



Reimagining High-End Residential Design: Ideas That Will Shape Our Future

Architects and designers from
six leading firms discuss the
influences they see driving design
into the next decade and beyond.

Presented by
GAGGENAU



Serving as futurists of sorts is a big part of what architects and interior designers bring to the design process. “With our clients, we’re really trying to figure out ‘How do you want to live not now but 20 years from now or 30 years from now?’” says architect Joe Dangan, a principal at Los Angeles–based architectural firm Woods + Dangan. “Let’s talk about the legacy of this residence for you and how you strive to live in the future.”

Getting there means tapping ideas and influences coming down the road, many of which have a lot in common among the architects and designers at Charlie Hellstern Interior Design, No Architecture, ODA, Rene Gonzalez Architects, Workshop/APD, and Woods + Dangan. Here, principals and associates from those firms share why they think these ideas will be critical for design moving forward.





Photo: Joe Fletcher

“Sense of Place” Will Become Front and Center

Connecting to nature in every conceivable way will become central to high-end architecture and design. Risingmountain by No Architecture (shown on pages 1 and 4) provides a captivating example. The project's name, a riff on Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, gets at the idea of embracing the landscape — in this case, one of the last remaining home sites to be developed in Aspen, Colorado. “We felt this spiritual connection to the mountains,” says Andrew Heid, the firm's principal architect.

Just as Fallingwater steps down to embrace its landscape, Risingmountain's five pavilions step up. “It spans 76 feet vertically,” Heid says. “It's quite a bit of topography.” Views from the pavilions are at once calm and dramatic, and the construction — of mass timber and local materials — is far more in sync with the environment than even the most exemplary of ski town structures.

For Woods + Dangan — known for renovations and new residential works that hearken to mid-century modernists such as Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler — the link between inside and out is symbiotic, as well. “A lot of our exterior materials come into the house, and a lot of our interior materials reference the natural landscape and the context of a specific place,” Dangan says.

He paints a picture with the firm's recently completed Desert Palisades house (on cover and above). “It's an example of the architecture respecting and being informed by the landscape and the natural environment — of the two working really well together. The planting material, the actual physical structure itself, the design of the architectural language, and the material of the site often references — if it's not the exact same as — the material of the site.”



Studying the Italian landscape informed ODA's work on the Four Seasons in Puglia, Italy, now under development. "We want you to be welcomed by elements that feel like they've been there forever," says Katherine Mendez, interior project director at ODA.

Katherine Mendez, interior project director in the New York office of ODA, makes a similar point with a project by her firm that's in the works: a Four Seasons resort with a residential component in Puglia, Italy (above). Mendez is collaborating with local craftspeople and artisans, and carefully considering the region's landscape and lifestyle. "In studying Puglia, we learned that simplicity really is a luxury there," Mendez says. It's an idea clearly illustrated in classic Italian cooking, she explains. "Food in Italian culture is obviously important, and looking at how the best foods are created — how simple ingredients come together and create this amazing dish — is how we're approaching the design of the interiors. So, we looked at the rugged coastline and the natural woods found in the olive trees as cues for how to begin to create rich and textured spaces."

Even nuances within the landscape provide inspiration. "There's something we found interesting in the natural but almost manmade landscape — the rows of trees lining the site — and the pattern of regularity and irregularity that is created through the landscape," Mendez says. "We wanted to bring that in — that kind of order and disorder — to create a welcoming space that emulates what's going on in the exterior."

Architects and designers are blurring the lines between inside and out beyond the material palette, too, by way of walls of windows and doors. Although the general idea isn't new, says designer and Gaggenau Club 1683 member Charlie Hellstern, architects and designers are beginning to take it further. "A lot of clients are lucky enough to live by the water, where the view is the focus," she says. "And so what you have often seen in the past and what you'll still see today and tomorrow are designs that are getting out of the way of that and allowing the windows to be as big as possible."





Although this Aspen, Colorado, site could accommodate a home as large as 15,000 square feet, Andrew Heid of No Architecture significantly scaled that back for the Risingmountain concept. "We tried to make it harmonious, calm, and compact, yet with the spaciousness of a much larger property," he says.

The evolution that is starting to happen now, Hellstern says, has to do with how quickly and completely that connection opens up. One of the best examples comes from architect Tom Kundig and his colleagues at Olson Kundig in Seattle, where Hellstern worked before establishing her own firm. "He's doing interesting things with kinetic architecture, where you crank a wheel and the windows fold up," she says. "The architecture moves with simple machinery."

The connection between indoors and out will likely take shape in an entirely different way for Kevin Regalado, project director/designer at Rene Gonzalez Architects in Miami. For a seaside home now in the planning stages, his team is "creating these dynamic spaces by the arrangement of volumes," specifically with smaller rooms nestled within a grand indoor/outdoor space. "There's this huge umbrella roof structure over all the living spaces of the house, which allows you to always be outside when you're not in a specific room," Regalado says.

