

# Designer's chics have come home to roost

Maurice Dunlevy

• Residential

PICTURE this. Celebrated French designer Phillipe Starck is getting down to business by sloshing around in knee-deep mud and water, and none of it has anything to do with hip hotels, apartments or offbeat widgets that create art forms out of toilet brushes.

One of the world's most commercially successful designers is actually an oyster farmer, and in two weeks' time he'll be down on the farm in Bordeaux, France, tending his latest crop of gastronomic delights.

But for this week, at least, it was all matters building — and fashion — with Starck a special guest at the Melbourne Fashion Festival.

The genial Starck, who has designed, and redesigned, thousands of products from fly swatters to motor bikes, has added his name to a new Andrew Rettig apartment development on the site of the former Victoria Brewery in East Melbourne.

The project is a joint venture between Starck and Rettig's R Corp, which is best known in Melbourne for its redevelopment of the old St Kilda railway station.

Backed by financier Babcock & Brown, the idea of the East Melbourne project is to create an urban village of almost 430 high-end apartments which will cost up to \$1 million each.

Eight buildings, around 150 years old, will be retained for a development that includes a gourmet supermarket and business centre.

The project vehicle will be R.yoo, a spin-off from Yoo, Starck's funky London-based all-things-property venture, which has helped make Manhattan-style loft living a reality in London.

Starck wants to "redefine the way people create and live within their own space", and his first Australian project will reflect this thinking.

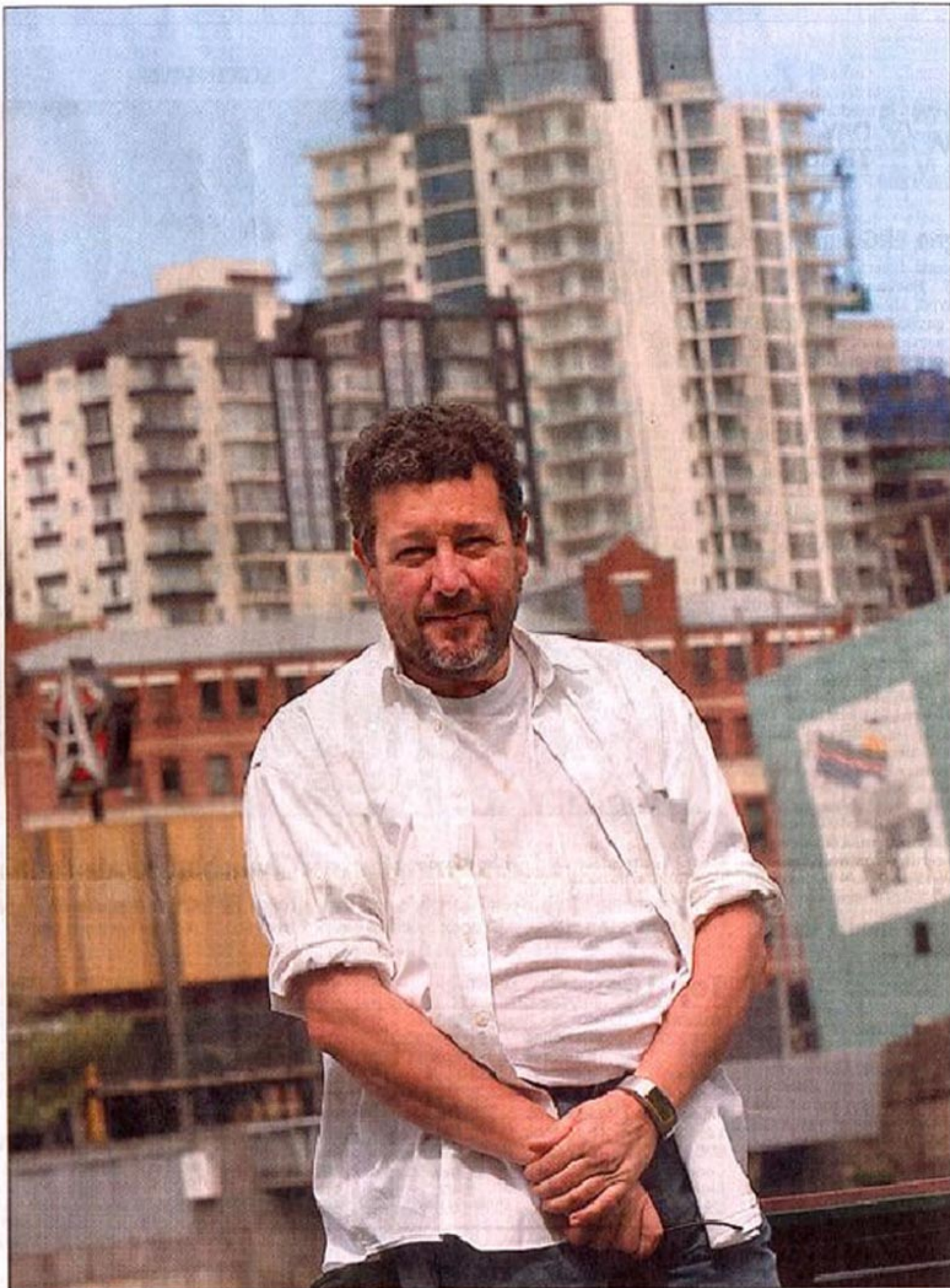
From New York's Royalton and Paramount hotels to a range of products that numbers around 2000, the world of Starck revolves around his "tribes", the four ideas he has created to define a home.

There's classic, culture, minimal and nature, and each comes with a palette of "fully resolved materials to individualise your life".

Classic is all things Jaguar, tweed, Italian villa, Scottish castle and French chateau.

Minimal is about white, empty space, pure and concrete, and nature is raw, leather, pebbles and driftwood.

Culture, on the other hand, is Andy Warhol, Mini Cooper, fantasy — and even Mao Zedong.



South of the Bordeaux: Phillipe Starck this week in Melbourne, where he was special guest at the fashion festival Picture: Colin Murty