

Modern home captures the serenity of the Alberta foothills

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DE WINTON, ALTA.
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The De Winton, Alta., home of Barb Zahnd and Jenn Kuntz.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

Barb Zahnd and Jenn Kuntz, psychotherapists looking to prepare for a transition into a home-based private practice, began with a plan to expand their home in Discovery Ridge, on Calgary’s west side. But they soon realized the lot would leave them hemmed in. They

began looking for a lot to build a dream house on.

They found it – a two-acre parcel of land in the rolling foothills of the Rocky Mountains near the town of De Winton.



The home is built in the shadow of Alberta's foothills.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

To design the home that would sit on this patch of ground that had been subdivided from a working ranch, they turned to Christopher Lemke of Alloy Homes, a Calgary-based design

and build firm. Mr. Lemke says he took his inspiration from the beauty of the surrounding land and its agricultural buildings, including a horse barn situated on the adjacent property.

“We really wanted to tell a story with this home,” he says.



The design takes cues from the surrounding land.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

The resulting 2,400-square-foot, two-storey vaulted home plays with the nature of open and closed spaces; with what is public and what is private.

The main structure is a long and narrow rectangle with a soaring gable, all clad in corrugated metal. Ecotreated cedar and plenty of glass soften the look.

“We then carved out all of the exterior architectural elements – second-floor deck, the breezeway and the southwest face and corner with floor-to-ceiling glazing,” Mr. Lemke says. He describes the materials used as “humble agricultural” – a nod to both the site-specific design and the owners’ budget.



The home features a chef's kitchen in an open living space designed for entertaining.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

The home works well for a country lifestyle with two dogs, being versatile, yet full of design drama. Ms. Kuntz loves to cook and the couple enjoys entertaining with friends and family,

so a chef's kitchen was included in the design, as was a functional home office. The private and public spaces are clearly delineated.

"We didn't want to totally be out in the boonies and here we are still close enough to the city and yet surrounded by the foothills," Ms. Zahnd says. "The views are stunning and we just fell in love with it."



The home is positioned to maximize views of the prairie sunsets.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

Mr. Lemke positioned the home from northwest to southeast to take advantage of the views – the vibrant red and purple prairie sunsets, the rolling hills and the occasional stream of wildlife.

“We are actually on the edge of a wildlife corridor, something we didn’t know when we bought the property,” Ms. Kuntz says. “Recently I was on a conference call and heard this big thundering sound. I looked up and in front of me, 200 elk were running by, 100 metres from our fence. It was shocking, yet so cool.”





The second-floor breezeway allows light to stream through into the home.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

The interior of the home spins around a second-floor breezeway, which carves out distinct spaces, while allowing light to stream through. The front of the home was kept opaque and private and slowly unfolds to a 30-foot vaulted great room with floor-to-ceiling glazing, spanning 180-degree views of rolling fields, horse barns and the soft edges of the foothills.

“When you approach the home it acts as a barrier to the view, which is then revealed in tantalizing snippets as you move through the spaces,” Mr. Lemke says.

The couple brought on Alykhan Velji Designs to help them with the interior design.





An Esse stove takes centre stage in the great room.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

A wood-burning Esse stove, a modern take on a two-century-old design, takes centre stage in the great room. Ms. Kuntz found the stove online and knew it belonged in her home. Although they agree it's a bit quirky, both women love the blend of the old with the new.

Many of the couple's antique family heirlooms – Ms. Kuntz has lovingly refinished many of them – sit gracefully amid the low-slung contemporary furnishings and whitewashed walls.





The couple's collected artwork adorns the interior.

JOEL KLASSEN/JOEL KLASSEN

Both Ms. Zahnd and Ms. Kuntz are avid art collectors and the home is peppered with works collected from their travels and gifted to them from family members. Many have been passed down through generations.

Since moving into their new home in September, 2019, life has changed. Now they spend more of their time closer to home, immersing themselves in afternoons spent gardening or taking long strolls with their two dogs, Bella and Alix, both rescue animals. They are deeply invested in creating a peaceful and unencumbered life together.





“We’ve become real home bodies and we really like having a beautiful home to live in and the space to do the things that we like,” says Ms. Kuntz, who is an avid gardener and is looking forward to spending the upcoming seasons growing fresh flowers, produce and herbs – and dining al fresco with her partner, family and friends.

“It’s all falling into place,” she says.

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