

PROPERTY REPORT

Luxury real estate, architecture and design

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PENTHOUSE FOR A PERFECTIONIST



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THE BLUE PENTHOUSE

| by **SOFIE LISBY** | Photos by **DERRYCK MENERE**

Crafting a functional yet attractive and unique home for a family is a tall order for any interior designer, but Thomas Dariel, the founder and creative mind behind Dariel Studio, a multi-award winning interior design company headquartered in Shanghai, took on the challenge.

Located in the city's historic Jing An temple area, the Blue Penthouse has been completely refurbished and renovated to drastically transform the existing space into a sophisticated urban residence. Using customised ceramics and wallpaper, Bisazza mosaic, Imondi wooden floors and furniture from Fritz Hansen, Cassina, Philippe Hurel, Kartell and Natuzzi, among others, Dariel has created a light, functional but supremely stylish living space to suit the needs and aesthetics of a modern, metropolitan family.

DESIGN FOCUS
Blue Penthouse



BORN AND EDUCATED AS A DESIGNER IN PARIS, THOMAS DARIEL'S WORK HAS ALWAYS BEEN INFLUENCED BY FRENCH AESTHETIC TRADITIONS. AS IN MANY OF HIS PROJECTS — WHICH SPAN A RANGE OF SECTORS THAT INCLUDES LIVING SPACES, CREATIVE OFFICES, CONCEPT STORES AND HIGH-END HOSPITALITY DEVELOPMENTS — THE BLUE PENTHOUSE WAS CREATED THROUGH A PROCESS OF CONFRONTING HERITAGE, INCORPORATING CUTTING-EDGE INNOVATION AND BLENDING FRENCH DESIGN WITH EASTERN CULTURAL INFLUENCES. THE ROOMS ARE LARGE AND AIRY, COMPLEMENTED BY ARTISTIC DETAILING SUCH AS CABINETS INSPIRED BY OLD SUITCASES, PATTERNED AND TEXTURED WALLPAPER AND FRENCH-INSPIRED WALL PANELLING. THROUGHOUT THE PENTHOUSE, GLASS AND MIRROR EFFECTS CREATE A SPACIOUS, TRANSPARENT FEEL WHILE STILL ALLOWING RESIDENTS PRIVACY AND SECLUSION.

“ WE TRIED TO MAKE THE SPACE AS PERSONAL AS POSSIBLE. ”

How did you approach this project?

I wanted to break away from the original basic volumes and open things up. In the living room, a huge void has been created that gives a very architectural, contemporary feeling while maximising daylight exposure through the large bay windows. The former balcony has also been integrated into the indoor part to increase the sensation of volume and enable more space for leisure. Looking up, a suspended cube has been designed into an office, where the owner can work while still overlooking the living room. The original meaning of the word penthouse from the latin *appendere* – to be suspended – is why we chose to call it the cube, because you can be suspended and at the same time overlook what goes on below.

What about the staircase?

I wanted to modify the way the spaces related to one another. To match this requirement, I designed and relocated the staircase to be in the centre of the apartment. It's a masterpiece in itself for the way it looks, but also because it opens up the entire home and connects all the rooms. It is the core of the space structure, the heart of the design. To add emphasis, we placed the staircase over a black and white marble pattern, a very graphic and contemporary stage that contrasts with the classic ornamented wooden panels all around. Staircase, flooring and walls have all been conceived as circular shapes to generate a smooth flow and bring harmony.

Which is your favourite room?

The dining room sets the standard for the apartment. We put in elegant wooden panels in a warm blue-grey tone to cover the entire room and we played with very graphic shapes on the ceiling and walls to balance the classical setting with contemporary lines. In the centre of the room, the peculiar geometric B&B dining table, circled by comfortable and rather traditional-looking chairs by Philippe Hurel, follows the same idea. Behind the customised bar counter where the family gathers for breakfast, again a functional yet stylish element, we put in a glass-panelled wine cellar that reflects the living room while allowing a look at the owner's wine collection. Inside the cellar, the organic-shaped shelves were inspired by boats and by the appearance of the hull's wooden skeleton.

