

development | Jennifer Stynes

Boxing clever

A grand idea on the site of an old packaging factory.

ISAR

1 Ralph Street,
Alexandria

One-bedroom lofts with balconies, from \$290,000; three penthouses with balconies, from \$450,000

Two-bedroom two-storey terraces with balconies, from \$495,000.

Three-bedroom terraces, from \$785,000; one penthouse with balcony, \$835,000

Inspect By appointment with Lynette Laming of Laming Property, 0411 332 336

Completion mid-2005

Why would someone call a building in Sydney after a river in Munich? The developers of ISAR, in Alexandria, are Nikki South and her partner Mark Phibbs, whose architectural and development company Southmarc has worked in Germany, Hong Kong and now Sydney.

While she was living in Munich, South was taken with the rooftop gardens that brought a bit of nature into the heart of the city. Taking a leaf (sorry) out of their book, she's adapting many of the environmental and urban design principles she learned while working with architect Juergen Rauch.

"This juxtaposition of nature and urban environment is, in our view, the key to sustainable development," South says.

"The principle behind the 'greening' of Sydney is having as much green within a development as the site would have contained before settlement, so ISAR tries, theoretically, to restore the original landscape."

There'll be a lawn, gardens and massed plantings of bamboo and olive trees – a combination that might have surprised the people who lived in Alexandria before settlement, but there you go – in various heights on the roof of the five-storey building.

The trees and plants clear the air by absorbing toxins such as benzene, says South, and the landscaping intercepts between 70 per cent and



When you wish upon an ISAR: the new Alexandria development will have rooftop gardens.

90 per cent of the sun's rays, aiding temperature control. See? It's cool being green.

ISAR's designers have been sensitive to global warming and the greenhouse effect. Living areas are orientated to the north and north-west to maximise passive solar penetration and reduce the reliance on air-conditioning and heating. Concrete and brickwork have been integrated using high-thermal-mass construction methods. As well, there are water-efficient tap and shower fittings and energy-efficient gas hot water systems.

South has used colour for fun on the balcony panels, metal cladding and within the apartments. Red is for one-bedroom apartments, representing the hip single lifestyle; grey is for the terraces; and green for the family-style three-bedroom apartments.

"We have tried hard to combine indoor, outdoor and common spaces to give the building a feeling of spaciousness and decadence," South says. "All apartments and terraces at ISAR allow residents to look up and see the sky, and some have their own patch of grass to rekindle the feelings many would have had when growing up in the suburbs."

You can take the girl out of the suburbs, but you can't take the suburbs out of the girl.

(By the way, those moving into a home with grass will be presented with a welcoming gift: a stainless steel push mower.)

Paying homage to the site's previous resident, a printing and packaging factory, South has designed the roofline so it looks like the overhanging lid on a box; and the landscaped inner courtyard is the shape of a box before it is folded together.

