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FORWARD THINKING

BY ELIZABETH KERR

What's trending for 2019? Colour, technology, design rooted in spatial awareness and community connection are a few of the predictions from industry practitioners



Bridge to the future: Amsterdam's 3D-printed steel bridge

A new year means new trends for interior designers and architects to consider. What were once novelties are now standard practice: sustainable design, use of eco-friendly materials, future-proofing where possible (particularly critical in ever-evolving shopping malls) and including space for all forms of technological hardware, to name a few. Industry analysts and tech pundits expect 2019 to be the year 5G networks become a reality, changing the way we communicate with each other and our interaction with the environment once again. Fabrication will figure: Amsterdam residents and visitors can cross a canal on a 3D-printed steel bridge come March.

On a more intimate scale, the keywords for 2019 for both residential and commercial design are colour, layout and community. "Our clients, both commercial and private, [are] becoming bolder and more confident in

what they want," says Douglas Moon, design director for Wilson Associates' residential studio. "Nobody wants to be middle of the road anymore. Every new project is an opportunity for a tailored, one-of-a-kind residence, and our clients understand the value of individuality. This is an exciting time for us and we look forward to what the New Year brings."

Colour has arguably been the most flexible and cost-effective tool in the box since we started designing our interiors. A fresh coat of paint or strategic wall coverings can take a space from '80s power-banker drab to retro chic in a few days. Colour and the generous use of it features large in 2019. At the residential level, coloured appliances are the latest ingredient to gain attraction. Ultra-modern, tech-forward manufacturers such as Smeg, Nespresso and Bang & Olufsen, among many others, are increasingly adding vibrant hues to their products and consumer kitchens. "The kitchen is getting more complete. It's



Nespresso Creatiss Plus stainless-steel coffee machine



Pop of colour: Kitchen by Clifton Leung Design Workshop

starting to get more attention because colour coordination is re-emerging. Think of those old KitchenAid appliances," says Clifton Leung, founder and director of Hong Kong-based Clifton Leung Design Workshop. "Fridges and stoves are starting to come in matching colours. It's livelier and more of a highlight of the space. It also completes a look."

London-based interior designer Katharine Pooley has a more glamorous take on 2019, with dusty blushes accented by gold and bronze for residential interiors. She goes against the green grain predicted for the year by the likes of *Elle Décor*, *Forbes* and *Mansion Global*: "For 2019 I envisage something warmer and more feminine on my walls. I love to use a tiny dash of very soft dusky pink to warm up expanses of taupe or neutrals," says Pooley. "It looks particularly appealing with rose gold and bronze tones and balanced with crystal and white marble."

At the other end of the spectrum, Robert Cheng,

founder and design principal of Brewin Design Office (BDO) in Singapore, sees monotone themes and tone-on-tone as the driving forces in colour this year. Cheng has used colour pops in the past, but for this year, his approach is different. "We feel that the tone-on-tone will take the lead to let spaces, materials and details take centre stage," he says. "We've been seeing that this method of working with colours will continue to be a focus in the industry, especially because the strategy is less thematic and more subtle – letting interior spaces, materials and details speak for themselves with less distractions."

Wilson's Moon agrees. "More European tonal palettes have started to appear, with an added layer of richness and punches of colour. This, combined with a focus on layering and eclectic choice of furniture and accessories, gives a more natural residential feel rather than feeling staged and uncomfortable. Luxury has to be comfortable or it's not luxury."



Warm dusty tones soften an apartment in West Bay, Doha, by Katharine Pooley

To go hand-in-hand with careful colour selection is the acceptance of using natural and man-made materials in tandem. Cheng cites consistently creative and efficient new materials for the standardisation of alternatives – think ultra-durable nanotech surfacing for kitchens – and sees that partnership becoming ingrained. “Mixing dull and bright, rough and smooth, cheap and expensive, raw and polished, natural and manufactured – these combinations that are unexpected make for interesting topics,” he says.

