

BIG SKY JOURNAL

HOME

Mountain Living and Architectural Design





WRIGHT ON TARGET

An homage to the Prairie School on the edge of the Montana mountains

WRITTEN BY MICHELE CORRIEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARL NEUMANN

"Space is the breath of art." — FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

NOT FAR FROM BOZEMAN, MONTANA, WITHIN sight of both the Bridger Mountains and Spanish Peaks, Frank Cikan of Cikan Architects has created a home that pays homage to Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie School architectural style — albeit in a way that is tempered by Cikan's own Montana vernacular. From the inset red squares at the foot of the front doors to the wheat motifs scattered throughout the house, from the stained glass focal points to the intricate ironwork, Cikan's meticulous attention to detail unfolds room by room. Along



ARCHITECTURE
Cikan Architects

CONSTRUCTION
Yellowstone Custom
Country Homes

CLOCKWISE
FROM TOP LEFT:
The 11,047-square-foot home in Bozeman's Black Bull community was built in homage to Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie School style.

- The dining room looks out toward a mountain vista with an overhead, stained-glass ceiling lighting the Mission-style furniture.
- Arches in the bedroom hall echo the curved, recessed ceiling in the master bedroom.



the way, he somehow manages to reference Wright's style even while creating a structure that is thoroughly his own.

"I'd worked with these clients before," Cikan said, "but not on this large of a scale. I knew they admired Frank Lloyd Wright's design but I didn't want to build an exact replica."

When his clients came in with the idea of a Prairie-style home that would fit into a Montana landscape, Cikan knew what he wanted to do. Taking his aesthetic cue from Wright — the iconic architect from the early 20th century — Cikan designed a house that is more comfort than showcase, with every room displaying a distinctiveness of its own yet integrated into the whole.

During Wright's Prairie period, he pioneered a new architectural form

characterized by the use of strong horizontal elements and natural materials. He also emphasized harmony between the building and the



ABOVE: The spacious, open kitchen features a butler's pantry and counters made of petrified wood. **BELOW:** The entryway, filled with bronzes and Western art, opens into a welcoming living room.

site. This residence, in the Black Bull golf club community development west of Bozeman, pays tribute to these principles in a way that feels natural in a mountain setting.

From the beginning, Cikan's design needed to accommodate the owners' extensive American Western art collection, which includes oil paintings, watercolors, prints, and bronze sculptures.

The homeowners had a vision, but they were open to Cikan's input as well. "Frank is not an egotistical architect, it was very easy to work with him," said one of the owners, who prefer to remain anonymous. "I'm not a big fan of high ceilings but Frank said we needed some volume in here and he was right."

The 11,047-square-foot house with 6,500 square feet of living space sits on a double lot in Black Bull. This spacious arrangement allowed

WRIGHT ON TARGET



Cikan to design a larger home, and permitted the builder, Wesley Mills, co-owner of Yellowstone Custom Country Homes, to complete one that was extensive enough to satisfy his clients even while meeting all the requirements and covenants.

ABOVE: A stained glass partition divides the kitchen from the living room. **BELOW:** Rafters repeat the design of the stained glass motif placed throughout the home, while the fireplace highlights the horizontal stonework that is repeated outdoors.



RIGHT: The study features a sliding, stained-glass barn door. **BELOW:** The master bedroom includes a cozy fireplace and an architecturally designed headboard made specifically for the space.

“It was a great project and the owners were nice people to work with,” Mills said. “It was a challenge from the standpoint that there were a lot of architectural details. We had to do a lot of thinking to make it come out the way it did.”

Mills made sure the stained glass lined up with the interior trim and the layout on the inside was balanced and carried through, not only from room to room, but from indoors to outdoors.

“It gave us an opportunity to use our brains more than our hammers,” Mills said. “Especially in the master bedroom where the arch detail is the



same arch as the ceiling and the same arch that is in the fireplace. It was great because we got to take Frank’s ideas as well as the owners’ ideas and bring them to life in the real world.”

The biggest challenge for Cikan was to create an open space with lots of light and windows but without taking wall space away from the artwork. “The artwork

WRIGHT ON TARGET



Even in the bathroom, Wright’s style comes through in the lighting fixtures and natural elements.



was part of the design plan from the very beginning,” Cikan says. “The wainscoting — specific to every room — keeps the scale down, while the wood used throughout the residence warms it up.”

Enter the hall and immediately the eye alights upon the owners’ art collection, starting in the entrance with a large bronze sculpture of two dueling moose. A few steps into the living room, the Wright-inspired arrow or wheat motif introduces the theme of the home. The repeating motif comes across in the stained glass divider between the kitchen and the living room, as well as in the ceiling over the dining room table — not too much to feel overwhelming and not too little to go unnoticed. A recurring iron latticework hangs between trusses of the vaulted ceiling in the main living area, serving as a subtle reminder of the motif as

The outdoor patio offers warmth on a cool Montana evening. The horizontal stonework is indicative of a Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie home.

well. Look under the steel braces and a red square logo, the symbol of creation for Wright, peeks out. Small surprises like this appear again and again.

The Prairie School is known for its horizontality, and Cikan gave a nod in that direction with horizontal limestone banded stonework on the exterior and in the patio area, as well as in the interior walls and hearth. “It was important to have that connection between the outdoor area and the indoor space,” Cikan said, “and that every room have access to the outside.”

In the master bedroom, Cikan designed a two-sided headboard that serves as a bookcase and creates a corridor from the door to the bath and walk-in closet. He used red squares in the stained glass of the headboard, and a four-quadrant square in the blackish-brown steelwork of the wainscoting. Cikan created a concave vaulted ceiling with wood slats over the bed, echoing the arc of the headboard as well as the gentle curves above the living room fireplace. These arcs continue over the adjacent stained glass doorways.

In the roomy but efficient kitchen, an island separates the workspace from the dining room. The countertop uses petrified wood from Turkey, a surface that is repeated on a side cabinet as well.

Off the kitchen, a convenient butler’s pantry is easily accessible both from the garage, when coming in with armloads of groceries, and from the work area when cooking.

“I wanted a pantry,” the owner said. “That was very important for me.” The butler’s pantry connects the mudroom





Continuing the material palette from the exterior to the interior, the horizontal bands of limestone and roofline angles combine to bring the design full circle.

to the kitchen for practical convenience as well as linear design.

A bar and connecting corridor lead to the guest wing of the house, with two bedrooms and a bathroom, and a well-lit office space. Upstairs, another large office overlooks the backyard with stunning views of the Bridger Mountains.

The homeowners are delighted with the results. "Some people might say this is a formal house, but we feel it's a comfortable house," one of the owners said.

The most striking thing about the house is the attention paid to even the smallest aspects, from the ironwork to the stonework, from the stained glass to the countertops. Each area shows Cikan's devotion to detail.

"I could have had a vision, but without the craftsmen involved it would not have

turned out as well as it did," Cikan said, mentioning the stained glass work by David Fjeld, ironwork by Scott Hutzler, structural engineering by Russ Whitten, and landscaping by Bigcountry Landscaping. "But above all, Wesley Mills, the builder, who transformed the vision into reality. Oh, did I mention the client? Without their involvement and generosity nothing at all would've happened." 🏡