



## Fashion Forward

InsideOut gets an exclusive tour of the home of celebrated dress designer Tadashi Shoji.

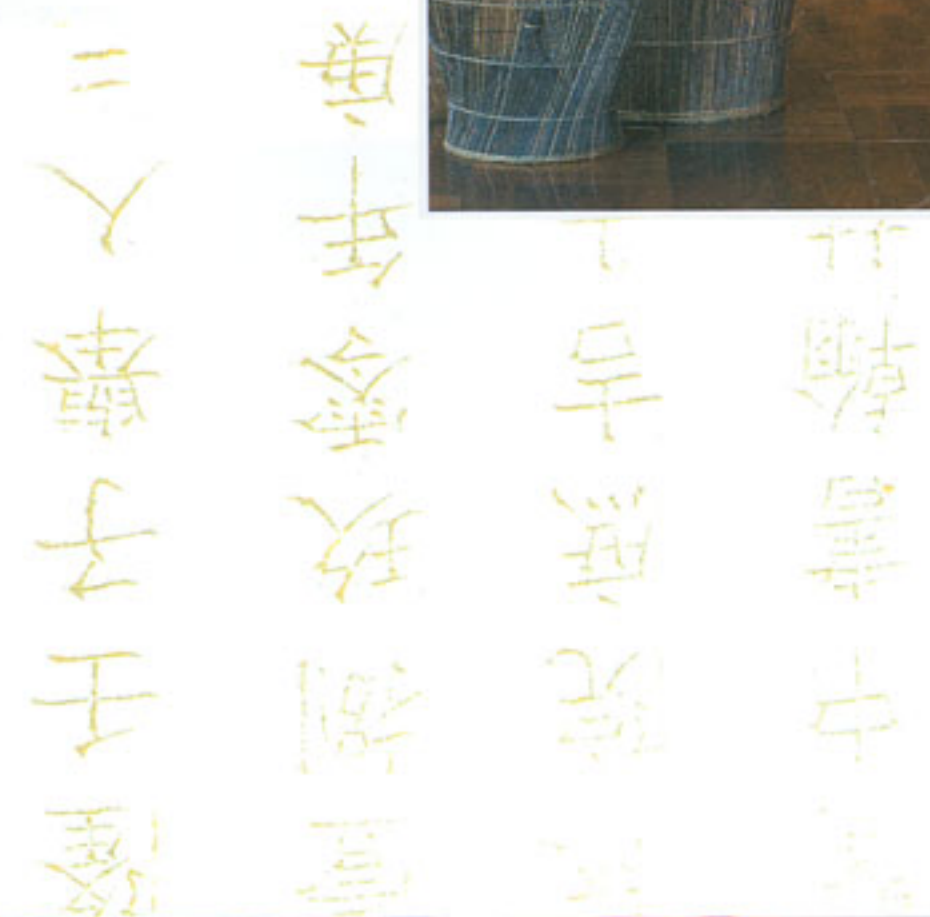
Text: Ayesha Khan, Freelance Writer

Chaos reigns on this fall afternoon in a makeshift tent on New York's Bryant Park. Everywhere you look, super-slender models are being touched up before they hit the runway. The lights have just gone up, music is blaring, and a throng of stylists, makeup artists and models are scurrying about this exclusive backstage enclosure. At the centre of it all is one man whose name reverberates throughout the room. "Tadashi! Tadashi!" yells a chorus of publicists and fashion show directors, demanding the utmost attention of this soft-spoken gentleman, who is clearly immersed in his art.

A week later, across the continent in Pasadena, California, Tadashi Shoji, the man who firmly believes in functional elegance for the working woman (working women such as Queen Latifah and Shakira, mind you) is, if only for a brief moment, at peace in his Zen-like oasis of calm. Built in the

early 1950s, this 14-room, 5,021 square foot home retained most of the unique structural qualities and finishes of its original design. "This house dates back to 1954. The owner must have paid a fortune because of the walls were panelled with individually carved wood panelling," says Shoji. "The architecture is very mid-century modern - sleek with a lot of Asian influence," he adds. The home, originally designed by architect Harry Sims Bent, was recently declared a historic Pasadena landmark. A 2004 renovation more than doubled its size.

