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THE INDIAN DESIGN MAGAZINE

ISSUE 299

MAY 2010

Rs 50

Brinda Somaya
designs a sprawling
bungalow in Indore

**The ingenuity of
different designers
comes together in
the Majestic Hotel,
Singapore**

**Ajit Shilpi designs a
Mumbai Apartment**

**A holiday home in Goa
bags an IIID MK award
for Girish Karnawat**

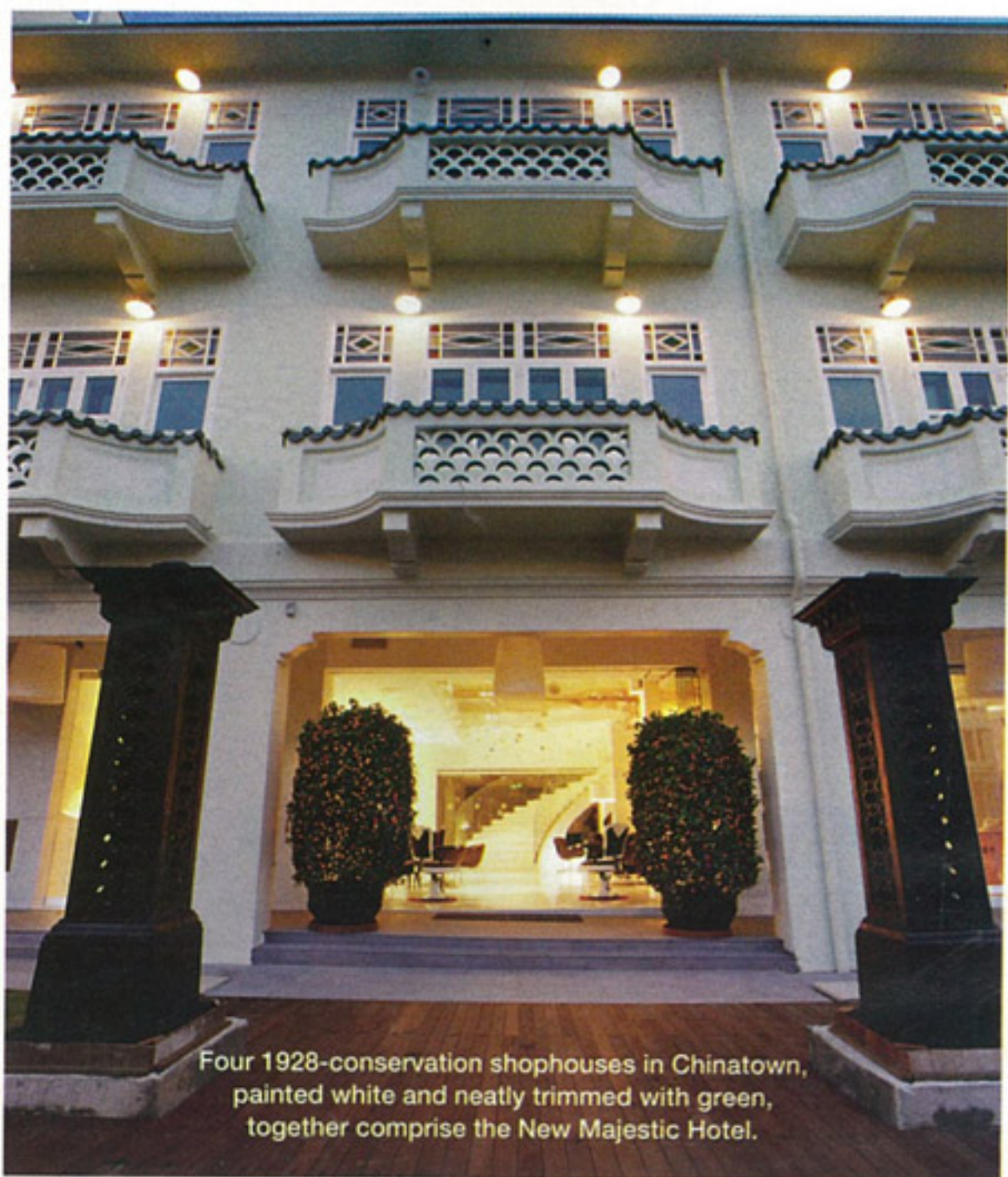
The Dungarpur palace combines the contemporary and the old world

