



Power Play

The new W South Beach turns the boutique brand's latest endeavor into an aesthetic oceanfront playground | By Sophie Danzlou |

Developer David Edelstein is not a man who takes things lying down. But he couldn't help himself while refining the design of the poolside chaise for the W South Beach Hotel & Residences; it needed horizontal research. "The Shore Club's is too low," he says. "The Raleigh's is metal and the Serai's is way too wide." His version is wide enough to rest both a body and a book. Not that Edelstein has been reading or resting much, as he's about to unveil Miami's first W.

It may seem like a developer's role is to focus on the big picture. Not when Edelstein is involved. "The devil is in the details," he quips. "I don't ignore them." The furniture is only one element of this project at 23rd Street and Collins Avenue, but it's a biggie for W, a brand built on slick architecture and high design. Edelstein, a New Yorker who has been developing buildings since the '80s, assembled a crack team of designers in hopes of creating a property so breathtaking that it upends the way people think about W.

Of the myriad stories from South Florida's boom, bubble and bust, the W South Beach's is among the most intriguing. Plenty has changed since Edelstein bought the former Holiday Inn back in 2005, but of the more than 300 units sold, only two buyers have defaulted. (Both are Russians whose broker says they have disappeared into the ether.) And in a city notorious for construction delays, the W South Beach has remained close to on-schedule for an opening this summer, to the relief of buyers like the two World Cup soccer players who forfeit Milan for Miami during the summer off-season.

For pallid snowbirds, there's no more life-enriching force than a few days in Miami, and Edelstein catered to such visitors. "The first thing you do when you get to Miami is open the door, step onto the balcony and breathe in the ocean air," he says. Renowned New York architectural firm Costas Kondylis and Partners devised a herringbone-shaped floor plan that angles each residence at 25 degrees, giving every unit—from a 574-square-foot studio to the 3,000-square-foot penthouse—a glimpse of blue ocean within seconds of crossing the threshold.

The firm also seized the opportunity to restore integrity to what had been an eyesore smack dab in the Art Deco historic district. Kondylis laid a Mondrian-style grid over the glass shell, a nod to Deco style.

It's apropos that the building would pay homage to the past, as the project represents a sort of homcoming for W. It was in Miami Beach that Barry Sternlicht, the former CEO of Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, first attempted to launch the W in 1998 at the old Ritz Plaza before Ian Schrager quashed the plans, citing the shadow it continued...



DEVILISH DETAILS From top: The W South Beach's nightclub. Wall. The lengthy lobby with custom tables. A marble-dominated bath. The high-ceilinged dining room of Mr. Chow.



IMAGES COURTESY OF W SOUTH BEACH



...continued would cast on his Delano. In the cat-and-mouse game that defines this industry, Sternlicht's moved on, developing, among other things, an eco-friendly hotel brand called I, and Schrager is creating a boutique hotel chain for Marriott called Edition. All of this is to say that it took W eleven years to find a home in Miami Beach, so it's not surprising that they'd call on a stickler like Edelstein, whose commitment to design also comes through in his choice of contributors to the project.

Hiring Anna Busta signaled a new era. Though Yabu Pushelberg completed the room designs, Edelstein tasked the 29-year-old Poland native, who designed the W Maldives and the much-lauded W Montreal, with the public spaces and restaurants. Busta didn't sign up for a status-quo project. Immediately, there was a watershed moment between she and Edelstein: He wanted to mount a jaw-dropping piece of art in the lobby; she vetoed it. "It would get tired very quickly," says Busta. "Hotels do that as a design trick, but there are no tricks here."

Instead, Busta embedded the drama in the surfaces. Gray, gold and ivory marble is book-matched into an artful backdrop of moody, swirling shapes. Oak floors processed to reveal rich depth are inlaid with a bronze pattern, and hulking quartzite columns are sheathed with brass screens. The lobby is a who's who of high design, with furnishing by Christian Liaigre, Antonio Citterio and B&B Italia. Busta custom-designed dozens of pieces, such as a wood table dipped in silver, and a glass display case modeled after a Louis Vuitton steamer trunk, replete with metal rivets.

But it was in the garden where everyone got into the groove. Edelstein indulged his desire for a *jardin secret*, a concept he stumbled upon in Provence. "Somewhere to read a novel, kick back, have a beautiful long breakfast," he says. He enlisted Paula Hayes, a conceptual artist who has helped create Miami gardens for architect Rafael Vinoly and Shakira, and who designs blown-glass terrariums that have become "it" art in Manhattan.

Unlike the manicured gardens of neighboring hotels like the Raleigh and the Delano, the W's significant space called for a look of unwieldy beauty. "I wanted it to be a little bit primal," says Hayes, citing locals' strutting and preening, something she sees as vital to South Beach culture. She created a series of experiences for people walking the ipê boardwalk: a cool grove where knotty gumbo limbo trees and sea grape with paddle-like leaves create an arbor, a tunnel of flowers and a pool area where bright sunshine meets blue water and sky. "There's a lot of sensuality and variety, and many spots for privacy."

In the Grove, Busta added decorative elements such as a 1920s French metal *longue* chair, primitive teak stools and objects like a marble bathtub and a wooden wheelbarrow that might be filled with oranges. The getaway inspires everyone around it, including rock-and-roll photographer Danny Clinch, whose work hangs in the rooms and hallways. "David pulled together the most interesting people; they're all artists," says Clinch. "Anna showed me the fabrics and furniture, and Paula talked to me about her garden—so artful and beautiful—and the next thing I know, I was just so into this project." We're betting he won't be alone. **MIAMI**

Conceptual artist Paula Hayes designed the secret garden to be "primal," citing locals' strutting and preening, something she sees as vital to South Beach culture.

GETTING THE W *Foot Jay*: Designers Paula Hayes and Anna Busta with Hayes' terrariums. A suite at the W South Beach. Danny Clinch, whose photography is featured throughout the hotel.



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