

A large, detailed photograph of a coral reef aquarium. The scene is filled with various types of coral in shades of purple, blue, green, and red. Numerous colorful fish, including orange, yellow, blue, and pink species, are swimming throughout the tank. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the coral and the colors of the fish.

SOMETHING FISHY

The era of two goldfish and some multi-coloured gravel is over. Welcome to the serene, aquatic world of the super-tank, the enormous, watery wonderlands which are the new must-have addition to any luxury abode

WORDS: GEMMA KNIGHT



There's no two ways about it, mega-aquaria are big business. These colossal tanks, often many feet in diameter, holding hundreds of valuable exotic fish and requiring costly constant maintenance, can be found in the homes of a diverse range of high-profile figures that includes Wayne Rooney, Joe Hart, Gillian Anderson and the UAE Royal Family, not to mention a myriad of anonymous international billionaires and the luxury offices of such high-flying companies as Facebook, Estée Lauder, Finchatton and Toyota.

In fact, footballer Thierry Henry even wanted to re-build his trendy London home to incorporate an incredible 40ft-high tank flanking the central staircase and spanning the four-storey house from top to bottom. The project is currently on hold – perhaps unsurprisingly considering the logistics of slotting a £250,000 aquarium holding 300 fish and 5,500 gallons of water into the middle of your home – but you certainly couldn't accuse him of a lack of ambition.

So what is it about enormous aquariums that has the world's wealthiest racing to install them in their walls, coffee tables, king-size beds and even toilets? Aquarium Architecture, a British company with offices in the UK and America who count megastars the world over amongst their clientele, believe that 'the bespoke aquarium is a 21st century expression of ultimate luxury', which might have something to do with it.

But it seems it's not all just about showing off. 'For many, a bespoke aquarium is much more than just an illustration of wealth,' explains co-founder and creative director Roland Horne. 'Over the past few years we've noticed that they can be quite personal things and people are reluctant to show them off as they would, say, a sports car or private yacht. Aquariums offer a small but perfectly formed world that can be surveyed from the comfort of one's own home, and allow time-poor individuals to indulge in a hobby of the maintenance and cultivation of an abundant ecosystem.' →

IMAGE: AQUARIUM
IN A LUXURY
TOWNHOUSE
(PHOTO: AQUARIUM
ARCHITECTURE)



→And he should know. Amongst Aquarium Architecture's high-end creations are those at Home House members' club in Mayfair and the Exotic Thai restaurant in Dubai, as well as the incredible Fijian reef aquarium recently installed at the Melanesian-themed Urban Bar in Manchester (a stunning tank which holds over 1,500 litres of water and 150 kilos of live Fijian rock, all cleverly camouflaged to complement the interior of the bar).

Typically, however, they remain tight-lipped when it comes to name-dropping any of their individual clients, but we do know that they include 'a prominent Premiership footballer' and the owners of a string of penthouses, villas, townhouses and apartments from Hong Kong and Monte Carlo to Manhattan and Paris.

'The bespoke aquarium is a 21st century expression of ultimate luxury'

These moguls and megastars have requested such features as specific themes, fish species and designs evocative of personal hobbies or previous travels, a very definite sign of a sentimental link between owner and aquarium – a link that would rarely exist with the sort of luxury toys which are designed as much to impress others as personally please. It's also surely no coincidence that those with some of the most stressful and high-power jobs in the world are opting for items renowned for their calming influence.

According to property experts these epic statements of interior design certainly won't add value to your home, but if you happen to have a demanding job and long for a quiet oasis, it seems it's a case of the bigger the better. We can think of worse ways to unwind after a busy day than quietly surveying your aquatic empire with a glass of something chilled – though we'd avoid anything involving piranhas or baby sharks because, let's face it, nobody likes a Bond villain. 🐠

(aquariumarchitecture.com)

FROM TOP: AQUARIUM AT HENLEY HOUSE; AQUARIUM IN A LUXURY TOWNHOUSE; AQUARIUM AT QUEEN'S GATE; A NEW PROJECT BY AQUARIUM ARCHITECTURE; FAR RIGHT: VILLA RIVIERA (ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF AQUARIUM ARCHITECTURE)