The home's main swimming pool sits outside the umbrella structure. "But there are secondary pools that weave into the space under the umbrella where the living room, bedrooms, and other spaces are, so the design really blurs that edge between inside and outside," Regalado says. "Since that umbrella roof is so high, it's almost not present. You feel like you're right on the ocean — you feel the ocean breezes, and you're constantly surrounded by water."



Photo: Joe Fletcher

Technology Will Become Ubiquitous and Intuitive

Clients expect the ultimate in smart-home controls, lighting, and speakers, but the technology and innovation will increasingly be “under the hood,” Danganan says. “And we’re trying to simplify the interface between the user and the technology.”

The outward expression itself will become nearly invisible. “One thing that we know about technology is that the day it’s installed is the day it’s outdated, because technology is advancing so quickly,” Danganan says. “So we need to build in the flexibility to upgrade that technology as it becomes available.”

That flexibility includes removing elements that can “timestamp” a house. “What we’re trying to do consciously, for example, is remove recessed can fixtures from the ceiling, and we’re trying to remove speakers from ceilings and build them into wood paneling with routed-out grilles so that those speakers can change over time,” says Brett Woods, principal at Woods + Danganan. “You just open up the grille, change the speaker, and close it back up.”

The idea of concealing the technology will increasingly apply to the kitchen, as well, says Brook Quach, design director at New York-based Workshop/APD. “For our higher-end clients, we try to integrate the kitchen so it almost doesn’t even look like a kitchen,” he says. “The more it fades into the background or becomes part of the overall space is really important to us. There’ve always been paneled refrigerators and paneled dishwashers, but in some cases, even being able to cover up the sink or newer technologies to figure out how to hide the range or cooktop is the next step for us.”

Hiding the cooktop is becoming more conceivable than ever thanks to induction technology. “We installed an induction cooktop recently for a client, and it’s a space that’s all open,” Hellstern says. “I think that seamless aspect from a design perspective is absolutely key.”

Quach concurs and has even pondered the notion of integrating technology and controls beneath the counter. “At least in this particular case [I’ve seen], you would actually put down a mat that conducts the electricity, and then you put your pots on it,” he says. “I can see that being taken a step further, where there’s no middle ground and you’re able to put your pot right on the countertop and start cooking.”

The approach will be particularly beneficial for designs that blend kitchen functions with their environs. “This idea of making the kitchen look more like furniture or disappear or be a part of the living space is what is important to us and what makes it luxurious,” Quach says. “What luxury is really about is when there’s that effortlessness of it not being there.”



Photo: Donna Dotan

A holistic materials palette and sculptural architectural forms create a rich yet minimalistic environment in an apartment overlooking Central Park in New York. Designed by Workshop/APD, the gallery-like design accommodates cooking and entertaining while concealing technology.

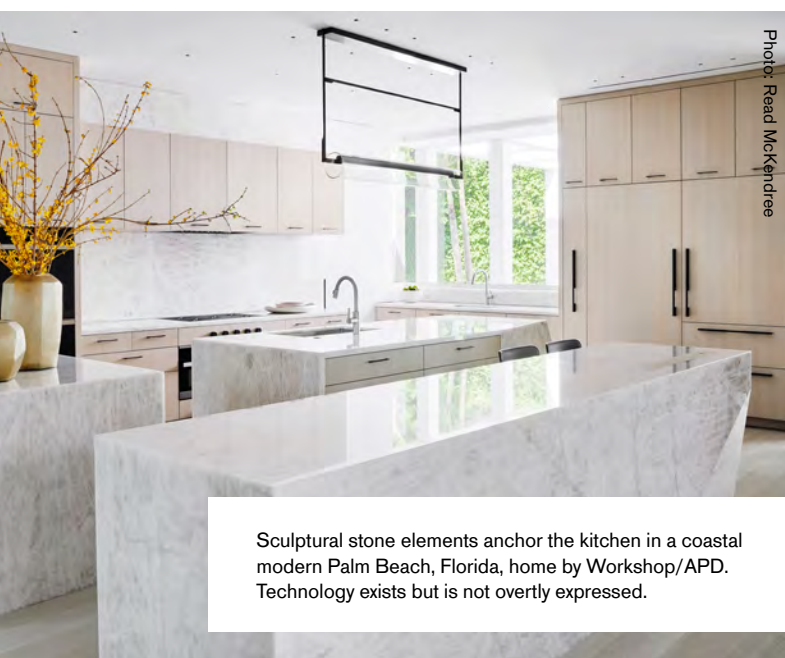


Photo: Read McKendree

Sculptural stone elements anchor the kitchen in a coastal modern Palm Beach, Florida, home by Workshop/APD. Technology exists but is not overtly expressed.

