



high

A new build in the Blue Ridge Mountains is given an old soul by designer Rachel Halvorson. Her first move? Collecting vintage quilts

COUNTRY style

Mountain Magic
Bark siding and natural stone set an inviting tone on a porch that's wrapped in views.



FOR DESIGNER RACHEL HALVORSON,

this project was personal. After all, she has spent her whole life visiting this close-knit North Carolina community in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains with her family. When a Nashville couple was searching for a trusted guide to give a dose of rustic charm to their new build in the High Country, they were certain that Halvorson was the right person to bring their vision to life. “Here, there’s an open-door policy. I grew up going in and out of friends’ houses before leaving for hikes, so I really got to know the homes,” says Halvorson. “It’s kind of like a summer camp.” The homeowners also called on Charlotte-based architect Don Duffy to design the rambling mountain house to accommodate their visiting children and grandchildren. When it comes to giving new construction a long-standing appearance, Duffy offers this wise advice: “Look at what old homes have, and then bring in that rich palette of authentic materials.” Here, he opted for bark siding as well as stone fireplaces. Halvorson knew how the interiors needed to function: durable enough to withstand muddy hiking boots, spacious enough for entertaining friends and houseguests, and cozy enough for the couple to feel comfortable when staying there by themselves. “I really wanted to decorate it in a way that seemed undecorated,” she says of her approach to creating a relaxed, layered-over-time aesthetic.



DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK

“It wouldn’t make sense to walk into a bright, all-white house here,” Halvorson says. “There’s something comforting and nostalgic about keeping certain parts of the interior dark and woody.” Taking a design cue from some of the older homes in the community, she clad the entry in chestnut paneling. “In some houses, it’s everywhere—on the ceilings and the walls,” says the designer, who used it more sparingly to establish a sense of place right at the front door.

SIT AND STAY AWHILE

Since the back of the house faces the scenery, Halvorson oriented the outdoor spaces around the view. "It's a very social porch," she notes. The wraparound design provides several conversation spots for chatting in front of the fireplace, relaxing in the living area, or taking in the landscape from rocking chairs. "Because it's where everyone hangs out, I thought, 'How can I fit as much seating as possible?'" she explains.





PRIORITIZE PLAYTIME

Embracing practicality when outfitting each space was key for Halvorson, who chose an extendable farm table for the dining area to accommodate a crowd. Lightweight wooden chairs can be pulled up to seat more guests for meals or quickly moved aside when friends come over for a rousing game of liar dice. She “shopped” the homeowners’ Nashville house for the traditional rug and light fixture.



MAKE MODERN CONCESSIONS

Halvorson remembers her nearby family home’s tiny kitchen as being dark and outdated. To meet the homeowners’ needs, she designed an island large enough for preparing dinner, packing lunches for hikes, and feeding toddlers. “The kitchen is big so everyone can cook together and is open to the rest of the main level. But hidden sliding glass doors allow it to be closed off too,” she adds. The white marble countertops balance out the warmer cabinetry (painted Benjamin Moore’s Clarksville Gray, HC-102). To ground the room’s lighter, airier look, she carried the wood onto the ceiling with beams and also accented the vent hood.



LET THE VIEWS LEAD

The expansive main level is naturally busy, so Halvorson kept the scheme neutral in the primary living area. "The surrounding scenery is incredible, so I didn't want any upholstery to distract from that," she says. She centered plenty of plush seating—a mountain-house must—around the fireplace and chose a functional coffee table (with drawers for stashing remotes and decks of cards) that could double as another game station when guests come over.



ADOPT A LAID-BACK ATTITUDE

As Halvorson can attest, there's always a puzzle being put together, whether it's on a rainy day or during downtime between activities, so a dedicated table for jigsaw masterpieces was a top priority. To bring warmth to the book nook, she painted the shelves Benjamin Moore's Clarksville Gray (HC-102). Her casual approach to arranging items included mixing books and family photos with art created by friends or scooped up at vintage shops.



DESIGN FOR RAIN OR SHINE

The perks of a sunporch? The homeowners can comfortably hang out here in any weather and still feel like they're outside thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows. To help the ocean-blue sofa feel more at home in the mountains, Halvorson says, "I mixed it with greens and other natural colors to incorporate it in a rustic way." She also swathed the space in Benjamin Moore's Hampshire Gray (HC-101). Bringing in rattan armchairs, a bluestone-topped coffee table, and other patinaed pieces completes the indoor-outdoor look.





Suite Dreams
 Each bunk was equipped with its own reading light and cubby plus curtains (in Ginger by Heather Chadduck Textiles).



RETHINK COASTAL HUES

Whimsical botanical patterns (Kerry Joyce Textile's Flowering Vine draperies and Schumacher's Etched Fern wallpaper) along with traditional wood furnishings keep the homeowners' requested blue scheme from swaying too beachy. A vintage quilt, which serendipitously coordinates with the palette, brings old-school charm to the bedroom. "We started collecting quilts the second the project began," says Halvorson.