Quiet Design: Changing Residential Landscapes in Early 21st Century Colorado

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Quiet Design: Changing Residential Landscapes in Early 21st Century Colorado

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ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration into twenty-first century residential patterns in Colorado. Twenty-one individuals were interviewed, focusing ethnographically in three field site locations: Denver, Boulder, and Summit County. Using in-depth interviews with the twenty-one informants, historical data, and modern articles and media, the changing inclination away from what is described as ‘traditionally Coloradoan’ toward contemporary design is the result of both social class preferences and sociopolitical actors vying for environmental innovation in residential design. Using Keith Murphy’s theory of a cultural geometry and Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of class distinction, as guiding theoretical frames, this study explores changes in residential design patterns as Colorado’s population demographics are shifting in the early twenty-first century.
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INTRODUCTION

“Homes are as much cultural constructions as they are built forms.”
-Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga
From House life: space, place and family in Europe, Page 3

The home is a bounded space in which the public and private spheres combine to reflect particular cultural values, perceptions, of status, and the social world in the most intimate spaces. Residences combine objects, spaces, styles, practices, behaviors, meanings, perceptions, and ideas, emblematic of distinctive areas. In the twenty-first century, homes are an enduring symbol of change and innovation, a statement of intent that, when analyzed reveal insights into aesthetics, social dynamics, and modernity.

The imponderabilia of what makes a house a home is subjective. Idioms such as ‘home is where the heart is’ and ‘there’s no place like home,’ don’t offer concrete or universal definitions but solidify the abstract concept of a home being personal. They do imply a sense of security and around the notion of comfort and love. And although these idioms exist for a reason, a home is also its design: the objects and architecture. How people create their space is indicative of how one identifies with particular aspects of culture, and their social status. Objects, style and type function through social symbolism through which people construct a symbolic interpretation of the self. The domestic sphere has been an important field of study within the field of Anthropology, relating kinship to the larger social world. Residential design fuses the public and private as a symphysis of contemporary culture. Design Anthropology is a way of looking at how objects and design interact with the individual as an aspect and perpetuate of the social world.

In the Context chapter, the guiding theoretical frames are discussed. Literature analysis is given of both Keith Murphy’s argument and Pierre Bourdieu’s, as they relate to this study’s
subject. This chapter provides an introduction to the formal design as it appears in Colorado during the early twenty-first century, along with the social web enforcing and perpetuating design types, and the contemporary social structure as residential design relates to class position. Here, the importance of studying design as it relates to the field of Anthropology is discussed further, especially the implications of design within the home.

The chapter *The Scandinavian Design Aesthetic* provides a brief context for contemporary design as it appears outside of the endemic region. The deep political roots and theoretical attachments as they appear in Scandinavia, mentioning specifically on the Swedish case study, provide a contrast to how such design similarities appear within the Colorado field sites. This chapter discusses the ties between politics and Scandinavian design and outlining this aesthetic type as it exists in the Nordic region. This chapter also explores why this style has become infamous amongst a quite global middle, and upper class, and how such a particular culturally charged phenomena is evidence of how deeply Scandinavian culture has saturated the global market predominantly concerning residential design.

*Quiet Design: A Cultural Geometry of Colorado* explains—through existing literature, government documents, and ethnographic research—why there exists a ‘traditional’ Colorado design form, and how this appears to be changing. In this chapter, Murphy’s theory of a cultural geometry is explored within this state, providing an analysis of the components that have created an image of the state and its residents through patterns in residential design, as well as influences affecting the changing dynamics seeking to redefine the cultural ideology of ‘Coloradoan.’

The chapter *Permanent Vacation: Luxury, Conservation, and Distinction*, is an in-depth assessment of Colorado residents, as their social and class status inform their attitudes and discernment toward their residence. Bourdieu’s theory of class distinction is applied through the
lens of Colorado in the early years of the twenty-first century. This chapter includes a class-based analysis of how the middle and upper classes have taken varying interpretations of this contemporary (Scandinavian inspired) design type. The importance of environmental concerns frequently appears among Colorado residents, informing an imperative appeal of this aesthetic model. However, economic concerns amongst various classes are reflected both in how one describes their home, both current residences, and future aspirations. It is also necessary to explore the changing Colorado type through the state’s population demographic: a large domestic migration of individuals between the ages of 18 and 35, the percentage of second homeowners in mountain communities, and long-term residents.

This study argues, then, that Colorado residents do not recognize Scandinavian design as it is intended within the Nordic region, but rather as part of a Contemporary model. IKEA is frequently mentioned as a controversial topic and yet informs ideas of Scandinavian design. The use of IKEA products also relates to economic class, with higher income families preferring high-end luxury furniture or unique pieces not found in mass-produced department stores. Ideas relating to the home also distinguish this design type between regions. Notions of the public and private spheres are very different between the regions, with a deeply rooted focus on individuality within Colorado. The Scandinavian model appears, with growing frequency, in Colorado because it is the most appealing and easily replicated version of modern design because it retains the functional aspects, combining minimal decoration with components that create a cozy atmosphere. The appearance of such a residential design type in Colorado, in particular, is the result of a growing young population in which money is a concern, but also the modern emphasis on innovation and ‘newness.’ The popularity of this type is spread through various means, dependent on social and cultural capital. The upper classes in Colorado tend to
incorporate styles and pieces experienced through cosmopolitanism, whereas the middle class experiences this contemporary type through inspiration found on prevalent media forums.

*Purpose and Questions*

This study began as an exploration into changing aesthetics related to cultural preferences within the domestic sphere and the processes in which one design has become a regional style. Looking specifically at residential design, I sought to examine how the Scandinavian model was being received in Colorado. I was looking into Scandinavian design components and their increasing appearance in Colorado, as well as the differences in stylistic tendencies between each of these sites to form a more inclusive view of the state and interpretation of the aesthetic in the Colorado context. However, it quickly became apparent that what is thought of as the Scandinavian type is not truly Scandinavian, but rather a shorthand for contemporary design spread through online social media outlets.
As a result, this study examines changing design aesthetics as they relate to regional culture in the twenty-first century and the processes in which particular design types become emblematic of an entire region. I look at Scandinavian design as it exists in its endemic region to better critique its appearance in contemporary design within Colorado. The focus of this study is in the Northwestern area of Colorado with specific field sites in Denver, Boulder, and Summit County [indicated in Figure 1]. The focus is placed on reasons for a shifting preference away from what is ‘traditionally’ Coloradoan [explained further in the chapter Quiet Design, and section ‘What is Colorado Design?’], toward modern elements in architecture and furnishings resulting in what is now generally referred to as contemporary design. Through discourse between existing literature and original ethnographic research, this study assesses the connection between the increasing prevalence toward modern design in Colorado, as well as how the sociopolitical vitality of Scandinavian design is modified to become emblematic of the contemporary ‘type.’

I argue that residential design aesthetics are changing in Colorado because of new priorities for sustainable design practices, popular media, and economic class structure and status. This argument is based on twenty-one interviews from homeowners, architects, and designers, using theoretical analyzes based on Keith Murphy’s theory of cultural geometry and Pierre Bourdieu’s theories regarding class, social status, and wealth. The purpose of this study is to understand connections between individuals, rationality, and design. By focusing on residential architecture and interior style, these connections become clear because the home is the most direct and regular space in which design interacts with the lived world. People change their spaces based on cultural interpretations of the social world and the perception of the
landscape or region referencing both the formal side of design as well as value and meaning of objects based on active social markers and associates. I, therefore, ask the following questions:

- How does Scandinavian design appear in Colorado? Do people recognize the Scandinavian style versus simply modern design?
- What is Colorado’s design style? Is this different from trends in the twenty-first century?
- How do people in Colorado view their home?

**Methods and Study Design**

This study was created with the purpose of capturing the emic view of twenty-first century Colorado residents’ associations with residential design. It combines in-depth interviews, contemporary media portrayals of home design, and observations that are interpreted using the two theoretical frames listed above. Materials were taken from local magazines such as Colorado Homes and Lifestyles and 5280, as well as design blogs, newspaper articles, and government documents.

The focus of this study is on the ethnographic data taken from twenty-one formal interviews with homeowners, renters, architects, designers, and other professionals related to design. Each interview was an audio recorded session, lasting approximately thirty to sixty minutes, exploring each participant’s personal aesthetic preferences, values, inspiration and consumption practices and restraints [sample questions are listed in Appendix II]. Interviews took place at either a prearranged location or over the phone, all during prearranged times between the participant and myself. The majority of these interviews took place over the phone; others took place either in cafés or an informant’s home.

The twenty-one informants were spread between three field sites indicated in Figure 1. These sites provided varying contexts through which social demands and the landscape affect
perceptions of residential design. The Denver field site is a quickly expanding urban center that has been hosting an increasing number of residents between the ages of 18 and 35 [more information in the *Quiet Design* chapter]. This field site includes the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the city center. The Boulder field side is a smaller city that includes surrounding towns within Boulder County. Residents in this area are influenced by its proximity to the mountains and a large amount of Open Spaces. The Summit County site is a small mountain community including the towns Keystone, Dillon, Silverthorne, and Copper Mountain with an emphasis on Breckenridge and Frisco. All three field locations consist of similar but different subject populations that experience the state’s changing demographics through varying scopes of urbanism, wealth, and environmentalism.

The data taken was a compilation of interviews, photographs, observations, and library research. Interviews and observation notes have been transcribed and coded. The data is stored in a password protected file in an online-cloud based server. From these themes have been identified that create a detailed portrait of contemporary attitudes in Colorado toward residential design within the state.
CONTEXT

“When we go through that process, the home remains, whether in our hearts or in reality, the place of security and nurturance necessary for our psyche. It remains the envelope into which we retreat for privacy and intimacy, which reflects who we are as individuals and as members of society; that is essential for our well-being. But it may not be enough. The garden may beckon us also, or the wilderness, the ocean, the landscape, wildlife. We must heed that call too, for deep within it, the soul is asking for attention. Home-base and journey, home and away, inside and outside- we all need to experience and embrace this dialectic of life’s polarities to be fully ourselves, to be deeply integrated in the rich complexity of who we are meant to be.”

-Clare Cooper Marcus

From House as a Mirror of Self: exploring the deeper meaning of home, Page 281

GUIDING THEORETICAL FRAMES

A Cultural Geometry: Designing political things in Sweden

Using Keith Murphy’s 2013 concept of a cultural geometry as a framework, the current status of Colorado home design in the early twenty-first century can be assessed as a unique result of geographical and historical influence while new political and technological implementations are informing the changing aesthetics. Murphy defines cultural geometry as an ideology grounded in a set of “shapes and surfaces” that, when substantiated in everyday objects, renders them nearly interchangeable with cultural connotations or meanings that closely observe and follow them (Murphy 2013:119). As such, a cultural geometry is essentially an idealization of aesthetics that becomes a recognizable tendency within objects themselves. He argues that in such a paradigm, individuals versed in such forms can recognize an object as being designed according to a specific style or type, provoking the assessment of a chair that looks ‘English’ or a lamp that looks ‘Swedish.’ This is the formality of design and style. In reference to the cultural proponents, Murphy argues that a cultural geometry circulates shapes, proportions, materials and surfaces concerning how they appear in day-to-day contexts, how they resonate with particular
beliefs and values, and how they interact with human elements and vice-versa. All of these components create a web of influence, each informing the other. This web creates a dialogue between forms and values that become profoundly interconnected with the lived world, thereby creating a context through which an object or shape invites an analysis as being a cultural signifier. While a cultural geometry includes particular forms and not others, Murphy explains that it is not a closed frame. Both forms and associative meanings are subject to change and innovation in one segment of the connective web which, in turn, extends to the others. A cultural geometry can, therefore, undergo a shift, while retaining identifiable “synchronic stability” (Murphy 2013:123-24).

The iconic mountain geography has become synonymous with the state, and the ingrained philosophy of historic preservation creates a unique paradigm in which Colorado is clinging onto its iconography as the American Western frontier. However, new political and technological advancements are advocating design sustainability and landscape conservation, while the state has undergone the largest domestic migration in its history. Historic architectural patterns and aesthetics, paired with the development and growing inclination toward renewable and sustainable products, home design is inching toward a contemporary and modern aesthetic pedantry. The changes in aesthetics and architecture fuse individuals with objects and the state in such a way that an alteration in one cannot happen without incentive or response from another, thus creating a web connecting varying influences.

The existing cultural geometry of Colorado is the rustic mountain lodge. The use of wood, especially darker wood has become a trademark of the state’s type. The use of leather and warm, rich colors invites nostalgic feelings of warmth and coziness. The use of nature and animal motifs appear in most aspects of this Colorado mountain style. Elk antler chandeliers
hang from exposed log beams; craft-art landscape paintings adorn mantles of wood-burning fireplaces; or a rich landscape photography, giving meaning to ‘Colorful Colorado,’ hangs above a plush leather sofa. Such forms incite feelings of comfort, while the rustic cabin aesthetic radiates a sense of solitude, thereby becoming the aesthetic of retreat and the experience of the wilderness. This aesthetic paradigm is the cultural geometry of the region. However, the twenty-first century is waving in new associative forms and cultural signifiers.

The move toward more contemporary and modern design in Colorado is the result of lifestyle companies—such as Burton, Whole Foods or, more locally Alpine Modern—influencing public perception of what is ‘cool.’ For instance, the Whole Foods Brand promotes the image of a healthy, environmentally conscious, and educated lifestyle (Network 9 2013), whereas Burton draws upon the snowboarding subculture, even offering places to ‘learn to ride,’ and information about ‘sustainability’ on the brand’s website (Burton 2016). Public perception is at the heart of this shift. What people want drives products that are available; every time a consumer buys a product, they are voting, telling brands and companies that this is what they want. Other embedded influence in the web of Colorado’s cultural geometry includes state politics and private sector enterprises. Colorado state tax and policy initiatives have been passed to encourage the use of environmentally sustainable design components. In 2014, Colorado reinstated the Brownfields tax credit to slow development growth and provide grants to fund state cleanup projects (Jahn and Gerou 2014). Local county governments, such as Summit County, have also passed and are enforcing sustainable building codes for additions, remodels, and new projects (Summit County Building Inspection Department 2012). With these regulations and incentives geared toward promoting sustainable building, new ‘green’ companies are moving to the state and working to cater to the demands for environmental innovation. Thus, individuals
opting for such green products are influenced by the popularized lifestyle connotations sold to them by brands. Each of these, seemingly innocuous, components create the web to which each pertains and influences the others.

Things, according to Murphy, operate as social actors through various layers of meaning instilled in them. In many instances, the effects that objects exert are the direct result of their designers’ intentions; looking, feeling, or working as they were envisioned. In most cases, these intentions are rather innocuous, such as when an object functions according to plan. But through the processes of forming such cultural geometry, objects, in most instances, become agents and propagate certain assessments of being of a particular type. It is also relevant that these evaluations of type carry with them a host of external ideological frames about what that type means, for instance, how one lives their life and what values they deem significant. Objects say things about how one lives their life. In this, there is, of course, the basic level of function, how an object looks, feels, or functions according to the designer’s intent, but this bleeds into how particular object forms combine to create an aesthetic, which then embodies a particular cultural geometry.

A New Cultural Geometry for Colorado

The iconic landscape and the history of mining and rustic influences in architecture and design define the cultural geometry of Colorado. The historically influenced cabin and rustic denote the ‘Colorado style.’ However, the new political and technological implementations are informing the twenty-first century’s changing aesthetics. The historical architectural patterns and aesthetics of the log cabin, although not the most common architectural type, have a resilient hold on the imagination, one of the classic American West as the frontier. In the new century, the
growing residential population in the state has created a desire to change the ‘branding’ of Colorado. There, like in the past, is a huge migration of a younger population into the area bringing with them new ideas about the ideology of Colorado and concerns for the future. The wave of younger generations and the emphatic concern with sustainable living has resulted in a shift toward the modern and contemporary pedantry of form.

Table 1: 2016 age distribution by U.S. News. Real Estate. Best Places to Live. #1 ranking Denver, Colorado

The changes in aesthetics and architecture fuse individuals with objects and the state in such a way that an alteration in one cannot happen without incentive or response from another, thus creating a web of influences. Such changes in regional aesthetics are fused with the individuals who are promoting them, the designed objects with which they interact, and the state which is working together with the population to work on a statewide rebranding project toward ‘a collective momentum’ (brandCOLORADO 2014).

The cultural geometry of Colorado is in a set of shapes and surfaces, substantiated in everyday objects. The shapes play off the environment, including large support beams, soft
curves in the plush furniture and wooden surfaces, as well as the use of stone and leather or other wildlife motifs. The overwhelming cultural geometry of Colorado is the use of darker woods in domestic design, which has been substantiated in everyday objects such as plush leather couches, wooden support beams, elk antler chandeliers or floor lamps with leather trimmed shades. Such pedantry has become synonymous with the mountains and the mountains with Colorado. It has also become culturally laced with the mentality of the outdoors: a lifestyle glorifying a connection and appreciation for the surrounding landscape and a more general ‘natural,’
solidified through outdoor activities. Such rustic ‘cabin’ aesthetics has been made to express the notion of authenticity. It is symbolic of a simpler lifestyle through which the trappings of modern concerns and opinions are stripped and instead hold ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘retreat’ in high esteem. The familiar image of a solitary cabin situated against a rugged, remote landscape evokes a sense of both tradition and a do-it-yourself attitude which is genuine and very American. Genuine of the outdoor experience, the tradition of escaping from the trappings and stresses of urban life, and of a pure lifestyle which rejects mass-production of everyday objects. Therefore, the cultural geometry is an idealization of such aesthetics evokes a recognizable predisposition toward a simple, rugged existence, making this ‘Colorado type’ recognizable as such. Culturally, rich colors, animal motifs and heavy use of wood appear every day in promotional material from resorts, private homes and protected historic neighborhoods as well as informational material posted at the base of hiking trails or scenic visitor destinations. Thus, the ‘Colorado type’ resonating profoundly with ideologies of a genuine experience.

While these forms have become the state ‘type,’ this is far from being a closed frame. Forms and associative meanings are changing as innovations and alterations in the population, object desirability, and state initiatives, are causing a shift away from the standing cultural
geometry. In Colorado, the move toward modern and contemporary design is driven by a growing young population concerned with environmental standards as well as aesthetic concerns of the upper classes, who have a greater capacity to design their homes and select furniture and other design components based on aesthetic criteria alone. This growing inclination toward new forms is, therefore, a design choice based on both financial concerns as well as status. The distinction between the middle class and upper class seems to stem from the capacity by which such design is principles are implemented. For the middle class or the younger demographic, it has become an economically reasonable choice, made fashionable by local businesses, take for example the Highlands district in Denver, and popular online media, such as the image sharing site Pinterest. For the upper classes, this design has become a status symbol. For people who can afford to do so, working with architects and designers to mold a unique residence, including the newest technology and sustainable practices, as well as finding the perfect furniture for their space. The difference is comparable when looking at both IKEA and Scandinavian Designs. For Caroline, a young photographer in her twenties, IKEA offers reasonably priced, practical goods which she becomes rather animated about personalizing through IKEA hacks designed to make objects both more attuned to her personal taste, and elevating the object to appear more expensive. Whereas Eric, a business owner in Frisco with his wife Lua, denounce IKEA—as “a bastardization”—preferring Scandinavian Designs.

The Colorado type rustic style has remained widely used in mountain communities throughout Colorado’s settlement history. However, after the initial mining camps along the Front Range turned into permanent settlements, the use of the cabin has never made a noteworthy appearance in Colorado’s urban areas. The farther one is from the mountains, and the wilderness, the less visible the rustic style appears within the frame of architectural style. Leigh,
now in her early twenties, grew up in the suburban Highlands Ranch neighborhood on the outskirts of Denver. Her mother decorated their home with rustic accents although their home was part of a new development project. She had heavy dark wood furniture around the house, leather couches and antique ski memorabilia decorating the walls. Leigh recalls that this was not uncommon, even ten years ago, many her parents’ friends carried the same motif into their residential spaces. Now, however, the use of darker woods is being replaced by lighter or even replaced by other materials. For instance, Leigh describes a family friend’s choice to abandon the dark oversized wooden coffee table for one that has a glass top with metal legs.
The shifting cultural geometry is influenced a great deal by the public perception of the state and by what is now considered ‘cool’ and ‘trendy.’ In the early months of 2016, this is modern architecture and contemporary elements that play off of Colorado’s history. Perhaps the best example of this is Denver’s Union Station, which reopened in 2015. It was part of a historical preservation project, and the new design was inspired by luxury train travel and the American industrial era. However, the interior is now entirely white in the modern style which leaves the focus on custom lighting and furniture and late nineteenth century inspired elements. Union Station blends the old with the new, a theme in the twenty-first century Colorado. Public perception and the growing desire for more modern design is also shaped by lifestyle brands promoting their vision of Colorado living. People are adopting such aesthetics and components into their lives creating a demand for certain shapes and surfaces. These forms are taking the modern elements and creating environmentally sustainable products that utilize recycled materials, clean lines and simple, elegant designs. Companies who specialize in ‘green’ products design them for the consumer and are therefore catering to customers in modern styles. The state, also, is involved in this remaking of the state’s cultural geometry by using the Brownfield tax incentive, which rewards reduced energy consumption, and local building codes for new structures and additions requiring some degree of energy efficiency standards, sustainable design, and ‘green’ building products.