"Originally when I bought the house, a Feng Shui consultant suggested I should change the entrance of the kitchen. It was a great house, and so I didn't want to touch anything, except to have it painted, of course. Three years later, when I decided to fix my studio, I decided to redo my home as well. The process took two and a half years," recalls Shoji who has always been



one to stay true to his Asian roots, both in his dress designs and now in the unique ethos that drives the look of his home.

Originally from the picturesque town of Sendai, Japan, Shoji had an innate talent for art and design. He honed this talent in Tokyo, studying Fine Arts and later training with legendary Japanese artist Jiro Takamatsu. He made his foray into American design under the tutelage of flamboyant 1970s looks for countless performers such as Elton John, The Jacksons and Earth Wind and Fire. In 1982, Shoji set out to join the ranks of America's finest designers, and has continued to outdo himself ever since.

We begin the tour of this charming designer's home with the living room. Set against warm hues of mahogany and other woods, this room seamlessly fuses American comfort with Asian elegance. "The furniture is a mixture of modern, Balinese and Chinese," Shoji points out. "I collect Southeast Asian art, statues and photography. Because of my Japanese heritage, I don't like to put nails on the walls, so I never hang any paintings on the wall. Everything is on the floor. It bothers me to nails things onto the wall," he adds.

As one strolls through the halls, Japanese trellis motifs, pebbles and bamboos abound, giving this home a true sense of its owner's identity. A small, yet cosy sunroom mixes

**Above:** The halls are filled with personal paraphernalia and Japanese artefacts, allowing cosiness and a true sense of identity

