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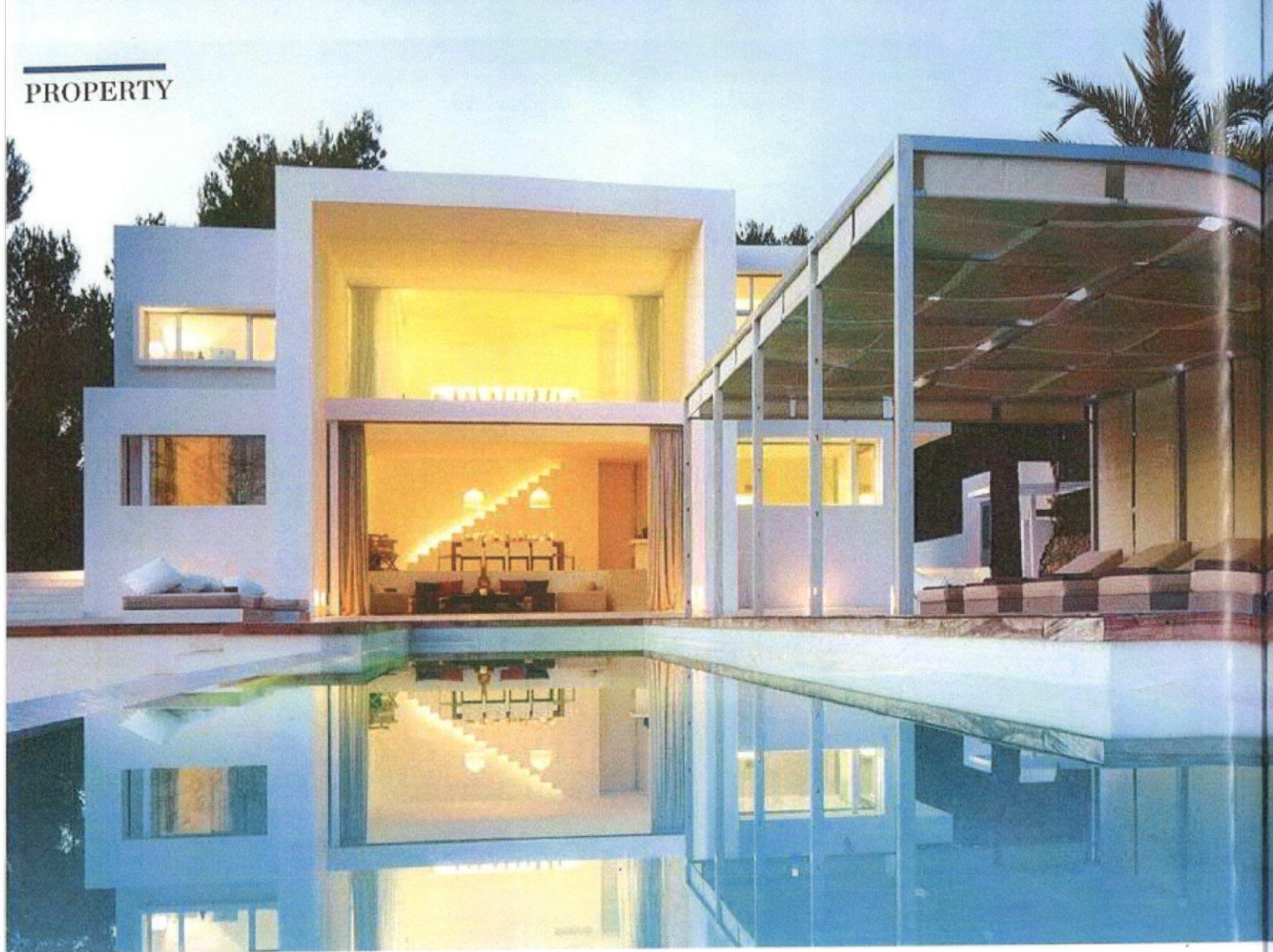
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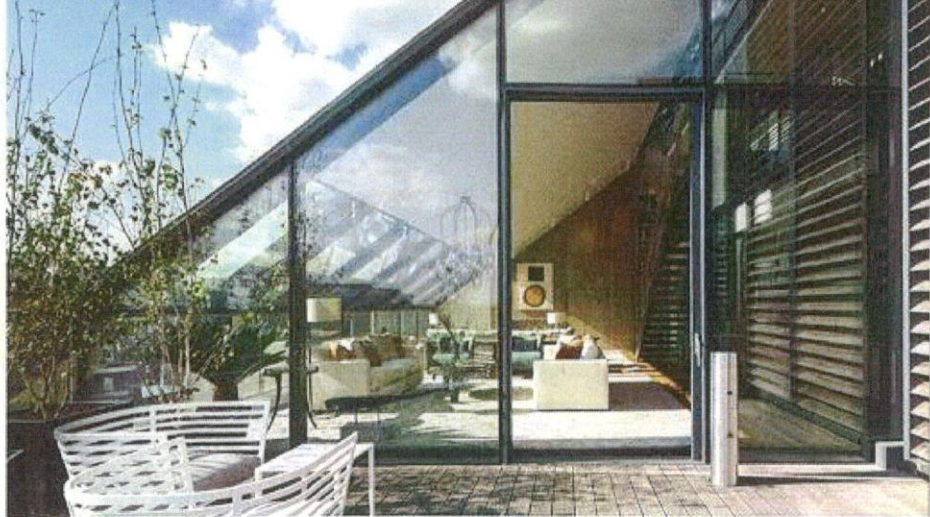
LET THE OUTSIDE IN

