

Starck designs for yoo Australia

Robert Clow

Philippe Starck may be on a mission from God, but he is not quite sure. "When I see people who are lost I always try to help," the internationally renowned designer says. "Why, I don't know," he adds, suggesting that it might be a good question for his shrink. "Perhaps because of my deep religious background."

That, he explains, is part of the philosophy behind yoo Australia, the design and development company he has formed with London property developer John Hitchcox and Australian developer Andrew Ridding.

It also underlies his other ventures, such as his organic food company and organic food restaurant.

"I am nothing," he proclaims. "I am not an architect. I am not a designer. I am just what in France is called a citizen — a citizen."

The feeling of responsibility to the community or "the tribe" is one of the things Starck argues fuels all his ventures.

Speaking mid-way through a world

tour that has taken him to Hong Kong and South Korea, amongst many other places, Starck's partner, Hitchcox explains that yoo tries to look at interiors from the inside out, because the interiors are where people spend most of their time.

"People will spend a lot of money buying a house and because they are rich they will make the biggest mistake of their lives," says Starck. "They will hire an interior designer."

"I am nothing. I am not an architect. I am not a designer."

Nobody should allow themselves to be imprisoned within the vision of an interior designer, he says, speaking as an interior designer. "I think it is better to create your own life, your own egg."

Starck says he is most happy when apartment buyers choose to decorate their own space in their own way, but yoo can guide buyers towards a natural, minimal, classical or cultural look.

The company now has projects in

London, Miami, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, Sydney and Melbourne and the world tour is designed to extend that list.

Typically, yoo teams up with a local joint-venture partner in each place it builds. In East Melbourne, yoo teamed up with Babcock & Brown to develop its Tribeca site and in Sydney it is working with the Carrington Group to develop its Surry Hills building on Goulburn Street.

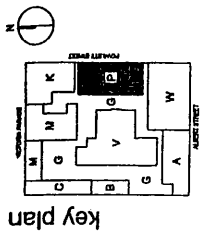
The Surry Hills building, called Meta, is a mixture of a renovated old commercial building with a new structure welded on like Melbourne's Tribeca. Acclaimed architect Richard Francis-Jones, of Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp, also worked on the building. Sixty of the new development's 77 apartments have already been sold, with a top price of \$1.5 million, and the project is due to be finished next April.

Starck and his partners have been meeting a host of developers, including Land Lease, Robert Whyte's Trafalgar Group and Robert Magid, with a view to collaborating with them on future projects.



Philippe Starck has projects in Sydney and Melbourne.

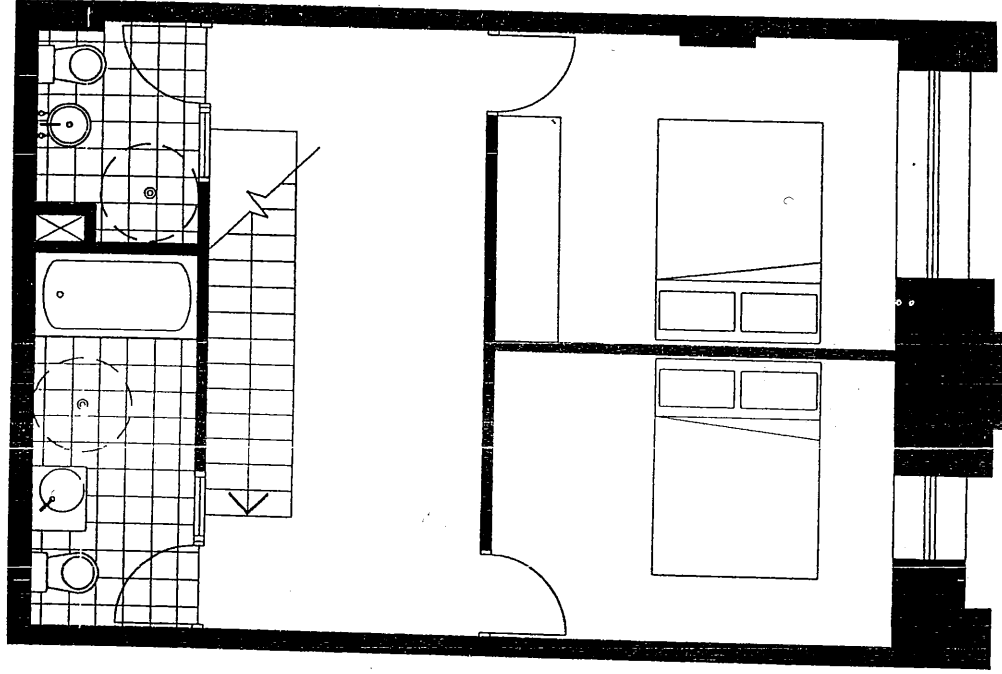
Photo: TAMARA VONINSKI



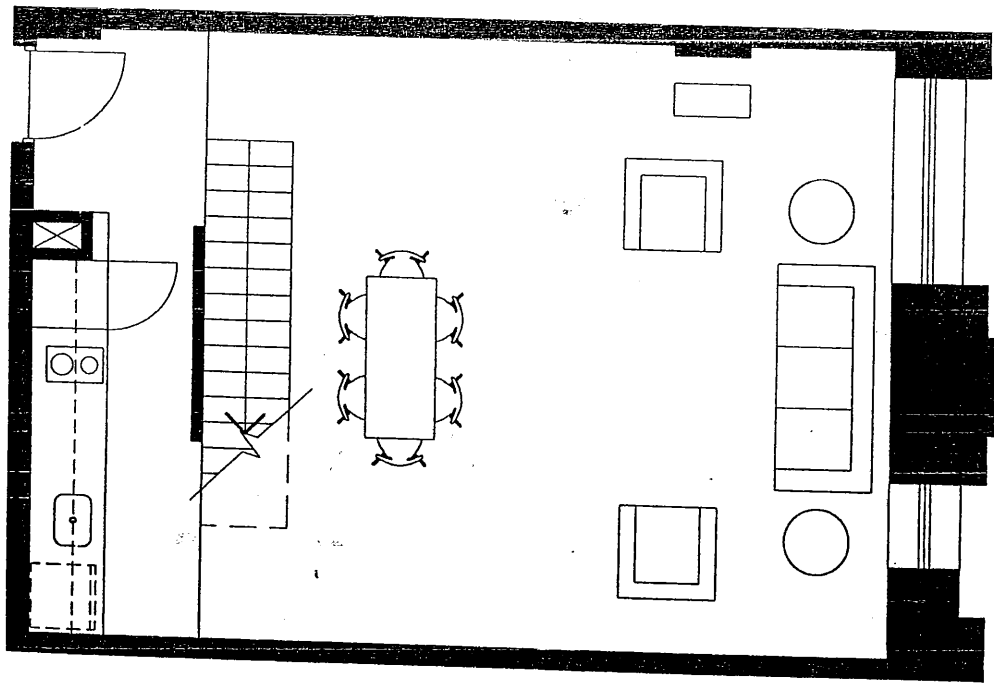
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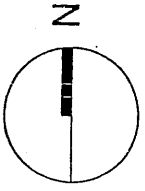
UPPER LEVEL (LEVEL 2)



LOWER LEVEL (LEVEL 1)



NOTE: UNIT PLAN ROTATED



TRIBECA

THE POWLETT
UNIT TYPE V

PRELIMINARY

brucehenderson architects

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TYPICAL UNIT AREA

97.89m²