



THE FIRE INSIDE

The year of fire energy

By Kimberly Nicoletti

We all know what fire contributes to a home or a camping trip: It's a place to gather in warmth and community. Its mesmerizing flickers can assist us in meditative contemplation, or stillness. And, its flames allow us to make nutritious meals on gas stoves.

This month is a particularly apt time to consider the role of fire — and fireplaces — in our lives, as Feb. 17 marks the Lunar

New Year, which ushers in the fire horse. Fire adds passion, drive and transformation to the horse's freedom, setting up the upcoming 12 months to be a vibrant, fast-paced time period for action, personal growth and pursuing what lights us on fire.

We contain fire in and outside of our homes because we know its power.

"Fire has movement — it moves really fast. It can be distracting if not contained. It tends to increase in size

quickly," says Kasia Karska, owner of Kasia Karska Designs, commenting on the powerful energy of fire both physically and energetically.

According to Feng Shui, one of the practices she employs in her architecture and design, the five elements — wood, fire, earth, metal and water — should be employed to bring balance and harmony to homes and businesses.

Whether most people intuitively knew it or were just being practical in terms of building fireplaces,

surrounding it with stone and metal actually balances out the intense energy of fire. As Feng Shui principals point out: Metal is the opposite of fire; it contains shrinking qualities, as opposed to fire's expansive qualities. Similarly, stone is an earth element, which adds grounding and stability to fire's power.

HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF INCORPORATING METAL OR STONE INTO FIREPLACES.

Stellar by Heat & Glo offers one of Karska's favorite indoor/outdoor fireplaces. Here, this fireplace in Frost Creek allows for comfortable indoor/outdoor living nearly any day of the year. From the interior of the home, the transparent glass gives homeowners a window, so to speak, out to nature when the fire isn't blazing.

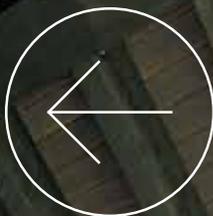
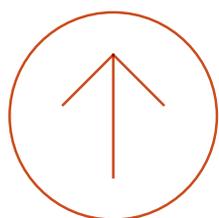




PHOTO BY BRENT BINGHAM



Metal also adds a more contemporary aesthetic to a home. In this Kasia Karska project, the metal creates a dramatic statement as it extends all the way to the point of the cathedral ceiling, drawing the eye upward, which can actually lift spirits. According to "Psychology Today," physically looking upward can boost the mood by activating brain areas associated with awe and holistic thinking. It also helps engage the parasympathetic, rest-and-digest nervous system, creating a sense of calm and creativity.

Fireplaces can also act as a sculptural element, such as in this example, with its hanging steel panels grounded and held by quartzite, again, adding metal and earth elements. Inside, a metal sculpture of lengthy sticks add interest to the gas fireplace, whether it is on or off. Lighting further enhances the sculptural piece.



