custom cabinetry, and sunny breakfast nook. (Photo by Joshua Johnson)



65

News spread like wildfire that Tom Cruise's mountain hideaway was on the market, with media outlets around the globe picking up the story.

The buyer's broker inquired about the property within one or two days of the launch, and requested more information. Dockray's team began the process of verifying the buyer's funds and getting them to sign an NDA.

Once they did that, they were allowed to have private access to the property's password-protected website where much of the collateral was housed. They scheduled a trip to Telluride within the week, and brought an offer to the table four or five days later.

In the meantime, Dockray also showed the property to several other interested parties. "I'm not allowed to say how many,

but I can say there was a lot of activity," he said. "We had serious buyers from Sweden, Australia and another European country that all would have been here, if they had had the chance."

By March 26, the property was under contract. And in early May, Dockray closed on the deal for the asking price of \$39.5 million — the highest-priced residential sale ever in the Telluride region.

>>>

Breathtaking mountain views beckon in every direction, setting the stage for peaceful contemplation and unmatched adventure. (Photo by Joshua Johnson)

The whole thing happened at such a breathtaking pace that some of the marketing collateral Dockray and his team prepared (including a beautiful glossy property book) never even saw the light of day. The property went under contract that quickly.

None of the potential buyers blinked at the price tag.

“And I think that’s why we’re under contract. Because we have the right price,” Dockray said in April before the deal closed. “But you know, pricing is always a bit of an art. There is some kind of gut instinct of where you think it needs to sell.”

The money and prestige are pretty cool, but for Dockray, the real story is in the tremendous value in going public with a listing. (Under the new Colorado Clear Cooperation law, private so-called pocket listings aren’t even legal in this state anymore.)

“This buyer was already in our market looking at properties for like six months,” Dockray pointed out. “And they did not know this property would be available. When it was, their broker called us immediately, and was like, we need to get in there. This property would work perfectly for this person. And so that sale may never have occurred if it hadn’t gone public.”

RISKY BUSINESS

Dockray had never handled a bonafide celebrity’s property before. That aspect of the selling experience turned out to be pretty surreal. As soon as the news came out about the listing, the weirdness began.

In the first week or two, Dockray did four to seven interviews per day with pre-approved media outlets. Not everyone he dealt with in the media exhibited stellar ethical behavior.

“One of Denver’s local news stations did a Zoom with me, and they didn’t tell me they were going to put it live on the news. I thought that was totally



unethical and really dangerous because I can be sued if I say the wrong thing," Dockray said.

Then there was the radio host who called Dockray up, posing as a buyer, and tried to get Dockray to say, "Show me the money" (an iconic line from Cruise's hit movie "Jerry Maguire") on-air.

Dockray said he fielded multiple threats from someone who had a one-page concept for a script that would be worth "a billion dollars" if Cruise made it into a movie (which was how this person reportedly proposed to pay for the property). This person reportedly threatened to sue Dockray and get his license removed if he didn't show the script to Cruise.

Another person started texting Dockray with a script concept to present to Cruise, promising to give Dockray a percentage of the profit if the thing went big.

"There is mania about Tom Cruise that I don't share, but I respect him and think he's done an incredible job," Dockray said. "But there is a mania. Some people

are crazy about celebrities to a level that I don't understand. And that's why I feel for the seller, right? Because there are people doing all this crazy stuff."

The buyers were concerned about their privacy and security, too. They protected their identities through the sale under NDAs and a Limited Liability Corporation.

"You'll never know who they are," Dockray said. "What I can tell you so far is that my experience has been very good. They have a style that will fit Telluride well."

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Selling Cruise's property has been a career-making move for Dockray — his own version of Cruise's Risky Business underwear-dancing breakout moment. But Dockray also has some concerns about being associated with such a high-profile listing.

"Because I don't want the local people to think that I'm not extraordinarily inter-

ested in them and their business and the character of this town," he explained. "To me, money is not nearly as important as your life and your integrity."

