

# Custom Home Outdoors

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## Inner Space

Urban oasis  
in a courtyard



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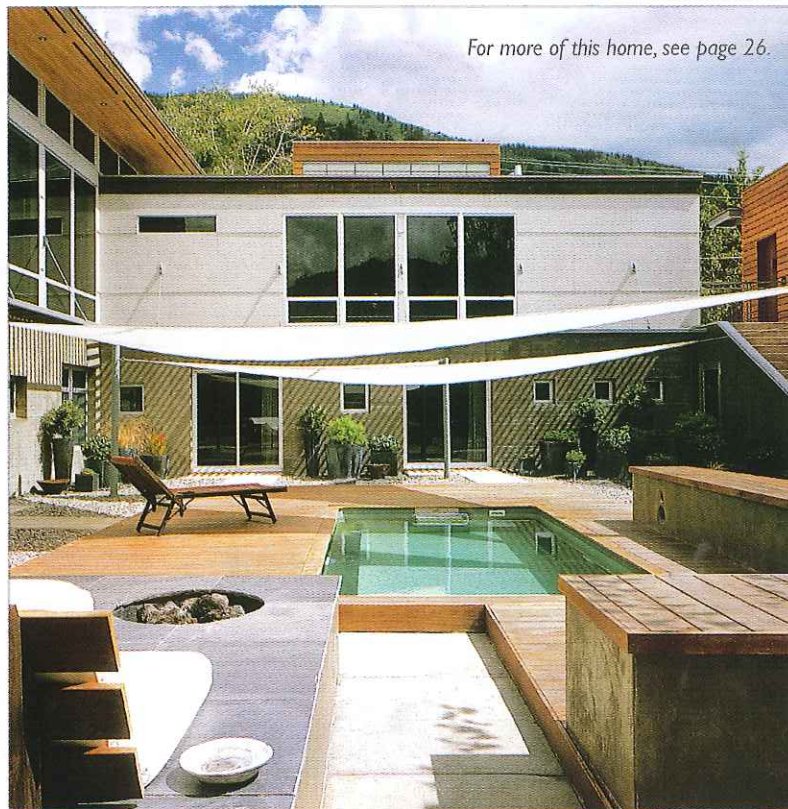
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**Outdoors**

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ON THE COVER: A custom home in Aspen, Colo. (See page 26.) Photo by Paul Warchol.

**F**or clients who travel for business more than they are home, a house that feels like a vacation home is a must. Three busy streets framing a one-third-acre lot with four derelict houses and piles of junk wasn't exactly an auspicious beginning for such a retreat. Scott Lindenau, founder of Aspen, Colo.-based Studio b Architects, saw potential, however, and jumped right in to fulfilling his client's program for no-maintenance outdoor spaces that could handle frequent entertaining and enjoyment in any season.

"This courtyard was key to the way this couple lives," says Lindenau. "The architecture forms a barrier to the streets and closes off views of the pool." Lindenau stretched the 6,500-square-foot main house into an L shape to block off two of the streets. A 750-square-foot guest house obstructs the third thoroughfare and provides guests with their own street entrance as well as free access to the outdoor areas. "If the client is home and there are guests staying, they can meet in the courtyard," explains Lindenau. "If guests are there alone, then they can use the pool area and not disturb the main house."

