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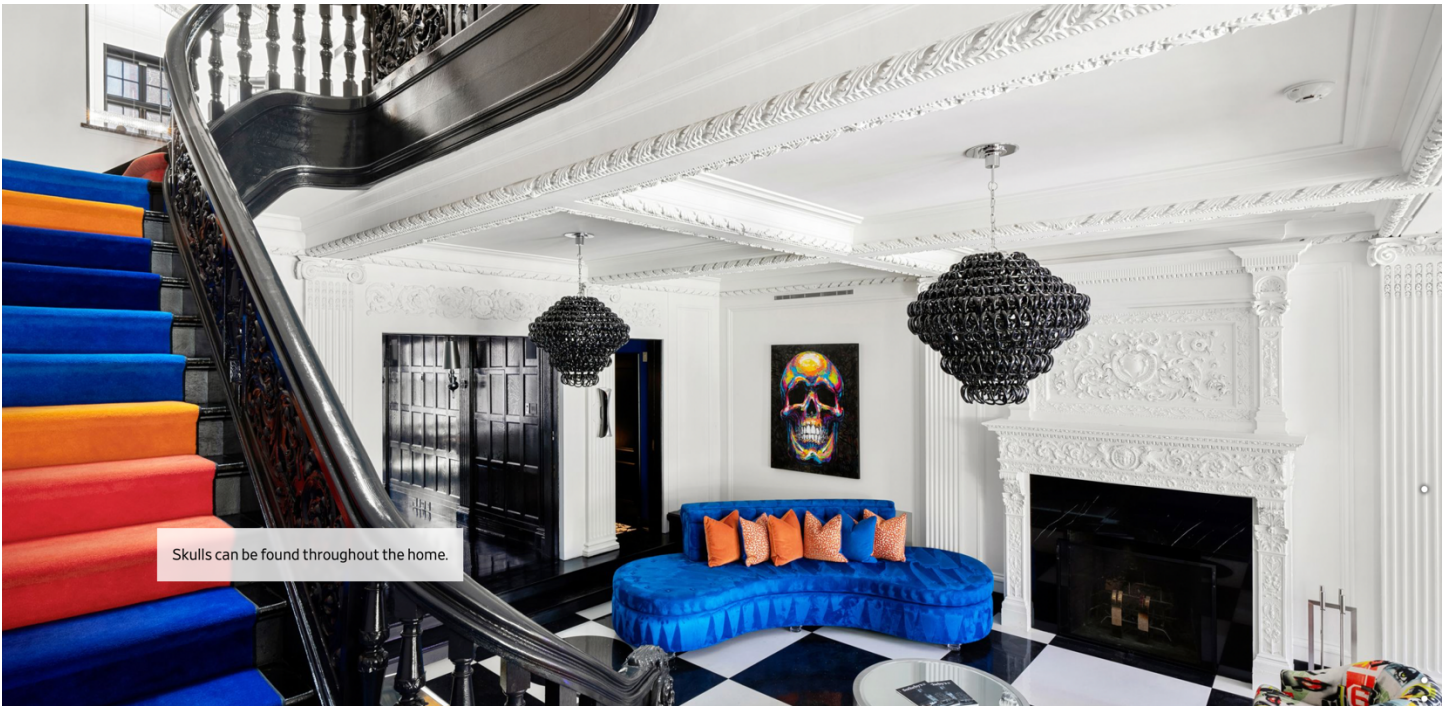
EXCLUSIVE LUXURY HOMES

An Investor's Colorful, Skull-Laden Mansion Is Boston's Priciest House for Sale

Kevin Starr launched a multimillion-dollar renovation to turn the \$29.9 million limestone residence into a bold, 'sexy' home

Behind wrought-iron gates on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston's Back Bay, the stately limestone mansion is an imposing relic from the late 1800s, when the residence was built on this tree-lined street. A peek through the front window, however, reveals a neon sign proclaiming "Love is the Answer," hinting at the cacophony of bold color, lush textures and skull-inspired decor inside.

Owned by venture-capital investor Kevin Starr, the house and its adjacent twin are known locally as the Commonwealth Sisters, standing out for their limestone facades amid a sea of redbrick townhouses. Starr is now listing the house, having moved to the suburbs of Boston with his wife, Nichole Starr, and their family. The asking price is \$29.9 million, said listing agent William Montero of Gibson Sotheby's International Realty, who said it is one of the priciest listings in Boston, and the city's priciest listing for a single-family home.



Skulls can be found throughout the home.



After buying the late-1800s house in 2015, the owner completed a multimillion-dollar renovation.



A co-founder of Third Rock Ventures, a biotech-focused venture fund with offices in Boston and San Francisco, Starr bought the house for \$11.6 million in 2015, property records show. Working with designer Eric Roseff, who is known for his bold use of color and textures, Starr spent about a year on a multimillion-dollar renovation that supercharged the home's color palette while retaining original detail—and adding plenty of skulls, an important symbol to Starr, Montero said.

Starr declined to comment for this article.

Spanning about 10,600 square feet over five floors, the house has six bedrooms, including a full-floor primary suite. There are five fireplaces, an elevator and a roof deck.

The house is a reflection of Starr's bold personality, according to Roseff, who has worked with Starr on several of his homes. "His vibe from the beginning was the feel of a boutique hotel," he said. "He likes a little bit of Miami thrown in, a little bit of Vegas thrown in."