While spatial layout (like sustainable building practices) should be fundamental rather than simply a trend, the use of space and how it works is nonetheless receiving new consideration from designers. BDO will be exploring design through function, and challenging function in its traditional use of space in the coming year – especially in hospitality and corporate design. “Owners and operators continue to push the boundaries and definition of what ‘good hospitality’ and luxury means; design will continue to

evolve and mature in that way, paring down the frivolous and the ‘over-designed’, back to basics done well, with integrity and thoughtfulness in design and detail,” observes Cheng. Moon adds that both institutional and individual clients are more frequently respecting the importance of flow and balance, and how the relationship between the two can create volumes and ground open-plan spaces – or simply feel cavernous when poorly planned.

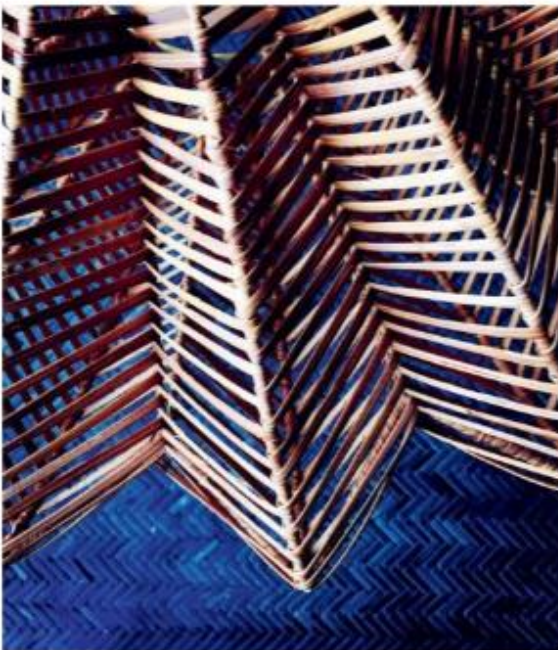
Asia is home to the largest pipeline of hospitality properties in the world, and looks set to be at the forefront of architectural design for years to come. Not surprisingly, technology-driven construction and detailing factors in most projects. Prefabrication and 3D printing will continue to play prominent roles in 2019, paving the way for better construction speed and improved product diversity. “What used to be an industry where one would visit shacks and stilt houses on islands as an exotic hotel has now evolved into staying in a residential-styled villa of



Polished accent: Neutrals highlighted by gold and bronze in a Mayfair townhouse by Katharine Pooley



In the mix: Natural and man-made, raw and polished at the Pool Lounge, Conrad Hotel, Singapore



Preservation of heritage and culture, and fostering genuine community connections will be important, says Canvas's Carl Gouw



Going up: Galleries such as the Palace Museum, West Kowloon Cultural District, are becoming vertical

the highest specifications, as though you were in an urban apartment in the heart of a metropolitan city, yet stranded on a deserted island,” says Cheng. Similarly, a renewed focus on heritage and culture has resulted in a boom in construction of galleries that, like malls, are trending towards experiential, mixed-use spaces. Vertical galleries, such as Hong Kong’s forthcoming Palace Museum in the West Kowloon Cultural District, are the future. Cheng calls it a new building typology that demands formal innovation in both architecture and content. Art-handling entrances and floor heights will be rethought. “Galleries [will] begin to engage artists to use all six sides of the room as the canvas or to increasingly venture into digital art, augmented and virtual reality art,” he says.

Finally, co-working and co-living as office and residential alternatives are making headlines, but their emergence has cultivated a new understanding of architecture and interior spaces rooted at all levels of the community – an understanding that looks set to

stay. “The momentum of ‘conscious’ design is building rapidly,” says Roger Hackworth, director of Collaborate architecture and interior design practice. “The ‘Four Cs’ principle of collective, collaboration, co-creation and cooperation is quickly becoming the foundation of our lives, in all cultures, in all societies, all professions.” Design as a tool for social, environmental and economic support and interconnection is a trend that should cement itself in 2019 for years to come. Canvas and ACTS Group founder Carl Gouw echoes Hackworth (who also designs for Canvas), for whom the reinvention of social communities with technological and digital tools is on point for the immediate future. “In 2019, I think the preservation of heritage will be on a lot of designer’s minds – not just in preserving the aspect of physicality, but also cultures and sub-cultures,” Gouw concludes. “Working with the local community, we offer constantly evolving experiences to foster genuine social connections.” ■