

The KEYS to QUIET LUXURY

A movement is discreetly reshaping the design world, rising above artifice and embracing what is not only alluring but livable and lasting. Quiet luxury may be exactly the shift every home needs.

By Suzanna Logan



Interior design motifs come in and out of vogue with unsurprising regularity. In recent decades, the rise and decline of countless styles — from the clean simplicity of mid-century Scandinavian to the ubiquitous modern farmhouse to the maximalist flair of grandmillennial — underscores design's ever-shifting nature. Some styles linger longer than others, but fads inevitably fade, giving way to the next.

That's why many are reluctant to label the look making subtle waves in the home sphere a "trend" at all. This aesthetic — coming in on cat's feet and aptly dubbed "quiet luxury" — appears to be less a fleeting style moment and more of a here-to-stay design philosophy. Signaling a shift from defining looks of the past, quiet luxury dives beyond display and into a visceral realm that speaks to humanity's deepest desires — authenticity, connection and classic beauty.

To explore what this approach means for the way we live, we consulted a panel of design experts to uncover their take on quiet luxury — its defining elements, its role in our homes and how to incorporate its principles in ways that are thoughtful, timeless and exude a lived-in elegance that's far from boring.

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The Defining Elements

The origins of quiet luxury are easily traced. "Like many interior design principles, it emerged from the fashion world," explains Meagan Cooperman. "Think beautiful, classic pieces with understated elegance — a high-end leather bag, tailored jeans, a wool blazer. Those reflect quiet luxury."

Translating the concept into the home space sphere, Sarah Guzek echoes the emphasis on perennial classics and elaborates on what defines the genre: "It's a timeless approach to design and space that values quality over anything loud or visually overpowering." To craft interiors that breathe this hushed aesthetic, she suggests leaning into a few

defining principles, like carefully edited furnishings marked by exceptional craftsmanship, muted colors, rich textures and personal resonance that unites meaning and function.

How these elements come together in a particular space can take countless forms. "Homes that have this vibe can be rustic, eclectic or traditional," says Meagan. This ability to be interpreted broadly speaks to the highly personal nature of the look. "Quiet luxury isn't staged," she continues. "It goes beyond a particular style and is more about collecting pieces that you love, that are true to you regardless of what is trending."

Our Experts



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Portraits courtesy of each expert

In a world of ever-shifting opinions, this freedom to embrace authenticity isn't just relevant, it's a relief. "Everyone has their own form of quiet luxury, and it will translate differently from one person to another, but at its core, it's calming," explains Ellen Walker.

This leap past transient aesthetics and towards a more soulful approach is likely a response to the cacophony of contemporary life, suggest our designers. "I think it's coming from a place where people are wanting to slow down and have more peaceful homes because our day-to-day lives are so chaotic and fast-paced," Meagan articulates. Ellen echoes her sentiment: "It's something we can all resonate with. We are inundated with the noise from technology, and we need somewhere to go that is quiet."

To achieve this sense of calm, Rochelle Zemlak points to quiet luxury's North Star: Surround yourself with natural

colors and materials and things crafted by humans. Aligning with this trifecta offers a rich reward. "It will ground you, giving you security in the envelope where you act out your everyday life and connecting you with nature and with humanity," Rochelle says.

And perhaps this is the reason for quiet luxury's inexorable magnetism — by going beyond visual cues, it creates a refuge that speaks to the human spirit's most profound longings. "Quiet luxury isn't about achieving a certain look," Meagan clarifies. "It's a feeling you get when you walk through a space. It's warm and inviting, a place where you belong."

To usher this experience into your home's interiors — whether you're building new or refreshing an existing space — read on as our experts share design strategies and room-by-room tips for cultivating quiet luxury.



Start with the Structure

A quiet-luxury approach to designing and building a home emphasizes a foundation of rich, architectural features that prioritize craftsmanship and convey a sense of permanence. "The idea is for the room itself to be stunning even before you add any other layers," shares Meagan. Lean into open-concept spaces with high ceilings and exposed wood elements, an abundance of windows that spill light through the interiors, built-ins that double as seating and storage, a striking fireplace, detailed millwork and wide-plank hardwood floors.

Photos courtesy of Deep River Partners



The Materials You Use Matter

To truly achieve that air of quiet luxury, real materials are a must. "The luxury is in the authenticity," Rochelle asserts. In architectural design, this translates primarily to real wood, natural stone, exquisite tilework and raw metals.