After passing through three sets of wrought-iron gates, visitors enter a voluminous foyer with checked quartz floors and wood paneling covered with black lacquer paint. Vivid cobalt, indigo and orange carpeting covers the staircase leading to the second floor, where the open kitchen has a black-and-white stone island.

The adjacent living room is the showstopper: With blue walls, couches and rugs, it has an illuminated bar, banquette seating and arched windows overlooking a tree-lined pedestrian mall. “We wanted it to have a real loungy vibe—like a 1970s coke-den vibe,” said Roseff, who described the room as having a “perpetual mood” to it. “It’s intoxicating, it’s inviting, it’s sexy.” A round portion of the ceiling, set off with detailed crown molding, is covered with Christian Lacroix’s “Butterfly Parade” wallpaper.

The primary suite encompasses the entire third floor, and can be closed off from the central staircase with frosted-glass pocket doors. In the bathroom, a soaking tub fills from the ceiling and the shower has music and a lighting system. A glass wall of the bathroom has a view of Starr’s closet, where Starr kept his extensive sneaker collection.



The full-floor primary suite has a skull mosaic in the shower.

The primary suite was previously “a little maze of dressing rooms and vanities,” Roseff said; some of Starr’s key changes throughout the home involved opening up parts of the house that were compartmentalized.

Skulls can be seen in rugs and wallpaper throughout the home. In the primary bathroom, there is a skull-shaped mosaic on the shower floor, and Roseff found a jeweler to engrave skulls into the shower fixtures, too. “A lot of people think skulls are creepy, but he sees it as a joyous sign of life,” Roseff said, noting that Starr believes skulls represent the circle of life. “When a fetus is forming, the skull is the first thing formed. At the end of life...the skull is what remains.”

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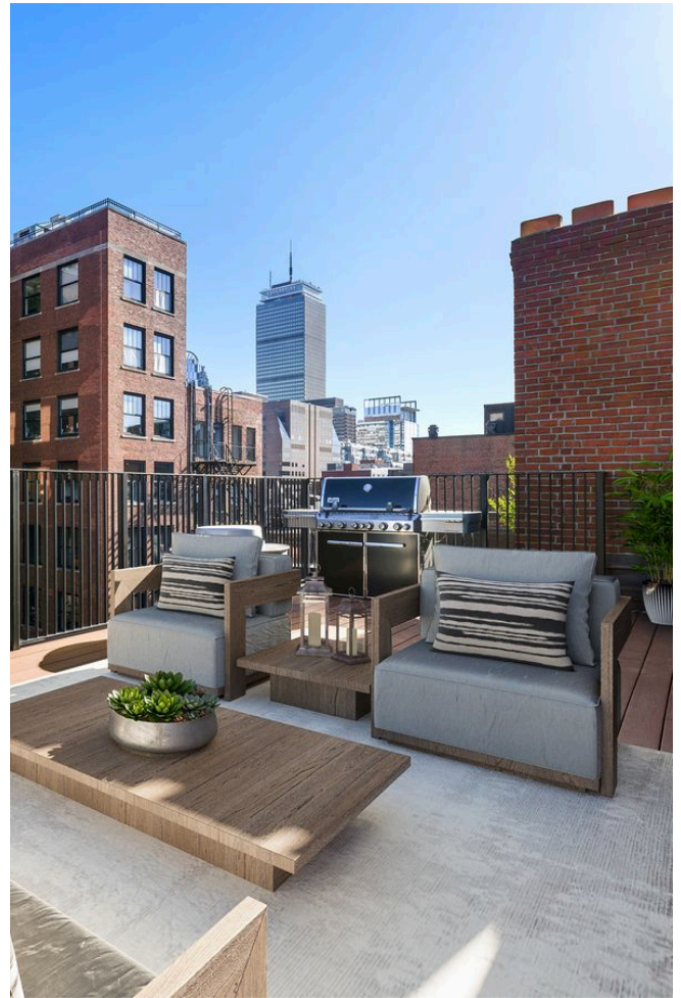
Off the foyer is Starr’s home office, which has a 2,200-bottle wine room. The fifth floor, which has large skylights and a roof deck, was mostly a living space for the children, with its own media center and kitchen. The space also doubles as a safe room with a steel door installed by a prior owner, Roseff said. He also recalled Starr’s young children riding tricycles

around the foyer.

Despite the bold aesthetics, the home blends old and new elements, Roseff said. Original details include fireplace surrounds, wood paneling and window hardware.

Finally, Starr’s house has six parking spaces, a rarity in a neighborhood where spots can fetch \$250,000 to \$500,000, Montero said.





The fifth floor of the townhouse has a skylight, kitchen and roofdeck.

Since he and his family moved to the suburbs of Boston a few years ago, Starr now uses the house only occasionally as a pied-à-terre, Montero said. He said the home's distinctive style—and skulls—won't hurt marketing efforts. "In a price range like this, whoever is going to buy the home will probably customize it any way they want," he said.

The Back Bay has long been one of Boston's [most expensive](#) neighborhoods, with price growth fueled by luxury condominiums built over the past decade, including One Dalton and Raffles Boston, Montero said. In recent years, new condos in the area have fetched between \$3,000 and \$4,500 a foot, he said.

Last year, a house in Boston's Beacon Hill area sold for \$28.25 million, records show.

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