

F&B

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A room at the Keating Hotel in San Diego, facing page.
A bathroom, below left, and a conference room, right.

FERRARI AND MASERATI were no longer enough, not even Jacuzzi tubs and Primatist speedboats. And so in November 2006 Italian icon Pininfarina, known primarily for designing cars, officially joined the luxury hotel sector: San Diego, America's finest city if locals are to be believed, was chosen for the venture. The hotel – located in an historical building dating from 1890, once home to the public library and the San Diego Trust & Savings Bank – is in the city's trendy Gaslamp District that helped fuel a rebirth of the entire downtown area.

The thirty-five rooms are spread over four floors, with a total of 72 beds and eight suites. The rooms feature high ceilings, exposed brick walls and resin floors, and the ambience is characterized by traditional Pininfarina style, clean, ergonomic, essential and functional, with red the dominant color.

This is The Keating, the luxury boutique hotel designed by Pininfarina Extra. The company, based in Cambiano, near Turin in Italy, focuses on industrial design, and now also interiors. The hotel's concept came from San Diego lifestyle group Bond Urban Habitat and real-

estate developer Edward Kaen, who invested about \$16 million in the project. The goal was to redefine the profile of urban hotels in

“Rooms, called ‘stanzas,’ have no internal wall dividers, not even between the bedroom and the bathroom, offering a new way of interpreting space.”



Southern California, positioning The Keating as a tangible symbol of the rebirth of a chic metropolitan San Diego.

“For this project, we created a kind of research laboratory,” said Paolo Pininfarina, chairman of the company founded by his grandfather. “The hospitality sector is an area of great interest, and will constitute one of our lines of development. Projects in the hospitality industry work as marketing multipliers, because in a hotel, especially one at this level, hundreds of people come into contact with our brand every day. Plus, we consider the United States our market of opportunity and increasing growth in coming years. In fact, our name already has a good position, as we have collaborated with very popular high-end brands. In addition to car design, we are dedicating particular attention to our technological products, including cell phones and home electronics, and interior design.”

Thanks to close ties with other Italian brands, the new hotel serves as a showcase for high-quality “Made in Italy” products, as well as Pininfarina design. Every room has a Lavazza Blue espresso machine and each Imperiale Suite features a Jacuzzi Morphosis tub. Guests can sip Laurentana water and Gancia sparkling wines, for which Pininfarina designed new packaging. They will find rooms equipped with all of the amenities expected of a hotel of this level: goose-down mattresses and comforters and Frette sheets plus wall-mounted BeoVision high-definition plasma televisions and BeoSound entertainment systems with radio and CD player from Bang & Olufsen,





Design Meets Hospitality

ITALIAN DESIGN ICON PININFARINA MADE ITS DEBUT IN THE HOTEL SECTOR WITH THE KEATING. PININFARINA HAS BROUGHT THE ESSENCE OF MADE IN ITALY TO SAN DIEGO: LAVAZZA ESPRESSO MACHINES, LAURETANA WATER, GANCIA SPARKLING WINES AND JACUZZI TUBS, ALL PUT TOGETHER BY THE DESIGNERS FROM A SMALL TOWN IN NORTHWESTERN ITALY

by David Olson

Another view of the conference room and an en-suite bathroom with no wall blocking off the bedroom, below.



to make them feel part of this completely new and relaxing experience," said Pininfarina.

So far that recipe seems to be working and the Keating's owner, Edward Kaen, is enthusiastic.

"Working with the Pininfarina team is exhilarating," said Kaen. "Every detail has been designed with great attention to esthetics, while never forgetting the need for functionality. I hope that this is the first of many collaborative projects."

Soon after inauguration, the project entered its second phase that included the opening of a restaurant adjacent the hotel, a lounge bar, eight new premium suites and a covered rooftop swimming pool.

GOOD WINE, GOOD PEOPLE

Along with a wide selection of name-brand merchandise, guests at The Keating will find a special wine list to choose from and savor in the lower level, home to The Vault wine bar. Red wines are lined up along the walls, while the whites are kept in special refrigerators. The list features Piedmontese wines personally chosen by Paolo Pininfarina, wine connoisseur and winemaker himself.

The philosophy behind The Vault's wine list is "Good wine is made by good people," and the list introduces the winemakers collaborating in the project: Villa Fiorita (in Castello d'Annone in the Monferrato zone of Piedmont), Molino, from Treiso near Alba, and the Roero's Matteo Correggia. Together with golf and drums, wine is one of the Pininfarina's great passions. Despite so many successful creations behind him, Pininfarina confesses that he is still very intrigued by a new idea – a beautiful and elegant miniature wine cellar, ready to be filled with prestigious labels.



The restaurant, The Merk Bistro Italian,

serves what it calls "rustic Italian food with a California twist." The wine list has domestic and Italian offerings including the new Pininfarina wine collection, which debuted late last year and was made together with wine producer Heck Estates. The wine, called "2005 Vino Rosso," is a Napa Valley blend of red varietals and includes 60 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 29 percent Cabernet Franc, 6 percent Sangiovese and 5 percent

Petit Verdot. The wine making was overseen by Mia Klein, a Napa Valley winemaker who has worked on brands including Viader, Dalla Valle and Araujo. Pininfarina Extra designed the bottle and the 6-bottle gift case.

The hotel's target guests are businesspeople, VIPs and luxury tourists, given that the price per night ranges from \$300 to over \$1,000 for the Fresca Suite.

and of course a high-speed wireless internet connection.

In its first two years, the Keating has carved out its niche as the only boutique hotel in the heart of San Diego's newly vibrant downtown area. The Keating is a few steps from 5th Avenue, which is lined with bars and restaurants, and is a short walk from the baseball stadium, port and many of the city's top tourist and business sites.

In sharp contrast to the romantic revival-style historic façade, the interiors have been designed following extremely modern lines.

"I wanted to create a hotel that would maintain its historic external character while presenting a completely innovative interior," said Pininfarina. "San Diego is the perfect location for this. A similar project would not have had the same impact in a city like New York or Los Angeles."

For example, each room – called "stanza," Italian-style – has no internal wall dividers, not even between the bedroom and bathroom, offering a new way of interpreting space, which is broken up by contrasts of colors and materials. The bathrooms are done in a relaxing sky-blue, while the furniture unites mahogany and steel.

"Designing The Keating, I gave myself a precise goal and that was to inspire emotions in the guests staying at the hotel,