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'Who dares wins': meet Elnaz Namaki and Hugo van Bilderbeek, the duo taking over the West London property scene



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They were casually thrown together by a mutual friend in a London restaurant. “Oh, Hugo, you’re in property. Oh, Elnaz, you’re in property too - you two should speak!”

That was two years ago: today Elnaz Namaki and Hugo van Bilderbeek are fast becoming one of the hottest new propositions on the West London property scene. With an end-to-end service the designer and developer duo now have three large projects in Kensington, Notting Hill and Chelsea under their belts with numerous more in the pipeline.

The overlap might be an obvious one – van Bilderbeek’s background as a developer (project management and construction skills, tick) combined with Namaki’s construction, art and interior design expertise naturally leads to a more bespoke and joined up design and build service than is the norm.



This Chelsea penthouse is one of three large-scale projects the duo has already completed CREDIT: JAMES BALSTON

But, surprisingly perhaps, there are very few such collaborations that have proved so successful. According to Namaki, it’s a simple question of really good communication.

“Conventionally, developers and designers are used to the old fashioned, traditional way of building, with separate architects, builders and designers who often are unable to work effectively together,” she says, also explaining that breakdowns in communication can often lead to conflict – a blame culture, not to mention delays, unnecessary inefficiencies and compromise.

“We quickly realised that our parallel visions for delivering the highest quality and our united focus on attention to detail merged and could come alive if we collaborated together.



Elnaz Namaki is a property designer who describes her style as East-meets-West

Often our clients are more interested in the end product and less about the process of getting there, so having the whole team aligned with client’s vision creates a more dynamic culture and seamless work programme.”

Namaki, a British-born interior and product designer with Iranian heritage, describes her own style as a distinct East-meets-West combination, influenced further by her experience living in both Paris and Istanbul.

Mixing complex and bold patterns from her family roots with simple, innovative and modern design, she also prides herself on having a strong technical understanding of construction.

With a great deal of experience in bespoke furniture making, working alongside artisans and craftsmen, her interiors often feature pieces from her own furniture line, Luuna – the bold monochrome stripes in ultrasoft shearling are an easily identifiable signature.



Namaki's interiors mix complex and bold patterns from her family roots with simple, innovative and modern design CREDIT: JAMES BALSTON

Since founding HVB Development in 2014, Hugo van Bilderbeek has successfully built a strong reputation and relationships with its clients, including a variety of individuals, funds and investors. The move to a partnership that would enable the delivery of a full design and build service to include planning, design, construction and interiors was a logical next step.

“We both have a passion for developing original projects with an extremely high attention to detail,” he says. “Because we each understand what goes into every phase of a project, from initial planning process, to interior architecture design and building, and final styling – it’s a very respectful relationship and the added efficiency is so attractive to our clients.”

Their first project in Notting Hill - a townhouse - set the ball rolling with a word-of-mouth effect that has resulted in a waiting list for clients, and was quickly followed by a super prime development and a large penthouse on King's Road. A 10-bedroom villa project in Kensington and a lateral apartment development in Notting Hill are also both underway.



Hugo van Bilderbeek has a background in major property development

By uniting the design and building teams expertise and knowledge, the duo is able to achieve enhanced quality finishes and detailing. For example, knowing what various materials (such as wood, metal, leathers, fabrics or stone) are being designed and specified for different areas allows the correct preparation work from the outset, ensuring clean lines, junctions and seamless joints between various finishes.

“We pride ourselves and care about the entire process, whereas when design and building teams work separately, they think separately and only care about their own work,” says Namaki.

“There are so many examples of refurbishments of old period buildings when we have come across unexpected structural issues that would ordinarily take a long time to resolve if working separately. But together, we are flexible and able to act quickly with design solutions to overcome such inevitable obstacles.”



The duo's shared motto "who dares wins" sums up their philosophy that creating unrepeated spaces requires bravery

Van Bilderbeek cites another practical example: "If the design team came in too late in the construction programme and decided to alter the layout of a bathroom to meet the client's needs better, then the building infrastructure would most likely need to be changed significantly, causing delays and increased costs. We are able to prepare all the building foundations and groundwork from the beginning of the project in order to achieve the client's end goals and vision."

Warm and refined with an original blend of linear and textured designs rooted in earth tones with pops of colour, their shared motto "who dares wins" sums up their philosophy that creating unrepeated spaces requires bravery and a determined commitment to originality.

"We believe that every interior space should tell a story and reflect personalities whilst enhancing the original character of the building and its historic context," says Namaki, stressing that every design is treated as bespoke. "We ensure the originality by sourcing exclusive materials from specialist suppliers and artisans across the world."

Serendipity may have brought them together but it's careful planning that has become the foundation for their success so far and theirs is an ambitious new partnership. Watch this space.