**Left:** A seating area in a corner of the kitchen





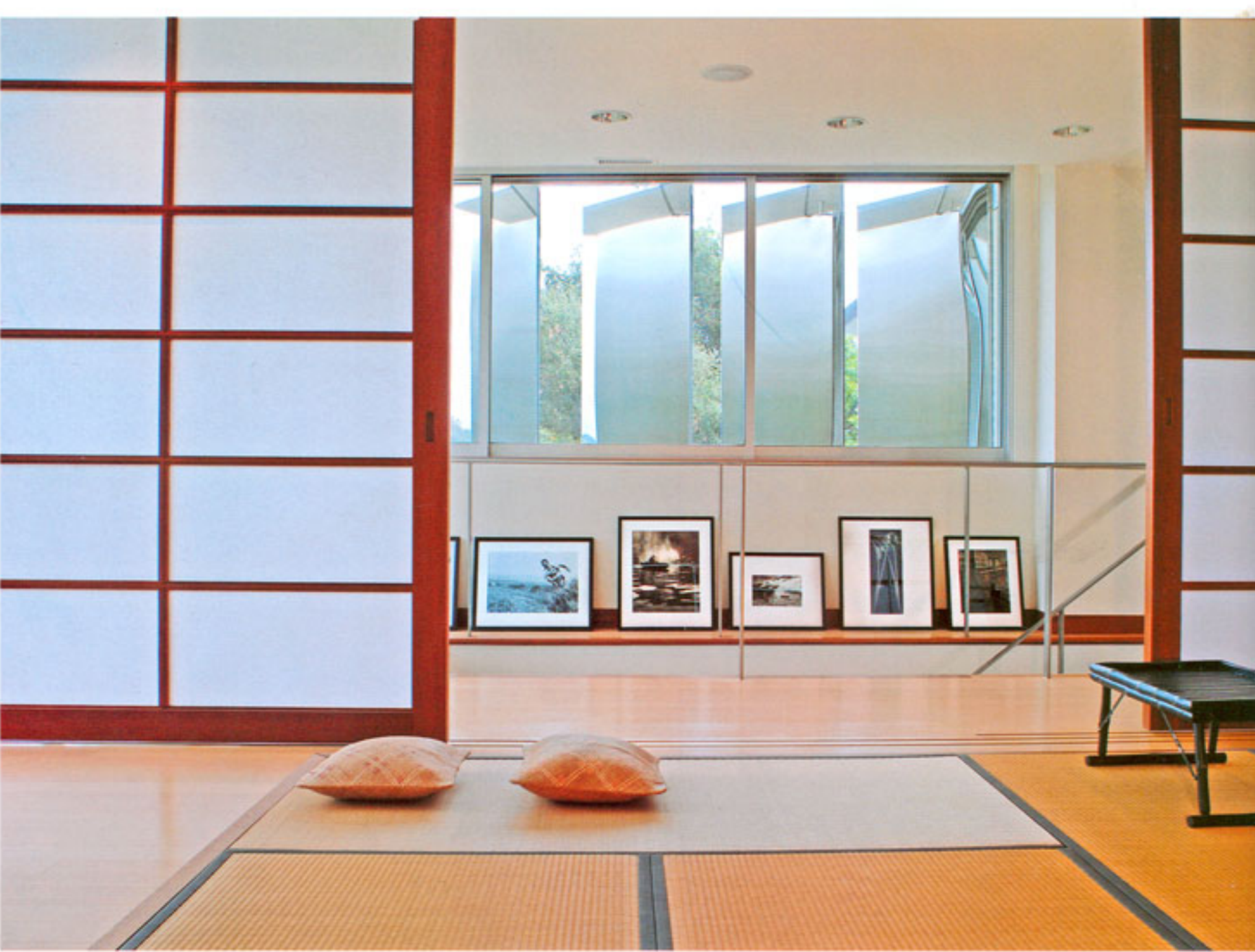


Lebanese Baroque

Kitchen Special Feature Pools and Landscaping in Dubai Buying in India



Above and facing page: In the meditation room, clean lines and wooden finishes are offset by delicate tatami mats, dark woods, Oriental furniture and an antique Chinese cabinet. This room offers some of the best views in the house



Before the 2004 renovation, the meditation room was an outdoor terrace. Now, it is separated from the house by a pair of shoji screens that slide away to reveal a serene room where Asian minimalism and simplicity prevail

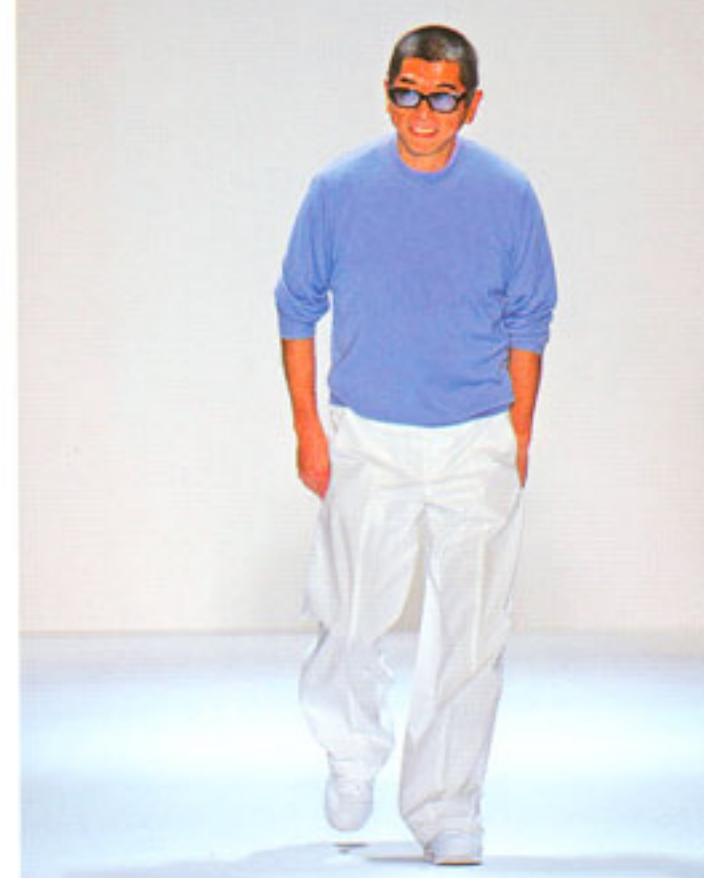
good old American living (including plush furniture) with hints of the Orient. Proceeding into the dining room, guests are immediately greeted by a captivating view. An expertly landscaped 10-foot waterfall cascades over a custom rock sculpture providing an instant focal point to the otherwise 17th century Japanese minimalist room.

