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Luxury DEFINED

Recent luxury trends are leaning towards resort-like amenities and a desire to connect with nature, says designer Diana Rose

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LUXURY LIVING

Dawn of the new luxury

Beautiful craftsmanship, natural materials and resort-like relaxation usher in a new era of luxurious living

DIANNE DANIEL
Special to Postmedia Network

The pinnacle of luxury used to be extravagance, the more garish the better as people aspired to live large. Fast forward to 2022, and there's a new dawn afoot in the luxury market that extends beyond physical products to encompass a state of mind. A luxury home today is less about brands and dollar amounts, and more about the luxurious moments your wealth affords.

"For me, a luxurious home is an upgrade in lifestyle," said designer Diana Rose Balanyuk (Diana Rose), principal and creative director at Diana Rose Design. "People say your lifestyle defines your home, but it also goes the other way around, how your home will define your lifestyle — it's about amplifying your own life so you can serve other people better."

Known for an approachable style that blends modern and transitional aesthetics, Rose said recent trends are leaning towards resort-like amenities and a desire to connect with nature. For the first time, her studio is explor-

ing the idea of green walls made from preserved moss and succulents. Cascading waterfalls that allow soothing, trickling water to be heard from every corner of a home are also gaining popularity.

What's new is that families are asking for second-floor relaxation lounges, a spot to unwind after dinner and before bedtime that often includes a fireplace, TV area, snack bar and homework station. The aesthetic is less formal, highlighted by plush, comfortable sofas, but the focus remains on quality — right down to the type of fill in the cushions — with more people interested in commissioning original pieces from local artists and craftspeople.

"They spend more time now focusing on the beauty of the home," said Rose, noting that luxury home owners are choosing natural over man-made materials, including handmade wallpaper and understated satin brass finishes. "Back in the day, everybody wanted to impress their neighbours or their friends, now it's a bit more reserved," she said.

Andy Taylor, broker and senior vice-president, Sales, at Sotheby's



Sotheby International is currently working with a client who is transforming an entire floor of The Residences at the Ritz Carlton in Toronto, turning four units into two larger ones, expected to sell for more than \$23 million each. *SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY CANADA*

International Realty Canada, said if he had to pick one word to describe the new luxury, he might choose serenity.

"True luxury wants more private, discreet buildings," said Taylor. "It's serenity and a place of calm away from the distractions going on with COVID and global events. You want, when you come home, to not worry about anything."

In the luxury condo market, that translates into larger spaces — 4,000 square feet or above — bathed in custom finishes. Though the materials are still the best you can find, from showers shrouded in Starphire ultra-clear glass and laser-cut marble wall slabs, to breathtaking Italian kitchen cabinets and one-of-a-kind open-flame fireplaces, the emphasis is on creating something special that you won't find anywhere else, he said.

Taylor is currently working with a client who is transforming an entire floor of The Residences at the Ritz Carlton in Toronto, turning four units into two larger ones, expected to sell for more than \$23 million each. Dual elevator access means two distinct entrances can be defined for each suite. In the first floor plan, one elevator opens to a more formal evening space adjacent to

a spectacular wine cellar and overlooking Toronto city lights at night; the other provides access to the kitchen and main living area, with breathtaking vistas of Lake Ontario and plenty of natural light.

Homeowners are looking for tasteful, boutique buildings with top-of-class concierge services that now include butlering. "For many people, a Toronto luxury condo is just one of the homes they have around the world, so they call and say, 'I'm coming in on Tuesday' and the concierge will have the fridge stocked with the foods they like from Pusateri's Fine Foods or Whole Foods, and the wine they want in the wine cellar," he said.

Within the next six months, Taylor expects to see boutique luxury projects coming on the Toronto market at starting prices of \$2,800 to \$3,400 per square foot. But factor in a growing desire to create truly one-of-a-kind oases, and the true cost of luxury will be far steeper, he said.