An Inimitable Approach

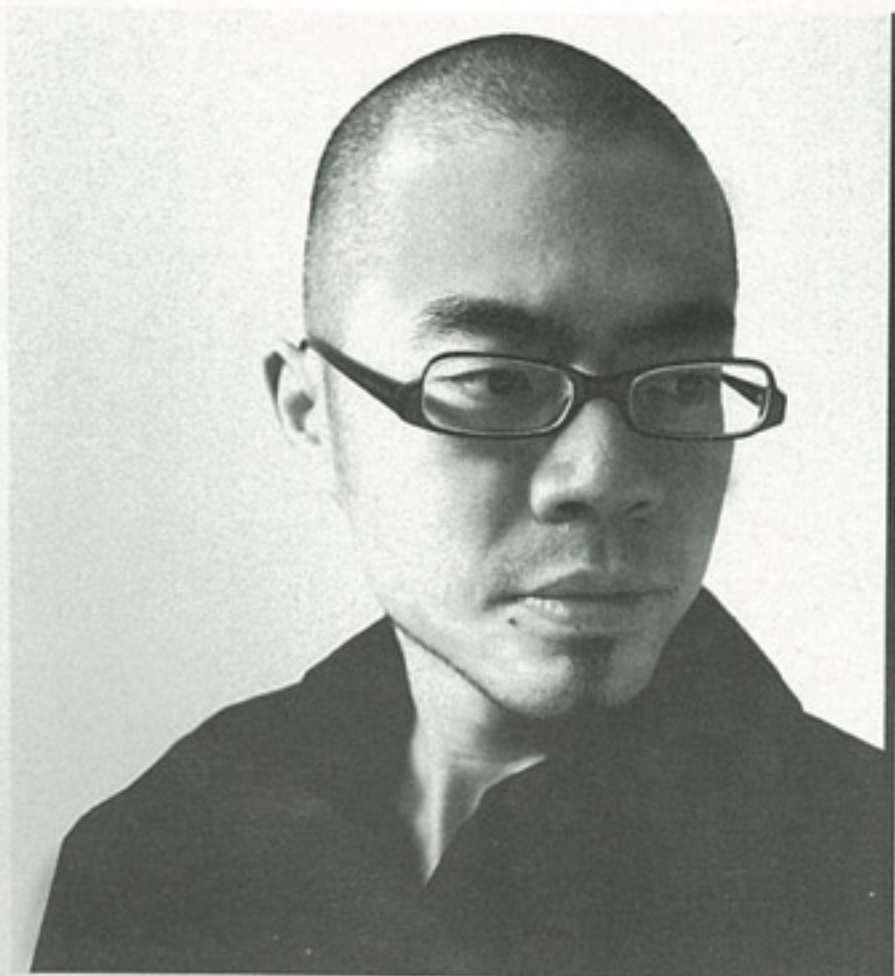
Each room in the New Majestic Hotel, Singapore, is a canvas of ingenuity created by artists, fashion, graphic, and furniture designers, a film and theatre director and fashion show producer.

TEXT: AMITA SARWAL

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY MINISTRY OF DESIGN AND NEW MAJESTIC HOTEL, SINGAPORE



Four 1928-conservation shophouses in Chinatown, painted white and neatly trimmed with green, together comprise the New Majestic Hotel.





The mosaic-lined lap pool fitted with a jacuzzi, has circular porthole-like glass inserts in the flooring, which forms the ceiling of the restaurant located one level below.



An all-white open lobby with its disparate collection of Art Deco chairs and theatrical spotlights

is topped by an unfinished, hacked ceiling.

A sweeping staircase has an installation of colourful glass baubles suspended from above.

The calligraphic insert on the floor symbolises 'Full of Happiness'.

The four 1928-conservation shophouses in Chinatown together comprise the New Majestic Hotel, and the unassuming white and neatly trimmed-with-green façade does a fabulous job of underplaying the creativity that lies within.

The brain behind the concept which won him a bouquet of awards is Colin Seah, Founder and Director of Design at the Singapore-based design firm, Ministry of Design (MOD). The acronym perhaps is not deliberate but to an extent symbolises the

interior designer's mode of work.

'Our mantra can be summed up in just three words – Question. Disturb. Redefine. We continually seek to question the status quo, disturb convention and redefine relevant answers for the contemporary context. We do not have any one aesthetic style, but instead have an approach that could yield a number of styles. We find that more relevant in a constantly evolving design scene,' says Seah about himself and his creative team.

Recalling owner Loh Lik Peng's brief, Seah says, 'He asked



us to create a hip hotel for people like ourselves – something which we would like to visit, something which lets you know exactly where you are in the world – that’s true authenticity.’

The interior designer continues, ‘After I had worked out all the architectural layouts and the interior spaces, Peng and I drew up a list of local artists we wanted to work with, and we allocated a single or series of rooms to them, based on their strengths. They had to work within the interior envelope design, and with the theme colours we had chosen. It took a few rounds to see their work, finalise the designs, and the end results were amazing! The four celebrity designers selected to dress up the rooms were also given the same interior envelope to work with.’

