

HOME FURNISHINGS

Consumers increasingly prioritizing quality, selectiveness in home design: Architectural Digest

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Natural tones in home furnishings are currently trending. Image credit: Zac Gudakov

By KATIE TAMOLA

An emphasis on quality in any luxury sector is imperative, and home furnishings are no exception.

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Architectural Digest is a beloved publication that immerses consumers into the world of home dcor, real estate happenings and more. While entering an exciting era for readers and writers alike, with the introduction of several new verticals including AD PRO, its luxury-focused platform, and AD It Yourself, which guides consumers through delightful home improvements, *Architectural Digest's* U.S. digital director Allie Weiss and Amy Astley, the outlet's global editorial director and U.S. editor in chief, are contemplating how affluents are adding special touches to their homes.

"Good design can come from anywhere," Ms. Astley said. "*Architectural Digest* continues to have something for all audiences and consumers, whether you are a professional interior designer looking for educational and inspirational content to support your business, or a design enthusiast ready to try your hand at affordable and stylish DIY projects."

In this Q&A, Ms. Astley and Ms. Weiss discuss specific trends within home furnishings, how ecommerce has impacted the space, as well as the publication's latest issue centered on "Renovation." Here is the dialogue:

What do you think are some of the most prominent luxury trends right now in home furnishings/design?

AW: Luxurious natural materials are key in home design today. From show-stopping marble slabs shipped in from international quarries for kitchen countertops to striking large-format stone tile moments, the natural touch is trending.

Plaster or limewash walls are also setting the tone of these textural spaces, and they are often complemented by cozy fabrics that add depth, from boucls and linens to shearlings and thickly woven natural textiles.

Furthermore, high-end homeowners are continuing to prioritize special amenities in their dwellings. From steam

showers to saunas to tricked-out outdoor kitchens and heated gathering spaces, these features, previously reserved for hotels, are now key components of upscale residential design and that trend shows no signs of slowing down.

Speaking of trends, DIY seems to be especially prominent. Can you please explain your new AD It Yourself and AD PRO platforms and how consumers have utilized them?

AA: Our membership-based vertical AD PRO has a robust and growing B2B audience that shows an increased appetite for the section's in-depth reporting about the design industry. Articles about trending colors, products and room features are top performers each month; in August 2022, unique views to AD PRO were up 39 percent y-o-y and 51 percent m-o-m, and engaged minutes up 26 percent y-o-y and 42 percent m-o-m, proving that design professionals are continuing to turn to *Architectural Digest* for the brand's insights into the latest decorating trends.

Last year, *Architectural Digest* also launched AD It Yourself, a digital vertical dedicated to helping consumers make the most of their home design. AD It Yourself's practical home improvement content and designer-vetted tips and tricks have found an enthusiastic audience.

Since its August 2021 debut, AD It Yourself has seen readers engage with our content for more than 8.8 million minutes; and in August 2022, the section continued showing healthy gains: unique views were up 91% y-o-y and 6 percent m-o-m, engaged minutes up 141 percent y-o-y.

Similarly, interest in DIY video content from AD is growing. Our series "Custom Crafted," debuted with 1.7 million views on how to transform an IKEA bookcase, and new series "Space Savers" has more than 700,000 views on its first episode on redesigning an open-plan apartment.

Can you also discuss your ecommerce performance and what affluents appear to be buying most?

AA: We've seen steady traffic and ecommerce success from *Architectural Digest's* editorial, expert-led shopping content, including competitive areas like buying furniture, mattresses, art and more. High-end consumers are browsing *Architectural Digest* to shop luxe bedding products and book lavish travel experiences.

Our current initiative, Seat Week, was born out of users' growing interest in shopping for major furniture purchases based on our suggestions. For our 2022 edition, *Architectural Digest's* team of editors and contributors tested and reviewed 15 sectionals, 9 sofas, 11 dining chairs, 16 armchairs and 29 office chairs so we can provide firsthand recommendations about the products that are worth bringing into your home.

In terms of performance, July 2022 was the best month AD had for e-commerce revenue in 2022, up 107 percent in revenue y-o-y.



One of the new November issue themes is "Renovation." Image courtesy of Architectural Digest

One of your new November issue themes is "Renovation." How do you believe affluent are approaching renovation and home design in 2022?

AW: After being home for so long, people want their spaces to work better so they can be more comfortable. For renovators today, functionality is top of mind, whether that means reconsidering and reconfiguring layouts or multiplying natural light.

But from an aesthetic perspective, we have seen the most discerning clients focus on coaxing out and amplifying their dwellings' architectural history. Whether stripping down floors, exposing original ceiling beams or highlighting ornate molding, these homeowners want to place emphasis on the original designs and details.

How do you think consumers are keeping in mind or prioritizing sustainability when contemplating home design?

AW: Awareness around quality and longevity is rising among consumers. Designers are helping their clients prioritize materials and products that will last, which is ultimately a more sustainable way of furnishing a home.

And as we experience more extreme temperatures around the world, architects are taking strides to design houses with natural heating and cooling properties that are less dependent upon electricity.

What do you think is most important for consumers to prioritize or keep in mind when considering expansion or renovation of their homes?

AW: Whom you decide to work with on your renovation is the most important decision you will make. While there are some obvious red flags to look out for, we can't overstate the power of a trusted referral.

Vetted professionals will help you navigate supply-chain delays, unexpected challenges, and budget considerations with ease.

Are there any trends or realities you are anticipating to continue to permeate or dominate the sector?

AW: With the real estate market cooling off and changes to the economy anticipated, homeowners will use this time to spruce up their abodes themselves, organize their belongings, and make wish lists for the future. We may see fewer home renovations breaking ground, and a renewed emphasis on DIY-style projects until things stabilize.

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