

PRIVATE AIR

LUXURY HOMES



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GOING BANANAS FOR STYLE

BANANA ISLAND MAY BE VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT IN DEEPLY AFFLUENT IKOYI-LAGOS, NIGERIA IT'S LEGENDARY. THE TONY MAN-MADE ISLAND MEASURES LESS THAN ONE SQUARE MILE YET BOASTS MUCH OF THE AFRICAN NATION'S MOST SPECTACULAR REAL ESTATE. AND AMONG THESE STANDOUT HOMES, A STUNNING RESIDENCE IMAGINED BY SOUTH FLORIDA DESIGNER, STEVEN ZELMAN. *By: Gina Samarotto*







Zelman, founder and principal of Zelman Style Interiors, whet his appetite for design at the age of sixteen when his mother purchased a sprawling, 4,400sf loft in Manhattan. Back then; the concept of loft living was in its infancy, a bohemian alternative in a land where walled units in doorman buildings ruled. “Mom bought this gigantic space on Broadway” Zelman reminisces, “and her excitement for it was contagious. It was a shell, a giant canvas. We put this huge bathtub surrounded in salvaged stained glass in the center of the space. The artist Francesco Clemente was our neighbor, the Thompson Twins lived in the building... it was an eclectic, unbelievably creative environment. I was hooked. I fell in love with creating and designing and have been doing it ever since.”

Fast forward a few decades and you’ll find Zelman hasn’t lost his passion for design. Case in point, the 6,000sf Banana Island penthouse recently created by the designer for his Nigerian client. “I had worked with the client before, designing his home in Florida. When he was ready to start building his family’s primary residence in Nigeria and asked if I would work with him again, I didn’t hesitate.”

While the task of designing from the ground up on another continent may come with a unique set of challenges, Zelman rose to the contest. Working in tandem with his client’s team of architects, he took the

design bull by the horns and set out to create an opulent, inviting family home.

“We imported what- and who-we needed,” Zelman says. “When we wanted to put down Italian glass floors the owner imported the tiles, along with the craftsmen to install them, from Italy. When we wanted reflective lacquer wall finishes, the same finish found in the automotive industry, we brought in the equipment- and the automotive paint specialist necessary to apply it- from the U.S.”

Despite the challenges brought by logistics, or perhaps because of them, the space shines. All sinuous curves, alluring textures, tiered ceilings and floating staircases are a study of the home’s modern aesthetics that firmly deliver the luxuriously classic feel Zelman and his client yearned for. In the entry nautically inspired, Mahogany-clad walls pay subtle homage to the owner’s love of yachting. Custom wallpaper brings tactile relief to gleaming expanses and bespoke furnishings in leather and rich, crushed velvets that complement the space’s mammoth scale are found throughout. Collectively, the elements join to create an impressive sense of inviting drama.

“It’s all in the details,” explains Zelman. “If, as a designer, you can’t create the wow factor... then you shouldn’t do it at all.” ✈