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HOT AND COOL

How refashioning a fireplace helped take an Aspen townhome from mountain to modern.

STORY BY **MICHAEL MIRACLE**
PHOTOS BY **ALEX IRVIN**

ROBYN SCOTT STARED AT THE WALL with the fireplace. The wall with the fireplace stared back.

The Basalt-based interior designer was remodeling an Aspen townhome at the behest of two Dallas brothers and their wives, who had commissioned Scott to modernize their downtown space while still keeping things warm and inviting. Scott's gaze had turned to the living room.

"It had what we call 'eyebrows,'" she explains. "There was a built-





in TV cabinet to the left, the fireplace in the center, and a built-in bar to the right.” The headers mounted above those three elements created dark horizontal lines along the wall (“eyebrows” as prominent as Bert’s from *Sesame Street*) and were just one aspect of the traditional European mountain style the homeowners were looking to downplay.

Because the room was the families’ main living space, the fireplace, TV, and bar all had to stay, and the wood headers couldn’t completely come out, either. Scott and her team’s solution was to convert the wall into a single, seamless elevation. “We applied a patinaed steel façade—big slabs of steel,” Scott says. “It’s contemporary, but the patina gives it some warmth.” Pulling what had been recessed cabinetry flush with the metal forced all of the elements onto a single plane, which drastically softened the impact of the horizontal remnants of the headers.

The TV and bar now felt integrated into a modern

whole, but the gray framing the fireplace needed to be linked to the room’s floor, a beautiful walnut that had been refinished to the point of looking brand new. Scott found her connector in a mosaic of vertical glass planks. “It has the browns—the warm tone—and it has some blues and grays and whites,” she says. Extending the mosaic all the way to the ceiling made the fireplace the focal point of the room, accentuating the height of the ceiling in the process. The hearth—a floating piece of Caesarstone that looks like concrete—also serves as a palette connector, exuding a slight shine that picks up the shimmer of crushed velvet pillows on the couch.

The effect is substantial. “This is a townhome, versus a house with huge views,” Scott says. “The first thing you see when you come upstairs is the wall with the fireplace, not a view.” Now, after a makeover that included some eyebrow plucking, that fireplace has become an impressive vista of its own. ●

Once they were covered in steel, the eyebrows over the fireplace and built-ins became more subtle.