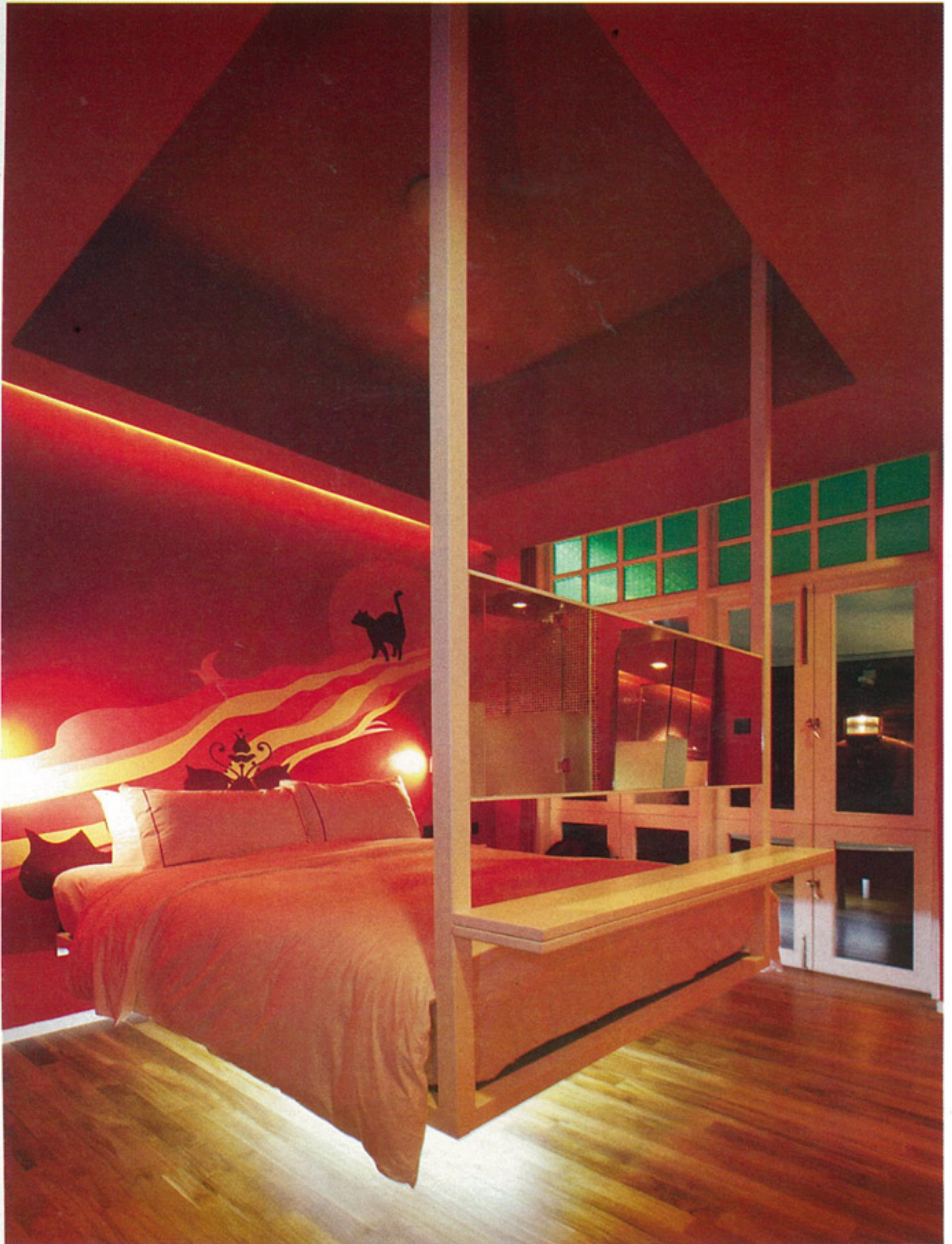
Seah reminisces on the one major challenge they faced. ‘To create a swimming pool in a shophouse is an amazing feat! It was a major architectural insertion. MOD worked on it with the client and the architect (DP Architects Pte Ltd).’

The tour of the hotel starts with the wow factor as you step into the dramatic all-white open lobby with its disparate Art Deco chairs, theatrical spotlights, sculpture and an outmoded red tricycle rickshaw. A sweeping staircase has an installation of colourful glass baubles suspended from above. A calligraphic insert on the floor reads ‘Full of Happiness’ in an ancient Chinese script. In contrast to the refined surroundings is the unfinished, hacked ceiling.

Leading off the lobby is the Majestic Restaurant designed as a contemporary reinterpretation of Chinese dining rooms of the past. Circular glass inserts in the ceiling allow an interesting play of sunlight filtering through the water

The Majestic Restaurant,
where circular glass inserts in the lap pool above, allow an interesting play of sunlight filtering through water on the tables below. And looking up, guests can spot swimmers taking their daily dip.





Dyn's 'One Day I Slowly Floated Away'
is about daydreaming – symbolised
by the carefree nature of stray cats in the city area –
sleeping, roaming or lazing.

of the lap pool above, on the tables below. And looking up, guests can spot swimmers taking their daily dip!

There are four key design styles: The Aquarium Rooms, The Loft Rooms, The Hanging Bedrooms and The Mirror Rooms. In each of these are a variety of design concept rooms.

The Aquarium Rooms are so called because of the central bathing area in a glass-encased 'aquarium'. This also serves as a window to the sleeping space and balcony beyond.

In the Loft Rooms the sleeping chambers are lifted high on slender columns into the attic accessed by a ladder. His and Her twin vintage bathtubs at the entrance level are surrounded by art and interestingly, in some rooms, a dentist's chair! In fact, Seah brings the mundane bath tub into the forefront, making it an integral part of the décor.

