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of Discourse &
Dialogue



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Top Doctors

Conversation STARTER

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REFRESHING A MIDCENTURY ICON

Nearly seven decades after Herbert Bayer began designing the guest quarters at Aspen Meadows, the interiors get a modern makeover.

BY HELEN OLSSON



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS FOR THE ASPEN MOUNTAIN RESORTS

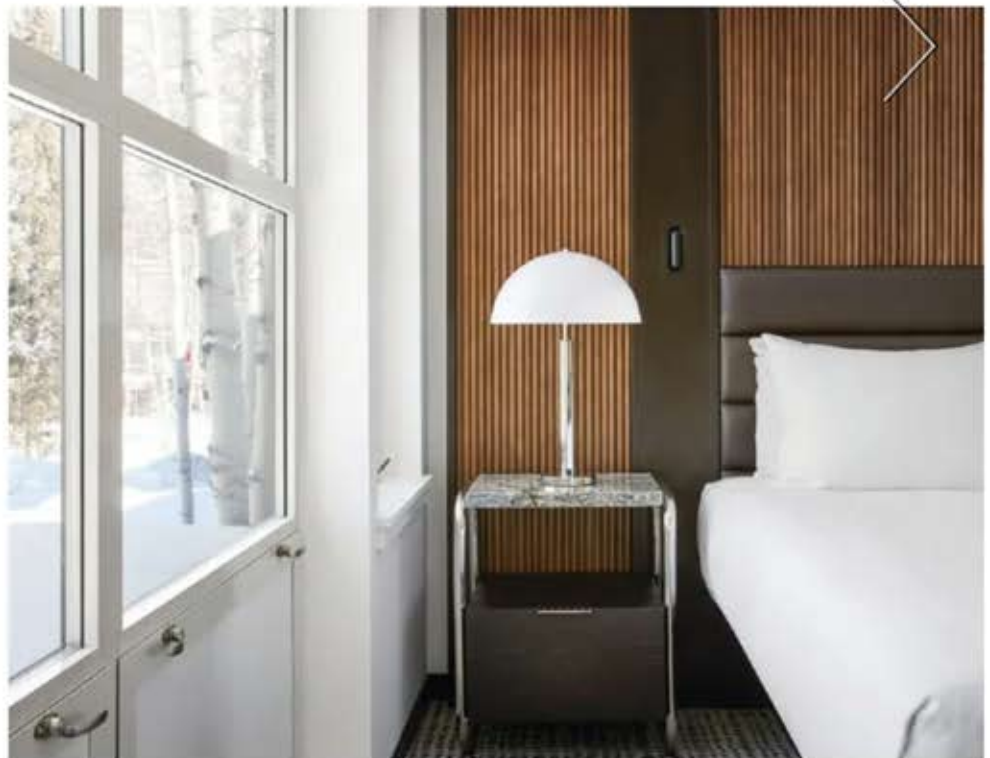


When architect Michael Suomi was charged with renovating 98 guest suites at the Aspen Meadows Resort, his journey of discovery on the legacy property was similar to an episode of *Antiques Roadshow*. "It was clear some pieces of furniture were significant in terms of modernism in the U.S.—and others were knockoffs," says Suomi, president of Manhattan-based Suomi Design Works. "We had to unravel all that—figure out what was worth restoring and what was trash."

In 1953, Bauhaus master Herbert Bayer began designing Aspen Meadows Resort—including the six-building residential complex—on the 40-acre grounds of the Aspen Institute. The interiors of those guest houses hadn't been renovated since the early 1990s. "After 30 years, they were visually tired and spartan," Suomi says. "The interior's design wasn't even a Bauhaus aesthetic."

Among the delightful discoveries made during the project were original midcentury modern Bertoni Bind chairs from Knoll. Suomi Design Works carefully restored the handmade welded steel wire frames and reupholstered them with Alexander Girard's original 1954 Arabesque textile, a whimsical pattern with playing card motifs. Other heritage pieces found on the property included Eero Saarinen tulip tables from 1957 and mushroom lamps circa 1960 from art deco designer Walter von Nessen.

To do the project justice, Suomi felt he needed to understand Bauhaus designers' work. "I spent a good deal of time touring the campus" **CONTINUED.**



From top: Herbert Bayer's primary color palette of red, blue and yellow brings the Bauhaus aesthetic indoors; behind the beds, naturally finished American walnut Tambour wall coverings add a coziness to the design, while details like vintage Walter von Nessen mushroom lamps preserve the midcentury vibe of the guest suites. Opposite page: Located on 40 acres of meadows and Aspen groves on the West End of Aspen, Aspen Meadows affords sweeping views of the slopes.

From top: Originally designed by Harry Bertola in 1952, the Bird chair (shown here to the right of the bed) was carefully restored and reupholstered in a heritage textile in Bayer's red, blue and yellow signature colors; original Ferenc Berko black-and-white photography decorates the suites.



...CONTINUED and learning about the property's history," he says. He researched Bayer and other seminal modernists like Buckminster Fuller and Marcel Breuer. He studied photographs by Man Ray, paintings by Josef Albers and handwoven textiles by Anni Albers.

The Suomi team also discovered original hand-embossed black-and-white photographs by Bauhaus artist Ferenc Berko. From aspen trees to snow mounds to abstract renderings of Aspen Institute tents, the 1960s-era photos were cleaned up and rehung in the guest rooms.

Drawing inspiration from the design of the building's exteriors, guided by Bayer's color language—reds, blues and yellows—Suomi rolled out that design ideology throughout the interiors. "That had never been done before," he says. The original interiors were mostly neutral tones—whites, blacks and grays, Suomi says. "When I was bringing in new fabrics and finishings, I had to think, What would Herbert Bayer have done?" The design team tapped Bayer's signature palette of primary colors with rectilinear banquettes in blue,

dining chairs in red, and side tables in yellow.

Bayer employed color in very particular ways. Terrace walls facing the setting sun were painted red; walls facing the rising sun were yellow. Suomi's interiors reflect that vision: You'll find red chairs and yellow cabinets located intentionally adjacent to the terraces.

At the same time, Suomi wanted the interiors to be cozy and inviting. "We brought in the Scandinavian idea of hygge into our design," he says. They blended in natural hues and employed textiles with patterns and textures that feel comfortable, with a little whimsy. "We wanted to compel people to touch things."

Dark charcoal-finished oak combined with smoked glass and chrome captures the Bauhaus aesthetic, while naturally finished American walnut Tambour wall coverings add warmth. Thoughtful updates include Anni Albers-inspired integrated boot-scrubbing flooring at the entryways and clever Kohler fixtures with single-disc chrome faucet handles. Both evoke the midcentury vibe in a 21st-century design. ♦

