



# GOTHIC ILLUSION

*An impressive, multifaceted outdoor fireplace is built to match the grandeur of its 100-year-old estate.*

Words by Corinne L. Casazza | Photos by Cory Finley

The fireplace was inspired by grand hearths at the famous Biltmore Estate. Historical detailing and personal touches, such as the addition of the owls, make a fascinating display.

**F**ormer owners Mark and Stephanie Erceg got their initial inspiration for this stunning fireplace from admiring unique chimney stacks on their walks around Mission Hills. “We were also influenced by the considerable time we spent in England while living in Geneva, Switzerland,” Mark says. The couple had always loved Edwardian-era homes and wanted to incorporate that aesthetic into the design.

They were introduced to Caleb Kangas, owner of Third Space Design Build, and charged him with creating a fireplace to complement their stately brick home. The house is more than 100 years old, and it was important to the Ercegs that the fireplace look like it had been built alongside it.

To achieve this synergy, Caleb used a variety of bricklaying patterns, herringbone patterns, inlays and angles. “We put the stone on the sides of the fireplace and limestone caps in different elevations, so it has a turn-of-the-century gothic styling,” he says.

The Ercegs’ design was greeted enthusiastically by the city. “When we went before the architectural review board, they said they’d never seen anything like it and couldn’t wait to see it built,” Caleb says.


All the limestone used in the piece is Indiana limestone carved specifically for the fireplace.

“The hearth opening was fashioned along the lines of what you might see at Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina,” Mark says. “We wanted to capture in some small way the size, scope and scale of some of the fireplaces on display there.”

The limestone mouth of the hearth reveals a chevron-patterned firebox that adds texture—and a three-tiered gas log set custom-fabricated in Arizona. The hearth opening also draws the eye upward toward the carved mantel stone above it. The two owls perched there represent the Ercegs’ twin girls. The owl on the lower level pays homage to their eldest daughter. The birds were sourced from an old English garden and are a point of pride for Mark, who added them to the piece himself.

At the top, the spires are turned at a 45-degree angle to the main stack. “Mark wanted to have three individual spires to create really great visual interest,” Caleb explains. The outside spires are dummy chimneys, giving the look of three smokestacks coming out the top, but only one actually works.

The overall effect of the multi-level piece is impressive; its architectural detail gives it a great aesthetic that matches the original home perfectly.

“We think it came out beautifully,” Mark says. “We have no doubt it will be there a hundred years from now.” 

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Anything less than this massive scale would feel dwarfed by the house. With historically accurate architecture by MindMade, the structure reaches nearly two stories up.

