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Yin Jun takes a moment to relax in his expansive living room

Home Free

Yin Jun, Boloni's VIP Director, invites us into his private home
By Daniel Allen

Based on Italian design and German quality, Boloni is an upmarket Chinese version of IKEA. Boloni now has 300 stores in 87 Chinese cities, including post-minimalist "lifestyle museums" in Beijing and Shanghai, showcasing the very latest trends in home décor. With such design pedigree in mind, City Weekend decided to check out the home of Yin Jun, Boloni's Director of VIP Customer Management and Retail Sales.

Apart from the Porsche convertible parked in the driveway, Yin's villa is unremarkable from the outside, fronted by a rusty gate and a dismal patch of grass. Through the lobby, however, is a house that demonstrates just how far Chinese home design has come, albeit design based on European ideals. In fact, with most of the décor supplied by Yin's company, the place neatly doubles up as a Boloni showroom.

Yin sums up his second home as a great "leisure house," perfect for inviting friends over, opening a bottle of wine and whiling away the hours. Contrary

to your typical Chinese "warm" house, he says, which usually means a lot of furnishings and a cluttered layout, Yin's home is defined by clean lines. "It is a real contrast to your typical Chinese house. I love the minimalism of this villa; the simple design is elegant and stylish while still very welcoming and comfortable. I like to think of this as my place for entertaining friends."

What happens next is a

That's the beauty of working for Boloni ... Who can blame me if I get big ideas?

whirlwind tour of Yin's villa. Beginning in the lounge, decked out in black wood, long leather sofas and a large legless table are bathed in the soft glow of the afternoon sun flooding through diaphanous drapes. While we're surrounded by European decor, the essentialist design evokes a more Japanese feel, as the neutral colors and geometric forms impart an understated elegance. The emphasis is clearly on clean, straight lines, with plenty of gleaming chrome,

OWNER PROFILE

Yin Jun has spent the past six years working as Boloni's Director of Customer Management and Retail Sales. The owner of two houses, he has spent three years in this current space.



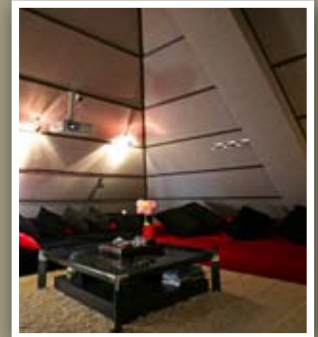
The elegant simplicity of the dining room makes for a classy meal



The private bathroom houses a sunken tub for two

Home Highlights

Pyramid loft: A cozy, comfort-oriented space on the third floor is decked out in bold colors, padded walls and subtle lighting. The projector, large screen and powerful stereo system make this a great room for digital entertainment. Yin Jun comments, "I always bring friends up here to watch movies and play Xbox/Playstation – the only problem is getting them to leave early in the morning."



Molded white table and chairs: Functional yet stylish, the clean, ergonomic lines of this furniture set by Boloni is perfect for the well-lit surroundings of a ground floor alcove, and contrasts nicely with the black rug, curtains and high-tech lighting. "This area is great for playing cards or mahjong with friends in the late afternoon – the warm light really helps to set the right mood."



Curved recliner: Once you overcome the feeling that you're sitting in a dentist's chair, this stylish, ground-hugging recliner by Boloni is surprisingly comfortable, and makes a great focal point for a room corner. Yin Jun comments, "I've actually dropped off to sleep on this couch on more than a few occasions!"



glass and mirrors, and discreetly integrated electronic gadgetry.

Near the wooden staircase, we noticed a pool of goldfish swimming in a black marble-encased pool, their fiery hues enlivening the stark coolness of the feature while the strong sunlight set off reflections in the still water.

Heading up, we eventually arrived in the loft, a pyramid-shaped area which no doubt serves as a rumpus room for adults, with velvet sofas, outsized cushions, video game consoles and a large movie screen. From the smile on Yin's face, this has clearly been the location of an enjoyable late night party or two.

Back down on the ground floor, Yin opens the door to the TV room, the last stop on our tour.

"This is my favorite chair in the house," he explains, while easing into a one-piece black leather recliner that perfectly complements the clean palette of white walls, cream-colored carpet, and floral prints in vivid pink and black. "If I want to relax after a hard day in the office, I make straight for this chair."

