

Atop One Queensridge Place: Imagination dances in unbridled opulence

There's a fine line between fantasy and envy. Fantasy is fine. Fantasy is the product of an active imagination. Envy suggests unhappiness with your own life. Envy is not so fine.

When some celebrity comes to Las Vegas and spends more on a bottle of wine than my house payment, I don't envy him. I fantasize a bit about the wine's taste, however.

So this week, when Frank Pankratz gave me a peek at one of the two-story homes atop One Queensridge Place that carries a \$20 million plus price tag, I fantasized big time. What could I do with a 16,000-square-foot home?

And it comes with a cupola, a domed hideaway perfect for writing. Something with enough room that my files wouldn't cover every flat surface. Now I'm really fantasizing.



Jane Ann Morrison
COMMENTARY

What would it be like to write in the cupola atop the tower, looking toward the mountains? Surely you'd feel like a princess in a tower, not one held hostage, but one protected, safe from the world's woes, free to let your imagination run wild.

There are four two-story penthouses at the very top of the twin towers at Rampart Boulevard and Alta Drive. Each has a private cupola,

which you notice more at night when it's lighted.

Two of the four \$20 million-plus penthouses have been sold, a sure sign that the economy isn't hurting everyone. One man bought the Crown on the 18th floor, plus the penthouse below for his mother-in-law.

Must be a generous soul.

Two features appeal to me. One is the design that gives the lucky homeowner views in both directions, the serenity of the mountains and Red Rock Canyon on one side and the energy of the Las Vegas Strip on the other. You don't have to pick your favorite view; you get them both:

The other feature: the *pietre dure*.

(Yeah, I didn't know what the phrase meant either. It's Italian for hard stones and means mosaic designs out of semi-precious hard stones and colored marble.)

I just saw gorgeous

handcrafted mosaics, but I'm plebeian.

The mosaics are everywhere. The floors, the walls, the bathrooms, the elevators. The designs are unique works of art.

It's one of the signatures of the luxury 219-unit project, and Pankratz, president of Executive Home Builders, enthuses about each *pietre dure*.

"See that one?" he said, pointing to one on the wall. "The women's necklaces are made of real rubies and emeralds."

Pankratz and his partners, Yohan Lowie and Paul and Vickie Dehart, are hands-on, and it's obvious. Paul was making precise measurements on the curved staircase of the Crown home being finished when Pankratz and I wandered by. Lowie personally designs the mosaics and the ironworks.

Pankratz, who is the spokesman for the project, knows everyone who lives there and walks through the public areas with eagle eyes. If there's a streak from a wet mop left on the floor, he asks it be removed. He continually picks up anything that sullies the public areas, even the smallest fragment of paper. Pankratz picked up a plastic bag that had blown into a shrub outside the sales office.

"I do this because when the staff sees me do this, then they do it," he said.

It's about pride as well as the search for perfection.

(In the bright sunshine, suddenly I realized the black top I wore had more than the usual number of cat hairs on it, and I thought Pankratz must have had to restrain himself from cleaning me up.)

Pankratz said that of the 219 homes ranging from \$1.8 million to more than

\$20 million, 73 percent have sold.

From atop the tower, we peer toward The Village at Queensridge, kitty corner from the towers, where the underground garages are under construction.

That \$850 million complex, also a joint effort of Executive Home Builders, the Israeli-based IDB Development Corp. and PBC Ltd., will have residential, restaurant and retail.

I won't have to use my imagination when The Village opens in 2009 not far from my home. But I'll be able to look up at the four cupolas and wonder who is doing what in those secret hideaways.

Fantasy will prevail once more. And maybe just a touch of envy.

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