Design 9 Comes to Columbus Circle: Modern Luxury Interiors Honors the Northeast at Ascent Lounge

Design 9 Awards, November 16, 2026, Ascent Lounge, The Shops at Columbus Circle: Modern Luxury Interiors honored the best of Northeast residential design above Columbus Circle.

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The Design 9 Awards presentation at Ascent Lounge, above Columbus Circle, November 16, 2026. Still from event footage.

At 6:40 on Monday evening the fourth-floor corridor of The Shops at Columbus Circle was nearly empty, except at its far end. There, beside the brass letters of Ascent Lounge on a wall of wood paneling, a low planter had been wrapped in strings of warm white light and silver garland, coats were going onto a rail and a check-in table was busy. Inside, under ring chandeliers and a screen carrying a tall orange 9, Modern Luxury Interiors was about to hand out its 2026 Design 9 Awards for the Northeast.

Design 9 comes to Columbus Circle

Modern Luxury Interiors, the design title of the publisher Modern Luxury, presented the 2026 Design 9 Awards for its Northeast edition on Monday, November 16, 2026, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Ascent Lounge, on the fourth floor of The Shops at Columbus Circle, 10 Columbus Circle, with an entrance at 60th Street and Broadway. The organizer billed the evening as a celebration of "nine exceptional visionaries whose creativity, artistry and innovation are shaping the future of regional design."

The Northeast program covers residential work in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Its 2026 competition rules required every project to be located in those three states, wherever the designer is based, and to have been completed between 2023 and 2026. Architects, interior designers, builders and landscape professionals could all enter, and Modern Luxury said its winners would be announced at the Design 9 event in November and published in the magazine's Volume 4 Design 9 issue.

Benjamin Moore, James Hardie, Brizo, Hästens and Hudson Valley Lighting Group were the evening's named sponsors, and their marks shared the step-and-repeat wall with *Modern Luxury Interiors* and its sister title *Manhattan*.

The evening at Ascent Lounge

The room did much of the decorating on its own. Ascent's floor-to-ceiling windows look out over Columbus Circle and the towers of Central Park South, and by the time the program began, a little after 7 p.m., the glass was a wall of lit apartment windows with the traffic of the circle moving below. Crystal ring chandeliers hung over the lounge seating; brass faucets rose from several of the round cocktail tables among the sofas, a fittings display set straight into the party. A tall arrangement of white flowers stood beside the screen that announced the Design 9 Awards.

The magazine brought its own covers. Enlarged editions of *Modern Luxury Interiors* stood on easels beside a stand of potted palms: one, under the cover line "Ground Work," showed a man in denim at a white front door, a black dog asleep at his feet; on the table below sat stacks of an issue whose cover line read "Martha Knows Best." A third enlarged cover, "Master of the Mix," wrapped the front of the clear acrylic podium, and a row of clear display blocks waited on the console behind it between silver bobbin candlesticks.

Black River Caviar ran a "Lucky Dip." A card on its table invited guests to fill out an entry for the chance to win a tin of caviar, and a glass bowl filled up with the cards. Caviar was served from a tin set in a silver bowl of ice, with a plate of potato chips and a pot of crème fraîche alongside.

The presentation moved briskly. A screen titled "Editorial Leadership" put up the portraits of the title's editors from its regional markets, followed by a grid of Modern Luxury Media covers. From the podium, guests heard that this year's program had drawn more than 1,500 entries from across the country, and the welcome ended on the theme of the night: "We honor you, the designers, creators, and innovators who transform spaces into stories and homes into works of art."

Then the categories began. Each award came up on the screen as a slide headed "Best," with photographs of the winning rooms and the Design 9 Awards mark in the corner, and the honorees crossed the small stage to collect their awards and say a few words of thanks while the room applauded and phones went up. Afterward the crowd drifted back to the bar, the step-and-repeat and the windows.