The web of cultural geometry in Colorado includes the growing state population that is excited by new design aesthetics and technologies, influenced by brands who are promoting a vision of Colorado that is both modern and environmentally conscious. The state is creating a new image and requiring ‘green’ building standards, and using tax incentives to push for sustainable living. Private companies that are providing ‘green’ products are designing them in a
modern aesthetic, thereby pushing modern design, and contemporary, design forward because the state regulations require certain standards and the available products are created in the new modern styles. These seemingly innocuous and separate agencies work together to perpetuate the shift in design practices. Lifestyle brands influence the individual, and sell them not only trendy objects and products, but culturally relevant values associated with the consumption of specific forms, colors, and materials. The paradigm such brands are promoting embrace new technologies and renewable design components. The state is offering strong incentives for the use of such products, and the companies producing such products are designing them to appeal to the consumer, who, in turn, desires the promoted aesthetic. People are excited by new design and innovation while still addressing Colorado’s historical context.

*Distinction: a social critique on the judgement of taste*

Pierre Bourdieu’s work on the development of ‘taste’ and how it is reproduced, serves as a guiding text for assessing the process of changing home design preferences taking place in Colorado. Looking at how taste preferences and cultural norms are reproduced, especially in a distinct cultural frame, and how social class structures inform this design shift, it is a result of what people, on an individual level, are viewing as preferential. It is a result how people are orienting themselves in the social setting, by outwardly showing off a specific lifestyle.

Bourdieu asserts, in his landmark work *Distinction: a social critique on the judgment of taste*, that the development of aesthetic dispositions is strongly determined by social origin rather than the accumulation of capital and experience over time. He argues that individuals learn their cultural attitudes and accepted definitions from their family because taste regarding such things as their home, for instance, is a form of social preservation. Consumption of specific items or
styles which are an outward display of taste indicates an individual’s place within the social structure by showing off a specific lifestyle. A person’s likes and dislikes should mirror those of their social class. For instance, Bourdieu writes that individuals from a working class background expressed a preference for buying furniture from department stores and decorating their homes in a “clean, tidy” and “easy to maintain” manner (Bourdieu 1984:78). The middle class, then, chose to buy furniture in specialized shops, decorating their homes in a “cozy” and “warm” manner, whereas the upper classes usually preferred to decorate their homes in a such a way that it may be “harmonious” or “sober, discreet” (Bourdieu 1984:78).

It is also important to understand Bourdieu’s theory on the reproduction of social structures regarding taste, and how the ways in which attitudes and actions of individuals reproduce to create larger social elements. His argument stresses that the reproduction of social structures happen at the level of the individual, and therefore, cultural norms must be assessed as such rather than thinking of them as external entities existing outside the control of the individual. Bourdieu explains this process happens as the result of any group of individuals living in a specific area developing distinct social and cultural peculiarities that distinguish them from one another. Some individuals in such groups establish both the superiority of their peculiarities and official consent for them, these individuals become ‘tastemakers,’ and are in the position of power to define what constitutes aesthetic concepts and taste. These concepts are then reproduced by along the spectrum of ‘legitimate’ which relates to art and ‘high-culture, learned in school and through formal education, and ‘personal’ which involves decision making concerning everyday choices, reproduced at home. All of the ideas regarding taste and aesthetic concepts are distinct between various cultures because the processes of creating ‘taste’ differ based on the peculiarities of each distinct group.
Looking at Colorado as a discrete cultural region, even with variations within the state, Bourdieu’s theories regarding the creation of taste relating to class norms as well as culturally distinct allows for a socially based interpretation of home design. Whereas cultural geometry emphasizes the agency of objects and their social meanings, Bourdieu’s theories explore the creation of taste preference and how it is perpetuated and reproduced. The growing inclination towards this contemporary model\(^1\) is currently viewed as new and innovative, especially in the mountain context where it is a homologous bubble with the longstanding norm of the rustic cabin type. In Summit County Colorado, the shift is happening in the upper classes, some individuals who can afford to are building their homes from the ground up in much more modern styles. In the more urban areas, this design style is a bit more contemporary [described in a later section] and are born both out of necessity as well as preference. The emphasis on functionality, simplicity and the lack of adornment means that it is an economically resourceful and rather easily achieved aesthetic to be implemented and replicated. Therefore, in Colorado, this shifting taste in home design is happening in both the upper class as well as those with a middle-class background. Unfortunately, this study does not include an analysis of the working class in Colorado, but in the Denver area, and to a lesser degree Boulder area, individuals are gravitating toward this style based on availability and economic demands. Looking at Colorado as a distinct

\(^1\) The term ‘contemporary,’ meaning “existing or happening in the same period” (Merriam-Webster 2016), retains this meaning when used in reference to design. Contemporary design refers to what is popular or being used right now. As such it is eclectic because it is in constant flux and borrows and builds on different styles from conceivably any era. At present, contemporary design is concerned with comfort and sustainability focusing on the basics of lines, shapes, and forms (HGTV 2016). Furniture and art in the modern style are quite regularly used, as well as large windows, unique or irregular shapes, open floor plans with the purpose of blending harmoniously with the surrounding landscape (Rourke 2012). Spaces designed in this way are comfortable and welcoming without being cluttered and dark. The overarching characteristics of contemporary interior design are spaces that view negative space as equally as important as objects, the inclusion of smooth, clean and geometric shapes, unique objects and furniture to give a basic, bare but bold look.
cultural group, it is interesting that this design style is being reproduced by both the upper class as well as the middle class. It means that the style has been primarily accepted as taste and the variations in how it appears between such classes and is replicated as such.

*Distinction*: a social critique on the judgement of taste

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the development of aesthetic dispositions, the development of ‘taste’ in Colorado is informed by social origin. If in fact, as he suggests, individuals learn their cultural attitudes and accepted social definitions from their family, because taste regarding such things as their home, for instance, is a form of social preservation. This structure seems to be especially true in Mountain communities who have a protected way of life and are more often resentful about the growing population. However, attitudes in Denver’s urban population are different. There is a much more accepting attitude toward domestic migration, especially because the population increase also necessitates new housing structures and state initiatives that are promoting new and modern designs. Consumption of specific items or styles, which are an outward display of taste, indicates an individual’s place within the social structure by showing off a specific lifestyle. For a state with a large middle class—the average annual salary in Denver is $51,800 (U.S. Census Bureau 2014b); in Boulder it is $58,062 (U.S. Census Bureau 2014a); and in Summit County it is $64,521(U.S. Census Bureau 2014c)—most of the consumption and style preferences are rather homologous, because a person’s likes and dislikes mirror those of their social class. Of course, there is a difference in preferences between mountain communities and urban communities.

The reproduction of social structures regarding taste and the ways in which attitudes and actions of individuals reproduce to create larger social elements happen at the level of the
individual. This process is the result of a group of people living in a specific area, developing distinct social and cultural peculiarities that distinguish them from one another. Within Colorado, this is different in various populations. For example, Summit County and Denver have developed aesthetic preferences. Noticeably, mountain communities, such as Summit County’s taste has become the Colorado style, whereas in Denver, historically there have been about thirty-eight different design styles. Middle-class attitudes, typically Denver’s urban population has been much more welcoming to new technological, and design innovations whereas Summit County’s population have been restrictive and reluctant to incorporate modern elements into their accepted aesthetic preferences. However, because of the various domestic migrations, beginning in the 1940s and a one of the largest percentages of domestic growth in the country—besides to British Columbia and North Dakota (U.S. Census Bureau 2016)—between 2010 and 2014 (Hearsum 2016), the state is beginning to see much more homologous attitudes materializing in design. The diversification of domestic homes in Summit County is indicative of this collectivizing state social identity. In fact, the five most common domestic designs in the Colorado are American Bungalow, Contemporary, Raised Ranch, Mid-Century Modern, and Mountain Rustic (Melton Design Build 2014).

Within this regional context, according to Bourdieu, some individuals establish both the superiority of their peculiarities and official consent for them, thus becoming ‘tastemakers,’ and are in the position of power to define what constitutes aesthetic concepts of taste. Such tastemakers are those who are doing something different and leading the forefront of what is accepted as Colorado design. Lifestyle brands, who are promoting a vision of Colorado are influencing ‘personal’ taste involving decision making in everyday choices. New styles, such as Alpine Modern’s vision of mountain design, focusing on modern design blended with natural
elements, then become legitimate through it being reproduced at home and inspiring everyday decision making. In Summit County, this is quite clearly seen in domestic architecture commissioned by the county’s second home owners. Wealthy seasonal residents have dictated domestic taste in the area for decades [continued in more detail in the Quiet Design chapter]. The homogeneity of homes in the county attests to that.

The growing inclination towards this contemporary model is currently viewed as new and innovative, especially in the mountain context where it is a homologous bubble with the longstanding norm of the rustic cabin type. In Summit County Colorado, the shift is happening in the upper classes of year-round residents, some individuals who can afford to are building their homes from the ground up in much more modern styles. In the more urban areas, this design style is a bit more contemporary and are born both out of necessity as well as preference. The emphasis on functionality, simplicity and the lack of adornment means that it is an economically resourceful and rather easily achieved aesthetic to be implemented and replicated. Therefore, in Colorado, this shifting taste in home design is happening in both the upper class as well as those with a middle-class background. Unfortunately, this study does not include an analysis of the working class in Colorado, but in the Denver area, and to a lesser degree Boulder area, individuals are gravitating toward this style based on availability and economic demands.

Looking at Colorado as a distinct cultural group, it is interesting that this design style is being reproduced by both the upper class as well as the middle class. It means that the style has been accepted as taste and the variations in how it appears between such classes and is replicated as such.
WHAT IS ‘DESIGN’?

“Design” is a fascinating term. When used in a conversation, it carries value without a precise definition. When one hears “that’s great design” or even just ‘good design,’ there is an immediate sense of what that means without needing much elaboration. Form, function and quality play into this idea in a practical, vernacular manner. It is a complex topic that seems to reject attempts to define exactly what design is. The most common definition is “a purposeful plan for solving problems” (“Definition of Design - Google Search” 2016); and from a practical standpoint, the power of design does come from blending creativity, collaboration, modeling, meaning, and building to offer solutions to a problem. And yes, this is an accurate description, but the word ‘design’ has so many more connotations than just aesthetics or function. It is more than just planning function. It is about giving meaning to objects, and about the experience though that. Design then, is a silent communicator, a language that people know without having to think about it. It is not about the object itself; the thing can be meaningless, but it transforms and can be manipulated in the exact way you want it when placed in the context of a place. The difference then, between good design and okay design is meaning hidden in a relationship one has with an object, whether consciously one finds it or not.

From an anthropological perspective, studying or examining ‘design’ necessitates the creation of parameters around what sorts of objects, practices, ideologies and other phenomena are associated with, and important to the category of ‘design.’ People exist within complicated and interconnected relationships that give meaning to everyday experience. In such complex and a rather innocuous social sphere, objects, spaces, individuals, and ideas combine and interact to create the social world (Appadurai 1996:178). With this broad spectrum in mind, the umbrella of ‘design’ includes objects, styles, practices, behaviors, creators, meanings, perceptions and ideas
According to Murphy, design is a deliberate ordering of the lived and social world in such a way as to alter how it is used or understood and both necessitates and prescribes relations between people, spaces, and objects. It is purposeful and active creativity through which raw materials are converted into some end product that results in meaningful social implications, usually a physical object but quite often something with vague, such as an encompassing ‘style’ or ‘type’ (Murphy 2015a:37).

‘Design’ is often misused in reference to technology or art, and although it touches on both, it is its own particular category. Design is actively making, conscious of form, and resultant in social and ideological patterns that extend further than the designed object itself (Whitemyer 2016:9). The anthropology of design is concerned with how things and objects impact and ultimately affect the world. Particularly relating to the cultural context to which the user belongs, the agency of the creator and the consumer concerning ideas and meanings and the consequences of such objects. The particular properties of things designed and how they relate to other phenomena, the nature of relations between people and things, all pertain to phenomena that may not always exist as distinct from one another, yet often require some demarcation to understand fully (Murphy 2015b).

This analysis is particularly concerned with the process of changing cultural geometry and how this pertains, specifically, to how people in Colorado are designing their homes and their domestic life. The focus of this study is on styles, behaviors, meanings and perceptions. The capacity of material things speaks to an understanding of values and how one orients themselves and lives within a particular social context.

What is it About Home Design?
The home is where design and everyday experience entwine on every level. It is a unique space in which cultural norms, social expectations, and personal preferences are created, maintained and displayed. Objects interact directly with their users to create a space which is both a private sanctuary as well as a public display of identity. One’s home and how they create their personal space is one of the most obvious displays of how someone identifies with specific aspects of a culture and how they find their place socially (Marcus 1995:4). The home, just like any object, functions through symbolic meanings which operate in two directions: through social symbolism working in the cultural world, and from personal symbolism in which one constructs a symbolic interpretation of the self (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). In other words, the home is a display of culturally significant indicators referencing an individual’s taste as well as the cultural symbolism and meaning which an object projects. Therefore, the domestic space is a multifaceted subject which requires multidisciplinary inquiry ranging across disciplinary boundaries to explore issues and concepts (Keeble 2000:249). According to Cierraad, the domestic space is an invention of the West in that “it is ‘constructed’ as a counterpart to the public” (Cierraad 1999:3), and is, therefore, a place where meaning is created, identities are formed, and meaning becomes attached to practice.
THE “SCANDINAVIAN” STYLE

“...the only thing worth striving for is harmony between the useful and the beautiful.”
-Ellen Key (Key 1899:36)

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Ellen Key wrote “only when there is nothing ugly available for sale, when beautiful things are as inexpensive as ugly ones now are, can beauty for everyone be fully realized” (Key 1899:11). This sentiment dictated Scandinavian design philosophy throughout the 20th century, and bled seamlessly into the political sphere; to speak of one is to speak of the other. The idea of equality was at the forefront of Scandinavian progressive thought: forming, and, in fact, re-forming, the world according to a collective concept of ‘better.’ Keith Murphy writes that Swedish Welfare politics and the iconic Scandinavian aesthetic link cultural and political ideologies to forms and functions of everyday objects. Such objects (tables, chairs, lamps, kitchen utensils) are not just things. They are “just things, things that in their widespread presence politicize the everyday world through a subliminal semiosis that suggests, but does not necessarily impose, a significant, experience-near means for managing well-being in everyday life” (Murphy 2015b:1). In this sense, then, objects take on deeper associations than simply their intended use-value. They become symbols of a larger cultural paradigm that both encapsulates an idealized vision of society, as well as allowing the individual, or the family, to articulate their interpretation of the shared sociopolitical ideal.

As such, twentieth-century Scandinavian attitudes toward design, and indeed the home, do not drift far from political attitudes. The distinction between public and private spheres do not have clearly defined boundaries. The home is both an inner sanctuary for the comfort of the individual, as well as an outward display of identity. Designed objects reflect this duality.
Objects they are expected to ‘care’ for their users, in the same way the Swedish Welfare ‘cares’ for its citizens, which is reflective of longstanding political and cultural values of social responsibility. The home emerges as the symphysis of the state and the individual. It materializes through objects bearing the rectitude of equality: the notion of beautiful functionalism in everyday objects, accessible to everyone. Meanings and values attached to the creation of a ‘home’ play into the larger juncture of citizen and state. The ways in which people furnish and style their homes allows the household, on an individual level, to symbolize their “values of togetherness” as a unit, or their individual taste (Gullestad 1984:97). At the same time expanding on the Swedish Folkhem, or the Danish Hygge, both social concepts emphasize the role of a ‘good citizen’ and outline respectable modes of social conducts within social, and in turn, political contexts (Linnet 2011). Design, then, becomes the purposeful and thoughtful structuring of the lived world; it is the backdrop of daily life and works with the purpose of improving the individual experience as well as common problems and shared needs. ‘Good design’ is not reserved for the upper class. In Scandinavia “so the cultural model goes, design is everywhere and belongs to everyone” (Murphy 2015b:11).

DESIGN FOR THE COLLECTIVE: A symphysis of the home and the nation

Design as Political:

Scandinavian design, at its core, is deeply political. Using the Swedish case study as indicative of the larger regional attitude toward design amongst the Nordic states (Sejersted and Adams 2011) allows for a contextualized analysis. There are, of course, variations between the countries in how, and in what form, Social Democracy developed as well as the State’s hand in developing the style. For instance, according to Sune, a Danish man in his mid-twenties living in
Boulder, Danish design is different than Swedish or Norwegian, discernable by slight nuances in form that convey national pride for the particular state. However, the broad themes parallel each other. Design emerges as a culturally significant category through which people find meaning both within their intimate familial life as well as in their affiliation with national identity. The idea of the ‘exhibitionary complex’ maintains that one’s private home is reflective of their place within the national framework (Murphy 2008:114). Residential design within Scandinavia is exhibitionary. The home and its design are guided by “a set of cultural technologies concerned to organize a voluntary self-regulating citizenry”(Bennett 1988:76), meaning that the home is metaphorically similar to a museum, showcasing contemporary cultural values manifested through materiality (Kriegel 2007:161). Since the home and the state do not have rigid and definite boundaries—as they do in the United States—home design becomes indicative of regional ideology. Having the same furnishings as one’s neighbor shows that an individual has good taste, rather than a faux pas [revisited in the Conclusion].

A network of discourses emerges between institutions relating to design and the consumer by presenting design and material objects as having a *meaning*. In other words, cultural significance and value within an object itself, that translates to a form of social or political agency (Gratton 2010). There is the philosophy that things possess a kind of influence that affects the world in particular ways, implying that such meaning is hidden inside the objects, acting independently of the object’s designed function(J. Bennett 2010:31). Such meaning links enduring political discourses which underline the significance of citizenship. Such connections from an object’s interaction with various processes in which, and even for which, everyday objects in their design are made to reflect and embody a social democratic ideology. As designed objects move through various situational discourses and spaces, “their agency materializes as an
achievement, the product of asymmetrical forces that together grant Swedish design its politic” (Murphy 2015b).

Scandinavian design is political because it is constructed to fit within the social democratic ideology, which relies on essentialism. This concept focuses efforts on fewer better things (Staff 2016) that when incorporated into a design paradigm, characteristic of a culture can be indicative of a higher quality of life, such as the Swedish case study. From the view of the government, “all Swedes are typical Swedes, regardless of background” (Murphy 2013), an ideology around which Scandinavian design has formed. The Swedish social democratic government initiated the folkhem or ‘the people’s home’ vision in 1928. The party’s enduring philosophy read:

“The home’s foundation is community and a feeling of togetherness. The good home does not recognize any privileged or neglected [members], any favorites or stepchildren. There, no one looks down on another, nor tries to gain advantage at another’s expense, nor do the strong push down or plunder the weak. In the good home consideration, cooperation, and helpfulness prevail. Applied to the great home of the people and the citizens, this would mean breaking down all social and economic barriers that now divide the citizens into the privileged and the neglected, into rulers and dependents, into rich and poor, into landed and impoverished, into plunderers and the plundered.” (Berkling 1982:227)

The lasting effect of such political ideology essentially linked the home and politics, creating a triad between beauty, the home, and politics. Throughout the twentieth-century, this link developed into strong nationalist sentiments, strengthened by the circulation of the folkhem metaphor.

What is Scandinavian design?

Scandinavian design is a fascinating fusion of political attitudes and implementations with intriguing, modest and elegant forms. It encapsulates the notion of beautiful functionalism
for everyday objects. The political roots, from which this particular design concept sprouted, are based on the conception of care. With this fundamental idea at the heart of design in the region, objects take on layered meanings. On the surface, they may be a chair, or a lamp composed largely of straight lines, right angles or soft curves. Deeper, though, they act as a bond to a larger ideological frame that links the object to spaces and people themselves (Murphy 2015b) through which the tenacity of the social democratic way-of-life is maintained.

The Scandinavian type utilizes a pedantry of form dominated by light colors, organic materials, accent metals, and clean lines in object design which, when brought together form a larger visual concept and ‘feel’ which has become iconic of the region as a whole. A space is light both from the colors of the walls, usually whites or some light neutral shade with large windows allowing natural light into the room. There is a place for everything, and everything has a function; it is a well-managed space. Such aspects harken back to the modern design influence; however Scandinavian design is unique in that it is not afraid to go the next step with some of its forms. A bright red, or a bright orange light fixture might be hanging down over a dining room table, or coat racks may be cute designs, maybe metal or colored metal pegs above a bench that may be deeper or taller to maximize the area in a small home. Patterns are also popular, quite often florals, but it is never gaudy, or loud. Elements blend in an understated manner to create a space that feels cozy and yet remains simple and clean. Briefly, it is light and uncomplicated where modern design aspects meld with comfort and function to create a cozy well-managed space.

