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Nature by Design

SOUTH FLORIDA'S FOREMOST EXPERTS ON BIOPHILIA AND DESIGN DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVING GREEN.

BY PATRICIA TORTOLANI

Biophilia—a desire to be close to nature—is a term that continues to grow in popularity since it was first introduced several decades ago. The benefits of surrounding yourself with nature include stress reduction, memory retention and mood elevation, among many others. So it comes as no surprise that biophilia is a growing trend in interior

design and among forward-thinking developers. One of those developers is Marcelo Kingston, whose 57 Ocean (57ocean.com)—an ultraluxury boutique residential building on Miami Beach—is set for completion in 2021. *Ocean Drive* sat down with Miami's premier experts on biophilia to discuss the future of design and development. The panel included Paloma Teppa, founder and creative

director of Plant the Future (plantthefuture.com); Yair Marcoschamer, who leads the development of the company alongside his wife, Paloma; Craig Morell, director of The Kampong national tropical botanical garden; and Margarita Blanco, co-founder and director of the award-winning ArquitectonicaGEO landscape architectural firm. What follows are highlights of the discussion.

ON HOW A TREE CAN AFFECT HUMAN BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS

"When people visit the garden at The Kampong, within a few seconds after they come through the gate, you see their whole body just relax. We see people just sigh, look up, look around—really just take in what they're seeing. Oftentimes when we are in nature, the colors and smells conjure memories from childhood. And ultimately that is a biophilic experience. Naturally you can experience this in a garden, but you may also feel it in a lobby filled with green or flowering plants. Honestly, take a moment to think if you've ever been stressed sitting on the pool deck, under the shade of some coconut palms. There are many different ways to experience biophilia, but there is no doubt that nature has a calming effect on the psyche. And I think people are hungry for that." —Craig Morell, director, The Kampong



The Kampong's west entrance

ON A WELLNESS-MINDED DEVELOPMENT

"There is evidence out there that supports that gardens alleviate stress and promote well-being; you just have to step into a garden and you feel like a different person. At 57 Ocean, we designed the landscape with this in mind, and push the envelope by delivering a natural landscape, made up of little pockets of wellness that promote relationships with birds and butterflies and other creatures healing the rift between humans and nature, especially in an urban environment. This is really an integral part of creating wellness for any project. I think that 57 Ocean is really ahead of all the others in that aspect." —Margarita Blanco, co-founder and director, ArquitectonicaGEO



ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING WITH NATURE

"A biophilic environment is essential for humanity. Biophilia is, in my opinion, one of the most important ingredients of life, providing harmony, balance and a flexible understanding of the surroundings. It is endless what we can learn from nature. Every space we inhabit should be a temple, a sacred space to reconnect with ourselves and the universe."
—Paloma Teppa, founder and creative director, Plant the Future



From left: The Kampong in Coconut Grove; "The Swimmer," an installation by Plant the Future.



KAMPONG PHOTO COURTESY OF THE KAMPONG, PLANT THE FUTURE PHOTO COURTESY OF PLANT THE FUTURE. 57 OCEAN PHOTO COURTESY OF DBOX



The terrace at 57 Ocean

ON PRIORITIES

"Businesses and developers should think differently about how they choose a space and how they plan that space. We need to think [about how] to prioritize the level of biophilia in spaces from both a budget perspective and a space consideration—if we can add a little bit more life, a little bit more plants, rather than putting a piece of furniture that maybe costs \$50,000. I think that it's about priorities shifting a little bit."
—Yair Marcoschamer, chief executive gardener, Plant the Future

ON THE 57 OCEAN EXPERIENCE

"The first experience when you arrive at 57 Ocean is two gigantic green walls, which are literally vertical gardens. These walls help clean the air we breathe, they provide soothing aromas and color, and they moderate the intensity of light and temperature. Once you enter the building, you're immediately connected to the ocean through its open central axis. We have a labyrinth that was designed to be a place of personal, psychological and spiritual healing. The aim of a labyrinth is to offer the user a walking path of quiet reflection. Since we did not have enough space in 57 to do a gigantic labyrinth, we designed a special, what we have called a finger, labyrinth that takes up far less room but still provides people with the same experience. So this project is really unique because the overall landscape encourages a lifestyle that will literally improve lives. It's about priorities shifting a little bit." —MB



ON THE FUTURE OF BIOPHILIC DESIGN

"In the future, I can see architects, designers and artists working with clear intention of preserving and collaborating with nature. I see a clear interest in urban gardening, designing landscape and considering pollinators and local plants, cities utilizing rooftops and terrace balconies in growing food gardens. I dream to see public parks providing free organic food for the neighborhood." —PT
 "You see the future in Singapore. To me, it is one of the most biophilic cities in the world. I think that over time hopefully Miami could become the next Singapore." —YM ■

From top: A relaxation terrace at 57 Ocean; the building's sauna and massage area.

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62 ocean drive

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