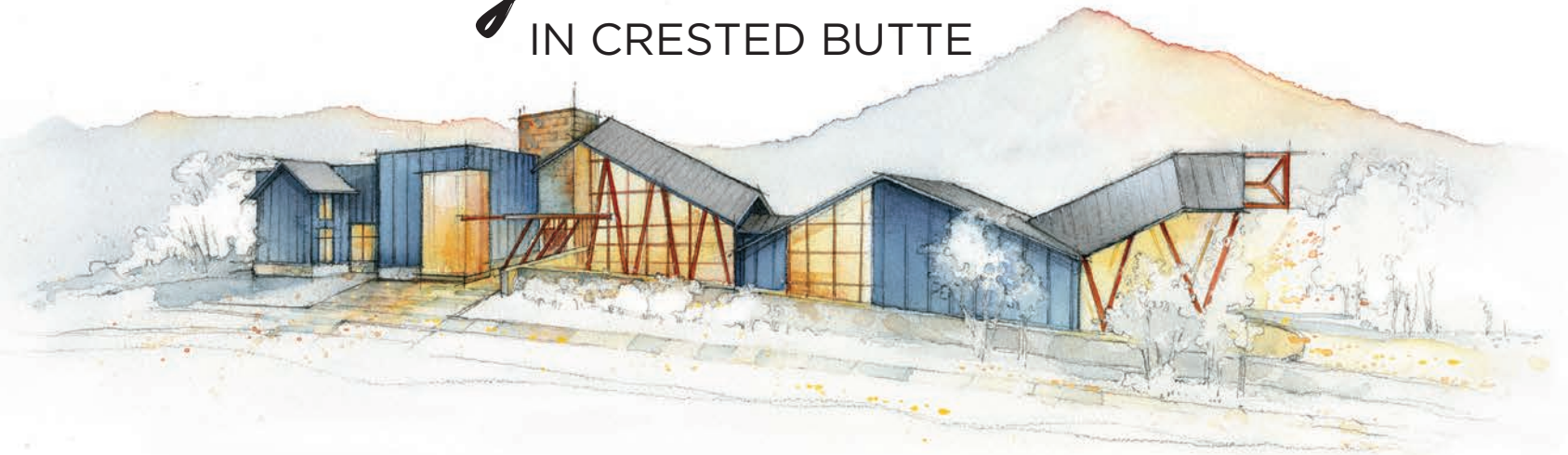


A new ridgeline

IN CRESTED BUTTE

ILLUSTRATION BY NARDA LEBBO



DESIGN FEATURES OF THE CENTER FOR THE ARTS BUILDING

By Cayla Vidmar

The pyramid stance of Gothic Mountain, the hooked peak of Mt. Crested Butte, the faceted chutes of Whetstone—the ridgelines that surround the town of Crested Butte are among the first things to behold as visitors and locals alike descend into the town at the end of the road. Now, a new ridgeline has taken shape along Sixth Street: the new Center for the Arts building, designed and constructed by Holzman Moss Bottino Architecture out of New York and Black Dragon Development, LLC of Crested Butte.

The architects had one guiding principal as they were designing the building, and that was to strike a fine line between blending with the flare of typical Crested Butte buildings while creating a distinctive place for the arts community. Here, Nestor Bottino behind the architectural design of the building and Crockett Farnell of Black Dragon Development outline the top architectural features of the new building.

A nod to location

Starting with the main lobby of the building, Bottino explains the shape of the all-glass exterior walls of the lobby are meant to reflect the shape of the surrounding mountains.

The two entrances into the lobby—one off Sixth Street that slopes up, and one off Seventh Street that is level with the exterior landscape—are intended to make the height of the three-story theater appear less elevated, particularly compared to other buildings in the town. “We didn’t want it looking very large compared to other buildings in CB, so the second story entrance facing 6th street is a way to visibly reduce size,” says Bottino.

Fitting in and standing out with color

From the outside, one of the most visually striking features of the new building is the dark blue stained exterior wood. Bottino explains that using natural wood on the exterior would disappear into the scenery, while the blue popped out from surrounding greenery, and created a relationship with the Colorado-bluebird sky. “The thing I like best about the blue stain is the variance of color, it gives the building life,” says Farnell.

A built in way-finder

Much like a needle in a compass, the copper tower rising from the center of the building is meant to be a way-finding piece that designates the entrance while also orienting visitors inside the building. Farnell notes the copper will patina over time into burnished amber, but at a slower rate than usual due to the dry climate. Farnell explains the copper shingles were made by a company in Minnesota, which has been in operation since the 1800s.

Among the trees

While the surrounding mountain ridgelines were a guiding piece in the design of the building, so too were the pine forests. Bottino explains that the timber framework throughout the building was an intentional design piece, and with abundant filtered light throughout the building, it’s meant to remind visitors of being among the trees in the forests surrounding town. The beams were pre-assembled and delivered from Canada, making it a somewhat seamless assembly for the builders, the main framework of the lobby taking only three days to put together.

Elegance and functionality

The theater itself boasts a full theater seating system that can be retracted based on the event happening within the space, leaving a flat floor. The theater also has an area close to the stage that can be lowered four feet beneath the seating area, allowing for an orchestra pit, or mosh pit—all dependent on the varied tastes of the Crested Butte arts scene.

Theater Acoustics

It’s all about rich sound and clarity in the new theater, which has been designed to accommodate multiple types of performances and create an incredible listening experience no matter the show. According to Jennifer Nelson Smid of Threshold Acoustics, who designed the theater acoustic experience, “clay brick sidewall panels and wood diffusion flank the audience. The clay brick was chosen for its mass and will ensure richness in the sound reflected from these walls toward the audience.” A slightly angled and ribbed surface projects the sound from the stage to the audience, reflecting some of the sound energy traveling upward that would otherwise miss the audience.