In the Hanging Bedrooms murals cover the walls and high ceilings. An attached tiny wooden slat-lined portico suffused with greenery serves as a bathing area.

Justin Lee's 'Oriental Girls Go West' is the artist's take on the union of cultures and recreation. Chinese girls in traditional dresses obsess with modern gadgets and play badminton.





Sandra Lee's 'Tembusu Tree'
climbs right upto the ceiling
and the rising 'moon' lights
up the scene.

The Mirror Rooms or the corner rooms are visually extended with reflective mirrors spanning the walls, rising up to the ceiling and coming down as the headboard. Each room makes an impact with its artwork, colours and perception.

Of the design concept rooms, 'Pussy Parlour' is termed the 'fun' room. Fashion Show Producer Daniel Boey mingles brilliant fuschia with turquoise, cobalt blue and letter-box red and furnishes it with a black brass bed, Princess chair and French chandeliers to give it a bordello-like appeal.

Film and theatre director Glen Goei goes theatrical with 'Wayang', where burgundy silk lines the walls, and billowing gauze curtains drape the front windows. Large red globular

lanterns and simple lacquered blackwood furniture is offset by calligraphic murals.

Graphic designer Theseus Chan's 'Work' with its under-process ambience of 'living in a box' with raw plywood walls and floors, and notice boards pinned with newspaper clippings and memos, is attractive and unusual.

In contrast is fashion designer Wykidd Song's (of Song+Kelly's 21) 'Fluid' where flowing lines are covered in monochromatic camel carpeting creating a minimalist and calming atmosphere.

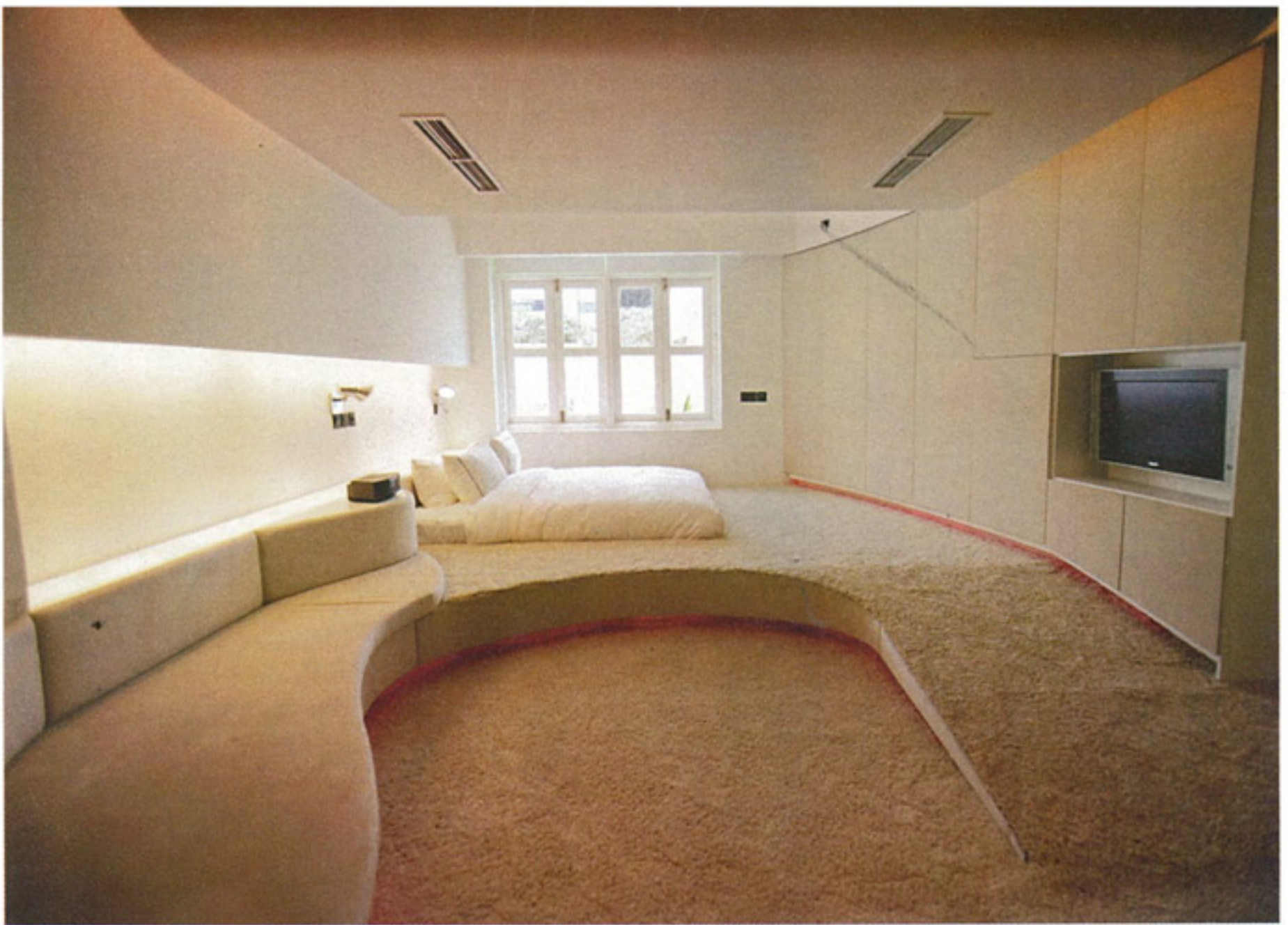
Moving on to the artists, there is Sandra Lee's indigenous 'Tembusu Tree'. The 'sun' dappled trunk changes to a night

