

Space of the Week: A Living Room Embraces the 'Mountain Living' Look—Without Leaning Too Far Into a Theme

Designer Stephanie Brown updated a family's vacation home with clean lines and a contrasting palette.

By [Kelly Dawson](#) | Published on August 25, 2022



PHOTO: EMA PETER

[Stephanie Brown](#), the principal designer of a namesake firm, faced a particular obstacle when it came to this project for a family of five. The home she was tasked with renovating is based in Whistler, Canada—a hub of world-class outdoor excursions a couple of hours from Vancouver—and would be used primarily for vacations to reconnect the homeowner with their growing children. It was Brown's job to modernize the place and ground it within its beautiful, natural setting. Except she couldn't make it feel too "on theme."

"It's a very outdoor and sports-oriented area of Canada," Brown says. "Originally, the living room had a very cliché 'mountain' aesthetic with rustic river rock and a wood mantel around the fireplace. And although it had lots of windows, the dated decor choices made it feel dark and small."

Brown knew that the living area would be where the family would gather most, naturally, and so she aimed to make it feel as welcoming and comfortable as possible. The existing room sat next to a covered deck, which the owners seldom used, and Brown thought that it made more sense to absorb the deck into the new footprint. "By enclosing that space as part of the living room, we increased the square footage and also gained more flexibility and openness for how furniture could be arranged."

Her team removed the heavy stone and wood mantel from the fireplace and replaced it with a sleek concrete tile, and then installed classic hardwood flooring and painted the walls white to bring more sunlight in. "I think that brightening and modernizing spaces is something very common for us, but the use of wide-plank wood on the ceiling was actually a surprise suggestion from the client, and we feel it was a really great addition," Brown says. "Looking back, I don't think the space would have the same feel or appeal if it just had a white drywall ceiling."

When it came time to furnish, Brown aimed to make the palette feel like it belonged in the mountains but had a decidedly modern, Pacific Northwest personality. She designed a custom sectional to be as large as possible for the layout, and upholstered it in a charcoal-colored wool. "It has a hint of blue, and that darkness grounds the otherwise airy quality of the room," she says. A built-in, floating cabinet incorporates storage and acts as a place for the TV to rest somewhat out of sight (a pull-out arm makes it visible to every seat, without dominating the area above the fireplace). Finally, an oversized lamp above the sectional adds an element of coziness, and the wood coffee table coordinates with the rest of the surrounding grains.

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It's been five years since Brown completed this update, and the home still looks fresh and inviting without feeling too on the nose—exactly as she had hoped. "The clean lines and light palette lean slightly Scandinavian, but overall it still feels very West Coast," she says.

Get the Look:

01 | Swivel Seat

of 03



oncetreefurniture.com

A cozy upholstered armchair is a must for any living room—but a swivel chair that lets you turn to the tv, then rotate to talk to those across the room, is even better.

02 | The Right Light

of 03



artemide.com

A modern floor lamp with an adjustable design lets you shine a light right where you need it.

03 | Pop of Pattern

of 03



From \$27, etsy.com

To introduce subtle pattern to the space, gray plaid pillows allude to the outdoorsy theme without being over the top.