You played around with various types of glass-mirror reflections, please tell us a bit more about that...

While the first floor meets the public functions of the apartment, the second floor accommodates more private and intimate ones. In the master bedroom, we created a fully integrated space with the bathroom actually located within the room. A conventional master bath tub, isolated from the living area by plain walls, would have obstructed natural light and decreased the surface. Instead we designed a vitrine-like bathroom, glassed in on two sides. We wanted to preserve the transparency and the open feeling of the space, so the glass partitions are still tinted on the bedroom side. This means you can still enjoy a plain view of the entire master bedroom, watch TV, or enjoy the views over the city from the comfort of the bathtub. Meanwhile, people in the bedroom can only guess what is happening in the bathroom. We also played with the glass-mirror-reflection elements in the dressing room where each door has been designed with two layers, one of glass with engraved lines and below that one of the mirror, reflecting the glass pattern.

Tell us about the decor in the Blue Penthouse...

We put in a tremendous amount of detail. The ceilings, walls, storage spaces and some of the furniture have all been customised to suit the owners' needs and push our design agenda. For example, the cabinets, wardrobes and chest drawers were all made by hand, inspired by old luggage. Just like steamer trunks, they are finished with leather and linen and appeal to the strong travelling spirit of the owners. We tried to make the space as personal as possible. Even the air conditioning grills are made of stainless steel and have been engraved with French words, because the owner wants to learn French. Strong concept and vision, attention to the smallest details, furniture and lighting by the best designers, quality equipment and high technology, all are elements that makes this penthouse a paradise to live in. ■

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Blue Penthouse





THE CUSTOMISED DRESSING ROOM WITH CUSTOMISED MIRROR AND REFLECTION EFFECT.

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THE STAIRCASE MAKES FOR A
SMOOTH TRANSITION BETWEEN
FLOORS.



