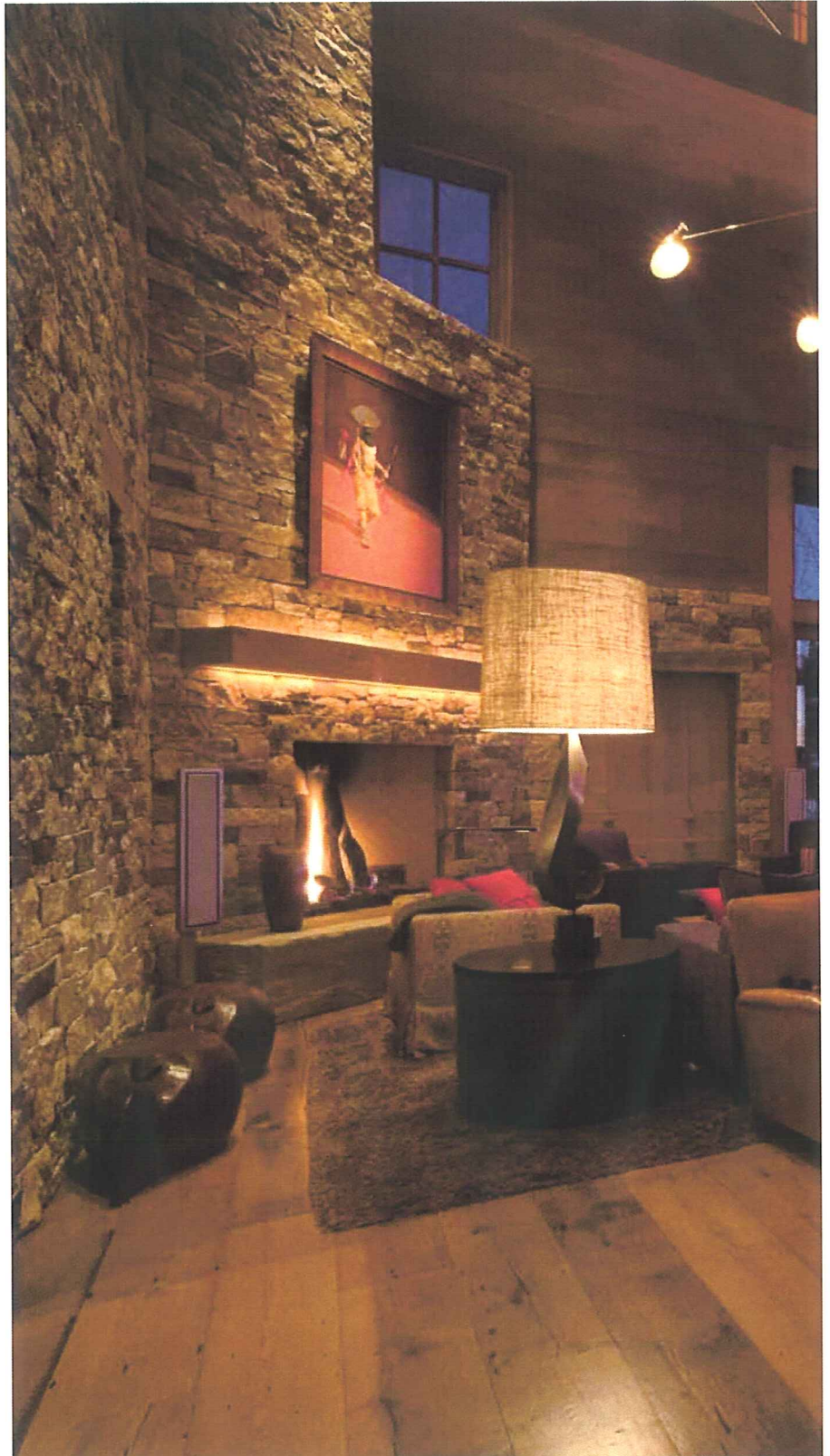


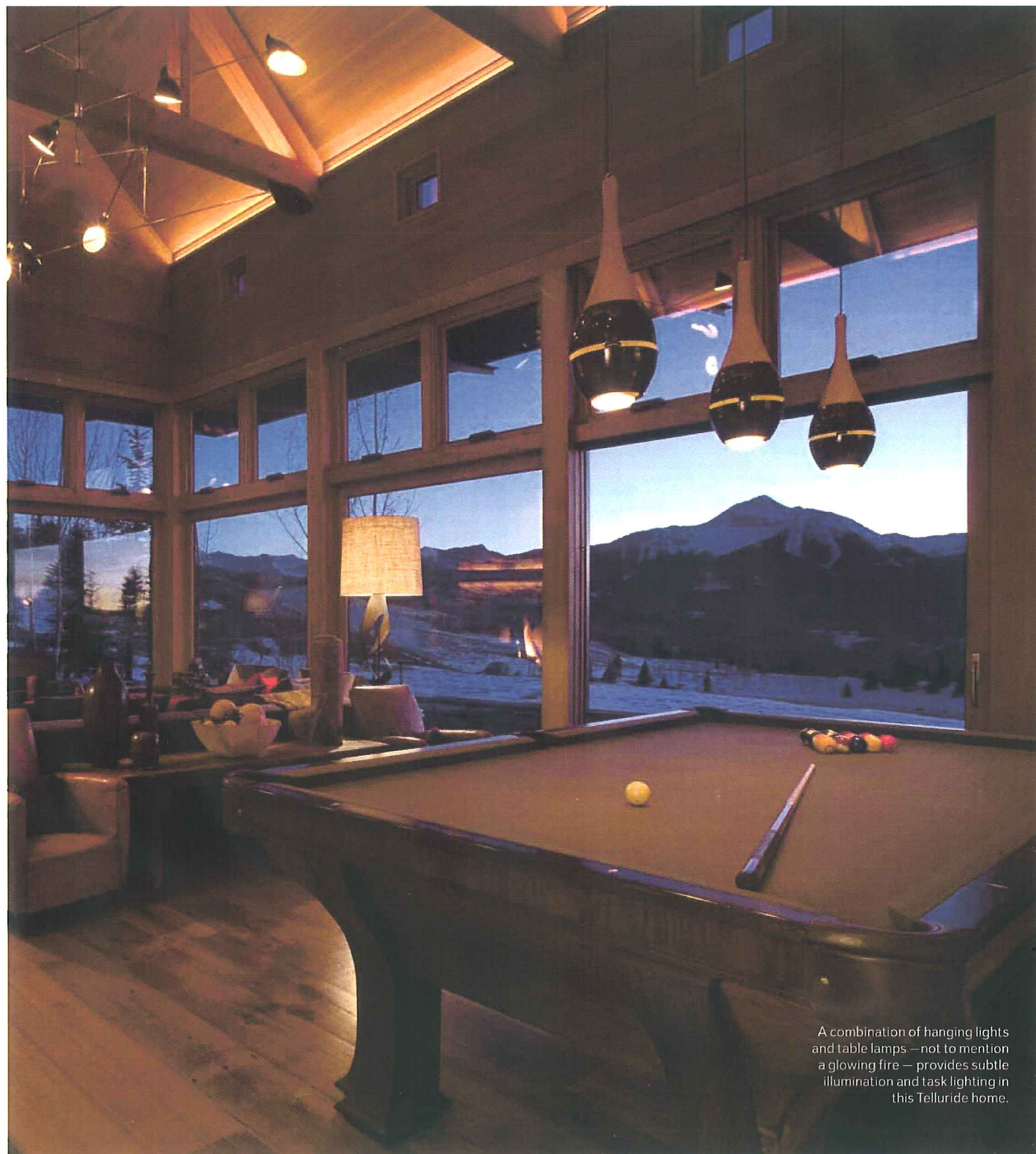
Bright Ideas

Add finishing touches on your home by shedding a bit of light on everything

SOME PEOPLE ENTER A HOME AND a light bulb goes off in their heads. A sudden feeling of warmth, comfort and luxury strikes them, but they can't identify the source of this bright realization. It's often a simple case of seeing the light. But not everyone has an eye for that.

It's not uncommon to invest hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of dollars into a home and overlook the one finishing touch that many in the home-building and decorating industries believe to be absolutely key: the lighting. After all, what good are all of those fancy columns, tile blocks, granite countertops and original works of art if people can't see them very well?