And the minimalism continues upstairs, past a sleek cantilevered staircase that doubles as a gallery for some truly

spectacular photography. Once upstairs, a pair of shoji screens effortlessly slide away to reveal the meditation room. Before the massive 2004 renovation, this room was an outdoor terrace. Asian minimalist simplicity is the operative phrase here, where clean lines and wooden finishes are offset only by the delicate tatami mats and an ornate antique Chinese cabinet. The views from this room are enough to cast a meditative spell on guests, giving them an insight into how truly stunning Shoji's hometown of Sendai must be. ▶

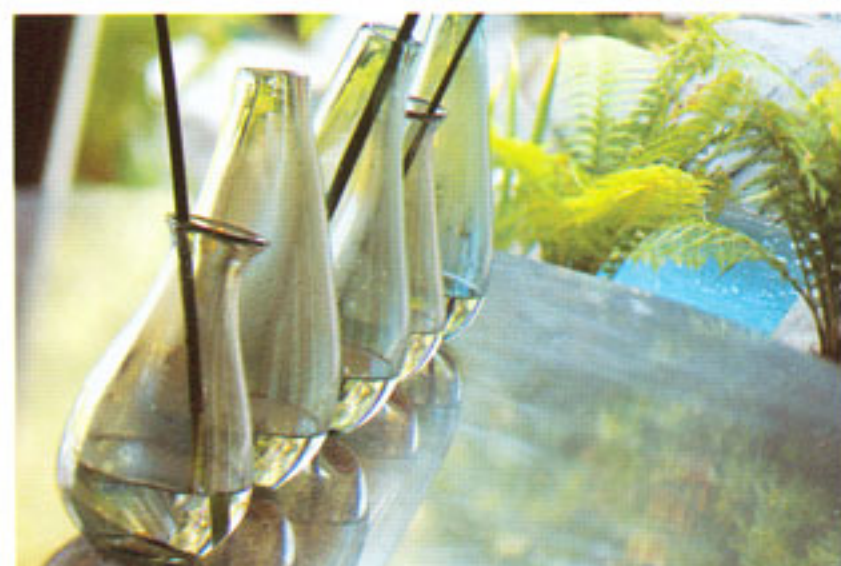


TADASHI SHOJI



Tadashi Shoji

“I'm so flattered when I receive compliments because I didn't really try too hard to design this home. It all just came naturally”