Glen Goei goes theatrical with 'Wayang' where burgundy silk-lined walls, billowing gauze curtains, large red globular lanterns and richly lacquered simple blackwood furniture are offset by calligraphic murals.



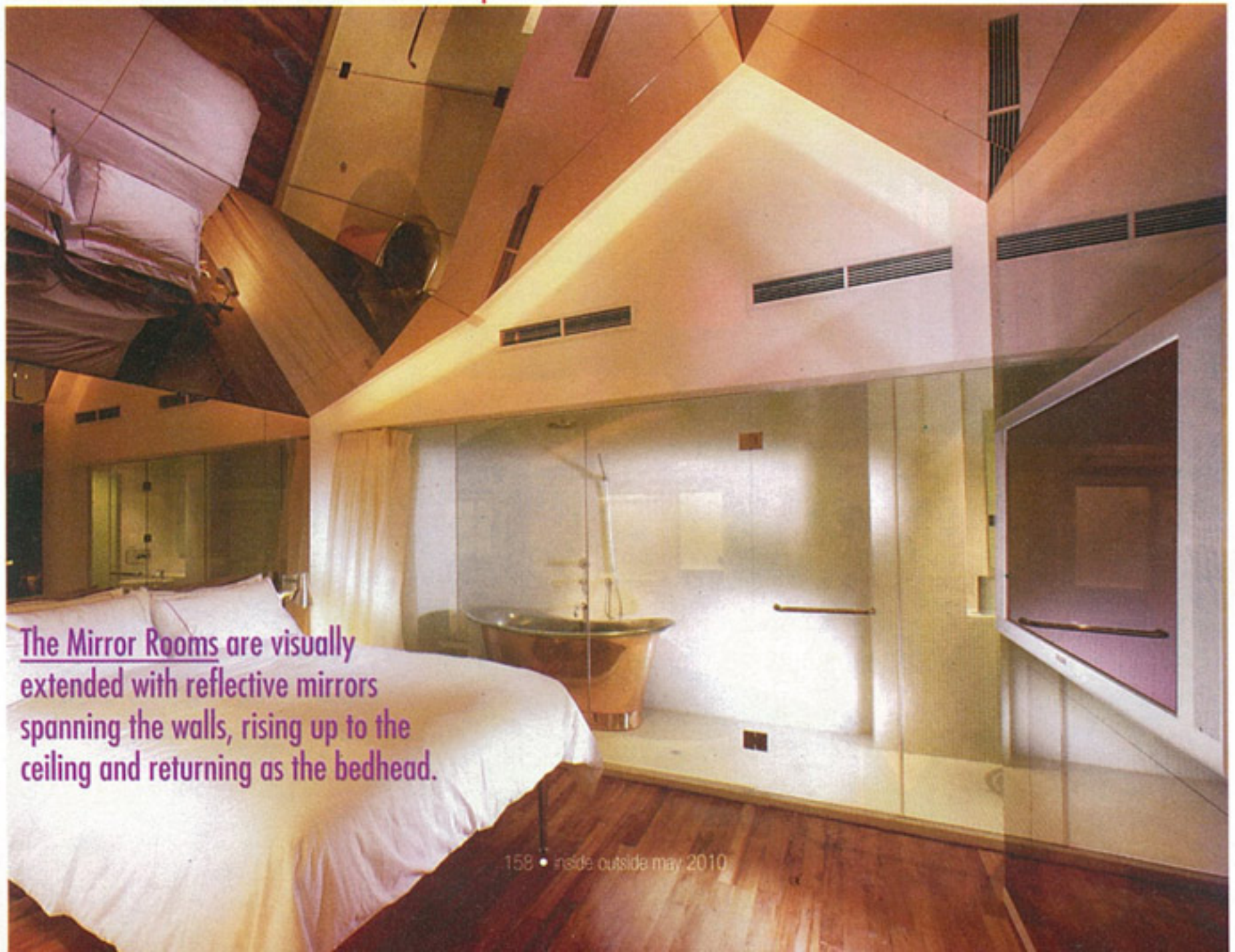
Daniel Boey's 'Pussy Parlour' is termed the 'fun' room. Daniel mingles brilliant fuschia with turquoise, cobalt blue and letter-box red and furnishes it with a black brass bed, Princess chair and French chandeliers to give it a bordello appeal.