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— Brook Quach, Design Director, Workshop/APD

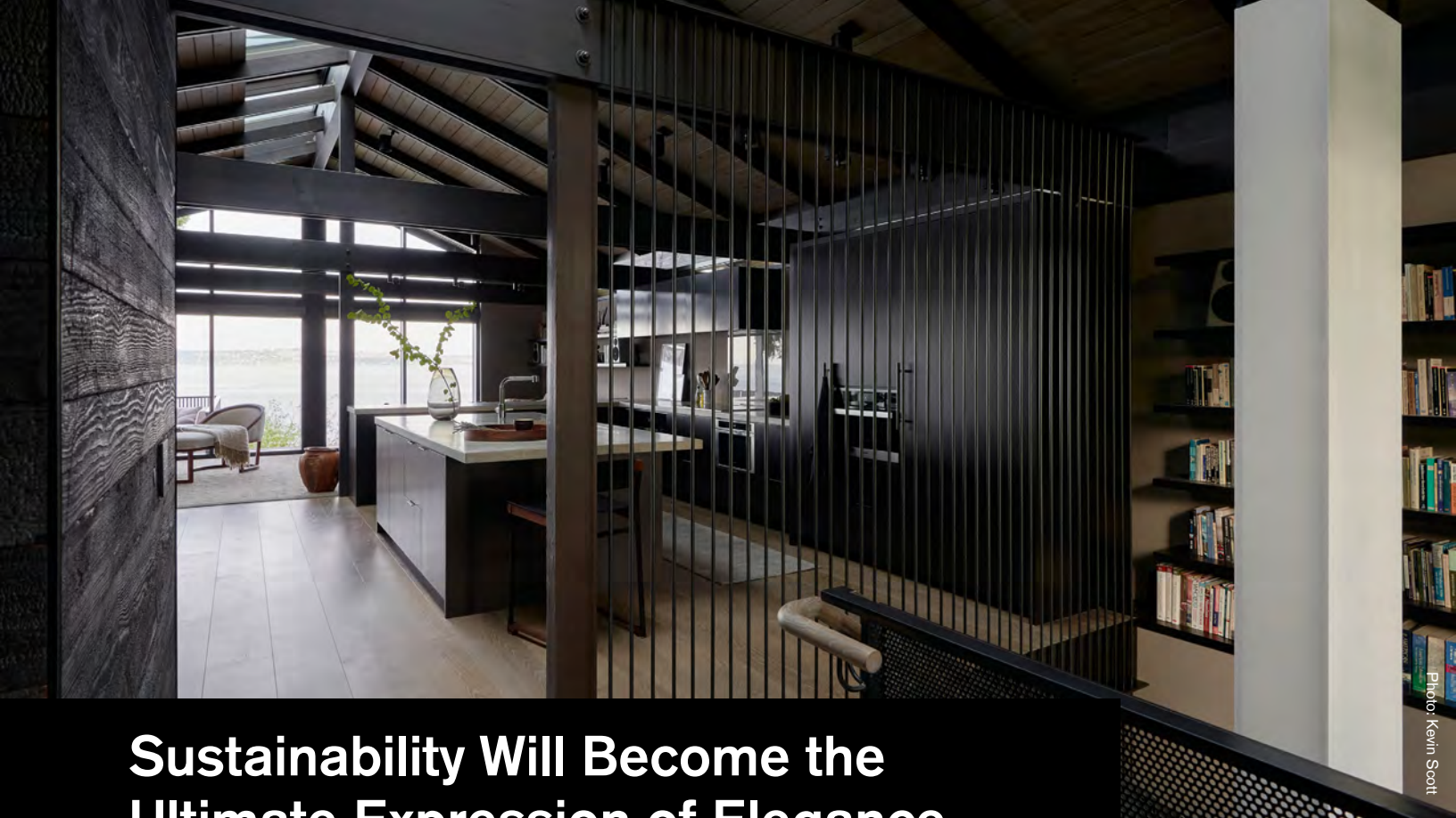


Photo: Kevin Scott

Sustainability Will Become the Ultimate Expression of Elegance

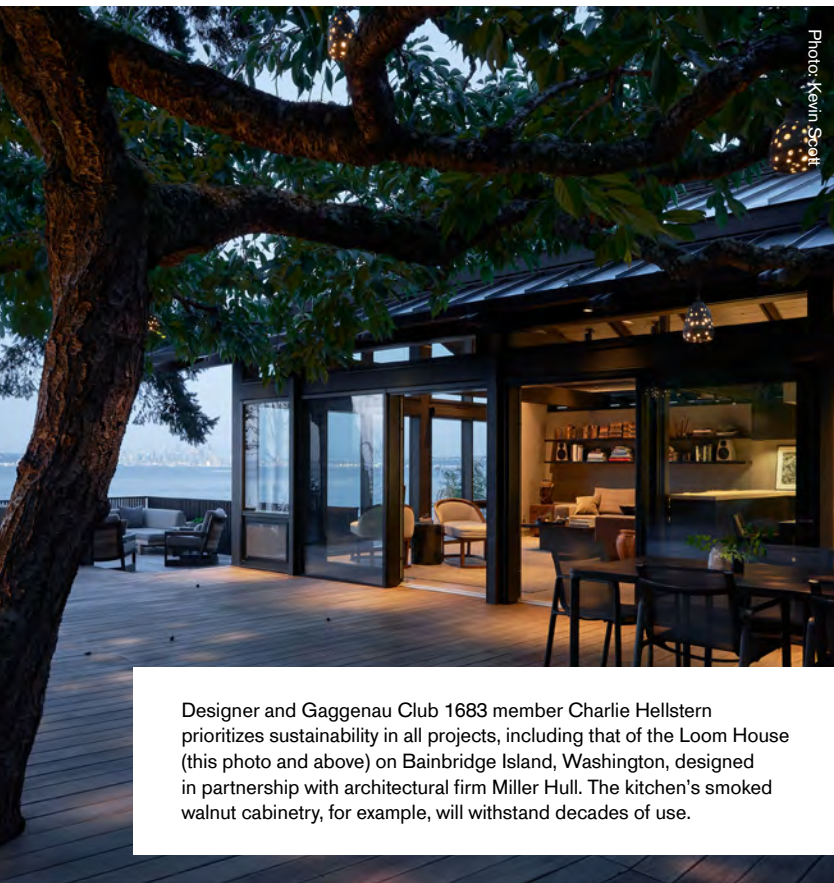


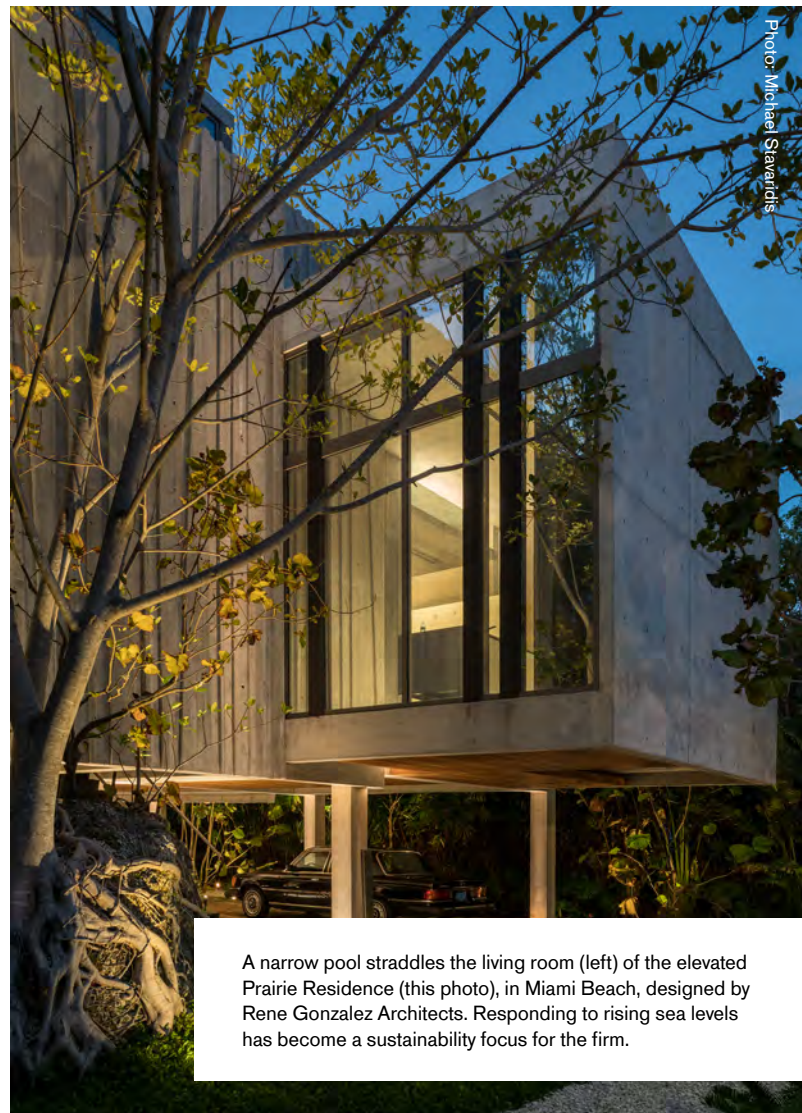
Photo: Kevin Scott

Designer and Gaggenau Club 1683 member Charlie Hellstern prioritizes sustainability in all projects, including that of the Loom House (this photo and above) on Bainbridge Island, Washington, designed in partnership with architectural firm Miller Hull. The kitchen's smoked walnut cabinetry, for example, will withstand decades of use.

