



EXCLUSIVE + HOME TOURS

# A Colorado Mullet House Hides Its Wild Side Behind a Traditional Facade

By Mandi Keighran – January 20, 2021



[View 22 Photos](#)

**Nestled into Boulder’s Mapleton Hill Historic District, the Nut House conceals an unconventional interior—complete with a “ninja room” and a slide.**

Mapleton Hill is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Boulder, with wide, leafy avenues lined with a handsome mix of late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture. Not all is as it seems, however. Behind the traditional facade of one recently renovated home, known as the Nut House, lies a thoroughly



contemporary family home, which architect Nicholas Fiore, founder of FLOWER, describes as "business in the front, party in the back."



The clients had long owned the property in Mapleton Hill, and they were looking to build their dream "forever" home in which to raise their family. The public-facing side of the home is historically appropriate, with gables, dormers, a porch, and double-hung windows. While these features are traditional in many senses, the clean, minimalist detailing signals contemporary construction. Timber screens and lattices add a texture and translucency to the archetypal forms.

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: exterior, wood siding material, shingles roof material, house building type, glass siding material, gable roofline*

"The clients had a strong instinct to create a home that conveyed a humbleness in



its form, size, and expression, and also a home that would be respectful toward the historic context of the neighborhood," says Fiore. "We all love the charm and architectural character of the district—and we wanted the home to function as a modern home and be modern in its language, details, and construction."



The back of the property has a relatively private feel for a downtown location. The living room opens out to the garden through two glazed walls, while the trellis cladding of the mudroom echoes the screens at the front of the home.

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: [exterior](#), [house building type](#), [glass siding material](#), [wood siding material](#), [shingles roof material](#), [gable roofline](#)*

So, while the front is inspired by the historic neighborhood, the details signal what is to come at the rear—think a trellis balcony with a steel framed-window, slimline roof fascia that accentuate the folded roof plane, and the use of trellises to screen and add texture.





The street front, on the south side of the property, is directly across from a busy intersection. "This problem resulted in the gable trellis balcony, one of our favorite design features," reveals architect Nicholas Fiore. "The balcony serves three functions: as a headlight filter, as a subtle nighttime



beacon when lit from within, and as a nod to a favorite Mapleton Hill historic detail—gable  
woodwork filigree, which is seen throughout the neighborhood."

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: [outdoor](#), [front yard](#), [wood patio, porch, deck](#), [small patio, porch, deck](#), [wood fences, walls, trees](#)*

It's rare for new homes to be built in Mapleton Hill, and it required almost a year of negotiations with the Landmarks Board. "They fight to preserve existing homes, and seek to shape any new construction efforts, so there's a thick packet of rules to abide," says Fiore. "However, this also allowed us to consider the house 100 years from now, since the board was likely to fight to maintain it 'as-is' long after we're all dead and buried. So, we felt as if we were designing for the owners as much as for the district—and for the next family, and the next after that. It was an opportunity to build a Mapleton home with the strange knowledge that it will be protected and preserved for generations to come."







The exterior walls of the mudroom are clad in a trellis—a historic feature commonly seen in the neighborhood, rendered here in a modern expression. "The exterior is clad entirely in western red cedar, painted as required in the historic district," says architect Nicholas Fiore. "Cedar has excellent rot and insect resistance, and takes paint beautifully—although we admit it was very hard to paint it once it was installed in all of its honey-tone glory!"

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: doors, exterior, wood, swing door type*





The mudroom offers plenty of built-in storage, which was essential for the family with young children. The bold panoramic wallpaper is Forêt Noire by Nathalie Lété for Moustache.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: [storage room](#), [closet storage type](#)*

As the local Landmarks Board guidelines are primarily concerned with the public face of the home, the natural solution was to create a "secretly modern" home, with a traditional frontage that opens up to a contemporary construction of exposed steel and expanses of glass at the rear.

"Time was spent early on walking around the district," says Fiore. "It's not a homogenous historic neighborhood—it has a variety of styles and details that provided a rich context and an enormous kit of parts that served as inspiration."