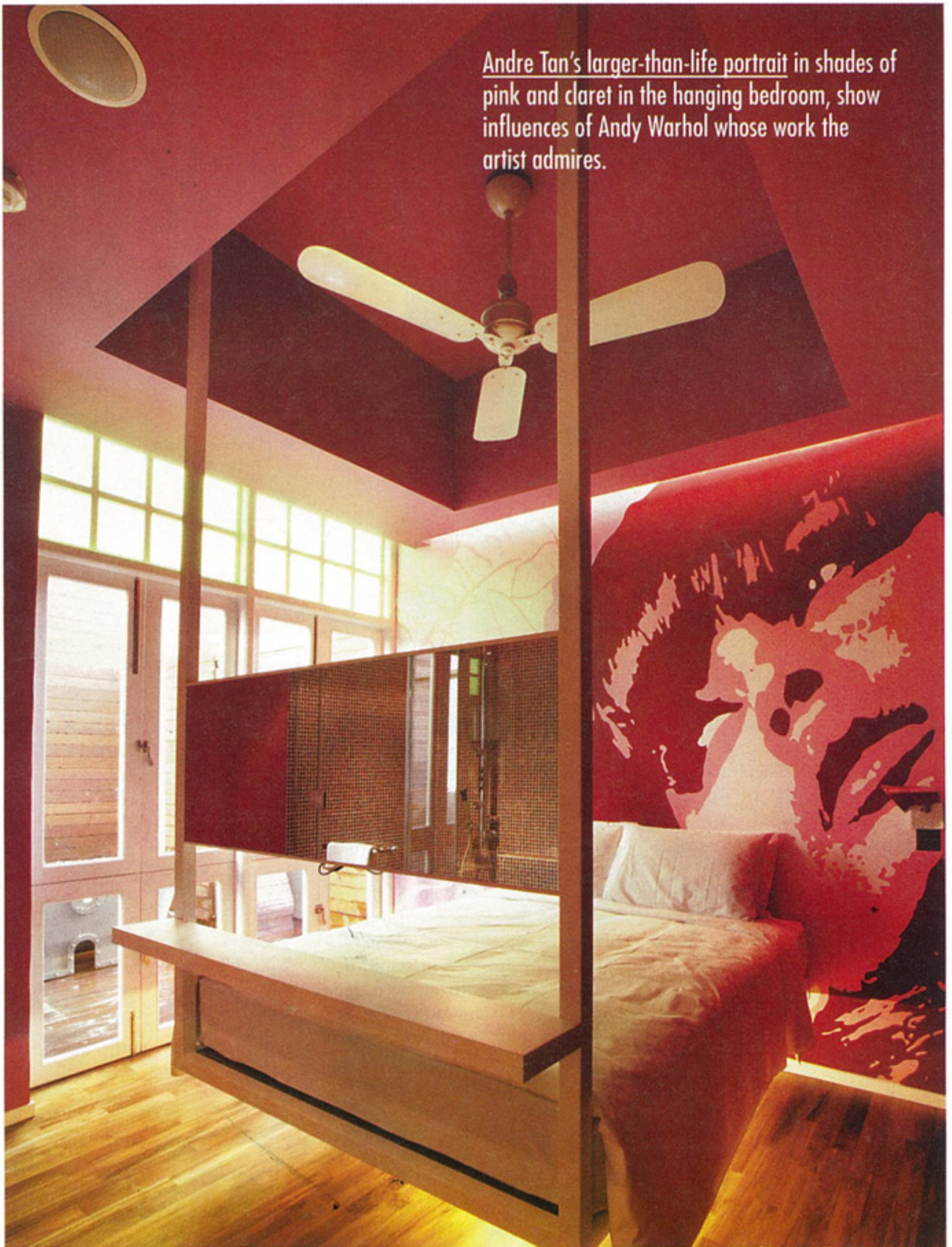
Wykidd Song's (of Song+Kelly's 21)

'Fluid' has flowing lines covered in monochromatic camel carpeting, which creates a minimalist and calm atmosphere.



The Mirror Rooms are visually extended with reflective mirrors spanning the walls, rising up to the ceiling and returning as the bedhead.

Andre Tan's larger-than-life portrait in shades of pink and claret in the hanging bedroom, show influences of Andy Warhol whose work the artist admires.





scene with the 'moon' up in the attic bed loft. The birdcages are reminiscent of the traditional practice of bird owners gathering for tea and hanging up their prized caged birds to enjoy their singing. Another of Sandra's designs 'Which Way Ought I To Go?' is from her deep sea diving encounter with a 'turtle grinning like a Cheshire Cat' and inspired her to borrow from Lewis Carrol's 'Alice In Wonderland'. The accompanying wall mural is... 'And The Pussy Cat Went Out To See.'

Kng Mian Tze's 'A Big Goldfish' plays with the idea of keeping live fish as ornamental pets. Seah's Hanging Bed seemingly floats in the 'water' as the artist places the guest inside the tank itself!