"Beauty can and should be sustainable," Hellstern says. For the designer, it takes many forms, including induction cooking — now fairly commonplace in Europe and Asia, and gradually gaining popularity in the United States. "A lot of people talk about the control aspect of cooking with gas, but it's important to know that chefs are being trained to cook with electricity, as well," Hellstern says. She points to eateries at Los Angeles International Airport and the Microsoft campus near Seattle as examples of facilities in the process of moving toward electric.

Hellstern also believes it is becoming more important to look for sustainability in the materials palette. "We want to be designing with materials that are as natural as possible and to use as many of what I call living finishes as possible so that finishes continue to live and breathe and patina over time so that you're actually seeing the wear," she says. "It's something you see in Japanese furniture." The idea is beginning to take hold with her clients, for whom the idea of using high-quality, long-lasting materials and limiting waste is attractive. And, she points out, it brings the "beauty of life to the way we live in spaces."

Natural materials factor into nearly every project Quach designs, too, and he's preparing for the next evolution of options — using nature to grow building materials in an innovative new way. It's something he's been thinking of ever since he saw it featured in the Netflix show *Future Of*. "This goes well beyond using trees for timber — we're talking about looking at fungus for insulation and building bricks," Quach says. "We're very focused on collaboration, so why not collaborate with the ultimate builder, Mother Nature, to grow materials and environments that are more sustainable?"



A narrow pool straddles the living room (left) of the elevated Prairie Residence (this photo), in Miami Beach, designed by Rene Gonzalez Architects. Responding to rising sea levels has become a sustainability focus for the firm.

Local, natural materials, including coral stone, are key to many residential projects at Regalado's firm, too. But with Rene Gonzalez Architects based in South Florida, adapting to rising sea levels is becoming another key aspect of sustainability. "The rise in sea levels is something we're dealing with every day, and it's architecture's responsibility to respond to it," he says. As a home's main living space is elevated to a safe level, it creates a beautiful opportunity to address the lower-level space. Regalado says, "Rather than ignoring that space we've now created beneath that first habitable interior floor, we thought, 'Well, what if we use that space? What if we make it incredible, protected from the rain and sun, and connected to the landscape?'"

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and should
be sustainable."**

— Charlie Hellstern, Designer,
Charlie Hellstern Design

In his firm's Prairie Residence in Miami Beach, for example, a narrow pool sits alongside the main living room on the first elevated level (above and page 9). Water then cascades over the edges of the pool down to the level below. "It's a 'notifier' of something happening above," Regalado says. "There's a sound quality to it, and it reflects light and is textural. So, the water elements don't just stop at the pool level; the pool now becomes the water feature down in that ground-level space."