Despite the contemporary feel to his home, Yin is anxious to not let anything become outdated. "This villa is three years old," he says, "Soon I think I'll rip everything out and start again. That's the beauty of working for Boloni; I get to check out the latest, trendiest home products every day of the week. Who can blame me if I get big ideas?"

Office Oasis

SOHO China, creator of numerous office spaces across Beijing, offers a brief glimpse into its own workspace
By Daniel Allen



SOHO China's Chaowai
office is more like a home than
an office



It's only fitting that the new headquarters of SOHO China, the Chinese development company renowned for its avant-garde architecture, should be a showcase for progressive interior design. Sitting across three levels of the recently completed Chaowai SOHO building in the heart of Beijing's CBD, SOHO China's new workspace has one of the most impressive layouts in the capital, and represents the very antithesis of the pack 'em and stack'em cubicle-driven mentality of many cramped Beijing offices.

Designed by Hugh Zimmerman, one of the leading talents behind Hong Kong-based architectural practice Leigh & Orange,

SOHO China's new office has only been occupied since late last year. The wooden floors and stairways still have a well-polished sheen, the crisp white walls are blemish-free and the grass on the balcony garden is just starting to grow.

Spacious, light and airy are three hackneyed words in the world of real estate, but in this case, they sum up the SOHO China office perfectly. Indeed, it would be hard to find a Beijing office where the space to employee ratio is higher—the tastefully decorated communal seating areas, high ceilings and large, open floor plan make it seem more like an airport lounge than a place for doing business.

Zimmern is clearly happy with the way his design concept has been realized. "It's very unusual to find an office so dedicated to communal space. The whole office is designed to engender free thinking and communication, and the lounge areas are perfect for formal and informal meetings," he says.

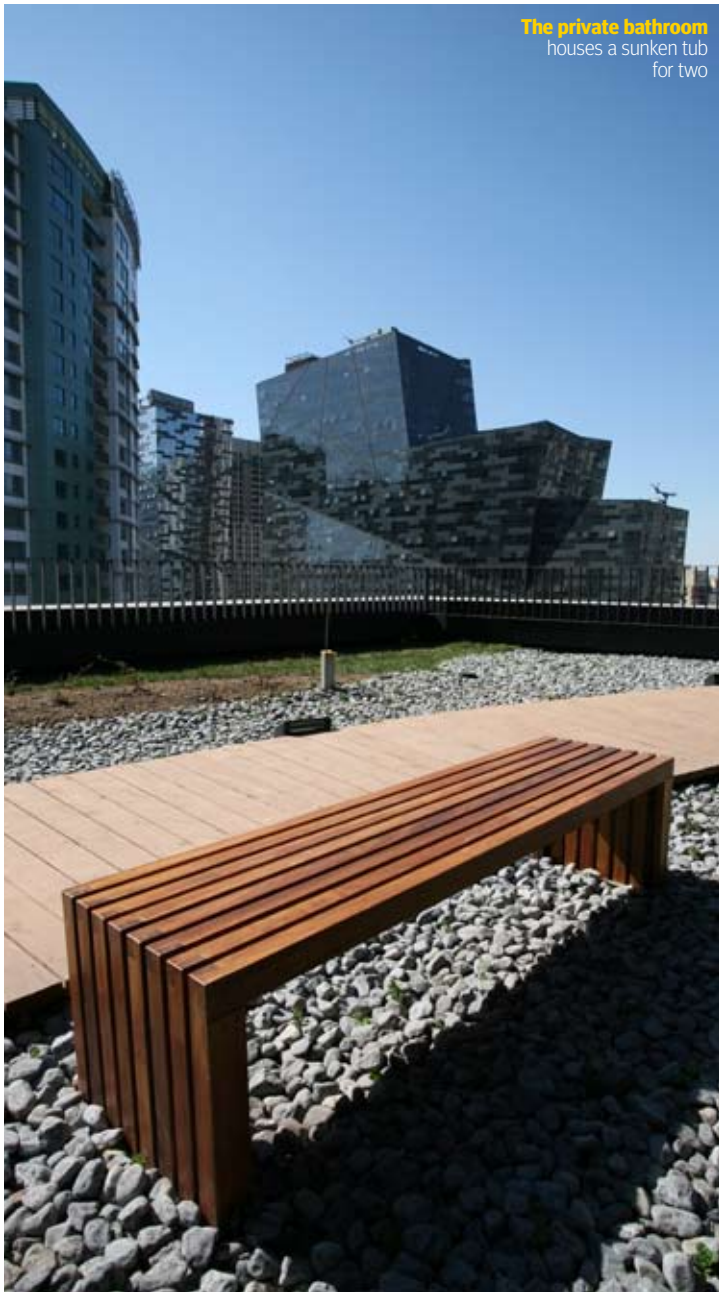
Natural light plays a big part in making the SOHO China office such an attractive and energy efficient workspace. Stenciled metal screens on the large outside windows break up the sunlight, throwing kaleidoscopic patterns

