

LUXURY LIVING

Small but luxurious

CHRISTY WRIGHT
Special to Postmedia Network

When it comes to interior design, the idea of luxury is often measured in squarefeet (the more, the better). Yet, as many city-dwellers and most condo residents know, the formula that expansive space equals aesthetic heft doesn't always add up.

"A lot of people think luxury means a large home filled with overly expensive items," says Toronto-based designer Lisa Kooistra. "I believe that luxury can be about living in a small space – one that's carefully thought out and reflects the needs and personality of whoever lives there."

Kooistra's eponymous GTA design firm, which is known for its well curated interiors and custom-builds, reflects this belief. "I love designing customized interiors and using an overall neutral palette that offers visual impact with smart details and finishes," she says.

"Mystyle is more minimalist and contemporary with a nod to a Scandinavian vibe." It's a look that resonates with many who live in small spaces, not only because it's a design scheme that feels airy and expansive, but also because it can be unexpectedly rich looking; as Kooistra says, "A Scandinavian minimal approach doesn't compromise on luxury, rather looks at it in a different light."

Even a design novice knows



Gold and brass finishes have a soft and classic appeal that lends itself well to a smaller space.

that the modern Scandi mood gravitates to warm woods and pale tones, but then what? For Kooistra, one of the key elements in Scandi decorating, especially in a small abode, is customized millwork. It may be a bit of a splurge in terms of budget, but she feels it's a well-worth-it investment that pays off, providing stylish and practical storage options, while layering in warmth and interest.

The addition of open storage in the form of shelves, whether built-in or floating, and closed-storage in lower cabinetry creates a custom, finished look that feels both luxurious and unfussy. "For most of my clients, storage in a smaller space is extremely important," says Kooistra.

When square footage is at a premium, she and her team design millwork that's

functional and maximizes space. One of the most common areas they address is the otherwise unused space under stairs, which are quite common in condo lofts. "These areas can be repurposed for dedicated storage, as a reading nook, even a home office. There really are many unique ways to use every area of a space."

The choice of finishes can also radiate a quiet luxury. Replacing standard or builder-basic hardware (which is often simple chrome) with upgraded options, such as brass or matte black, is an easy and relatively inexpensive way to impart a bespoke feel to a tiny residence.

"I love working with gold and brass finishes as they have a soft and classic appeal," says Kooistra. "When clients shy away from brass, we recommend polished nickel because it still has that gold

vibe, but is a little more traditional. Black finishes have more of a contemporary presence that adds depth and a bit of edge." The darker shade is popping up in more and more powder rooms and bathrooms, where Kooistra likes to pair it with light walls for a dynamic monochromatic mashup that's still in keeping with a Scandi mood.

No matter the finishes, overall colour continuity is crucial in making a small area feel larger than it is, and that ties in nicely with Kooistra's preference for a tone-on-tone palette. "It can be overwhelming to have too many colours in a small space and they can actually make a room feel even smaller. It's best to keep the palette consistent for a peaceful and calming effect."

If colour is on the agenda,

introduce it with accessories like artwork, cushions and decorative items on shelves. And don't forget to layer in some texture – things such as nubby throws and tactile rugs factor in welcoming visual interest. Kooistra also likes to mix glossy and matte finishes, a nifty trick that elevates any room's aesthetic.

Lighting should be carefully considered and a good rule of thumb for a luxurious effect in a small space is to have more than one light source – think a mix of spots, sconces, pendants and lamps (make sure all are on dimmers). "Lighting emphasizes the areas we want to show off and is a great way to demarcate areas in open-concept condos and smaller homes. Large light fixtures create drama but it's important to know where to use them. If you have high ceilings, then go big! If you don't, stay away from large ceiling lights as they will make a room smaller."

When asked how she defines luxury in décor, Kooistra says it's not about design rules, rather personality. "It's investment pieces that make a home: artwork, an area rug, a vintage item... These add a luxurious feeling and make a home truly inviting." And it isn't about the quantity of these items, rather their personal significance. "Every successful interior – big or small – reflects who lives there and tells a story to all who enter."

It's what you don't see

Making a statement behind the walls

DIANNE DANIEL
Special to Postmedia Network

Whir. Click-Clack. Plink. Plink. Plink. Honk! Honk! These are some of the sounds residents of 89 Avenue won't be hearing when the bespoke Yorkville building opens its doors in a few years' time.

That's because noise mitigation is just as important as every finish and carefully chosen luxury brand going into the residence to deliver a "lifestyle of quiet sophistication" – part of what the developer calls the Armour Heights difference.

"We'll pursue that perfection and we insist on excellence," said Armour Heights Developments president Frank Mazzotta. "The quieter you get a home, the more insulating factors you have in the walls, the less vibrations (and other noises) will sound."

Sound measures planned for the exclusive condominium

include insulated interior walls with a sound transmission class (STC) rating of 57, high-performance soundproofing membranes that cover concrete floors like a blueskin, noise attenuation flooring assemblies that offer a minimum impact insulation class (IIC) rating of 60, and integrated window systems with an STC rating of 30 compared to the standard 18-20 rating. You won't find noisy plastic pipes either because the developer is going back to cast iron for sanitary and storm systems.

