
The most outrageous things the wealthy have purchased in the past decade

BY DENISE KOK



For one Wall Street billionaire, the interiors of his Gulfstream 550 private jet was transformed to mirror his Manhattan office, complete with an US\$85,000 custom trading desk. (Photo: International Jet Interiors)

From S\$1.2 million Monopoly sets to a S\$610 million artwork that broke the world record for most expensive painting, these are the luxuries coveted by those who have it all.

According to a 2019 Global Wealth Report from Credit Suisse, the number of millionaires in the world grew to nearly 47 million over the past year. Their combined net worth of US\$158.3 trillion (S\$214 trillion) accounts for nearly 44 per cent of the world's total wealth. While some may choose to live way below their means, others have had no qualms splurging on exorbitant, but sometimes questionable, purchases.

TIFFANY & CO. 18K GOLD PAPER CLIP BOOKMARK



(Photo: Tiffany & Co.)

Marcel Duchamp's Readymades – found objects that the French artist picked up and presented as art – have nothing on Tiffany & Co.'s 18K gold paper clip, handcrafted by the luxury jeweller's artisans, no less. Measuring 2.5 inches, the object described Tiffany's as 'a whimsical bookmark', comes with a US\$1,500 (S\$2,000) price tag – a figure that makes the astronomical inflation rates in Venezuela pale in comparison.

For a brand better known for its diamond rings, this unusual object (of desire?) certainly lies beyond Tiffany's usual portfolio. The gold clip is one of over 300 items sold under the brand's Home & Accessories collection, which includes such extravagant items as a silver ball of yarn and sterling silver clothespin.

GEOFFREY PARKER ALLIGATOR MONOPOLY SET



(PHOTO: GEOFFREY PARKER)

Develop as extensively and as swiftly as you can. Snatch up choice properties, but don't bother with utilities. These moves, according to gaming experts, are the key to gaining an upper hand in the game of Monopoly.

But for the wealthy who have long conquered the financial game of life, luxury games maker Geoffrey Parker gave them the opportunity to immortalise their milestones in a custom-made Monopoly set sheathed in alligator skin, complete with sterling silver playing pieces and street names that take after one's achievements.

The British brand, which prides itself on three-generations of craftsmanship in the luxury games niche, has sold such Monopoly boards for £700,000 (\$\$1,233,500).

LEONARDO DA VINCI'S SALVATOR MUNDI



(Photo: Christie's)

In November 2017, Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi went under the hammer at a Christie's auction for US\$450.3 million (S\$610 million), shattering auction highs to become the world's most expensive painting. For a painting whose authenticity has been intensely debated, the price tag seemed almost astronomical.

The identity of the anonymous bidder, thought to be a close ally possibly acting on behalf of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, turned out to be just as mysterious as the fate of the painting – which appears to have disappeared into thin air. The painting was slated to go on display at the Louvre Abu Dhabi last September, but never did. No official explanations were issued.

SKY-HIGH TRADING DESK



(Photo: International Jet Interiors)

In the world of stock trading, a few seconds is all it takes to win or lose a five-figure sum. For one Wall Street billionaire who wanted to continue trading in real time 40,000 feet in the air – a US\$2.5 million (S\$3.4 million) makeover of his Gulfstream 550 private jet was valued as a fair trade in his world where time is money.

The interiors of the plane was transformed to mirror his Manhattan office while a US\$85,000 custom trading desk worked in tandem with US\$100,000 high-speed satellite communications equipment to ensure business as usual. Five Italian leather seats, each priced at US\$45,000, were also specially commissioned for the plane.

BILLIONAIRE'S PERSONAL BILLBOARD



(Photo: International Jet Interiors)

Hell hath no fury like a billionaire scorned. For American developer Harry Macklowe, installing a 13-by-seven metre portrait of himself and his fiancée Patricia Landeau on a Park Avenue building in New York City seemed like a sensible thing to do – just in case his ex-wife Linda Macklowe missed the news about his forthcoming nuptials.

Linda had filed for divorce in 2016, leading the former spouses of 58 years into acrimonious battles over their East Hamptons home, an art collection valued at over US\$700 million, and real estate at 432 Park Avenue – the very same building featuring the midtown mural of the new lovebirds.

Macklowe's over-the-top proclamation of love – and war – is proof that with enough dough to spare, building facades are just unrealised real estate for airing one's dirty laundry.

LUXURY REHAB



Celebrities and other wealthy individuals thrown off-kilter by years of alcoholism, eating disorders, and depression have been quietly checking themselves into Paracelsus Recovery, an exclusive recovery centre located on a lakefront in Zurich, Switzerland.

Founded in 2012, the centre staffed by a team of therapists, doctors, and nurses treat only one patient at a time, supported by a slew of butlers, chefs, as well as a 24-hour concierge service. The cost of checking in for a week of treatment comes up to CHF80,000 (\$\$110,550).