

>>> Roger Wade, Swan Lake, Montana



ROGER WADE MOVED TO WESTERN MONTANA from the hustle and bustle of New York in 1985 with the idea of immersing himself in landscape photography. "I wanted to do something different, and landscape photography is a passion of mine" says Wade, who previously had been involved in corporate and industrial photography.

Nearly 20 years later, though, Wade admits the only landscapes that make it into his photographs are those in conjunction with a building's exterior. During the course of two decades, Wade has established a successful architectural photography business, one that has him traveling to some 40 states per year to capture images of mostly residential projects.

From an early age, Wade knew that photography was to be his life's work. The Long Island, New York native built a contact printer as a Cub Scout project in his early youth, and later studied photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology. After graduation, he headed back to New York, where he worked as an assistant doing still-life and fashion photography during the early 1980s. He also worked for his father, Roger Wade, Sr., a former war photographer who founded an industrial photography and filmmaking production company in New York in the 1940s.

While Wade's move to Montana was supposed to be

a pastoral experience, he couldn't help noticing the building boom there that brought striking log homes and vacation residences to the area around Kalispell, the largest city in the region where he'd settled. Wade began shooting the homes for builders, architects, interior designers and magazines, teaching himself the nuances of architectural photography by looking at magazines and experimenting with images.

By the 1990s, Wade's architectural photography was in full swing, and he found himself shooting not only for trade clients, but for publications such as *Sunset*, *Architectural Record*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Montana Living*, *The New York Times*, *Log Homes Illustrated*, *Home* and *Architectural Digest*, for which he now shoots exclusively.

Wade credits much of his success to his wife, Debra Grahl, who handles the sales and marketing end of the business and does the styling and assisting on shoots. Alice Meyer also works in the business as their studio manager.

Grahl helps manage Wade's vast stock inventory, which he estimates contains more than 12,000 images. "I don't go out and shoot stock images specifically," Wade explains, "but we find we have plenty that work as stock." A recent example of Wade's stock usage came about when a snowmobile catalogue purchased a log house image to add to the publication's overall graphic ambiance.

Wade prefers shooting projects in 4x5 or a 2 1/4 format. He notes that he'll be adding digital to his repertoire soon. His approach is strictly visual, explaining that he looks for a composition to be "right," a quality that's hard to pinpoint in words. Wade will use natural lighting when appropriate, but many of the log and rustic-style homes he shoots need a bit of extra lighting. "I

do tend to photograph more rustic homes, but I also enjoy shooting contemporary architecture," he explains.

Much of Wade's work is out on location. He recently made a swing through the Southwest and the East Coast to photograph several projects. Even on his travels, though, there isn't much time to get out and shoot some landscapes. "It's ironic," he says. "Now that I live in a gorgeous area, I really don't do any landscapes. I actually did more when I lived in New York."

The landscapes may not have panned out, but Wade's architectural photography has bloomed in Montana. ■

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Right: Roger Wade. Below: A grand residence by Roth Construction, as captured by Wade.



An interior of a residence designed by Stephen Dynia Architects of Jackson, Wyoming. Wade's photograph captures the room's graphic elements.