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ELITE TRAVELER

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The Style Issue

Outerwear, watches, interiors,
and jewelry — plus the rise
of the Betweeners, and
how to buy a vineyard

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ELITE TRAVELER



ALL UNDER ONE ROOF

Garages full? No more room in the wine cellar? The Hangar Group, with its cavernous, collector-friendly units, may have the answer

Scott Cunningham is on his way to the airport when we speak. He's heading to the Dolomites to drive supercars through the mountains with a group of fellow collectors.

This might sound like the sort of trip that's been organized by a private members' club, but it isn't — or at least, not quite. It's an unexpected but very welcome by-product of the business Cunningham created. The Hangar Group builds private hangar condominiums for collectors — those with too many Ferraris for the garage or who prefer to house them away from their homes. The same goes for art, wine, collectibles, or any other hobby that demands space and security in equal measure.

For Cunningham, the idea was a slow burner born of personal frustration. After downsizing once his children had grown up and left home, he found himself without room for the cars and motorcycles he'd collected over the years.

So he rented a warehouse space which solved the storage problem, but created another. Each time he pulled out in a different car or a bike, it drew attention from those working in the area. "There was no privacy, but no expectation of privacy," he summarizes.

Security was a factor, of course, but it wasn't just that. He wanted somewhere that reflected how much care he had put into his collection. He wanted to decorate, to make the space his own; but who's going to spend a substantial sum of money to do up a rented warehouse?

A breakthrough came when he was visiting a friend who kept an aircraft. After a day of flying, they sat in the hangar, beer in hand, to watch the sun set. Alongside the plane were motorcycles, classic cars, a TV, and a bar. Exactly what Cunningham had in mind. But, again, there was a problem.

It was an operational aircraft hangar so, in order to pass the annual inspection, all that extraneous stuff had to be removed. Friends would show up with trucks to clear the floor of everything except the plane before the inspectors

arrived, and then put it all back afterwards. Quite the operation. (It passed, in case you were wondering.)

Cunningham decided to build something that would combine privacy, security, the freedom to display what you want, how you want; and the social beers-after-flying atmosphere that he couldn't find anywhere else.

Today, the Hangar Group is a bit of an oddity. It sits at the intersection of real estate, private storage, and an accidental members' club. At the original location in Palm Beach, owners invite each other over for drinks and parties in their hangars, organize road trips (those collectors on Cunningham's Dolomites vacation all own units next to each other) and private track days, and recommend friends when a space becomes available.

The second site, in the Hamptons, which is expected to be ready this fall with Miami due to follow, is invite only — prospective buyers arrive through the nominations of existing owners. Cunningham insists there isn't a formal vetting process so much as a referral network that has grown naturally. "You're choosing your next-door neighbors," he says. "People recommend friends they'd actually want to spend time around."

And when they do become owners, they're given carte blanche to decorate as they choose. I ask Cunningham if he has any favorites, or any he dislikes. He laughs and admits some aren't to his taste, but that's the point. He's not here to police an aesthetic, but to let the owners have their fun.

Not every hangar houses automobiles or auction-worthy collectibles. One owner spent \$1m converting his into a professional recording studio, complete with broadcast-quality mixing desks and extensive soundproofing. "He and his friends will come and jam for hours," Cunningham says, noting that it's "like bringing a band back together."

Others resemble art galleries, wine cellars, or even nightclubs. Cunningham's own is comparatively restrained: Italian oak floors, marble worktops, and enough wine storage to entertain, but also spaces to host movie nights with his grandkids.

But ultimately, these spaces aren't really about the design. They're places to gather with friends, or to enjoy privately. More though, they're a signifier — an expression of personality, of generosity, of connoisseurship... and maybe just the ultimate flex, an entire space dedicated to the pursuit of passion. Samantha Coles