

WESTERN ART & Architecture

From Cowboy to Contemporary

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DESIGNING WITH PASSION

Arizona designer Heidi Weiskopf creates spaces full of custom Western art pieces

WRITTEN BY Thea Marx



The elegant dance of the line in the air before the fly touches the water to meet the rising fish creates one of Heidi Weiskopf's favorite moments. The gracefulness with which Heidi casts her fly rod over an Alaskan river is also

Left to right: Weiskopf devotes as much time as possible to Power Paws Assistance Dogs. Kendall was the first assistance dog she trained for a person in a wheelchair. She now has a puppy in training for the deaf. | In a perfect melding of western and contemporary, Weiskopf created an office that is both sleek and rustic. The John Gallis walnut desk boasts twisted alligator juniper legs. Replica guest chairs with brindle hair on hide match the Gallis ensemble. Aged copper ceiling panels from M. Boss recall the Old West saloons. The rug is Tabriz from David E. Adler Gallery. A Tiffany lamp, inverted pendant by Kichler, and window coverings in Kravet finish the room. Photo by: Epic





From bottom left: Cozy, but chic, Weiskopf created this dining room for a home at the Yellowstone Club using local craftspeople and materials native to the area: table by Big Timberworks, custom side chairs and swivel stools by Tim Groth, Paul Robert Cowboy Chairs. Window treatments and stools in Folia/Ralph Lauren and Anthem leather. Tile counters and backsplashes from Pratt & Larson. Photo by: Ralph Kylloe | For an inviting space for casual entertaining, Weiskopf created a “Tavern” that is inspired by the mine shaft of the Queen Mine Rail Tour in Bisbee, Arizona. Behind the door stands a Subzero temperature controlled wine chiller that Weiskopf artfully integrated into the entertaining space without taking away from its rustic look. The stained glass window by Kathryn Tonnessen stylizes Pinnacle Peak and adds brilliant color to the space. The Sam Moore Settee was custom upholstered in NU and Moore & Giles leathers in the yoke pattern of a classic western shirt. Photo by: Epic

reflected in her interior design work. Though she was raised on the road with her famous father, professional golfer Tom Weiskopf, and experienced the privilege of seeing beautiful resorts the world over, she is firmly grounded in the West.

Weiskopf never dreamed she would be an interior designer. She received her M.B.A. in international management and ran a successful consulting firm. Her design career started almost overnight when, in a lull between consulting contracts, she agreed to help her father develop new marketing materials for his company. The process of working in his office led her to suggest that the space could use a facelift. Much to her surprise, he appointed her to do the remodel. She was bitten by the design bug and her new career fell into place.

“For once,” Weiskopf says, “both sides of my brain were working almost simultaneously: the analytical and the artistic. It was so refreshing. It was a wonderful reprieve from spending hours droning over reports and writing analyses. I was hooked immediately to the creativity and energy designing gave me.”

Weiskopf immediately went back to school and earned her interior design degree. Her first project entailed designing the interiors of a home at the prestigious Yellowstone Club in Montana. From that point on she never looked back. She is fearless in her support of Western and rustic design. Even in the Arizona desert where she resides, she dares to cross the boundaries of traditional desert design and buck the trends of mass construction.

She boldly mixes seemingly illogical elements — such as reclaimed slate roof shingles from European churches with 100-year-old recovered barn wood.

Over the last six years, she has compiled a network of diverse craftspeople with whom she works. They represent multiple disciplines and varied styles of Western and rustic creations. She finds working with the artists gratifying and includes custom art pieces as often as possible in her projects. Al Boswell, a furniture artist from Missouri who often collaborates with Weiskopf, notes, “It’s a privilege to work with Heidi. She is intelligent,



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Commissioning Custom Pieces

Adding commissioned Western furnishings is the perfect way to create a spectacular focal point for any room. Weiskopf specializes in working with artists and craftsmen, understanding that incorporating custom work into a design demands different tactics. She shared her tips for creating a successful relationship with craftspeople and developing custom designs.

