

# THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE ARCHITECT

THROUGHOUT HIS ILLUSTRIOUS PROFESSIONAL LIFE, KEN LIBMAN HAS DRAWN ATTENTION—TO HIS PROJECTS, TO HIS CAREER, TO HIMSELF. AND FOR GOOD REASON. FROM CANADIAN ORIGINS TO A LEGENDARY GOLFER CAMEO TO THE PEAKS OF ASPEN AND BEYOND, HERE'S HIS STORY.

BY ELIZABETH HARPER



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUBJECT



From top:  
The kitchen  
inside LWC  
Modern Ranch;  
architect  
Ken Libman.  
Opposite  
page: LWC  
Modern Ranch  
is an energy-  
efficient,  
technologically  
advanced  
home with  
solar power.

AS I PREPARE TO INTERVIEW ARCHITECT KEN LIBMAN, whispers begin to flutter: “He’s such a character!” and “He’s incredible; you’ll love him.” When the day finally arrives, my expectations are, frankly, quite high. Journalist cap on, recorder set, interviewee ready and willing: “OK,” I begin, “let’s start at the beginning.”

“I don’t know if you’re ready,” Libman quips. And it’s off to the races. A native Montrealer, the architect built his career in Canada, then at Olympia & York in New York. He eventually opened shop as Libman & Wolf, which later became Libman Wolf Couples after a chance meeting with Freddie Couples and his then-wife, Debra, who had a mind for design, construction and real estate—until 9/11. As an American Red Cross first responder, Libman was in the action with a front-row seat to the horrors. “That,” he says, “is when I said to myself, ‘This is crazy what’s going on here.’ I turned around after that experience and I said, ‘You know, there has to be more to life than making money and being a big company.’” And so he—from »





Canada—and his wife, Rachel—a San Diego native—packed up and moved. “I said, ‘Let’s meet on neutral territory.’” Aspen would be the spot.

On arrival, Libman, who rebranded as The Libman Group ([thelibmangroup.com](http://thelibmangroup.com)), was shocked by what he found. “I thought the market was broken,” he states. “When I came out to Aspen, I couldn’t believe how much the cost was to do what I did in New York.” While he had founded a practice working directly with manufacturers across the world, therefore minimizing overhead, in Aspen, “the resources are so limited.” Not only is there a need to import more, but the local industry pros were also working with third parties to bring in materials. It was here he found his niche. Libman was going to turn the Aspen market on its head. With his contacts from his days in New York, he was able to produce high-quality, visually appealing work—in a more economical way. Rather than sourcing products from vendors, he would work directly with the manufacturers.

He garnered a reputation in Aspen—by way of his New York portfolio and his foray into the local market—becoming architect of record for Douglas Elliman’s Western division (Aspen, Snowmass, Southern California and more). Libman has completed many projects in the region, including Black Magic, a modernist manse in Brush Creek Village; LWC Modern Ranch, a cozy-chic mountain chalet in Woody Creek; and Mountain Queen, two slopeside Aspen condos and his first project in town. Recently, Libman polished off work for The Altman Brothers, Josh and Matt, who have deep ties to Aspen. The Beverly Hills office is a 1950s midcentury remodel with an open-air design, high ceilings, natural light and sleek design touches. And it will soon debut on Bravo’s *Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles* (June 16), with Libman making cameos throughout the season. “Fast-forward,” he says, “I had cameras in my face for over a year, doing multiple episodes with them.”

Outside his reality debut, Libman continues to produce beautiful work in Aspen and beyond. “It’s a passion-driven thing,” he says of his philosophy. “Being more efficient... drives me. That’s what gets me up in the morning.” Yet the burning question remains: Does *the* Ken Libman live up to the hype? An astounding yes. This talent surpasses my heightened expectations and soars on to another galaxy. ♦