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London-Based Designer Says Interiors Are More Thoughtful Than Ever

Charu Gandhi on the current trends that are here to stay

BY LUCY COHEN BLATTER | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON DECEMBER 28, 2020 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)



Ms. Gandhi and her recently luxury residential design projects. COMPOSITE: COURTESY OF ELICYON

Charu Gandhi is the founder and director of Elicyon, a design studio she started in 2014 based in Kensington, London.

Elicyon creates personalized and tailored homes for clientele around the world. This year alone the firm completed a number of projects across London in both private homes and large developments, including Chelsea Barracks, Lancaster Gate, Mayfair Park Residences and a new boutique development in Knightsbridge's Beaufort Gardens in Knightsbridge, as well as international projects in Dubai and Kuwait.

We caught up with Ms. Gandhi, 41, to discuss future trends in design, which Covid-era preferences are here to stay and more.

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Mansion Global: How has business been since Covid-19 started?

Charu Gandhi: There have been so many stages already. During the warmer months we really got into our groove. August was really busy for us because we had some installs that had backed up.



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It's all about figuring out the new normal. It's figuring out how to do business as usual in this new world.

We've signed on a lot of new projects. All of our wonderful clients have stayed steady. About 50% of our work is repeat.

We only had one project pause and it already restarted.

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MG: Are people making tweaks to their homes now that they're spending more time at home?

CG: A lot of our clients are what I call "global nomads." A lot of clients that are couples have been together when they're not usually, and we're having longer meetings. There's more thoughtfulness. It's made us all rethink how we want to live as a family.

We're seeing more of a focus on lighting—task lighting specifically—and people want flexible living.

Some parents ask to hide TVs. There are definitely specific requests connected to Covid.

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MG: Do you suspect they're long-lasting?

CG: It's a larger philosophical question about how it changes us as a society. I think these big events tend to color what happens next, but there's an elastic nature to human nature. We'll likely see ourselves dashing between meetings again, flying in crowded planes. We'll likely keep some stuff, and some will go back.

Already early this year we'd been talking about this trend of the new neutrals. In general we have found that over the last year already there was a more considered approach to how people were wanting to live. Things like KonMari, living a life of purpose. That doesn't mean it's not decorative or fun. It doesn't have to feel austere. There's certainly been a return to natural materiality and texture.

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MG: What are your thoughts on trends for 2021?

CG: One thing we are quite excited about that we've done in one of our projects is forgotten furniture, reimagined. We did a telephone table. It's something that people used when they landlines, but these are reimagined or rediscovered.

Outdoor spaces have been a big part of some of our discussions with clients. Any little outdoor space has become so cherished, and people are paying attention to the design of it.

Also, people are celebrating imperfections. People are wanting to hold onto the pieces they have, upcycling them and celebrating their imperfections. We've also talked a lot about places dedicated to children—spaces that give them a format to study, to play, to do crafts.


Neutrals—from mustard, to ochre, to ivory—are back. We're also seeing a return to natural materials.

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MG: What does the word “luxury” mean from your perspective?

CG: It’s so overused, but it’s hard to find another word that captures it. We’re just finishing an apartment in a development called Mayfair Park Residences. It’s a branded residence—that’s another trend we’re seeing, clients wanting to live in a residence that’s managed by a hotel. They feel it’s cleaner and disinfected better. They can still have room service if they’re quarantining. That feels luxury.

It’s a branded residence with the Dorchester. It’s considered, it takes into account the lifestyle. There’s a focus on materiality. It’s about creating a better space overall.

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MG: Describe your dream home.

CG: If you have a place where your family can gather, and you can have a library and a garden, that’s a dream. A home that’s successful is one that tells the story of the building, the interiors, but also tells the story of the occupants.

I’m partial to homes with history. And a place where you can build your own family’s story on top of that history is ideal.

These buildings will be around long after we’re gone—and we don’t take that custodianship lightly.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

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BY LUCY COHEN BLATTER | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 5, 2020 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)

