



Getting In The Swim

Growing up as an expat child in Hong Kong, swimming pools were part of my daily routine. Everybody had a pool at their apartment complex and I have no recollection of learning to swim – it was as natural as learning to walk and talk.

On our trips back to the UK to visit family and friends I remember being distinctly unimpressed by the pools on offer – not that many people had home swimming pools in any case and if they did, they tended to be chilly, under heated outdoor numbers that only appealed to the hearty.

Fast forward a quarter of a century and indoor and exterior pools play a growing role in the construction of luxurious new build homes.

In Northern Europe, for the less hearty, an interior pool is a more practical option if you're

considering all year-round swimming. Although as a designer, I very much like the type of interior immersive pool that is constructed with fully glazed walls opening up to the outside area – that can be fully retracted in summer so that the pool is effectively brought outside.

In fact, I'd say that a carefully considered pool is a great asset – particularly when you're entertaining guests.

And all-round entertainment is the buzz here, because modern pool engineering means that you don't just have to dedicate an interior area

solely to a pool. Today's pools have moving floors which can be completely raised – so the area can multi-task and transform into a dance floor or even a concert hall. Being able to convert a valuable area into a space suitable for social gatherings is a bonus in city centre properties where space may be at a premium. The same engineering allows different depths to be set in a pool at different times – shallow for young children and deeper for serious swimmers.

When taking a brief from a client I always ascertain the effect that the client wants to

create and this is certainly worth pondering when considering a swimming pool – whether inside or outside. Is the pool going to be used in a spa setting, complete with hot tub, sauna and possibly a steam room? Will it be used exclusively by adults or will children be dipping in and out?

If an indoor swimming pool is going to be used as an entertainment area, then consider having some ‘toys’ built in – by which I mean an overhead swing, a bridge or maybe a whirlpool area. On the other hand, if a pool is going to be used for serious exercise, you might like to consider having a counter current swimming device included (which effectively has you swimming your lengths against the tide – so you need to swim faster and harder).

I like a pool area to emanate a mood of calm. With indoor pools acoustics can be an issue – I would insulate walls with soundproof boards to ‘soak’ up echoes and give a warmer audible tone to the space. Lighting is also critical around a pool area – it can be used to change the colour of the water, highlight accent features or create interest – in one pool I used GOBO lighting which projects a changing pattern or image around the walls.

A sound system also needs to be thought about – with music for parties or classical tones for contemplative lengths. Underwater music is also a recent development and special submersible speakers are available to deliver quality sound whilst you’re submerged!

I talked to my fellow interior designers and members of the BIID (British Institute of Interior Designers) to hear their thoughts on indoor pools. The overwhelming consensus of opinion is that interior swimming pools are becoming increasingly sought after.

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We’ve certainly found that those home owners / developers who have the space and budget are using these areas almost as another reception room adding entertainment into the equation. If done correctly and with taste it transforms what could end up being an under used space into an extension of family living.

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I think it has become a box to tick for a certain level of home, much as a home cinema has.

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Certainly pool technology has moved on in the past few decades and outdoor pool design no longer comes as one design fits all – blue tiled rectangles with a deep and shallow end. Modern lighting offers a number of different effects for exterior pools – for example neutral coloured stone combined with lilac coloured lights can create a romantic air of mystery.

Today's pools can incorporate Jacuzzis, underwater seating areas (beside a bar for example) or can resemble a natural pool that blends in with a landscaped garden and its own gently sloping beach. Such pools would be created from reinforced natural stone that works with, not against the environment. Swimming 'ponds' are another development, which will appeal to the eco-conscious. These are natural pools designed so that you can swim in chemical-free pure water, and can be sympathetically landscaped to fit in with the scenery – they'll also act as a wildlife sanctuary as well as a water feature. Gartenart have some interesting ideas in this area.

And of course, infinity pools (where the edge of the water meets the horizon, giving a seamless finish) add sophistication and glamour – and are a must-have if you have a beautiful view in the background.

Looking around some of the glorious indoor and outdoor pools being designed today by companies such as [The London Swimming Pool Company](#) and [Falcon Pools](#) I think my younger, expat self would have been highly impressed... as chilly exterior pools tucked away into a corner of a garden are now a thing of the past.

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