This concept is marked by the designed objects, and the designed space, and the experience of the individual to support the long history of the Scandinavian welfare model. The design links “people (designers, consumers, curators, citizens, politicians), things (everyday
objects, their particular forms, and arrangements), and ideologies (of care, responsibility, equality, justice, beauty)” (Murphy 2015b); each reliant on the others. Together they create a paradigm that discerns regionally distinct norms and values which are marked, remade and enforced in everyday experiences and interactions. Through this paradigm, ideologies—especially those framed around vocabulary such as: “democratic, social, equality, good, satisfaction, pleasure, quality, better, beautiful”(Murphy 2015b)—are substantiated, creating an accepted, largely political, way of life.

It is interesting, based on the deeply political nature of Scandinavian design, that it has begun to appear with a greater frequency outside of the region. Within the United States context, the pedantry of this design form is emerging as a popular way in which to organize the domestic space. Colorado, though maintaining many of its incumbent home designs (rustic cabin, classic transitional suburban), has experienced an increased application of the Scandinavian aesthetics. The actualization of this scheme is minimalist and unassuming, characterized by light colors and clean, geometric design. Everyday objects are created to be equally beautiful and functional. The intent is to make well-designed objects available to the most comprehensive section of the populace at reasonable prices, thereby democratizing the home. In order to understand and appreciate the shifting phenomena, it is necessary to understand the historical, political, and cultural origins responsible for producing, and indeed exporting the regional style.

A CULTURAL EXPORT: GLOBAL SATURATION

Scandinavian design, as an aesthetic paradigm, is enormously wealthy as a cultural archive for the Nordic region. The depths of its innovation have become nationally symbolic for its historical and political significance as well as placing the Scandinavian region on the global
marketplace. However, the cultural importance of this design becomes muddled and confused once it leaves its endemic region.

This study began by questioning why there has been an increased appearance of Scandinavian design in Colorado. It became immediately evident that very few Coloradans knew more about this design type than ‘IKEA is Swedish, right?’ More than anything, the Scandinavian aesthetic, once it has reached a global audience, has become the type which has inspired contemporary design in the early twenty-first century. Several of the Colorado residents, who could identify and explain what this design paradigm means, were usually of the upper class, those who were able to travel and experience Scandinavian life first hand, or those who were able to put a lot of time and effort exploring design styles, designing which if any, were suited to their vision of their house. Therefore, the notoriety of the formal side of Scandinavian design is largely the result of social media sites such as Pinterest and Tumbler. Sites like these are dedicated to image sharing without much more content. Pinterest, in particular, is filled with endless pages sharing Scandinavian interiors without citing them as such. A significant number of Colorado residents interviewed cited Pinterest as their number one inspiration source.

The popularity of this design on Pinterest, in particular, does speak to how deeply Scandinavian culture has saturated the global marketplace. According to Göran Hermerén, the intellectual center of aesthetics has been the United States since World War II (Hermerén 1993:177). Hermerén’s paper specifies the intellectual school of aesthetics, but the same can be said for contemporary social media, most of which have been created within the United States, gaining popularity domestically before reaching a substantial global user base. The focus now seems to be placed on an aesthetic that can be marketed to and used by a significant portion of the modern demographic as it appears in the United States as well as Europe. Scandinavian
design, therefore, seems to be the most easily replicated form of modern design. It is an approachable style that appeals to modern, innovative aspirations of the twenty-first century while remaining playful and welcoming.

Within Scandinavia, there is a wide-reaching emphasis on design. From doctoral degrees in design and design strategy to nationally sponsored museums and studios, the Scandinavian design type does not exist as it does globally (Petersen 2012). Inger, a Swedish-born Colorado resident, explains that she never grew up thinking that what she saw in shop windows or what new textiles her mom bought were anything other than what they were. The notion of ‘Swedish design’ or ‘Danish design’ never really occurred to her. This seems to be a designation to

Figure 3: Poul Henningsen (designer). Artichoke, pendant lamp (1958) National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 2015
categorize the regional design for a global context. In a 2012 article in the Huffington Post, Soren Peterson describes this design frame “as being authentic, calm, restrained, uplifting, practical and yet inviting, playful and whimsical. (Petersen 2012). To a global audience, such intentionality is not lost. Yet most of what people understand as being Scandinavian is overwhelmingly mid-century modern furniture design, for instance, the Artichoke lamp or the Model 3107 Chair [figures 3 and 4].

Nina Bruun, in a 2015 article for The Guardian, shares that the recent emphasis on Scandinavian design has arisen from a “new wave of creative energy from young Nordic designers,” (Treggiden 2015). She continues by explaining that “Their designs are innovative, yet continue Scandinavian traditions: functional, honest and produced to the highest standards of quality and craftsmanship, combined with an egalitarian aim of affordability”(Treggiden 2015). Katie Treggiden, in the same article for The Guardian, claims that the growing interest in Scandinavian design comes, in part, from “big-name brands rejuvenating their product lines, pushing the possibilities of materials and technology, forming creative collaborations and reinterpretting their heritage for a contemporary audience”(Treggiden 2015).

It may very well be that renewed interest in Scandinavian design is the result of marketing pushes from new designers or new product lines. However, the majority of Colorado residents, especially within the middle-class, do not keep up to date with the latest-and-greatest in design trends. Taking several Colorado resident’s confessions that most of their design inspiration come from Pinterest, it makes sense that part of the renewed interest comes from access to images. Looking at Pinterest specifically, that has about 100 million active users (Smith 2014), and about 67% of users are under 40-years old(Smith 2014). Within the younger generations moving to Colorado [detailed in following two chapters] it makes sense that people
are looking for inspiration for their new homes. Although, Pinterest has reached only about 29% of the U.S. digital population. Therefore, the significant increase of Scandinavian interiors cannot be the result of social media alone.

IKEA is a loaded topic when discussing design. By some, it is viewed as a great resource for interior decorating, another interprets it as a economical alternative to more expensive options, and to others, it is a cheap imitation of the Scandinavian aesthetic. It is, however, what most people in Colorado recognize as Scandinavian design. With over 700 retail locations in 41 countries, Swedish design has become largely synonymous with the brand. For Colorado residents, most view the brand as a budget friendly option, and with all of the IKEA-hacks floating around the internet, a cheap DIY project away from creating more expensive home furnishings.

The popularity of Scandinavian design in Colorado varies between the upper and middle classes. Pinterest and IKEA are catered to the middle class. Only eighteen percent of Pinterest users have annual salaries of over $75,000 (Smith 2014). IKEA caters to lower income brackets as being ‘design for everyone.’ None of the upper-class individuals interviewed for this study shop at the store. For them, the appearance of this design is more of a status symbol, indicating that they have the ability to shop at more expensive stores and find unique pieces. Scandinavian design, for the upper class, also serves as a way to show their travels, bringing in elements they have experienced during summers in Denmark.

The increased appearance of this design type in Colorado varies among classes. The more colloquial knowledge of the aesthetic is that of contemporary design. Very few Colorado residents know much about it apart from the notorious IKEA. The attraction, however, seems to lay with the simple comfort with which it is associated. Although Scandinavian design in name
has not been popularized in Colorado, the underlying philosophy of good design that prioritizes function has captured the appreciation of the state’s residents. The uncomplicated and functional take on domestic design has become timeless. Eileen Beer in her 1975 study on Scandinavian design, wrote that it “has worldwide appeal, the ability to blend harmoniously with other periods and styles, and suitability for today’s living. Its essence is the insistence that useful articles should be, not just sturdily constructed, but also beautifully formed” (Beer 1975). This statement is just as true now as it was forty years ago.

Figure 4: Model 3107 Chair
“Certainly, there is no kind of landscape more mesmerizing nor more daunting than the great mountain ranges they have the ability to both seduce us and terrify, they inspire both awe and affection. Only the sea, perhaps, has the natural power to compete with the majestic and ungovernable character of the mountains.”
-Dominic Bradbury and Richard Powers,
[from Mountain Modern: homes in high places]

There is an enduring idea rooted deep within the developmental philosophy of Colorado. The importance of historic preservation and the pre-emanating vision of the American Dream have created a paradoxical landscape in which the so-called ‘spirit of the west’ clashes with a push toward innovation. This is nowhere as clear as it is in the home: the material manifestation of the lived world. They stand as monuments reflecting the values and conventions both of the past and for the future. Their presence changes the landscape while being inspired by their surroundings and participating in the evolving cultural landscape of the American West.

The cultural landscape of Colorado has always had a contemplative relationship with nature. The philosophy of domestic design in this state retains the nostalgic sense of the natural and the enduring image of the mythical American West. As such architecture, and, in fact, home design, reflect western regionalism and identity through the enduring ideologies of nature and the wilderness. Colorado was pioneered for its rich natural resources, with its roots in westward expansion and mining based development—from gold to silver, coal and uranium. As such, there developed a strange relationship between the enduring west of legend and that of fact.

The late nineteenth-century American appreciation and pride in its wilderness areas was motivated both by their perceived aesthetic qualities and their domineering source of national
pride. American Romanticism toward the end of the nineteenth century instilled an enduring moral enthusiasm and commitment to the natural. The wilderness became an ideal and that which was urban, or man-made, became a degradation of the moral esteem of the natural. At the same time, the deeply American preoccupation with freedom was placed in the west as a remaining frontier of the American Dream. The later philosophy of rugged individualism combined with the reverence for the natural to create the West of legend and popular imagination. Experiencing nature and the outdoors became an antidote to an increasingly urban world. A belief which continues to has endured and prospered.

Design in Colorado has retained the reverence for the natural. Home design, in particular, is as much defined by the contours of the Rocky Mountains as it is by human ingenuity. Homes in Colorado reflect ideas about nature and wilderness, cultural identity and innovation, progress and technology and a quest for both recreation and retreat. They also embody a larger set of ideologies relating to the home and domesticity, and the social values and cultural norms that underlie their design. In the 21st century, Colorado design — and largely its identity — is concerned with preserving its history and capturing the aesthetics and ideology of the landscape. Design, then, has become a facet of state identity that is inseparable from the geographical landscape.

HISTORY OF COLORADO DESIGN: From statehood to Destination

*Colorado State History: Welcome to Colorful Colorado*

The American Westward expansion was driven both by the idea of possible wealth and the United States’ push toward unifying the North and South in the wake of the Civil War. On August 1, 1876, Colorado became the 36th state (Mehls 1984:70) (Colorado State Archives)
2016). For much of its history, until the Postwar era, Colorado remained, largely, a series of small mining towns. By the late few decades of the nineteenth-century, Colorado’s smaller towns and settlements were dependent upon four cities along the front range—Fort Collins, Boulder, Denver and Colorado Springs—which provided goods and services needed in the mining areas (Mehls 1984:109). Many people settled in the State in hopes of finding economic prosperity. Others came for the allure of the West and the Colorado Rockies. The first population boom happened in 1859 when 100,000 people flocked to the northern Colorado gold fields (Mehls 1984:34).

![Pioneer Log Cabin, Boulder County, c. 1858-1930. Image courtesy of History Colorado.](image)

During this time design was focused on practicality and availability. Most of these early settlers lived in log cabins or sod houses along the plains. Where there were lumber availability people built pioneer log structures. This residential style was used from 1858 through the 1930s (Pearce 2008) usually located in or near mountain regions, exhibiting rather unsophisticated construction technique. They were constructed using round logs laid on alternating tiers and fit
together with notched corners. The spaces were filled with wet moss, clay, animal hair, straw or stone or wood chips. Roofs were made of canvas, sod, shingles, wood boards or sheet metal, depending on what was available (Pearce 2008).

In the years between 1870 and 1875 the major cities along the front range nearly doubled their population (Mehls 1984:112). Water and gas were brought to Colorado by private companies between 1860 and 1900 (Mehls 1984:113), and by the turn of the twentieth century the region had become largely urbanized; growth trends that continued throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

The Colorado rustic style building began appearing around 1905 (Pearce 2008). This style of architecture is characterized by the use of log and stone in its construction, and rarely appears outside of natural settings; for instance, the rustic style is not used in urban environments. According to Colorado’s Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, these building types are “designed to blend in with the natural environment”(Pearce 2008), and typically used for vacation homes, hunting lodges, dude ranches, or tourist-related facilities. An important section of the Rustic style is the Great Camp style. The Great Camp developed during the Victorian era in the Adirondack Mountains in northern New York (Carley 1994:170), as a place for the upper class to get away. The style grew in popularity and reached Colorado in the mid-twentieth century. It is an elaborate structure with sprawling floor plans and usually multiple buildings on the property (Hamilton College 2016). The design choice was rustic, using stone, logs and twigs used in their natural state(Carley 1994:170). The Great Camp style remains popular amongst second home owners in the Mountains.
Following World War II, Colorado experienced a second large wave of Westward expansion. This time, it was a newly-affluent, newly-mobile middle class, sold on the aesthetics of the ‘Wild’ experience (ASX Staff 2012), and the reborn ideology of Manifest Destiny. Businesses congregated to Denver around which the suburbs blossomed. Colorado appealed to Businesses such as the Hilton Hotel chain and IMB because of the climate, scenery, and the low density of urban areas where the majority of the workforce was non-unionized (Ellis and Smith 1991:167-78). As a result, the suburbs and outlying towns along the Front Range grew rapidly...
around residential development projects that “produced visual monotony” in the Capital (Ellis and Smith 1991:168).

With this second Westward Expansion, a new wave of natural resource mining developed. Areas that were once prosperous from mining adapted to new industry demands and created a cache of ‘white gold.’ Howelsen Hill Ski Area in Steamboat Springs, Colorado was the first North American Ski area to open in 1915 (National Ski Areas Association 2011), and was designed for cross-country skiers. The sport originated over 6,000 years ago in northern Scandinavia as a form of winter transpiration (Lippus 2015:17). The work ‘ski’ originates from the Norwegian word for ‘snowshoe,’ ‘skilober’ (Lippus 2015:17). In North America, the first to ski were rural postal delivery men and preachers who were generally of Norwegian heritage, who used them as a means to travel amongst rural villages (Lippus 2015:18). The late 1930s to the early 1970’s Colorado’s ski resorts opened from southwestern Colorado through the central Rockies attracting locals and creating a lifestyle around a recreational sport. The ski industry in the United States took off in the mid-twentieth century, taking Colorado with it. In 1936, the first issue of Ski magazine was published in Seattle, and the third Winter Games holds the world’s first Olympic alpine events— downhill and slalom combined (Lund 2016). The big boom for the ski industry happened after the 1960 winter Olympics hosted by Squaw Valley. It was the first televised Olympics, which helped the popularity of the industry immensely. From 1960 to 1968 skier visits in the US increased from about half a million to three million (Moulton 2010). Skiing became a lifestyle sport as people sought to spend more time in the mountains, and resorts began catering to visitors, and locals, year round opening golf courses, hosting festivals and other warm weather activities.
Tourism became one of the leading revenue sources for the state, and the main industry for Mountain towns once the mines dried up. The popularity of snow sports grew and the success of resorts such as Aspen or Breckenridge, which were practically ghost towns before the 60s, were revived as investors poured money into the Colorado Ski Industry (Ellis and Smith 1991:170)(Breckenridge Heritage Alliance 2013). Large resorts, such as Aspen, Vail, Steamboat, and Breckenridge, began to redefine residency in the region by promoting second-home ownership with the idea that they would earn high-dollar returns when sold. Annie Gilbert Coleman, a twentieth-century historian, writes that "skiing transformed leisure in America after World War II, creating a now common situation in which people spend money to participate in some authentic activity or place that is a carefully crafted product—not really 'real' at all."

Beyond the thrill of cruising down the mountain on a crisp winter's day, or carving rhythmic turns in deep powder on a bluebird day, a ski vacation requires navigating the mythical view of the landscape and a cultural landscape entirely staged for consumption (Shellenbarger 2008:403-404).

The establishment of Colorado National Parks during this period also influenced the way in which people valued nature in Colorado. The creation of the National Park Service as a bureau within the Department of the Interior in 1916, promoted the use and regulation of Federally owned areas. The purpose was to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife within the parks, monuments, and reservations under the bureau’s control (National Parks Service 2016). Mesa Verde was Colorado’s first National Park, authorized in 1904, followed by the Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915 (Burns 2016). As of 2016, Colorado has thirteen national parks, three National Heritage Areas, fourteen National Natural Landmarks, twenty-four National historic landmarks and one World Heritage site (National Park Service
The National Park Service in Colorado attract state revenue resulting, tens of thousands of visitors each year, as well as promoting historic conservation and sustainable land use while also providing improved recreational facilities for visitors (Mehls 1984:178).

The allure of the Colorado wilderness became the state’s major economic foundation. By the 1960’s tourism became integral to the state’s economy. The construction of the interstate system allowed easier access to the best destinations but left smaller towns bypassed. Towns closest to scenic areas and popular destinations flourished by their proximity (Mehls 1984:178) (Ellis and Smith 1991:171). Old towns were quickly restored by the sharp and renewed interest in experiencing nature. The national forest service expanded its services and developed the concept of multiple use land. Americans could now go four-wheeling, dirt biking, mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking to visit old mining sites or to reach the summit of the Continental Divide. When the construction of the Eisenhower Tunnel was completed in 1973, skier traffic to the mountains increased significantly. Denver and Front Range residents had the new ability to make weekend trips to the ski-slopes requiring a second tunnel to carry the increased traffic, benefitting the entire state by expediting motor traffic along Interstate 70 between Denver and Grand Junction.

The mentality behind Colorado’s mid-century economic revival, between about 1940 through 1960, was driven by the ‘grow or die’ creed (Ellis and Smith 1991:175). However, underneath the exuberance of renewed industry, a growing minority questioned the rapid development. Some were attached to the idea of the lonely wilderness, enjoying nature separate from urban development, and others were increasingly worried about the environmental impacts of the state’s growth. Throughout Colorado’s history, the economy was dependent upon the environment. With the Federal government passing the Clear Air Act in 1963, the Water Quality
Act and the Motor Vehicle Air Pollution Control Act in 1965 (PBS 2016), the condition of the landscape began gaining increased attention. Environmental protection activists advocated and spread awareness about unsafe and unsustainable practices that threatened the health and progress of the state: dumping untreated sewage into the stream by Black Hawk and Central City; mining pollution from both active and inactive mines; littering and trash build up from the hordes of tourists flowing into the mountains. Colorado newspapers began running articles and editorials about water pollution, air pollution and trash and the degradation of the South Platt River, which had essentially become Colorado’s gutter (Ellis and Smith 1991:175). Three traditional concepts were blamed — population growth, economic growth, and automobile dependence — each of which needed reform to preserve Colorado’s quality of life (Ellis and Smith 1991).

In the early 1960’s Boulder became one of the leading communities to fight for environmental preservation. The picturesque location at the base of the foothills developed into a mecca for new residents who developed the open space programs to buy and maintain the surrounding land, reserving it for recreational use, as well as other town regulations that favored limited development and capping the population size. Residents felt the weight of environmental protection and clean-up, the economic need for tourism, and the sentimental mentality of a smaller Colorado.

Maintaining the quality of life became a priority for residents. It was not a new idea and had been around since the first pioneers, miners, and farmers had begun settling the area. Throughout the twentieth century that quality was deteriorating, and in the 1960s, the automotive dependence was blamed as the largest participant. The average family owned two vehicles and the skies in the Front Range were murky from car exhaust fumes (PBS 2016) (Ellis and Smith 1991).
Coloradoans also had a disposition toward littering since Colorado’s territorial days. The difference between then and the 60s was that the nineteenth-century trash had become twentieth-century antiques, a majority of which had been refurbished by treasure seekers, who in turn left their junk—cans, bottles, wrappers and other harmful and non-degradable materials (Ellis and Smith 1991:175-76). Popular tourist destinations could not accommodate the heavy demands of the enormous influx of visitors. Interest and action grew into the 1970’s because much of Colorado’s charm was threatened, affecting tourism. Public officials bemoaned the death of core areas and encouraged the implementation of revitalization programs (Mehls 1984:181). The 1970 census painted a portrait of the average Coloradan family:

“They had been born outside the state, but their two children were native-born. They lived in a city (or suburb) and were young, median age 28.2 years (younger than the national median age of 30), with a family income of $9,555 per year. They were high school graduates with some college work (again better than the national average), owned their home and one car, and were on the verge of buying a second vehicle. Most had moved once in the past five years to a new home in the same county. They lived in a state that was growing much faster than the national average and, as a result, had earned another seat in the House of Representatives. Younger and better educated, they had values different from earlier generations” (US Census Bureau 1970) (Ellis and Smith 1991:214-15).