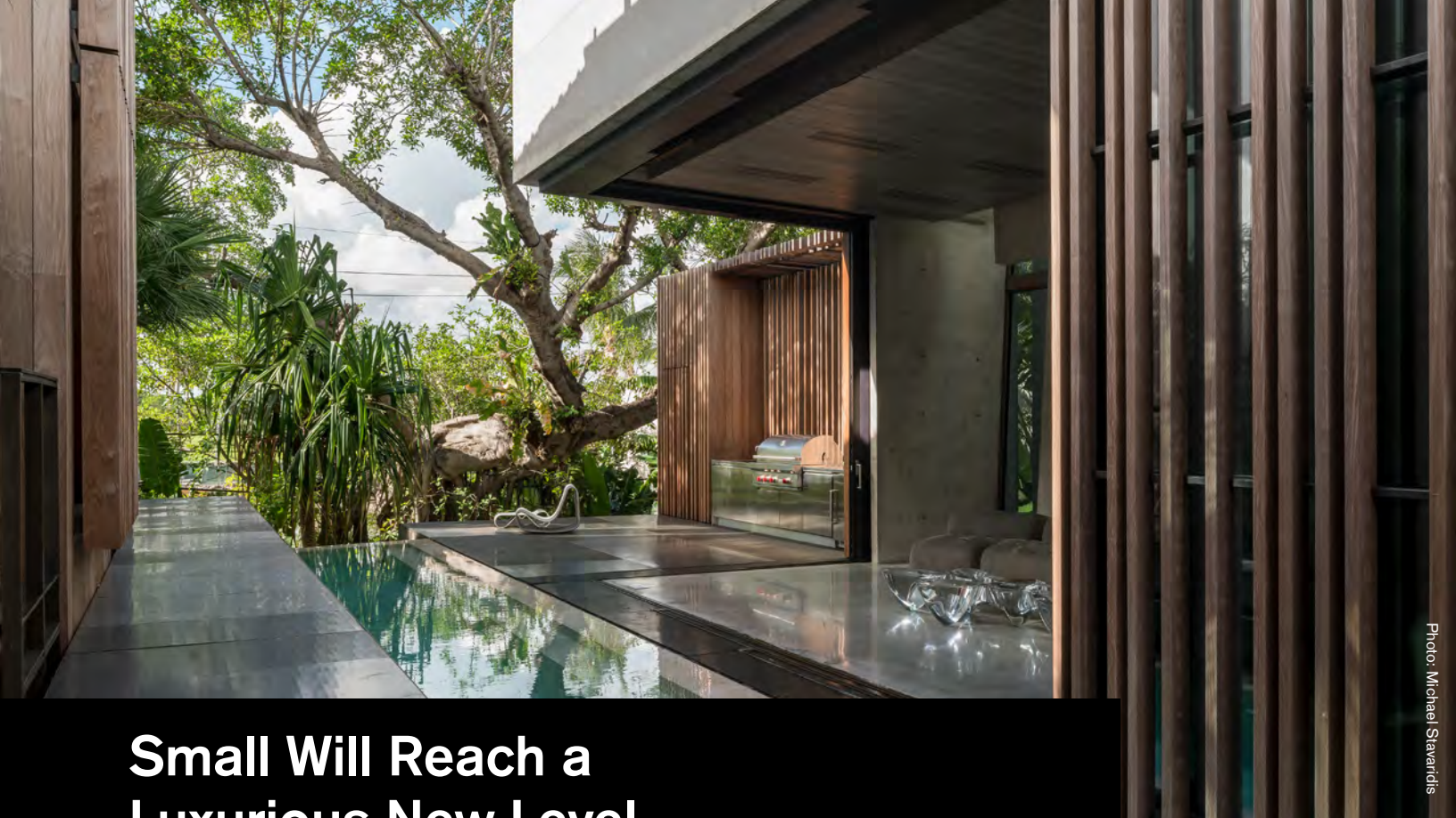


Photo: Michael Savardis

Small Will Reach a Luxurious New Level

More and more, Dangan and Woods find themselves talking their clients into smaller homes. “It’s often more appropriate on a number of levels — especially if you can take advantage of the climate in outdoor spaces — to not take over the site with a built structure,” Dangan says. It comes down to integration and respect for the landscape, he adds. “It’s a big responsibility that we take very seriously.”

In many cases, Dangan notes, homes are getting smaller and sites are getting larger. “And that’s really exciting to us because it would be amazing to be able to design a home that is completely camouflaged and disappears into the site. We feel strongly about the architecture being very secondary to the site. It heightens the interior experience.”

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— Joe Dangan, Principal,
Woods + Dangan

When clients assume they need a big house on a big lot, the idea of small takes some convincing. “It’s like, ‘No, you don’t need a big house,’” Dangan says. “And in fact, let’s be very gentle with this, and I’ll bet you’ll like the house that much more because it’ll feel like it’s breathing.” The perennial “quality over quantity” adage takes effect, too, with a design of exquisite features and finishes.

Zachary Helmers, managing director and senior associate at Workshop/APD, is finding himself providing the same advice to clients. “If you build a giant home, everybody’s like, ‘Oh, look at the giant home.’ And there’s just something that’s not attractive about that, at least in our opinion,” he says. It’s more important to engage with the outdoors, “setting smaller volumes that have their own definition into that landscape and being able to circulate through them.”



"Pure transparency" in between columns helps the Devil Lake House in Ontario, Canada, live larger than it is. The design, by architect Andrew Heid of No Architecture, makes the most of indoor/outdoor connections and expansive lake views.

Heid followed that philosophy in the soon-to-be-built Devil Lake House (left and page 11) three hours northeast of Toronto, where small pavilions step up from a rocky lakeshore. Enclosed interior spaces total a mere 1,800 square feet. "But we open it all up with covered exterior spaces," Heid says, noting that the home's embrace of the environment is far more expansive than you'd expect.

The size of the house should never get in the way of exceptional architecture and design, Regalado says. "We're always trying to design in the dream world — these ethereal qualities — either through the geometry of the space or the materials."

Again, he references the Prairie Residence, a relatively small house where the main living quarters press right up against the pool "so people can be swimming and people can be sitting in the living room, all interacting with each other."

Materials keep the design luxuriously distinctive. “If you look at the diversity of materials and textures — how concrete is used in three different ways, and reflective matte and matte metals and mirrors and glass — all of those are used to tell a story. And sometimes you can use a material like a stone that’s been used for thousands of years, but you can do it in a new, interesting, different way. The juxtaposition of a stone with another material, for instance, can bring it to a new light,” Regalado says.

