





SUITE DREAMS

The mastermind behind San Diego's sparkling Ivy Hotel puts his design smarts to practice and creates a Gothic-inspired bayfront manse that's custom-made for soaking up the Miami sun

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Move over Ian Schrager and Andre Balazs. There's a new hotelier with an eye for design and luxury services on par with the Peninsula. Michael Kelly, the 44-year-old co-founder of Kelly Capital private investment firm in San Diego, is charming jet-setting partyers and quality-obsessed businessmen alike with his \$90 million Ivy Hotel, where white-glove service meets The Delano.

"It's the sort of place celebs like Heather Locklear come to drink and dine and end up buying a pair of pajamas and staying the night," says Kelly, who developed the concept when San Diego didn't meet his boutique hotel and nightlife needs, and boutique hotels elsewhere didn't come close in the luxury department.

So how does the man who's known for beyond-decadent details in his hotel projects actually live at home? Rest assured, he's left the queen-size bunk beds and the stripper polls back at the office. For his own home, a 12,000-square footer located on Biscayne Bay, Kelly opted for opulence of another version.

The home is a Gothic-Polynesian hybrid combining pointed arch windows, groin-vault ceilings and intricately carved latticework with a hint of *Swiss Family Robinson*. In the heart of the sprawling house is a courtyard tree canopy, as well as a turtle-and-koi pond dotted with stepping stones, an idea he plucked straight from Bal Harbour Shops. Kelly had seen the property years before, made an offer and lost. Luckily the winning bidder never moved in during all that time and eventually lost the house. Not one to be burned twice, Kelly swooped in with cash in hand and closed a week later.

Miami's water, warmth, international flair and most importantly to a bona fide businessman, lack of state income tax, wooed him. He was of a similarly singular mind when he met his fiancée, a blonde triplet who left Minnesota to become a California girl.

"The minute I saw the bay at Montenegro while driving in the Gumball Rally, I knew that was the spot I would propose to her," he says. The couple was engaged in July after settling into the island home tucked off Biscayne Bay (she

PARADISE FOUND *Opposite page:* A custom-made white sectional by Kreiss makes the rectangular space between the spa and guest wing functional. *Above:* 40-foot canary palm trees frame the blue-slate pool. The second-level patio overlooks an interior courtyard, while the top level is a private tanning area accessible via a spiral staircase.



THE TAO OF DESIGN *From left:* Kelly's fiancée in the hallway that leads to the family room, which boasts a beautiful groin ceiling. The "Zen Den" features corral-stone columns and teak furniture custom-made to fit the shape of the room. *Opposite page:* A custom queen-size bed made from ultra suede and white silk divides the seating areas in the living room.

acquired his race car, a Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren, in the deal too).

But Kelly's willingness to settle down didn't stop him from channeling decadent playboys Howard Hughes and Hugh Hefner for the Ivy, where bachelor fantasies come to life. The queen-size bunk beds are surrounded by a plush platform in case things get out of hand, and shower glass goes from opaque to transparent with the flip of a switch. Guys who want to focus on a special sweetie can cozy up underneath cashmere blankets in a private wine room with a Murano glass chandelier, or chill in a poolside cabana accessed from a suite's private spiral staircase.

It's an aesthetic Kelly has created along with Dayna Lee, principal of Powerstrip Studio, the Los Angeles design firm behind the Ivy's interiors. Lee will also work on the second Ivy as soon as Kelly can settle on a location (as of February he was bidding on South Florida properties). "Michael's generosity to guests and friends shows from lavish spaces to good food and overflowing drinks," she says.



Lee has experienced his generosity firsthand as a guest in his Miami home. One of her fondest memories was when a full staff pampered her with facials, massages and manicures at his in-house spa. One wonders how the Kellys ever stop the constant flow of family, friends and colleagues, especially with a slate-heated pool, fitness center and Jet Skis for sunset rides.

"Both of us have huge families," Kelly says, "so we never get the perks ourselves, like a manicure or pedicure, by the time everyone else finishes." Instead, he's forever loading up his iPod tunes for ambiance or cueing up a classic Mafia film to screen in the home theater. "The home's original name is Casa des Sueños, House of Dreams, and it really is my dream house, even if it happened through a comedy of errors."

They did it up in decorating their home with art by Picasso, Moreau and Chagall, as well as a gilded swan sink of 21-karat gold that Kelly spotted during an overseas trip. His design savvy extends to all facets of his life, like an airport hangar of dark wood and marble by architect Graham Downes, based on his similar scheme for Kelly Capital's offices.

"I never thought I was a creative person until I finished the hotel and realized my design input," says Kelly.

The home still needs a few minor details, but he says that will have to wait for summer.

"No way am I doing construction during season," Kelly says. "Life's too short." **M**

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