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One of a kind: Custom Monte Sereno home with English country estate

The thick grape ivy that hugs the facade and brick chimneys look like they have been there for centuries. Looks are deceiving, however, because this stately, seemingly old mansion lovingly called Winterbourne with its long, gated, tree-lined driveway and spacious gravel motor court is not as old as it looks.



It's not so much a style, but rather a perception of a timeless, established residence that has withstood the test of time and generations of residents. Designed by renowned architect Ned Forrest, this 17,170-square-foot Monte Sereno estate's design was influenced by 19th Century English architect Edwin Lutyens.



Forrest used a mere footprint of the original home that stood on this 5.6-acre parcel and mirrored the “bent form” of the layout. Inspired by the actual winterbourne in the nearby canyon and the natural topography that descends from the main home into the surrounding gardens, Forrest and fellow artisans crafted a spectacular estate worthy of being called “fine art,” he says.

“Winterbourne was an absolutely unique result and nothing we have done before,” says Forrest of the Sonoma-based Ned Forrest Architects, whose long list of designs includes The French Laundry, and numerous wineries and estates. “The design comes from how it’s made.” He adds,

“It was a creative process. I love it. They (the owners) were not in a hurry and it was done over several years, done carefully and well considered.” Completed in 1992, the Winterbourne estate features all the attributes of a grand home with elevator, elegant foyer and rotunda, formal drawing and dining rooms, gourmet kitchen with scullery, breakfast room, library, gym, servants quarters, three grand bedrooms including a luxurious master suite and a stunning two-story great room. There is also a 900-square-foot, detached guesthouse.

Forrest favors the two galleries that flow from the foyer and is “crazy” about the curved colonnade that runs along the back garden side of the estate and overlooks the lawns.

Serious and somber with its rich finishes, imported antique marble fireplace mantles, gleaming mahogany wall panels and leaded pane windows, Winterbourne also sports a whimsical, playful



side. There is the inlaid maze design on the limestone floors in the rotunda that matches the garden’s yew tree maze made of 632 8-foot-tall yew trees that lead to the Medieval two-story folly at the center. Then there is the topiary garden with giant shrubs sculpted into animal shapes including a cuddly teddy bear.

Forrest adds that the design of the estate includes an enfilade, a noted feature of grand historic houses and palaces including the palace of Versailles where the north and south galleries branch off the center foyer.

The craftsmanship continues outdoors where landscape architect Todd Cole and others put their signature touch on the master design of multiple outdoor rooms including an award-winning floating teahouse and 9-foot deep bass pond in the cup garden.



Original brickwork by the renowned landscape architect Thomas Church remains intact on the property including the tennis court viewing area.

The outdoor amenities are numerous and include sweeping lush lawns, and meandering pathways connecting a multitude of outdoor rooms enhanced by imported sculptures and fountains.

There are surprises around every corner beyond the 20-foot by 65-foot lap pool and tennis court, bath pavilion and full kitchen.

A wrought-iron domed gazebo covered with rambling yellow Lady Banks Roses creates the “temple” area and romantic site for wedding vows. There is the camellia garden, the knot garden, rose garden, fruit tree orchard and nearby beehives, wisteria-covered tunnel, greenhouse, vegetable garden where 755-pound pumpkins are grown, and two-story playhouse. There is also a barn and three-car garage.