Nine categories and a Home of the Year

Modern Luxury had not published the 2026 Northeast honorees by the morning after the ceremony. The magazine says the winners will appear in the Volume 4 Design 9 issue of *Modern Luxury Interiors Northeast*, and this story will name them once that official list is out.

The structure of the awards is public. The 2026 Northeast rules set out nine categories. Four are for whole houses, and each project may enter only one of them: Best Vacation Home, Best Traditional Residence, Best Contemporary Residence and Best Renovation. Five are for individual rooms, where a single project may compete more than once: Best Kitchen, Best Bathroom, Best Primary Suite, Best Living Room and Best Outdoor Living Space. Every house entry is also considered for Home of the Year.

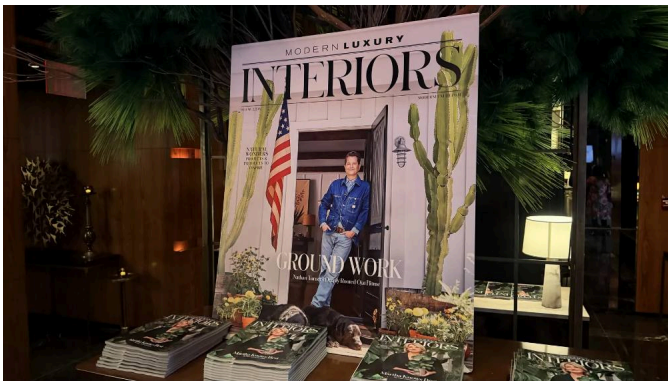
A panel of Modern Luxury Interiors editors-in-chief and design ambassadors scored the entries. Submissions opened May 1, 2026, and the published deadline was August 21, 2026. Projects published elsewhere qualified only if they had first appeared more than six months before submission, so the honorees' work is new to most readers.

Design 9 at Ascent Lounge

Photographs and short films from the 2026 Design 9 Awards for the Northeast at Ascent Lounge, Columbus Circle, on November 16, 2026: the arrival, the room above the circle, the presentations and the caviar table.



The entrance to Ascent Lounge on the fourth floor of The Shops at Columbus Circle as guests checked in, November 16, 2026.



Enlarged Modern Luxury Interiors covers and stacks of the current issue in the lounge, November 16, 2026.



The lounge's windows over Columbus Circle during the presentation, November 16, 2026. Still from event footage.



An award category on the screen as the presentations began, November 16, 2026. Still from event footage.

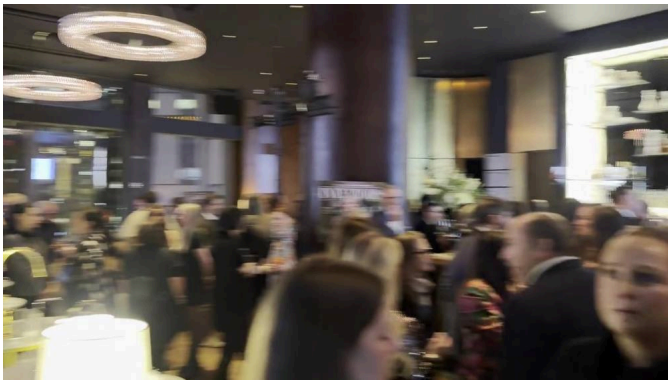


Guests beneath the Design 9 Awards screen before the program, November 16, 2026. Still from event footage.



The Design 9 Awards step-and-repeat, with the evening's sponsors, November 16, 2026. Still from event footage.