Don't expect to see Dockray driving around town in a new Ferrari anytime soon. "It's not my style, and I don't do it," he said. Instead, he has been toying with the idea of buying some new rafting equipment.

"I just think that you should live however you're happy," he said. "To me, money is not happiness. It has nothing to do with it. To be a high roller is not my style."

Greed and ambition might make for good movie scripts, but for Dockray, a 20-year search-and-rescue veteran, giving back to his community is where it's at.

"If I do really well, maybe I can create a foundation, or I can maybe even retire and go be a paramedic with Doctors without Borders. Do something way more powerful," he said.

That would be a mission to accept. 



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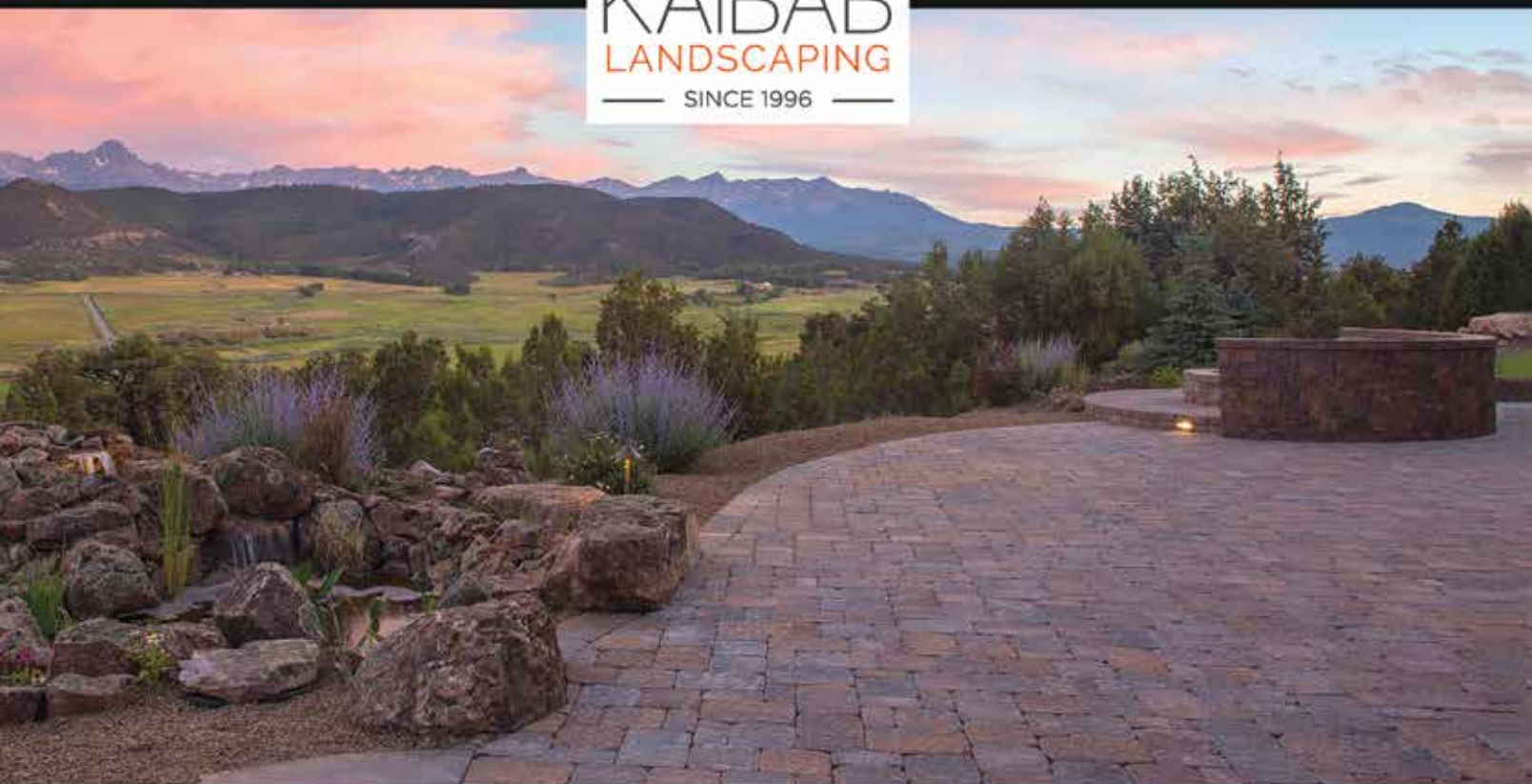
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Ways and Means with Greens

