

Inside Outside

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RS 69

A 'glass' house designed by
Hameeda Sharma in Hyderabad

Inspiring work spaces by
Nitin Killawala

Introducing YOO Design Studio,
co-founded by John Hitchcox
and Philippe Starck

SHOP AROUND TOWN...

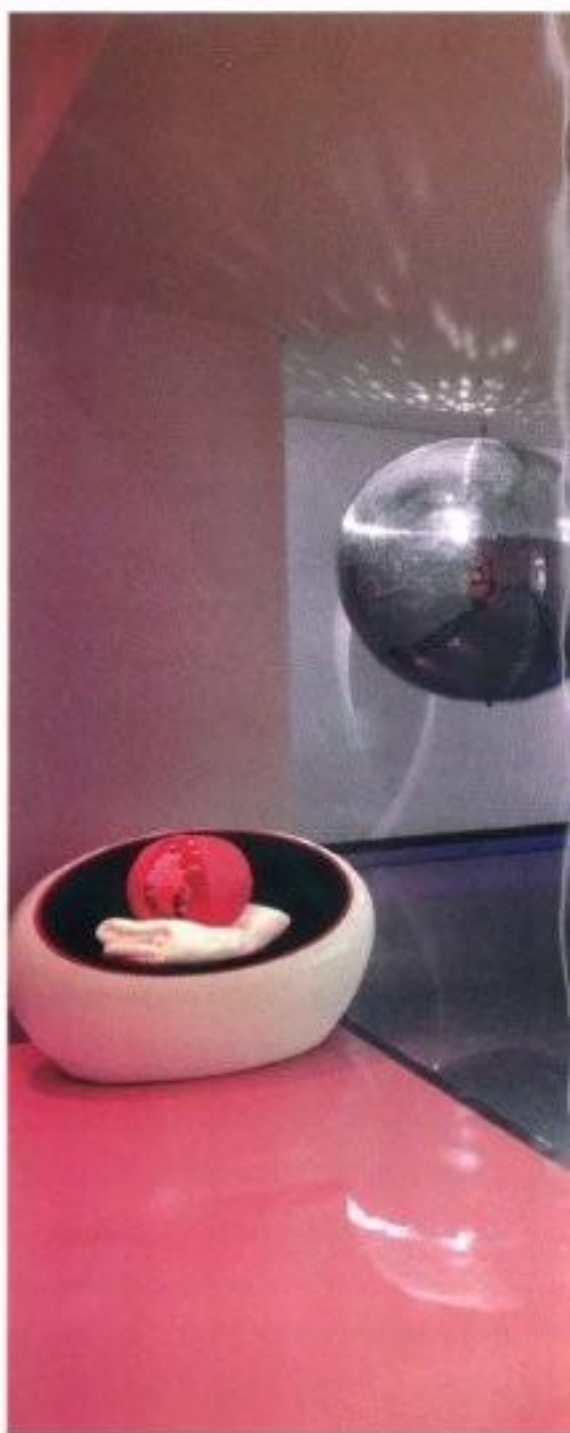
An
award
winning beach
cottage in
Brazil by
Juliana Lahóz

A pristine white home – avant-garde yet vastu compliant by KNS Architects



John Hitchcox

Philippe Starck



TEXT: DEVIYAN JAYAKAR
PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY YOO

Bedroom (Classic)



slightly out of wind because of the pedalling, he also gets a little carried away. 'Our design is democratic. It is not only high end, or meant for the elite.' Really? The price of a Fabela chair would furnish an entire room, maybe more, for the 'non-elite' in India and possibly elsewhere too. Surely John knows that. 'My long term aspiration is to bring good design to everyone,' he continues, making it sound almost like social work.