At Ascent Lounge on November 16



Ascent Lounge before the program · 10 seconds
The lounge filling up beneath the Design 9 Awards screen and the windows over Columbus Circle, November 16, 2026. Event footage, without sound. Open video



The welcome from the podium · 12 seconds
The welcome from the podium, honoring “the designers, creators, and innovators who transform spaces into stories and homes into works of art,” November 16, 2026. With the presentation's sound. Open video



An honoree accepts · 11 seconds
An honoree accepts a Design 9 award as the winning rooms appear on the screen, November 16, 2026. With the presentation's sound. Open video



Black River Caviar's Lucky Dip · 4 seconds
Caviar served from a silver bowl of ice at Black River Caviar's Lucky Dip table, November 16, 2026. With the room's ambient sound. Open video

How the Design 9 Awards grew

Design 9 began as a series of regional competitions and has spread across Modern Luxury's markets. In Arizona, the architecture firm Drewett Works reported winning Best Primary Suite at what it called Modern Luxury's 2nd-annual Design 9 Awards, held November 7, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Scottsdale. Modern Luxury's 2025 rules described the competition as running in ten regional markets (2025 Northeast rules). The 2026 rules say eleven.

New York joined in 2025. Modern Luxury Interiors Northeast held its inaugural New York Design 9 Awards that year.

The 2026 season moved through the country in the days before the New York evening. Modern Luxury published regional winners for the Midwest (Home of the Year), Dallas (Home of the Year and Best

Contemporary) and Houston (Home of the Year and Best Contemporary) between November 12 and November 17, one post per category.

Modern Luxury and its Interiors title

Modern Luxury publishes city and regional lifestyle magazines across the United States. Its New York titles include *Manhattan* and *Hamptons*. The company's reach in the city grew in 2017, when it acquired GreenGale Publishing, whose portfolio included *Gotham* and *Hamptons*.

Interiors is a long-running category for the company. In March 2025, Business of Home reported that Modern Luxury was launching *Modern Luxury Interiors* as a national quarterly built on its nine regional interiors editions, with editors embedded in 24 markets. Phebe Wahl, then described as editor in chief of Modern Luxury and overseer of the regional interiors publications, said interiors had been "always high-performing for us," and that the editors "know what the design scene is like in Aspen or Miami." By September 2026, Business of Home was listing Wahl as Modern Luxury's executive vice president of editorial. The "Editorial Leadership" slide on Monday night made the same point visually: one national title, many regional editors.

Ascent Lounge at The Shops at Columbus Circle

Ascent Lounge describes itself as a luxury cocktail lounge and event venue on the fourth floor of The Shops at Columbus Circle. It opened in 2015 as the flagship of Brian and Carrie Packin, who founded City Nights Hospitality in 2009 with 48 Lounge in Rockefeller Center. The room has panoramic views of Central Park South, and its sound and lighting are built for DJs and live entertainment. According to the venue, it holds up to 500 guests standing or 200 seated.

When Time Out reviewed the lounge in 2016, it described a "glam overhaul" of the former Parkview Lounge space, with velvet armchairs, crystal chandeliers, a mirror-backed bar and banquettes along floor-to-ceiling windows above Columbus Circle. Ascent is part of the Restaurant and Bar Collection at The Shops at Columbus Circle, which also includes Per Se, Masa, Bad Roman and Twin Tails.

The sponsors: paint, siding, fittings, beds and light

The evening's sponsors each make something that ends up inside or on the outside of a house. Benjamin Moore, based in Montvale, New Jersey, has been making paint since 1883. James Hardie makes fiber cement siding, trim and soffit for home exteriors. Brizo is the luxury fittings brand in the Delta Faucet Company portfolio. Hästens, the Swedish bedmaker founded in 1852, has been a Royal Purveyor to the Swedish court since 1952. Hudson Valley Lighting Group grew from a family lighting business that moved to New York's Hudson River Valley in 1947, and David Littman founded the company in the 1980s; its brands now include Hudson Valley Lighting, Troy, Corbett, Mitzi, Schoolhouse, Sonneman and CSL.

The caviar came from farther afield. Black River Caviar is a family-owned producer that says it has been focused on sustainably harvested caviar for more than 20 years. Its listing in Uruguay XXI's export catalog says it has raised sturgeon since 1995, Oscietra and Baerii, at a CITES-certified farm, the first in the Southern Hemisphere to raise sturgeon for caviar, and that the United States is among its ten export markets.