

DESERT LIVING





Coronado Finds El Dorado

The home at 7 Coronado Court achieves the near impossible in contemporary design; it's both intimate and dramatic.

BY KENT BLACK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS MILLER, ONE POINT MEDIA

There's a saying that the most wonderful things come in small packages. The home at 7 Coronado Court is by no means a small package. But, the enclave in which the property is situated is about as small and exclusive as they come. Perfectly placed in the center of Rancho Mirage, the little community boasts less than a dozen home sites. "It's probably only going to be five or six houses because most of the homes will be made up of two home sites," the owner of 7 Coronado Court says.

In fact, 7 Coronado was one of the first homes built in the gated enclave in 2008. It sprawls gracefully over two full acres.



The home was designed by renowned architect Guy Dreier, whose contemporary masterpieces not only dot the Valley but also grace communities internationally. Dreier is the son of renowned Swiss architect Eduard Dreier, who was a disciple of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's glass-and-steel minimalism. The younger Dreier is known for creating complex, sculptural homes that – nonetheless – offer an inviting, organic feel. They might be works of art, but they are not cold, ascetic, or awkward. As the architect himself said in past interviews, his creations are functional and inviting. There is a flow that reveals comfort in every space; the aesthetic is not forbidding.

Thus, the home at 7 Coronado Court reveals itself as very much in the Dreier oeuvre. Agent Valery Neuman throws open the massive glass front door to reveal an open entryway. It leads enticingly to a living room with high ceilings and a huge fireplace surrounded by small, rectangular stones (stacked Anasazi-style). A huge, curvy chimney piece looks like it was lifted out of MOMA. Beyond that is floor-to-ceiling glass that reveals a lush, water-filled grotto; it makes you feel like you entered the house from the desert and entered a rainforest in Costa Rica. There is almost too much to take in all at once.

Neuman agrees. "Pictures cannot do it justice," she says. "This is a house that has to be experienced. And even then, it's a lot for the senses." She continues speaking as guests remove their footwear. "It's gorgeous," she says. "It's about 10,000 square feet, as you can see. There are five bedrooms and six full bathrooms and two half-baths. Dreier's design of this house encompasses a lot of angles, yet the textures and stones and woods ... brings [sic] warmth. Of course, the owners here also brought warmth in with all the furnishings and soft touches. There are lots of water features – waterfalls, beautiful pools, and a full lagoon. Everywhere you look, [there's] a water feature, [so] that you're kind of surrounded by them. And wait until you see the guest house!"

The tour group definitely wanted to see the guest house. But first, we check out the main house! Neuman





leads her guests past the living room. There are actually two living rooms, flanking either side of the front door. As we pass the living room to the left, it appears to be designed more for entertaining. It features a curving couch that faces a dramatic fireplace plus a grouping of card tables and club chairs (not from a wet bar) that fairly beg for a weekly poker or bridge night. The living room to the right of the front door can be thought of as a family room, though it's as expansive as the other living room. Its seating is oriented toward a giant flat-screen TV – it's definitely a movie night setting for 20 family members and friends.

As we walk down the hallway, we tiptoe past the office, where the owner of the house is working. Dreier said he likes to tailor office space to its user. In this case, an entire wall of glass lets you look out at the backyard lagoon and waterfall. The shade of the greenery and the sound of falling water seem almost too soothing to be conducive for work.

The primary bedroom exemplifies the home's seemingly contradictory qualities of dramatic architectural statement and comfortable intimacy. The ceilings are high, and the juxtaposition of glass elements and jutting angles emphasizes the sculptural nature of the design. At the same time, the room is surprisingly small, as the bed is situated within a few feet of the fireplace and fills the room. The choice of warm colors and inviting textures for the furnishings provides a nice complement to the greenery on the other side of the windows and the glimpse of water beyond. On rare days





when the skies open up and rain comes down, you can get the fireplace going and stay in bed in this room.

As we explore the opposite wing of the home, Neuman takes us into the open-plan kitchen and dining room. Again, the use of wood and stone provides a softening juxtaposition with the soaring dimensions of the room.

