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The Safe, Seductive Club Scene

A Brand of One's Own

The Evolution of Outdoor Living

i-D

Entertaining by Design

Designed by Michael Vanderbyl, inspired by classic sailing yachts, the modular Hatch Collection pairs teak with sleek, powder-coated, aluminum.
(Image: JANUS et Cie)

Luxe Living

Janice Feldman, founder and chief executive officer of JANUS et Cie, says, "People have always wanted to enjoy the outdoors, and, as our culture has found more prosperity, there has been a natural progression to enjoy luxuries, which we now view as the norm. Outdoor living is today a necessary and welcomed part of everyday life.

"Also," she adds, "luxury hotels have always had great outdoor spaces and...consumers recognized that they could have that 'luxury lifestyle' in their own backyards, very much informing and simultaneously strengthening the outdoor life at home."

Presenting a different twist on luxe living at home, Allen Gant III, the casual market manager for Sunbrella, explains: "The economic downturn [of a few years ago] led homeowners to keep a closer eye on discretionary spending, especially with regard to vacations. Spending more time at home, it was a natural reaction to make improvements on their houses, and, thus, outdoor spaces ultimately became 'staycation' destinations."

Stephen F. Elton, chief brand curator of Brown Jordan, agrees. But, for a more protracted view, he relates that when the company was established in 1945, most people had little more than Adirondack chairs and picnic tables outside the back door. "Our founder, Robert Brown, wanted to reinvent the category with innovative materials and create 'outdoor art,' as he called it."

He accomplished this with designer Walter Lamb, and was so successful that many of the original designs are still sold today—along with new ones like chairs that gently glide back and forth.

"People are increasingly looking to expand their living spaces, and outdoor areas...are the quickest and most cost-effective way to do so," says interior designer Gil Walsh, who works primarily in and about Palm Beach, Florida, and Martha's Vineyard. "There has also been an explosion in outdoor furnishings, fabrics, and accessories that provide us much more flexibility and creativity to design outside."

Warm yet architectural with its tapered teak frame, the Konos Collection by JANUS et Cie's founder Janice Feldman, is well suited to modern settings. (image: JANUS et Cie)

A Good Investment

"Not only do outdoor rooms increase a home's value," notes Walsh, "they enhance their overall appeal, especially for people fond of entertaining. My clients are looking for exterior rooms to function just as the various rooms of their homes do: cooking/barbecuing, watching TV, quiet spaces, maybe with a water feature, for relaxing and reading, fire pit areas to gather family and friends for cocktails, dining areas with awnings."

"It used to be landscaping that added value to a house," says Elton. "Today, it's how the outdoor space is furnished." He reveals that customers frequently tell him the reason they obtained the asking price when selling their home was that the outdoor furnishings were included. "Outdoor furniture is the fastest growing of all furniture categories," he adds. In fact, analytics and advisory firm Transparency Market Research anticipates 4.9 percent growth in the global outdoor furniture market for the 2017 to 2022 period.

Noting how outdoor living rooms increase a home's square footage, Feldman says, "People are more adept than ever at seeing value when making purchases, including a home. Having an outdoor space is as much a decision of the [fiscally responsible] mind as it is of the heart."

And, while furnished outdoor spaces began with the wealthy, "the outdoor living space trend is completely scalable and attainable," according to Gant. "Whether you have a lavish and spacious patio or a simple balcony, there are performance options available."