

MODERN **LUXURY**

PEAK



ASPEN-SNOWMASS BOULDER BEAVER CREEK BRECKENRIDGE CRESTED BUTTE DENVER STEAMBOAT TELLURIDE VAIL

space



Original Ferenc Berko black-and-white photography decorates the remodeled suites at Aspen Meadows resort.

Located on the Aspen Institute's 40 acres, Aspen Meadows affords sweeping views of the slopes.



ELEVATING AN ICON

A DESIGN TEAM TAKES A THOUGHTFUL APPROACH TO RENOVATING HERBERT BAYER'S MIDCENTURY GUEST QUARTERS AT ASPEN MEADOWS IN ASPEN.

BY HELEN OLSSON

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 a little like 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 guesthouses 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 renovation were original midcentury modern

RESTORATION



From top: Herbert Bayer's primary color palette of red, blue and yellow brings the Bauhaus aesthetic indoors; the light to the left is a 1952 George Nelson Bubble pendant, chosen to match the existing midcentury lighting pieces.

Bertoia Bird 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: Eero Saarinen tulip tables from 1957 and mushroom lamps circa 1960 from art deco designer Walter von Nessen.

To do the project justice, Suomi wanted to gain an understanding of the Bauhaus designers. "I spent a good deal of time touring the campus and learning about the property's history," he says. He researched not just Bayer but 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.

To match the existing midcentury lighting pieces found in the studios, Suomi tapped Herman Miller for new George Nelson Bubble pendants, a series of spherical silhouettes originally designed in 1952.

The Suomi team also discovered »

RESTORATION



From top: Originally designed by Harry Bertoia in 1952, the Bird chair (to the right of the bed) was carefully restored and reupholstered in a heritage textile in Bayer's signature primary colors; the same palette plays out on the campus in sculptures like Bayer's *Four Chromatic Gates*.



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, which were 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 used Bayer's signature palette of primary colors with rectilinear banquettes in blue, dining chairs in red, side tables in yellow.

Bayer employed color in very specific ways. Terrace walls facing the setting sun were painted red; walls facing the rising sun, 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 bit of whimsy. "We wanted to compel people to touch things."

Dark charcoal-finished oak combined with smoked glass and chrome capture the Bauhaus aesthetic, while natural 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. ♦