Colorado’s young population was better educated than the state’s earlier generations and had different values. The largest concern to residents was solving the pollution issue, which was loudly voiced when the bid to hold the Olympics in Colorado was declined. In 1976, Colorado celebrated its centennial, and with it came Colorado’s demand for ‘balanced growth,’ development and clean-up of water supplies, responsible land-use regulations, and effective transportation systems. Plans were passes, both state and local, to make strides toward preserving Colorado’s identity. Tourism was getting out of hand, Colorado’s outdoor attractions were overcrowded and littered with trash, and there was an outcry to protect the state heritage that was
disappearing under new construction. In Denver, conscious residents advocated for preservation initiatives, “Colorado had so much history to lose that preservation became a volatile issue statewide. It would be a struggle to maintain the old, but a cause worth fighting for” (Ellis and Smith 1991:218). Laws were passed, and organizations were formed to protect Colorado’s historic sites.

_Spirit of the West: Preserving the Pioneer Identity_

Visitors and new residents to Colorado are inspired by a renewed view of the American West and its wilderness areas left over from the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The American West, both the mythical and wilderness landscapes, were held as a source of national pride, “Americans began to fear losing their virtue with the passing of the wilderness” (Anderson 2016). These sentiments were bolstered by advancements in transportation and the establishment of the national forests and parks. Both intrigue and anxiety brought tourists west.

The mentality and identity of the US have arguably always been reliant on a fervent sense of freedom, individuality, and curiosity about the land. The Westward expansion became the epitome of the American character and national identity. The frontier spirit, first demonstrated by the successive waves of mostly male Anglo-American pioneers, hoping to strike it rich, carried with them the notion of conquering the wilderness and bringing civilization and democracy (Shellenbarger 2008:31). Others venturing west, such as botanists or naturalists, set out to explore the landscape, rather than tame it (Nash 1982:47). The American reverence for the ‘Idea of the West,’ or the ‘Spirit of the West,’ was expanded and developed by American writers and artists whose work was a Romantic celebration of the wilderness. The US’s relatively short history had not allowed a strong culture to develop, unlike Europe’s millennia-old culture and
history, and was, therefore, grounded, literally, in the country’s dramatic scenery and prehistoric geological features. Americans, in the mid-nineteenth century, began taking short excursions into the country to appreciate the landscape, and books detailing new discoveries popularized the countryside for the general public (Nash 1982:50-51).

Toward the end of the nineteenth-century national pride came from the wilderness areas and their perceived aesthetic qualities and their dominance over literature and art. Emphasis was on the visual and the aesthetic, on viewing scenic mountains, valleys, and forests for their picturesque and sublime qualities. All of which were overwhelmingly distant from human interaction, rarely was it experienced first-hand, with the exception of pioneers and residents of settlements in such picturesque locations. Americans valued the natural wonders of the West nearly exclusively for their scenic impact. The objective was not wilderness preservation but rather scenic safeguarding to protect and foster American nationalism (Shellenbarger 2008:56).

By the 1890’s, however, there was a shift toward a more direct interaction with nature and the outdoors. It was seen as a healthful antidote to an increasingly urban life, especially following the American industrial revolution. Frederick Law Olmsted claimed that

“it is a scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character, particularly if this contemplation occurs in connection with relief from ordinary cases, change of air and change of habits, is favorable to the health and vigor of men and especially to the health and vigor of their intellect beyond any other conditions that can be offered them...The want of such occasional recreation where men and women are habitually pressed by their business or household cares often results in a class of disorders the characteristic quality of which is mental disability. Olmsted listed the litany of ills brought on by the stresses of daily routine including, "paralysis, palsy, monomania, or insanity, but more frequently of mental and nervous excitability, moroseness, melancholy or irascibility." (Shellenbarger 2008:57)
Recreation, then, was considered a form of therapy, especially outdoor recreation. The establishment of government run public parks allowed every citizen, not just the wealthy, the ability to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors and beautiful spaces.

The emergence of ‘the wilderness cult in the early twentieth century (Anderson 2016) created an interest in outdoor recreation. Americans began camping, riding, fishing, hiking, and seeking the outdoors, in greater numbers. They began entering into a more personal relationship with nature, perceiving their natural world less as a meditative appreciation than an arena in which to experience a more intensified and, by implication, a more satisfying association with nature. The wilderness as an experience, rather than the wilderness as an aesthetic, presumed the absence of civilization and its artifacts. In roughing it, Mark Twain wrote of waking at dawn during a camping trip at Lake Tahoe, "There is no end of wholesome medicine in such an experience...The air up there in the clouds is very pure and fine, bracing and delicious. And why shouldn't it be? — it is the same the angels breathe"(Twain 1835).

Prompted by a romantic tendency to associate wilderness with the frontier and America's pioneering past see it as a locus of noble primitivism, and perceive it as a sanctuary of renewal and relaxation, the "average citizen could approach wilderness with the viewpoint of the vacationer rather than the conqueror. Specifically, the qualities of solitude and hardship that had intimidated many pioneers were likely to be magnetically attractive to their city-dwelling grandchildren” (Shellenbarger 2008:57-58). Americans wanted to be able to, conveniently, experience the wilderness during short family excursions; which was made possible by the increased quality of life and advent of modern conveniences related to transportation(Anderson 2016).
The notion of wilderness as experience is the largest idealistic attraction. Since the population increase in the 1950s and 1960s (Colorado State Archives 2005) the focus has been on the experience of the wilderness. Colorado is defined by its landscape. The tourism industry, which arguably supports Colorado industry as well as a large percentage of residents of such destinations, was founded upon the idealized notion of the west and the rugged pioneer. The development was built around the landscape, not just that, but around the idea of a pure and untamed land. The irony of this was of the landscape but the discursive construction of the landscape and the literal destruction of the land (ASX Staff 2012). Well into the 1970s this irony, that is evident now, was largely overlooked. It has now been acknowledged that Americans have always been complicit in the frontier myth of the West and its destruction.

The rapid destruction of the environment from tourism centered on the experience of the wilderness caused a tremendous amount of anxiety from citizens. The state’s burgeoning economy was largely the result of people wanting to experience the mythic American west. As an effect of the rapid state growth, old mining sites and longstanding cabins were threatened with destruction from developers with the hopes of capitalizing in the region as experiential outdoor tourism blossomed. There was an outcry from those who depended on the allure of the wilderness and the aesthetics of the American frontier. State and local conservation organizations fought to preserve what in the late twentieth century as ‘historic sites,’ sites that glorified the state's pioneer past and would inspire the continuation of the intrigue and captivation of the American spirit.

The mid to late nineteenth-century expansion and development of the American West necessitated a new relationship with the landscape and the intrigue of the wilderness. The ideology of the mythic Colorado, as it has often appeared in art, is that of the landscape. The two
are inseparable, and a new Western ideology has been forming since. The new ideology of the West and Colorado, in particular, is that of western landscapes, trees, deserts, houses, roads, and construction, which remains centered on the aesthetic discourse of the landscape, but now it is of a ‘man-made wilderness.’ It is about the American myths of the West, suburban expansion, the American dream, and the exploitation and destruction of natural resources. Bright observed that “beauty, preservation, development, exploitation, and regulation… are historical matters in flux, not essential conditions of the landscape” (Bright 1985:). They are, however, vital components of the cultural construction of ‘landscape.’

From the 1990s into the twenty-first century western regionalism has reemerged with a new purpose of conservation rather than that of conquering and taming. This new spirit of the American West, and especially that of the mountains, draws a line between the West of legend and that of fact. This new view is that of progress. The West of the 1890s is dead. While the mystique of the frontier past still exists, ingrained in the Colorado identity, a new dogma of the West is forming. There remains, and will remain an understanding of and pride in Western history, but the West that thrives today recognizes the reality, complexity and consequences of conquest in shaping the West, and exposes the mythic West of the popular imagination to greater scrutiny (Shellenbarger 2008:32). It is still the ‘Spirit of the West’, but this new West is formed on the new view of the west and is looking forward rather than remaining in the past.

*The second home:*

The second home is a curious aspect of Colorado’s cultural landscape. In the twenty-first century, the height of luxury and happiness could very well be space and silence. In a densely populated world dominated and polluted by noise and urban commotion, it is a great privilege to
be able to own and enjoy a space separate from the pressures and stresses of urban life. A second homeowner refers to individuals and families who relocate to a residence, which they own, in the Colorado mountains for some portion of the year for the primary purpose of recreation and leisure (Shellenbarger 2008:15).

The notion of a second home in Colorado has been a longstanding tradition that created a collision between concepts of culture and nature that shaped, and continue to shape, Colorado’s cultural landscape. These homeowners altered the natural landscape physically and perceptually to live with it and in it, actively participating in the creation of seasonal homes and seasonal lives, which traversed the boundaries between community engagement and individual escape (Shellenbarger 2008:13). Those seeking a landscape of wilderness came to Colorado, some seeking solitude and wilderness, and others in quest of camaraderie. Early vacationers eloquently describe the place of the valleys and the grandeur of the mountains, as well as the benefits of escaping the strictures and stresses of urban life. However, by returning annually, they created communities characterized by a distinctive form of kinship that ebbed and flowed with the seasons (Shellenbarger 2008:13). The desire for refuge was infused with a strong sense of communal and social that mediated between the culture of the cities and the splendor of the natural world. Yi-Fu Tuan states, "The more Americans participate in, and indeed lead the world in, globalism, the more they yearn for locality, tradition, and roots—for the hearths and ethnoses that they can directly experience and understand, for the small milieu that yields emotional satisfaction" (Tuan 1996:104).

Early second homes in Colorado were summer homes, symbolically referent to the traditional and idealized American home, represented by the pioneer log cabin, the simple colonial dwelling, or even the New England cottage (Faherty 2007). The summer home served as
a conduit for creating subtly shaped perceptions of place. The summer home transitioned into the second home with the advent and popularity of outdoor winter recreation. For their owners, second homes embodied and reflected distinctive notions of place that traversed a terrain far beyond the vast, general, and prepackaged appeal of Colorado to tourists (Shellenbarger 2008:12). The Colorado appeal for second home owners was more nuanced and subtle than the place is known to tourists and artists of the frontier and wilderness. It is not that of myth and legend. For a cabin or cottage dweller, an evolving sense of place was, in part, due to a rather distinctive seasonal migration. No longer was the migration and settlement about moving from east to west in their ‘conquest’ of the frontier, but rather “as those of the butterfly, the hummingbird, and the college student on his or her way home for the summer” (Shellenbarger 2008:13). It became less of east to west movement, and much more cyclical: returning to their cabins and cottages year after year. This allowed them to form a singular relationship with their dwelling and its environs. The place translated into something much less transparent than the Colorado mountains and included ideas of identity and collective memory, the natural and cultural landscapes that accrued to a very specific location and ideas of home (Shellenbarger 2008:12-13).

Colorado’s second homes convey an intriguing narrative of mostly vernacular buildings and forms that embody complex notions of tradition and modernity at once. In the early twentieth-century, neither local nor seasonal residents of Colorado’s mountain communities hesitated in accepting and even encouraging modern innovations. Early railroads and stages, cabin resorts and guest ranches, sawmills and steam-powered automobiles were rapidly followed by improved roads, gasoline-powered cars, electricity, sewage treatment plants, telephone exchanges, all manner of retail establishments, and home builders and developers as well
(Shellenbarger 2008:14). Given the readily available industrially produced goods and building products, rusticity of design and functional primitivism of one’s second home were clearly individual choices that reflect, in part, different sets of expectations different than today. Many second home owners purposefully rejected modern conveniences in their homes, some due to budget constraints and others due to philosophical principles, embracing a simpler, although not necessarily easier seasonal life (Shellenbarger 2008:14).

The second home in the mid-twentieth century continued the ideology of both escape and the return or experience of the wilderness. A brochure from 1960 declares “Leisure living is twice the fun in a second home!” (Douglas Fir Plywood Association 1960:3). The brochure advertising the use of Douglass Fir plywood exuberantly describes the phenomenon of the American second home as “one million American cabin-owning families can’t be wrong… getting away from it all in a family hideaway is more fun” (Douglas Fir Plywood Association 1960:3). The pamphlet goes on to explain that Americans were enjoying longer vacations and more free time. With the construction of better roads, motorists were able to get away from urban locations with increased ease and “this mass exodus to the mountains, desert or seashore is easy to understand and – even better- fun to participate in” (Douglas Fir Plywood Association 1960:3)

![Ownership of Housing Units](image)

Table 2: Number of Housing Units and % of Non-Local Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Non-Local</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitkin</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Today, a similar ideological concept remains, although the ownership of a second home is much more of a luxury than in the past. Homes are designed much larger, usually to accommodate sizeable amounts of friends or family, but the aesthetics remain rooted in the historical and mythicized notions of the frontier past. Homes are still being designed in the rustic cabin aesthetic, with the intention of capturing the spirit of Colorado as it appeared, and to a great extent appears, in connection to the wilderness. It is more of a retreat escape now, with all of the newest conveniences emblematic of the wealth necessitated by the ownership of a Colorado mountain second home today. According to a report conducted by the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments in 2004, sixty percent of the housing units in Eagle, Grand Jackson, Pitkin and Summit are second homes (Venturoni 2004:2). The effect of this highly concentrated seasonal residency means that the development creates a demand for workers above that of the traditional tourist industry, especially in construction but also in their maintenance and operational use (Venturoni 2004:5). The study goes on to conclude that because second homes take up land in mountain areas where developed land is limited, values of the properties and the surrounding land increases in value, which surpasses the wage paid for worker housing. Second homes have generated the need for more workers, but the rise in property values and subsequent housing costs have made it difficult for the workers to live within a reasonable distance of their place-of-work.

Perhaps one of the most extravagant and extreme examples of the twenty-first century second home is the RRL Ranch in Ouray County in the very southwest tip of Colorado in the San Juan mountains owned by Ralph Lauren. Built on 16,000 acres of land, Ralph Lauren furnished and decorated the different houses on the ranch in a manner that justifies his title of 'the man who defined American style'. Each of the five guesthouses or cabins, the main Lodge House, the
Cook House, and the four giant tepees exemplify Western style in the choice of fabrics, leathers, woods, colors and objects. Everything within these sturdy, red cedar log cabins speaks of the region’s strong identity: its people, craftsmanship and past (HOUSE 2015). Ralph Lauren, filled with the characteristic sentiment of a Colorado second home owner, intonated “…The minute we saw it, that was it. This is a place for friends and children. They come with their friends and we with ours. The other day, I was shocked by a telephone call about my next fashion show, because I felt so far away from the city here. Here nature - the elements, the mountain, and the animals - overwhelms you. It has no ties with the world outside” (HOUSE 2015).

Second home owners have always been drawn to Colorado seeking recreation, a healthful environment, a form of solitude unavailable in urban environments, an escape from the summer heat, or just the magnificent scenery itself. However, no matter what it is they sought, these seasonal residents brought with them a complex set of values and conventions surrounding the home and notions of domesticity. Second homes at the turn of the twentieth century are a narrative of freedom, agency, and individual invention. The American weekend home was no less ideological than its grand antecedents, its sources of inspiration were different from a permanent residence, usually vernacular: the pioneer cabin, the fisherman’s shack, the mountain chalet. The log cabin in particular communicated American spirit and endurance; it embodied the frontier spirit and the wilderness experience; it was relatively undemanding to build; and it utilized America’s most abundant natural resource, timber (Shellenbarger 2008:350). The log cabin represented a rugged and primitive life that few could wish for themselves but held an appeal for short periods.
WHAT IS COLORADO DESIGN?

Colorado does not have one particular regional design. Colorado, like most of the U.S., does not have a long national history, its cultural history extends far beyond the European Colonization. However, the design paradigm in Colorado focuses on the rustic cabin, brought to the continent by German and Scandinavian settlers. This study does not concentrate on the influence of Native American populations and residential design, although that facet is still present. Focusing on the national history of the US and the movements to create a national culture and ideology as well as the local history and influence of Colorado populations from the twentieth century into the twenty-first.

The U.S., in its two centuries of nationhood, rallied nationalism from the land itself rather than cultural traditions since those had not been formed. Colorado has only recently celebrated 100 years since its ratification of statehood, in 1976. Still, with its relatively short history, is clinging onto the cultural landscape left over from the frontier days. Trying to preserve a sense of the pioneer and Colorado as the great American West, specifically the Colorado Mountain West. The state’s relatively short history and emphasis on western regionalism have created an unshakeable need to preserve the historical context from which the success of the Colorado has blossomed. This grounds the state identity in the past.

The twenty-first century Colorado is as much defined by the contours of the Rocky Mountains as it is by the rapid growth of the cityscape. The cultural landscape is something that is worked upon and does work upon other things and people, riddled with ambiguities. This means progress though progress does not mean abandoning the past, but rather recognizing its limitations and working toward an idea of the ‘better.’ The very notion of a cultural landscape
implies a set of complex, casual, uncontrollable and often messy environs which make up the lived world. Identities are assembled and disassembled and meaning created and recreated, as a locus of insider as well as outsider perceptions, as a form of constantly changing representations, and as an area in which the natural and the cultural may collide and combine (Shellenbarger 2008:22).

Regarding design, that of residential design, there is not one design. The History Colorado website the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation lists thirty-eight different styles of Colorado’s historic architecture and fifteen separate forms. However, when most people think of ‘Colorado design’ most often they think of Rustic: a Mountain Style, harkening back to the days of early statehood. Most of Colorado’s historic homes were built in the 1920’s and 30s, with some mid-century modern styles (Prairie and Usonian) from the 1960’s and 70s. The diversity in architecture is indicative of diversification in the population and increasingly global influences. However, it is necessary to realize that most of this architectural style experimentation happened in urban areas, in Denver neighborhoods, and within the surrounding Front Range communities. Of the 38 styles History Colorado lists, very few remain and even less are still popular today. Historically, the experimentation of the 1920s and 30s is not unsurprising considering the burgeoning population, moving west after World War I. Regarding the rising American middle class, one’s home was viewed as a strong reflection of both the current and potential moral character of its occupants. Its beauty reflected their taste, its functionality their industriousness, and its inventiveness their progressiveness (Shellenbarger 2008:348). The house was both shaped character and was a reflection of character. Strong moral integrity would derive from surrounding oneself with beautiful and practical objects. Thus, American domestic
architecture was recognized as an important agent in the development of the individual and by extension national character.

“Traditionally” Colorado

“Wood, wood, wood, wood, wood” complained Diane, a resident of Breckenridge Colorado, about popular design styles in her town. For quite a few, the rejection of modern appears to be a desirable aspect of the ‘rustic mountain’ experience. The design experimentation in the twentieth century stayed largely in more densely populated urban areas. The Colorado mountain towns never fully experienced diversification in residential design, thereby remaining anomalies; bubbles relatively isolated from the changes in design trends, content in existing along the ebbs and flows of seasonal tourism.

The virtually unchanged aesthetics of the Colorado mountains have become the Colorado ‘type’ because the mountains are every bit as much a part of the narrative of the region as they are a part of its geography. The region is rarely depicted when the land is not cast as a major character (Gary Ferguson). The cabins and cottages, lodges and camps, speak of an earlier time in Colorado against which the ski resorts, exceedingly handy icons of the ever-expanding commercial development in the Colorado mountains serves as an interesting foil. Each in its way tells distinct stories of choice and place; ideas and images of the Mountain West; individual identity and collective memory; work and play; leisure and recreation. The built environment that both alters the landscape and embodies the desires of those who create it and live in it (Antique Home Styles 2016). The mountains are typified by their residents and what they want from their home. The mountains are the biggest draw for tourists who want to experience the mysticism cultivated by intrigue, revere, and legend of the wilderness.
The myth and lore surrounding the log cabin grew in the nineteenth century through a stream of literature and art. William S. Wicks wrote in the ninth edition of his book *Log Cabins and Cottages: How to Build and Furnish them*, “In the judgment of the writer no material equals the log, and no cabin or cottage looks so well as one built of logs. One essential of a log cabin or cottage and its furniture is that as far as possible, they should be made on the spot and with the material at hand” (Wicks 1908:8). The log cabin was symbolically the opposite of urban architecture, city life, and technology. However, such Rustic style lodges and cabins speak to Colorado’s earlier days against which ski resorts, exceedingly handy icons of the ever-expanding commercial development in the Colorado mountains, serve as an interesting complement. A significant portion of Colorado’s housing market is dominated by second home owners coming to Colorado and want the ‘cabin feel,’ the wilderness experience where they can spend a few weeks a year taking part in the Western fantasy. According to Robert Dietz from the National Association of Home Builders, second homes in Colorado are concentrated in communities within the Rocky Mountains based on data from the 2009 American Community Survey. Summit County’s second homes make up 50.01% or more of the total share of housing stock, with 10,001 or more second homes within the county. Meanwhile, in Denver and Boulder County, second homes make up only 5% or less of the housing stock, and between 1,001 to 5,000-second homes (Dietz 2011). These trends explain why residential styles have remained rather homologous, people buying in the area and wanting their mountain home to exemplify the popular image of the Mountains as rustic while homes in Denver and Boulder have experienced the ebb and flow of changing popular styles between decades. Both Boulder and Denver are communities play host to year-round residents who experience the demands of Colorado life and
chose design style based on their needs rather than an idealized vision of the state and its landscape.

