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ARCHITECTURE
INTERIOR DESIGN

HOUSE HUNTING... OUR ONCE-A-YEAR COMPENDIUM

Steven Holl Goes to Princeton

APIDA Takes Over Hong Kong

Magmode Reprints Retail

www.hinge.hk

ISSN 1561-781-5



9 771561 781004

HK\$80
RMB80
US\$11

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hinge focuses on architecture and design. The magazine is distributed to industry professionals, academics and VIPs, and eagerly snapped up by the public every month from leading bookshops.

We take a dynamic and innovative approach to the disciplines of architecture and design, juxtaposing bold graphics and striking visuals with lively and informative editorial. *hinge* brings you the design world – the global picture in full technicolour.

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A Word from the Editor

Houses... just four walls and a roof. yes? Perhaps a basement, a garage, a pool. Maybe add a guesthouse, extra bedrooms, a study or studio space. Let's not forget the media room. And storage, plenty of that. You get the picture. Houses come in all sizes, shapes, colours and styles, but they never fail to lift our spirits when we put together our annual favourites. This year the story grew even larger, as full-scale domestic buildings demanded inclusion merely by their quality, or their individuality. Do what we did, and tour each of them with the question, 'what would I give up for this?' Happy house hunting.

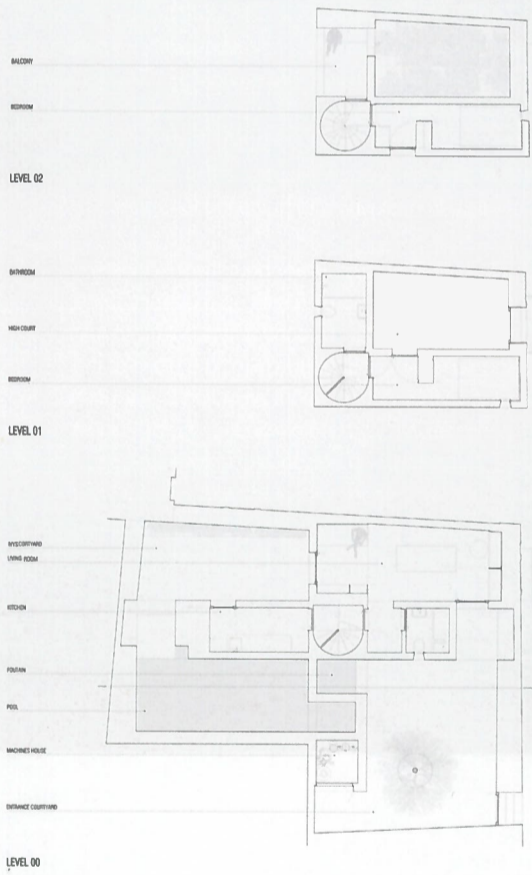
Printed by

Lighter Sources Co. Limited
Room 1605C, Ho King Commercial Centre
2-16 Fa Yuen Street, Mongkok, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Although every care has been taken to ensure accuracy, the publisher cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions that may occur in this issue. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Publisher or the Editorial Committee.
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HOUS
LISBON
PEDRO

Photography by Dan



HOUSE IN ALFAMA

LISBON, PORTUGAL
PEDRO MATOS GAMEIRO

Photography by Daniel Malhao



To try to insert new architecture, even at the smallest domestic scale, into the dense, ancient fabric of urban Lisbon, is not the most straightforward of tasks. In the Alfama district of the city, not far from the National Pantheon and the Monastery of St Vincent, a small residence within a former *palazzo*, jumbled by varied actions over decades, became the starting point for this 'classically modern' and minimal residence. The building was medieval – a rare survivor of a major earthquake that devastated the area in 1755. There had been new walls introduced at different moments in the building's history, resulting in non-original courtyard spaces that were tightly constrained but which delivered natural light to adjacent rooms. Yet even these spaces had been occupied.

Gameiro began by rationalising the layout and spaces of the house, cleaning up the disunited spatial relationships, and stripping away what wasn't either necessary or beautiful. The pair of courtyards became central to his strategy, helping to organise the internal spaces and set out the basic functions of the house. There are now fully four outdoor spaces, each with different characters, including one that has been 'flooded' with water to provide a pool. These outdoor rooms can be used much of the year, thanks to Lisbon's beneficent climate, making the rather introverted urban house something like a garden labyrinth. It is a clever direction to take the house in, making of it a sequence of surprising spatial moments and allowing the family residing here the chance to withdraw in privacy or come together in commune.

The interiors are finished in a becalmed language of creamy concrete and vanilla plaster or tiled walls. The blanched colour tones throughout help to butter the daylight onto surfaces, even when it is once or twice removed. Apertures were limited by the existing structure, of course, but Gameiro has turned them into dramatic instances of view and light. A delicious and petite staircase winds up through the three levels, a conscious remnant of the building's centuries-old past. But it is the courtyard spaces that make the project. They are each presented as sibling spatial sculptures, their whitened walls laying out compositions of light, sky, ground and elevational planes, as if this house had been crafted by a sect of artful monks. It is impossible to imagine chaos occurring in the residence, so peaceable are all its parts.