



Marcia Weese, left, at the Zurcher residence in Aspen. She conceived the interiors to complement the natural light that infuses the Harry Teague-designed house.

Though she's custom designed rugs for years, Weese's first full line, the Prairie Collection, recently debuted. The wool rugs are hand-knotted in Nepal by Tibetan weavers.



Michael Brandt

Nature Calls

ARTIST MARCIA WEESE CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF THE NATURAL WORLD
IN MANY MEDIUMS BY JEREMY SIMON

As the daughter of two pioneering Chicago modernists, Carbondale resident Marcia Weese was literally born into the world of art and design. One of her seminal experiences was sitting under the drawing table as a child, watching the fast-moving pencil of her father, Harry, an architect who counted Alvar Aalto, Eero Saarinen, and Charles and Ray Eames among his friends. "He was so joyful when he was drawing, so fluid," she says. "Then he would take me to see the finished product. One thing he taught me: Never go out the same door you came in."

Marcia Weese has walked through many doors during her long and winding artistic journey.

Sculpture was her first calling, discovered when she was an undergraduate at Bennington College. During a decade spent in New York City, she belonged to an improvisational dance troupe (the director described Weese's movement as "almost sculptural in space"). She has also been a painter, designer of rugs and fountains, and an interior designer. Earlier this year, after having visited Aspen regularly since childhood and spending summers here, she has finally been able to settle full-time in the Roaring Fork Valley, where she continues to operate her business, Weese + Design.

The common thread among all of Weese's artistic ventures is an aesthetic that draws on mod-



Courtesy Marcia Weese



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ernism and minimalism, reorienting the viewer's eye toward the natural environment in a stripped-down way. Her new set of hand-knotted rugs, the Prairie Collection (Chicago's indigenous landscape was prairie, she notes), evokes grain, wind, and rain via landscapes of thin, wavy lines on bold backgrounds whose colors skew toward harvest hues. "One of the most important elements in a space is the floor," Weese says. "The floor sets the mood."

The custom fountains and birdbaths she creates out of materials indigenous to the site are sleek and spare, allowing the movement of water to take center stage. And in her art she has most recently focused on monoprints: woodblock studies whose Rorschach-test ambiguity inspire the viewer not only to look, but to see. The David Floria Gallery, in Aspen, exhibits Weese's monoprints, and the Anderson Ranch Arts Center publishes the prints. She has also printed extensively with Craig O'Brien, who helped establish the graphics program at Anderson Ranch and operates O'Brien Graphics in Basalt.

From the outset, Weese has been inspired by site. "I really enjoyed seeing parameters, getting clues," she says. In particular, "the horizon line is very important to me. Everybody has a point of reference—for me, it's the light meeting the land."

She added interior design to her repertoire in the 1980s. Her mother, Kitty Baldwin Weese—who, with her husband and with business partner Jody Kingrey, opened the pioneering Chicago modern-furniture retailer Baldwin Kingrey in 1947—taught her the business aspects of the trade. One of the younger Weese's first projects was a daunting one, an interior renovation of Chicago's historic Newberry Library.

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Her interiors are unfailingly clean and modern, encouraging an unimpeded flow of light. In Aspen, she has collaborated with architect Harry Teague, whom she met while skiing on Aspen Mountain in 1969. The interior she designed for the offices of Hansen Construction, at Aspen's Airport Business Center, garnered her an Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects.

The simplicity in Weese's work harks back to the "old" Aspen she got to know before she was able to truly make the area her home. Her parents first came to Aspen in 1945 and eventually bought a house in the West End. The family spent each Christmas in Aspen (Weese recalls having the run of the Hotel Jerome, Eloise-style, for those two weeks) and, later, stayed for the summers. "Aspen was so simple, so unpretentious," she says. "It was truly a little mining town."

Weese's new home in the shadow of Carbondale's signature peak ("I'm so happy to be at the base of Sopris—it literally makes me buckle," she says) is likely to further inspire her work. "I see an opening here to create an environment where a client is grateful for a relationship between himself and the mountain environment," she says. "I want to extract the essence of our experience in space." ■

Weese created this fountain, above, for the entryway of a home in Chicago. As water drips into the bronze-cast bowl from a copper pipe above, it emits a bell-like tone. Above left: At an equestrian estate outside Chicago, one of the local residents enjoys Weese's "horse trough" fountain, made of marble, granite, and copper.

Rugs in Marcia Weese's Prairie Collection are \$73/square foot and come in sizes up to 22 feet wide and 25 feet long. Prices for fountains, which Weese does on commission, vary. Monoprints start at \$750. For more information, contact Weese at mw@marciaweese.com or go to www.marciaweese.com.