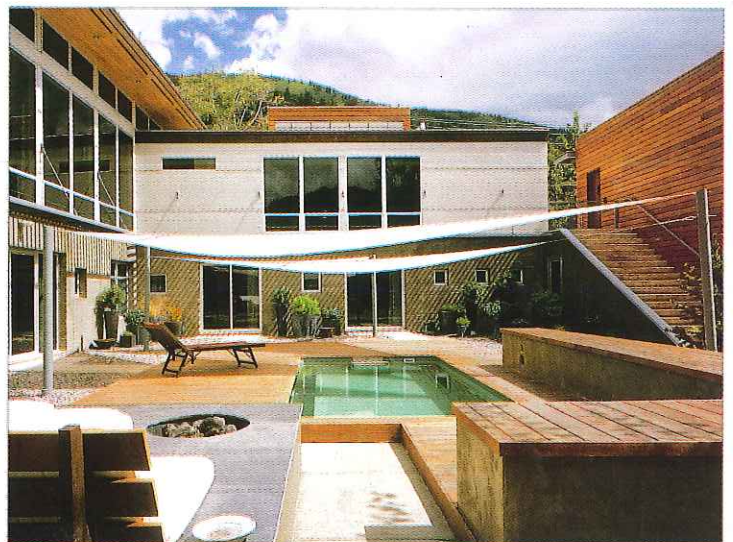


The design for this house revolves around a courtyard that contains the fire and water elements the clients required for multi-season enjoyment. To give the clients the easy-care landscape they desired, the architect designed a "floor" for the outdoor room entirely covered with an earthy combination of stone, wood, and concrete.



(Above) All bedrooms in the main house open to the secluded courtyard, while double sets of oversized glass doors allow the owners to feel as connected to the outdoor room as they wish. A spacious roof deck accommodates a long table for dining al fresco.

(Right) Although a level above, the main living spaces contain easy access to the courtyard through two sets of stairs at either end of the L-shaped footprint. From the living room a staircase descends directly into a casual lounge that acts as the hub for winter entertaining. The kitchen opens to the exterior stair.



# Street Escape



One of the existing houses was deemed historic and was moved to the edge of the lot, fenced off, and sold to complete the architectural perimeter. Thanks to the site's 10-foot grade drop, the courtyard and lower level of the house sink a full story below the street. Since the surrounding neighborhood is less than bucolic, Lindenau designed the house to turn its back on the neighborhood and face in to this secluded sanctuary. "The street façade is very unassuming," he says, "so you'd never know this place existed."

Hardscaping the entire 45-foot-by-45-foot courtyard eliminated the client's maintenance concerns. Concrete paths connect the lower level rooms such as the master bedroom to various courtyard destinations. A raised wood plinth sets off a heated, swim-in-place pool. A slate platform surrounds a flush fire pit that lights up at the flick of an indoor switch.

Filling in the blanks, monotone pebbles counter smoother surfaces. Zinc planters filled with indigenous trees and shrubs soften crisp corners while the compound's flat roofs allow the variegated slopes of Mount Sopris and Aspen to dominate sightlines. Custom sail-shaped canopies strung across steel columns gently billow in the breeze adding a tranquil auditory element. The sails also help mitigate the relentless high-altitude sun.

Lindenau used diverse level and material changes to break up the courtyard expanse and create an engaging geometry. Robust ipe decking brings richness to the collection of surfaces and connects back to the house cladding. Long, low concrete walls, also lined with ipe, contain outdoor speakers and double as seating. Wide exterior stairs between the house and garage offer casual resting spots and allow visitors to walk directly into the courtyard without traipsing through the house. Storage beneath the stairwell is deep enough to house deck chairs, cushions, and pool supplies. Suspended aluminum trellises produce friendly shadows that lure people to come out and play. ■

(Above left) From the restrained street elevation there are no telltale signs of the outdoor oasis just beyond the board-formed concrete and Hardipanel walls. Indigenous plantings help the home all but disappear into its scenic mountain backdrop.

(Above right) A rich collection of colors such as the charcoal stained concrete, tawny ipe wood, zinc planters, and black and gray gravel creates a dark palette that absorbs the sun's heat and warms the path from house to heated pool to fire pit and back again.

Project Credits: Builder: John Black, Aspen, Colo.; Architect: Scott Lindenau, AIA, principal, and Ryan Hoffner, project manager; Studio b Architects, Aspen; Landscape architect: BlueGreen, Aspen; Photographer: Paul Warchol; Illustration: Rick Vitullo.

