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Trey Parker

THE SOUTH PARK CO-CREATOR
EMBRACES JAPANESE STYLE AT
HIS COLORADO RETREAT

Architectural and Interior Design by Trilogy Partners

Landscape Architecture by Chad Guinn

Text by Jeff Turrentine

Photography by Roger Wade





For his family's hilltop retreat in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Trey Parker (left), co-creator of television's *South Park*, worked side by side with designer Michael Rath, of Trilogy Partners, to balance a Japanese aesthetic with the alpine vernacular. The tatami room faces the morning sun and a Japanese garden designed by Chad Guinn.

At the risk of destroying his reputation as a shamelessly profane, scatologically minded man-child, here are a few things about *South Park* co-creator Trey Parker that most people don't know.

He majored in Japanese at the University of Colorado; by his own estimation he's traveled to Japan between 50 and 60 times. In person he's thoughtful, articulate, polite and self-effacing. When reminiscing about childhood summers spent with his grandparents in the Colorado resort town of Steamboat Springs, Parker grows quiet and wistful; when discoursing on the elements of Japanese *ryokan*-style architecture, he grows... well, one supposes the only word for it is *animated*.

Indeed, Parker spends most of his public life in an animated state. He's not only the co-creator of *South Park*, the Comedy Central cartoon series about four Colorado grade-schoolers that debuted a dozen years ago and has since become a pop culture touchstone, he also provides the voices of many of the characters. Among them is the show's most iconic: Eric Cartman, a roly-poly ball of undistilled fourth-grade id who can out-manipulate Machiavelli,



ABOVE: "The kitchen was designed so that there was room for plenty of cooks," says Rath. Sub-Zero refrigerator, Wolf multifunction modules and cooktop, at Abt.com. BELOW: The *tansu*-style credenza in the rec room supports a 110-inch projection screen. OPPOSITE: The west dining room mirrors the tatami room. The Trilogy team was committed to the "simple beauty of the furniture's utility."







out-bigot Archie Bunker and out-curse any Quentin Tarantino heavy.

It therefore makes perfect sense that he'd seek as personal refuge a peaceful mountain lodge right next door to where his grandparents used to take him as a child. "I have nothing against L.A.," he says. "Obviously, it's been great to us." But, says this man of many voices, "you have to be able to get away from the voices in your head. I go whenever I can."

When Parker met designer Michael Rath, who was once an independent filmmaker, they were able to communicate in the lingua franca of film production, in which lengthy and complex artistic endeavors have to be broken down, with every expenditure itemized and justified. "I

budgeted the first house I ever built using software that was the industry standard for budgeting a film," says Rath. "We build houses the same way we made movies."

Other builders and architects seemed unwilling to do what Parker wanted with the unusually shaped parcel of land, on a hill overlooking the Steamboat Yampa Valley and its famed ski runs. "The land goes up, then flattens, then goes up again," says Rath. As Parker recalls: "I kept saying, 'I want the house to be built into the cliff.' Mike was the first guy to figure it out and say, 'Yeah, we can do it.'"

Even before Rath and Parker had arrived at a Japanese theme for the entire project, Parker knew he wanted, in addition to the main house, a guest cabin modeled after a

particular *ryokan* he'd visited in Kyoto. "It was the perfect layout. I'd been there a few times, and I thought: One day I'm going to re-create this, right down to the shoji screen doors and the tatami mats. And then very quickly the conversation became: Why not do the whole house like that?"

The result was a 7,000-square-foot main house that's recognizably within the mountain lodge style but references Japanese design subtly, and a 700-square-foot teahouse guest cabin that references it directly.

Parker, whose schedule is famously stressful—he and his colleagues typically deliver each just-finished episode to the network mere hours before it airs—is obviously grateful to have a place to decom-



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press. He also loves introducing his Los Angeles friends to the natural beauty of his home state by bringing them out for visits. "Being able to share it with people who may have never been to Colorado before is great. I love to walk with them around the rocks and the aspens, to step outside and see a deer or a porcupine."

But lest you think Trey Parker has gone all grown-up on us, here's some comforting news: He and Michael Rath have wrapped up a collaboration on another house, on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, among whose features is a miniature golf course designed by Parker and built into the surrounding landscape. "It looks like this incredible botanical garden," says Rath. Surely Cartman would approve. □



Parker designed the traditional teahouse (above left). Rath recalls: "I'd say, 'Don't try to explain it to me; give me a drawing.' He'd send me this beautiful CAD picture of exactly what I needed to know." TOP AND ABOVE: By day, the main living area is equipped with a low table for dining and tea ceremonies; at night, the *shojis* shut and futons are brought out for guests.



Guinn hand-selected and fitted boulders for the outdoor spa to give it the look of a natural hot spring. The stone pavers are heated so the multiuse space can be enjoyed year-round, even in the snow.



A listing of the designers, architects and hotels featured in this issue

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