In the age of “oversharing” it seems that even previously private individuals are prepared to bare all in glass-walled living spaces, says **Zoe Dare Hall**

When we look back at the 21st century “teens”, we will surely think “What a lot of exhibitionists we were.” From parading our thoughts on social media to hosting strangers at supper clubs in our homes, we’re happy to discard privacy in favour of simply being seen. This appetite for sharing our lifestyles is echoed in our modern architecture. From smaller self-build projects and extensions that involve knocking several rooms into one big space and installing glazed walls, to luxury developments that play on people’s desire for panoramic views, we all want glass – and lots of it. Where once money bought you privacy, now it seems wealthy buyers want to say, “look at me”.

London’s rapidly changing South Bank has been quick to embrace this “bare all” architecture. Look at Neo Bankside next to Tate Modern, designed by the masters of this look, architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners. Every apartment – ranging from £850,000 for a one bed to £19.75m for the penthouse (020 7629 8171; www.knightfrank.co.uk) – has a double-aspect, glass-walled living space with an internal glazed balcony, or winter garden, providing a full-height glass corner that’s an ideal showcase for a statement designer chair or lamp. Even the glass-walled private gym, set at ground level, ensures its inhabitants are on show. Should you live in the facing tower, or simply be strolling past, you can’t help but get a look into someone else’s life.

Another development that will put glass to great effect is the Foster + Partners-designed South Quay Plaza in Canary Wharf, where every apartment will have full-height glazed



corners in the living area that open up to a glass balustrade. There is nothing structural to block the view when you're standing indoors and looking out. It gives the purest sense of space and light, which is what everyone in cramped, grey London wants.

"I like the idea of putting a lifestyle on display," says Dara Huang, the founder of Design Haus Liberty, based in London and Hong Kong. She has come up with some imaginative uses of glass in another of the South Bank's landmark developments, the South Bank Tower, where she has designed the triplex penthouse, on sale for £20m (020 3267 1048; www.southbanktower.com).

The glass wall between the bathroom and bedroom becomes a two-way screen when the movie projector is turned on. There's also a frosted glass wall in the master bedroom that looks directly over the living room. "This creates a relationship between communal and private spaces. While it is impossible for anyone to see you from outside, there is a visceral sense of freedom of being able to walk around in 'exposed space' completely naked," says Huang. "A well-thought-out interior design space stages some of the best everyday performances, filled with human interactions and constant buzz. Glass allows us to observe those, so I always think of fun and interesting ways to play with furniture, art elements and lighting and see how they perform when viewed through windows."

Architect Chris Darling, the founder of London-based Darling Associates, has also noticed a certain desire for exhibitionism among wealthy buyers. "They seem to have

taken a liking to living their lives fully exposed to passers-by. At one project we worked on, Albert Bridge House in Battersea, it was even possible to peer into Sir Norman Foster's nearby glass penthouse," he says. Buyers will pay large premiums to have views and light and, Darling points out, "Architects have responded to this by increasing the glazing areas within schemes, with large expanses of clear glass affording great views of the city, river – and sometimes even of the neighbours across the way."

