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PROPERTY & ARCHITECTURE

## Fashion houses

*Do interiors designed by a global fashion brand - or Kate Moss - boost the selling potential and value of a luxury property, asks Zoe Dare Hall*



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As you walk about The Dock House, Elle Macpherson's country retreat at The [Lakes by Yoo](#) in the Cotswolds, you can't help thinking that the supermodel has luxuriated here as you pass her super-sized bed or her roll top bath overlooking the lake. This is her son's drum kit. This is where she eats. There are even photos of her dotted around which, because she's so instantly recognisable, makes you feel like you're in the house of an old friend – except of course you've never met her.

That's as intimate as celebrity involvement in a property gets. Elle designed this as her occasional home and you can rent it out for £7,000 a week. Now Kate Moss has turned to interior design on the same luxury development, having just spent six months designing Barnhouse, a five-bedroom house with a pool hidden away in a private acre of woodland. It



([christiesrealestate.com](http://christiesrealestate.com)).

has a huge, mezzanined living space and flamboyant use of colours and prints to avoid, says Kate, being “too matchy-matchy”. It could be yours for £2.5m or you could build one just like it on one of the 20 plots available.

Alternatively, you could zip over to Parrot Cay, the private Caribbean retreat where the American fashion designer Donna Karan is selling The Sanctuary estate with two four-bed beachfront villas – price on application, though they were previously on the market for £26m and have since been reduced

But do properties designed by major league fashion designers persuade buyers to part with that kind of money? Certainly many developers around the world seem to think so.

**AYKON** at Nine Elms, a 50-storey tower in Battersea's emerging riverside district, invites buyers to enjoy “Versace-branded living” with Donatella and the Versace Home team having



designed the 360 apartments and communal areas including the residents' lounge, gym and lobby. Prices range from studios from £711,000 to three-beds from £1.7m ([aykonproperties.com](http://aykonproperties.com)) - and there will of course be some lavish penthouses whose prices have yet to be released.

The project's developers **DAMAC** are reluctant to say just how decadently Versace these properties will be; they're more interested in talking branding strategy than bling. “Our key strategy is to associate with a living brand,” says DAMAC's chairman Hussein Sajwani, whose fondness for working with fashion houses has led to collaborations in the Middle East with Versace, Fendi and Louis Vuitton. Sajwani expects his Battersea project to attract “a lot of Middle Eastern and Asian buyers” who are drawn by the rarity value of this kind of offering in London. While

Dubai is peppered with properties that boast fashion designer interiors – including a 42,000 sq ft Candy & Candy-designed house in Emirates Hills with 18-carat gold and pearl floors and custom-designed furniture by Louis Vuitton, on sale for £26.1m ([Sothebysrealty.com](http://Sothebysrealty.com)) – AYKON is London's first Versace-branded project and a trophy purchase if you like that kind of thing.

You can feel fairly sure that if a big fashion label is lending its name to a development, these are good-quality properties. “They wouldn't align themselves with a bad product,” says Philip Eastwood, London head of **The Buying Solution**, Knight Frank's buying agency arm.



Such a collaboration also brings a sense of exclusivity and luxury, says Giles Hannah, senior director of Christie's International Real Estate, who says a fashion brand is likely to add up to 20 per cent to the property

price. “In prime central London that means an extra £1,000 per square foot on the price for exclusive developments such as The Bulgari Residences,” he says, referring to the Knightsbridge development whose penthouse reportedly sold for £100m.

“It’s about an exclusivity that only money can buy,” says Lulu Egerton, partner at [Strutt & Parker Chelsea](#) about wealthy buyers’ love of a brand that’s “renowned and admired the world over”.



But others are more dubious about the aesthetic appeal or investment value of flaunting such fashion names in your property. “When you walk into a home furnished by Fendi, you know it. The ‘F’ motif is everywhere, along with the lacquer and gold. Likewise Ralph Lauren and Hermès, who put their motifs on every throw, cushion and cover. It’s blatant and it appeals to a certain type of buyer,” says The Buying Solution’s Rachel Thompson.

Does that kind of fashion name-dropping add value? “I’d say not,” says Thompson. “Furniture is a very personal thing. If you dress a property right, you can add value and desirability, but get it wrong and people can’t get past the bling.”

Gilly Holloway, from [Heaton & Partners](#) search agency, is similarly doubtful about just how swayed buyers will be by having a high-end fashion house on board. “It can certainly add desirability to a property for fash-pack types, it’s attention-grabbing and will get people through the door. But I wouldn’t agree that it’s a deciding factor for people when choosing a property,” says Holloway. “There will usually be a large mark-up for these properties and buyers need to make sure they’re not paying over the odds just for the brand.”



Some properties are trading on their fashion connections in a different way. Beau House in Jermyn Street, Piccadilly, is named after the 1700s fashion dandy Beau Brummell, and has seven apartments costing from £2m and a penthouse likely to be priced in excess of £15m ([beauhouselondon.com](#)).

[Oliver Burns](#), the designers of the penthouse and co-developers with [Dukelease](#), have gone to town with the fashion theme and Jermyn Street’s tailoring heritage. There is also prestige, they say, in being above a DAKS store, a British clothing designer itself synonymous with luxury design. “The clientele we cater for expect collaborations with national and international design and furniture houses and artisans,” says Joe Burns, managing director of Oliver Burns.

“A celebrity endorsement may make sense in other locations around the UK – such as Kate Moss at The Lakes by Yoo because of her strong personal associations with the Cotswolds – we find that in super-prime London, buyers are more interested in the use of homeware collections by prestigious designer brands such as Fendi, Armani Casa and Ralph Lauren,” says Burns. “Creating bespoke design solutions for ultra high net worth individuals is the equivalent of fashion’s haute couture.”