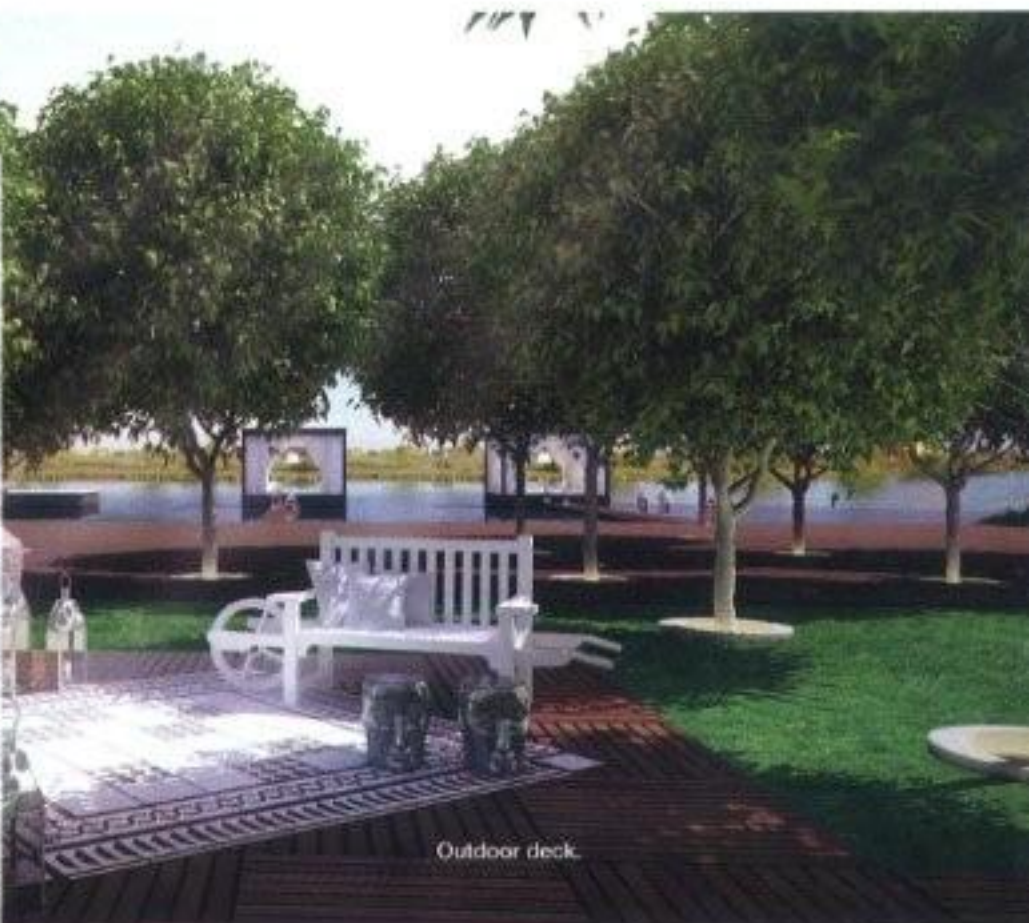
Since YOO has tied up with Panchshil, a developer in Pune, it seems logical to ask John how designing for the Indian market is 'different.' 'In India, apartments as well as families are larger, with more staff. The lifestyle is more family oriented, reflected in parenting styles – and kitchens are more important because of the variety and frequency of meals cooked. The difference between the west and India, is like drawing a comparison between arranged and love marriages. Indian buyers are also well travelled, with exposure to international style and design.' And does YOO use Indian labour in the projects here? 'Of course!' says John.

Bathroom (Classic)

