

PREVIEWS INSIDE OUT

MAN  
OF THE  
WORLD

BY ALYSON PITARRE

Faithful readers of *Architectural Digest* and  
*Robb Report* over the last 20 years should  
immediately recognize the name Richard Landry.

PHOTOS BY ERHARD PFEIFFER



Known as the “architect to the stars,” he has appeared on the AD100 list since 2000 and his residences have been selected by *Robb Report* as its “Ultimate Home” for the last four years—elevating the worldly architect to an almost other-worldly status in the small, yet rarified circle of luxury residential architecture. His firm, Landry Design Group, has completed more than 400 residences, many of them large-scale manses in elite locations around the world.

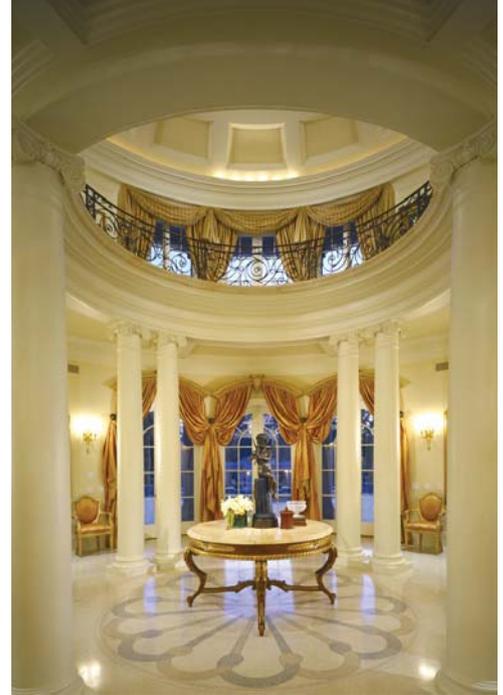
Unlike many of his contemporaries, Richard Landry does not gravitate towards any particular architectural style. He can just as easily design a French château or a cozy Mediterranean as a sleek, cutting-edge modern home. Paul Goldberger—who penned the foreword of his 1996 monograph, *MODERN TO CLASSIC: Residential Estates* by Landry Design Group—said it best: “Richard Landry belongs to the great tradition of American eclecticism, a tradition that, at its best, has yielded masterpieces, and has also created a vastly larger quantity of decent and civilized buildings than it has been given credit for.”

With clients throughout the United States and in 15 other countries, Landry is also one of the rare residential architects who truly has his pulse on international luxury design. Affluent homeowners from Indonesia to the United Arab Emirates have commissioned his firm, seeking out the Landry Design Group’s flair for “mastering materiality to achieve immaterial qualities” as architect Joseph Giovannini wrote in 2011’s *PRIVATE ESTATES: New Architecture by Landry Design Group*. This talent—his ability to eschew architectural purity in favor of achieving an emotional quality—is perhaps what Landry is most revered for. The “intangible” or “the aura” of a Landry home, whether it is located in Dubai, Singapore or Beverly Hills, still speaks the language of that country. Monumentality, another Landry trademark, also has the power to transcend culture and continent. Notes Goldberger: “Landry’s houses, for all their sumptuousness, do have a certain understatement about them.”

The international clients with whom Landry works are often drawn to the quality and openness of his floorplans, and “they also love the American way of living,” he admits.

“They want rooms that feel comfortable,” he says. “Many of them have large extended families who visit. They want each child to have his or her own bedroom and a bedroom

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for the in-laws. Before you know it, you’ve got a 10-bedroom house. The challenge for us as architects is to keep a human scale to a home of that size. We do that by paying close attention to the proportions in each room and by adding a lot of detail.”

In effect, Landry has become a master of layering details. A sense of intimacy and comfort can be achieved in a grand living room by layering intricate moldings, patterns, rich materials and fireplaces. On the outside,

layers of lush landscaping and exquisite exterior detailing can make an intimidating 50,000-square-foot estate suddenly feel welcoming. For a 100,000-square-foot home near Shanghai, he has managed to bring down the scale with special massing of the rooflines and the walls, so there is movement from the outside and not just a flat façade. “The idea,” he explains, “is to break large spaces into smaller, more comfortable spaces.”

That is why, in a Landry home, rooms will

frequently have multiple uses: dining rooms are also libraries, kitchens are also family rooms and bedrooms have sitting areas. As Giovannini recounts, “he nests one room in another, one function inside of another. He layers. He also proliferates the spaces that socialize a home, bringing people together with loggias, patios, outdoor fireplaces and focal water features.”

Yet not all luxury architectural design elements translate from country to country. For example, luxury architecture in China is still heavily influenced by the ancient principles of Feng Shui. The same is true in India with the ancient Vastu Shastra school of thought (which many believe to be the basis for Feng Shui). Both philosophies center around building residences that are harmonious with nature, which, in turn, can impact everything from the site location and



“It’s not just about the size of the house,” says Landry. “How do you want to feel when you come home? How do you want your friends to feel when they walk into your house? These are the intangibles of architecture.”

orientation to the floorplan and selection of materials. Often when Landry is building a luxury residence in Asian countries, the client will bring in experts in these fields to ensure that the home’s environmental factors are considered during the design and construction process. As a skilled interpreter of historical and contemporary traditions, Landry simply folds these concepts into his design as another rich layer.

Still, other cultural differences dictate the types of rooms designed in a grand estate. In the Middle East, for example, it is common for luxury homes to have commercial or catering kitchens, in addition to a family kitchen. Formal entertaining spaces and greeting areas are also essential for many wealthy Middle Eastern families, as guests frequently show up unannounced.

“There is a private side of the home and a public side of the home,” says Landry. “And often, women are separated from men’s activities—which impacts the floor plan.”

Landry’s design approach, of course, remains the same no matter where his clients live in the world.

“We ask a lot of questions, and we often challenge our clients to truly pay attention to the way they actually live in their home, the way they entertain, how they see themselves in five, 10 or 15 years,” he told *Architectural Digest* in 2010. Which is, perhaps why his work has appealed to so many elite and celebrity clients over the past 20 years. His celebrity clients have included Tom Brady and

Gisele Bündchen, Rod Stewart, Mark Wahlberg, Wayne Gretzky and countless others. Privacy (a celebrity's most prized asset), then, is another Landry hallmark.

"They are in the public eye so much that they are very protective of their homes," he says. "That is why they so often choose to build their home in areas that allow for privacy, that are either guarded by landscaping or a gated subdivision."

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eclecticism, there is no common design pattern for celebrity homes—some seek grandeur, some seek minimalism, some seek traditional styles and some seek contemporary styles.

"Some celebrities are entertainers, so we would want to know about what sort of events they plan to host at their home in order to understand how people will circulate through the floor plan and where we should place the catering facilities," he explains. "Other celebrities want to stay out of the public eye completely, so we might include a home theater, an incredible rec room, a bowling alley or a beautiful gym—so they can enjoy these amenities with their family and close friends in the privacy of their home."

Celebrity or not, Landry approaches each client more or less the same. He listens and searches for the unspoken and spoken nuances, the "intangibles" that make people unique. Whether it's for his discretion or ability to see modern living in all its glorious complexity, Richard Landry has made an indelible impression on the world. He may operate on a small, yet exclusive stage—but his work reminds us that at the end of the day, he is simply bringing joy to people's lives in the most profound way an architect can—a personal home. ♦