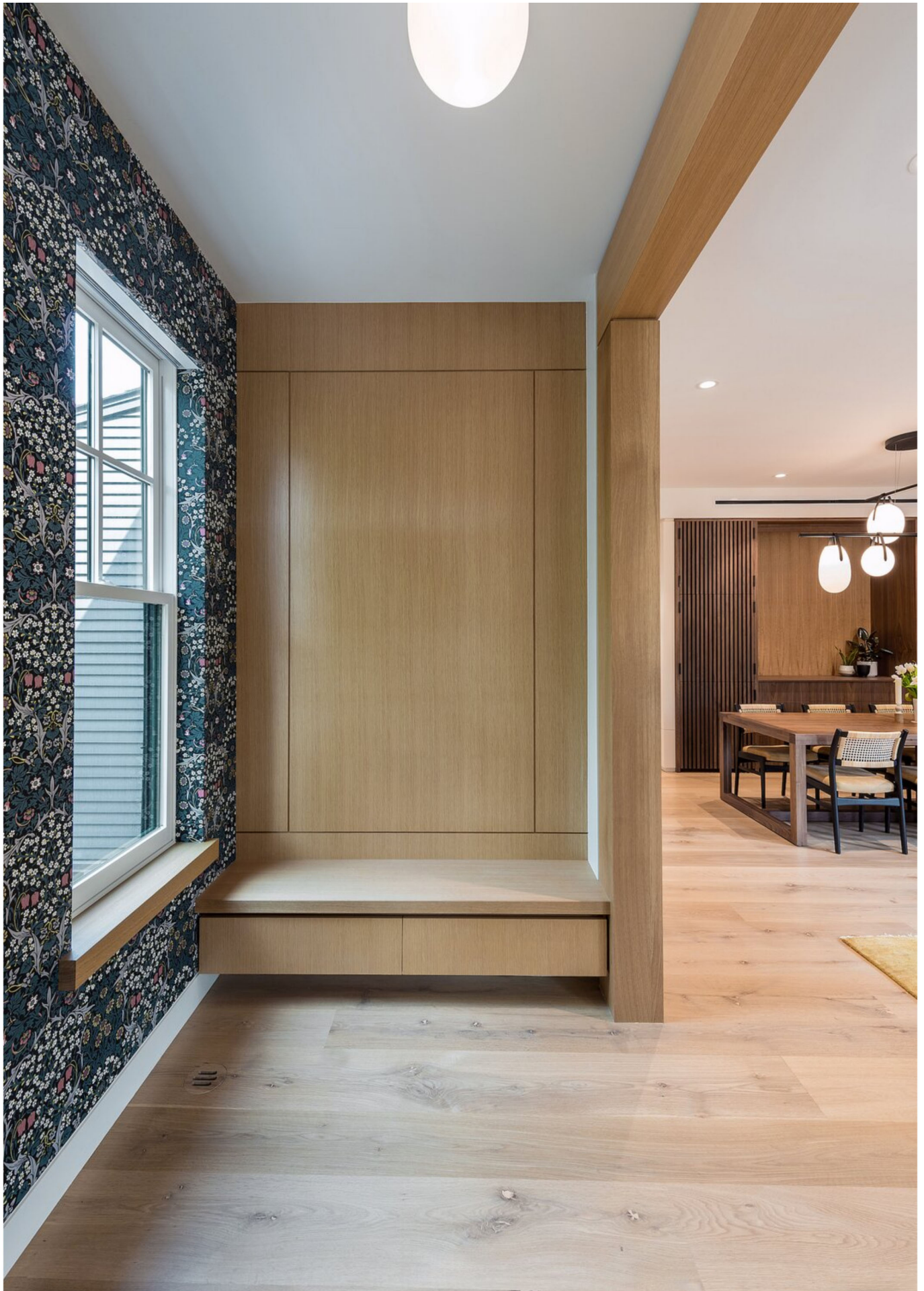
"I have a soft spot for door handles, and we had an opportunity to design a custom steel-and-white-oak handle for the entry," reveals architect Nicholas Fiore.

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: [doors](#), [exterior](#), [metal](#), [swing door type](#), [wood](#)*

The home was inspired by the simple form and pure geometry of an archetypal gable house, and it's a contemporary riff on the neighborhood's classic one-and-a-half story designs. Like Nut House, these homes often incorporate balconies under the front gables over the porch, delicate custom wood filigree below the gable, and dormers as a means to expand the upper-level living spaces.





The formal entry space features a built-in bench and is defined by a timber detail that runs up the walls and across the ceiling. "Built-ins are an excellent way to bring a human scale to a project," says architect Nicholas Fiore. "People seek an intimacy—a coziness—in their homes, and we think that niches, window seats, benches, nooks, and other 'hand-scale' details can satisfy that human need."

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: [hallway](#), [light hardwood floors](#)*





The parlor features a white oak window seat that receives eastern morning light.

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: living room, bench, light hardwood floors, ceiling lighting*

From the street, a wide, welcoming porch leads to a formal entry space that turns directly into a parlor in another nod to bygone eras. The parlor shares the same volume as the dining room, which features a large table anchored by a fireplace and a built-in buffet crafted from walnut timber.

"We set up this initial spatial series at the front of the house, as it is partially open to the kitchen and living rooms in the rear," says Fiore. "We wanted a break between the public greeting and gathering spaces and the informal family living spaces."





