

Handcrafted meets High-Tech

Architect and interior designer Campion Platt creates beautiful homes with a handcrafted quality, while also integrating the latest home technology systems. The result: stunning, eco-sensitive spaces that both reflect his clients' unique stories and make their lives easier.

By Christine Aebischer

Since he was 15 years old living in Switzerland, Campion Platt has known he wanted to design luxurious homes that would inspire stories. Today, the New York-based architect and interior designer also has added tech guru to his résumé. His use of cutting-edge technology in his projects makes him a sought-after authority in the industry, and a favorite among celebrities. While these additions run behind the scenes, they are equally prized as the elements that can be seen, helping not only to facilitate daily life, but also to increase the home's energy efficiency.

How has your design approach evolved over your career?

In my early days, I was more of a strict modernist, using all neutrals and white. One has to learn about color over time and to experience it. It's hard to visualize how a color is going to feel, you're taking it on faith. The work we do is for the client, there is no ego; everything

we're producing is for somebody else. Even in modern places, you need a textural level in the stone, the wood, the carpet, the upholstery that has a great feeling when you touch it because the senses are so in tune to that. Anything you touch has to feel very luxurious.

How have your travels inspired your projects?

For me, so much of what we do is so highly detailed, that when I'm in the office I am completely focused on the work at hand. It's interesting to travel as much as possible to exotic places to be inspired by new ideas and new design and free thought. In the last month and a half I've been in southwest China, Costa Rica, Paris and Greece. And I'll be going back to China in October to visit five new cities. I've spent a lot of time in Asia, and I'm always intrigued by the Japanese design and modernism built out of simple, clean lines and a lot of natural materials. I bring this approach to my projects by working with things organically. For instance, the wood floor of one of my projects had a leaf pattern marquetry so it looks like you're in a forest, and there's a hand quality to it, you can tell someone put their hand to it.

Why is it important to you to incorporate this hand quality?

Most things today are completely machine-made and sterilized and they lose touch a little bit. The more human the designs, the more energy efficient they tend to be. I try to use a lot of local vendors and artisans who have that hand quality to their work where people can build a story around it. In these great old homes and places you visit, there's a lore, a story behind the house. With the pre-fabricated nature behind what we do today, there's little opportunity to create a storyline, but the people living there are invested in what they're living with.

What design trends are you currently seeing?

People have a much greater knowledge with the Internet, they're much more informed consumers. Every year clients are more informed, and the business has become more about editing than full-service, because most people can find things online. Most people are becoming more discerning and they're trying to help the environment. They feel a responsibility because there's so much news about what's happening to the environment, and people are





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trying to contribute. The greatest way they can contribute: insulate their home properly. Using too much heat or air conditioning is the largest source of energy waste.

When did you become interested in technology in the home?

I have more of a scientific background; I follow astronomy and physics and like learning what's out there and how we can apply it in a human scale. I also test out all these gadgets on myself. I was one of the first people to have the Nest thermostat and I recently got the Apple watch. The newest and best technology sits in the background and helps you do things without you knowing it. For instance, with the iPhone calendar, alerts just pop up and remind you, and it's the same for the Nest thermostat or alarm system. These sensing devices regulate life behind you so you don't have to think about it. They help my clients' lives, and they help my life.

How has home technology advanced in the last few years?

Technology systems from about five years ago, a little longer, were too hard for the average person to program and work well, and they became frustrated quickly. I grew up in the dial-up Internet days, but now, if you can't click through a website in 10 seconds, you're

frustrated and you go somewhere else. There is very little patience for inefficiency. Operating systems today are working almost at human speed, and as speeds increase and capacity increases, you'll find people having technology fit seamlessly with them. You don't even have to touch buttons, you just walk in your home and things are happening.

What are your favorite home technology picks?

Nest products and Savant systems. They're very iOS based and much easier from a programming point of view. Your house — doors, lights, alarms, music — is all controlled through the iCloud. I install these systems in most of my clients' houses now. You can control everything, your whole ecosystem, from an iPhone.

