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VOICES

## Alexandra Champalimaud Talks Green Design

*The designer has become adept at blending uber luxury with eco-consciousness*

By Hadley Keller

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A rendering of an apartment in 200 East 21st Street, a new green development by Alexandra Champalimaud.

Photo: Courtesy of Alfa Development

Alexandra Champalimaud's name is practically synonymous with luxury. The New York-based designer has conceived the lush interiors for such iconic spaces as the Carlyle in New York, the historic Belmont Mount Nelson in Cape Town, and the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles, in addition to residential projects for many well-heeled private clients. Champalimaud has just released plans for her latest project, a luxury condominium project at 200 East 21st Street in New York, which she designed in partnership with BSKS Architects and Alfa Development and which the team hopes

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will nab LEED Gold certification. To achieve this, BKSK and Champalimaud devised a slew of eco-conscious features that don't compromise on luxury: a green roof, a solar-powered water supply, FSC-certified wood finishes, and water-saving Miele fixtures, to name a few. At a time when environmental consideration is more important than ever, AD PRO caught up with Champalimaud to hear more about how to incorporate Earth-friendly aspects into even the most upscale projects.



The lobby.

Photo: Courtesy of Alfa Development

**AD PRO:** How do you balance your luxury projects with the desire to be green?

**Alexandra Champalimaud:** Aesthetic is not a hurdle, because a good design defends itself. All projects demand green considerations in some regard, and we are well-versed in delivering.

**AD PRO:** What are the biggest changes you have to make to your process when designing a LEED or eco-friendly building?

**AC:** In approaching the design process at 200 East 21st Street and delivering on the standards of a LEED Gold building, we felt up for the task because sustainable design is simply smart design, which we achieve in all of our work. We utilized responsibly sourced materials and finishes that would have minimal environmental impact while also maintaining a high standard of luxury, and selected energy-

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efficient appliances that would allow residents to enjoy the most state-of-the-art technology without compromising their commitment to conscious living.



A view across a unit. The building will include one to four bedroom apartments.

Photo: Courtesy of Alfa Development

**AD PRO:** What have you learned most about green building by working on projects like 200 East 21st Street?

**AC:** We must be mindful of a material's origins and make the effort to use natural and sustainable materials that are locally sourced and recyclable.

**\_\_AD PRO:\_\_** What's the biggest hurdle in designing a green building?

**AC:** We treated the hurdles of this project as moments to educate and enlighten ourselves. We had to be more mindful with the material selection—balancing sustainable materials with a high luxury aesthetic. It was enormously important that we chose vendors that are transparent with where they are sourcing. Beyond material selection, we were equally deliberate in our consideration of every aspect of the design. For example, we extended the entry foyers by ten feet to be sure residents and guests would track in less mud and dirt, thus requiring less cleaning. It's simple adjustments—or in some cases not so simple—like these that help to conserve waste.



The kitchen will be outfitted with water-conserving Miele appliances. A solar-powered system will provide 60 percent of the building's water.

Photo: Courtesy of Alfa Development

**AD PRO:** Have you adopted any of the practices you've learned on green or LEED buildings into your other projects?

**AC:** Sustainability and conservation are valued by our clients and a promise we deliver on. We are known not only for luxury multifamily residential, residential interiors, and international hotels, but also for historical renovations—something we do quite well. In each building, we incorporate existing structures and materials when we can, being mindful of the history and paying homage to the tradition and story that exists.



The roof garden, with landscaping by Halsted Welles Associates.

Photo: Courtesy of Alfa Development

**AD PRO:** What do you think will be the biggest change to design due to green consideration five years from now?

**AC:** I think the real-estate industry will continue to see greater innovations in sustainable and green design practices. The generations to come are increasingly more considerate of the earth and how they can make a difference in every aspect of their life—from how they live to the types of hotels they stay in. Consumers will greatly affect designers because we will have to meet the standards of what is expected. It is not a trend!

<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/alexandra-champalimaud-200-east-21st-green-design>