Lead Time — Remember, each piece is handmade with wood and/or other materials often found in the artist's surrounding environment. It can take the craftsman months to find the perfect stump, unique pieces of driftwood or just the right hide for your custom order.

Defining Your Vision — Using sketches can be helpful in communicating your vision to the craftsman. If you need help developing ideas, look at the artisan's portfolio and identify desired elements from his/her past pieces to create a unique adaptation for your own commission.

Dimensions — Make sure to provide clearance dimensions including width, depth and height for any furniture and art niches. Don't forget to measure table heights when working with corresponding arm chairs.

Sign Off — It is important to sign off on all final drawings and all specifications including dimensions, wood and finish, leather, fabric, nail heads, etc., for every order. Deposits (usually 50 percent) are taken to commence work with the balance due prior to, or at delivery. Prices quoted usually don't include freight or delivery.

Level of Rusticity — It is important to communicate your desired level of rusticity to the craftsman. Most rustic craftspeople build furnishings for cabins and lodges, where heavy distressing and Western accents such as antlers and nail heads seem natural and are expected. In some cases (i.e. city settings or very contemporary projects) a clean rustic look may be preferred. It's very important to express your desire up front.

Blending Custom Work — If you choose to use multiple craftspeople for furnishings in a single space or project, make sure all styles, materials and finishes complement one another. An easy way to do this is to introduce the craftspeople and encourage them to discuss your project. However, be sure to stay in the loop with regard to final decisions.

Finding Artists and Craftspeople — Weiskopf is always looking for talented craftspeople and artists. Her favorite venues include: Western Design Conference, Jackson, Wyoming; and Cody High Style, Cody, Wyoming. For Western art she recommends Buffalo Bill Art Show and Sale, Cody, Wyoming; Cowboy Artists of America Sale and Exhibition in Phoenix, Arizona; and Masters of the American West Fine Art Exhibition and Sale, Los Angeles, California.



knows what she wants and treats my time with respect. She is one of my favorite designers."

Heidi's background in international business and resort development lends her a unique take on the spaces she creates. She approaches them with thoughtful business sense, then makes them artfully intriguing, full of texture and detail. She boldly mixes seemingly illogical elements — such as reclaimed slate roof shingles from European churches with 100-year-old recovered barn wood. Weiskopf masterfully combines the modern and rustic elements; often integrating high-tech appliances into kitchens and bar areas and camouflaging their harsh stainless steel exteriors with carefully constructed custom rustic and natural elements like stone and reclaimed wood.

Architect Domenic Berta, a veteran of high-end residential design in the Scottsdale area, compliments Weiskopf on her latest project in Ladera Vista. "The Western I have seen in my 30 years in this area is more pseudo-Western and frankly, not very appealing. The Ladera Vista project is very well done. Heidi did a beautiful job capturing the character that she was seeking. The design is not distorted. It's thoughtful, tasteful and the best Western I have ever seen. She has a passion for what she does. She must if she is to do something this well."

Weiskopf lives her entire life with zest. Everything she



From Left: Weiskopf has proven that a beautiful, modern kitchen can have all the conveniences of today and still feel like the bustling hub of an old ranch house in the West. | A regal and welcoming custom sculpture by Gary Burke greets guests upon entry to the Ladera Vista home in Scottsdale. Custom door and sidelights by Craftsmen in Wood. A Navajo rug lies on an ungauged slate floor. The custom 12-light mule deer antler chandelier overhead is from Jackson Hole Designs. The outside sconces are Arroyo Craftsman. Photo by: Epic

does, she does well. Whether it's fly-fishing on an Alaskan river, raising a puppy for Power Paws to assist a person with a disability or designing Western and rustic spaces, Weiskopf makes sure every detail is considered. Heidi Weiskopf's newfound profession is a perfect fit for this Arizona girl with a passion for Western design.

Thea Marx is fifth-generation-born and ranch-raised in Kinnear, Wyoming. Much of her career, including her book and Web site, *Contemporary Western Design*, has been dedicated to Western style. Her work also appears in *Living Cowboy Ethics*, *Western Horseman*, *American Cowboy* and *Western Lifestyle Retailer*. ■

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