The wallpaper in the formal entry space is Blackthorn by House of Hackney. The pattern—which features hawthorns, daisies, and tulips forming a skull of foliage blooms—is part of a collaboration with the William Morris Gallery, and it was originally created by Morris in 1892.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: storage room, closet storage type*







"I have a friend who has vintage wallpaper in his bathroom, and it's been an inspiration lately," says architect Nicholas Fiore, who collaborated with Westward Foundry on the interiors.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: [hallway](#)*



The built-in walnut buffet in the dining room adds a dramatic counterpoint to the white oak joinery used throughout the rest of the home.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: [dining room](#), [pendant lighting](#), [light hardwood floors](#), [table](#), [chair](#), [ceiling lighting](#)*





The home is rich in crafted details, such as the fireplace in the dining room. Architect Nicholas Fiore refers to these kinds of unique, refined elements as "tailoring," likening the process to crafting a bespoke suit. "Designing homes is interesting because there are very clear pictures in people's minds about what a home is, and I don't think these images vary widely," he says. "So, I imagine the job as if I was a tailor making a suit, with dozens of decisions that will differentiate one suit from another. In this home, the modernity comes from these decisions, built up in layers."

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: living room, light hardwood floors, bench, standard layout fireplace*

Beyond the kitchen is the living room, which has two glazed walls—operable sliders to the north, and fixed units to the east. These walls are visible from the kitchen, and they open up to the backyard patios and garden. The dramatically contrasting Colorado weather means that the relationship between interior and exterior is, as Fiore describes it, "more *The Odd Couple* than we'd like to admit."



The kitchen has a large central island, with the range and workspaces on the right and a huge built-in on the left in front of the stair. A bright, white laminate wall holds the oven and refrigerator. Architect Nicholas Fiore says this element "pumps the brakes a bit" on the white oak shiplap walls and white oak ceiling.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: kitchen, ceiling lighting, engineered quartz counters, refrigerator, undermount sinks, wood cabinets, marble backsplashes, pendant lighting, wall oven, white cabinets, recessed lighting, cooktops, light hardwood floors*





The kitchen island features an elegant concrete top in a light tone that complements the white oak joinery and allows the Carrera marble backsplash to steal the show.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: kitchen, engineered quartz counters, cooktops, marble backsplashes, wood cabinets, undermount sinks, ceiling lighting, light hardwood floors, recessed lighting, wall oven*







The kitchen has a 12-foot built-in unit along the west wall that includes an upholstered sofa, a standing desk, and mail organization slots and drawers. "These are the kind of details that I will carry through my career—and there is never a guarantee that a project will produce such a thing," says architect Nicholas Fiore.

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: [hallway](#), [light hardwood floors](#)*

"We have that 10' x 14' glass wall that melts away, and we protect it with a 10' cantilever steel balcony roof," he explains. "The 'party in the back' scheme—wherein we peel away the solid skin and visually and physically engage the backyard landscape—is made possible by these huge slider doors. And, where we want sun over access—on the east side of the rear corner, in this case—we decided on fixed glass windows instead of doors."





A steel-and-wood built-in "shoe drop" cabinet at the top of the stairs prevents things from piling up at the top step. As the design progressed, the home became more thoroughly "built-in," and nearly every room has custom features, including desks, windows seats, benches, cabinets, and panelling. "This is an echo of the many craftspeople who set up shop in the nearby homes in the district 100 years ago, installing custom wood panels, handrails, built-ins, and bookshelves," says architect Nicholas Fiore.

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: [hallway](#), [light hardwood floors](#)*

Upstairs, there are three bedrooms—a master suite and two children's bedrooms, including one with a gable trellis balcony. "The main intention here was to set the main bedroom on the northern, quiet side of the home, open to the northern balcony," says Fiore.





The master bedroom opens to the northern balcony, which is set on a 10-foot-deep steel cantilever covering a patio below on the main level. "The primo swag built-in feature is the white oak lap-sided ceiling in the master bedroom," says architect Nicholas Fiore. "As architects, we set as a goal on every project to experiment in our details and to try something new. Turning lap siding on its head—literally—completely frees it from its conventional usage, and provides a rich texture on the ceiling surface. It also serves to pull together a tricky space created by the variegated ceiling planes, which were a result of the challenges served up by zoning and district guidelines."

Joni Schrantz

*Photo Categories: bedroom, bed, pendant lighting, light hardwood floors, table lighting, ceiling lighting, night stands, lamps*



The master suite features a sitting area and timber built-ins. "Our team of trim carpenters practically lived in the house for a year," says architect Nicholas Fiore. "The value of built-ins is multifaceted, and it runs from the ephemeral to the most pragmatic."

