

# A

57 DEC/2011/IAN/2012 LL10,000 US\$7



It's a  
beautiful  
life

Dream of everything  
and more



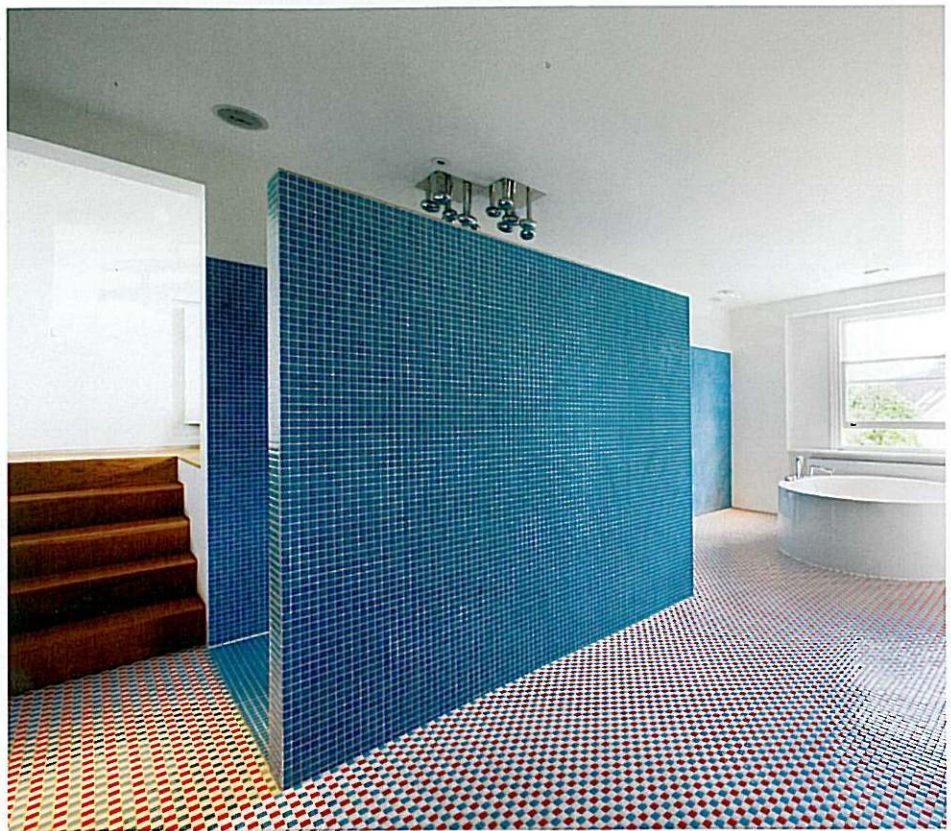
# Playful and functional

By Sophy Grimshaw





This page Andy Martin (below) and one of his residential projects (right) Opposite page A private residence designed by Andy Martin Associates



## Architect Andy Martin has his finger on the contemporary design pulse

"I'm drawn to the style of architecture where elements of furniture are considered and built into the structure by the architect, such as storage or seating," says Andy Martin. "It's not as though this is a new thing that I've invented. It used to be quite common in the '30s and '40s, say, to think that way as an architect, but it isn't now. I don't think architects such as Richard Rogers, for example, or Grimshaw, are concerned with building in elements of furniture. That's not what they're looking to do."

Australian-born, London-based Martin heads up an innovative architectural practice, Andy Martin Associates – also referred to by its tag of "ama" – which he established in 2000. The concept for the studio is something more wide-ranging and holistic than a traditional practice, and

ama incorporates not only architects, but interior designers, furniture, lighting and product designers. A common thread, if you scan the restaurant spaces and pieces of furniture created by Martin, is design that is at once playful and functional, doesn't shout for attention and yet effortlessly captures your imagination. It's an approach that has inspired loyalty from clients and consumers, judging by the success of his restaurant designs in particular.

Martin says his friendship and professional collaboration with celebrated designer Mark Newson (named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 most influential people in the world) was a catalyst that helped him build his versatile design practice. Martin met Newson, who is also Sydney-born and now London-based, in the early '90s, when both were working with Idee, the Tokyo-based contemporary furniture studio. Newson works across many different design disciplines, from creating furniture to yachts and aircraft. They clicked.

The pair went on to work in Paris together for the next five years. By 1998 they were working in the United Kingdom, and together with restaurateur and entrepreneur Oliver Peyton they created the then much-lauded new restaurant Mash. Like Newson, Peyton

is another great force in contemporary design, who Martin acknowledges as key to his success. Martin says Mash was inspired in part "by the idea of what it would be like to walk inside a computer. People had not really seen anything like it at that time." Martin's other high-profile London restaurants included "the more classic" restaurant Isola, which opened in 2001, another collaboration with Peyton.

In addition to working as a product designer and with restaurant and hotel clients, Martin continues to be an architect of private residences, including his own. He designed the mews house he lives in with his family in Notting Hill Gate, converting it from two floors to four, and it's typical of his work in the way it manipulates and plays with natural light sources. More recently, he created a private residence for former Oasis songwriter Noel Gallagher. He has a variety of private residence projects in the pipeline and says he will continue to work on these alongside designing products and public spaces.

"I like to play when I work, I like to have a sense of fun with what I'm doing," says Martin, and if you look at his work, this sense of fun shines through. The projects he's working on and planning for the future





Chan restaurant in Thessaloniki, Greece (top left), the Milk Stool (top right) and the Wood Lamp (above), all designed by Andy Martin Associates

are almost too numerous to count, but clients include the Barafina restaurants and Groucho private club in London and the Zevaco restaurant in Casablanca. In terms of product design, Martin's newest projects include developing an intriguing prototype bentwood bicycle for the German company Thonet.

He's by no means short of clients, but one area of the world in which Martin is keen to work is Beirut. He frequently collaborates on international projects with Kurt Zdesar, formerly the chief executive of Nobu, who also created the more accessible UK dim sum chain Ping Pong. The pair were until recently going to work together to create a hotel restaurant in Beirut. That particular project of Zdesar's did not, for various reasons, go ahead, so Martin did not in the end get the chance to come onboard. But Martin and Zdesar are definitely planning to revisit the idea in future. "When it comes to Beirut, it's somewhere I am keen to work on a hotel or restaurant project, and I'm very much open for business when it comes to working in that part of the world. It's something I'll be looking to do."