

MA(i)SONRY

N A P A V A L L E Y

The question Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley proprietor, Michael Polenske asked was, “How can I preserve the historic integrity of the Charles Rovegno House while modernizing this 20th century stone structure into a stylized backdrop for “a life aesthetic?”

The Restoration Team

Polenske’s question was answered by the award winning, San Francisco-based architectural firm, Gould Evans Baum Thornley Architects LLP, who specialize in winery design and urban infill projects. Recently completed winery projects include Paraduxx winery in Yountville and Lynmar Estate winery in Sebastopol. Ma(i)sonry’s intimate, contemporary design aesthetic was executed with consulting designer, Erin Martin of Erin Martin Design and M showroom and with the collaboration of husband and wife landscape architect team, ROCHE + ROCHE. The design team was assisted with the guidance of a historic mason and architect.

History

Originally built for Charles Rovegno in 1904 as his private residence, the building is one of only a few listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Napa County Historic Resources Inventory. The building was designed and built by an Italian mason using stone quarried from the eastern hills of Napa Valley, representing a noteworthy period of design from 1874 to 1912. Almost 20 years after Rovegno passed away in 1954, the property was converted to a boutique, seven-room inn known as Burgundy House Inn, which remained in operation until 2007.

Creating a “living gallery”

Principal architect, Douglas Thornley, surveyed the site of the former Burgundy House Inn and adapted his design around Polenske’s living gallery concept. With the goal of retaining many of the structure’s original materials, Thornley’s primary strategy was to highlight the classic stone features of the building by opening up the space, allowing for the natural flow of light in the former warren-like inn. Thornley also stressed the elimination of all non-historic elements to restore the building to its original state and character. Before this could happen, a complete seismic retrofit of the unreinforced masonry building was needed to guarantee that this piece of history would be preserved for future generations.

Preservation

By removing all the worn internal partitions, yet salvaging the interior stone wall which had served as the original exterior façade, a fluid gallery space emerged, emphasizing the original stone walls with the use of abundant natural light. After discovering the beautiful un-milled log rafters hidden under a heavy layer of plaster ceiling on the 2nd floor, the ceiling was removed to provide a unique view back into time. Thornley commented, “Each project is a new exploration, one that responds to the unique qualities of its client, site, context and purpose.”

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Adapted Reuse

- Original stone walls reinforced
- Original ceiling beams of un-milled log rafters exposed in the 2nd floor ceiling
- Original bead board siding reused in the Accessory Building
- Original fireplace preserved in wine cellar
- Original stone excavated from building reused in outdoor fire pit

Removal and Additions

Although preservation was of the utmost priority to proprietor Michael Polenske, upgrades were necessary, not only to reflect Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley's present day architectural and functional needs, but also to adhere to the Secretary of the Interior standards. The wood shake roof was a fire hazard and was replaced with a standing seam metal roof. Non-historical siding at the two gable ends was replaced with horizontal metal siding to complement the new metal roof. Steel sash windows and doors replaced the vinyl windows and worn wooden doors that had been installed in the 1970s. All new exterior materials were chosen with the intent that they, like the original stone structure, would last another 100+ years.

The upper and lower floors were connected with a brilliant lightwell between the two levels. A new “floating” stairwell with elegant wood treads and steel mesh railing was installed to highlight the double height of the interior stone wall while increasing views from the lower level. Other upgrades included gallery quality lighting to showcase world class art. A wood and metal spitting sink was installed on the second floor as a whimsical “alter.” An accessory structure was built to provide accessible restrooms and a catering kitchen for intimate private and public events.

Landscaped Gardens

To enhance Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley's exterior, which was overgrown with a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, Polenske relied upon the expertise of ROCHE+ROCHE landscape architecture to create an environment reminiscent of a backyard garden retreat. With the vision of ROCHE + ROCHE, a clean, contemporary setting (with a hint of French flavor) was constructed where layers of evergreen Holly Oak trees and Carolina Cherry Laurel, India Hawthorn and Little Ollie hedges would provide privacy and enclosure, while Red Maples, Vibernums, perennials and ornamental grasses would offer movement and seasonal color.

Much of the garden was covered in decomposed granite to allow for flexibility of use and circulation, with intimate seating areas separated by plantings. Inset bands of bluestone were used to highlight important axes and elements, such as the stone fire pit. Additionally, a small lawn with an inset fountain was installed to provide a calm focal point in the side yard for guests to lounge and appreciate contemporary sculpture. To complete the setting, century-old olives trees were planted to frame a 36-foot long communal redwood table to bring guests together in their wine-tasting experience.

Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley—“a life aesthetic”

The resulting landscape is simultaneously urban and pastoral, an oasis of sculpture, art and design. With every collection created by the hand of an artist, artisan, or designer, Ma(i)sonry's varied incarnations are each as richly textured as the other, celebrating life's aesthetics...