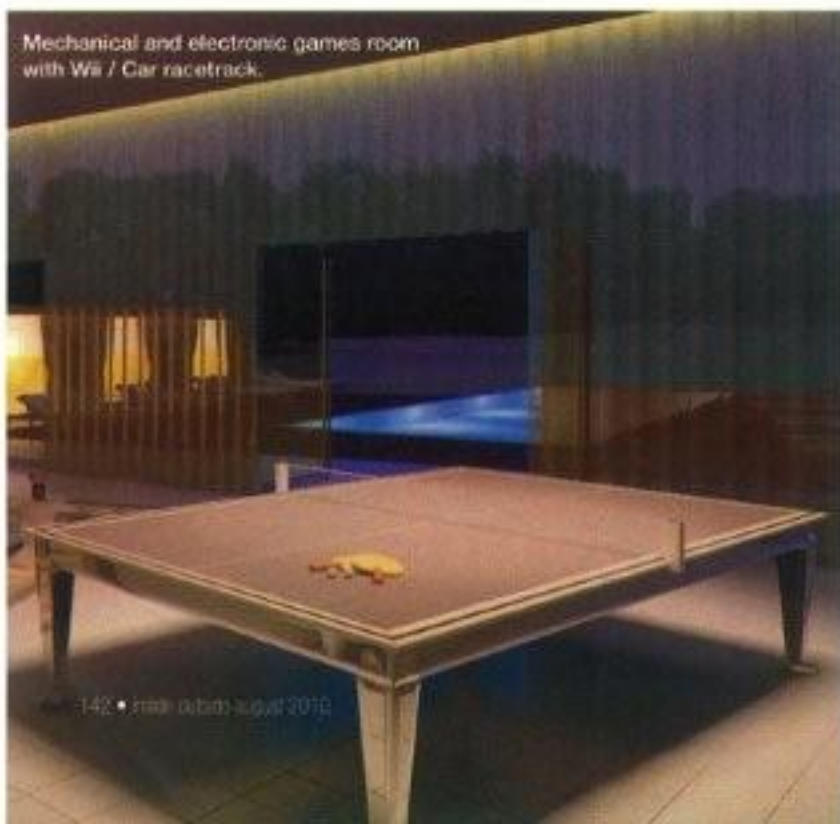


Philippe draws a distinction between the way he deals with public spaces and private ones. 'In public spaces, my job is like a film director. I have to tell a story and print the strongest memory of the place on everyone who visits, use every tool available to astonish and provoke. In private spaces, it is the opposite. I must be very humble, silent and almost disappear.' But is that what Philippe actually does? Even the private spaces carry an indelible stamp, explore the gray spaces and blurred lines between different styles, pushing the viewer to shed complacency and embrace the new. The aesthetic soars, taking that Keatsian leap into the subconscious, to wrench viewers into an experience that will stay with them for a long time...irreversibly raising the design bar in the process.

Good design is about entertainment, not just functionality. And YOO's celebrity designers inherently understand that. Aesthetics is visual entertainment. Humanity, fun and humour are the core values. 'These designers have created some of the most popular pieces of furniture in the world. The lineup of superstars definitely gets us more attention, but our dedication to design is second to none. The fact that they are big names is only an aside,' says John. So YOO continues to create a precocious, delightful, sometimes quirky mix of seemingly disparate looks, both witty and classic at the same time. Look at their work, and you are reminded of the Frank Lloyd Wright witticism: 'Give me the luxuries of life and I will willingly do without the necessities.' 📌



Outdoor deck.



