

# ARCHI MEASURES

BY **DÉSIRÉE SADEK** PHOTOS **HD PRODUCTIONS**

A perched house looks respectfully over Beirut. Bernard Khoury chose to create his abode with the sea to his back in order to keep the city constantly before his eyes. His loft is sublime with accuracy, the opposite of the panorama it overlooks: a beautiful lesson in contradiction, to which Lebanon holds the secret.







A perched house with only one desire:  
cut away the bitter and fly away.



**Bernard Khoury resembles his achievements:** resolved, a man of conviction and a hardliner when it comes to the quest for perfection. His work is as surprising as it is impressive, his use of tempered steel – a material that is increasingly rare to find in the architectural world of the Orient and possibly anywhere else in the world!

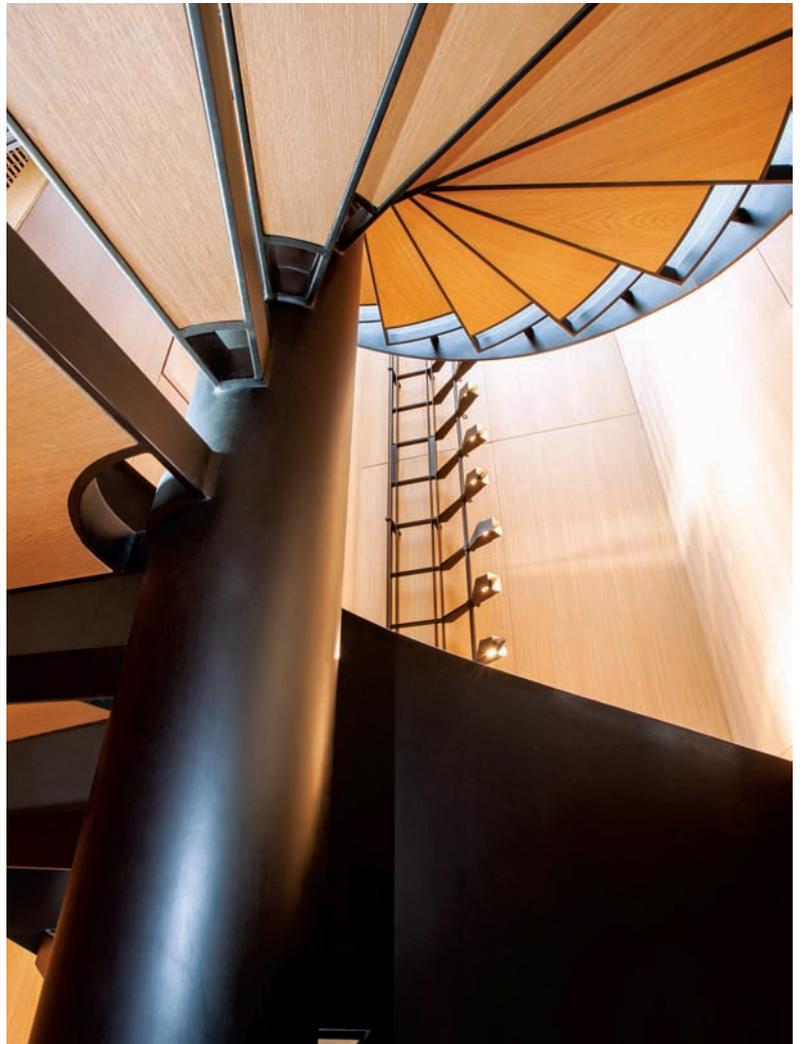
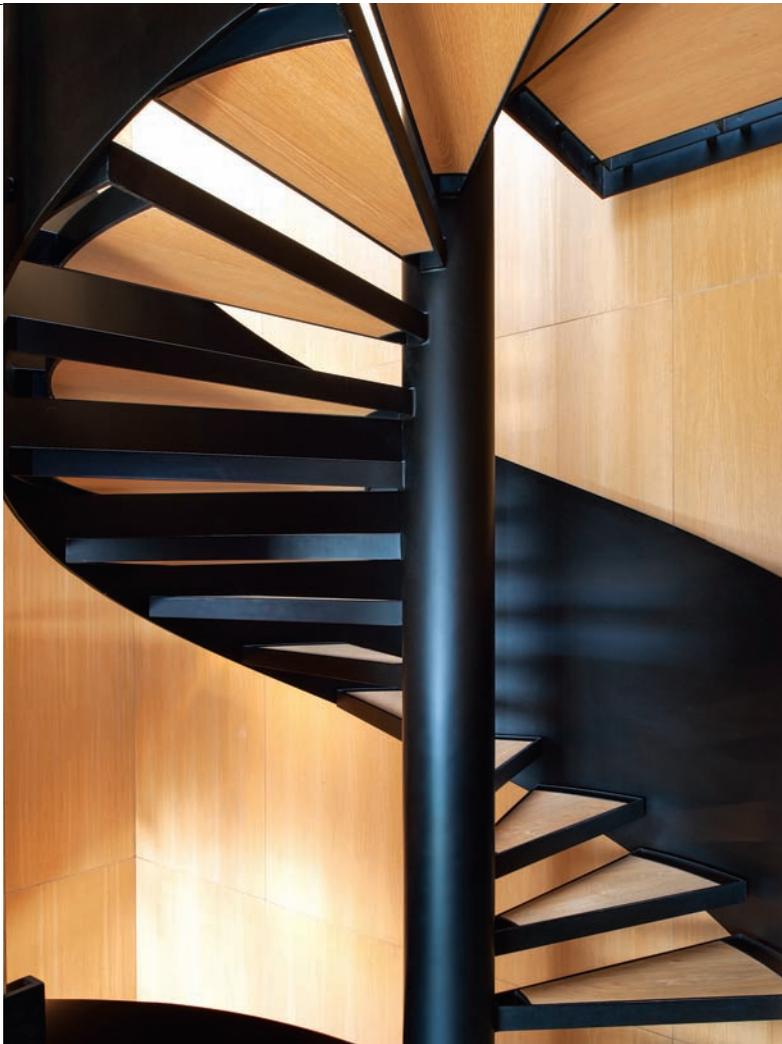
When entering the loft, or as he call it, his "perched house hovering over Beirut", it is difficult not to be impressed by the precision in which the loft was designed. Everything is built in accordance with lines and proportions: the work of a true master builder. From floor to ceiling and everything in between – the ventilation structures, heating and door