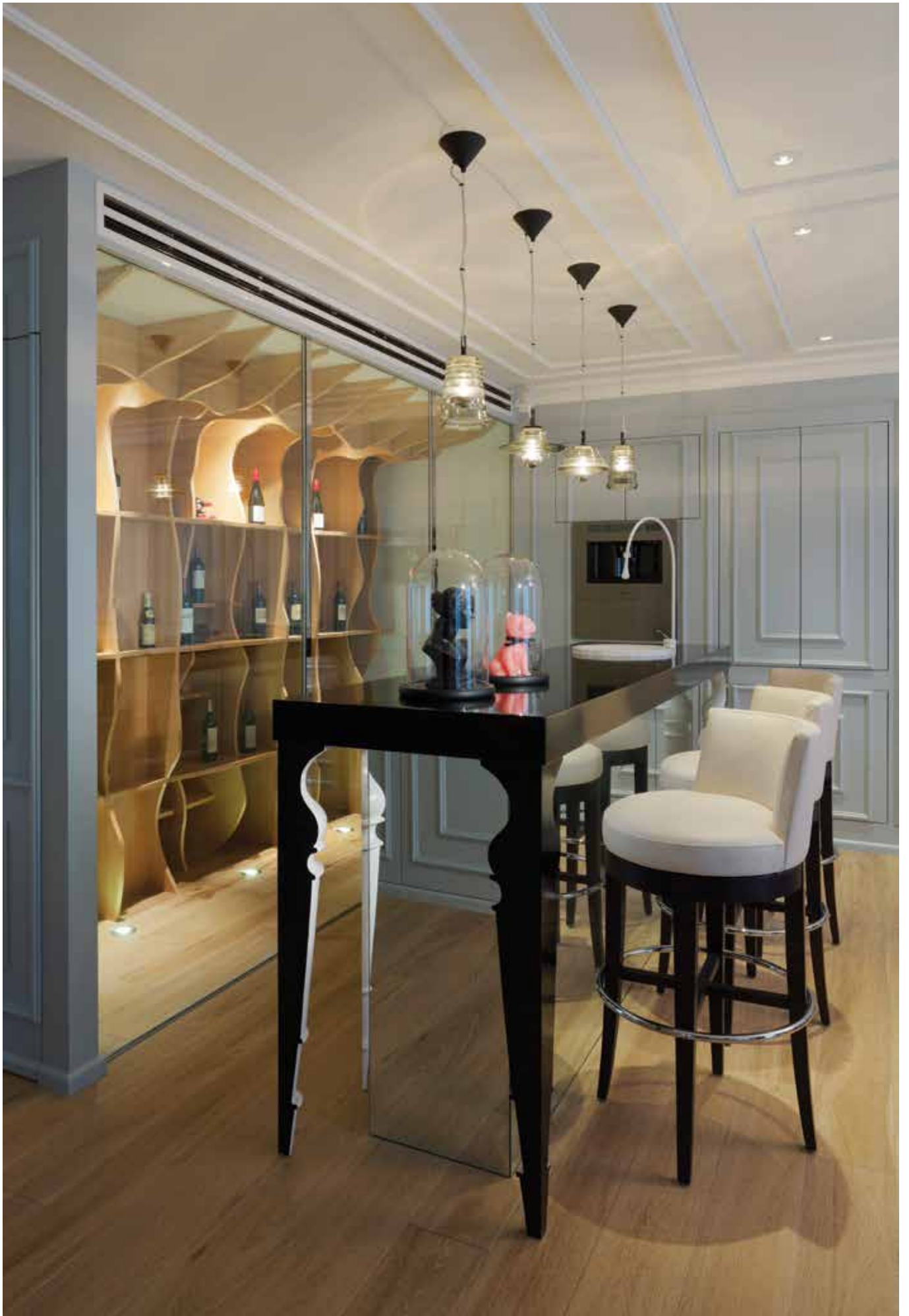
THE STAIRCASE IS PLACED OVER
A BLACK AND WHITE MARBLE
PATTERN WHICH CONTRASTS
WITH THE CLASSIC MOULDING ON
THE WALLS.

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ABOVE: THE DINING ROOM SETS THE STANDARD FOR THE ENTIRE APARTMENT.

RIGHT: THE CUSTOMISED BAR COUNTER WHERE THE FAMILY GATHERS FOR BREAKFAST.