A move toward small is also taking hold in condominium properties, where people are willing to give up square footage for first-class building amenities, Helmers says. “But we’re not talking about your typical amenity gym. It’s actually like a full-functioning gym, similar to Equinox or Life Time — maybe not quite that large but with similar amenities, including a fantastic pool deck.”

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— Andrew Heid, Principal
Architect, No Architecture

Focusing on exceptional quality versus quantity at the smallest scale is top of mind for Hellstern, too, even if it’s not immediately noticeable. She references a recently completed kitchen in Seattle (page 7) to illuminate her point. “We made sure the function inside the cabinets had everything at your fingertips and that it was just as beautiful on the inside as on the outside,” she says. In this case, she specified cabinets made of walnut inside and out. “The inspiration for that home was Japanese folk house influence, so we wanted the design here to feel like a *tansu* cabinet where, when you open it up, it’s the exact same wood on the inside.”



Small pavilions make up the Devil Lake House, starting with a main living space and kitchen, followed by another living space, the main bedroom and guest room, and a sleeping cabin/bunk house. Enclosed interior spaces add up to 1,800 square feet.



Photo: Joe Fletcher

Timelessness Will Take Priority Over Trend

Architects and designers tend to eschew the word “trend,” and for good reason. “The goal for us is timeless quality,” Dangaran says. “A trend, by its nature, will become unpopular and another trend will come along.”

Because Woods + Dangaran works on new homes as well as renovations of notable mid-century homes — the two of which, for the firm, have many design similarities — they strive for a quality they sum up in one word: consistency. “A lot of our design principles come from the historic homes, from that era of architecture,” Woods says.

Tied to those principles and the consistency they bring are control and restraint. “I think in today’s world, and not just in architecture, everybody’s looking for the ‘shiny objects,’ like walking by the storefront and seeing something shiny that draws you in,” Woods says. “We’re the opposite. The shine is not about the shine itself. It’s about coming into the house and experiencing it.”

A big part of that consistency — of not being the shiny object — has to do with materiality. “When it comes to materials, I think that’s the one place where people get in trouble with pushing the agenda,” Woods says. “We are very confident in delivering messages to clients about using natural materials that are timeless.”

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Pursuing qualities that are timeless also produces less waste, Hellstern says. "If we're creating a trendy colored kitchen, it will be something people will want to change in the near future." But advancing inside a framework of timelessness works. "Then it's not so much a trend but more of a new evolution of what we've always done," Hellstern says.

Indeed, evolution within a design philosophy makes perfect sense, Woods says. Companies such as BMW exemplify the idea. "They've modified their recipe, but the main part of the recipe is still intact," he says. "So if you went into a BMW car from 20 years ago and you went into one today, the similarities are shocking. The technology has changed and the leather is a little bit different, but the actual philosophy behind the design is identical."

Apple and Gaggenau provide further examples, he says, noting that Woods + Dangan specified Gaggenau appliances for their restoration of the Moore House (page 5, page 9, page 12, and this page), a modern classic originally designed by Craig Ellwood and selected as an Honor winner in the Restoration/Preservation category of *ARCHITECT* magazine's 2021 Residential Architect Design Awards. "We love Gaggenau and put Gaggenau in a house because we think they're timeless. In 20 years, someone's going to come into that kitchen and say, 'Oh, these are Gaggenau appliances, and they look amazing,'" Woods says.



Photo: Joe Fletcher

Woods + Dangan's meticulous renovation of Craig Ellwood's 1965 Moore House (this photo and below), located in Los Angeles' Los Feliz neighborhood, made key infrastructure updates without altering the home's California modernist roots.