Suzanne Allen, an architect, based out of Breckenridge, estimates that “in Summit County probably…50-60 percent of my projects are in more of a rustic style, even though there might be some contemporary elements,” the overall look and feel of these newly designed homes are generic. “They don’t want out of the box” Suzanne explains of the significant population of Texans investing in the County. The images below illustrate the cultural geometry of the ‘traditional’ Colorado. Figure 6 is a rustic cabin interior from the early years of the twentieth century. Figure 7 is a rustic cabin interior from the early years of the twenty-first century. With nearly a decade separating these two images, the style is largely identical. Figure 8 is a cabin located on Ralph Lauren’s Colorado ranch encapsulates the mythological ideal of Colorado design which remains the forefront of Colorado’s cultural geometry because second home owners, such as Ralph Lauren, purchase in Colorado with the desire to experience the cultural ideal of the old Colorado mountain west. Since these seasonal residents migrate to the state at scheduled intervals throughout the year, they experience the state through the lens of the rustic, cozy, retreat.
Figure 8: Nelle Stevenson. Longs Peak Inn. Photograph. 1907. Colorado Historical Society, ID 84.128.3

Quiet Design: 21st-century design for the contemporary landscape

Colorado is shifting away from the nineteenth and twentieth-century concepts of the region. People are demanding something new. This is not to say that the deeply rooted connection to the state’s geography is any less moving or revered, rather that the ways in which it is appreciated are changing. The state as a whole is defined by its geography, especially the mountains, which have guided Colorado’s history and will continue to shape its future. Colorado design, especially domestic design, is increasingly moving toward that of innovation. John Brinkerhoff Jackson wrote that "landscape is history made visible" (Jackson 1997:x). This statement is nowhere as clear as the remains of old mining camps found half-forgotten on the side of a hiking trail, or long abandoned mining sites glanced at as the waves of traffic move along I-70. These are relics of a west that no longer exists. A new western dream is taking shape; one that seeks to preserve the wilderness rather than conquer it; one that craves the wilderness experience cultivated through an amorous relationship between nature and culture.

Figure 10: Alpine Modern Café, 2015. Courtesy of Alpine Modern.
Quiet design is elegant and appropriate. It is not showy or spectacular, simply gently pleasing. The idea behind this design idea is that every day there are constant flashing lights, screens buzzing, and advertisements blaring; modern lives are not quiet. So when a space is discovered that is quiet, it is a welcome space; enticing by the general sense of ease and comfort. People are always searching for quieter, nicer or whatever it may be, and in a noisy world a quiet place is refreshing. A space which doesn’t have anything loud or vibrant, no promotional material advertising something unnecessary, one that is just quiet, but intentionally quiet, becomes a new kind of retreat.

Leigh, a returning Denver resident, explains that as a young population “we’re really visual, and we’re definitely more encouraged to express ourselves through the visual.” She explains that most of what she does as a graphic designer is on the computer, but also her spare time is spent watching TV, or browsing the internet, which is always visually intensive. “We’re bombarded with a lot of media from the beginning,” she says. She references the Disney Channel shows she would watch as a child, and all of the colorful toy commercials and cartoons. Then growing up and going to the mall where every store has a million sale signs and, even more product adds. Even driving down the road, there are hundreds of billboards yelling at the drivers and passengers. “We are bombarded with media at every turn, and it’s everywhere!” Leigh complains. “It’s kind of nice to escape with spaces where there are not a million things bombarding you. Its clean and simple and relaxing. It’s like you can breathe again.”

Quiet design inspires beauty, even in the simplest of objects, from its usefulness and neatness. It is a design in which fewer, better things combine in everyday life and experiencing one’s surroundings as aesthetically meaningful. Lon’s view on life in the twenty-first century is
that “it’s just, it’s too loud. And people are really just, you know... they can’t get on board with that as a lifestyle... after too long, and get too fatigued.”

The notion of ‘quiet design’ is emerging as a kind of cultural geometry analogous to the political significance of Swedish Design. Within the familiar simplicity of form and style reminiscent of the twentieth-century modern era, the geometry exhibited in explorations of new cultural lines in Colorado is progressing from a steadily growing movement based on the need for a collective idea of the ‘better’; engrained in the necessity for environmental sustainability and conservation. Just as Swedish design, and indeed, the larger Scandinavian design, is cemented into the cultural consciousness as morally good, and designed to care for the user with ease and simplicity, so too, is Colorado’s quiet design formed with the moral ambition of improvement, care and ultimately the idea of being ‘better.’

Any examination of the twentieth century Colorado must acknowledge the fundamental urban transformation and cultural diversity. Such diversity is transcribed into the architecture of the area; most houses in Colorado are not rustic. However, when most people think of Colorado, they envision the mountains, and paired with that association is Colorado’s rustic mountain style. This is already changing. Colorado has a growing young generation between the ages of 18 and 35, bringing with them new ideas about what it means to live in Colorado. The stories and photography emerging from the region expresses an emerging design ethos of a more natural, minimal and refined life. Utility and everyday beauty inspired by the landscape are at the center of this phenomenon. There seems to be an intentionality in objects and design that appeal to twenty-first-century sensibilities and preferences. The less is more philosophy is growing, both because of the moral quality attached to this ethos- better environmental sustainability consumption patterns, as well as the economic restrictions of younger residents.
Colorado urban design in the twentieth century largely followed national trends while remaining centered on pride in the state’s mountain identity. Throughout its just over a century old history as a state, design has been focused on its mining and pioneer history. This is not necessarily changing. Western regionalism remains strong. What is changing is the way in which that historical identity is being reimagined with the necessities of the current era. Remnants of outdated ideologies of the American West and the mythicized mountains endure; however, residents of Colorado recognize the changing contexts. Robbie, an architect in Summit County, has witnessed his clientele requesting much more solar applications, especially the incorporation of passive solar into their homes. He recognizes that with the environmental concerns and the materials people are using, there has been more of a shift away from the typical mountain home. These new technologies aimed at resource conservation, and begin to change the design of the house “not always in ways you notice just looking at them or driving by, or walking through them, because a lot of those changes are happening on a technical level in the insides of walls with choices of thinks like insulation and choices of things like heating systems and appliances.” Robbie continues “I would say more environmentally focused homes that have more of the energy criteria are designed, sometimes look [more modern] because of the amount of glass they have facing south.”

Designing residential spaces in a mountain landscape poses challenges on a technical level, with the need to consider extremes of temperature and climate. However, the opportunity to create a window to such a powerful view allows creative ways of both framing the vista as well as connecting with it. Building in this context requires a certain sensitivity to nature itself. Eric, a business owner, in partnership with his wife Lua, just designed their new Modern
mountain house. Reflecting upon the changing cultural geometry in Colorado he passionately explains the new ethos for mountain living he has begun noticing in Summit County.

“I think people when they came to the mountains for decades, it had to have the log home feel. It had to be that stone fireplace feel, well as summit county is one of the most desirable places to live in in the nation, it naturally attracts wealthier, more style minded people, who don’t want that really bold feel. They don’t want that cigar room, cabin feel. But they still recognize that they are in the mountains. So I think it’s a really strong alternative in architecture in the mountains to become more modern and a little metropolitan with the softer lines, with the straighter squared off line structure as opposed to circles, so much. And that’s for the architecture, the windows, the space, the cabinets... everything.”

He believes that this trend will continue because, by its intention, marries itself well with the environmentally conscious. It is the lifestyle and preferences for design that are the driving factor because this design lends itself to eco-friendly options: “the lighting, the spacing, the heating, the cooling and the functionality.”

Quiet design is, therefore, becoming the aesthetic of environmental sustainability.

Elsewhere in the state, design is taking a giant leap forward, incorporating the necessity of environmental conservation with design that respects the landscape in which it exists, rather than imposing development upon it. For example, Creede Colorado has taken the “funky old shacks and miners cabins” in the area, as well as “the extraordinary mining structures that cling to the cliffs of Willow Creek” (Creede America 2016).
They are encouraging an evolution in residential design that brings a twenty-first-century lens to the old tradition of the cabin in the mountains. Creede advertises their new interpretation of the mountain cabin, declaring that “This is the Real West” (Creede America 2016).
In Boulder County, too, people are swaying in the direction of design blending quietly and thoughtfully with the landscape. Boulder architect Renee del Gaudio rebuilt her home after the 2008 forest fire that destroyed her previous house. According to the article in Dwell, she used the new ‘virgin’ landscape and her experiences to design a new home. The façade of her house is now one hundred percent fire-resistant using corrugated metal, there are extensive windows throughout the structure, taking advantage of both the sun, as well as the newly expansive view of Boulder’s Flatirons (Walker 2014).

The relationship between land and building in Colorado is of the highest importance. With the increasing popularity of the quiet design type, new residences are beginning to frame a particular perspective of the landscape without intruding upon it. Indeed, Peggy Deamer et. al, explains that houses in the new millennium exhibit the need to “establish a sympathetic relationship to the land, to mark the passage of time, to make seamless transitions between activities”(Deamer et al. 2004:9), does not imply the need or desire for traditional architecture. Such fundamentals of the daily routine can be accommodated and explored in both unusual and familiar ways.
PERMANENT VACATION: LUXURY, CONSERVATION, AND DISTINCTION

“In a word, I would define Colorado design as a whole as changing. Yes, I would say it needs to change. And I think we’re at a point where because of the environment because of the restrictions and space, because of the influx of people moving here, wanting to live here, it’s causing a very cramped and tight lifestyle that you have to modernize. You have to get cleaner with and more organized with. And you have to be more eco-minded when you do all of these things. So I think it is changing, dramatically. You can’t have single family homes. You are already seeing that. That’s almost a thing of the past. You have to match the environment more so than in the past. And we are at the brink of design change in Colorado.”
- Eric, [Summit County resident and entrepreneur]

Design in Colorado has been marked by several periods of rapid domestic migration. Within the last five years, the state’s popularity has risen, making Denver a destination for younger populations. As of a 2014 New York Times article, the city’s young and educated population has increased forty-seven percent since 2000. In fact, about 7.5 percent of Denver’s metro area population consists of recent college graduates. The national average was at about 5.2 percent (Miller 2014). This drastic shift of residents in Colorado’s capital has brought new demands regarding the state’s cultural identity. While the synchronic stability of Colorado identity remains largely intact, there are signs of shifting preferences. The state has recognized the need to redirect western regional pride toward creating a new collective definition of ‘better,’ as a path toward environmental conservatism.

Looking at the state of home design in Colorado through the lens of Bourdieu’s theories regarding structures and the habitus, resident’s attitudes regarding ideas of luxury living, environmental conservationism, and an aversion to ‘commonness,’ are apparent. Assessing Colorado residents’ practices through an analysis of the habitus and the social world within the state context reveal a deeper understanding as to why the cultural geometry is shifting, and a
deeper understanding of current attitudes toward the home and the condition of residential design.

COLORADO HOMES AND LIFESTYLES:

Figure 13: Colorado’s new state Logo. 2014.

Colorado, since 2013, has been banding behind the new state slogan: “It’s Our Nature” (brandCOLORADO 2014). Evocative of both the renown scenery as well as the state’s residents. Colorado’s recent campaign to rebrand the state has been felt by its residents, even if the redirection of the governance has passed largely unnoticed. Changes are happening on an institutional level as well as through changes in Colorado’s residential population and geographical landscape. With the twenty-first century developments in both policy and cultural landscape, Colorado’s popularity continues to grow. Now in 2016, US News named Denver the best place to live (Hearsum 2016).

One of the most important topics regarding both lifestyle and residential style is the inclusion of environmentally sustainable practices. The environment is such an essential aspect of life in Colorado; most of the state’s residents have a deep connection to the outdoors. Inger moved to the US as an interior design student when she was 18, has lived in Colorado for a few decades, moving to Conifer from Tennessee in the 1990’s. She loves “just being out and you know, being in the dirt. It was fun. Didn’t have to be much. Wasn’t much. I mean.” She believes
that Colorado is a great place to live, “I feel like I have much better quality of life here than I did in Tennessee.” Inger has noticed the active, outdoor lifestyle characteristic of the area is “so easy. Because when we lived in Tennessee it was so humid…you didn’t even feel like doing so much. And here we have the mountain range, and it’s so easy to find hiking trails. It’s so easy to be active.”

Hillary, a graphic designer in her mid-twenties, moved to the Denver area about two years ago from San Diego, California. “I want to get closer to the mountains,” she says. In the short time that Hillary has been a Colorado resident, she has taken every opportunity to make the most out of her new landscape. “I’ve done so much exploring in the year and a half that I’ve lived here” she exclaims, “like I’m really impressed with myself.” For her, the most important thing about living in this state is the wide open spaces and disconnecting herself from technology. Hillary laughs as she admits that she doesn’t know if she could live in San Diego again. “I have this access to the Rocky Mountains now…I feel like I just crave it. Like I want to be out.”

Life in Colorado is focused on experiencing the outdoors. There is a renewal of the romantic idea of being connected to the environment. There is a sense that people are searching for something outside themselves, it’s a new take on finding the sublimity in the wilderness, however, rather than experiencing the solitude and reclusiveness in nature as a connection to the divine, people in the twenty-first century experience the solitary pursuit of sublimity in nature as a form of escapism.
Images such as this one have found their place in twenty-first-century ideology about the mountains and the wilderness. Increasingly, there is a re-inspired desire to search for solitude. Images of a single subject with a backdrop of a stunning and quite often eerie landscape have become increasingly popular in the last several years. As much as images such as Figure 12 captured the romantic spirit blossoming in this young century, they have also become a prestigious form of cultural capital, showing the individual in an objectified state. The active value of such neo-romantic images is that of displaying the subject through the lens of ideological values, accepted by the habitus of Colorado [and other such regions where experiencing the landscape is a valued, quite homogeneously, as modus operandi] (Bourdieu 1984:172-73). Take, for instance, Figure 13: Caroline, a photographer in her early twenties, took
a day trip up Boulder’s Flatirons, she asked another hiker along the trail to capture an image of her in this neo-romantic style. The composition is evocative of eighteenth-century European Romantic paintings, particularly of Caspar David Friedrich’s ‘Wanderer above the sea of fog’ (Friedrich 1818).

![Figure 15: Photograph by Caroline, 2016, Boulder Flatirons.](image)

This photographic trend is not limited to human subjects to capture the re-found intrigue in capturing solidarity and sublimity. Architecture has been appearing in images such as Figure 14, or Figure 15. Similar ideas accompany the new solitary dwelling as they do the solitary individual. They represent an objectification of connecting to the natural.
Still, with a state growing at the rate Colorado has been growing, there is a large percentage of the population who are not ‘super outdoorsy’ as Hillary describes them. Just like anywhere, the Colorado social world is not entirely homologous. There are variants of individual habitus that have created a diversity within homogeneity of the state’s social values. However, this is not uncommon. There are always exceptions to generalizations. That is an issue of the state’s government working to find a collective direction for the future of Colorado. However, the importance of the landscape to Colorado is unquestioned, mountain iconography even taking the visual emphasis of the state logo [Figure 11], it is, therefore, logical that the popular idea of ‘better’ includes environmental preservation, conservation, and inspiration.
**Inspiration**

Design in Colorado has always been inspired by the landscape. It is just as influential today as it was when the pioneers were settling the western frontier. Today, that inspiration comes from other sources than just the natural resources. Lon speaks of an aesthetic inspiration over design. Although, aesthetic appreciation leads to architectural or design inspiration. The mountains hold an unbelievable attraction to those who grew up surrounded by them. Lon, who grew up in Vail, and attended CU Boulder, moved away, and then came back.

“The thing I really love about the mountains in terms of design, I think what influences design, especially the architecture so much is, you know… the quietness of the design in the mountains. That’s so different than anywhere else. Like if you go to like Florida or something, you’re in, in the jungle. It’s very loud. There’s tons of colors, tons of like flora and fauna and it’s just like whoa. An explosion of like colors. You can see that in the art and things, it’s like very colorful and wild, which is really beautiful. But in the mountains you’ve got like the top of the tree line you have snowy peaks. It’s all white. Or you have white and green, and it’s something very modern or magic, [or brown I joke, referring to the beetle kill] yeah or brown. But it’s very monochromatic, and it creates, I think, serenity in that. And I think that’s really interesting, and you don’t get that in a lot of places. I mean people love our aesthetic. They are in awe, [it’s] just really perfect. And it’s just very cool. So I think that has a lot of unique qualities. I find that just very beautiful.”

Eric, very animatedly, told the story of how he became inspired by the land and wanted to bring that into the design of his new home. Design from the landscape. “You know, Emily…” he starts. “My brother used to live in the dune house; you can google that later.” It’s a Jacksonville Florida house built by William Morgan, to keep the landscape natural, and not disrupt his ocean view next door (Small House Bliss 2012). Eric spent three months in the Dune House before He and Lua built their house, or opened their second store. He described how he had spent many, many hours with William Morgan, who was going through cancer treatments at the time, discussing design. Eric continues that the two of them “spoke a lot about all of these lines and
being different, and yet clean and organized and structured, really stepping up the bounds of normal, or more typical design.” He took those discussions to heart with his home design, trying to emulate those same kinds of lines. He is referring, not to the Dune House, which is rather organic and circular like “looking from inside the skull of an alien,” but rather other of Morgan’s work.

“His other stuff is very angular, very sharp or squared off lines. And those lines much like the art museum or the convention center in Denver, the modern art museum in Denver. Those jagged, sharp, unique lines lend themselves to the surroundings, not just the surrounding environment, the mountains. You know, that’s obviously where we pulled the inspiration, but it actually fits. A big old round building wouldn’t fit because you look around you, and you see angular mountains. So it’s more paying an attribute to where you live, much like people in the southwest America are going to have the adobe look. The rounded look, they have these adobe huts and homes because they match the environment. Going back to our mountain modernist design concept, we wanted it to fit well in Frisco because we’re surrounded by angular mountains and it makes sense here. Those are the lines I am referring to.”

*Preservation: laws and movements creating an ethos of environmental protectionism*

Preservation is an important and rather large focus for Colorado. The Colorado Historical Society and the Colorado Parks Department and Colorado’s Forest service have run to enormous lengths to preserve Colorado’s historic architecture. Most small towns in Colorado have city planning regulations to keep that quaint look and feel in the downtown area. For most places this includes height restrictions to preserve mountain views, as well as growing support for state efforts to temper light pollution (Finley 2015). Developmental restrictions within the state reveal a common love of nature, unsurprising given the Colorado’s history and thriving green-industry. Other ordinances include new structures following the old style or maintaining the integrity of
the existing buildings. Zoning laws and regulations are municipal specific, but most towns and cities have enforced preservation ordinances or zonings (OAHP 2015).

Colorado’s preservation efforts are directed toward both environmental preservation and historical preservation; although, quite often these two valued areas are connected in efforts of preservation. For instance, environmental protection restricts land development. Regulatory sanctions are implemented to protect the integrity of Colorado towns. Such sanctions seek to protect historic districts from being replaced with large-scale retail or housing projects or prevents land development from destroying the archeology of ghost towns or abandoned residences left from the pioneer days or when mountain men explored and hunted in Colorado’s wilderness.

There are quite a few organizations dedicated to the preservation of Colorado’s history: Colorado Historical Society, History Colorado, Colorado Preservation, and local town historical societies and museums. Most efforts are directed throughout the state through advocacy, education, outreach and preservation services (Colorado Preservation, Inc. 2016). According to Kimber Lanning’s Keynote presentation at the 2016 Saving Places Conference, in areas where there are older, smaller buildings and mixed-vintage blocks, “you see significantly greater walkability; younger residents and a greater mix of people at different stages of life; greater nightlife and cultural vitality; more jobs, creative jobs, and businesses per square foot; more women and minority-owned businesses, non-chain businesses, small businesses, and new business.” She also notes that having a connection to a place—whether that be from maintaining older buildings, outreach programs, or community applications—people are more likely to vote, volunteer, give charitably, and pay taxes (Lanning 2016). Many towns historic districts take this to heart and strive to keep the façade of the building’s exterior protected. Breckenridge is
encouraging residents to purchase and restore historic buildings in the district by now allowing the structure to be lifted, and a basement foundation to be dug under the house which would allow the structures square footage to nearly double in some instances. Policies like this promote both respect for state history and keep traditions present for future generations.

The home page of Colorado Prevention, Inc.’s website proudly includes its mission statement to promote historic preservation throughout the state, and their hope that “inspired citizens statewide will honor and protect their heritage, build a sustainable future with historic places and prioritize the past as legacy for generations to come”(Colorado Preservation, Inc. 2016). Colorado’s Department of Education along with the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation provide easily available information on Colorado’s preservation efforts from Architectural biographical series and State Register Properties to local government preservation ordinances(CDE 2016). Colorado’s historical society, History Colorado, opened up a state history museum in downtown Denver about a decade ago, which promotes educational awareness in the state’s youth. From Colorado Prevention, Inc.’s home page the excerpt from the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 states that

“The historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people…the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans”(NHPA 1966) (Colorado Preservation, Inc. 2016).

