



Appliances like this sleek Miele oven blend in with the modern kitchen seamlessly





Laminates from top-end brands such as TAK feature textures ranging from grainy to shiny



TAK laminates in avant garde designs can change the look and feel of a space

From designer names, luxury fittings to cutting-edge environment-friendly features, new properties have them all. **JAFRI M** hears from industry insiders on what really adds to the value of a development

Luxe Leverage

APARTMENTS AND PROPERTIES

being built now are markedly smaller than those from 10 to 20 years ago. Yet these projects are commanding hot new prices, and not all are located in prime locations, nor do they come with a freehold tag. In fact, some on Sentosa are 99-year leasehold properties in what are 'nouveau prime' locations.

Looking beyond location and leasehold, property developers are building and fitting these properties to ensure value for money for investors and buyers. Property specialists and interior designers concur that premier fittings and exclusive features matter even more now, with shrinking and hence more challenging interior spaces.

Developers generally ask that living spaces and show flats be visually expanded, enjoy ample natural light, and emanate a seamless

modernistic vibe. Increasingly, new smaller apartments are finished with expansive, full-sized glass windows to visually open up spaces, and come with muted or neutral colour schemes.

And of course, there are the premier luxury fittings that can help the developer command a higher price for the unit. The perceived value of top brand-name fittings - as well as how it subtly communicates that the developer has really put thought into the details - is a strong sales drive.

City Developments (CDL), for instance, had received positive response to its private jacuzzis and pools on the roof terraces of its penthouses at The Oceanfront @ Sentosa Cove. Since then, CDL has worked in such winning features for its other projects.

A heightened sense of space indoors is vital too. On creating an enduring

upscale feel, interior design specialist Norman Yeo of One Stop Concepts says, “The right colour schemes in smaller spaces are especially important. For instance, lighter toned finishes add much to a spacious feel, and will certainly complement outdoor views that are lush and green, such as around the Nassim Road area. Mirrors, customised furnishings and cabinets that are designed specifically with the apartment size in mind, help with space expansion too.”

Yeo, who has worked on luxury apartments such as the St Regis Residences as well as premier show flats such as an upcoming project at Ion Orchard, notes, “Many clients request a special focus on the bathrooms. They generally like it white, airy and streamlined, and outfitted with luxuriant bathtubs and jacuzzis.”

Paula O’Callaghan, senior designer at leading design consultancy Hirsch Bedner Associates (HBA), observes, “Given the smaller living spaces today, spaces have to be visually expanded yet still have that personal touch.” So lighter, more neutral shades coupled with modern shiny metallic accents are often employed, balanced with premium marble and woods.

She notes that about 80 per cent of new projects feature a lot of glass. Developers may also create larger balconies, extend personal lift areas, and integrate private plunge pools into apartment units.

Yet bathrooms seem to be growing larger, she feels, as many jet-setting clients who stay at well-appointed hotels often like a similar sense of space and luxe pampering in their bathrooms at home.

Bathroom Wow

Of course, there are the uber luxe features that up the ante on dazzle in upscale developments. SC Global’s The Marq On Paterson Hill scored a first three years ago with its cantilevered lap pools while Hayden Properties, ready next year, will feature en-suite sky garages for its luxe condo, Hamilton Scotts.



Stylish fittings like the Miele coffee machine now come as part of a new home

There is also the Nassim Park Residences development by UOL, which features private lap pools for ground floor units and penthouses. And Wing Tai Group’s L’Viv at Newton offers plush private outdoor baths. Developers including Wing Tai note that the “getaway” resort feel in the bath experience is a rising trend.

And while top grade marble and timber are perennially demanded luxury staples, smaller-scale fittings and unusual surfaces matter as well for their progressive design lines and unique finishes. Hansgrohe’s new Puravida mixers and showers, for instance, created from white lacquer and shiny chrome, intrigue with its flowing and fluid shapes.

Lamitak, by leading local laminate brand TAK, offers its latest collection that goes beyond just ubiquitous solid hues, wood grains and patterns. Presenting intriguing tone and texture offerings, finished looks include suede, textured, glossy and Dri-Matt, a new laminate finish that provides a zero-reflection surface.

Seamless Fare

The kitchen, always a central social area, has increasingly soared in importance with the popularity of the open plan, Western-style living concept, where living room spaces and the kitchen space flow seamlessly into each other - and a growing necessity, given shrinking apartment sizes. Designers emphasise

the need for sleek, streamlined, high tech, energy efficient applications and customised work pieces to seamlessly fit into such spaces.

Premium appliances specialist Miele, which has its state of the art coffee machines, steam ovens, microwaves, fridge freezers and wine coolers outfitted in many luxury developments today, enlightens on the buyer mindset and developer positioning. “Consumers today have a deep understanding and appreciation for fine living. They are not only paying attention to the location and facilities when buying homes, but also to the fittings, materials and even kitchen appliances, which have become an integral part to home living.”

With consumers opening their eyes to what is available in their market, the brand and type of kitchen appliances are playing an increasing role in the home purchase decision, and luxury property developers are acutely aware of this fact.

Furthermore, they know that their potential customers are familiar with top international kitchen appliance brands and often assess the appliances featured in the kitchen as an indication of the positioning of the development they are contemplating.

“Project developers would want to work with a credible partner who



With mirrors, marble and neutral tones, Bishopsgate Residences exudes space and luxury

will ultimately give them peace of mind and deliver a level of quality that matches theirs,” says a Miele spokesperson. “After the home owner moves into his new home, Miele provides customer relationship management services and tests its products to ensure that they will last for at least 20 years and are as water and energy efficient as possible.”

Eco Consciousness

Certainly, “green” products and buildings designed and built with environmental sustainability in mind is a growing trend.

Take The Residences at W Singapore Sentosa Cove, which comprises some 228 ultra-luxurious apartments. CDL invested approximately 2 per cent of the total construction cost into

the development of the complex’s numerous green innovations. That is expected to yield energy savings of over 2.8 million kWh per year. Last year, the development was conferred the BCA1 Green Mark Platinum award - the highest rating awarded to green buildings in Singapore.

To begin with, the façade of the development was carefully considered. The apartments were designed with minimal direct west-facing sun - an optimised orientation which minimises solar heat gains. As well, extensive overhangs, balconies and planters are provided to block direct solar exposure.

Apartment units are also designed as “through units” to promote natural ventilation and majority are oriented

with prevailing wind conditions. Other key green features include the use of photo-voltaic solar cells as power lighting for clubhouse facilities.

And what of the final price points to all that luxe leverage? Property specialists from the Dennis Wee Group and other top real estate companies observe that unique and plush fittings do help elevate a development’s upscale positioning and exclusivity. They point out though, that such premium fittings inevitably add to the final construction cost. Hence, apartments at such luxury set-ups easily cost upwards of S\$2 million.

Still, with glorious views, prime locales, a surging investment climate, and a property market ever hungry for more, ownership has its privileges.