"You're not going to hear someone flushing their toilet upstairs," said Mazzotta. "These are clients that are very set in their ways and really want to have things that are above normal."

When you enter one of the opulent suites, the world class features and finishes will take your breath away, but it's the systems you don't see that will truly deliver a luxurious and gracious custom home

experience, he added. "It's going to outshine, let me tell you," he said.

At 89 Avenue, Armour Heights is looking to incorporate variable refrigerant flow (VRF) technology developed by Daikin Industries for heating and cooling. Residents will have their own individual rooftop units so that any malfunction affects their suite only. Humidification will also be included to prevent wood finishes from warping or cracking, and automatic water detection sensors will be strategically placed to shut down valves as soon as a small leak is detected.

In addition to smart lighting controls and power window shades, residents will have an exclusive 'cyber suite' app that integrates their smartphone with alarm, entry and elevator systems, connects with concierge, valet and security services, operates home sound and theatre systems, and shows nearby restaurant, spa, salon and other local services. Reflecting the new normal of a post-pandemic world, the filters in the air purification system are expected to have a minimum efficiency reporting value (MERV) rating of 20, the highest efficiency possible.

Earlier this year, Lifetime

Developments partnered with Clear Inc. to integrate both air and water systems throughout its future developments, starting with Oscar Residences in the Annex. The smart air purification technology offers four levels of purification to remove particulate, microbiological chemical contaminants and odours, and the water system is designed to kill 99.99 per cent of viruses and bacteria.

At a recent gathering of purchasers interested in Lanterra Developments' Glenhill Condominiums, expected to be ready for occupancy in 2024, chairman Mark Mandelbaum remarked that people were as "intensely interested" in learning about technology as they were about finishes. Systems, he said, are now just as high on the features list, with discerning owners expecting highly rated air purification, water circulation to provide instant hot water, and individual heating and cooling units with smaller conduits that don't interfere with coffered ceilings.

Sound mitigation is high on the list, making noise attenuation systems standard for both flooring and windows, and at the extreme high-end of the market owners might

even request double layers of drywall, though it's rare.

At 50 Scollard, now under construction, Lanterra is providing discreet, private access elevators controlled by a smartphone. "It's a system where it comes to you exclusively and takes you directly up to your suite," said Mandelbaum.



When you enter one of the opulent suites at Armour Heights, the world class features and finishes will take your breath away, but it's the systems you don't see that will truly deliver a luxurious and gracious custom home experience.

Rooted in nature

Rosedale enclave blends into historic neighbourhood

LINDA WHITE
Special to Postmedia Network

When the opportunity to build an enclave of luxurious new residences in Toronto's Rosedale neighbourhood was approved, ensuring the new blended into the old so it looked and felt like it's always been there while honouring its natural surroundings was a responsibility the developer, designers and architects took to heart.

After all, the tree-lined neighbourhood boasts

architectural treasures that date back to the 1800s and was named after the wild roses that grew there in abundance. The two-and-a-half-acre site upon which No. 7 Dale by Platinum Vista was built – formerly home to three bungalows – is adjacent to the Rosedale Ravine, an incredible natural amenity with well-maintained trails.

No. 7 Dale features two connected, four-storey buildings home to 26 suites. Though contemporary in design, red brick from Denmark, slate stone roofing, Algonquin limestone façade,

bronze accents and a bronze picket balcony railing are among the features that pay homage to the heritage neighbourhood.

Ten-foot ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows and open-concept layouts create a seamless transition between indoors and out. "Some of the units have views on both sides. Some of them explode onto the green. Some of them enter right from grade," says architect Siamak Hariri. "It feels like the outside and the light are all coming in with those extraordinary views. At the same time, it's a home."

Maintaining the natural surroundings was so important that the buildings were sited to protect two giant trees, reports Hunter Milborne, Vista's dean of condos. A stone wall is being replaced with gates that belonged to one of the original bungalows and a teahouse located on the original

property has been retained and carefully restored.

An existing heritage garden served as the foundation of the new landscape design and was preserved and integrated into a shared amenity space in the rear yard. Working with existing components was challenging but worthwhile. "You end up with a much better, richer landscape than you would if you were to wipe everything away and start from scratch," says landscape architect Janet Rosenberg.

The lobby offers views of the landscaping from a large picture window, while the landscaping and gardens in the courtyard take advantage of the site's dramatic location atop the Rosedale Valley. "To me, it felt like an environment that was ready to be journeyed," says interior designer Alessandro Munge of Munge Studio. "When we thought about people coming home to

the front door, I wanted people to connect instantly to that gorgeous setting to the south."

Almost implausibly, Rosedale is in the heart of downtown Toronto. The Glen Road Footbridge crosses the ravine to Bloor Street and Castle Frank subway station provides convenient access to the entire city.



No. 7 Dale features two connected, four-storey buildings home to 26 suites that range in size from about 2,500 to 5,200 square feet. Ten purchase opportunities remain. Occupancy is slated to begin early next year.