

HOME FURNISHINGS

Outlook 2021: Home improvement to remain a big task in coming months

January 7, 2021



Upscale home furnishings are in vogue amid the pandemic. Image courtesy of Perigold

By ELLEN KELLEHER

A lasting consequence of the COVID-19 crisis is that affluent consumers are now aficionados of the home improvement game and this means the current boom in home furnishings is set to continue in 2021.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

This year, luxury consumers want comfort and convenience in their dwelling spaces as they still find themselves in lockdown mode because of the pandemic. On the list of advancements many now seek at home are clean design, improved outdoor spaces and home offices as well as eco-friendly furniture and smart-home connectivity.

"The casualization of living is triggering a return to comfort," said Susan Brunstrum, designer and owner of **Studio Brunstrum**, Chicago. "It is as important as design and style."

Looking ahead, here are a few trends that are likely to impact the home furnishings market in the coming months.

Robust online market for high-end home furnishings

The market for online luxury home decor is roaring as companies like **Amazon.com**, **Carrefour**, **Wayfair** and **Net-A-Porter** wage focused campaigns to attract buyers who are eager to furnish their houses with upscale items bought online.

Thanks partly to COVID-19, the market for online home decor, which reached \$98.4 billion in 2020, is likely to balloon to \$348.3 billion by 2027, according to forecasts released last year in the report "Online Home Decor: Global Market Trajectory & Analytics."

Asia-Pacific is particularly important in the home design arena.

Driven by Australia, India, and South Korea, the online home decor market in Asia-Pacific is forecast to reach US\$42.6 Billion by 2027. The size of the same market in China, meanwhile, is expected to rocket to \$60 billion within six years.

Consumers' dedication to pouring money into their homes creates a business opportunity that retailers are eager to capitalize on. Online retailer Net-A-Porter, for instance, recently unveiled a lifestyle hub on its platform just in time

for the holidays in a bid to profit from affluents' desire to nest these days ([see story](#)).

As the pandemic lingers, luxury brands have been marketing their home furnishings offerings more extensively, including Armani ([see story](#)) and Herms ([see story](#)). Meanwhile, Italian artisan ecommerce platform Artemest raised more than \$5 million in an equity funding round after seeing growth in direct-to-consumer sales during COVID-19 ([see story](#)).

Embrace of outdoor space

High-net-worth individuals are making nature a pivotal part of their existence amid the pandemic.

Improvements to backyards and outdoor spaces are being ordered. In the suburbs, fire pits and outdoor movies are in vogue as are pools and saunas in sunnier climates.

Families are also investing in outdoor furniture and outdoor cooking facilities like wood-burning pizza ovens in the pursuit of superior approaches to outdoor living and working.

"For those with land, carving out trails for exercise as well as fire abatement is also de rigueur," Ms. Brunstrum said.

Zoom improvements

The introduction of remote work and school to home routines as lockdowns linger means affluents around the world are embracing a Zoom lifestyle. In keeping with this, professionals who balance time between their home office and their workplace are seeking better and more elegant Zoom-worthy furnishings to stage their homes for virtual meetings.



Fashion icon Meryl Streep giving a toast on a Zoom call, featured on Vogue's Instagram page. Image credit: Vogue

Video conferencing and webinars through Facebook Live, Instagram Stories, webinars, WhatsApp and Zoom are making people's living rooms their new offices and social hubs, and many people are hoping to spruce up their surroundings to impress the people on the other end ([see story](#)).

"For Zoom meetings, many of our clients are finding themselves tweaking at home backgrounds with lighted display shelving to more impressively show off industry awards, diplomas, trophies and the sorts of things that add personality to a talking head," said Peter Kelley, partner at home furnishings specialist [Kelley Group Two](#), Boston.

Mr. Kelley reports a surge in requests for home office updates from stock market traders and other affluent clients looking for larger work areas at home.

Surge in home sales a push for home improvement

A robust real estate market, which is likely to last in 2021 barring unforeseen circumstances, is providing gas to fuel the home improvement drive now underway.

Realtors report that a sea change in how affluent consumers are making health-driven lifestyle choices amid the pandemic will continue to shape the luxury real estate market as long as inventory holds out.



Private amenities such as large swimming pools will continue to be in demand as affluent consumers practice social distancing well into 2021. Image credit: Luxury Society

Demand for exclusive residential properties will continue well into 2021 even as the vaccine for the coronavirus is widely available to large segments of the United States and global population ([see story](#)).

"Undoubtedly, strong home sales will make the home furnishings recovery a long-term phenomenon," said Dave Cesaro, executive director for client strategy at marketing technology firm [Valassis](#), Mich.

Within the first six months of a purchase, new homeowners spend about \$9,700 on items for their new home, according to Valassis data.

"This opportunity awaits retailers as it is estimated that about 20 percent of all furniture sales are directly impacted by new and existing home sales," Mr. Cesaro said. "The new year will be bright for home furnishings retailers."

Antique, art market rebound

The pandemic has had a welcome impact on the antique and art market, with dealers such as [InCollect](#), [1stDibs](#) and [Chairish](#) now suddenly doing swift business via the internet. So popular are these sites that clients are being urged to make purchases quickly before items are sold.

"The layman sitting at home quarantining has found these resources and is snapping up beautiful antique pieces," said Michelle Workman, an [independent designer](#) based in Lookout Mountain, Ga. who has worked on homes for John Travolta, Kristie Alley, Jennifer Lopez and other stars. "It would seem that antiques, art and one-of-a-kind pieces have seen unprecedented growth during this time."



The art and antiques business has added ecommerce to its shopping options to keep in step with evolving collector behavior. Image credit: Ronati

Due to disruption in supply channels brought on by the global nature of the pandemic, designers now sometimes struggle to find products to meet demand. So, many are favoring goods that are available quickly and in the U.S., this means many are buying American-made goods.

Alongside these trends is another. Signaling a return to the arts, interior designers are being asked to commission artists to draw portraits of family members.

"Legacy is a pillar of luxury that will always be important and portraits are a piece of that," Studio Brunstrum's Ms. Brunstrum said.

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.