While incorporating his 'Double Happiness Xi symbol', Justin Lee's pop art reflects Asian and Occidental cultures. Da Jie (Big Sister) celebrates girl power inspired by disparate characters such as Indonesia's first lady president Megawati, Charlie's Angels and the Power Puff Girls. 'Oriental Girls Go West' is a take on the union of cultures and recreation where Chinese girls in traditional dresses obsess with modern gadgets and play badminton.

In the 'Bliss' Loft Room artist Lee Meiling's site-specific low-relief wall installation is crafted from satin, silk, Indian embroidered cotton and chiffon. Sakura depicts spring when Nature flaunts its colours.

Dyn's (Safaruddin Abdul Hamid) 'One Day I Slowly

Theseus Chan's 'Work'

creates an under-process

ambience of 'living in a box'

with raw plywood walls

and floors and boards

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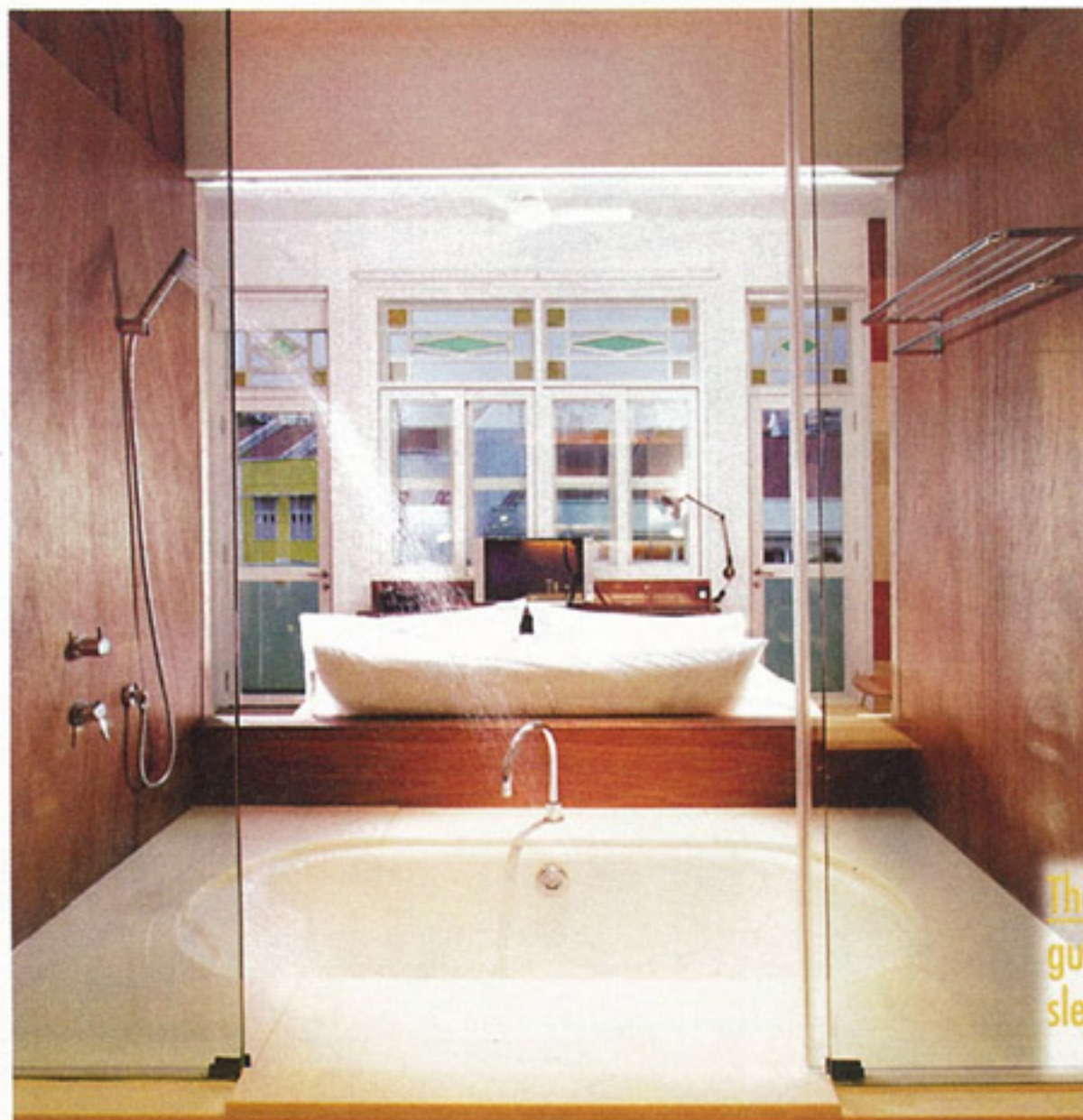
Justin Lee's 'Da Jie (Big sister)' is a celebration of girl power inspired by various disparate characters such as Indonesia's first lady president Megawati, Charlie's Angels and the Power Puff Girls.

