

# Philippe Starck

ONE OF PHILIPPE STARCK'S first design projects was a torture chamber for his schoolteacher. This strange design debut proved to be decidedly apropos. One of the design world's brightest stars, Starck has successfully breached the chasm between fame in the industry and fame in the outside world. This is undoubtedly due to his unusual charisma and playful—to say the least—style that has found a wide and adoring audience.

Starck began his career in the '70s designing two enormously popular nightclubs in Paris—La Main Bleue and Les Bains Douches. This was followed by French President Mitterand's highly publicized and highly criticized selection of Starck to redesign a suite of rooms in the Elysée Palace in 1983. Although the choice of a design school dropout drew a collective “*Mon Dieu!*” from many, the final product so impressed the French government that they put up money for the development and manufacture of a complete collection of his furniture.

Starck's unique designs have won him worldwide recognition. People are as drawn to his whimsical, theatrical designs as they are to his witty, eccentric personality. He professes to be uninterested in the history of aesthetics and claims to “have

no taste”—a combination that places him in the “one-of-a-kind” club of history's innovators. Although he makes no claims to taste, he has designed chairs and lamps—which are said to

be his forte—for manufacturers such as Kartell, Driade and Flos. He has also designed toothbrushes, pasta, a bridge, vases, a sports water bottle and much more.

His unique style is perhaps best revealed in the interiors he has designed around the world. Cafe Costes in

Paris, completed in 1984, is still drawing long queues. Other fantastic European interiors include the Teatriz restaurant in Madrid, completed in 1990. He found wide acceptance in the U.S. in 1988 with the completion of the Royalton Hotel in New York City. The owners of the Royalton also enlisted Starck to design the Paramount—a New York hotel full of magic and surprises that was booked solid for 12 months at its opening in 1990.

Japan has developed a fascination with the eccentric French designer. Starck completed two buildings in 1989 in Tokyo. NaniNani, a multi-purpose commercial building, literally threw a twist in an otherwise stolid city office block. And the spectacular beer hall located in Tokyo's run-down East End that Starck created to celebrate the Asahi company's centennial is performing its intended function—drawing huge crowds from the popular West End. The black granite and glass block structure defies its definition of “beer hall,” and the 360-ton steel shape that tops it off is certainly difficult to describe.

Philippe Starck has brought a spark of brightness and wit to our times. His designs reflect how he believes humans should live—with grace and innovation and function and fun.

—Keli Dugger



The entrance lobby (above) and stairwell (below) of the futuristic Asahi beer hall in Tokyo. Below, right: A bar area at the Teatriz restaurant in Madrid. Right: Starck's vision of how a person's room “should” look, as created in the Paramount Hotel in New York.