PHOTO BY KIMBERLY GAVIN

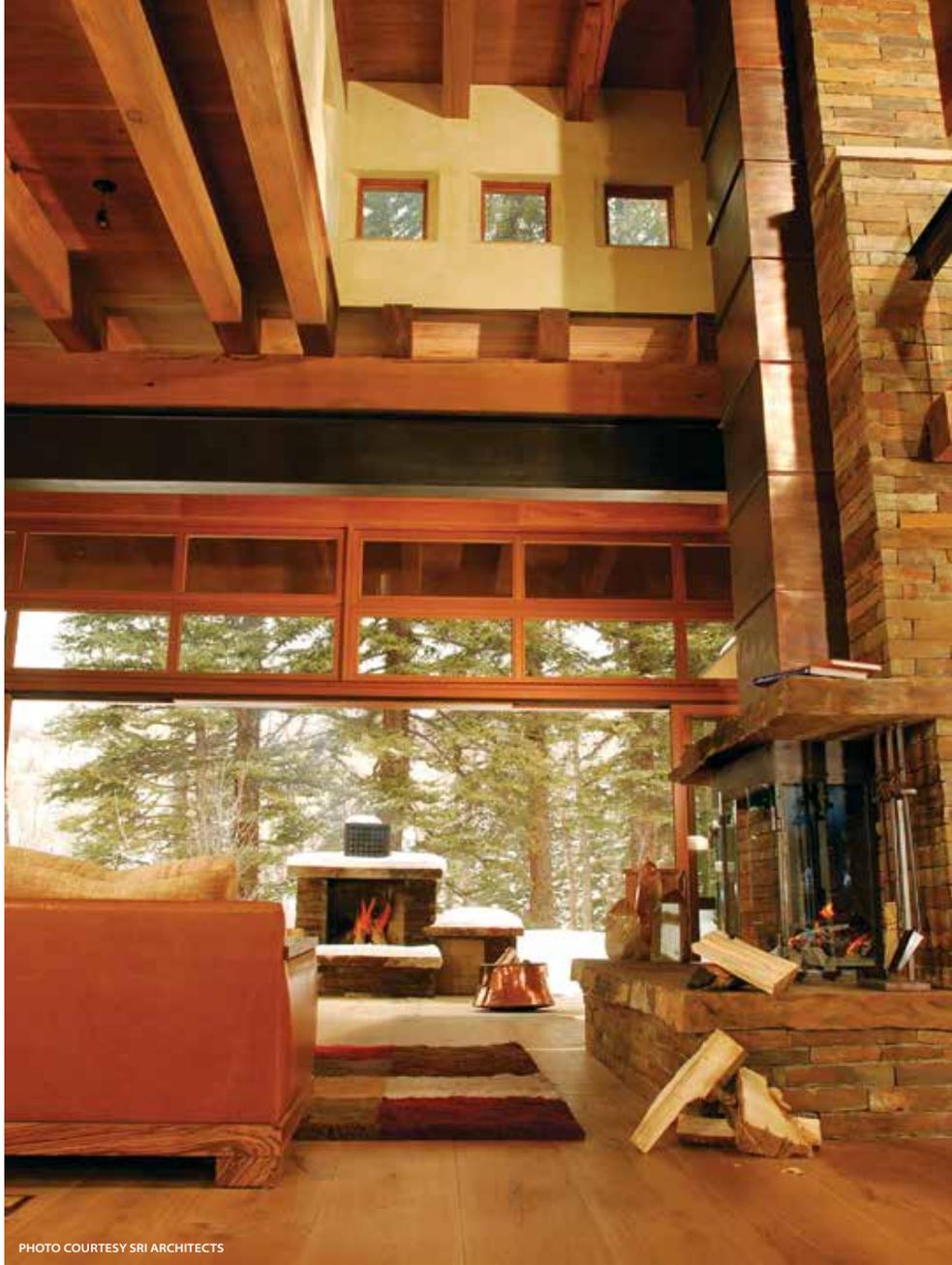
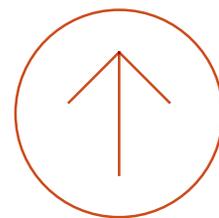


PHOTO COURTESY SRI ARCHITECTS

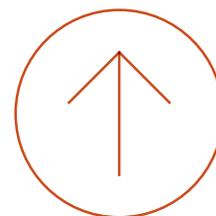
This home in Steamboat blends both stone and metal extending to the high ceiling in its mix of a traditional and modern aesthetic. Outside, a stone fireplace complements the indoor hearth.



"I ALWAYS FOUND IT TO BE AMAZINGLY CREATIVE AND UNIQUE," ADAM HARRISON, PRINCIPAL OF SRI ARCHITECTS SAYS. "THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOME IS ALL STONE AND COPPER, SO WE BROUGHT THOSE MATERIALS IN TO CREATE THIS FIREPLACE. WE HANDPICKED BOTH THE HEARTH AND MANTEL SLABS AT GALLEGOS IN GYPSUM. I ALSO LIKE THE PLAY BETWEEN THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR FIREPLACES."



The goal in this Timber Rock residence in Estes Park involved honoring the 1960 and 1970's days of ski lodges in the Midwest. Completely open on all sides, Acucraft, a Minnesota company, engineered all the venting and guts of this gas fireplace, and FireFeatures Inc., a company out of New York, designed the metal log set. As Adam Harrison, principal of SRI Architects notes: "Building codes hate fireplaces, and it has become harder and harder to be creative with fireplaces in today's day and age." And yet, he found one of many ways to create an inspiring fireplace.





This floor-to-ceiling dry-stacked stone has a darker look, much like many metal-surround fireplaces. It includes storage nooks for natural-cut wood, the latter of which reflects fire's expansive energies, yet brings in an earthy element, in this Beth Levine project.