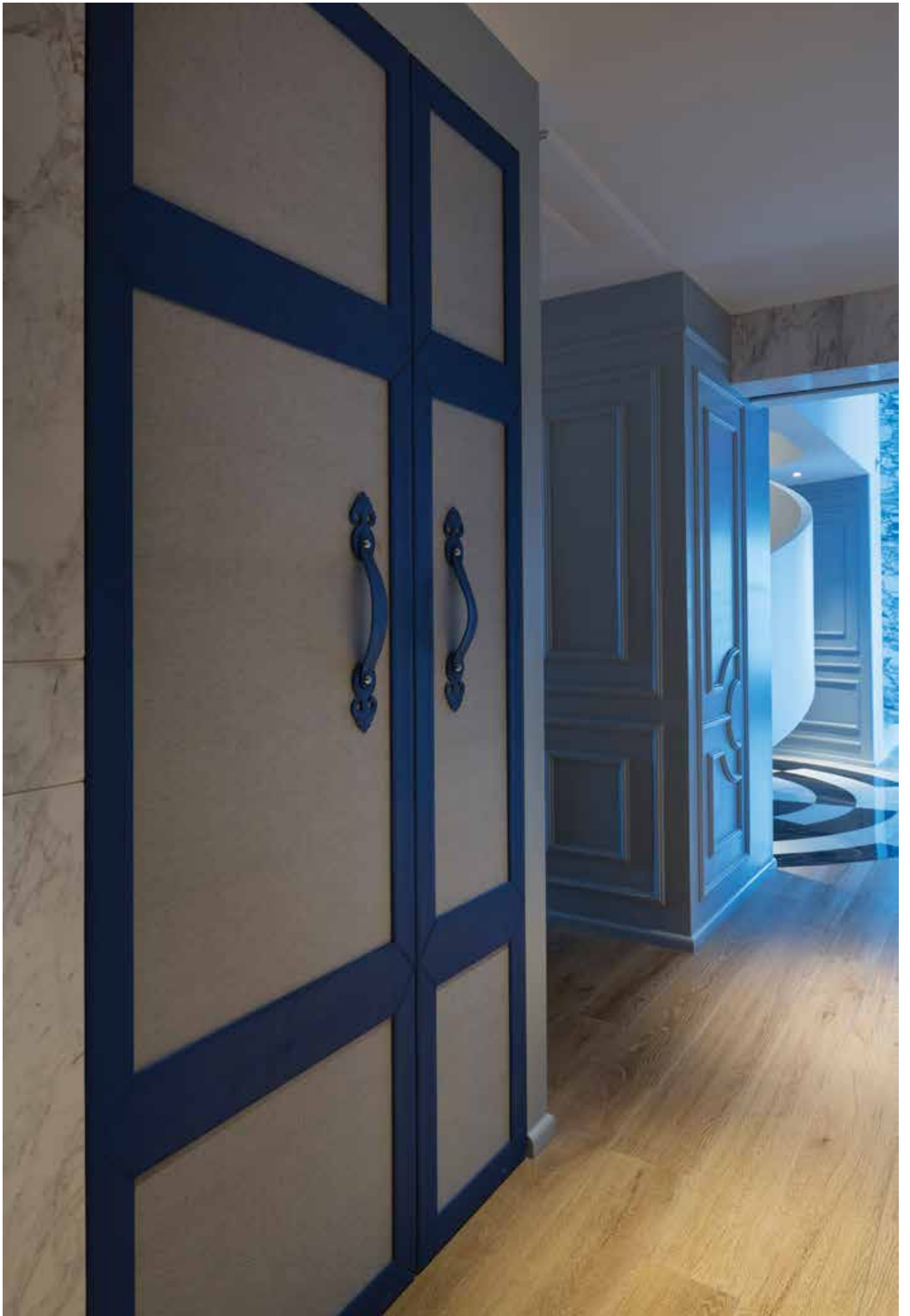


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Blue Penthouse

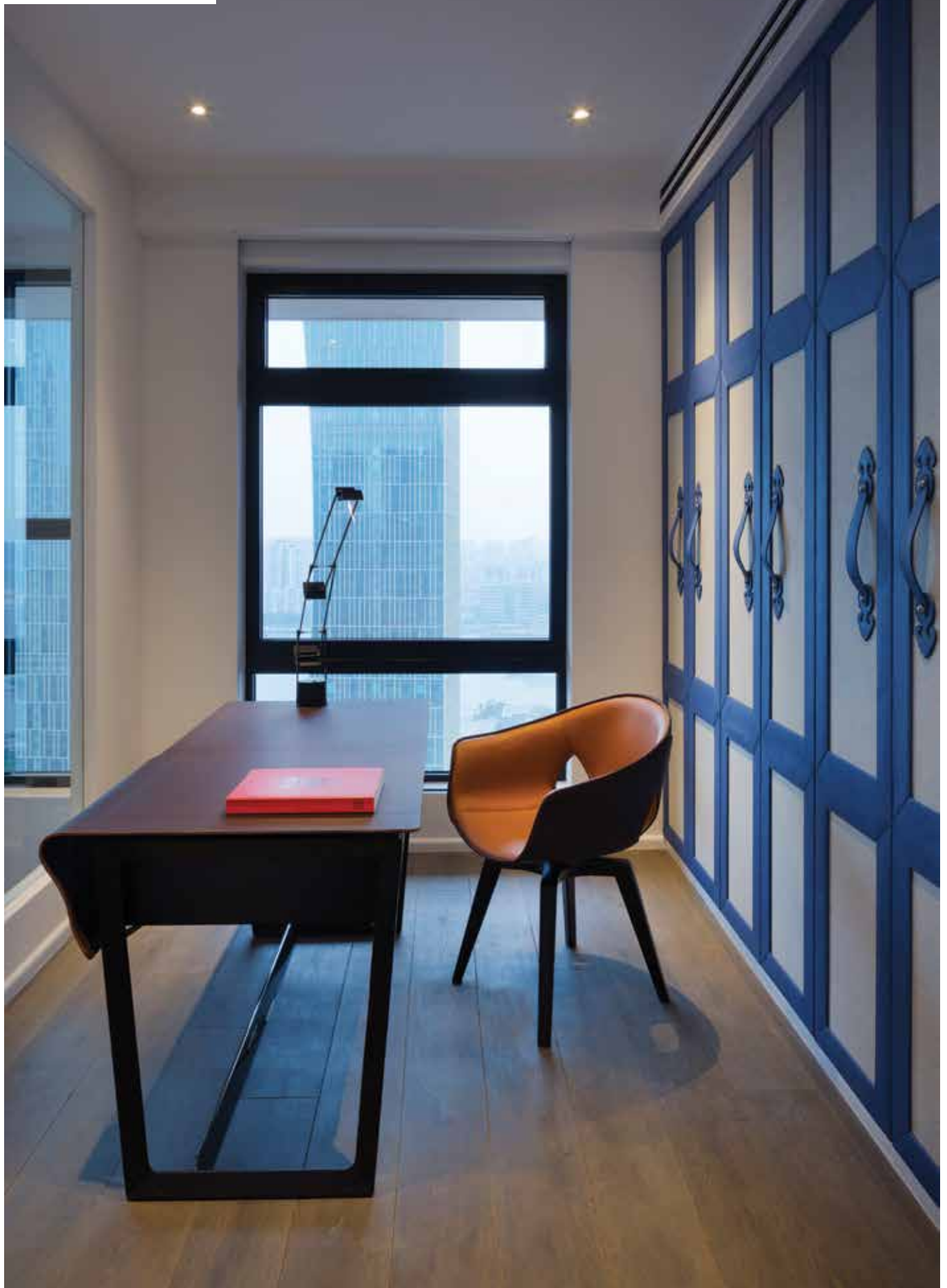


ABOVE: IN THE STUDY THE AIR CONDITION GRILLS ARE MADE OF ELEGANT STAINLESS STEEL PLATES WITH ENGRAVED LETTERS FORMING QUOTES THAT MATCH THE CLIENT'S DESIRE TO LEARN FRENCH.

RIGHT: THE WARDROBES WERE MADE BY HAND WITH A FINISHING OF LEATHER AND LINEN INSPIRED BY OLD SUITCASES.



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ABOVE: THE CORRIDOR IS DECORATED WITH WALL PAINTINGS AND RE-DESIGNED FRENCH MOULDING.

LEFT: SUSPENDED OVER THE LIVING ROOM, THE CUBE IS A WORK ROOM THAT ALSO ALLOWS RESIDENTS TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS DOWNSTAIRS.

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**ABOVE: THE MAIN BEDROOM
BOASTS A CLEAN, MODERN
DESIGN.**

**LEFT: HAND-MADE LEATHER
HANDLES ON THE CABINETS.**

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Blue Penthouse



ALTHOUGH SITUATED IN THE
MAIN BEDROOM AND SHIELDED
BY GLASS, THE VITRINE-LIKE
BATHROOM RETAINS PRIVACY
WITH TINTED GLASS PARTITIONS.