

Condé Nast Traveler

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word of mouth → DESIGN FILE



Clockwise from left:
The Austin Proper's Peacock
Mediterranean Grill;
the foyer at DTLA Proper,
featuring a mural by Abel
Macias; Kelly Wearstler

MIX AND MATCH

In her Proper hotel projects and beyond, design virtuoso Kelly Wearstler creates eclectic spaces that capture the world outside



FEW INTERIOR DESIGNERS working today enjoy as much name recognition as Kelly Wearstler. Even for those who can't tell a sconce from a suspender, the South Carolina native's sumptuous Slow Cal-inflected aesthetic is easy to spot, thanks to its surprise-and-delight intermixing of color, texture, and materiality along with an unwavering sense of place. Who else would think to pair, for instance, a vivid Mexican folk art mural with pink-and-white checkerboard tile floors (the Downtown L.A. Proper hotel) or burnished brass countertops with emerald-green cabinetry (Cameron Diaz's Greenwich Village pad)?

Since Wearstler established her firm in 1995,

her empire has grown to include restaurants and storefronts, hotels and homes, bespoke furniture and lighting lines. A new book, *Synchronicity* (Rizzoli, September 26), documents this high-wire act through the prism of seven recent residential and hospitality projects, including Proper hotels in Austin and Santa Monica.

Wearstler's magpie eye and knack for summoning locations are particularly evident in these undertakings. Take the Austin Proper, in a city she had never visited before. During repeat trips she got a feel for its cool, rootsy character, eventually finding local artisans able to capture it. There are nods to craftsman homes in the woodwork from Austin-based outfit Delta Millworks and honky-tonk references in the glowing flourishes by neon artist Evan Voyles throughout the common spaces. Wearstler sourced some of the antique furniture from legendary flea market Round Top. The key to creating harmony between a hotel and its environs, she says, is to look beyond the walls of the space. "When a hotel is at its best, it really embodies the culture of the city and the community it resides in." **BETSY BLUMENTHAL**

PHOTOGRAPHS: THE RINGALLS; MERRY CROWDER