Making the Most of Summer's Bounty

The farm-to-table movement has pushed chefs to find creative ways to showcase the local harvest. Menus are loaded with information about where the ingredients came from and how they were treated, but the recipes themselves often struggle to keep the story going. Dishes like roasted heirloom carrots or braised radicchio can sound pleasingly earthy, but are all too often boring, like overcooked, under-dressed salads. And some recipes try too hard, tap-dancing with foam injections and quick pickles in dishes that don't add up to more than the sum of their parts.

But when the farmers who grow the food that feeds this movement sit down at their actual farm tables, it's a different story. The food is not so fancy, but the dishes have meaning and history. The recipes are adapted to the farm kitchen. Some come from farmer friends. Many

are built and scheduled around seasonal surplus, and portion sizes at the farm table convey the true reality of life on a farm. I just got two recipes from my farmer friend Luci, one for beet greens and one for parsley, and I had to convert from bucket loads to cups.

Some of the ways Luci has of serving vegetables remind me of the menu of a fine Chinese restaurant, where dishes are named after a single vegetable like "eggplant" or "pea greens," each with a simple, specific recipe that reflects the chef's personality. Luci's parsley and beet green recipes both contain ground meat, and like most of her recipes, healthy doses of fat. "I am not a low-fat cook," she once announced, unprompted, mid-recitation.

Luci doesn't waste time or mince words, and barely needed a sentence to relay her parsley recipe to me over the phone. "Go out with a bucket and fill it halfway with parsley. Wash, chop, put in a kettle with hamburger, garlic, onions, and steam-saute it in chicken broth and fat with the lid on. Let it simmer so it's nice and soupy,

juicy and delicious and green. Serve over buttered rice, and everyone is happy."

It's an Italian recipe, she added, that she got from our mutual friend Sarah DeSilvey, a former farmhand of Luci's (and Bernice's barista!) who returned home to Vermont and became a doctor. DeSilvey says it was her favorite dish growing up, her "every birthday feast."

DeSilvey's mom got the recipe from "The Complete Book of Italian Pasta" by Jack Scott, who enjoyed versions of this dish in many kitchens around Rome, usually over the straw-like noodle called bucatini. Scott's version contained a single tablespoon of parsley. DeSilvey's mom used quite a bit more. Like a giant game of telephone among Italian cooks and their farm-y overseas counterparts, this recipe has evolved at each stop (including mine). You may not find meaty piles of parsley and beet greens on many farm-to-table menus, but these simple, veggie-centric recipes embody the essence of farm cooking, with a legitimacy that many farm-to-table restaurants can only crave.

Beet Greens

This recipe also came to me in units of bucket loads. We'll call it the greens from one bunch of beets. I prefer the foliage of yellow beets, which are less earthy. You could also make this recipe with chard.

Serves 4

1 lb uncased sausage, preferably Italian or similar
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup minced onion



1 bunch beet greens
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon black pepper

Fry the sausage in the oil in a heavy-bottomed pan on medium heat. While it cooks, mince the stems of the beet greens. When the sausage has browned, add the onions, garlic and stems and cook until the onions disappear, about 10 minutes. Add the leaves, soy sauce and black pepper. Give it a good stir and cook until the leaves wilt in the steam of the soy sauce. Serve as a meaty veggie side dish, or on toast.

Parsley Sauce with Orzo

Beef with chicken stock, olive oil and butter might seem an awkwardly redundant combination, but they all make parsley taste better, and vice-versa. For a compromise between buttered rice and bucatini, I went with orzo, the pasta that looks like grains of rice. It carries the parsley sauce and sucks up the jus like rice, but has that springy, dreamy pasta feel, and, for fun, is more true to its Italian roots.

