

THE HOME STRETCH

What's happening at home? RSP's interior designers share their insights into the changing landscape of residential design across the Middle East



From luxury living to hybrid working, there is a lot changing within the realm of residential design. We sit down with RSP's Interior Design Lead Zoe Burnett and Senior Interior Designer Stephanie Brown to investigate the latest shift in trends and needs.

With hybrid working, how have the needs of homemakers shifted?

ZB: The pandemic brought us a more flexible and adaptable way of both working and living arrangements. We see more and more living environments which are elevated to feel more like hospitality environments. More specifically for apartment living, with the increasing number of digital nomads, entrepreneur and freelancers, it is imperative we design spaces with in the public amenities which cater for flexible working styles, places

for residents to meet their clients or multifunctional spaces which can be used for meeting facilities.

Looking more closely at villas and apartments, the importance of providing spaces within the living environment which can be both be dedicated work environment such as a study or more simply a place which can be made more private and quiet when being used for study or work. We also see a continuously growing desire for the inclusion of amenities which promote wellness such as gyms with elevated gym equipment, immersive simulation fitness screens and spas with the latest in treatment offerings along with dedicated areas for meditation and personal training.

How important is sustainability to your clients?

ZB: There is certainly a growing interest and awareness in the region

for a more sustainable approach to design. Clients are increasingly interested in embracing sustainability within their design and living spaces, seeking our guidance in this regard. We collaborate closely with furniture and product designers who share our commitment to sustainable practices. These partners prioritise sustainable manufacturing processes and assess the environmental impact throughout the entire life cycle of their products.

Our material sourcing strategy prioritizes local options whenever feasible. When foreign sourcing is necessary, we ensure the selection is based on valid reasons, and we collaborate closely with suppliers to minimise carbon footprint during transportation.

Water conservation is essential which can be addressed by selecting sanitaryware and kitchen tapware which have adhere to the correct

water flow rates, in compliance with Dubai Green Building Regulations.

Air quality within the home is also fundamental which can be attended to by ensuring all materials are low in VOC.

Working closely with the architecture team allows us to ensure natural light is celebrated within the space and create an environment which has a truly holistic and human centric approach. A design which is timeless and will be loved and lived in for many years to come.

However, it is not only down to the selection of the materials and fixtures. Clients, operators, consultants and contractors need to work collectively to achieve more sustainable living environments.

How does 'luxury living' translate to high-end, high-rise apartments?

SB: High-end standalone villas can be moulded, catering to the personalised style of the client whereas multi-level apartments tend to approach luxury design through dedicated space planning and overall vision of the specific developer. The developers have a unique approach for every building depending on the context, providing a thematic experience while maintaining their own distinct brand. Special bespoke features and curated experiences such as humidors, wine rooms and wellness suites such as yoga rooms or sauna facilities are integrated across both property styles within the luxury residential market.

In addition to unique amenities, we see luxury apartments providing services such as doorman and porter services, butlers, valet parking, gym and spa services, housekeeping and laundry, and home floristry services which truly blends the luxury home experience with a hospitality experience

Another distinct difference and selling point within the luxury multi-residential development market is the beautiful skyline or ocean views, creating the most breath-taking backdrops, perfect for those luxury

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entertaining spaces. Although luxury apartments don't offer the same level of private outdoor grounds as luxury villas, we are seeing the growth of private pools within luxury apartment terraces, blurring the lines further between the two. The level of design

expectations and amenities within villas and apartments has been elevated in general and as a result the growing trend for both villas and multi-level apartments in the recent years has been the offering of branded residences.

What are the biggest obstacles when designing residences in this region?

SB: Within the luxury residential market across the region, we work closely with developers to fine tune our designs to suit their specific project or brand requirements, which can include preferences for locally sourced materials as an example. When specific materials or supplies need to be sourced from outside the region, this may pose unexpected potential delays in the time-line.

Designing with multiple stakeholders involved, such as in the case of branded residences, presents a notable challenge. Striking the right balance between adhering to the developer's requirements and identity while reflecting the operator's brand integrity is a complex task.

Designers who are new to the region must be well-versed in the importance of designing spaces reflective of local cultures and design principles. This includes elements like prayer rooms, segregated public areas, privacy considerations, and the incorporation of majlis spaces.

What changes can you see for residential design in the future?

SB: The luxury residential market in the region is experiencing incredible growth, and the focus on luxury experiences is now a new norm of luxury living developments, where exciting and vibrant experiential spaces are being incorporated where



people can experience something at home like never before.

Amenities within multi-residential developments are in a perpetual state of evolution, with developers consistently pushing boundaries to captivate prospective buyers with extraordinary facilities that seamlessly extend the essence of home living. This is something we see across the market, both luxury and mid-level where the aesthetic of luxury is achieved in a more cost effective way, while retaining the special experiential moments.

We expect this trend to continue to evolve in both alongside international design styles and approaches, where we are seeing a vast shift away from the closed kitchens to luxurious open plan kitchens, living and dining, creating show-stopping entertainment spaces.

The residential design demographic is expanding, and we are seeing more inclusivity of facilities dedicated to entrepreneurs, freelancers and families of all ages.

We envision the experiential concept of residential luxury living to continue to expand, we are already seeing incredible facilities being integrated but we envision further five-star luxury hotel services to begin to integrate as a staple offering, elevating the living experience.