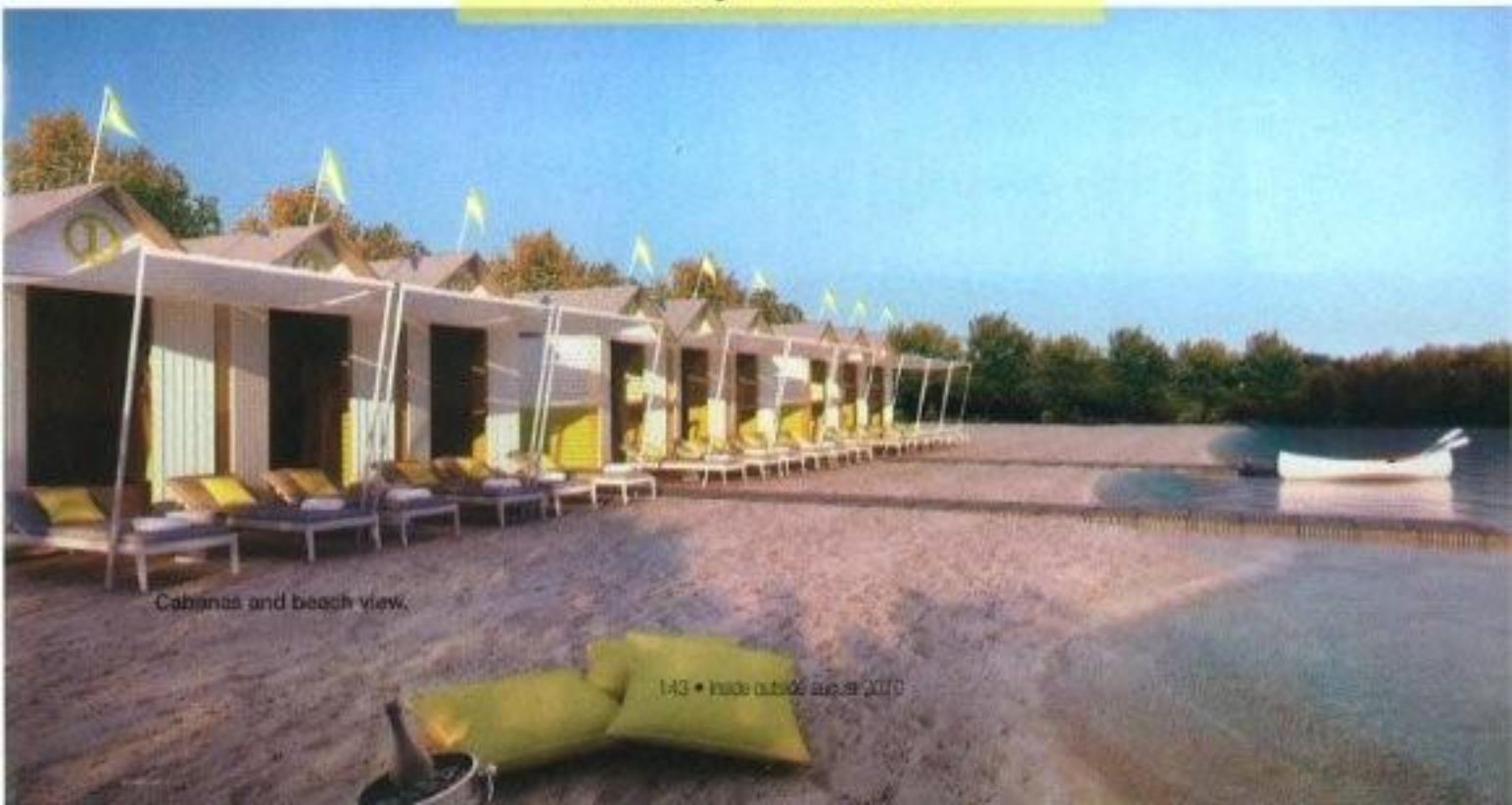
Mechanical and electronic games room with Wii / Car racetrack.