In the kitchen, look to unlacquered brass hardware or fixtures that will take on a natural patina over time, as well as honed or leathered countertops for a soft, matte finish; stained wood cabinetry; and other warm, wood details, such as beams on the ceiling. To merge form and function, Rochelle also suggests a scullery to keep messy tasks out of sight and promote the kitchen as a welcoming gathering space, organized pot-and-pan drawers with lid sorters and dishware drawers placed below the counter height. "It's an immense luxury for things to feel easy," she says.

Curate Your Color Palette

As the name suggests, the quiet luxury concept embraces muted tones. The most obvious imagery is a hushed backdrop washed from floor to ceiling in neutral earth tones, like taupe, cream and stone. (Favorite paint colors name-dropped by our designers include Benjamin Moore's Swiss Coffee, White Dove, Edgecomb Grey, Alexandria Beige, Bleeker Beige and Clay Beige.)

But a monochromatic, color-drenched scheme isn't the only option. "Sometimes a bold, vibrant shade is the perfect way to exude a sense of luxury," says Rochelle. Allow nature to guide the palette. "If you're lakeside, bring in the blues and greens from the lakes and trees," she suggests. Or opt for warmer tones, like deep red, amber or charcoal. To create a pleasing visual balance, try pairing warm and cool colors, such as camel alongside blue-grey. If opting for richer tones, Rochelle offers this rule on restraint: "Keeping the 'quiet' in quiet luxury means having just one or two bold things — a vibrant sofa, an intensely colored rug or a rich piece of art that dominates the room but having everything else around it be neutral."



Photo by Phil Crozer; courtesy of Ellen Walker Design Group Inc.



Photo courtesy of Ellen Walker Design Group Inc.

Introduce Textiles with Intention

Upholstery throughout a space — whether for dressing walls, ceilings, windows, beds or sofas — should maintain a highly tactile quality. Velvet, suede, leather, linen and grasscloth are all apropos selections. Where durability is a concern, many performance fabrics mimic the real thing but with enhanced protection for everyday life. Rochelle suggests beginning with a foundation of durable fabrics, like wool mohair (which she calls "one of the most durable and luxurious fabrics"), then layering in touches of luxe textiles, such as cashmere, silk, boucle or fur. "The layers are everything," agrees Ellen. "They make your space quieter acoustically and help cocoon the space."



Photo courtesy of Deep River Partners



Photo courtesy of Rochelle Lynne Design Studio



Photo courtesy of Deep River Partners

Home in on Hospitality

"To create quiet luxury, imagine your home experience as if you were a guest in the space," Sarah suggests. What amenities would give you a sense of being at a luxury resort? These can range from sweeping design gestures to intimate details. She recommends considering how a space should function for entertaining first. "You may want multiple seating opportunities for people to gather, large sliding glass doors with interiors that spill out onto an exterior, perhaps even a pool," says Sarah.



Photo courtesy of Deep River Partners



Photo courtesy of Ellen Walker Design Group Inc.



Photo courtesy of Rochelle Lynne Design Studio

Share Your Unique Story

It's time to get personal. "Introduce family heirlooms, items collected during your travels, things that have a story to tell," Sarah notes. These pieces will imbue even the newest interiors with a sense of history and belonging that is inherent to achieving the quiet-luxury aesthetic. The goal isn't to fill every corner or shelf, it's to weave together a tapestry that invites reflection and connection. As Sarah says: "You'll want a look that is curated and edited but has a collected, layered feel at the same time."



Photo courtesy of Eutree



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Create Calm, not Clutter

Quiet luxury is more than just a pretty face. Look closely and the functional aspects of the design will emerge. "Organization is one of the main tenets of quiet luxury," Rochelle proclaims. "Having spaces to accommodate the everyday activities of your life, to give everything a functional home so it's a pleasure to go through your routines . . . what could be more luxurious than that?" Our designers recommend editing your belongings down to only what you truly love, then crafting a functional storage plan — whether through built-ins or baskets — for each space in your home.

Weave in Those Little Luxuries

Quiet luxury doesn't demand a total overhaul of your interiors. Adding in a few pampering touches, like plush pillows and a throw, can immediately elevate an ordinary space into the realm of luxury. "Attention to detail is everything," Sarah says. "Thoughtful amenities might include adding an ice maker with craft ice at a beverage bar, personalized baskets in a bathroom or a small tray on the nightstand to hold belongings," she suggests. "Little things like that go a long way towards making any space feel extra special." 