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: living room, light hardwood floors, chair, storage, wall lighting, shelves*

Like many Boulderites, the clients are passionate about the outdoors and enjoy

cycling, mountain biking, and rock climbing. With this in mind, part of the brief was for a "ninja room" fitted with climbing walls, swings, rings, and hanging platforms. This is located in the basement level, alongside other quirky and fun details like a slide that runs from a coat closet to the family room, and a hidden "Hans Solo in carbonite" door that leads to the gym. This level also features a small guest bedroom suite.



The "ninja room" was fitted out by a local climbing wall installer and an American Ninja Warrior gym. A floor window beneath the living room coffee table offers a view into the gym.

Ryan Hughes

Throughout the home, white oak keeps the interiors light and bright. "White oak, with its strong, open grain, plain sawn cathedrals, and—when used in a wider-



plank character grade as per the floors—contrasting tones, can be employed in modern ways and strike more traditional notes as well," says Fiore. "The beauty and warmth inherent in natural materials like wood are important for our souls, our inner lives."



The children's rooms both feature custom, built-in desks for studying and homework. "There's a language of reveals and quirks and integrated pulls—handleless drawers and doors—that is

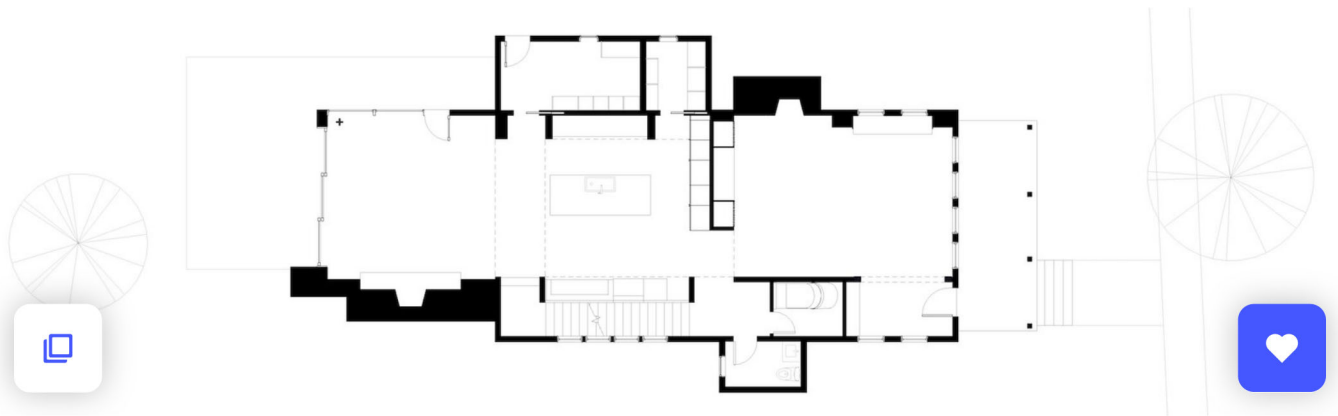


consistent even if the form and function of the particular detail is different," says architect Nicholas Fiore.

Ryan Hughes

*Photo Categories: office, chair, light hardwood floors, desk, study room type*

"The clients were a dream," says Fiore. "They measure success in terms of integrity and realness, and hopefully the home reflects that. We have yet to really celebrate this house, and the time and effort it required to make it real. I cannot wait until this hell storm of a time is over and we can drink a whiskey or three on the porch swing—together, not distant, not masked, not afraid, just grateful!"



Ground-level floor plan of Nut House by FLOWER

FLOWER



## Upper-level floor plan of Nut House by FLOWER

FLOWER

*Related Reading:*

[Top 10 Mullet Homes of 2020](#)

[10 Mullet Homes That Are Traditional in the Front, Modern in the Back](#)

### **Project Credits:**

*Architect of Record: [FLOWER](#) / [@flowerarchitecture](#)*

*Builder: [Treeline Homes](#)*

*Structural Engineer: [Anthem Structural Engineers](#)*

*Landscape Design: [MARPA](#)*

*Lighting Design: [FLOWER & Innovate Lighting Consultants](#)*

*Interior Design: [Westward Foundry](#)*



*Cabinetry Design: FLOWER*

*Cabinetry Fabrication & Installation: BKI Woodworks*

*Lighting Controls: Listen Up*

*Trim Carpenters & Millwork: ICS*

*Photography: Joni Schrantz & Ryan Hughes*

 Share

 Saved

 Responses

# dwell

## ABOUT

About  
Contact Us  
FAQ  
Careers  
Advertise  
Media Kit

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribe to Dwell  
Gift Dwell Magazine  
Dwell+ Subscription Help  
Magazine Subscription Help