There are limits on how close you can be to neighbouring buildings' windows – traditionally 18 metres, though in some luxury developments now it can be as little as eight metres, says Darling. Architects are also coming up with clever ways to limit inward views without impeding those looking out. At One Hyde Park, Rogers Harbour Stirk + Partners have designed vertical fins "to screen views across to the neighbouring celebrity or oligarch", Darling comments.

Tinted, mirrored or frosted glass always works a treat, too. As Dara Huang comments: "One of the most expensive materials on a building site at present is privacy glass that frosts at the touch of a button. It's exciting how technology is playing with exposure and creating settings to reflect our constantly changing moods."

London isn't the only new-build exhibitionist. Miami has never been a shrinking violet on the world stage and its latest residential skyscrapers also ensure everything is on display. At Zaha Hadid's 1000 Museum on Biscayne Boulevard, there is little to block the fabulous ocean panoramas from the apartments priced from US\$5m to

Main image: Casa Libelai, in Santa Gertrudis de Frutera, is a prime example of the flamboyantly open, modern Ibiza look.

From top: a Reid Williams-designed penthouse at Neo Bankside, on London's South Bank; apartments at Zaha Hadid's 1000 Museum in Miami are a new take on 1970s style, with a "luxurious and exposed twist"



From top: Neo Bankside offers fantastic city views over London; this Punta Brava house changes colour according to the position of the sun

US\$16m (Savills, 020 7016 3740; www.1000museum.com). "This is a new take on the 1970s style that's all the rage in Miami, with a more modern, luxurious and exposed twist," says Mayi de la Vega, CEO of One Sotheby's Realty in South Florida. For architects and developers behind such projects, there is a fine balance to be struck between dramatic design and privacy. "The tower is designed to be a truly secure, ultra-private, state-of-the-art environment. Privacy is maintained with unparalleled security," says de la Vega.

When it comes to the "if you've got it, flaunt it" culture, then Ibiza is also vying for number one spot. In summer, the Balearic island is awash with supermodels, super cars, multimillion pound yachts and wild parties, but many who relocate here to raise families claim to love its privacy and nonplussed attitude to seeing a famous face. However, the houses they build simply scream for attention.

On luxury developments such as Vista Alegre and Roca Llisa, minimalist mansions sit close together "and the owner's life is indeed on display", says interior designer Karina Kieffer (www.karinakieffer.com). For her own house, Casa Libelal – which is on sale for €5.25m (+34 971 310 799; www.ibiza-sothebysrealty.com) – she chose a secluded spot near the popular small town of Santa Gertrudis, far from

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prying eyes. The double-height living area opens entirely to the terrace where day beds line the poolside, blurring all sense of inside and out. "It had the reputation of a party house when we bought it, with faux nightclub interiors to match," says Kieffer. "We gutted it and used a lot of natural materials, such as limestone tiles for the floor inside and out so when you open up the living-room glass doors you have the feeling of being outside."

The flamboyantly open, modern Ibiza look has also travelled to the nearby Costa Brava. Where old wealth in this well-heeled area of Catalunya has tended to prefer historic castle-like *masias*, shielded from view among their many hectares of countryside, new and international money is making its mark on the coastline by building white palaces that could be straight out of the Balearics. The Punta Brava estate near Sant Feliu de Guixols, an expensive residential development on the coast, is home to one of the most eye-catching examples. On sale for €13m (+34 933 562 989; www.lucasfox.com), the house is designed with a reflective fibreglass facade that changes colour according to the position of the sun and replicates the look and feel of a luxury cruise liner.

"They have tinted glass, so they can see out but the neighbours can't see in," Tom Maidment from Lucas Fox is quick to add. "There has certainly been a shift away from the classic Mediterranean properties in favour of modern, minimalist homes. The challenge is making the design live up to the dramatic coastal landscape that surrounds it, taking full advantage of every inch of sea view that the client has paid for – while also maintaining a high level of privacy."

That could be the crux of it. It's a toss up between design, maximising the views and privacy. Sometimes you just have to compromise – and if that means not leaving your laundry in full view of anyone who happens to pass by, then so be it. ☺