

# MOUNTAIN LIVING<sup>®</sup>

AMAZING  
VIEWS

---

ASPEN WOODLAND MASTERPIECE



TELLURIDE FAMILY HAVEN

MISSOULA MINIMALIST RETREAT

REINVENTED MONTANA BISON RANCH

THE OCULUS IS AN ECO-CONSCIOUS MOUNTAIN BIKER'S DREAM

## AT HOME IN A... *RIDEABLE OFF-THE-GRID HUT*

STORY BY MICHELLE JOHNSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GIBEON PHOTOGRAPHY



*TEN WEEKS, EIGHT BIKE-MINDED GUYS, OVER 10,000 POUNDS OF BUILDING MATERIALS, AND ONE GOAL IN MIND:*

craft an eco-friendly cabin with a rideable roof in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley. Dreamed up by a group of designers, architects and members of Stomparillaz—a creative cycling collective that hosts bike polo tournaments, full moon cruiser rides and community-centered events in Carbondale—the 165-square-foot eye-shaped hut is an exercise in integrated design and biomimicry, according to Steven Novy of Green Line Architects.

"Our question was, 'How do you fulfill a number of design criteria at once, such as I want to be comfortable, I want to be warm, I want to be energy efficient, I want to be sensitive to a natural site?'" Novy says. >>

*OPPOSITE: Situated along a trail system on the Carbondale property of Aaron Humphrey (a lighting designer, Stomparilla and key player in this project), the Oculus main attraction is a curved roof built to sustain ride-overs and wheelies. ABOVE: The eye-shaped structure features a faceted window wall that lets in light and heat.*



*After completing the Oculus, architect Steven Novy is a believer that all buildings should be rideable. "If you look at a Zaha Hadid or Daniel Libeskind building, or any of these famous architects that are using humanlike, anthropomorphic shapes to create artistic sculptural structures, those buildings in a lot of ways are begging to be ridden," he says. "If you can ride over it, then all the sudden there's an opportunity to interact with architecture in a totally different way."*

"With the Oculus, we were able to show people how to design a small structure with an integrated process, and then they can imagine how it would work for a larger building."

The idea was conceived over a sketchbook and a few beers. Novy and friends passed around a sketchbook, drawing a structure that mimicked an eye in function and shape—the front of the structure would let in light and heat through a faceted window wall, while the curved parabolic roof would allow bikes to be ridden over the top. The concept was eventually picked up by the DIY Network show "Building Off the Grid," which held the team to a strict 10-week deadline to complete the project from start to finish.

To minimize the Oculus carbon footprint, the structure is made of more than 60 percent recycled, reclaimed and salvaged materials (primarily donated by the local Habitat for Humanity), and its passive solar design provides heat without the use of fossil fuels. To boot, the team bypassed gas emissions by hauling 80-pound bags of concrete and >>



wooden beams up a steep half-mile driveway and narrow singletrack trail via their beloved mountain bikes.

"We got a lot of physical exercise—a lot more than we thought we would," Novy says with a laugh.

The core group of eight spent nights and weekends assembling and troubleshooting the design, working up to 40 hours a week in addition to their day jobs. Extra muscle was provided by additional members of the Stomparillaz community, referred to as SWAT (Stomparillaz With A Tool).

For Novy, the Oculus brought together the loves of his life—innovative design, bikes and the Roaring Fork Valley community.

"Architecture is already exciting to me. But when you add bikes to that, it doubles or triples the excitement," he says. "I came away from this thinking that this is what everyone should do—think honestly about what you like, and pursue it. Bring your passions into your life in every way you can, because that's what motivates you and excites you."○



*CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: AaronHumphrey, president of Alpenglow Lighting Design, fashioned a solar-powered overhead lighting system out of bike rims. Novy tests out the rideable roof. Brad Reed Nelson and Dan Giese of Carbondale-based furniture company Board By Design built the sleeping area—a sectional bench and bunk—using their signature “knuckle” brackets. Novy says waking up to views of sunrise over Mount Sopris through Oculus’s window wall is “unbelievable.”*