handles – nothing was left to chance. On the contrary, everything has been calculated, designed and custom made. Each piece of wood panelling fits perfectly with its surroundings, from the library and its suspended bridge, to the windows, every metre up to the roof.

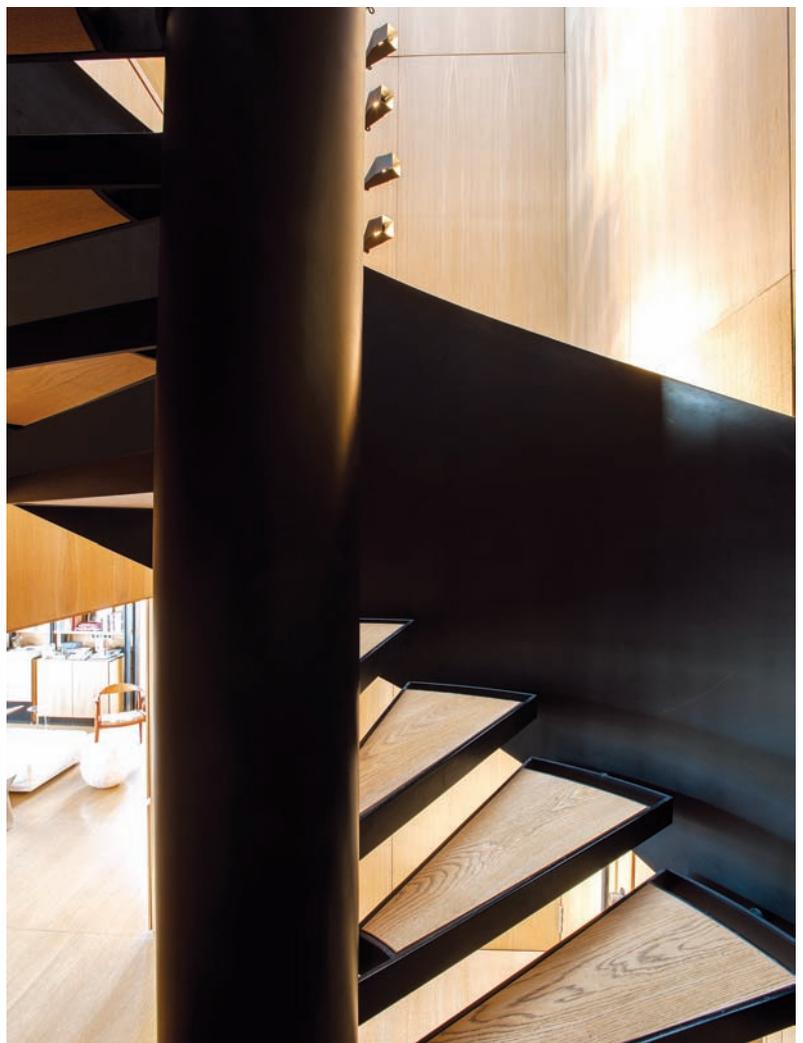
"When I was offered this piece of land I did not hesitate a second! We are at the heart of the most significant location in Beirut, a city without a blueprint. Around us are lonely islands that do not interact with one another and are institutions on their own: the Faculty of Medicine, the French Embassy, Pine Forest, the Maronite Cemetery... allowing for some distance that we can't get anywhere else if we want to be

