

CASUAL SOPHISTICATED *in* STONE

Today's architects and designers are creating settings with rustic, yet upscale feel through the use of natural stone or other rough-textured materials

by Jennifer Adams

With the stress and hassles of everyday life, homeowners look to their residences as a place of refuge. "Relaxing" and "comfortable" are two words that come to mind when describing a living space. To create such a soothing environment, architects and designers often look to the local surroundings of the home. Bringing the outdoors inside with natural or natural-looking materials is one way to provide a soft warm feel. A rustic style design is no longer only associated with stark log cabins. Natural stone and textured ceramic and porcelain tile are being used more and more to develop natural-looking, yet high-end residential designs.

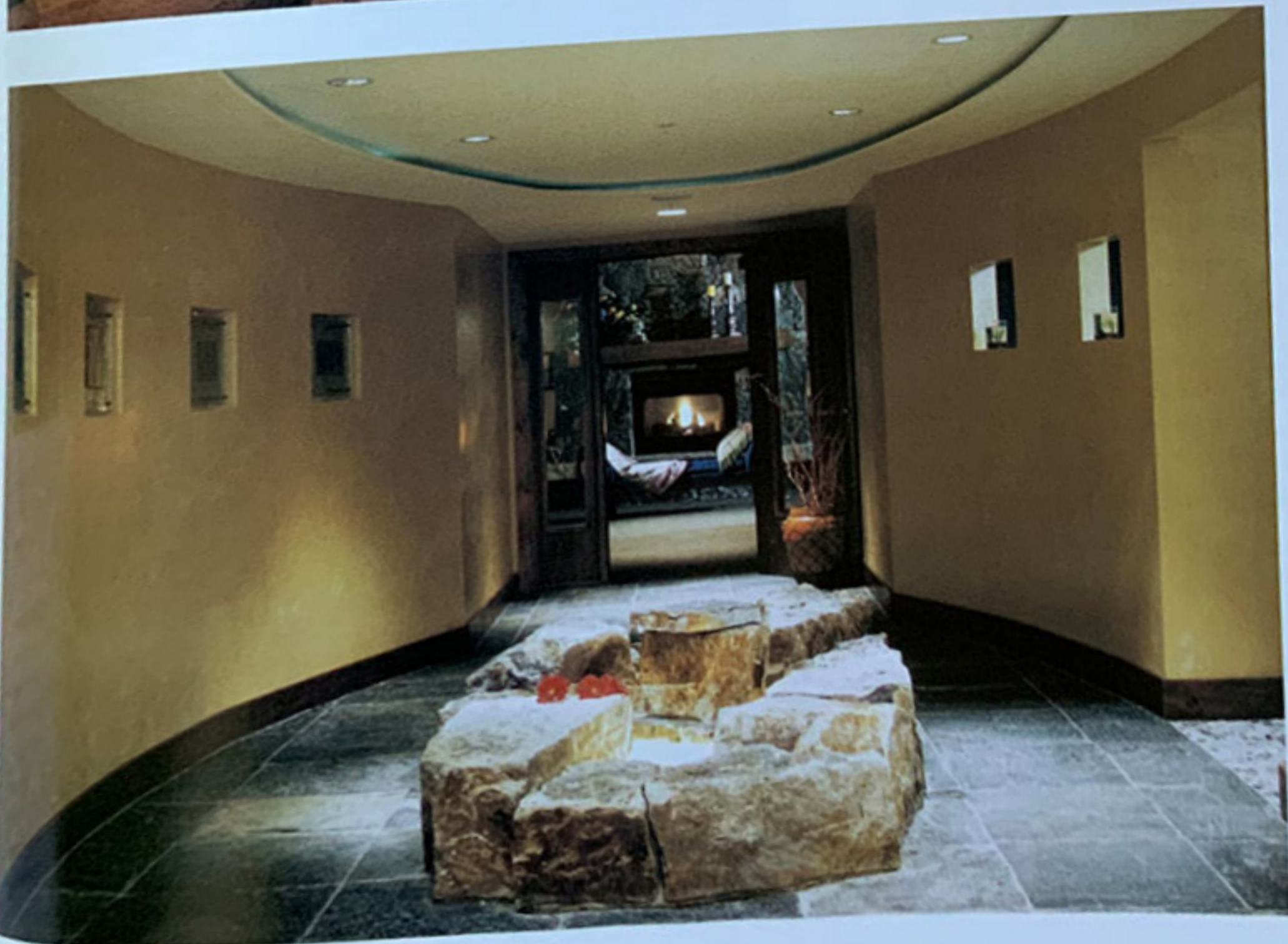
One firm that works almost exclusively on these types of designs is Slifer Designs of Edwards, CO. Stretching beyond basic rustic elements such as stone fireplaces and slate floors, the designers at this firm have used rough-textured stone for home furnishings such as bars, tables, vanity tops and even Jacuzzi tubs. While homeowners often desire a rustic style for their primary residence, Slifer Designs also works on a number of vacation homes.