A combination of hanging lights and table lamps — not to mention a glowing fire — provides subtle illumination and task lighting in this Telluride home.



Finishing touch

"When you're spending that kind of money to build a house, the cost of the finishes is the last 20 percent," says builder Chris Renner of Pinnacle Mountain Homes in Summit County. "That percent is what absolutely makes or breaks the look of your home. To me, it seems silly to spend 80 percent of \$2 million and not light it well."

Individuals designing their dream home usually have a clear idea of what sorts of light fixtures they want in certain places — delicate hanging bulbs in the kitchen, halo cans in an upstairs bathroom. But there's a finer science to lighting than most homeowners know.

"It is a marriage of art and science. You have to have a certain level of sophistication with three-dimensional design and an understanding of lighting

technology," says Breckenridge lighting designer Wendy Cooney. "You need to understand how a design is going to look and be able to communicate that to your clients."

Lighting specialists are truly the architects of light. While homeowners can identify types of light they like and dislike, specialists provide an expert filter on the elements that aren't visible to the naked eye, and their assessments are always customized to the structure and specific components of every home.

"We access all the architectural elements before we think about the lighting — interior design, reflected ceiling function of the room — and we design the lighting accordingly," says Robert Singer of Robert Singer & Associates lighting consultants. "We never use a formula or cookie-cutter approach."

Science of lighting

According to specialists, types of light can be divided into two categories: architectural and decorative. Home lighting always involves various combinations of the two, but the specialists listen to their clients to discover how rooms are used in a home. Rather than classifying types of lighting with terms like "romantic" or "elegant," specialists build lighting effects to enhance specific objects and structures in a home.

Cooney says the key is finding different layers of light through four techniques — uplighting, downlighting, accent lighting and task lighting.

Uplighting is used to provide an ambient effect and to accentuate architectural elements like beams, cupolas and vaulted ceilings, while downlighting is used to provide the "blanket layer of light" and, like task lighting, enhance the quantity of light where it's needed. Accent lighting, on the other hand, is employed to highlight artwork — sculptures or paintings — and can also bring out definition in architecture and create a dramatic contrast effect.

"The lighting techniques that are employed will determine how a space feels," she says. "The client's personal preferences will determine how the design is approached. Does the client like a lot of light or do they prefer a more subtle light level? Does the client want all of the lighting in the ceiling or would they prefer to rely more on table lamps and floor lamps?"

"It is important to respond to the style of the house," she continues. "There are many things to consider, and there is no one right answer. The options are endless, and it is my job to sift through these options and give clients the best possible design for their needs, desires and budget."

The light options

Control of light is also of vital importance, not only for economical reasons and a green approach in maintaining resources, but also because sometimes it's more important to say, highlight the countertops and other times, the kitchen table. Integrated lighting systems are the

LEFT: Most bedrooms, like this one in Snowmass, use a blend of windows, ceiling lights and lamps for a variety of illumination options. This one also adds accent lighting to the fireplace.

ultimate in having all of the options right at your fingertips.

"You've got six buttons to be programmed on the formal dining occasions, the romantic look, watching TV ... Sometimes the countertops are on full and the hall lights are at 50 percent," Renner says. "With an integrated lighting system, I have all my closet lights turning themselves off after 10 minutes and the lights in my kids' rooms — that are usually on all day — going off after 30 minutes. You're pushing a button, and it all changes."

What keeps the work so interesting for specialists?


"The magic of what light can do to an environment," Singer says.

That fascination is perpetuated by the constant evolution in the color presentation and new technologies.

There have been plenty of studies vouching for how daylight (to which specialists also give a great amount of thought when lighting a home) can make or break a person's mood. Home lighting can do the same.

"Light levels that are too low for the task being performed can cause fatigue and headaches," Cooney says. Fixture glare can be a problem, but if introduced in the right manner, it can also create spark and excitement. Color rendering of a light source can be very important. The ability to make people look good in a space is dependent on the light source that is used."

When it comes to spending the final chunk of change on refining a home, lighting covers more ground than most finishing touches.

"The lighting enhances everything else you've done on every other finish," Renner points out. "You can make cheap carpet look great. But you could also make great carpet look cheap with bad lighting. You can put in less expensive tile, but if it's lit well, it looks expensive." 



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