"Those owners are still going to renovate to their own taste and level of finish they're looking for," said Taylor. "The level of quality in the top units is only getting better as the bar is set higher and higher."



Andy Taylor, broker and senior vice-president, sales, at Sotheby's International Realty Canada, said if he had to pick one word to describe the new luxury, he'd choose serenity. *SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY CANADA*

How designers define the evolving look and feel of luxury



DIANA ROSE
How has the concept of luxury living changed?
As we come out of the pandemic, more clients are looking to recreate resort-like amenities in their own homes. Luxury design is now not just about a beautiful space with stunning materials but also the ability to customize as much as possible, to tailor a client's lifestyle and achieve the most comfort, from the cushions, to fill in the sofa, to smart appliances and heated floors.

What popular luxury elements are trending?
We are working on a few stunning new builds with amenities like indoor pools with spas, bowling alleys, video games rooms and wine rooms. A lot of homeowners are now adding more importance to functional mudrooms, large pantries and organization systems in closets and home offices, since most are working from home.

Diana Rose is the principal & creative director at Diana Rose Design serving the Greater Toronto and Muskoka areas. Visit www.dianarose.design



TRISHA ISABEY
How has the concept of luxury living changed?
Luxury living used to be about the location, size, materials and brands. Today it has changed and is more than that. Now we care about the ease of living — smart homes are a typical addition to a luxury home.

What popular luxury elements are trending?
Homes that contain all of the amenities — a gym, home office, butler pantry, mud room, golf simulators, saunas and home bars. In addition, the luxury owner wants to bring their indoor luxury to the outdoors. Outdoor kitchens boast the same high-end finishes as indoor; pools, putting greens and sports courts are becoming more sought after.

Tisha Isabey is owner & principal designer for Isabey Interiors based in Kelowna, B.C. Visit isabeyinteriors.com



PATTI WILSON
How has the concept of luxury living changed?
It's no longer about how big your home is or acquiring the latest and greatest. Luxury has become a state of mind. Right now, I would say we are seeing a huge shift towards a simpler lifestyle rich in experience. We all want our homes to be a place where we feel safe, secure and at rest from all that is going on around us.

What popular luxury elements are trending?
More smart technology — voice-activated and touchless plumbing fixtures in bathrooms and kitchens; smart technology appliances with integrated wi-fi capabilities to find and quick-load recipes; and capabilities for security, lighting, heating and air conditioning, and remote control blinds.

Patti Wilson is principal designer & founder of Patti Wilson Design Inc., based in Newmarket, Ont. Visit pattiwilsondesign.com



KATE DAVIDSON
How has the concept of luxury living changed?
It is now more about interior spaces that are enhancing everyday activities: saving time and effort but remaining stylish. I see luxury design as also more about self-expression, not just style or comfort.

What popular luxury elements are trending?
We are seeing more eco-friendly and repurposed high-end materials, such as in tiles and artful rugs. Today's luxury homes feature accents and materials that are as great for the earth and its creatures as they are stylish: VOC-free paints, sustainable wood and cruelty-free upholsteries. In the kitchen, we are seeing double islands and larger pantries, with technology that saves time and simplify the process of meal prep.

Kate Davidson is principal & founder of Kate + Co Design Inc. based in Oakville, Ont. Visit kateandcodesign.com



LAURA HAY
How has the concept of luxury living changed?
Luxury means complete comfort at home. It means having the highest-quality conveniences at your fingertips. Luxury in the past meant a display of wealth but now it means smart and beautiful. There's a movement toward more organic forms and finishes and away from shine and glamour. Luxury is more relaxed — think earth-inspired colours and finishes.

What popular luxury elements are trending?
Extensive outdoor kitchen and bar design, multiple living zones, separated/private sleeping quarters, multiple principal suites, extravagant his and her bathrooms with walk-in closets/dressing rooms, generational spaces now with kid zones for media and entertainment.

Laura Hay is principal & founder of Laura Hay Décor & Design based in Toronto. Visit www.decoranddesign.ca

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