"When approaching a design, we always keep what the clients' goals will be in mind," said Yvonne Jacobs, vice president of interior design at Slifer Designs. "We ask a lot of questions about the usage, and believe it or not, we get a lot of different answers. In the end, they want it to fit in with the Colorado environment and not seem out of place — they are not looking to duplicate their home in New York."



LEFT: The owner of this home wanted to use native Colorado stone from his property in the design of his bathroom. The stone for the large tub had to be lifted into place with a crane, and the rest of the space was built around it. **Designer:** Slifer Designs, Edward, CO

BELOW: Regional stone from Colorado also played a prominent part in the design of the 10,000-square-foot Aria Spa, which was built to complement the hotel and conference center at the Vail Cascade Resort in Vail, CO. During the selection process, several choices were considered, but in the end, Telluride Gold was chosen for the project. Random 2- and 3-foot boulder-like pieces were shaped to look like a natural pool, while 6- and 12-inch random and dry-stacked stones were used for the fireplace. **Designer:** Slifer Designs, Edward, CO; **Installer:** Gallegos Corp., Vail, CO



made from wood beams, further enhances the rustic style of the space.

According to Pam Goguen, also a designer at Slifer Designs, ledgestone and dry-stacked installations are two noticeable trends that she is seeing in rustic style designs today. She also selects, "stone with color variation," for interior features such as fireplaces, interior pools and columns to further enhance the architecture. She often tries to use local stone for her projects because it is indigenous to the area. "But, we want to also be good to the environment. Some stones from local quarries are in big demand and short supply."

Goguen did specify Colorado stone for the design of the 10,000-square-foot Aria Spa in Vail, CO. "We wanted to create a world-class spa to complement the hotel and conference center at the Vail Cascade Resort," said Goguen. "The Aria Spa services synchronize the beauty and serenity of the Rocky Mountains with the spa experience. Finishes, furnishings and fabrics were carefully selected to create the allure and experience associated with the natural surroundings. The Serenity Pool's concept was to bring the outside in, utilizing local stone and the soothing sound of mountain creeks."

During the selection process, several choices were considered, but in the end, Telluride Gold was chosen for the project. "We selected stones that we felt were indigenous to our Vail environment," said the designer. "We did look at Colorado Buff, but the Telluride Gold is more colorful and worked with our other finishes. The Telluride Gold was presented to the client, and they loved it for both the fireplace and the Serenity Pool."

Random 2- and 3-foot boulder-like pieces were shaped to look like a natural pool formation, while 6- and 12-inch random and dry-stacked stones were used for the fireplace. "Fitting the boulders together to emulate a natural mountain pool was one of the most challenging aspects of this project," said Goguen. "Jim Dawkins, Slifer Design's Director of Architecture, and I made three different site visits to supervise the installation."

Work on the project began in the spring of 2001 and was completed in the fall of 2002. "The beauty of the spa is not only enjoyed by destination resort guests, but is also a year-round favorite of Vail locals," said the designer.



Many rustic-style designs bring the feeling of the outdoors inside. Rough-textured stone, such as that used for this fireplace, can add character to a room. **Designer:** Slifer Designs, Edward, CO



Combined with textured wallpaper and contemporary lighting fixtures, a stone slab vanity top with rough-cut edges creates a natural yet classy setting in this bathroom. **Designer:** Slifer Designs, Edward, CO