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Modern Mountain

Designer Brittany Haines effortlessly mixes a neo-traditional aesthetic with a distinctly California-cool vibe in a Lake Tahoe home



designers face unforeseen obstacles all the time. Contractors run late. Zoning boards quibble. Electricians misplace outlets. In Lake Tahoe, California, Brittany Haines had bears.

“Not close to the house, but within 100 yards,” says the San Francisco-based designer and one of *Traditional Home* magazine’s 2018 New Trads. On multiple site visits, Haines and homeowners Claire and Holden Spaht came face-to-face with the Spahts’ new neighbors. It’s hard to escape nature when your home shares a

border with Tahoe National Forest. Large steel-frame windows and doors in the living room seemingly entice the bears to cozy up to the fire for a fresh bowl of porridge. Goldilocks is invited this time around, as the Spahts’ vacation home is always full of guests.

Don’t be mistaken, though. This isn’t your typical cozy pine cottage in the woods. “We were trying to make it a little bit more boho than a mountain home, more L.A.,” Haines says.

Striking the balance between California cool and traditional Tahoe proved an interesting

aesthetic challenge. The new house is airy—white walls and high ceilings in the living room set the tone. “To create an earthy, more modernized mountain home it was all about layering textures,” Haines says.

The designer added loads of jute and linen. She repurposed vintage kilim rugs into pillows, adding fringe to make it feel fresh. “We all decided early on that it just feels good to have earthy, textural things in the house,” Claire says. The key was “to make each space feel appropriate, not overly layered, but appropriately



Dining area and kitchen Oversize pendant lights from Frezoli Lighting provide a striking separation between living and dining areas. **Laundry room** Designer Brittany Haines subverts traditional Tahoe aesthetics by going light and bright in a room designed for everyone’s least favorite chore. **Exterior** Modern architecture roots the ground-up build. Traditional stone elements juxtapose contemporary steel windows and doors. **Preceding pages** The home’s open floor plan is wrangled with statement-making furnishings and art.

layered so it just feels really welcoming,” Haines says.

Warm touches soften the modern edges. Plush cushions and chunky knit blankets adorn benches and sofas. The high pine-paneled ceiling in the main room offers a foil to the space’s white walls. Patterned kilim rugs break up the wood floors. Colorful abstract art and black-and-white photographs

and sketches hang side by side—offering visual balance.

Haines has known the family for years. Before she opened her firm, the designer had nannied for the young Spaht girls. Her responsibilities soon shifted, however, from helping the girls to helping Claire refresh their San Francisco residence. Soon, Claire asked Haines for help designing their Lake Tahoe escape.

Who better to lend a hand than the person who knows exactly how your family ticks?

Haines knew that the girls like to sleep with the bathroom light on, and that they love a sound machine, while Claire finds them visually unappealing. “Working on someone’s home is so personal,” the designer says. “All those little things about the family and how they



Media room The paneled media room is Haines’ favorite. The deep sectional is a custom piece designed by her firm, ABD Studio. It is covered in fabric from Classic Cloth. A vintage womb chair covered in a nubby Cowtan & Tout fabric creates a calming visual break between the patterned pillow and the vintage Moroccan flat-weave rug.
Living room A mix of modern and vintage pieces, like these Swedish Arne Norell chairs, creates the collected, livable feel the Spahts crave.
Upstairs landing The home is filled with items from the Spahts’ personal collection of pottery and art gathered over years of travel. **Entry** A floating bench below coat hooks is as utilitarian as it is sleekly beautiful. The family commissioned artist Margo Wolowiec to craft a custom piece to hang in their light-filled entry.



Bunk room bath The bath has multiple stations for guests. The subdued palette is enlivened with patterned tile from Commune Design.
Master bath A rug in muted tones and a vintage stool balance the modern space.
Master bedroom A custom light from artist Stephen White hangs above the bed. A vintage kilim sourced from Marc Phillips Decorative Rugs adds color without overwhelming the space.
Bunk room Each bunk has its own sconce from Schoolhouse Electric.
Guest room The shelving behind the bed is painted in Farrow & Ball's "Studio Green." The bed is styled with vintage pillows.



live, it just adds another layer that is so important in design."

Because of that personal relationship, the design of the home is based in a deep trust on both sides of the equation. Claire is a dream client. She's an artist and an avid collector of perfectly mismatched pottery. She's the kind of person to keep the open shelving in the kitchen organized and beautiful. "That was never a

concern with Claire," says Haines. And so, the open shelves went in.

Though modern in its architecture and aesthetic, the house is sprinkled with traditional elements. Pottery, mostly collected from visits to North Carolina, dots the open shelving. A traditional dining table pairs with modernist black chairs. In the bunk room, preppy gingham curtains and sleek

gray cabinets make a soft yet masculine statement. Cocooned in wood paneling, the media room feels subtly Scandinavian.

The beauty of the Spahts' Tahoe house is in its originality. You won't see a pine room covered in Western textiles. No scratchy wool blankets or moody palette. It melds modern and traditional, striking a balance that suits this family just fine.



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