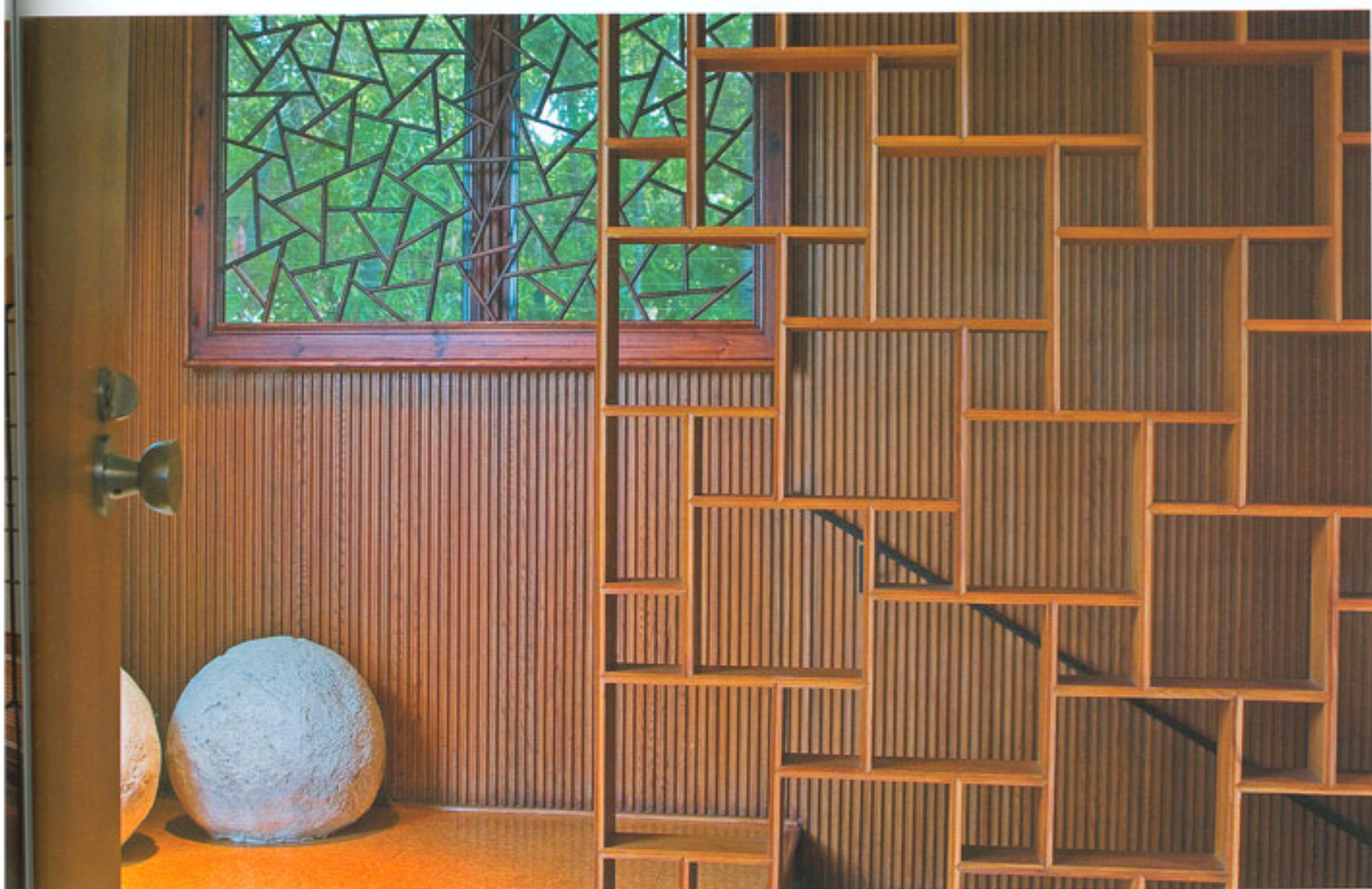


Lebanese Baroque

Kitchen Special Feature Pools and Landscaping in Dubai Buying in India



Top: The kitchen injects a burst of vibrant colour into the overall muted palette of the home Above: The dining room offers a captivating view of an expertly landscaped 10-foot waterfall cascading over a custom rock sculpture. This view further downplays the already understated 17th century Japanese minimalist decor



page: The light-filled sunroom (top) feels airy in comparison to the sombre and serene master suite (above)





**Top and bottom:** The crimson guest bedroom is full of handicrafts from the Orient. A collection of mirrors on the wall (the only exception to Tadashi's "no drilling holes in the walls" rule) were gathered from all corners of the world

**Centre:** Stark white linen in the master bedroom forms a pleasant contrast to the deeper tones and Asian décor



Kitchen Special Feature Pools and Landscaping in Dubai Buying in India



**Above:** Deep, warm tones fill the guest bedroom with the help of a regal silk carpet and rich fabrics, leathers and deep coloured woods. The bed linen in contrast is silver-white, offering visual respite



The two bedrooms are complete departures from the characteristically Japanese theme that pervades the rest of the home. In the master bedroom, a deep blue colour palette is offset by whiter than white linens and, once again, a hint of Asian antiquity with Ming chairs and hefty Chinese chests.

The guestroom is a crimson red homage to the handicrafts of the Orient. Deep, warm tones reign in this space, which features a regal silk carpet and rich fabrics, leathers and deep coloured woods. A collection of mirrors (the only exception to Tadashi's 'no drilling holes in the walls' rule) was gathered from all corners of the world, from Turkey to Mexico via the canals of Venice. ■



"I'm so flattered when I get compliments, because I didn't really try too hard to design this home. It all just came naturally," says Shoji, with all the humility and modesty of a true artist.

As soon as we leave him, the cycle of events that define this busy fashion designer's career will begin again. There are celebrities to dress for the upcoming awards season and yet another stunning collection to present at New York Fashion Week. There is also a line of home furnishings to promote and countless bright ideas waiting to emerge on canvas. However, with a resting place like this, it's no wonder that such inspiring design comes from the House of Shoji season after season. ■



The architecture of this home allows for maximum light to enter. There is an almost tangible flow of energy from the airiness created by large open windows in the facade