

Integrate—Don't Decorate—the Outdoors, Says Landscape Architect

Switzerland-based Enzo Enea has created green spaces in Europe, Miami and New York



Enzo Enea with various projects by Enea Landscape Architecture
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Enzo Enea, a landscape architect based in Switzerland, established Enea GmbH in 1993. Now, the firm has offices in Switzerland, Miami and New York.

Mr. Enea, 53, who was born in Italy, works to create intertwining outdoor and indoor spaces, and has recently worked on projects that include Palazzo del Sol, a new construction on Miami's legendary Fisher Island, and One Thousand Museum by Zaha Hadid Architects.

One of the world's most prominent tree collectors, he opened his Tree Museum in 2010 on Upper Lake Zurich.

We spoke to Mr. Enea about the importance of designing from the outside in, respecting geology and more.

Mansion Global: Describe your dream property.

Enzo Enea: To buy a property next to a river and integrate it into my home. I love moving water, and the natural surroundings of a river. I'd love for it to be in Italy if I could.

MG: Do you have a real estate property that got away?

EE: A few years ago I was offered an incredible villa from the 18th century—it is 6,000 square meters near Lake Zurich. At the time it was too expensive, but I regret not buying it. I did buy some of the land and built on it, but I should have bought the whole thing.

MG: What does luxury mean to you?

EE: For me, there are two different types of luxury. There's material luxury, which is about design, materials, and the value of an article. And then the other thing is the ultimate luxury, which is time with family, friends, time with myself. Sitting under a big apple tree and eating together on a Sunday afternoon is luxury. It's important to have a balance. We're living in a world where we forget to appreciate the small things.

MG: What's the biggest surprise in the luxury real estate market now?

EE: As a landscape architect, the level and diversity of design for luxury homes is amazing. There are so many choices when it comes to technology. We're seeing cinemas next to pools outside. There are so many gadgets integrated into the outdoor space, many of which offer great sound for music. We had the music of the birds before.

Water features, too, are much more advanced. There are a lot of possibilities in lighting. Some people do make their outdoor spaces simple, but there are a lot of options for those who want them.

MG: Where are the best luxury homes in the world and why?

EE: There are homes all over the world that are luxury, but for me it's about being in a place where the surrounding landscape flows into the house and is reflected in the architecture. If you can connect outside in— not inside out as everyone says—that's the biggest luxury for me.

Miami is a good place for that, and that's what we're doing in private homes there. With its tropical climate, it's a perfect place for that.

MG: What's your favorite part of your home?

EE: Our kitchen. As an Italian, I love great food. It's where our family comes together.

MG: What best describes the theme to your home and why?

EE: There's no specific theme. I'm art-inspired and modern, but also sentimental.

MG: What's the most valuable thing in your home?

EE: My daughter and wife are most, of course.

And then it's the view to the lake with a castle in front.

MG: What's the most valuable amenity to have in a home right now?

EE: Without a doubt, a garden, or any green space with nature close to you. In cities, value comes from the combination of outdoor and indoor space.

MG: What's your best piece of real estate advice?

EE: From a landscape architect perspective, the most important thing is to understand the geology. The place tells you what to do. You don't want to decorate, but to integrate. Look at the surroundings, understand the architecture, and then combine the two.

MG: What's going on in the news that will have the biggest impact on the luxury real estate market?

EE: The challenges we face in terms of sustainability and climate change. World politics, too, will influence the stability of the real estate market worldwide. Those are the big ones.

MG: What is the best area now for investing in luxury properties?

EE: San Francisco is quite interesting. There's the booming tech economy, and it's one of the strongest luxury markets in the world. There's a huge demand for little supply. I'd love to work there.

MG: If you had a choice of living in a new development or a prime resale property, which would you choose and why?

EE: Prime resale property. Gardens and their history have always influenced me. The charm of a house binds me to it. I love when the house tells a story and I try to reflect that into the outdoor design.

Time is the only thing you can't buy, and the trees that surround your house, for one, need time.