This statement about the importance of protecting national history holds true for Colorado’s vision of protecting and inspiring preservation for all aspects of Colorado’s history.

Colorado’s environmental preservation has focused on open space protection. Most issues facing open space projects is the lack of funding grants allocated for site maintenance and
pressure from other agents to develop the land (Masur et al. 2008). The Colorado Open Space Alliance is an organization of statewide publically funded local and regional open space programs. Their environmental preservation efforts are centered around ‘sharing information,’ ‘creating public awareness,’ and ‘fostering partnerships’ in order to maintain budgets to keep the open lands free from development and open to the public as parks and outdoor recreation areas (COSA 2016). Colorado Open Lands is a 501(c)3 nonprofit land trust. Since this organization was founded in 1981, it has played a ‘direct’ or ‘critical’ role in protecting over 400,00 acres of Colorado land, and has now leveraged over $284,521,096 of donated land value, and protected 358 miles of Colorado’s waterways (Colorado Open Lands 2016).

Preserving the state’s environment is important to prevent sprawling development. Pollution, land degradation and thereby minimizes human impact on the lands. Unfortunately, areas in Colorado are still recovering from mining, overuse and pollution from the mid-twentieth century and earlier. Preserving the undeveloped and largely untouched spaces in Colorado is a necessary and profound strategy to protect the landscape of this state before conservation and clean-up are even needed.

Conservation:

Environmental conservation has been one of the largest regional design movements developing in the twenty-first century. It is altering the way design is viewed and utilized within Colorado at every level of planning and development—from the state level to the individual resident. In most places there is a recycling bin next to the trashcan on street corners, and countless state-wide annual design awards, strongly featuring innovative ‘green’ structures.
That was one of the driving forces for Diane, a homeowner in Breckenridge, who recently had the opportunity to design and build her home from the ground up, now about six years old. It was in part using the ‘green’ products, but a lot of the appeal also had to do with creating something that was very low maintenance. Diane’s previous house in Breckenridge had “a lot of wood. Wood floors, wood window sills, you know, the casements, all the door frames, door jambs, doors. Everything was wood, wood, wood, wood, wood. And because things would dry out not only outside in the outside siding, but also the inside…. its constantly calling the painter and having him sand and varnish. It was constant, and I thought ‘what is the point,’ you know? This is your life.” When Diane started the process of designing her home and finding the right products to fit her lifestyle, she began looking away from anything that would require maintenance. This restriction ruled out any heavy uses of lumber or wood products that have been an essential aspect of architecture in the county since the first mines were in use. When the design process began for her, about ten years ago, the status of commercially sustainable building materials was in its infancy, but the county building ordinances incentivized the use of sustainable design.

“All these green products were starting to come out, and they were very, not accessible. You couldn’t go look at them in Denver because, you know, they didn’t get to Denver yet. So, with the internet, I was able to search a bunch of products, and I just wanted this next home to be really low maintenance. And the town had just adopted this green building program, which means if you want to build a house you have to gain points for you to build. The points, the way you gain points is, we deconstructed the A-frame that was on the lot, so we got points for that. We used recycled plastic for siding, so we got points for that; I have aluminum windows, so I never have to varnish them, I never have to sand them, so I got points for that. Things like that. So that helped me keep moving toward the modern, the modern look, the modern you know, maintenance free idea.”
The town of Breckenridge points system comes from the Summit County Sustainable Code, Section 4601. It was added to the Summit County Sustainable code in 2012 to encourage the construction of efficient and healthy buildings (Summit County Building Inspection Department 2012). The Sustainable Building Program addresses all residential construction and additions. The program is a points-based system in three sections: Mandatory Measures; Secondary Measures, which includes Intensive Energy Measures; and the Sustainable Building Menu. The Summit Sustainable Building Code Checklist/New SFR calculates the amount of points needed or achieved to build a new structure or build an addition onto an existing structure (High Country Conservation Center 2011). Diane’s house is in compliance with all the new requirements, and even surpassing most of them. At the time, the process was a struggle, one that paid off for her, especially regarding how she saw her life.

“The maintenance thing was always on my mind. All of the green products I wanted to try out some of those. And I have samples of all these green products that I did not use; like I would call and order a sample, and things like that. Some of them I didn’t use, like the counter tops. Well, it was kind of a Plexiglas material, and it just would have scratched, you know, that one didn’t make the cut. And then there were some other products that I didn’t use. But it was certainly fun researching and talking to people. I mean, because of the green building a lot of these products were so new that when you call you would talk to the boss, you would go to the man. Like I would call, and they would go “Oh well, you talk to Joe.” Well, it's Joe’s company. Then I talk to him about the siding. And this other guy Tim has these counter tops. So he and I chatted about the house and, you know, I sent him pictures. And it is just kind of fun to be on that level.”

The novelty of these materials seems to have been appealing for Diane. Her disposition toward Modern design originated from a childhood surrounded by antique furniture both in her childhood home and pieces that her mother would refurbish for clients. Diane’s first significant introduction to new design forms was during a year abroad program during her time at university in Copenhagen, Denmark. She was drawn to the lighter colors of Scandinavian design, and the
functionality. Captivated by the functionalist mentality, that things should serve their purpose perfectly and are beautiful through their use function, she sought to use that philosophy in her home. The novelty of the green products serves as an incorporation of environmental and space management progressivism.

Diane’s deliberate consumption of entirely new products with which to build her home necessitates addressing the question of whether the consumption large amounts of green products in some ways are not environmentally friendly in the sense that it is encouraging further consumption. Similar to Cindy Isenhour’s observations in Sweden, environmental education in the US is focused on consumer responsibility (Isenhour 2010:151). She observed that although there has been a successful reduction in pollution, “the gains achieved through production efficiency and pollution reduction measures were being outstripped by increases in per capita consumption” (Isenhour 2010:151). The same can be said for the US. Advertisements for products made from recycled materials and biodegradable packaging or plastic products are a part of every-day life. Whole Foods sells not only organic food but home wear, hemp clothing, and organic skincare. Advertisements and campaigns for new green technology and products are still a large factor of the mass-consumer culture in the US. Certainly Diane contributed to this by outfitting her home with entirely new material, rather than making do with the old. However, she chose products that would last. All of the siding on her house came from recycled materials and products that won’t need to be replaced. Her investment at the time resembles unsustainable consumption patterns, but in the long run, her house will not waste energy nor require the floors to be replaced as most hardwood floors do after ten or twenty years. Diane’s goal was that she would not have to worry about replacements or any major upkeep again. It is a responsible, sustainable home.
Diane was one of the first homes in Summit County to use almost entirely green products. Her search was difficult, and she brings up an interesting point about sustainability. More people might not be choosing a design in a sustainable direction because the products are scarce, expensive or just simply unavailable. When she was building her house in the early 2000’s, some products she wanted were rare, at best. She sympathizes with the struggle to build in a truly ‘green’ way.

“I’m sure it’s changed now where they're so many different companies doing this stuff. But I think it’s great because I think, you know, we should be going down this road using recycled products, you know things that aren’t so toxic. With windows, that was difficult. We found a company in Denver, but they were the only company that had a commercial line of these types of windows. I am sure now, that has changed, but I can see where people get forced to go backward and pick out something that’s maybe not as environmentally friendly or not quite getting what they want because the builders are pushing them to get what’s easy.”

Figure 17: Diane’s Kitchen. Courtesy of Allen-Guerra Architecture.
She had a good attitude about the challenges of environmentally friendly building. “I had a lot of fights for this one, you know” she admits. “I’m like a baby you know, I’m like "no," she laughs. Her joking manner aside, she had an upward battle to build her dream house.

“Every little detail, you know, you need to think it through. You need to think about okay, so, you know, were going in into our sixth year that we’ve been in this house and things still look good you know and if I would have ordered a different kind of product, you know maybe it wouldn’t look so good right now.”

The overall aesthetic of the house is vastly important, but the progressive movement toward sustainable living has its appeal for those building new houses in the state. The style of one’s home is important. Diane certainly had practical considerations, but the modern design has always been a passion for her. She had just finally had the opportunity to bring that in fruition.

Modern aesthetes were a huge consideration for Lua and Eric as well, a couple who have recently built a new home in Frisco, Colorado. Eric explains that they built their house with functionality in mind. They wanted a home that was tailored to their lifestyle. Energy conservation was not necessarily at the forefront of their design intentions. More than anything, they wanted a place in which they could express themselves. The local listings, according to Eric were not inspired. They were the same designs that have been in the county forever. So, when they had the resources to begin planning what they did want, most of their choices resonated with sustainable design.

“We are a green-certified energy saving house, and that was important to us too because we didn’t want to be burning up the fossil fuels, and so that we were not... it’s been a stretch, but just like how our house smells and how and how it looks, we also wanted it to feel right. we wanted it to have that, that feeling that you’re doing the right thing for the environment, and it makes it more comfortable.”

Eric goes on to explain that the type of design he has used in his new home utilizes the surrounding landscape. A home, he believes, should make the most out of the surrounding
landscape, it should use the available resources while remaining in harmony with nature. Design should be created as a way of living respectfully, especially in such a stunning location. The way a building interacts with its landscape is important. When they designed their home, they added as many windows as they could install, in order to get natural light throughout the day. Eric states, proudly, that they added about twenty percent more windows than their floor plan would have typically required. This isn’t an unusual strategy in green design.

Robbie, an Architect, located in Summit County, spoke passionately about the use of windows in his designs. He explained that the formal term is ‘passive solar,’ in which design and technical choices are made in order to pull in the most amount of sunlight to heat the building, rather than central heating systems. Ideally, passive solar design would “eliminate the need for mechanical cooling and heating, and daytime artificial lighting” (Southface 2016). Design choices have to consider the right amount of glass windows facing south. This helps the building gain heat from the sun, as well as having the correct ratios of windows to square area, and having the correct or adequate amount of thermal mass within the building to be able to be warmed up by the sun and to hold onto the heat once it is gained. Such thermal mass includes dense materials such as concrete, stone or tile that when hit by the sun, converts the solar radiation into heat radiation or UV radiation; the denser the material, the longer it holds the heat.

According to Robbie, the demand for such design choices has been increasing in the last decade. “I’ve always believed in passive solar principles,” he tells explains, “and I have seen a greater desire for it, my own means of persuasion notwithstanding.” The desire for passive solar has risen along with sustainable and green “inner peace type concerns” that Robbie has noticed an increased respect for amongst his clientele. Beyond the passive solar concept, people are also now wanting more recycled materials.
“we use beetle-kill pine in construction, either as paneling of the inside or siding on the outside. The use of other kinds of renewable materials like cork flooring, or reclaimed hardwoods that could be reclaimed from like an old barn or an old railroad trestle bridge and things like that. So those, that whole body of kind of recycled materials or reclaimed materials.”

Robbie animatedly describes advances in Architecture, energy efficiency, and home design. A subject he is clearly very passionate about, saying that he “could go on and on about for days,” the technical side of design, especially energy design. Architects, to maintain their license, are required to attend continuing education programs, such as classes or seminars to learn about innovations and new technology within their field. Robbie has recently been introduced to a renewable power source that may quickly become commonplace for most homes within the next decade or so.

“The next thing to hit our industry in terms of energy design includes companies like Tesla that are changing battery technology very quickly. Lots of houses like you know, homes are too far away from power lines to be connected to power lines but have, generators or solar that work on battery systems that are not unlike nautical systems like you have in a yacht. Tesla, some of their improvements and innovations and battery technology that are put into their cars are starting to go into residential systems. And I would say in the next five years there could be a certain time where it’s cheaper to have the Tesla power wall, that’s what they are called, they are battery systems for residential. There could be a point in the next five years where, it’s cheaper to have a Tesla, off the grid battery-powered household system and the batteries get charged um by the solar power, wind power, and generator, then it will be to buy power from the power company. So that’s something that I think we in our industry are anticipating.”

Such innovative technology could revolutionize sustainable design and conservation initiatives. The technology has been created to reduce the consumption demand on fossil fuels, such as coal or gas. The Powerwall has two main applications: used in companion with solar panels; used without solar applications. When installed with solar panels, the Powerwall uses the converted energy to power a home throughout the day and has enough capacity to power most homes.
during the evening. Without solar, the Powerwall reduces ‘time of use power bills’ by shifting energy consumption throughout the day for the most efficient use of electricity (Tesla 2016).

Tesla is an interesting example. The brand is very much a status symbol representing a level of sustainable technological innovation for the upper classes. The company’s series of battery-powered luxury automobiles signifies a new field of sustainable design along the class lines of a high-end European sports car while promoting sustainability options only for the wealthy. The same may be true for many of the green design choices.

While a 6.4 kWh model of the Tesla Powerwall © for daily cycle applications costs the consumer only $3,000 with a ten-year warranty (Tesla 2016), most sustainable design choices come with a rather large price tag.

A FOREVER HOME: Settling for availability rather than desire.

Not everyone can afford to design their dream homes. Quite often, the price one pays to live in Colorado is settling for what is available or within their budget, rather than what would be ideal. Homes in Colorado are overwhelmingly driven by the housing market and their re-sale value. Sarah Ann, a woman in her early sixties who recently purchased a new house in Longmont, explains that she and her husband Richard made their recent investment because it had a good asking price and values in the neighborhood were escalating. “It has a lot of potential,” she explains. “If we decide we love it, love the neighborhood, love the people, we will stay here. If we don’t, then this is a two-year house. So, we don’t know. Today it is a two-year house. Yesterday it was a forever house. Who knows what it will be tomorrow.”
“It’s all about money” Lesley stated. She and her husband had been looking for a permanent house in the Boulder Front Range area for about nine years before finally purchasing into a new housing development in Longmont. The couple bought into a new development because they were looking for something permanent. “After living as long as I’ve lived, that’s all I really care about anymore; stuff that lasts,” Lesley admits.

Diane, a resident of Frisco, Colorado complains about the cost of renovation. The family of five with three dogs bought an older home right at the base of MT. Royal. Initially, she purchased the house because of the location to the elementary school, which all three kids attended at the time, and for the Frisco lifestyle. “It’s funny how we discovered this property,” she starts.
“…we were riding along the bike path behind this house, and I said something to Ron like I saw that this place was listed. And he just tore across the bike path through the yard. We pulled up to the house and were looking through the window, and we contacted the realtor to look inside. I think, Emily, honestly, like we were all in love at that point and grand visions of our lives together, and it was pretty spontaneous how we bought this house. It wasn’t like we were looking for a house for a year or something. It just seemed right at the time. And I think we have some regrets about this house over the years because it’s kind of a piece of shit. Like ‘what have we done?’”

Diane laughed as she finished her story. Unfortunately, the house always seems to be falling apart. “We will remodel things as they go” Diane states. “I mean, we would love to redo our entire kitchen, the other two bathrooms absolutely need to be redone, the carpet is disgusting, rip out the carpet” she continues rather thoughtfully.

“Then again we think, like, once these kids are up and out of the house, we wonder if we will keep this house or if we will sell it. I mean, I think the property is pretty desirable. But I think we can certainly make some money on the property so then we kind of wonder how much money we want to invest in it if we’re not going to stay in it.”

She admits that they would love to downsize and really, would like to get out of the county because “it’s so busy now.” And they would prefer things to be a bit quieter. This is still just an idea, and certainly they will stay there until for the next five or six years until the children are out of the house. Diane loves living there but “sometimes it doesn’t seem realistic. Because we can’t have the house we really want because we just can’t afford it.”
Price is the largest issue for Colorado’s middle class. Most people, if money were not a concern, would absolutely include green technologies. However, according to Dyane, an investor who currently has seven houses in the Boulder area that she is renting until the market becomes high enough that it makes sense to sell, says that “Colorado doesn’t have any soft markets.” Since housing markets are based on supply and demand for homes in a particular region, Colorado has had a 9.8 percent increase between 2014 and 2015 with the average residential property selling for about $377,550 (Housing Predictor 2015). Zillow Denver CO’s January 2016 report found that Denver’s residential values have increased 12.8 percent from 2015, and estimates that they will continue to rise 4.9% within 2016 (Zillow Inc. 2016). Suzan comments that the Colorado market is “very influenced by selling, you know. The design of homes up here it’s very…” she pauses, “It runs by the feature of getting your money out of your house. And I think, you know, for the locals it’s because… all their money is in their house.”

Therefore, for most people purchasing in Colorado, especially the older generations, they want something that’s going to last. Somewhere they can create a home without worrying about remodeling or repairs, a place that will allow them to focus on the things they value most.
A PERSONAL TOUCH:

As a result of the famous maxim of Winston Churchill, who said, "We shape our buildings and our buildings shape us" (Churchill 1943), one might argue that homeowners in Colorado have shaped their homes, and their homes have shaped the landscape. Homes reflect ideas about time, place, culture and identity. They serve as the material realm through which people pass their lives—emblematic of the values of their owners and the social conventions of the times. They also stand as artifacts whose presence changes the landscape, reflecting back these values and conventions, and participating in the evolving cultural landscape of the American West.

What makes a house a home is an interesting question. It is not something that can be easily defined but is an important epicenter for what people want, how they live their lives, and how they view their place in society. It is a private space as well as a collection of culturally infused objects and their accompanying meanings. Homes in the state are twenty-first-century manifestations of the culture and identity of individuals who have spent their energy creating a space in which to share and form values. In turn, these values form the basis of culture and life within Colorado.

Hillary, a newcomer to Colorado, feels that having a home versus just a house is about ownership; having control over a space to make it unique and personal. She explains that her goal within the next several years is to own a house in Colorado closer to the mountains. She and her boyfriend are currently renting an apartment in Aurora, a suburb of Denver, a short distance from her current job as a member of a graphic design team for a local bicycle appeal company. “I
feel like when it’s a home, that’s my own. It’s mine. Renting, it’s…” she pauses before she continues:

“It’s nice to come home to with a roof over your head, and that’s awesome. But at the end of the day, it’s not mine. I can’t totally decorate it. I’m not going to paint the walls. So I feel like once I am able to paint my walls and just nail into the walls and make it, just decorated and go crazy with it. That’s when it becomes a home to me. When I own something, that’s kind of how I feel with everything. It’s just not... if it's not mine, I’m just kind of whatever. When I own it, though, I take care of it, and love it and make it amazing.”

Ownership and Security blend into the ability to have a space in which one can make it personal, surround themselves with things that are necessary and add to the personality of the space. There is a sense of privacy in American homes. The space between the public sphere and the private sphere are comparatively well defined. Colorado homes, in this sense, represent the larger ethos of the deeply American value placed in privacy. One’s home, therefore, becomes a space which is that is personal and tailored to one’s life, whether that be economic constraints, lifestyle necessities, personal memorabilia or other such factors.

Inger explains that the design phenomena of houses having a much more open floor plan than in the mid-1900s is in part because people are separating themselves from the formal rigidity of etiquette tied to entertaining. “I don’t think we entertain much anymore. I think in general few people do,” Inger explains that when people meet up with their friends, it happens outside of the home, in a restaurant or an event. This separates the home from the public sphere making social interactions within the home reserved for special occasions or family affairs. An open floor plan allows those who are most important to each other to spend more time together. Inger elaborates that when her family is together “it’s easy for somebody to sit on the sofa reading a book while I’m cooking dinner and somebody can build a puzzle, you know. So we can all be doing different things, but we are all together. And that’s what I really like about it.”
This interconnectedness fostered by an open floor plan distinguishes the house as a private space, where there is one main living area that connects the main areas within the house: the kitchen, the dining room, and the living room. Since most day-to-day activities occur within this space, it becomes highly personal. The popular use of an open floor plan means that the home is become much more emphatic of the private sphere, detailing the shift away from formal gatherings happening within the home. Therefore, the culture within the Colorado can be seen as becoming much more casual both in the home and in terms of social interactions.

Suzanne is in the process of designing a new house for her and her family. “I’m ducking all the trends” she laughs. “It’s nothing like any of my client’s houses.” Her architecture firm in Breckenridge has an extensive client base of second home owners, who all want relatively the same thing. Their residences in Summit County are spaces which are used maybe about a month spread out over the year, most of whom request a rustic retreat. Suzanne and her husband are taking a different direction. Their inspiration comes from the French countryside as well as the Colorado mountain style, and of course some modern elements. “My furniture is pretty crazy, so I can’t have a rustic house to go with it,” Suzanne says, laughing. Their home will be anything but traditional because her main focus is to have fun with architecture and design in order to create a home that is entirely their own, fulfilling their needs as a family.

“You know all my kids; all my kids get their own attic space which has a loft. So yeah, the bedrooms and then they have like, one of them wants a rope ladder and one, you know, one wants a ladder, just like a wooden ladder to this upper attic space. One of them wants a slide. But you know, it’s just stuff like that is fun. It’s really fun to design for yourself.”