We glance at the guest suites at the other end of the house. (Recall the old adage: keep your friends close, your enemies closer, and your guests where you can't run into them.) Then, Neuman guides us back outside and down a long walkway toward the guest house. On our left is a bocce court. (The owner mentioned that she once considered turning it into a lap pool; there is also a horse-shoe pit, a basketball court, and a putting green for truly sporty residents.)

To our right is a stadium tennis court with enough shaded seating to take on the overflow from the BNP Paribas Open. Neuman says per Rancho Mirage city regulations, a cistern was installed underneath the tennis court to cache any and all runoff whenever a rainstorm or two would oblige. The amazing thing "is the cistern is underneath the entire tennis court," she says. "... I have no idea how many thousands of gallons are under that court."

When we reach the stunning guest house, it is everything that Neuman promised. It doesn't do it justice to call it a guest house. Maybe it should be called a guest mansion or a guest event space. The covered patio space is large enough for a medium-sized wedding party to





have cocktails or a sit-down dinner. The house itself (also designed by Dreier and built from 2015 to 2016) cost nearly \$6 million to design and build. It features two matching fireplaces, a formal living room, a spacious primary suite, and a second guest room (which the present owner converted into a well-equipped gym and meditation space). A fully equipped catering kitchen can service the aforementioned wedding party or any small or large gathering. This second home is less a guest house than it is a fabulous event space for guests.



At a certain point, it becomes difficult to take everything in. Your gaze is drawn in so many directions, at so many extraordinary architectural and interior design details, that there is a real danger of whiplash. Neuman agrees. “Still photography does not do this property justice,” she says. “It is the kind of amazing property that you have to see in person in order to take it all in.”



Valery's Way

“It’s really pretty simple,” Valery Neuman says as she strides between the main house and the lavish guest house at 7 Coronado Court. “Be hardworking and be honest. People will always call you back.”



She stops mid-stride and turns toward her guests to emphasize a point about her business philosophy. “And integrity is non-negotiable.”

Neuman is one of the Valley’s top real estate stars; she’s made well over a billion dollars in sales over her 33-year career. She came to the business by a somewhat circuitous route. She was born and raised by a Dutch family in Canada. They moved to Southern California to become involved in the aerospace industry. Neuman struck out on her own at age 16 before her senior year of high school. But, she managed to earn a diploma and went on to put herself through Cal State Fullerton. There, she met Don, her life partner. She worked in the family business for a while and was an executive in the technology sector.

“We started out like everyone else who falls in love with the desert,” Neuman says. “First, we came out on occasional weekends. Then, we came out more and more often. And then at some point, we just knew we had to move here.” She and Don left their Newport Beach life and professions behind. They weren’t sure what they were going to do to make a living in their new home. Don proposed the idea that Neuman should try to work in real estate. But, she wasn’t sure.

Neuman says she wasn’t obsessed with properties and didn’t spend her weekends looking at houses for sale. But, she had one thing that every successful realtor must possess: instinctual people skills. Neuman is the kind of person who never met a stranger. She often forms close relationships with her clients that last.

She’s had unparalleled success with luxury properties in La Quinta and Rancho Mirage plus the Coachella Valley’s most exclusive country/golf clubs, such as Big Horn, Toscana, The Madison Club, The Reserve, Hideaway, Tradition, the Old Polo Estate, Mission Hills, and The Vintage Club. She earned a reputation as a must-see broker for people looking for unique multi-million dollar properties. She joined forces with Compass six years ago and opened its La Quinta office.

“I think it’s my dedication to people,” Neuman says. “I’m a people person, and everything else comes after that. I love real estate and architecture. My husband and I have built homes and lived in nice homes, so I can relate [to the expectations] of a lot of my clientele. My business is all about referrals. I’m really super honest. When I don’t think the price or property is right for them, I tell people not to buy. I just imagine buying the home myself, and then I give my clients the best advice I can give.”