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# UNIQUE LIFESTYLES

Finding a Unique Home is only the beginning of creating The Unique Lifestyle. In this issue, we interview renowned architect Richard Landry, and we look at the developing trend of creating healthy homes.





**Le Grand Rêve, a Chicago-area estate, was inspired by a Loire Valley château.**

**T**he client list of Los Angeles-based architect Richard Landry includes faces from the covers of *Fortune*, *People*, *Vogue* and *Sports Illustrated*. His luxury homes have been built in 17 countries and their square footage and price tags are frequently staggering. But none of this really defines Landry as an architect.

Landry's passion for design has little to do with the fame of his clients, nor does he keep score by square feet or closing prices. It's the pursuit of exquisite craftsmanship and attention to detail that

gets this French-Canadian native out of bed every morning, not his commissions or celebrity following.

Landry's first job in Los Angeles, 30 years ago, was for a firm that designed theme parks, so the transition into the fantasyland of the luxury home market was relatively seamless. "There's a creativity that comes from themed architecture," says Landry, explaining that the process of researching different eras and styles informs his personal aesthetic. "You gather the essence of a particular style and translate it into your own," he suggests.

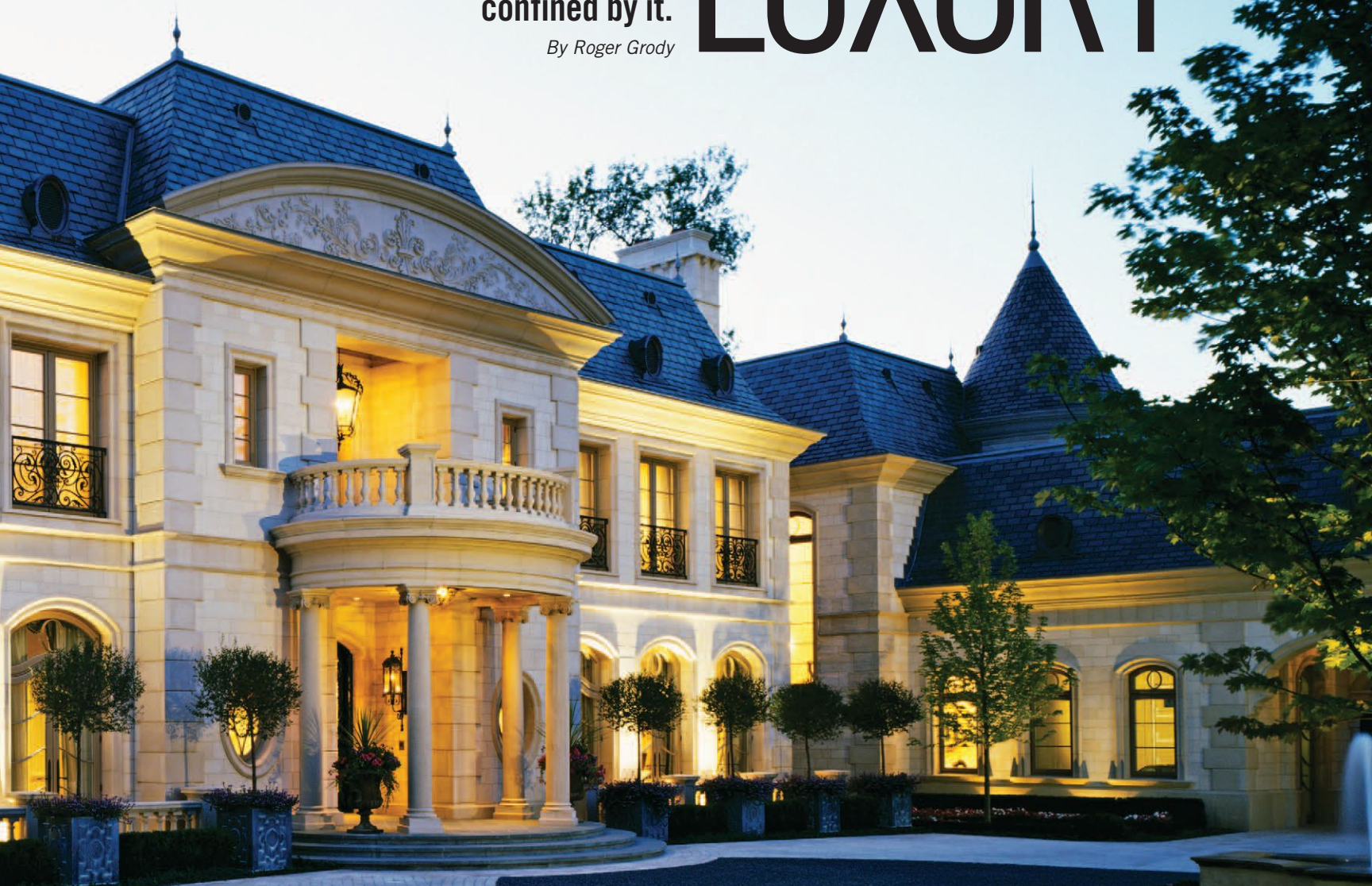
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# LANGUAGE OF LUXURY

Architect Richard Landry is inspired by history, but not confined by it.

