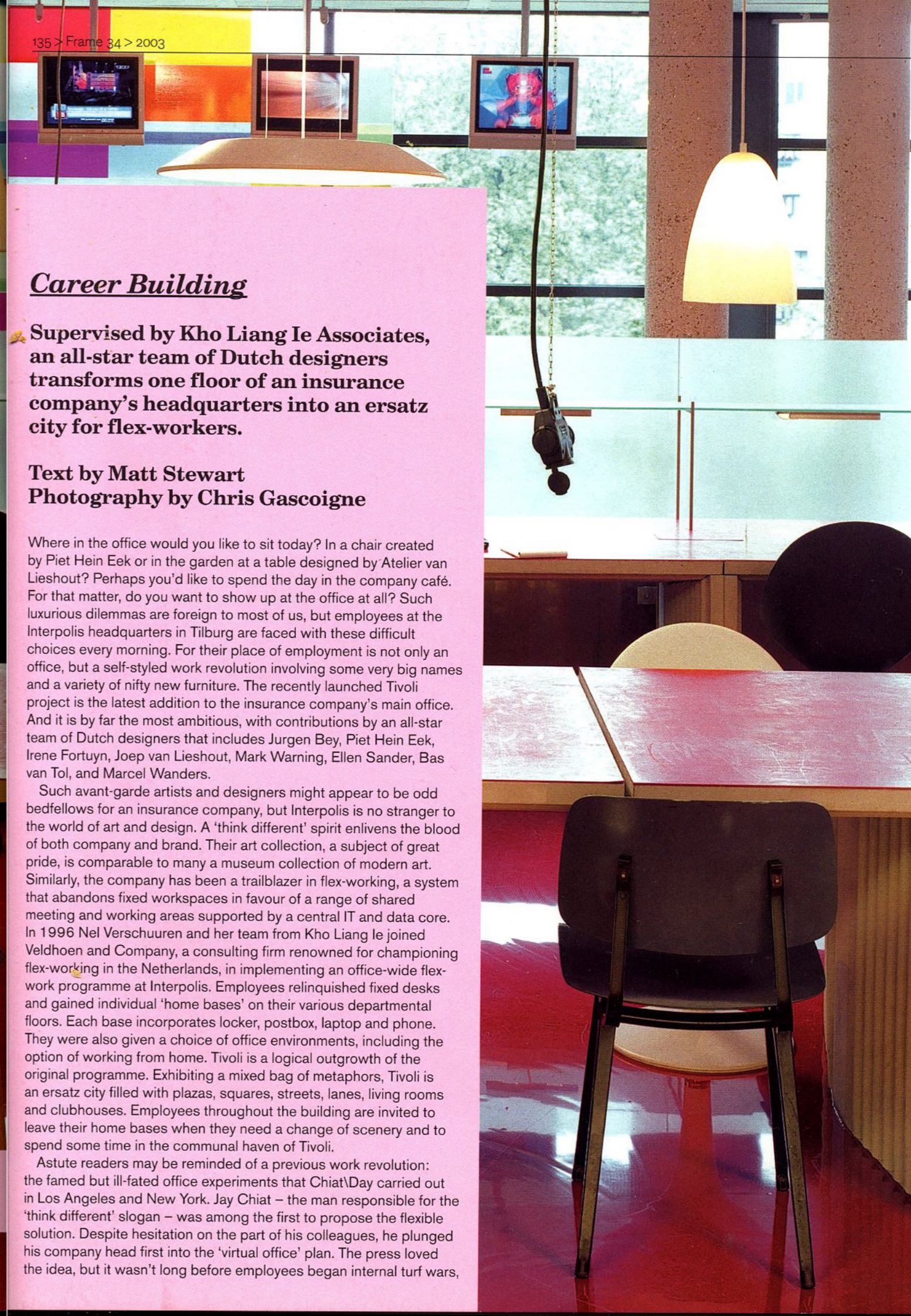




Rougher elements in Mark Warning's Light House, a design based on sewing workshops in Asia, are offset by whimsical mismatched chairs and lampshades. Photography by Scagliola/Brakkee



## *Career Building*

Supervised by Kho Liang Ie Associates, an all-star team of Dutch designers transforms one floor of an insurance company's headquarters into an ersatz city for flex-workers.

Text by Matt Stewart  
Photography by Chris Gascoigne

Where in the office would you like to sit today? In a chair created by Piet Hein Eek or in the garden at a table designed by Atelier van Lieshout? Perhaps you'd like to spend the day in the company café. For that matter, do you want to show up at the office at all? Such luxurious dilemmas are foreign to most of us, but employees at the Interpolis headquarters in Tilburg are faced with these difficult choices every morning. For their place of employment is not only an office, but a self-styled work revolution involving some very big names and a variety of nifty new furniture. The recently launched Tivoli project is the latest addition to the insurance company's main office. And it is by far the most ambitious, with contributions by an all-star team of Dutch designers that includes Jurgen Bey, Piet Hein Eek, Irene Fortuyn, Joep van Lieshout, Mark Warning, Ellen Sander, Bas van Tol, and Marcel Wanders.

Such avant-garde artists and designers might appear to be odd bedfellows for an insurance company, but Interpolis is no stranger to the world of art and design. A 'think different' spirit enlivens the blood of both company and brand. Their art collection, a subject of great pride, is comparable to many a museum collection of modern art. Similarly, the company has been a trailblazer in flex-working, a system that abandons fixed workspaces in favour of a range of shared meeting and working areas supported by a central IT and data core. In 1996 Nel Verschuuren and her team from Kho Liang Ie joined Veldhoen and Company, a consulting firm renowned for championing flex-working in the Netherlands, in implementing an office-wide flex-work programme at Interpolis. Employees relinquished fixed desks and gained individual 'home bases' on their various departmental floors. Each base incorporates locker, postbox, laptop and phone. They were also given a choice of office environments, including the option of working from home. Tivoli is a logical outgrowth of the original programme. Exhibiting a mixed bag of metaphors, Tivoli is an ersatz city filled with plazas, squares, streets, lanes, living rooms and clubhouses. Employees throughout the building are invited to leave their home bases when they need a change of scenery and to spend some time in the communal haven of Tivoli.

Astute readers may be reminded of a previous work revolution: the famed but ill-fated office experiments that Chiat\Day carried out in Los Angeles and New York. Jay Chiat – the man responsible for the 'think different' slogan – was among the first to propose the flexible solution. Despite hesitation on the part of his colleagues, he plunged his company head first into the 'virtual office' plan. The press loved the idea, but it wasn't long before employees began internal turf wars,



## HET LICHTHUIS

Marc Warning: 'Door de eenvoud van de ruimte, heb je bij binnenkomst gelijk een overzicht. Geen aparte hoekjes maar zestien meter horizon waarin je direct kan bepalen waar je naartoe wilt.'



## INHUIS

agen/Atelier van Lieshout:  
ruimte die wij door middel van een sluis  
te hebben "geplakt", is geïnspireerd op  
bouwkeet. Maar dan wel de luxe direc-  
tuurlijk, daar waar vergaderd wordt.'