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LUXURY HOMES

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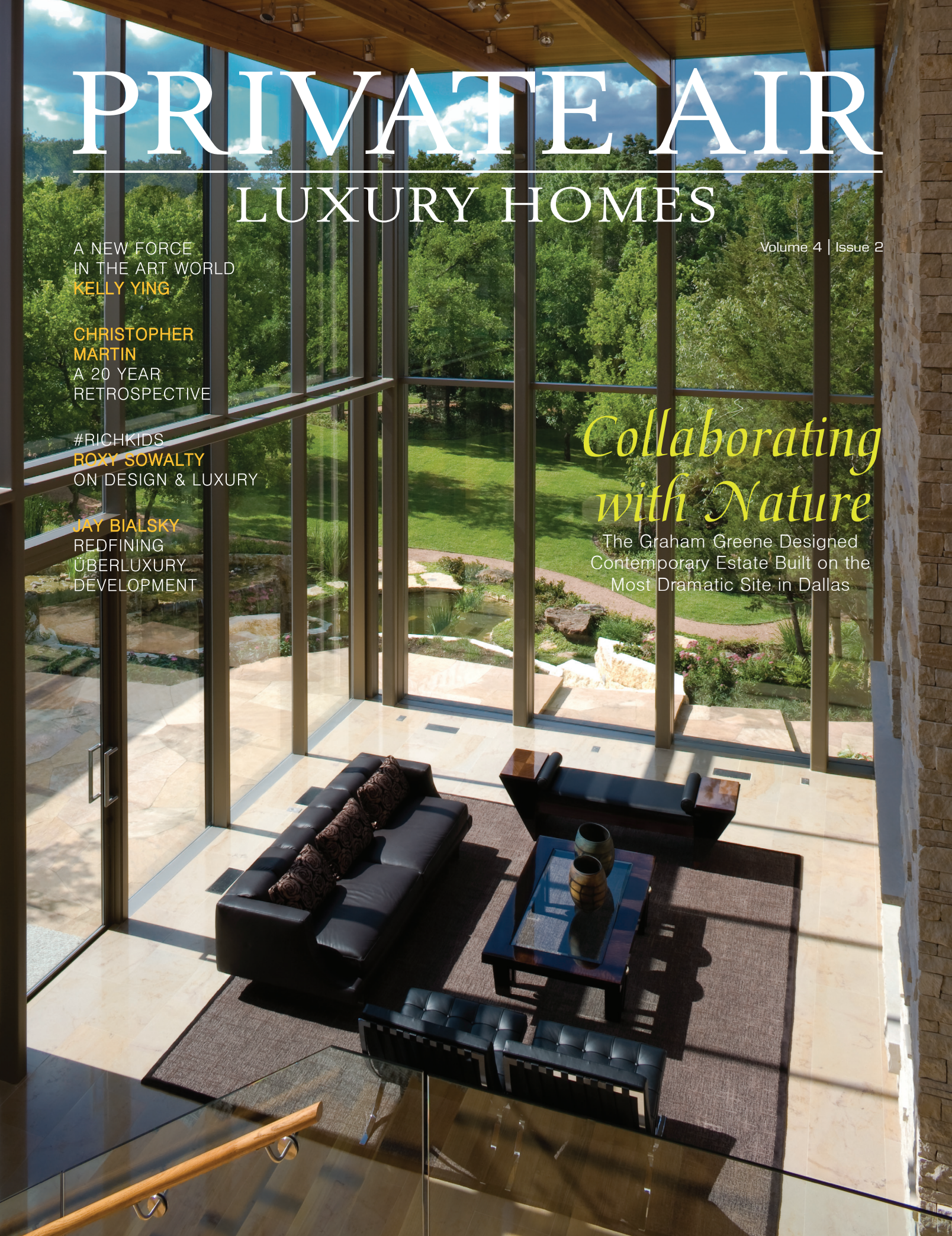
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DEPARTURES

That's Amore

*Falling in love with the opulence and luxury of Venice
at the inimitable Belmond Hotel Cipriani*

By Gina Samarotto





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Venice's Hotel Cipriani. Few other places can elicit such immediate nods of knowing approval, but celebrity is something this iconic hotel wears easily. Situated on the small island of Giudecca, just across the lagoon that sets it apart from the frenetic energy of Piazza San Marco, the Cipriani welcomes guests with an elegance that is stately and reserved. A living legend, she is one of the best known – not to mention best loved – hotels in a destination famous for its ability to inspire a longing for la dolce vita.