Photo: Joe Fletcher



Photo: Donna Dotan

Designs Must Anticipate Aging in Place and Accommodate Multigenerational Living

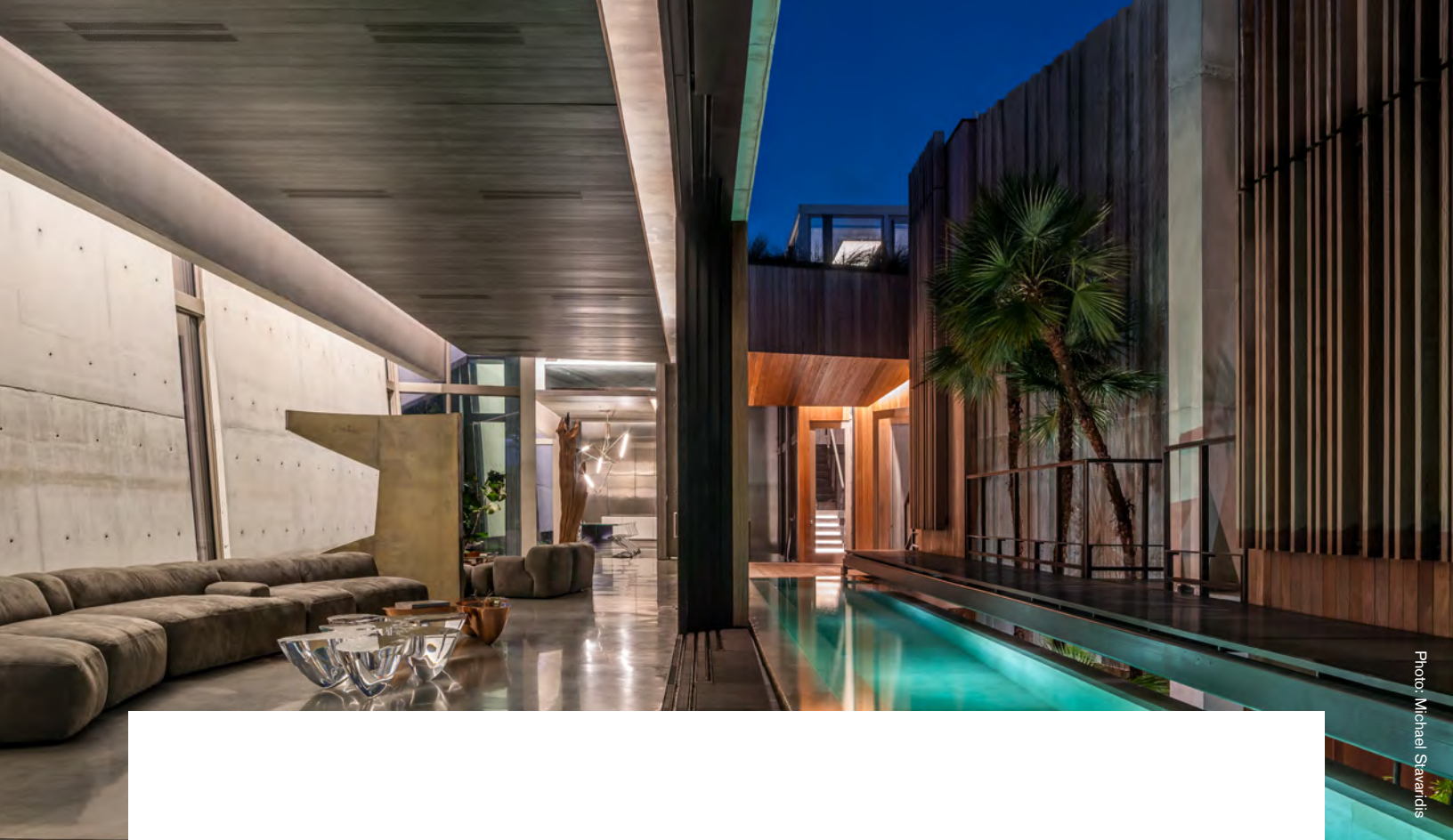


Photo: Donna Dotan

Clients are increasingly asking Workshop/APD for baths with walk-in showers and wet-room features such as what the firm designed for a Brooklyn townhouse (this photo and above) in luxurious, slip-resistant finishes.

Multigenerational living compounds grew in popularity during the pandemic, and they will increasingly become the norm as extended families come together for comfort and convenience. At the very least, dual owner's suites will become common in high-end homes. "With families coming together or the need for an extra person to help with kids or just be an assistant, we're seeing a need for a second primary suite," Hellstern says. "It used to be sort of tiered, with the primary suite the biggest with all the bells and whistles. But now these second suites are equally important to the primary suite."

And to accommodate every life stage, the floor plan changes are also coming with safe, user-friendly finishes, fixtures, and controls. "In bathrooms, everyone loves the look of a deep soaking tub, but there's a lot of demand for more walk-in showers and wet rooms, too," Quach says. "In these cases, to prevent slips and falls, we're thinking about surfaces with better grip-textured stone, mosaics, etc. And even if the homeowners don't need them at this point, there's blocking in the walls to add grab bars down the line."



Closing Thought: The Idea of “Home” Will Be More Important Than Ever

Regalado is proud of the distinctive, unforgettable work of Rene Gonzalez Architects. “In all of our work, we try to create these dynamic moments — these special, ethereal qualities achieved through the architecture. When dealing in high-end residential projects, when people come to us, they’re looking for something iconic — a house they haven’t seen before.”

But the bigger challenge, he says, is ensuring the utmost in comfort, too. “That’s something we’re very aware of — that we want to create these iconic houses but at the same time not lose the essence of what make them feel like home.”

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