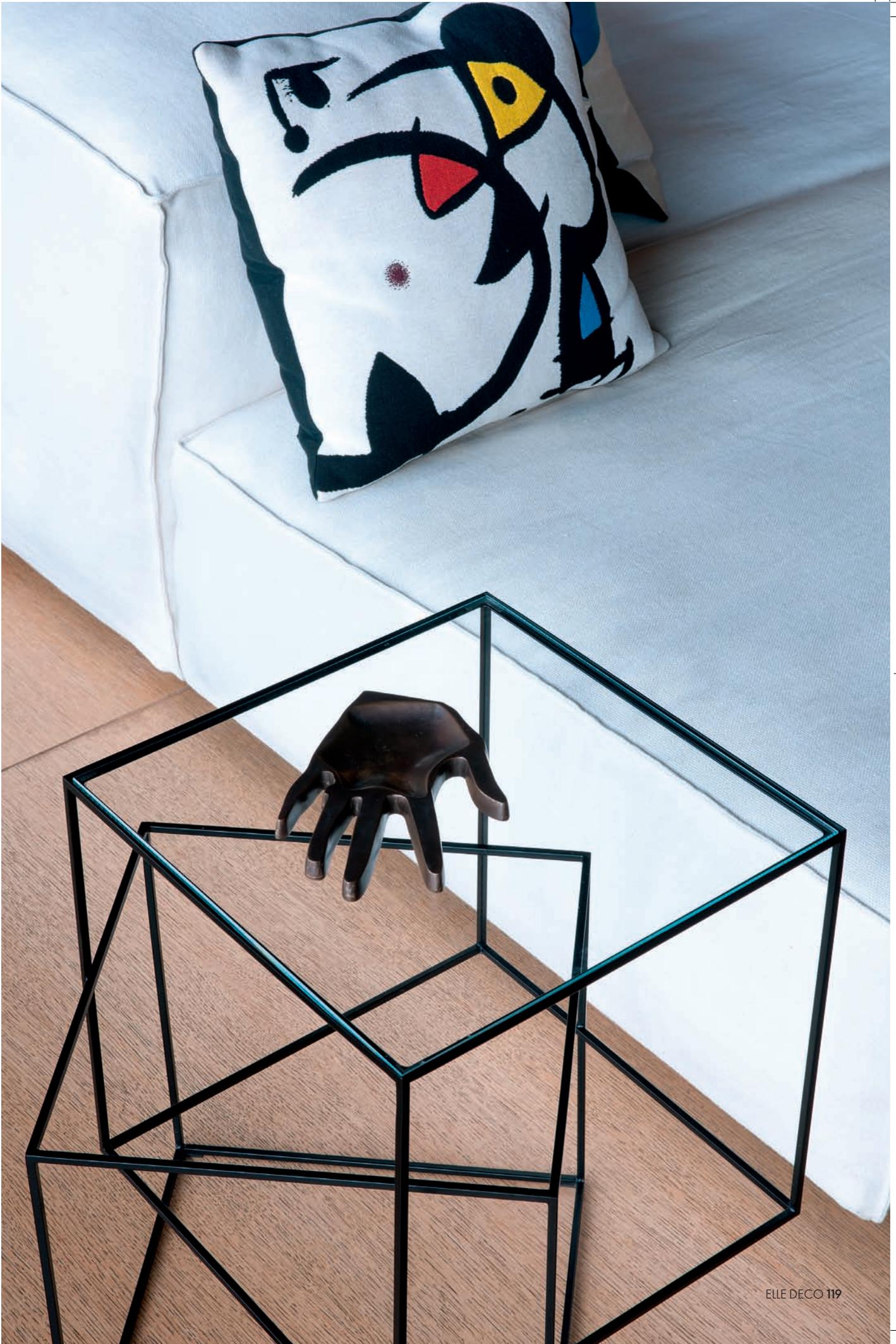
**Beirut right below**  
A swing and a  
suspended bridge.  
Prévert is not far away!  
When opening the panels  
of two floors, one  
breathes an incredible  
wind of freedom.