Fueled by the passion of Giuseppe Cipriani, the hotel was created as a place for discerning guests yearning to experience Venice from a

luxury, has helped the hotel compile a guest list that is a veritable Who's Who of the world's most celebrated figures. Over the years the Cipriani has hosted everyone from Elizabeth Taylor to Sir John Gielgud, from Diana, Princess of Wales to President Ronald Regan. More recently, the posh Italian hideaway served as a home away from home for the newly minted Mr. and Mrs. George Clooney and their well-heeled wedding guests. "Venice is a beautiful, magical place," di Bert says, "And the Cipriani is a beautiful, magical hotel. Our guests appreciate that beauty, they love that magic and they appreciate what we do to make them feel welcomed." It's a sentiment seconded and supported by General Manager, Giampaolo Ottazzi.

"We do whatever we have to do to make our guests comfortable and to make sure they experience Venice from a place that gives them privacy they need, the luxury they want, and the perfect service they expect."

more luxurious, exclusive vantage point than those offered elsewhere in the city. Joining forces with Viscountess Boyd of Merton, Lady Honor Svejdar and Lady Bridgit Ness - daughters of the Earl of Iveagh, the head of the prominent Guinness Family -Giuseppe Cipriani began to realize his passion by purchasing a two-hectare plot of land on Giudecca and in 1958 the original hotel opened its alluring doors. For the next decade, the Cipriani grew nearly as rapidly as its widespread popularity until it was sold in 1976 to American shipping magnate, James B. Sherwood. Sherwood soon began acquiring additional properties and a luxury hospitality giant first known as Orient Express Hotels – now rebranded as the highly regarded Belmond Ltd. - was born.

"The history of the Cipriani is so rich, so romantic," says Laura di Bert, Belmond's Regional Director of Public Relations, "And everything we do is designed to keep that spirit alive." That romantic spirit and rich history, combined with a meticulous commitment to service and impossibly decadent

Guests arriving to the Cipriani by water taxi as most do, either from Marco Polo airport just a short cruise away or from one of the neighboring Venetian hotels -are greeted at the hotel dock before being led along a garden path to an elegant lobby. Rife with old world charm, you won't find modern card keys at the Cipriani. Rather, upon check-in guests are presented with a weighty, brass fob reminiscent of the grand hotels of yesteryear. Sprawling out from the hotel lobby and spilling outdoors towards the lagoon that surrounds the island is a breathtaking, Italianate landscape where sculpture, fruit trees and flowers all vie for attention. In the gardens guests are invited to stroll, explore or simply relax. On a perfect day one may even catch a glimpse of Roberta, the hotel's resident turtle, sunning herself by a fountain or stumble upon a colony of bunnies nestled in the shade of the rose garden. Indoors, lovely boutiques dot the main level and hallways lead to the hotel's restaurants including the legendary Cip's Club, where guests may dine al fresco against amazing St. Mark's views. Other Cipriani dining options include



The living room of Cipriani's Palladio Suite where George & Amal Clooney stayed during their wedding week in Venice. It has private terraces, a plunge pool, stunning views of Venice, a private entrance hidden at the rear of the Cipriani's gardens and it's own dock to allow guests privacy from the paparazzi.



