

MANSION GLOBAL

Italian Architect Says a Building Should be ‘Timeless,’ and an Apartment Should be Comfortable

The man behind Miami’s new Arte building says luxury is about creating a sense of home, not about being shiny

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Mr Citterio with renderings of his first U.S. project, Arte, a luxury residence in Miami Beach.
COMPOSITE: COURTESY OF ANTONIO CITTERIO; ARTE

Antonio Citterio, an Italian architect, furniture designer and industrial designer, recently completed his first U.S. project, Arte, a luxury residential residence in Miami Beach. The building comprises 16 floor-through apartments and is built in a pyramid shape, inspired by Miami’s Art Deco style.

When it comes to luxury residential buildings, the Milan-based architect is also responsible for Treasure Garden in Taichung, Taiwan; the Taipei Sky Tower and an upcoming building in Bangkok.

He’s also been tapped to design all the Bulgari hotels and resorts. In addition, Mr. Citterio, 69, holds the title of Royal Designer for Industry, the highest accolade for designers in the U.K. (Only 200 designers have that title.)

We caught up with Mr. Citterio to discuss the challenges of designing a residential building, the problems with an “easy rich” look and more.

Mansion Global: Describe your dream property.

Antonio Citterio: I believe a home should be first of all comfortable and welcoming. “Comfort” is not only a physical sensation, but also an atmosphere: a perfect atmosphere for each moment of the day. Comfort means user-friendliness, correct lighting, proper proportions, a sensation of being in the right place, the desire to stay there. It’s a mysterious kind of alchemy more than anything else.

I’ve loved Miami for many years, since working on Arte, now I really understand why you want to buy a home there. It’s a healthy place, the natural element. Being by the beach is nice. It’s a nice place to spend time.

MG: What does luxury mean to you?

AC: For a home, the space and materials are important. It’s not just about what’s shiny, it’s about creating a sense of home, a place that is quiet.

Luxury is something strange for an architect, and I like to talk first about quality. And quality comes from the materials, through the details, and the quality of the space, too.

We create timeless buildings. Timeless means it lasts at least 30 years.

Designing residential, at the end of the day, is more architecturally difficult. It's easier to do a museum, because a residential building has a lot of balances you need to make. It's about creating solutions for the clients. It's very difficult.

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

AC: When I was younger, I used to say New York, but now I can see Miami.

It really depends on the weather, and what you're looking for. Florida has become an interesting place. There's an attention to natural beauty. California, too.

In California, you need to travel a bit to find the beach, in Miami you have a lot of beaches all around.

I have a home in Portofino, Italy. It's a little farm, and it's such a beautiful place.

MG: Is there anything you're seeing happening in the high-end real estate market that surprises you?

AC: Urban densification inevitably leads to building in vertical. The high-end real estate market is not immune to this trend.

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

AC: The kitchen. It's the place of conviviality. For the last 25 years, the moments with the family have been in the kitchen in the morning and in the evenings. There's a terrace off the kitchen, and it's open so you can cook and see people, too.

It's an emotional place where you connect with your family.

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

AC: It's an apartment in an old building, and it's very similar to the way I like my work to be—it's simple, with some pieces of art on the wall, and that's all. It's about being timeless. It's quite a big space, with a two-floor high living room. It's about simple materials and light colors on the walls.

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

AC: The space, because we decided to take a floor. And it's a little bit of a surprise to have something so contemporary inside such an old building. That's the value of our space.

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

AC: The kitchen represents the center of the house, an intimate gathering place and the place where the rite of preparing meals is performed. Receiving your friends in the kitchen has become a metaphor for affection, interchange and warmth.

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

AC: Normally location is one of the most important things. The location, the view from inside, and the quality of the building are what matter most. Sometimes developers use ugly solutions, or they make tiny terraces just to make sure they have them, because they don't spend money on other things. Some people want to create an "easy rich" look and I hate it.