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Photography by Mauss, Schulenberg, Waldron, Garrido and Piasecki.



*ARCHITECT ALLAN
GREENBERG*

*Designed
America's
(\$117 Million)
White House*

*Photography by
Michael Biondo*



Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, houses of Georgian Federal and Greek Revival styles were built as the newly arrived Europeans populated the continental wilderness. Numerous sketches, prints and paintings, contemporary historic recollections and existing structures memorialize the construction of these houses even as Native American culture continued to thrive in their precincts. This Allan Greenberg Northern California domicile is at home with these eminent forebears.

“In this job I had truly remarkable and wonderful clients, so the job from start to finish was a joy.” This sentiment augured well: this Allan Greenberg designed house recently sold for \$117 million, the highest price on record in the history of the United States. It is a testimony to the persistent value placed on the finest traditional architecture.

Although every bit as impressive as Edith Wharton’s the Mount, Washington D.C.’s Tudor Place and Maine’s Hamilton House, in *this* remarkable house, Greenberg



renders a five part villa as new and fresh. Located north of San Francisco it is sited at a high point on nine acres with valley views. His half rotunda, extending from one side of the seven-thousand square foot structure, would please Fouquet, who built Vaux-le-Vicomte, as well as many a Russian prince, whose country seats would include a domed artifice, in homage to the Fouquet' s



precedent. Not to mention the appeal it would hold for Thomas and Martha Parke Custis Peter, (Washington's step-granddaughter) who built their own half rotunda at the back of Tudor Place.

In viewing the house, one is immediately impressed by the lavish use of windows; where one might expect two



there are three-not an ironic statement-but a tribute to the architect's foresight. Greenberg clearly intended for this house to speak to the continued role of traditional architecture in his judicious use of the window wall. Here he tells the viewer that the preponderance of tall eighteen-pane windows permeating the first floor façade, (not to mention proportionally lavish windows

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on the floor above), in tandem with French doors of similar scale, results in an exciting light and shadow tale in each room, as well as affording visitors to each room splendid views over impeccably groomed lawns and ancillary architectural components of this five-part villa. There is nothing more thrilling than looking out a window at architectural extensions of the same house, set against the landscape.

Time-honored architectural details, familiar to Samuel MacIntyre and McKim, Meade & White, are lavishly employed. Greenberg praises contractor Larry Christiani: “He is a unique contractor, a pleasure to work with. He set up sheds making everything there, on the site, from raw wood to millwork, from marble slabs to finished pieces, from local stone to chimneys, everything.”

Ingeniously, as in every Greenberg residence, adroit architectural Greenberg-isms abound, unique design punctuation. In lieu of the generic red brick chimneys, there are finely cut yet irregular fieldstone chimneys,





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native to the region. They recall similar chimneys erected in the Ohio Territory on great houses. The large curved third floor protruding human scale view window, odd but providing panache and a design studio, is the type of irregularity that adds character.

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The unity of apparent peculiarities is pleasing: a clock with smoky glass is projected onto a wall along the staircase, itself possessing glass and twisted stainless steel spindles. Between each dentil molding beneath the cornice of the exterior of the house is a diamond shaped aperture (a square hole poised on its point). Similar to Delano and Aldridge—like Greenberg, modern Georgians—Greenberg, ever so subtly, employs Deco design in the moldings of this house, although one could argue that the silver carving illustrated in this article might also have been inspired by the 18th century

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French absurd period, or for that matter, Asian designs morphed to the West. They are, nevertheless, perfectly suited, much as they would have been in the houses of Salem, Baltimore, or Charleston traders. Add to this heady mixture Greenberg's pleasure in employing, occasionally, proportion with a twist.


I recall thinking, during my interview to be Chief of Protocol, what a pleasure it would be if I succeeded in getting the job to work occasionally in Allan Greenberg's brilliantly designed rooms at the United States Department of State. Although in the end I did not get the job, I have had the pleasure, on a few occasions, of visiting those rooms. The architectural details in these state rooms are executed with the same authority and individuality one sees in this Greenberg house, splendidly sited in the hills of Northern California.

The occupants of this house are enveloped daily by heady architectural beauty, at once stately but always evoking time-proven images of home, central to the American domestic narrative of the last two and a half centuries, central to Greenberg's mission in American architecture. Standing at the base of the cascading fountain, tall sentinel cypresses to either side, one glances up the gradual hill to a Greenberg façade, compelling, inviting and iconic. **H**

Christopher Hyland



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**Be on the
lookout for Allan
Greenberg's
forthcoming
monograph,
October 2013*

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