Heleston Chew's upside-down anamorphic message 'I Am Upside Down Because Of You' scripted on pleasing peppermint green walls can only be viewed when guests lie on specific parts of the hanging bed.





In Sandra Lee's 'Cheshire' Loft Room, His and Her bathtubs become a part of the main space. The ladder leads to the sleeping area on the loft above.



'Floated Away' is about day-dreaming – symbolised by the carefree nature of stray cats in the city who are seen sleeping, lazing or roaming around.

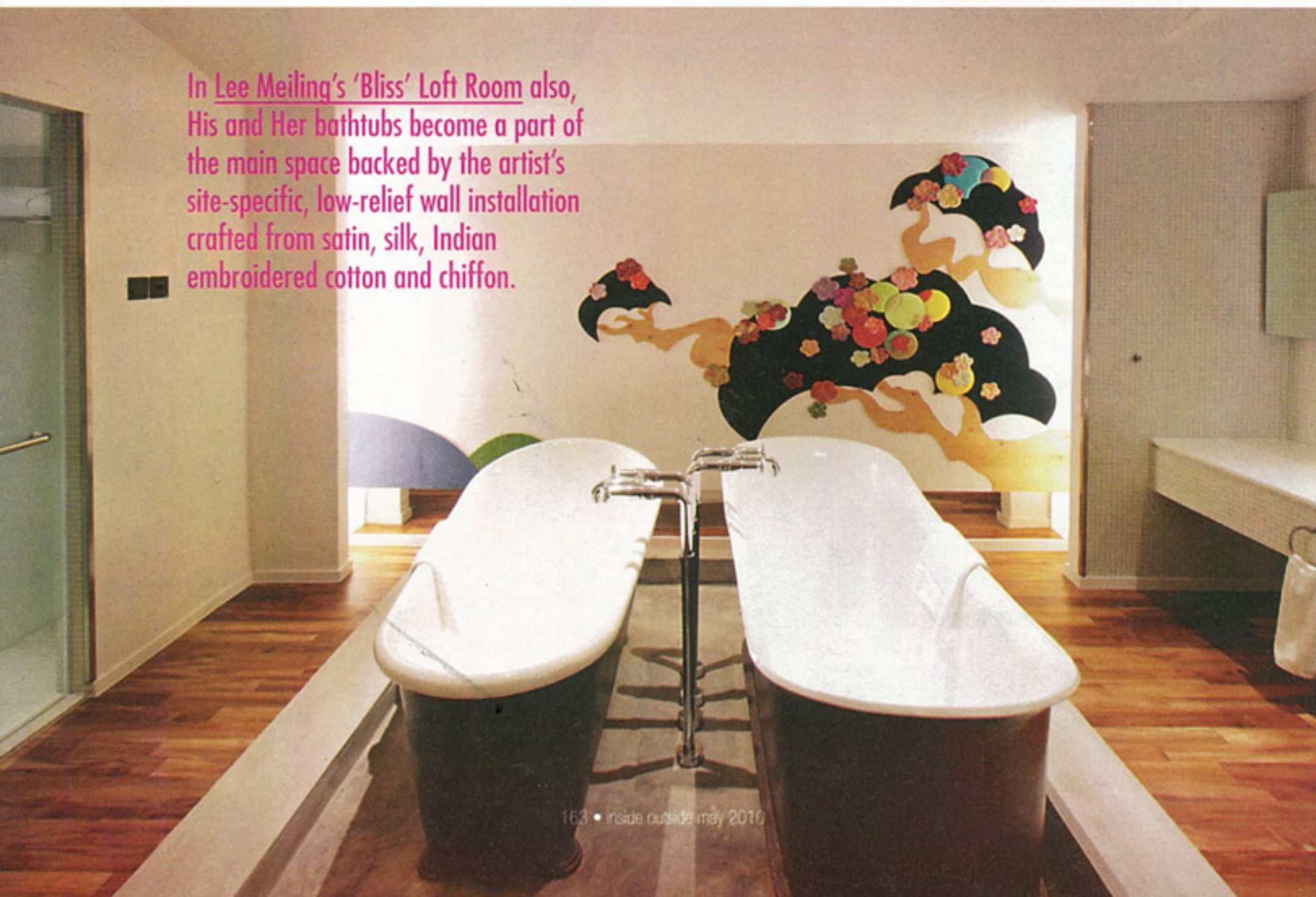
Heleston Chew's upside-down anamorphic message 'I Am Upside Down Because Of You' on pleasing peppermint green walls can only be viewed when guests lie on specific parts of the hanging bed.

Stepping out into the blinding mid-day sun validates that it was a distinctive – if at times eccentric – technicolour world in there! 📺

The glassed-in 'aquarium' tub greets guests and forms the window to the sleeping area beyond.



In the Garden Rooms, the bathtub is placed in the tiny enclosed portico outside and painted in brilliant, solid colours to match the décor indoors.



In Lee Meiling's 'Bliss' Loft Room also, His and Her bathtubs become a part of the main space backed by the artist's site-specific, low-relief wall installation crafted from satin, silk, Indian embroidered cotton and chiffon.