This is not an uncommon theme. People in Colorado emphasize the desire for originality and uniqueness. It is all about having fun in one’s home and making it their own. A home, then, is very different from a house. For a home, according to Inger, you have to “choose things that inspire you. And things you love and when you combine that it makes it a home, I feel.” For
others, it is about how the space feels. “I want my house to always be warm and welcoming and safe. that’s, that’s what I want from my house” Says Sarah Ann. When asked what is important about a home, Ronnie, a youthful photographer in her early 50’s who has lived in both the mountains and the Denver area, says “oh the people, of course, just that feeling of, you know, feeling safe, being happy, and it being yours.” When pushed about what makes a home hers, Ronnie explains that it is

“just your meaning, because even in a rental house it’s still yours. You know what I’m saying, but yes, it’s more so when you own it, and you have the freedom to do what you want. So it’s just, you know, coming in and it's there’s things that you choose in your life. Whether it be your family, or you know, the furnishings that you put in. It's, you choose everything. You get to decide what you like, or you don’t or where things go, and it’s yours. You know. I love that feeling.”

Talking with Lua and Eric about how their home came to be was enlightening. Their Frisco home has been an ongoing project. Their two local boutiques have become cornerstones in the community for visitors, locals, and seasonal residents. Design has always been an important part of their franchise and something that is always reinventing itself, as is the nature of retail and fashion. It never strays far from the forefront of their professional lives. The recent opening of their second Main Street business was time-consuming, and running both of them is no small matter. Part of what makes each of their endeavors so successful is the infusion of unique one-of-a-kind pieces. Purposefully chosen to represent the location, their clientele, and the mountain setting. Their second store is directed toward an active mountain lifestyle, more so than their longstanding first shop. Lua has, on several occasions, mention that the inventory choices she makes for her first store are ‘for the old ladies,’ her reasoning is that “they have money.” She means that the brands she carries in the first store are directed to older residents, usually seasonal residents who have a second home and have money to spend. Most products
include shapewear to camouflage parts of the body women might be self-conscious about or unique jackets and dresses for nights out at The Ranch in Keystone. She and Eric’s second store opened with the purpose of catering to the mountain lifestyle, carrying unique outerwear and sportswear that is not only functional but also fashionable, including technical winter boots starting at around $300, and down winter jackets at around $200. Lua explained that this second store was much more her style. She has always wanted to carry pieces that she loved, but often they were contrary to the ‘old lady’ feel of the first store.

Figure 19: Interior of Lua and Eric’s second store in Frisco Colorado. Photograph by Eric, December 2015

The couple’s interest in the mountain lifestyle comes across in the new store, where pieces are chosen based on their uniqueness, unavailability in Summit County, their fashionably and their function in terms of the mountain lifestyle. However, this interest was not limited to their businesses. Lua and Eric’s new home was built about the same time their second store was completed. It is not clear which one came first, but the power couple’s dedication to their work suggests that both projects informed each other. All aspects of their lives are combined, and the
new store seems almost an accessory to their home, just another facet of their lives and what is important to the both of them. They are promoting a new lifestyle in everything they do, which they creatively dubbed “Modern Mountain Contemporary Design.” Eric, rather enthusiastically, explains the philosophy behind the home they designed from the ground up:

“At this point in our lives, we did not want to have a gym membership. We did not, and this is really important actually. This says a lot about us. One we didn’t want a gym membership, so we made a gym. Number two, we do not enjoy going out to restaurants and not knowing what’s in our food and not cooking it and not having that activity that’s so enriching personally, so we designed a really functional, clean kitchen with gas burning stove. Nothing too modern. We wanted to cook with gas and be really authentic in our cooking. And number three, we wanted to sleep every night and bathe every night as if we were in a high-end luxury hotel. We would go to high-end luxury hotels in Vegas, and we would take pictures and get great ideas from them, and we said this is how we want to live every single night. For these things that we spend so much of our lives doing, very few people think that. So our bathtub is actually an extra deep, extra-long bathtub that also doubles as a shower. And it has all glass walls around it...so our bed is a high end, [and] has a canopy over it so we can control the lighting more and then have it dark if we like, or softer feel. Those are really the primary things, how you bathe and sleep, how you eat and how you workout. And we wanted to bring that all into goal.”

They view their lives as a permanent vacation. The idea of life as a luxury vacation seems to reflect a particularity of a high socioeconomic status. According to Bourdieu’s theories regarding status and class, taking such a view of their lifestyle, Lua and Eric are taking their economic capital and transcribing that success onto their values and expectations for their lifestyle. By taking their economic capital, the couple has transformed that into non-economic capital taking the shape of their home designed with the intention of conveying luxury. Bourdieu states that “Projection onto a single axis, in order to construct the continuous, linear, homogeneous, one-dimensional series with which the social hierarchy is normally identified, implies an extremely difficult (and, if it is unwitting, extremely dangerous) operation, whereby the different types of capital are reduced to a single standard” (Bourdieu 1984:125). This view argues that various
forms of capital can be quantified along a single axis, thereby substantiating the idea that with the accumulation of economic capital, such as that which Lua and Eric have earned, results in values appropriate with the higher quality or standards of goods such economic capital can be turned into. Thus, the couple has raised their expectations to that of the higher class through a new class view, structured by the habitus of wealth and privilege. This has allowed them to take the idea of luxury and make it a reality for daily life.

Lua and Eric have recognized what they love, in every aspect of their lives, and made it a reality. They focused on what was important, how they spend their busy days and created a space that is entire their own. Lua told me that “home means personally.” This personality is a privilege of their entrepreneurial production within their mountain community. Bourdieu states that to understand different practices that are performed in various social fields, such as at a class level, “one must return to the practice-unifying and practice-generating principle, i.e., the class habitus, the internalised form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails”(Bourdieu 1984:101). He also states that “social class is not defined solely by a position in relations of production, but by the class habitus which is ‘normally’ (i.e., with a high statistical proablity0 associated with that class position” (Bourdieu 1984:372). Their wealth has led to experiencing luxury at the highest levels, which has transformed their values while transforming their economic capital into shared values and expectations of their class luxury. And their mountain home is that indeed. Eric, animatedly explains that

“Yeah. Our home is a bastion in that it’s a vacation, yes, it’s also an all-inclusive location for our hobbies and interests. And our hobbies and interest a lot of what we designed for. So things we enjoy. We enjoy cooking, so we have a wide open space with an island, really clean and again, all white because it’s just sanitation and cleanliness and organization to us. But also, one of the bedrooms is a gym… And we also have an old-fashioned, that we got from the high school wrestling department, we have an old fashioned pull-up bar that we put on the wall in the hallway
downstairs. And then we framed it with indirect lighting, so it’s still fashionable, but you can go grab and do pull-ups. And we also have a stripper bar.” [Emily laughs awkwardly as he continues] “And the stripper bar you can express yourself, work out, swing, have fun, and that’s also in the middle of the wide open living space.”

Personality is plentiful in this new mountain house. Their Colorado lifestyle is important, but what matters is what makes it their own. Their lives are seamlessly blended into one expression of how they view themselves, and how they design their world.

The idea of having one’s own space that is the epitome of one’s lifestyle is now uncommon. Most people want their home to reflect their personality while at the same time being tailored to their lifestyle. The challenge is finding what is important and translating that into a space, and then doing that well. It seems to be rare that someone’s home is designed so purposefully and thoughtfully that it blends seamlessly with who the owner is, how they live their life, what they love and then have that reflect how they see themselves in a cultural context.

Caroline, a 20-something-year-old photographer, views a home in terms of its practicality and aesthetic qualities, in an almost wistful manner. Her profession is very much grounded in the visual, and her personal style comes across in her art, her business promotional material, her fashion taste, and her home style preference. When asked to talk about what she wants in a home, she immediately began with the appearance. Caroline recently terminated her lease early because of poor management from her landlord, who had not paid the apartment complex’s water bill in several months, as well as various issues within the apartment itself that had not been dealt with. Since then, she has moved back into her parents’ home but is looking for a new place in the Denver-Boulder area. “I really like white space” She begins, and immediately makes her preference for modern architecture apparent, over older structures such as a Victorian house. “I would never want to, you know, destroy the history of that” she explains.
“Something that’s modern, like say a loft in the city, with white space and large windows. I like that because it’s like a painting, It’s a white canvas that you can do with it what you will. And for me, I like, you know, the starkness of it so I can bring in my style.”

Caroline explains this preference for white spaces. They are simple; they are not overpowering.

She sites her website as an example: “it’s all white, and it has black. It’s more of a very dark gray lettering. Its calligraphy. And then you have my photos.” The neutral background allows her photography to stand out, as opposed to having a flamboyantly patterned background.

“[That’s] something I find with, you know, a Victorian house, something about it just feels really busy and cluttered. I like very clean, simple and to let my furniture décor stand for itself.”

Caroline explains the preference for simplicity has come from her artistic development.

“With my photography, from the beginning, has been that I’ve had to find my way for the past you know three years of who I am as a photographer and what I believe in and my personal style. And one thing that I love is natural light. Like organic, raw, emotion and I think that has come through as well with my personal style weather Its Interior design or photography. What my home looks like. and I think when people walk into to see my ideal house, they see, you know, some of the things that I love.”

Caroline’s assured assessment of her aesthetic tastes and sense of artistic style are not unlike that of Lua and Eric. They share the idea of authenticity within one’s home. One’s domestic aesthetic is not forgotten as the front door swings shut. Homestyle bleeds into other aspects of one’s life, becoming an amalgamation of the individual.

Lesley, who has recently purchased a house in Boulder County, believes that personality is what makes a home. She fondly reflects on her observations.

“Danyse is a really good friend, and her house, I don’t think it’s perfect for her, but what makes her house so, I mean I think it’s a great house, but what makes it so great is she and Steve are both real artistic, and everything that is arranged and all their artwork…just all her paintings that they collected and odds and ends like that just make it cool. And you’re, you just, you just feel like “Oh I love to be here.”
A home, whoever’s home, when it is done thoughtfully, becomes a material manifestation of personality. It can be like a notebook, a place where a person’s thoughts and feelings and disposition comes to fruition. This is not always an immediate, almost innate process. Most of the time a person’s home is a journey. From initially purchasing the land, or space, or structure to designing it, or filling it or imagining it in such a way that it feels right, becomes personal. “My other good friend Liz is kind of like that too” Lesley continues, “they have done all this really cool stuff to their house… it’s not huge. It’s just cool, just because of all the stuff they have done to it. Its wood and stone and a lot of windows.” A house becomes a home “I just think when it’s a reflection of that person,” which is what Lesley is trying to do with her new house.

For others, a home is more of a process, a journey rather than some end goal to achieve. Boulder entrepreneur, Lon, described his philosophy of ‘home curation.’ The distinction between house and home is “Just being interested and also practicing with decoration.” He admits that he and his wife were influenced by countless various sources. The key, though, is realizing that there is a deeper idea to design than simply buying more pieces from Crate & Barrel. This resonates with Bourdieu’s theories of class and status. Shopping at Crate & Barrel is a strong signifier of middle-class life. Similar to the working, middle and upper-class French families, who furnish their homes according to class status, so too do people in Colorado. Upper-class French families preferred finding their furnishings in antique dealers or flea markets rather than mainstream department stores (Bourdieu 1984:78-79). Most middle-class and younger generations of individuals tend to purchase items at Crate & Barrel, IKEA or other stores offering mass-produced products with relatively low or reasonable prices. Whereas upper-class individuals are willing to wait and find a unique piece which expresses their ideas of their taste and values, usually at higher end antique stores or furniture retailers around the state. In other
words, upper-classes can ‘curate’ their spaces out of taste and aesthetic preference rather than necessity.

The whole idea of curation is to build spaces to convey something. However, doing that, and doing it successfully, can be a challenge. The whole idea is that “it’s not just one thing. We’re not just slapping this look together.” The way a place looks is important, but what is more important than simply a beautifully styled home is the feeling of being home.

“I always have like that one window I always look out… that window to see the outside, but from within your confines of your home. And there’s something so… so warm feeling about that. Where you can sit and watch the snow fall, or you can sit and watch maybe a deer walks by or just watch and look at your yard. There’s, for me, always been a window that just feels right and I, I just always want to stare. I don’t know why, but it gives me a really good feeling.”

THOUGHTFUL DESIGN:

Thoughtful design is just that; putting thought into how one is designing a space. It can be thinking about the practicality of floorplans, or finding the perfect piece. It is a different approach to design than going into a store, or even hiring an interior designer, and having someone else choose the pieces for a personal space. There is an intentionality. A careful process in which one becomes surrounded by things they love; things that speak beyond what they are. In many instances, this means simplifying or not buying a coffee table just because a livingroom usually has one. Every piece is carefully selected to find just the right design for the owner. The goal is that it will be right, whatever that may be to the individual. This is not about less for the sake of less, but rather a thoughtful redirection. It is about finding the core of one’s design and what is being communicated, while and being authentic to one’s personal intentions, lifestyle,
and personality. Quite often, people’s instinct is to make things more complicated. We want to impress people.

Things have a place, a purpose, and this comes to people in various ways. But meaning in objects is important (personal meaning, cultural meaning). It involves being interested and also participating in design and decoration. This has quite a bit to do with ‘taste,’ but also it is a feeling. Looking back to the question of what makes a house a home, it is taking inspiration from maybe a million different sources, but then doing one’s own thing, and realizing that there is a deeper idea to design than just buying something from Crate & Barrel. Lon is inspired by the idea of curating one’s space and “building spaces to convey something.” So for Lon and his wife a home is finding meaning in the objects that one has. This can be challenging. Objects can have a meaning in so many different ways: in how you found them, or maybe just what they mean to you. “but there are certainly items that we have in our home, and everybody has in their home, and works perfectly, that don’t have a meaning because you just need a coffee table to just put your feet on,” he laughs. However, having the intentionality in mind, considering each thing for what it is as an object and not covering one’s home just to do it. “It’s really the less is more approach,” Lon explains. Finding the perfect painting for the wall, not feeling the need to cover it up. It’s the over decorating that too many times people get caught up. “They don’t have the confidence to put one thing up.” This is something that He has been working on for a while. He explains it as being a “less is more approach.”

“For us, that’s like a big part of decorating. Using that space of home rather than kind of a cluttered, just like storage space that you also live in that happens to a log of people. And I think when people walk into homes that are very well done I think it, find that bridge between cold and warm. Right, like, that, you know very warm and of your, of your own and meaning for yourself. That’s really difficult um, but that’s what we look for. Design in our home and then just creating purpose around the spaces, right and like, you know, trying to think “what are we really doing in
“this room?” what, you know, “how is the kitchen used?” and for me and for my wife too, it’s just like how do we just keep taking away, like the more we can take away the more comfortable it feels and like purposeful of a space it is and the kitchen feels”

Lesley feels the same way. A person’s home is when it has personality, but also a clear intentionality, in such a way that it can only be that person’s. Objects, decoration, everything has a meaning, a reason it is in that room. A home is “when it’s a reflection of that person,”

“…and that’s what I’m trying, you know. I’m trying to figure out this with the house. And so I’m going, I was telling Liz and Danyse… I don’t want to throw anything up on a wall until I kind of know what I want to, to be like that. Because I, I uh, I just don’t want to throw a bunch of crap on the wall. So it might be empty for a while, but I’m going to seriously think about what I’m going to do.”

Lua and Eric did the same thing. They were not in a hurry to furnish their house. Eric says rather emphatically “we had an empty living room with no couches, no chairs, no tables for a year.” Waiting for the right piece, I stated back to him. “Exactly. That’s exactly it, Emily. You know, always be seeking, but never in a hurry to find the thing that truly defines you.” Their emphasis was on being unique. “Put it this way,” Eric says, “We would look at the mass market, like so many people do…and we started there and just became so disillusioned by how common and how blaze, really everyone's style is. So we wanted to be different.”

“We started out by saying “okay, the couch is the centerpiece, and that’s where you begin.” So we found a second-hand couch that was made in Italy. And it’s got some really unique lines and some textures. But at the same time, we wanted another piece that would speak loudly and that is a really neat chair. It's an orange chair made in Italy and its vintage contemporary. And uhhh... it’s called a.c.e.r.a.y. Made in Italy and it has, it’s a really sturdy, well-built chair. It’s just so profound. And then we bought an orange lamp to match it. And you don’t see a lot of people with a single piece that really jumps out at you. But we feel that the couch is the signature piece, and we see it as unique, but then your eyes turn immediately to the orange Italian chair. And you’re like “wow, this eclectic but really fun and interesting,” while at the same time not being overbearing.”
Lua, in her thick Vietnamese accent, piped in that

“It’s simple, clean and, comfort. You know. And that’s all we are looking for. And it has to be unique as well. So if we see it on the market anywhere, we don’t want that because we want it to be just so different from everybody. And you know, so whatever we go, we buy pieces, we always ask those questions before we buy. If it fits our lifestyle, we find something to design for ourselves, not for anybody.”

She goes on to explain their disillusion with mainstream design styles and retailers. “They don’t see much about the design,” she complains. People take inspiration and buy things based on what they see others purchasing. “They don’t think about how they are living, or what feeling they want to express through the room, you know? And I think that is a mistake for a lot of people.”

Lua stresses the importance of reflecting on one’s lifestyle and ascertaining what is both practical and expresses personal interest. She and Eric do this for all aspects of their life, from their home design to finding the perfect multi-use table to what kinds of food they cook and how they store it. A lot of time and thought goes into making their lives easier through design. Again, this shows the upper-class habitus regarding originality and authenticity.

Diane speaks to this idea of intentionality, of thoughtful design. She knew what she wanted and went to Suzanne with a paper and her hand-drawn floor plan. “I’ve always been able to put myself in the space, even when it’s on paper,” she tells me. Diane visualized every detail of her house: where the garage would be when she parked, and how far it would be to the kitchen to drop the groceries. She had to work on where she wanted to be. Suzanne helped her bring these ideas off the page “just because architects now have all that software, you know, where you can pop in stuff and change things pretty easily.” “she and I had, we probably had too much fun” Diane admits, playfully. It’s all in the details: “You might think that you’ve got it nailed, and then when you’re on the job site, then you need to talk about okay, so this isn’t going to work out quite the way you’ve planned.” She explained that “you have to have an eye, you know, to be
able to say, well... we could do it this way, or the door should swing this way, and that will make this traffic work you know. There’s always, there’s always something.” Diane put a lot of thought into the entire process, from the planning to the construction and every material used in her home. She stressed the need for forethought and thinking about how you are going to live your life.

“I think people say, I thought of everything. And I think I did… A lot of homes you know, you get in there and there like 'why didn’t I do that?’ It’s because you do need to think of everything. You need to put yourself in the plan, and walk around and go okay, is this enough space, and umm... or is this umm... I could go smaller here because this really feels too big, or I needed this closet to be here or, you know, maybe the laundry should have been here or, what are we going to do now?”

When asked where interest in design came from Diane told me about her home growing up. Her mother refurbished antiques. That was not her taste; she gravitated toward pieces “you could really relax in.” When she spent a year in Copenhagen, Denmark she “would walk past all these home furnishing stores and I used to just droool [laughs] over some of the modern furnishings.” She never saw any of the mid-century modern furnishings, “I didn’t see it, because I grew up with all these antiques and that’s and dark woods, so when I got over there and went into some of these homes and saw the simple furniture and the light wood and the windows and the light fixtures hung low over the table.” It was something new. She fondly recalls her introduction into what design could be. “I think I took a lot back, even though I wasn’t able to do anything with it for 10-plus years” she admits. Her new house has a lot of the Scandinavian influence. She, rather humorously, describes some instances of bringing in such design influences.

“It’s funny because you have those fights with the electricians in this country, I’m like “believe me, you know, I could hang it lower!” “oooh, you don’t want to hang it lower.” They would think I’m kidding like I have my numbers wrong. So then they will hang
them way up there, “noooo bring it down.” Because I think it creates a different kind of atmosphere.”

What stands out about Scandinavian design for Diane is the simplicity and cleanliness. The lighting, as well. More than anything there is a place for everything, even in the smaller homes. Everything is well designed and well managed. They are not afraid to go that next step with some of their forms: a dining room table with a bright orange light fixture hanging down low over the table; colored pegs hanging on the wall by the entrance in place of a bulky coat rack; drawers under the sink that utilized the space rather than leaving it open. The space managing ideas gave her the frame to rethink her personal design. She fondly states that “the Germans and the Scandinavians just know how to engineer some smart stuff. It’s too bad we didn’t adopt that sooner.” In her home now her toilets do not come all the way down to the floor, they hang off the walls, which makes cleaning the floors much easier. “It’s just the little things that makes it look cleaner, more modern, you know, things that aren’t common.” The most important aspect, though, is having a warm and cozy home: “you can be simple and clean and you can be stark.”