INTERNATIONAL DESIGN

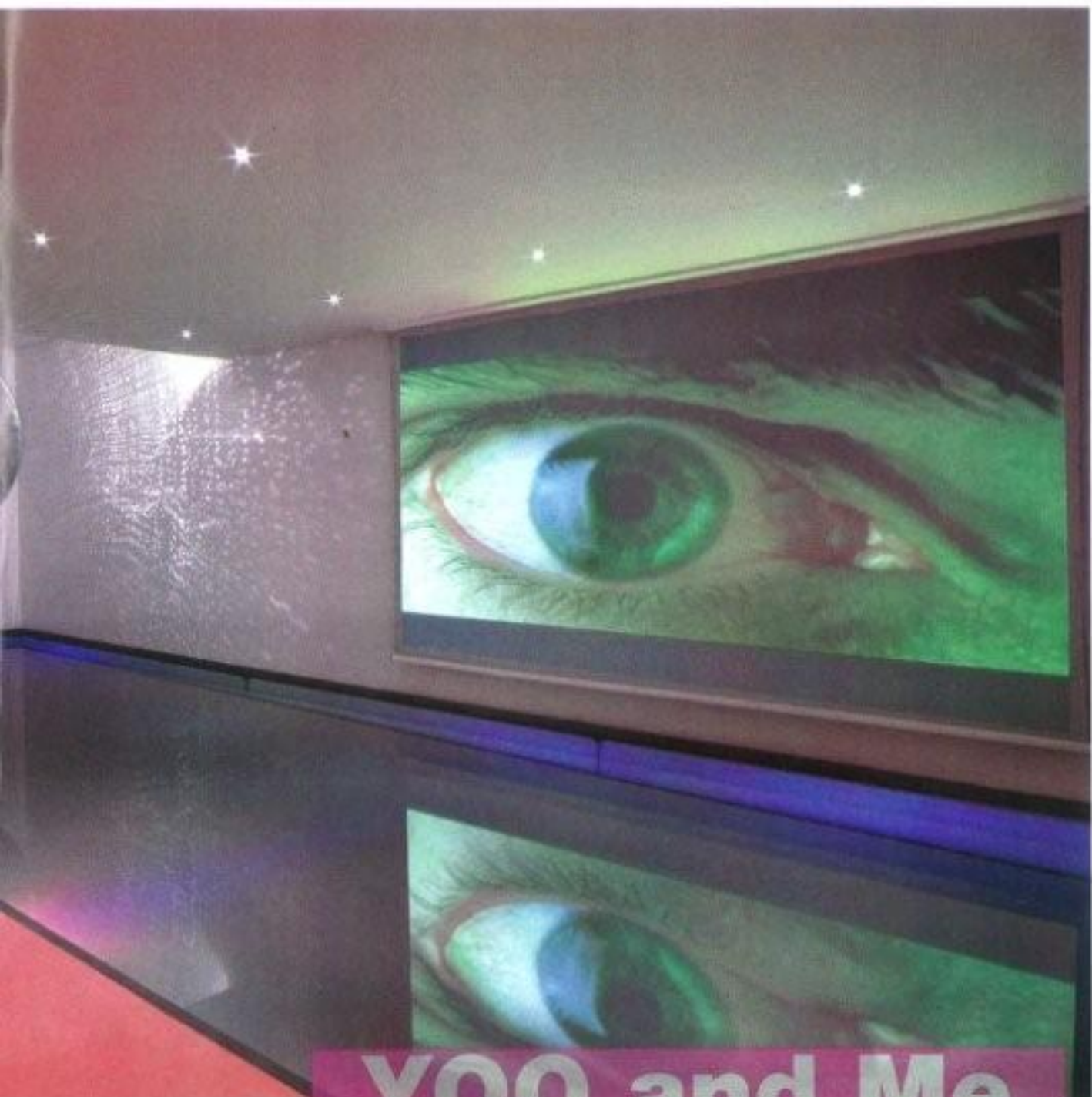
Pool.



'I understand developers. I have property in my blood. I realise that everything is not just art and design — it also has to sell.'




Cabanas and beach view.



YOO and Me

YOO, a company founded by John Hitchcox and Philippe Starck, ties up with developers all over the world to create properties with exquisite high end décor, consummately fine tuned by designers such as Kelly Hoppen, Jade Jagger and Marcel Wanders. A property in Argentina and John's own home in London, showcase their picture-perfect skills.



Conducting an interview over a long distance telephone call, with the interviewee bicycling in London's Hyde Park, was certainly a first for me.

Pedalling away, John Hitchcox was just multitasking, I suppose, getting both exercise and interview out of the way – and being what I assume would be his customary informal self. Which other jet set potentate of a multibillion empire do you know, who insouciantly grants interviews while perched atop a wobbly two-wheeler in a public space? Was he using a Bluetooth, I wonder. Using one hand to hold the cell phone to his ear, would just be more evidence of his skill in balancing acts. To be involved in the development of more than 10,000 apartments valued at over \$7 billion in 27 different countries, is definitely a serious balancing act.

John is a design-based property developer, who has partnered with different design professionals, to create YOO, a company which designs and sells apartments in a range of branded styles, full of the latest ideas and gadgetry. Partnerships are at the core of John's business. 'Everything in a partnership is more time-consuming, but also more rewarding,' he says. Is John essentially designing what Indians understand as 'showflats'? Not quite. It is that and more.

YOO has created award winning designs, which have an immediate impact on sales. 'We do imaginative, stand-out interiors best, a critical part of which is sourcing from around the world,' says John. Yes, we can see that,

Of his own home in London, John says airily, 'I couldn't decide which colour to use, so I just used white.' There is no pretense about the 'philosophy' behind it, or the 'associations' with the colour.



A disconcertingly pink corner features pink wallpaper, a large stuffed bunny, a delicate glass-topped dressing table and a pink shaggy rug. The many shades of pink, all the way through red, recur all over the house, the look ranging from high tech to homey.

