

FINANCIAL TIMES

# superior. interior.





Clockwise from left:  
the disappearing pool  
at Les Trois Couronnes,  
Verbier. The Frosts'  
pool, created by Guncast  
Swimming Pools and Alan  
Higgs Architects. The pool  
with its floor raised

can be swift  
ing the pool  
d requires  
ges to the air



we are quoting  
it was more like  
tively small, but  
r the same person;  
g houses in  
g we had in the  
houses in three

e is scarce,  
most popular  
mming Pool  
He has recently  
g constructions,  
at South End,  
quiet Kensington  
struction. "South  
arried out, due  
13m – to  
he third level  
y the most deeply  
the biggest  
steel that make

up the moving floor had to be transferred down through a narrow opening, then joined in situ." The pool room-cum-ballroom cost £350,000 to create, and the house is on the market for £16.5m with Knight Frank.

In these dual-purpose basement rooms, it's crucial to have a flexible lighting plan that can be altered to match the two very different uses of the interior. The scheme at South End was created by Lucy Martin, design director at John Cullen Lighting, by illuminating the area with a mixture of tungsten halogen and both white and coloured LED lights. "The lighting was used to soften out the space, give it warmth and atmosphere," she says. "We built in slate feature walls with downlighters skimming them to add texture, and created a coffered ceiling, lit with concealed LEDs, to give a sense of height. The lights are controlled on dimmable circuits, and you can knit the circuits together to create different scenes. It's a bit like mixing on a record deck; you have swimming and dancing, afternoon and party modes."

The ultimate party room, featuring a super-cool put-away pool, has recently been completed in a luxury

chalet in Verbier (pictured top). Although many disappearing pools are confined to subterranean spaces, this one has striking views across the mountains. The chalet, Les Trois Couronnes – on the market for SFr40m (about £28.1m) with Savills Alpine Homes, or to rent from about £60,000 per week – is the pet project of perfectionist local developer Caspar Schübbe. Set inside a Bond-villain-style reception room, with a timber-clad bar and an upholstered day bed suspended over the water, the 10m by 4m Hydrofloors pool has walls and floor decorated with 65,000 mosaic tiles, and an online music-streaming database linked to lighting and jets in the water. At one end of the pool, a glass wall allows swimmers to gaze out at Le Grand Combin mountain range; opposite, a glazed partition showcases a second hybrid room, a banqueting hall/art gallery.

It certainly all sounds picture perfect, but experts agree that there are hidden challenges to installing a disappearing pool. "It's not something that can be retrofitted easily," says Christopher Gaylord, head of architecture at Janine Stone Interior and Architectural Design. "Ideally, you need to be building a new home or an extension." Simon Williams, MD of Olive automation specialists, says owners don't always realise that, while the "reveal" can be swift and theatrical, putting the pool