

Roofscaping: A New Approach to Mountain Design

KATE BAILEY

Residences at The Little Nell by Design Workshop



The rooftop at the Residences at The Little Nell has the feel of a continuous waterway, with a lap pool and two spas neatly arranged in an orderly geometry. Photo courtesy Residences at the Little Nell.

Principle Gyles Thornely and lead designer Steven Spears of Aspen-based Design Workshop were tasked with crafting a rooftop garden for one of the most exclusive fractional ownership properties in Colorado.

“Because land is so valuable in Aspen, it was important to add as many amenities as possible to the Residences at The Little Nell,” says Thornely. “However, at the conceptual stages, the project had barely any room left over for a pool or outdoor areas where residents could take advantage of the 300 days of sunshine we have each year in Colorado.”

The Design Workshop team created a deck that is relaxing, minimalist and awe-inspiring. “The views are

360-degrees and utterly spectacular,” notes Thornely, “and we didn’t want to compete with those panoramas.”

The team designed a reflecting water garden that captures as much of the mountains and sky as possible. A lap pool and two spas complete the liquid assets, and the zen-like, minimal aesthetic offers quiet respite for the residents.

Japanese-style plantings soften the extensive hardscape with black Mexican pebble, bonsai-style trees, ornamental grasses, low-profile shrubs and plants. “We used a lot of color to create interest throughout the rooftop,” says Thornely, “but we kept the hues simple—no reds, oranges or pinks—so we didn’t detract from the vistas.”