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RENDERING

# SIGNATURE STYLE

Quality and creativity lead to innovative designs for Poss Architecture + Planning and Interior Design

WRITTEN BY Laurel Delp



Inquire, and you'll discover that some of Colorado's most striking mountain homes were designed by Poss Architecture + Planning and Interior Design.

The firm of 40 is renowned for high-end, high-quality, and highly detailed houses in Aspen and Telluride — and much farther afield — and though it doesn't adhere to a single distinctive architectural style, its clients insist they can always spot a Poss project. Perhaps the best way to sum up the firm's character is to say that while it works in many styles, its designs are distinguished by the skill and innovation it brings to each.

Founder Bill Poss has been an architect for 50 years and has had his Aspen firm for four decades. The heir apparent, partner and director of design, Andy Wisnoski, has been with the firm for 30 years, and his son, Drew, who was a one-year-old when Wisnoski joined Poss, is now a member of the team.





**Opposite page, from top:** The “folded” roofs of the Sunset Ridge house, outside of Telluride, Colorado, reflect the timeless mountains and convey youthful optimism. Photo: Frank Strachan | A bridge leads across a pond to a cabana in the home’s backyard. | The design of Sunset Ridge seamlessly incorporates expansive windows, porches and balconies to ensure that the stunning views can be enjoyed from every angle. **This page, from top:** Poss also designed the Sunset Ridge interior. The dining table is by B&B Italia and the light fixtures above are by Moooi. | An outdoor cooking island conveniently sits just off the kitchen. | The master bedroom in Sunset Ridge features a custom leather headboard, Swarovski crystal pendants and a Vladimir Kagan loveseat. Photos: Josh Johnson



“The client is the focus of our design. It’s their project and their vision and we look at ourselves as professionals trying to execute their vision in every possible way,” Poss says. However, once the client’s vision is clear, he adds, the site becomes the most important factor: “The site leads where the design is going to go.”

In recent years, the designs have taken on an ever more contemporary interpretation. Poss is seeing a newer client base that’s younger and more inclined toward contemporary design, as well as clients interested in legacy projects — buying more and more acreage and building expansive homes designed both for family gatherings and for passing down to another generation.

“When someone brings their desires and wishes to us, if, say, they want something in the Western ranch vernacular, we like having the opportunity to be a little more expressive and abstract, to make something unique and signature for them,” says Wisnoski.





RENDERING



Photo: Jay Goodrich



Photo: Jay Goodrich



Photo: David Marlow



Photo: David Marlow



Photo: Jay Goodrich



**Opposite page, clockwise from top:** The exterior of the Wheeler house reveals a mix of traditional ranch house materials adapted to a thoroughly modern interpretation. | The indoor-outdoor pool features a glass enclosure that can be opened in the summer. | The kitchen at Wheeler house follows a theme of rustic luxury. | The master bedroom's traditional beamed ceilings are offset by contemporary touches. | Stone and wood create the backdrop for the Wheeler house's living room that's surrounded by windows. **This page, clockwise from right:** Poss Architecture's "warm contemporary" style is reflected in the Wheeler house dining room. | The study looks out to the hillside beyond. | The front entrance to the Wheeler house demonstrates the "added onto" ranch house theme, where buildings were added to a property as they were needed.



Photo: Jay Goodrich

A perfect example of this is the Sunset Ridge house outside of Telluride, a stunning collection of shapes from curved to orthogonal, with soaring roofs that Poss describes as "folded plates," and floor-to-ceiling windows that put it at one with its site. The house, set on a ridge with unsurpassed views, was co-designed by Wisnoski and Poss architect Mike Hamberg and is the firm's most headily contemporary design. It's also Poss' favorite project.

"The clients wanted something they hadn't seen before," he says simply. "They didn't want us handcuffed by anything we'd done in the past." It was a welcome challenge for the architects, and in many ways opened a door into their future as much as the clients'.



Photo: David Marlow



Photo: David Marlow





During his career, which includes working in many different countries, Wisnoski has never seen a more dramatic site. He and Hamberg worked together from the project's inception. Hamberg was responsible for the startling "folded" roofs that reflect the jagged mountains behind. The house is so isolated it neither reflects nor interferes with

neighboring structures; instead it sits majestically amid its sweeping views with almost no interruption between the interior and exterior.

An earlier design, the Wheeler house, seems to presage Sunset Ridge. At first glance, it appears traditional, but in fact it's completely contemporary. It's set on an 860-acre





**Opposite page, from top:** A sculpture by Deborah Butterfield marks the entrance to the Ute Trail house. | The house, located in an 1980s Aspen development, was taken down to the studs during a Poss remodel, which led to the addition of large windows and glass walls in the living room, allowing natural light to flood in. **This page, from top:** The owners are avid art collectors, and walls for displaying art were a crucial element of the redesign. | In the living/dining room, the neutral color palette allows the artwork to be the focus. | The new design incorporated the neighborhood's requirements, while creating spaces that feel open and bright. Photos: Steve Munding

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property, and the clients' wish had been for a house with a "ranch feel." From there the design evolved, with the clients on board, into a modern interpretation. "It's reminiscent of early ranch compounds, where structures were loosely added over time," Wisnoski says. "The floorplan sort of evolved over time," Hamberg adds.

The wood-clad ranch house has expansive walls of glass and distinctive asymmetrical peaked roofs and is marked with the kind of detail for which the firm is known, including wood columns carved to resemble the trees from which they were cut. It's a series of connected structures that includes bridge walkways, waterfalls, an indoor-outdoor pool and extensive landscaping that extends from seating areas just outside the house — with fire pits and an outdoor kitchen — deep into the ranch grounds. The end result is what Poss calls "warm contemporary," an almost subversive blend of tradition and innovation.

Another collaborative project was the Ute Trail residence in Aspen, a full remodel of an existing 1980s home designed to showcase the homeowner's art collection and make better use of space. The floorplan was reconfigured

to accentuate views, the living areas were enlarged and made more functional, and outdoor spaces were added so the homeowners could enjoy Aspen's climate.

Poss and Wisnoski are excited about the firm's future. They're working on hospitality projects across the U.S., from Kauai in Hawaii to Kiawah Island in South Carolina. These days they're licensed in 18 states. "We're branching out. Working in high-end custom homes like we do, we've learned to incorporate lifestyle into our projects, so we're being asked to travel everywhere," says Poss.

"Yes," Wisnoski says. "We're developing a much broader portfolio. We don't want to be just those guys that do really nice mountain homes. We want to be able to do any kind of home in any part of the world or a resort. That's where we see the challenges of the future." ■

*Laurel Delp* is a Los Angeles, California-based freelance writer and editor specializing in travel, food, architecture and art. She is a frequent contributor to *Western Art & Architecture* and other magazines and websites, including *Town & Country*, *Departures*, *Sunset* and *A Rare World*.



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