**Plaster hides its game**  
A matte black paint is a nice to change from the standard white, making for a totally contemporary form, an unrecognisable plaster.







**Ultimate proportions**  
From the floor to the ceiling, including all the ventilation structures and heating, each wood panelling perfectly fits with what surrounds it.



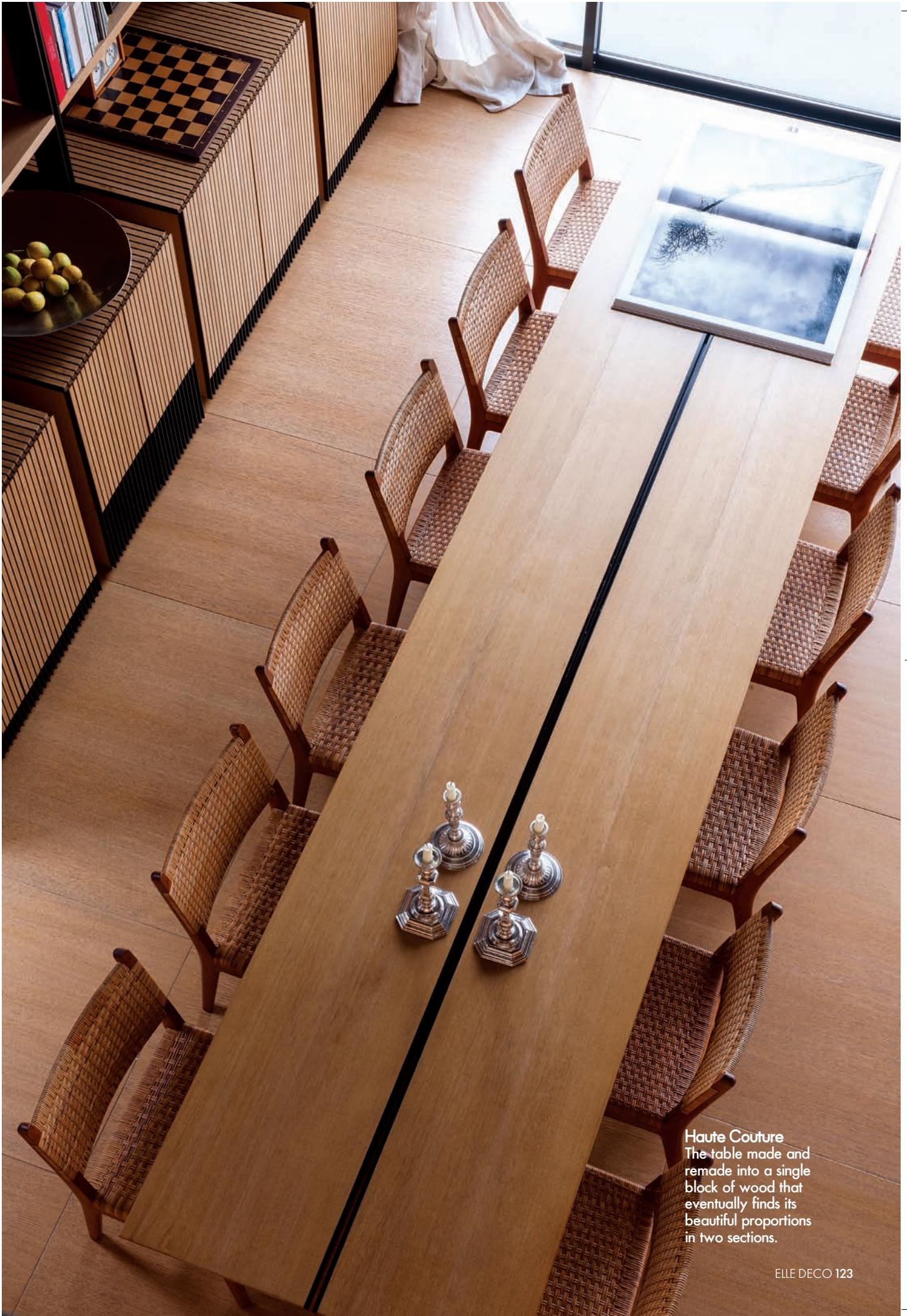


**Winter kitchen**  
 A room in the heart of the loft, replaced on sunny days by the barbecue on the terrace on the roof.

able to face the city; a distance only possible if we turn our backs to the city and face the sea, which I did not want. I wanted to be in front of uncontrolled development in all its horror while living with the sole breathing lung that only this area offers. I wanted a house that was neither romantic nor sweet but that had a close correlation to the city," Bernard Khoury explains by pointing at everything that's here under our feet.

**From this perspective, we can't help but feel fondness for this Beirut of yesterday and love for the Beirut of today,** two confused worlds that intertwine. In this setting of quasi chaos, clad in wood, the house is like a bird's nest in a baobab tree, with no regard for the jungle that surrounds it. The loft is comprised of three levels. On the first, there is the living room, dining room, kitchen and master bedroom. On the second floor, there are the children's suites, and on the third level is the guest room and space for the staff.

Finally, the piece de resistance is the rooftop, complete with a pool that looks over the city with a 360-degree view, surrounded by olive trees and all the comforts of a seventh heaven. "A large southerly facing frame, twelve metres wide and seven metres long for the main room, but not too long so as to preserve the intimacy of the space," adds the owner. "My grandfather was a carpenter, so maintaining the woodwork in the house was a personal challenge that I set for myself. We still use the same craftsman who has known me since birth and has worked with us for three generations. He even made our dining room table. It was he who produced all the wooden slats that conceal the heaters and storage and cover the library, which fit perfectly with the steel work around them, allowing extra openings meaning better air circulation and the best energy savings possible." Even though Bernard does not have a grandfather who worked with steel, the meticulous nature of the steelwork



