



Opposite: Kelly in the living room playing with her son Milo. I had hoped that this would be the cover of *New York* magazine's 2004 design issue, but another photograph from the shoot by Gentil & Hyers was chosen. Right: The art in the den is by Peter Gee, a sixties pop artist.

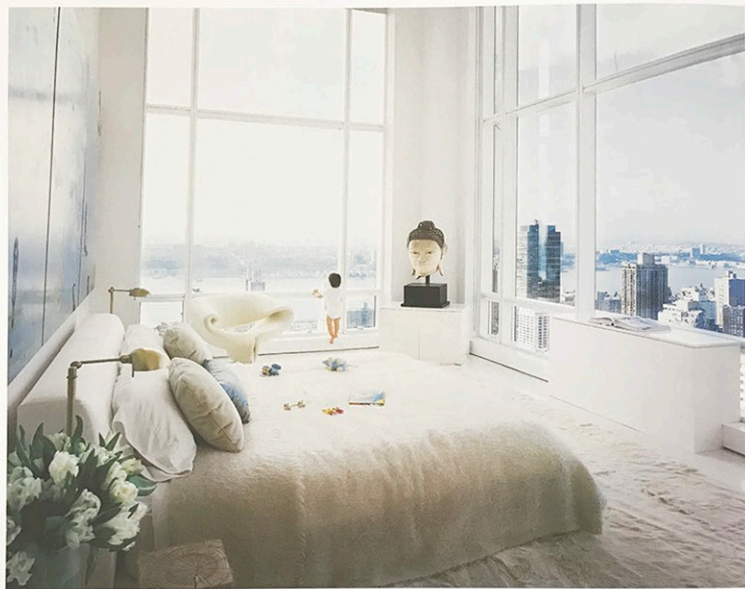


KELLY BEHUN

I FIRST SPIED THE WORK OF KELLY BEHUN and her then design partner, Natasha Ziff, in a *House & Garden* story featuring Ian Schrager's Soho rental. He had given them the keys and told them to get it done, on budget, no questions asked. It was fresh, unfussy, and effortlessly elegant. *Ikea* chaise included; I had to find them. It turned out that Kelly started her design firm, Behun Ziff, in 2001, after she and Natasha had cut their teeth working together for Schrager. They had no design training, but, as Schrager told writer Amy Laroocca, "I knew they had the eye."

I arrived at the penthouse of the building at Columbus Circle that Kelly and Natasha had recently renovated for Kelly and her husband, Jay Sugarman, and two boys, Miles and Arno, under the age of five, plus their dachshund, *Gj* boy, in 2004. When Kelly opened the door, all I saw behind her was a luminous landscape floating out over the city, with views that stretched from river to river. The decor of this winter-wonderland palette was exquisitely spare. A Tord Boontje crystal chandelier sparkled like a giant jewel over a custom-designed white leather Vladimir Kagan sectional sofa that sat on top of a 17-by-25-foot white goatskin rug, begging for bare feet, in one corner of the living room.

It was all so dazzling and otherworldly, was I really making the first tracks in the snow? It was too good to be true, and I didn't even want to ask whether I could do a story, so I didn't until the very end of our visit, after I had seen the playroom with *Elvis* towering on the wall in a photograph that had been digitally transformed for wall covering; and after I had seen the views of New Jersey from one son's room with a wall-to-wall Paul Smith carpet; and after I had seen the master bedroom envelop all who entered like a giant fluffy cloud that you never wanted to leave. Finally, I asked the question, and the answer was yes. I had found the biggest, fattest, most delicious mouse to triumphantly deposit at the feet of the new editor in chief of *New York* magazine, Adam Moss. I had surpassed myself in sleuthing out such a prize. I left Kelly and Natasha's home walking on air, but what no one knew when I got back to the magazine was that I had promised Kelly a cover story, because I knew it had to be, it deserved to be. I also knew what a dangerous thing that was to do, as it wasn't my decision, but I also knew that I always keep my promises, no matter what, so I kept that promise to myself.



Above: The master bedroom with views of the Hudson River and beyond. Opposite: Kelly Behun's ingenious decor, including a blow-up of a photograph of Elvis Presley papering a wall in her sons' playroom.