

# Great design starts with the right materials

What's it made of? This is the key question in the design of any new product, especially one we may live in for a long time.

We talk to the architects and designers of Vista Lago Residences, who take materials and finishes to a whole new level, never before seen in a residential development.

Article by Vivion O'Kelly. Images courtesy of BRIGHT.



A work of great architecture starts from the ground up. Whether residential, commercial or institutional, it builds upon its chosen site to become an integral part of the landscape, using materials and design that will not damage, either visually or environmentally, the land upon which it was built. And a work of great interior design starts from the floor up. In each case, the key element is the materials used. The quality of our lives is directly affected by the raw materials we live with every day. Getting them right is of vital importance to our well-being.

The first one sees of any structure is from the outside. First impressions may relate to size and shape, how it looks and how it makes one feel approaching the front entrance. All this has to do with architectural design, and with regard to Vista Lago Residences, the architects and interior designers at UDesign aimed to create something original and spectacular from the outside. But

they wanted a lot more than that. They wanted to ensure that, as one gets closer, it gets even better. And that's what they have achieved, not only through exceptional design but through the exceptional quality of the materials used in every part of the house.

On entering a house, one sees what it's made of, and disappointment will inevitably follow if it doesn't match the quality on the outside. What it's made of, the materials used, is probably the most important factor of all. One may choose one's own furniture and decorate the house to personal taste, and change it if need be, but if the materials that make up the house are anything short of perfect, it will never be perfectly right. What this means is that the designers of the home must start with the right flooring material before they can consider the walls, doors, windows and other elements. One cannot really change the floor afterwards.



Made in Italy

UDesign did not rush out and order the most expensive materials on the market, the best that money can buy. They didn't approach it from that mindset, because the best may not be the most expensive, but the most difficult to find. They source their basic interior (and some exterior) materials – tiles, stone, marble, porcelain – from Italy and Spain, in that order. The Italians have been in the business so long now that they know what to do with the raw materials, which are more or less the same everywhere. It's what one does with them that counts, and over time, they have developed the systems, the machines, to produce the very best in the world. That's not to say that UDesign do not search in other places: some Belgian companies, for example, come close.

Shopping in the right places

Each year UDesign visit the Cersaie International Exhibition in Bologna, perhaps the foremost tile and bathroom furnishings show in the world, and to the Cevisama exhibition in Valencia, the leading Spanish equivalent that showcases all kinds of stone and ceramic materials. The range on offer is extensive, from ceramics, stone, porcelain and marble to wood, doors,





kitchen facilities, bathroom furnishings, taps, lighting and so on. They have it all, and they have the very latest. The Italians have designed the machines that can print on porcelain, for example, so these new porcelain tiles can look and feel like stone. They take incredibly high-resolution images of the real stone, print it on porcelain and add texture. That, among many other reasons, is why the designers of Vista Lago shop where they do.

Shopping for such materials requires knowledge and experience too. No use sending the trainee sous-chef to the local market to buy the materials for dinner in a top-class restaurant – the chef himself must go. Only he has the knowledge and creativity to know what to do with what's available at any particular time. He plans from the ground up, so to speak. He cannot design his menu before seeing what's on offer, and he wants the best. He goes to the market to be inspired, and UDesign do the same.



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### *Design is in the details*

Tile size is especially important. Most tiles, whether ceramic, stone, marble or porcelain, measure 80 by 80 centimetres, or 100 by 100. That's too small for top quality, because logically, the bigger the tiles, the fewer lines between them. They need to be 120 by 140, or 100 by 300. The results are evident in many ways, one example being the kitchen island. It should grow organically out of the floor, built in the same material with as few lines as possible. If the floor is stone, the island looks like one huge block of stone. It may, depending on illumination, look like it's floating over the floor, but the materials must match. It's the same with other architectural features in the kitchen and bathroom, and throughout the house. UDesign are creating relatively neutral spaces that will accommodate more visually exciting pieces of furniture and fittings. But the furniture comes afterwards.

The client knows nothing of the effort and creativity needed to achieve these results, and that's how it should be. Their concern is the end product. They look at taps and sinks, washbasins and bathroom tiles, renderings and flooring, all the numerous elements that go into a new house, and they appreciate the results even if indifferent to how it all came about. If the materials are right from the start, they will last the course. And if chosen correctly, they will just get better with age and never go out of fashion.

**Vista Lago Residences is a luxury development of 18 individually designed sustainable villas. The development is located in the country club estate of Real de La Quinta and is just 15 minutes from Marbella town centre. For more information visit: [vistolago.es](http://vistolago.es) Or call the Sales Team directly on (+34) 648 981 111 Email: [info@by-bright.com](mailto:info@by-bright.com)**