**Haute Couture**  
The table made and remade into a single block of wood that eventually finds its beautiful proportions in two sections.

ELLE DECO 123



**Sweet intimacy**  
The bedroom where  
the pretty moments of  
life are appreciated.





On the roof, a pool that looks over the city.  
A 360° view to swim in seventh heaven.



exhibits the same desire for perfection and workmanship that echoes that of the precision of the woodwork. The same geometry, same patterns; the resemblances are startling. All the work was undertaken by a company named Acid. "In each of my projects, I want to highlight the excellence of expertise that still exists in this country and is made less and less appealing in favour of imported products that are imposed on the market at unbeatable prices to prevent any competition with those that are handmade and well done."

**The ceiling is a testament and tribute to Lebanon's savoir-faire.** Instead of a false ceiling that hides outlets and peripheral ducts, Bernard Khoury has commissioned a 75-year-old craftsman for the task of creating a "work of art", not created to hide unsightly pipes but to distribute air at optimal levels. When Bernard asks me to guess the type of material used

to create the ceiling covering, I imagine that it's a kind of resin. "Actually it's just a matte-black-painted plaster, a nice change from the usual white and its contemporary moulding makes it completely unrecognisable," corrects Bernard.

An important feature of the space, not to be forgotten, is the bridge that is part of the library structure. "It can be described as unnecessary, in fact, it actually hides the structure that separates the two glass windows. And when opening the flaps of the two floors, you feel as though you are floating over the city."

Even though a windstorm had hit the city that day, Bernard insisted that I experience this extraordinary sensation and in a firm single movement slid open the interlocking doors to open the loft out to the city. The sensation was breathtaking, even the wind calmed for a few moments so that we could enjoy taking in the sight of our stunning city.