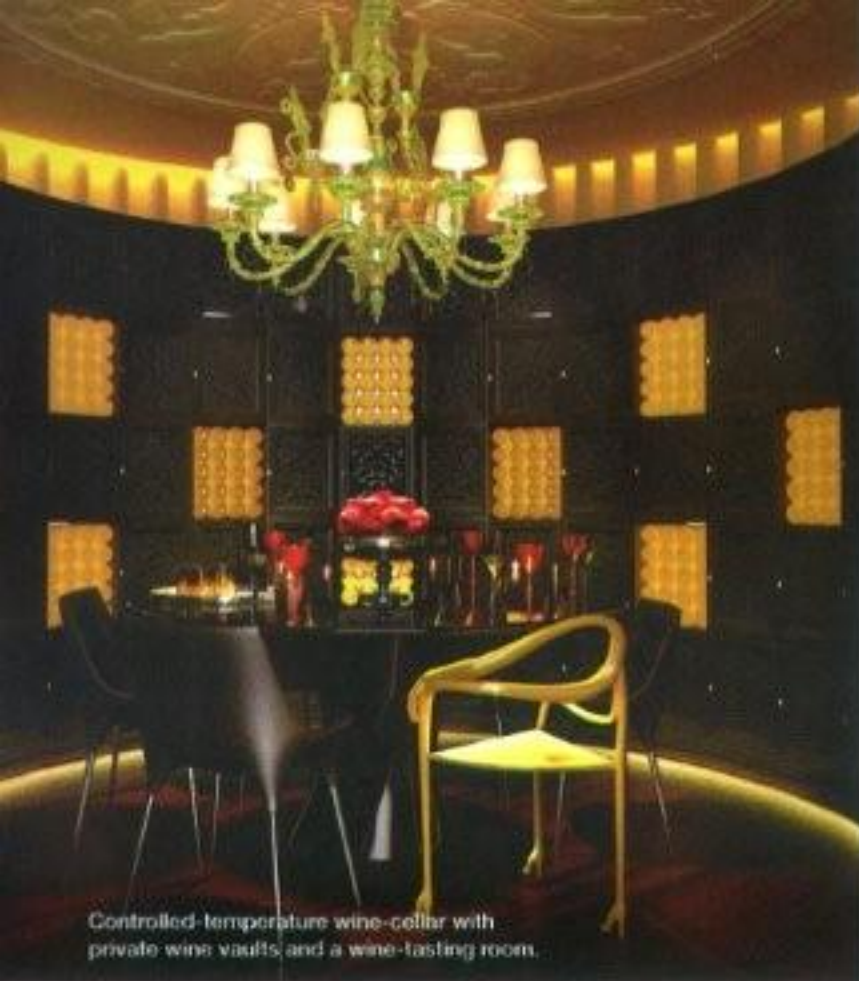


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with some instantly recognisable pieces from Fornasetti and a Fabela chair by the Campana brothers for Edra. 'The bugbear of showflats, is that buyers have different tastes. To address this, we have created four themes, out of which at least one is likely to appeal to any individual from the international market.' But the flair and aesthetic which practically stages a set, treating every room like a piece of jewellery, makes me immediately want all four styles myself.

As for John's own home in London, it is curiously feminine, with the bedroom still in white, which it was many years ago. Strange, that a serial renovator like John would continue to use the same colour. 'I couldn't decide which colour to use, so I just used white,' he says airily, without any pretense about the 'philosophy' behind it, or the 'associations' with the colour. A disconcertingly pink corner features pink wallpaper, a large stuffed bunny, a delicate glass-topped dressing table and a pink shaggy rug. The many shades of pink, all the way through red, recur all over the house, the look ranging from high tech to homey.