That all has to do with lighting. Diane’s dismissal of ‘common’ things is similar to Eric’s ideas as well. There is a strong draw for Colorado’s upper class, year-round, residents toward distinguishing themselves against the idea of being common. Personality and the ability to show personality through design is a class based phenomena which seek to portray individual ideas about their wealth and status by creating diversity within the homogeneity of Colorado’s social landscape. This individual habitus of the upper classes is aimed at diversification using personal style. Not only does this act as a distinction between Colorado’s social classes, but it also distinguishes Colorado’s upper-class year-round residents from the states upper-class second home owners, whom all seem to want the traditional Mountain Rustic experience.
Eric and Lua too. Stress the importance of lighting. They use a different technique to Diane’s low hanging fixtures. Eric animatedly describes their Hue lighting system. It's indirect and allows them to control the environment, leaving them with absolute creative opportunities without investing in art or wall-hangings. Their design choice came from their desire to keep their living space ‘clean and pure.’ Eric stressed that they do not own a television but hung a projector from the ceiling that they could then turn on from their computer and watch videos and movies directly on a huge white wall. “It’s much larger than most big-screen TVs,” Eric tells me. “and then you don’t need a piece of furniture hanging off the wall, occupying space and distracting us.” The indirect lighting and not having a television, simply a projector are important to the couple. More than anything, though, they use the projector to view art. They will not buy a physical painting because they know that they will get bored of it too quickly, “usually because over time your taste may change. So we, when we’re not using the projector for movies or TV, we use the projector for art, and that creates a really, really cool ambiance.”
CHANGING CONTEXTS

Living in Colorado today is grounded in ideas of authenticity, freedom and ownership. People seem to gravitate to this state to find authentic experiences with the wilderness, the people in their lives and the spaces in which they spend their time. There remains a sense of freedom, reminiscent of the American Western frontier, but more characteristic of a deeply rooted American ideal of independence and privacy. Both authenticity and freedom are grounded in the sense of ownership over the lived world. More specifically, ownership is tied into values about one’s home. If there is some claim of possession, freedom to express individuality and authenticity follow. Tied in with these ideas are concerns about the landscape, both in terms of physically protecting and conserving the Colorado wilderness, but also a sense of ownership over the landscape by the locals.

Many areas in Colorado are undeniably dependent upon seasonal residents and visitors. The socioeconomic effect on the Colorado mountain towns catering to second home owners is that these towns revolve around the tourist industry, which includes second homes. A study conducted in the Norther Forest region in the eastern United States, Stedman et. all found that in areas where second homes, as in the northwestern Colorado, make up a large portion of residential housing, there was some animosity between year-round residents and second home owners. Some residents were easily identified as newcomers or seasonal, and quite often both types of residents felt some animosity between locals and seasonal residents. However, the differences could not be clearly identified, which suggests underlying tensions (Stedman 2007). The findings from this study parallel Colorado areas like Summit County where locals are
aggravated by the increased population, heavy traffic congestion along the highway during peak times of the year, and a difference in the understanding of the local ski culture, tourists and non-locals are referred to as ‘gapers.’ The origin of this low-key derogatory term is popularly rumored to describe how tourists gape at the landscape of the Rocky Mountains around the Continental Divide. Steadman also found that year-round residents viewed seasonal residents as economic opportunity, but resent the ever increasing economic dependence on the seasonal residents (Stedman 2007). This is also true of Colorado locals.
The popularity of bumper stickers, such as the ones above, show class conflicts within Colorado. Specifically, between locals and non-locals. This idea, though, of locality and ownership over that title translate into the upper-classes ideas of authenticity and originality. The bumper-sticker war is the lower and middle-class way of distinguishing themselves, the same way upper-class locals are incorporating modern design and unique interior decorations into their homes in order to distinguish themselves from the thousands of second homeowners whose Colorado residences are done in what is seen as traditionally Coloradoan- the Rustic Mountain design style.

The state is viewed as a retreat, and the design of homes in Summit County has not changed very much in the last thirty or forty years. Suzanne laughs as she admits that most of her work is unnecessary.

“I think that people who have second homes or third homes, it helps them, and this is not a very, you know, nice thing to say. I would never say this to any of my clients, but I think it helps them, form this, um, personal identity when they are ‘yeah I’m from Huston, and I live in a really nice house in an exquisite subdivision in Huston, but I also have a house in Florida, and I also have a house, a really cool mountain house up in Breckenridge’ just sort of helps them create their identity. Or, substantiate their vision of themselves.”

Suzanne says that most of her clients are quite wealthy. They go to her to design a seven-bedroom house that will only be used for a few weeks over the summer or a few days for Christmas or Thanksgiving or maybe a week for spring break. “They have to have so many rooms, and have to have this or have to have that” she laughs. “It’s, I don’t know. It’s an interesting profession to be in because it’s not, you know, it's not necessary. They don’t need this home. They just want this home… I mean, I have a great time doing what I do. But certainly most of the work I do is not necessary.”
A lot of the formal design changes are due to economic restrictions. Most residents moving to Colorado or getting their own places don’t have money to buy large expensive homes. Nor do they have money to furnish their homes with rich leathers and expensive solid hardwood furniture. People are looking for ulterior solutions.

Before the 2008 housing market crash people wanted larger homes with more square feet and more bedrooms and baths. Robbie notices that “since that economic downturn and since that recession, at least my clients…I’ve seen people ask for smaller, more efficient homes with fewer bedrooms and in many cases or even tiered bathrooms, because there was a time when every bedroom had to have its own bath, and now that’s not necessarily the case.” In Summit County the average house size is about 2,500 square feet instead of 4-6,000.

Lon notices that the younger Colorado generation are attracted to modern, minimalist, simple aesthetics because there is the economic divide between the wealthy and the middle class, many of those in their 20-somethings, moving to Colorado can’t afford the larger homes and live in smaller spaces which need to be much more organized. “It’s not a bad thing,” Lon says, “it just is. And so people are thinking to themselves like “okay what do I do with like 700 square feet?” And they want some inspiration to make it actually look good.” “But knowing that, Lon continues, “IKEA, I think is one of the more brilliant things. They came out and gave people the permission to design that way. and, and on a budget which is even better.” He explains that the company provided tools and products that gave people a new way to design their homes, especially small places. “Its smart design,” he says, “and that’s really cool.”

Caroline, a twenty-one-year-old, explains that a lot of people buy IKEA furniture because of the price point and silhouette of the pieces. She explains the idea behind IKEA-hacking:

“If you do something, or for example when you change the feet on it, it looks like you know, it looks like, it is a $400 couch it looks like a couch that would be $1500 that you could get from a
contemporary store. Or you know there are some really great couches on urban outfitters that are $1200 that looks just like them. Another thing that people do with IKEA couches, is, you know couches that have the buttons, they look like buttons that are sewn into it, you can do that as well with cushions. It’s a nice base, it’s a canvas thing, you can do something, you know, a hack to it to make it look different. It makes it look totally new. another thing that is nice about IKEA is that you can change the covers, you can buy the couch, and say if I bought a white cover, I can choose a different cover to put on. It that’s a different color and they are not that expensive. whereas if I went somewhere else I wouldn’t be able to buy a different cover, it’s something you have to be married to when buying it.”

In reference to IKEA hacking, Lon says that “the biggest problem that IKEA has is, and it’s not their fault… I mean everybody has the IKEA stuff, right? So when you walk in you can see that bookshelf and it’s not cool anymore. It’s really hard, and people want, we all want unique… so I think IKEA hacking is great because they make inexpensive well designed clean lines.”

Robbie has noticed that technical design changes within the last ten years have included smaller home sizes, more efficient home design in terms of efficient floor planning with less wasted space like hallways and environmental concerns. Stylistically, Lon and Alpine Modern—a mountain living lifestyle brand based out of Boulder, which includes a retail store, a magazine and a café — are promoting a new direction for Colorado. “There’s ultra-modern things out there, of course,” he says. “And then [there are] heritage [things], and like kind of like passé but can be cool now. And they go through these fads and usually those heritage things resonate with our childhood or back-in-the-day kind of deal, right. And those usually convey warmth and the things because there’s that aspect of the past.” What he is trying to do with Alpine modern is to “bridge that gap between those two. So it’s the Alpine, which is the nature. So bringing in natural elements blended in with Modern elements.”

Eric expresses that he has seen a shift toward modern design in Summit County. When people came to the mountains “for decades it had to have the log home feel, it had to be that
stone fireplace feel” he lists, and continues “well as summit county is one of the most desirable places to live in in the nation, it naturally attracts wealthier, more style minded people, who don’t want that really uhh… bold feel. they don’t want that cigar room, cabin feel.” He explains that people, without falling into the traditional cabin trap, want architecture that still recognizes the surrounding landscape.

“I think it’s a really strong alternative in architecture in the mountains to become more modern and a little metropolitan with the softer lines, with the straighter squared off lines structure as opposed to circles so much. And that’s for the architecture, the windows, the space, the cabinets... everything. So I believe that trend is going to continue because it marries itself well with the environmentally conscious.”

Diane thinks people don’t want the old look any more. She is very passionate about moving away from the traditional Colorado mountain feel. She complains that every house is the same “you go on a drive and just like ‘ugggg’ you know? Nothing depresses me more than when I see a new house that looks just like the houses that were being built in the 80's. And is just like come on!” In most places, she says, you can tell the homes that were constructed in the 50s or 70s, “but up here it’s a little funky because we stuck to the same design for over 20 years.” She thinks its fun to see the shift. People want something different and “it could be the trickle effect, because you know Aspen has always had a couple modern ones. They do well there, so maybe, maybe people are wanting to try that here in Summit County.”

Lon says that the new Colorado design idea is that, with a home, it can live in harmony with nature. Modern can live in harmony with nature “but we’ve all seen the Modern home that doesn’t. It looks cold and out of place, and that’s not what we want.” That is not good design, “we’ve all seen of course the big log cabin…the big mansions, and that’s fine. But they are not really so inspired. And so it’s the contrast that I find that’s very inspiring.”
“Colorado design is in its infancy,” Lon explains. There are a growing number of people who are excited when something comes out that is cool design or is interesting or modern. That drives design progress “but we’re not even close to there yet. And a lot of that has to do with our cities and planners.” In a lot of Colorado towns, they have to have, for example, a ‘Breckenridge style.’ They have to keep the look and feel in the downtown area. “Those things have to go, we have to get away from trying to have Frisco be this old mining town look,” Lon expresses. “you shouldn’t dictate design.”

Design is changing. Diane passionately reflects on the changes she has already seen:

“It’s the whole wood thing, you know. I know why people do it. They just think 'oh it’s my place in the mountains.' Well, we’re changing, and don’t you want a house that’s easier to maintain? That's not putting the toxins back into the air and inside the house? And I think that’s changing, we're seeing more modern homes now. I think there was one up on Peak 7, and it was very odd. I think they had a hard time selling it. But I can see why people when they do a speck home, they don’t do modern because they know that’s not what people are looking for. But I think that’s changing as people, as the buyers are getting younger…It’s not fun to, you know, always be staining your outside siding or your deck, so I think people are starting to realize this. You know there’s all these low maintenance products that are better. So I see a change, even in Breckenridge, not too far. Within a mile from where I am, I’ve seen some homes that have little modern elements and I think part of that is choosing an architect is pushing that. And I think it was hard to get into it, which is fun, you know, I think it's bringing the fun back. I remember somebody walked in here, and she was all 'I don’t even feel like I’m in Breckenridge' and I’m all 'what?!’ you know, ‘look outside!' I mean you could be anywhere I mean you could have any kind of house in Breckenridge.”
CONCLUSION

The appearance of Scandinavian design in Colorado seems to be less an appropriation of the Scandinavian values regarding design than a compromise between comfort and modern design. The Scandinavian model gives an appropriate solution to the fear of design being ‘cold.’ The informants also viewed their design choices not as being in the Scandinavian style, but rather a spin on contemporary design within the US. The contemporary design frame simply underlines the most popular trends in interior design. Therefore, the appearance of such models within Colorado is not surprising. However, design within the region following the basic structure of the Scandinavian style regarding the technical side of design is the result of mainstream department stores stocking furniture and decorative pieces with the simplicity and beauty of modern design. Notably, IKEA was regularly mentioned. Amongst the younger informants and middle-class informants, it provides elegant furniture at budget-friendly prices. Amongst the upper-class IKEA and other mass-produced furniture, retailers were unappealing.

In fact, Eric went so far as to say that “IKEA bastardizes the entire genre” of Scandinavian design. This is an extreme statement, but he continues that the brand cheapens and devalues the whole Scandinavian genre of design, while, on a more positive note, this design, or what he would say is the genuine or intended side, Eric appreciates the “clean lines, structure, organization, the sharpness.”

Eric’s rather blunt statement of IKEA as a derogatory reflection of the Scandinavian style is reflective of the ideological differences, concerning design between, the Nordic countries and Colorado. The difference in ideology and value surrounding the home is one of the most interesting distinctions between these two regions. Whereas in Scandinavia, specifically using
the Swedish case study, the notion of the public and private spheres is entwined. There is not this line drawn between the home and the state, or the home and the social. In fact, having similar, or even the same furniture or decorative pieces is not viewed as conformity or lack of personal style, but rather shows that one knows the right thing or the good thing. In Colorado, there is an unshakable desire for personal taste. Caroline, who shops at IKEA, emphasizes the ability to alter the brand’s designs to make them her own. There is an ideal in Colorado that one’s home should be individual and private, a reflection of the self.

IKEA illustrates the differences between these two regions quite well. The brand creates a smart design, at prices for everyone. In Scandinavia, this is considered good practice: if something is beautiful and functions wonderfully, that is considered good design; by having good design in one’s home, it shows that the individual knows what is good. In Colorado, the home is an extension of the self rather showing one’s ability to understand and appreciate the latest innovation in design. The emphasis is placed on being different, genuine and authentic. The similar aesthetic take on modern design is, therefore, an analogous result of various collective histories. Colorado has been built on rugged individualism rather than social democracy, and that is very apparent in values concerned with the domestic realm. The Colorado habitus is cemented in the desire for individuality. There is value placed in heterogeneity which runs contradictory to Scandinavia where homogeneity is key. The Scandinavian context largely focuses on the collective, sameness; Colorado is the opposite. However, the guiding philosophies that have driven Scandinavian innovation since the 1930s has been spreading amongst Colorado residents, both newcomers and long-time locals alike: advancements towards environmentally friendly homes and ingeniously functional objects.
Contemporary design in Colorado, as it appears in the early twenty-first century, is driven by new necessities, both ideological and logistical. The state itself is undergoing a significant domestic growth: a rapid influx of young, middle-class adults migrating to the state, and forming new technological and innovative industry. The new population is bringing with it new ideas in all facets of residential design. Development projects are finding ways to comply with Colorado’s historic preservation initiatives, as well as efforts from the state’s Open Space programs to limit land available for new or potential urban growth. Compliance methods have included the construction of smaller homes with much more energy and waste efficient infrastructures, helping to preserve the quality of the state’s environment while catering to the urban growth of the last decade. Mountain communities are feeling the same growing pains as record weekend and seasonal traffic over the past decade have necessitated the expansion of the Eisenhower and Johnson tunnels along I-70.

This rapid growth has been felt by those who call colorful Colorado their home. Housing prices are escalating throughout the state, and conservation initiatives are advocating for the increased appropriation of land to Open Space projects, a problem that Colorado will have to face in the twenty-first century. Residents are appropriating concerns entailing responsible consumption and environmental preservation by shifting their residences toward a philosophy of better things for everyday life. This idea lends itself to eco-friendly options, creating harmony with the landscape. More and more homes, generally of the upper-class, are using the landscape as inspiration, and creating a residential space that works with the environment rather than altering it. Within Colorado’s middle-class, this same spirit of preservation is surfacing as a less-is-more mentality. People are investing in fewer, better quality objects that are designed to last, a
mindset that is cohesive with the smaller home sizes. Physically, these domestic ideologies have manifested in the increasing appearance of contemporary interior design.

Although there may be a growing trend toward such design components, the image of the Colorado as being the ‘Old West’ still endures. For many visitors and seasonal residents, rejection of urban life and modern technologies remains an appealing aspect of the ‘rustic mountain experience’ advertised by Colorado’s mountain resorts. However, even newer second homes designed are incorporating environmental design initiatives. Although they are designed to look and feel rustic, are including environmental innovation in their incorporation of passive solar and other such design technicalities.

An examination of Colorado in the early twenty-first century must acknowledge a growing urban quality and diversity. The state itself has become a source of identity for those who call it home, and an icon for visitors derived from the contours of the Rocky Mountains. The new cultural landscape emerging from this new century is at once the geography itself, as well as the encompassing cityscape. The natural and cultural are combining, slowly forming a collective consensus of how to achieve a balance between the landscape and the growing residential population. Remnants of old ideology and imagery of Colorado exist, and will remain present, preserving the state’s proud history. However, as the state continues to value innovation and progress, Colorado’s collective identity is being molded and redefined. There is a growing need, and in fact, a movement to create a collective idea of the ‘better,’ in which to shape the future of the state, rather than remain caught in the ideal of wilderness escapism. These views of Colorado, in their own way, narrate the places, ideas, and images of the Mountain West, individual identity, and collective memory, built into the environment that both alters the landscape and embodies the desires of those who create and live in it.
FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS:

Future research might look into other cultural aesthetic types have been influencing Colorado’s move toward modern and contemporary design. For instance, the Japanese and Swiss design types were mentioned. It would be relevant to explore their influence on Colorado design, as well as the Contemporary design type, rather than focusing on the Scandinavian paradigm. Similarly, it would be interesting to focus much more closely on the various levels of which Scandinavian design does appear in Colorado. Such a specific topic might take more of a consumption based approach, looking at the retailers who stock Scandinavian products, as well as how the design type is being marketed within the state.

On a slightly different note, further investigations into residential patterns within Colorado might explore the tiny house phenomena. Although the work done in this study did not broach the subject, the term appeared with surprising frequency throughout the research process. None of the twenty-one informants mentioned tiny houses, but the frequency with which they are mentioned in design literature and local media articles was surprising.

It may also be relevant to study how design in Denver, specifically, is changing. Since the majority of new domestic residents are moving to Colorado’s capital, there are likely growing pains. It would be fascinating to monitor policy as it applies to residential trends, particularly as the urban growth relates to efforts and existing mentality of limiting land available for future growth and development.
APPENDIX I: Interview Questions

General Questions
How would you describe your personal style?
Does your home design reflect your other aesthetic tastes?
Can you describe for me your ideal home?
How long have you had an interest in this design aesthetic?
How would you define Scandinavian design?
How would you describe Colorado design?
What are you looking for in a home?
What interests you most about design? / Tell me about your interest in design.
What does home mean to you?
What does Colorado/mountain living mean to you?
Do you put much effort into designing your home?

Questions for Homeowners
Did you design your house or did you buy it as it is? Are you planning on doing any renovations?
Were you originally drawn to this type of aesthetic?
Are you curating your home for a specific style? Alternatively, do you buy pieces that you find appealing?
What would your ideal home look like?
What is your favorite item in your home that represents your sense of style? How does this make you feel? Is there a story behind it?
What items in your home do you feel represent a Scandinavian design aesthetic? Why?

Questions for Retailers
Is there a difference in preference between people from different locations? (i.e. Mountain towns vs. urban, city settings)
What do you keep in mind when buying items to sell in your store? Is it customer driven, or are you buying for a specific aesthetic?
What trends have you seen in the past few years?
Are customers coming in for something specific? Alternatively, are they just browsing?
What do your customers seem to be shopping for? What kind of descriptions do they use?
Do you seek out Scandinavian items specifically for your store? Why?
What is your interest in home design and mountain living?

Questions for Designers
Why do you think people are drawn to a Scandinavian design aesthetic?
What trends have you seen? Is there a growing pattern?
Where do you pull inspiration from for new pieces?
How would you describe your design?
What do you think people are looking for, regarding home design?
When did the Scandinavian design aesthetic become popular in the US? Is it especially popular in Colorado?
What are your most common projects?
Is there a style most people are looking for?
Is there a type of home you prefer?
What are your clients looking for in a home?
Do home trends change often?
Do people usually come to you with specific styles in mind?
What does home mean to people?
What is most important for people in their home?
APPENDIX II: List of Informants

1. Aleah: Denver  
2. Caroline: Denver  
3. Diane: Breckenridge  
4. Diane: Frisco  
5. Dyane: Boulder area  
6. Eric: Frisco  
7. Hillary: Denver  
8. Inger: Louisville  
9. Jacqueline: Boulder  
10. Jim: Boulder  
11. Leigh: Denver  
12. Lesley: Longmont  
13. Lon: Boulder  
14. Lua: Frisco  
15. Paige: Boulder  
16. Sarah Ann: Longmont  
17. Suzanne: Breckenridge  
18. Robbie: Breckenridge  
19. Ronnie: Denver  
20. Sune: Boulder  
21. Tracee: Louisville
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