

SLEEPER

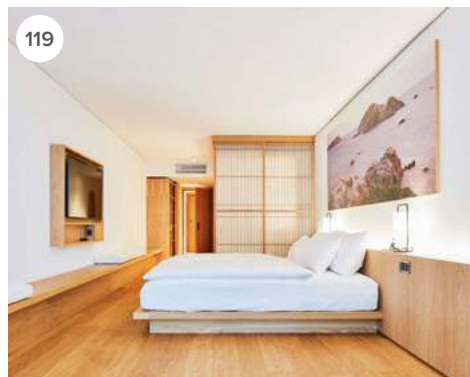
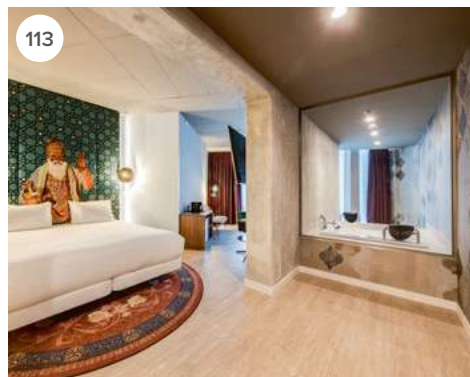
HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE & DESIGN



EKIES – HALKIDIKI • ANOUSKA HEMPEL • WHITE ELEPHANT – PALM BEACH

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White Elephant

PALM BEACH

Nantucket's White Elephant opens a sister property in Florida, where a museum-worthy art collection takes centrestage.

Words: Ayesha Khan
Photography: © Chi-Thien Nguyen

It's no secret that the slim island of Palm Beach off the coast of Florida is home to America's wealthiest social set. When winter in their Northeast hometowns sets in, the well-to-do hop on their private jets and retreat to where the sun shines, the art is priceless and everyone is smiling. This year, visitors are in for a treat in the form of the newly launched White Elephant, a 32-key hotel that boasts a museum-quality art collection and interiors designed by famed Boston-based studio Elkus Manfredi Architects.

Overlooking Bradley Park, the hotel was built in 1923 in the then à la mode Mediterranean Revival style. Today, the landmarked façade is still intact and punctuated by black-and-white striped awnings that peek out between the palm trees and lush vegetation. "For the exterior, it was about making the façade fresh and iconic," says Elizabeth Lowrey, Principal and Director of Interior Architecture at Elkus Manfredi. "It's so classic – beachy and bold; it's never going to go out of style," she adds.

To the front of the hotel, a multi-dimensional

sculpture of an elephant from Santa Fe artist Fredrick Prescott stands at 7ft-tall and sets the tone for the 120-piece art collection that awaits within. Inside, an immediate sense of calm is palpable through light, airy materials. "We wanted the lobby to be a non-transactional space," Lowrey explains. "Arches were brought in at the back wall to reflect the architecture outside, giving punctuation and dividing the space into chambers," she adds, alluding to how the tranquil room is partitioned into three sections, much like a home would be. The reception area, which doubles up as a retail space, features mother of pearl and plants in its arch, while the parlour room has a built-in banquette in its archway. Two seating groups are defined by earthy materials such as rattan and rope – Jaime Hayon's Frames armchairs for Expormim are a worthy addition – along with a stone coffee table fashioned in the form of a teak root. It is here that guests are first acquainted with the hotel's art collection. Two brilliantly coloured Christopher LeBrun's hold court in the



Guestrooms feature an earthy palette of rattan, rope and blonde wood with coloured accents in the form of bespoke floral fabrics on headboards and chairbacks



parlour, while a specially commissioned piece entitled Lady of the House shows an archetypal patron of Palm Beach donning her sunglasses and silk headscarf. The library, which General Manager Bernhard Duerrmeier counts as his favourite space, features a large communal table fitted with charging stations beneath chandeliers from Palecek, hewn of thousands of tiny coco beads in a soft white finish. “It feels like I am welcoming guests to my own home,” he says, admitting that he can often be found catching up with guests over coffee in this space. Hanging on the wall, works by Dan Walsh feature strong graphic patterns that offset the sinuous forms of both the chandeliers above and a chevron-patterned rug underfoot.

Each of the hotel’s three guest floors houses a veritable curated art gallery in its corridors. While one level features a series of aristocrats by Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare, another features a playful montage of ice cream in various cones and cups by Donald Baechler. In a nod to the hotel’s exotic subject matter, elephant door knockers were specially commissioned from





Matthews International. Each piece of furniture in the hotel’s guestrooms was custom designed by Elkus Manfredi and made by Vaughan Benz, with thoughtful accents that Lowrey describes as couture. Perhaps the most prevalent of these is the use of bespoke floral fabrics on headboards, chairbacks and as a smart contrast piping on pillows. Materials such as rattan, rope and blonde wood ensure that the palette is kept clean and neutral so that the art can truly shine. Bathrooms recall Mediterranean Revival with encaustic tiles and slick stone double vanities. In almost every room, a balcony opens up into the hotel’s U-shaped interior courtyard, which Duerrmeier refers to as its “beating heart”. Guests are invited to be social down at the plunge pool and patio of Lola 41, the hotel’s restaurant, where black-and-white striped umbrellas and woven bistro chairs conjure Lowrey’s bold and beachy vibe. In the expansive three-bedroom Park Suite, blonde oak wood floors and more neutral hues provide the perfect foil to vibrant artwork from the likes of Sir Ian Davenport and

Peter Granados. A generous outdoor terrace features soft furnishings by Sunbrella and a gazebo that was original to the 1920s structure; not to mention sweeping views to the ocean.

Although Lowrey and Duerrmeier count the White Elephant as one of the high points of their respective careers, it wasn’t without its challenges. Working with the Landmark Preservation Society to strip a historic building down to the studs and reconfigure its guestrooms as well as creating the perfect backdrop to the artwork were challenging. But when Florida and Boston went into lockdown with just weeks to go until the hotel’s opening, the entire White Elephant team had to do some serious improvising. “Thank goodness for FaceTime!” says Lowrey, recalling that once flights did re-open, she and her team spent one week working day and night to install everything, from priceless art to furniture and accessories on a condensed schedule. “It was some real team-building,” she quips, clearly satisfied with the result.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

Owner: New England Development
Operator: White Elephant Resorts

Architecture and Interior Design:

Elkus Manfredi Architects

Art Consultant: Emily Fine Art

Lighting Design: Lam

Procurement: GS Associates Inc

Landscaping: DS Boca

Main Contractor: Fine Line Construction

www.whiteelephantpalmbeach.com