



THIS MONTH CITY DWELLER MAGAZINE'S COLUMNIST CHRISTINE YORATH TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF A SENSE OF ARRIVAL AND IN PARTICULAR LOVELY COMMUNAL AREAS IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS

Almost 40 years ago I went to live in Vancouver for a couple of years, I was a WAG and already had three of my four children and anyone who has ever been there will probably understand why I loved my life there so much.

It took me awhile to get my head round moving my family around the world and my only regret is that it took me a few months to make the move I just wish I had made the decision more quickly.

Considering that it is nearly 40 years ago I looked back at my lifestyle then and realise how advanced it was compared to in the UK. My home had an integrated vacuum cleaner system throughout and a trash compactor in the kitchen and as our house was on an elevated site our sloping drive had underground heating which came on automatically in snow or icy conditions.

I made some lovely friends there and one evening was collecting someone I had met at my noon hour fitness class from her waterfront apartment where she lived between flights (she was an air hostess) The memory of that apartment building has stayed with me for four decades. Of course the location was stunning overlooking the

Pacific ocean but visitor parking was easy and most impressive was that sense of arrival. A portico entrance into a marble reception with the concierge desk and then into a beautiful, spacious, hotel-like lounge where residents could meet and greet their guests. There were settees and coffee tables and an area with magazines and newspapers and a small library section and a refreshment area with a coffee maker. I probably hadn't been in many apartment blocks back then but I had certainly never seen anything like this and I remember my friend, Sandy, telling me that they had a great laundry with coin operated machines which serve the building and became another social meeting place for residents.

In the UK we had found that we could build tower blocks to house a greater number of people on a smaller piece of land. The comparison has often been made that what we did was to turn rows of terraced houses on their end and built skywards! That has often been blamed for social isolation.

I have built apartment developments myself, although usually only around 24 units rather than tower blocks. I work as a consultant on apartment

schemes which currently includes ones in Leeds York and Scarborough and to keep my knowledge up-to-date I like to visit developments around the country and I'm pleased to see that at last some developers are seeing the importance of providing communal areas with a great sense of arrival and social interaction.

Of course it's only the larger schemes that can give over the square footage to provide a lovely lounge area or a swimming pool and spa otherwise it's just not commercially viable but even on smaller schemes there is no excuse for not making the most of the entrance hall and the communal staircase and the lift.

Almost 20 years ago I converted 19 Wellington Street in Leeds and I had the communal carpet made in Ireland and styled the communal areas appropriately for the grade 2 listed building and whilst I probably would do a different scheme nowadays there is still a feeling of comfort and luxury on entering that building. Three years ago I worked on Biba house in York and the entrance hall and corridors are still much complimented spaces.

Next time you go to view a new

apartment building let's hope you see more developers making an effort with their shared areas.



For more advice go to www.christineyorath.com or get in touch by emailing christine@yorathgroup.com or ringing 07836 737300.

*Till next time
Christine*