Serves 4

1 lb ground beef or similar red meat
3 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 cloves garlic, chopped
½ cup chopped onion



½ teaspoon black pepper
2-3 bunches parsley, preferably flat-leafed, which is much easier to clean
2 cups chicken broth
1 cup orzo (or some other pasta or rice)
1 lemon
Red hot pepper flakes, to taste

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, fry the ground meat in the oil and two tablespoons of the butter on medium. Break up the meat with a spatula and cook until nicely browned. While the burger browns, put some water on for orzo and cook it. Then, hold each parsley bunch by the leaves and mince the stems as finely as you can. Add the minced stems to the pan. When the meat is browned, stir in the garlic, onion and black pepper.

When the onions disappear, add the parsley leaves and chicken broth. Simmer for five minutes.

Use the final tablespoon of butter on the orzo. At serving time, give each plate a squeeze of lemon and a dusting of hot pepper flakes.

Kale Potato Salad

This salad is so transformative that even teenagers ask for it. I know a young woman who requested it for her graduation party. The combination of rosemary, celery seed and thyme in the vinaigrette evokes the flavor of marinated artichokes. Each component of the salad, including kale leaf and stem, cheddar cheese chunk and potato, holds the dressing differently. It's a side dish that doesn't need a main event.

Kale is an early-season producer, and freezes well, too. The fall harvest is the sweetest and most abundant of the year, and I like to freeze a big stash to eat through winter and spring. It's a template as much of a recipe, a style of potato salad. You can make it with as much or as little kale as you want, cook the kale much or little as you wish, chop it as small as you care to, and even substitute other fibrous greens like dandelion or collards. You can even add crispy bits of bacon.

But incredibly, one ingredient the recipe does not call for is mayo. I may be worldly in some ways, but I'm very provincial when it comes to both potato salad and mayonnaise. Potato salad needs mayo, and mayo needs to go on everything. But there is a long tradition, most famously in France but elsewhere, too, of naked, mayo-free potato salad. And I must admit, Kale Potato Salad has made me question some of my most deeply held beliefs.



Chunks of potatoes plastered and speckled with kale, full of that unmistakable potato salad-y flavor of summer. Serve it warm, as a comforting bowlful. After a day in the fridge, meanwhile, it will improve. I like to fry the leftovers in the greasy presence of chopped bacon.

Serves 4

4 cups diced red potatoes (they hold together best), peeled or not
4-ish cups of kale (or other fibrous greens), stripped from the center vein and chopped. Optional: chop off the ribs, which are tougher, to cook with the potatoes. If using frozen kale, it should be thawed.
2 cups stock
½ cup olive oil (or more, to taste)
¼ cup white vinegar
½ tablespoon mustard powder
1 teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon ground or dried rosemary
¼ teaspoon black pepper

2 garlic cloves, and more to taste, minced or grated

½ cup minced onion

½ cup minced celery

1 cup finely diced cheddar cheese.

Good, flavorful cheddar. Like an aged raw milk

Salt, to taste

Optional: red pepper flakes

Boil potatoes in the stock or water with 3 tablespoons of olive oil. About 10 minutes in, add any chopped kale rib you care to.

While the potatoes are cooking, make the dressing. Combine remaining oil, vinegar, mustard powder, herbs and garlic. If using whole dried herbs, powder them between your fingers as you add them. Shake vigorously in a closed jar or otherwise stir very well.

When the potatoes are nearly tender, add the kale and stir it in with a scooping motion so as not to crush the potatoes. When the liquid is gone, turn off the heat.

If serving warm, finish the recipe immediately. If serving cold, let the potatoes and kale cool first.

To finish, add the onion, celery, cheddar, pepper flakes if using and dressing, and toss the salad. Add more salt and/or oil to taste. If serving cool, it's best to make kale potato salad a day ahead. Just make sure to make extra, or there won't be enough. 🥗

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