onto nearby furniture and floors. Together with the use of plants and natural materials, this gives the office a very organic feel,

Who could turn up their snout at such a well-balanced office?

warming the minimalist aesthetic and cleverly linking exterior and interior environments.

At night, the effect of the metallic window screens is also very dramatic. Zimmerman explains, "There are pronounced variations in the day-to-night character of



The private bathroom houses a sunken tub for two



Designer Profile

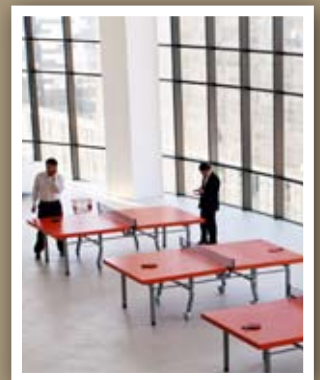
Hugh Zimmern hails from the U.K and is currently working on projects in Beijing, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Bangkok, Doha and Bahrain. He is well-known in architecture circles for his restaurant designs, such as Isola in IFC, Hong Kong, and the Commune by the Great Wall.

Office Highlights

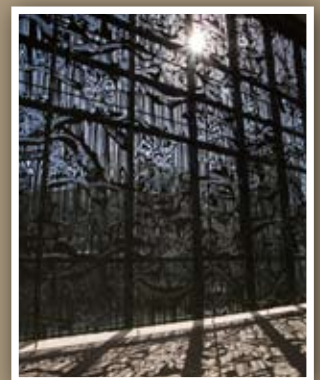
Stretched pigs: Adding an agricultural yet stylish touch of humor to the SOHO space, these elongated porcine sculptures can be found on several floors, either in pairs or mounted vertically. Zimmern points out: “These pigs have become part of the SOHO family, moving around from lobby to lobby. You could say they are a SOHO icon, a reminder not to take life too seriously.”



Table tennis area: This huge, airy space is flanked by large windows offering expansive views over the CBD. The tables are overlooked by the restaurant balcony and communal seating areas, and reached via wooden stairway. Zach Herold, Deputy Corporate Communications Manager, says: “Come lunchtime these tables are a great focal point for employees. They’re always packed with players and sometimes the competition can get pretty intense.”



Stenciled metal window screens: One of the most distinctive design features of the Chaowai SOHO Real Estate Company space, these screens cover windows across three floors, creating a beautiful dappled lighting effect on nearby communal areas and offices. The design of the screens is also echoed in glass partitions and the swirling color schemes of rugs on all levels. Created by Lillian Tang Design in Hong Kong.



this office. During the day the light streams inwards, but when it is dark the brightly illuminated interior is seen as a very distinctive silhouette to the people outside. It’s very beautiful and I’m really pleased with how it’s worked out.”

The commodious environment of SOHO China’s privileged employees should go a long way to easing the stresses and strains of the working day. For those who need to unwind, however, there is a small gym and a cavernous table tennis area that comes alive at lunch time. Meanwhile, spectators can watch the games from the overhead office restaurant while they feast on healthy snacks and freshly-squeezed juices.

No review of the SOHO China workspace would be complete without mentioning the pigs. Handling multi-million yuan real estate projects may be a high pressure business, but the management have clearly managed to retain their sense of frivolity. Watching over staircases and table tennis tables, the outsized swine lend a playful touch to the décor, and apparently have a venerable history with the company. With such illustrious guardians to lighten the mood, who could turn up their snout at such a well-balanced office?