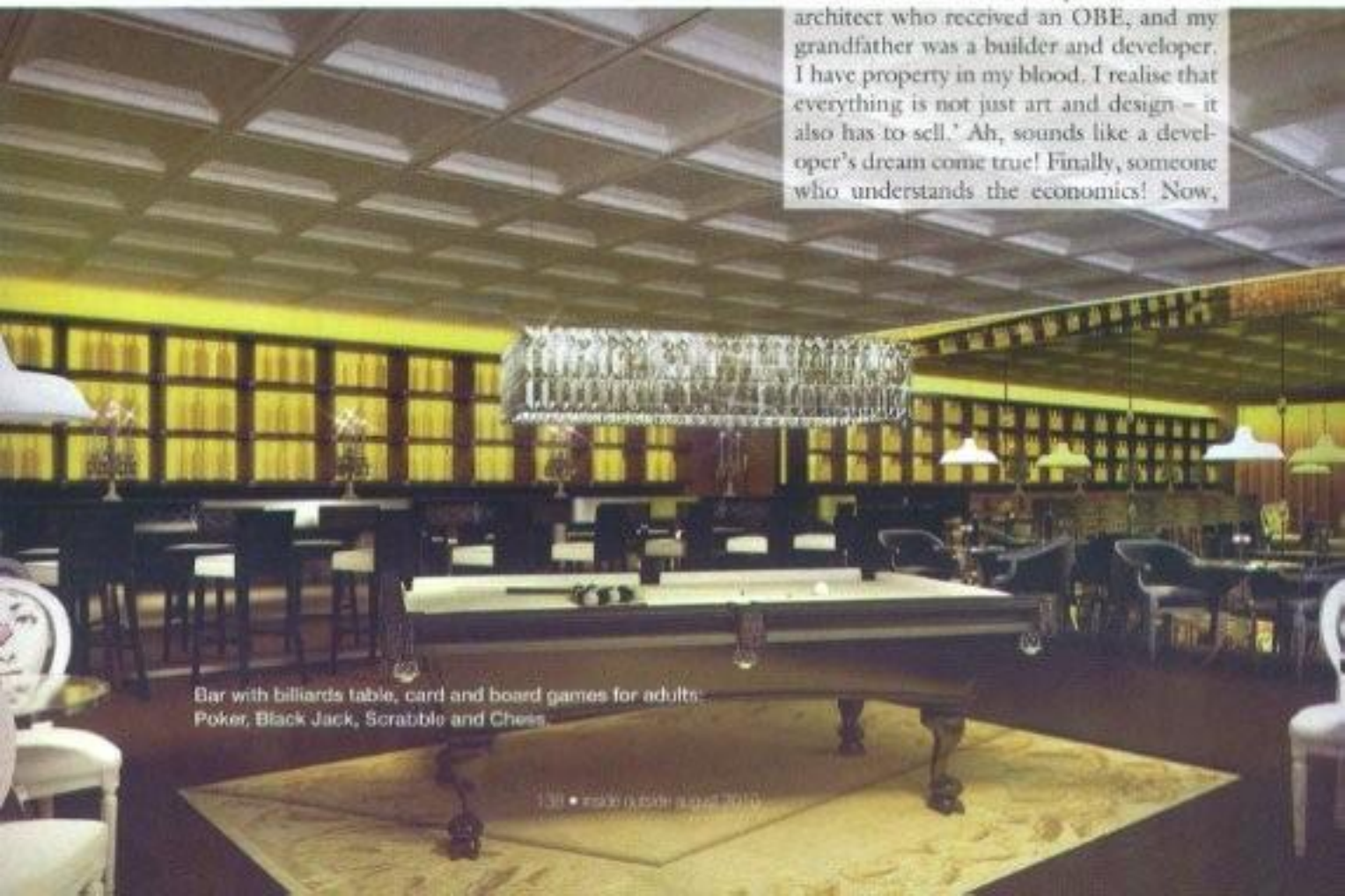
Controlled-temperature wine-cellar with private wine vaults and a wine-tasting room.

'There is a globalisation of taste. People from a certain class of society, want the same things worldwide,' he says. Adds Philippe Starck, (whom their website describes as the design provocateur who re-invented the lemon squeezer) 'The idea was simple, to create four unique styles – Culture, Classic, Nature and Minimal so we could help you to choose what best suited your personality. Yoo is really about the haute couture of architecture and interior design.' But, as YOO is at pains to clarify, these themes create homes for people, not carnival places.