All Photography by Gina Samarotto
unless where noted



A romantic, watery
side street in Venice



The domes of St. Marks
as seen from the water



Hand wrought offerings
crafted with sparkling pave
diamonds and 18K Italian gold



A mask-maker's workshop
prepares for Carnevale Venezia
in the Piazza San Marco



A red lace dream graces
a boutique window in the
lobby of the Hotel Cipriani



A seamstress crafts lace
by hand at Emilia Burano



ATELIER EMILIA
BURANO



Senior Editor Gina Samarotto
living la dolce vita on the Grand
Canal (photo by Kara Cutruzzula)



The Hotel Cipriani's inimitable concierge Roberto
Senigaglia joins a colleague to welcome
guests with beaming smiles



One of the Hotel Cipriani's
elegant 'barcas' waits to
whisk guests across the
waterways of Venice



the Gabbiano Bar, Enoteca La Via Della Sete, the Porticciolo Pool Restaurant and the hotel's newest dining addition: Oro's. Designed by Adam Tihany and featuring the culinary offerings of Michelin-starred Chef Davide Bisetto, Oro's is a magnificent dining room where Murano glass chandeliers illuminate a spherical, golden ceiling. With its inspired menu and stunning good looks Oro's is a spectacular destination within a spectacular destination, a feast for both body and soul.

Despite the myriad restaurants available within the hotel, Venice is a city that celebrates food and discovering its many delicious offerings is something not to be missed. To see - and taste - the city like a native, indulging in a Bacarata is a must. Deriving its name from the 'bacaro' or local bars found tucked within the residential areas of the city, the Bacarata starts like most events in Venice - on the water. Aboard the Cipriani's traditional "bragozzo," guests are taken on a canal tour of some of the city's most picturesque neighborhoods; stopping along the way to enjoy small plates called "cicchetto" and the unofficially "official" aperitif of Venice, the spritz cocktail. It's a delicious, romantic and fun way to experience the heartbeat of this ageless city.

The Cipriani has curated several other exclusive tours designed to introduce guests to the magic of Venice. In the "Dolce Sense

of Venice" tour, guests are taken along scenic routes to the Arco del Pradiso-Fransecco Molon perfumery in Calle Paradiso, the famous Vizio Virtù chocolaterie in San Polo, the Palazzo Bernado and the workshop of master luthier Riccardo Guaraldi over the course of a day where each of the five senses is tantalized in turn. Movie aficionados will find it hard to resist the Cipriani's film tour that delivers a Venice as seen from the director's chair by visiting Venetian locations made famous by the movies. Oenophiles can indulge their love of the vine by visiting the Collio Shire region of Friuli. Arriving either by car and driver or astride a bright yellow Vespa, guests are introduced to the wines of the Veneto and invited to meet

As Truman Capote was once quoted as saying, "Venice is like eating an entire box of chocolate liqueurs in once go." It's a deliciously desirable, intoxicatingly intriguing slice of la dolce vita and it's waiting for you to discover.

some of the area's most famous vintners. "When in Venice at the Cipriani, guests can do anything, everything or nothing at all," explains di Bert in discussing the bespoke tours the Cipriani has curated. "And, of course, we are always pleased to create a custom tour that brings together the very

best of whatever our guests would like to experience."

As delightful and full as days in Venice may be, retiring to the Cipriani each evening is not unlike unwrapping an opulent gift. Heavy, fine linen sheets layered with extraordinarily crafted duvets meet downy, gentle pillows resting against carved, gilded headboards to create beds that are impossibly plush and inviting. Amenities from the famed Italian House of Bulgari and the London-based Molton Brown grace bathrooms clad in cool marble. Terraces overlook the lagoon, offer unparalleled views of the Palazzo San Marco or open onto the lovely gardens and grounds. Each of the hotel's stunning forty-four

rooms and fifty-one breathtaking suites is distinctive and unique, yet each provides the feeling of living within an exquisite, ornate jewel box. It's a hotel small enough to be intimate, large enough to be intriguing and special enough to be called, as the Italians say, *perfetto*. ✈