By Roger Grody



The architect, born and raised in a small Quebec town, is not interested in replicating Tuscan villas or French châteaux, but clearly values them. "We don't aim to recreate architecture of the past, but are inspired by it and can place a historical style into a context suited to modern living." While he eschews the reproduction of landmarks brick-for-brick, he adopts the sense of scale that makes them timeless. "To achieve the proper proportions for Ionic columns, for instance, I use the original Greek formula."

In an affluent enclave outside Chicago, Landry created a stunning 26,500-square-foot home inspired by a château in the Loire Valley. Referred to as *Le Grand Rêve* ("the big dream"), the home features a 35-foot stained glass rotunda that took nine months to construct, showcasing a 900-pound crystal chandelier. A strict interpretation of the historic precedent would inhibit modern living, but this home's open floor plan and high-tech amenities reinforce the architect's ability to marry classical design with the way people live today.

"We're careful not to make a home look like a set design, and I hate the idea of using fake stone or roof tiles," states Landry. "Instead, we work with amazing craftsmen and search the world to find the right materials." One of Landry's signatures is his extraordinary attention to detail. "One can tell it's a Landry house because of its proper proportion, quality and detail," he insists.

Many architects enjoying Landry's success and acclaim tend to focus almost exclusively on their art, leaving to associates the less glamorous aspects of



the practice. But Landry has retained a passion for the human element, relishing his role as advisor and confidant. “I love sitting down with clients to understand their personalities, how they live and how they entertain,” reports Landry of his respect for the architect-client relationship.

“I want to be sure we have fun. Life is so short and the client is spending so much money, he ought to have fun too!” quips Landry. “We listen to clients. There’s no ego, no drama, and we want the client to enjoy the journey.” Part of the process is educational, he notes, showing clients just how far the envelope can be pushed. “But we always listen,” he reiterates, careful not to indulge his own fancies at the expense of his client.

Some of Landry’s most exceptional work involves contemporary design in which he’s free of the constraints of history and the meticulous research required to honor previous eras. “With contemporary architecture, we’re free to write our own language,” he says. Among his most notable modernist expressions is a Southern California

hillside estate comprising a series of four buildings that optimize views and privacy. The structures are unified by a circular stone tower — akin to a grand rotunda in one of his European-inspired homes — that rises above a unique, highly modernized version of a *porte-cochère*.

In a modern villa he created for a privacy-conscious client, Landry orchestrates a nuanced interplay between curvilinear and rectangular masses, punctuating the most expansive forms with water and glass. Simply arriving at the home is an experience filled with anticipation and drama, as the front entrance, surrounded by a two-story wall of glass, is accessed by traversing a reflecting pool. Immediately inside, a soaring foyer awaits, a space as sleek and geometric as Le Grand Rêve’s is classical and curvaceous. A floating staircase with a glass balustrade rises toward an elegantly cove-lit ceiling from which hangs a magnificent, one-of-a-kind chandelier conceived by interior designer James Magni with venerable Venetian glassmaker Barovier & Toso.

When Landry thumbed through architecture

tomes during his studies, he never tended to focus on the star power of the designers, and to this day the 57-year-old architect maintains that the experience generated by a space is more important than its pedigree. Landry admires peers Frank Gehry and Richard Meier and recognizes the genius of mid-century giant Richard Neutra, but doesn’t tend to engage in the deification of masters past or present, something many in his profession succumb to.

While his homes are often designed for larger-than-life clients, Landry constantly strives to retain the intimacy of spaces and insists that can be achieved no matter how massive a footprint is created. The architect’s personal residence is a contemporary beachfront home in Malibu, small by Landry standards, and his prior home was a reclaimed wood structure inspired by the Québécois barns of his youth.

“It’s not about how many rooms or how many square feet a home has. What’s important is the *feeling* you get when you walk through the door,” insists Landry. **U+I**

A dramatic foyer greets visitors at a contemporary villa designed by Richard Landry.



Architect  
Richard Landry