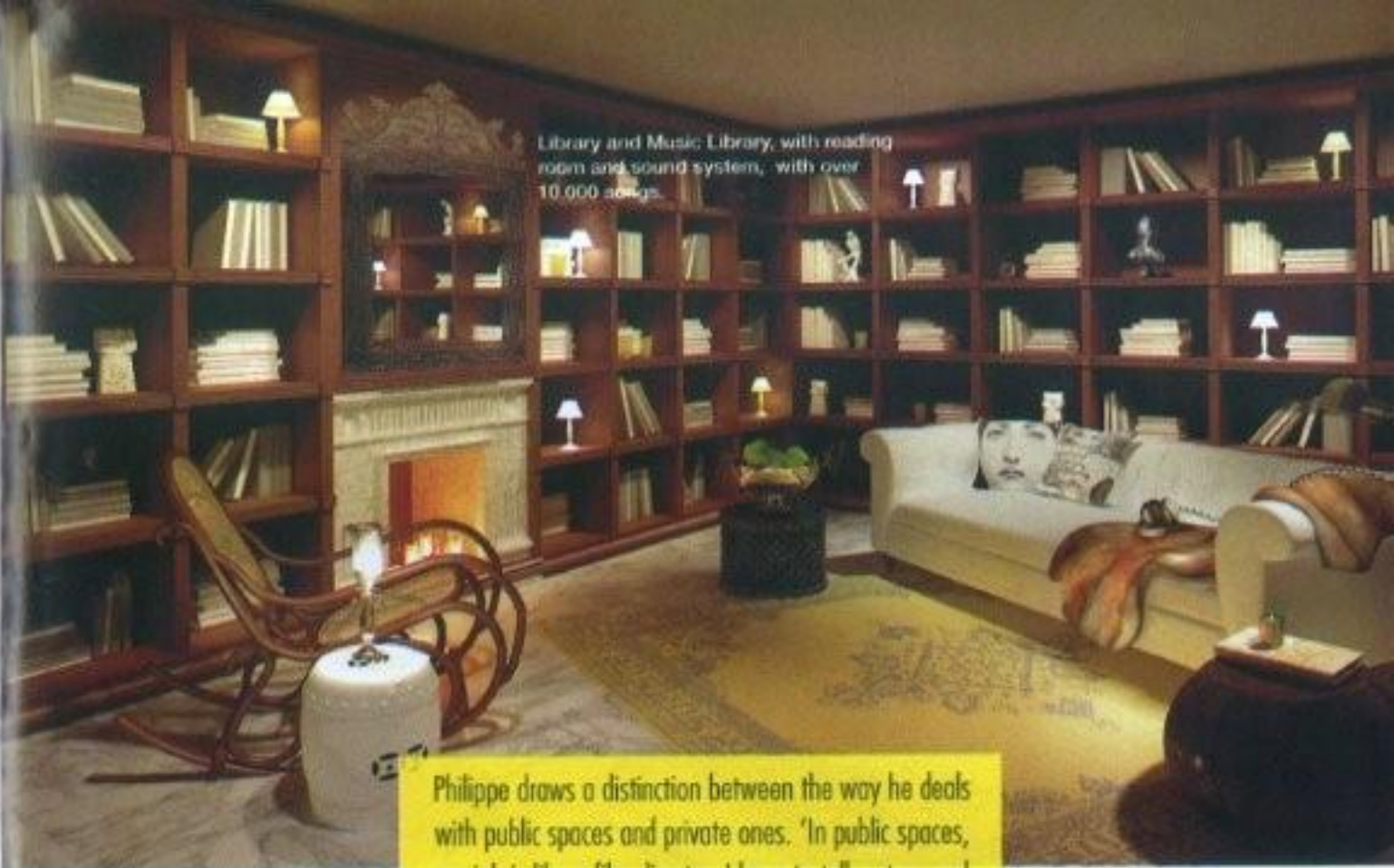
Nordelta, Argentina

The Nordelta housing project is in Argentina, about 30 minutes from Buenos Aires. It requires a commute and is within a large gated community, where recreation and security are high priorities. Some of the styles which Philippe talks about are illustrated here.

'I understand developers,' says John. What does that mean? 'My father was an architect who received an OBE, and my grandfather was a builder and developer. I have property in my blood. I realise that everything is not just art and design – it also has to sell.' Ah, sounds like a developer's dream come true! Finally, someone who understands the economics! Now,



Bar with billiards table, card and board games for adults: Poker, Black Jack, Scrabble and Chess



Library and Music Library, with reading room and sound system, with over 10,000 books.

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