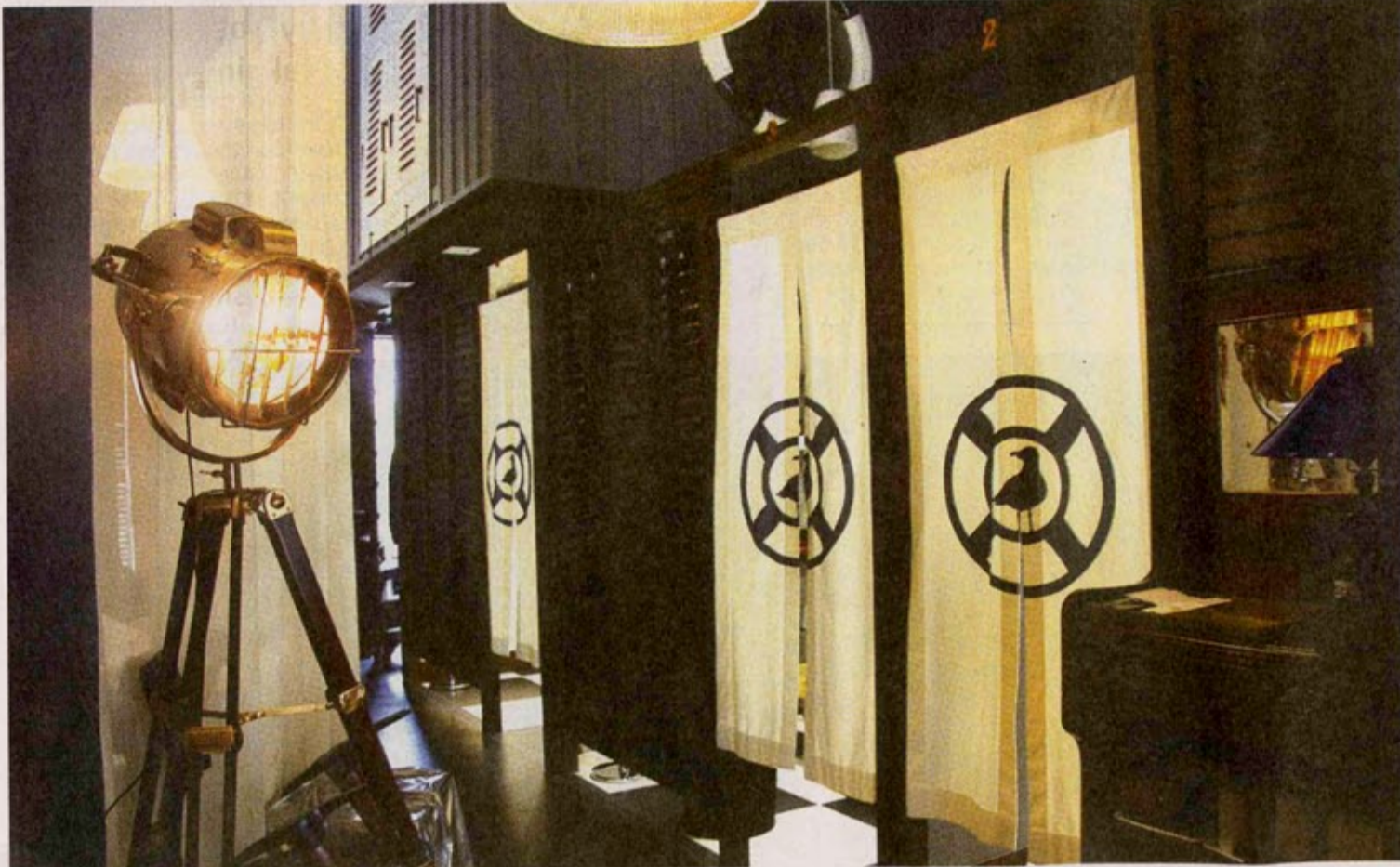


MOVING WITH THE TROUBLING TIMES, **NARA** NEVER LOSES ITS APPEAL 11B



BLUE HARBOUR has four cutting rooms, each intimate, private and comforting.

Behold the barber, past and future

Blue Harbour is old-world charming. Offworld is hi-tech sleek. Either way your hair is in for a treat

KHETSIRIN PHOLDHAMPALIT
THE NATION ON SUNDAY

Nithi Sthapitanonda is a National Artist in architecture and the man who dreamed up CentralWorld and the King Power Complex, but his personal pet project is considerably humbler: an old-fashioned barbershop.

Located in the new K-Village mall on Sukhumvit Soi 26, it's called Blue Harbour, and it's a place to get a wet shave or have your beard or moustache trimmed the old way – stuff they don't do in the modern salons.

By contrast, another new salon, Offworld in Chamchuri Square, is nothing if not modern, a rocket ship into the avant-garde. But we'll journey to Offworld in a moment.

There's more to Blue Harbour than nostalgia, of course. Nithi was a loyal client of Savad La-ad at Tony's Barber, a venerable clip shop on Ekkamai Soi 21. Savad abided by the old methods, and his warm personality fostered camaraderie among the patrons. But Tony's announced it was closing.

Tony's it turns out, has survived to see many more days, but in the meantime Nithi had wasted no time planning a new "old" barbershop and invited Savad to head the shearing staff.

No one else is happier than Nithi's son Nitis, who's also Nithi's colleague – he's currently building a condo in Bahrain and is in

charge of the Renaissance hotel in Phuket.

"My father had Savad cut his hair for 40 years, and I was a customer since I was a kid," Nitis says. "This kind of shop – with skilled barbers trimming beards, cleaning ears and cutting, colouring and perming hair – is very hard to find these days.

"We wanted a traditional place that was intimate, private and comforting."

Savad did his first professional haircut more than 40 years ago at the old Central Hotel on New Phetchaburi Road. A lot of his customers were American GIs, so he certainly knows how to do a crewcut and scrape off the nape fringe.

Savad does all the latest styles too – using techniques, and can fix hair texture and colour too. Among his regulars are Surakiat Sathirathai, Pol Col Kovit Sawaisaenyagara and Kanin Boonsuwan.

Blue Harbour's décor matches the nautical name, the walls sprayed in rusty hues and the ceilings decked out with wood, ship-style. There are four slots to get your hair done,

each made semi-private with louvered, curtained windows. Each has an old leather barber's chair, fully adjustable, of course.

The ceiling lamps actually came from a ship. Nithi found them in the Netherlands, and he's spread his own model sailboats, seagulls and lighthouses around and designed the wooden chairs himself.

Barbershops were once always near a city's port, Nitis explains.

"When the sailors were ashore they always headed to the barbershop. Hence the name Blue Harbour, and we're close to Klong Toey Port as well."

What's the difference between the modern salon's designer haircut and the one you get at Blue Harbour?

"For cutting hair they use both clippers and scissors," Nitis says. "Shaving or trimming beards requires mastery of the straight razor.

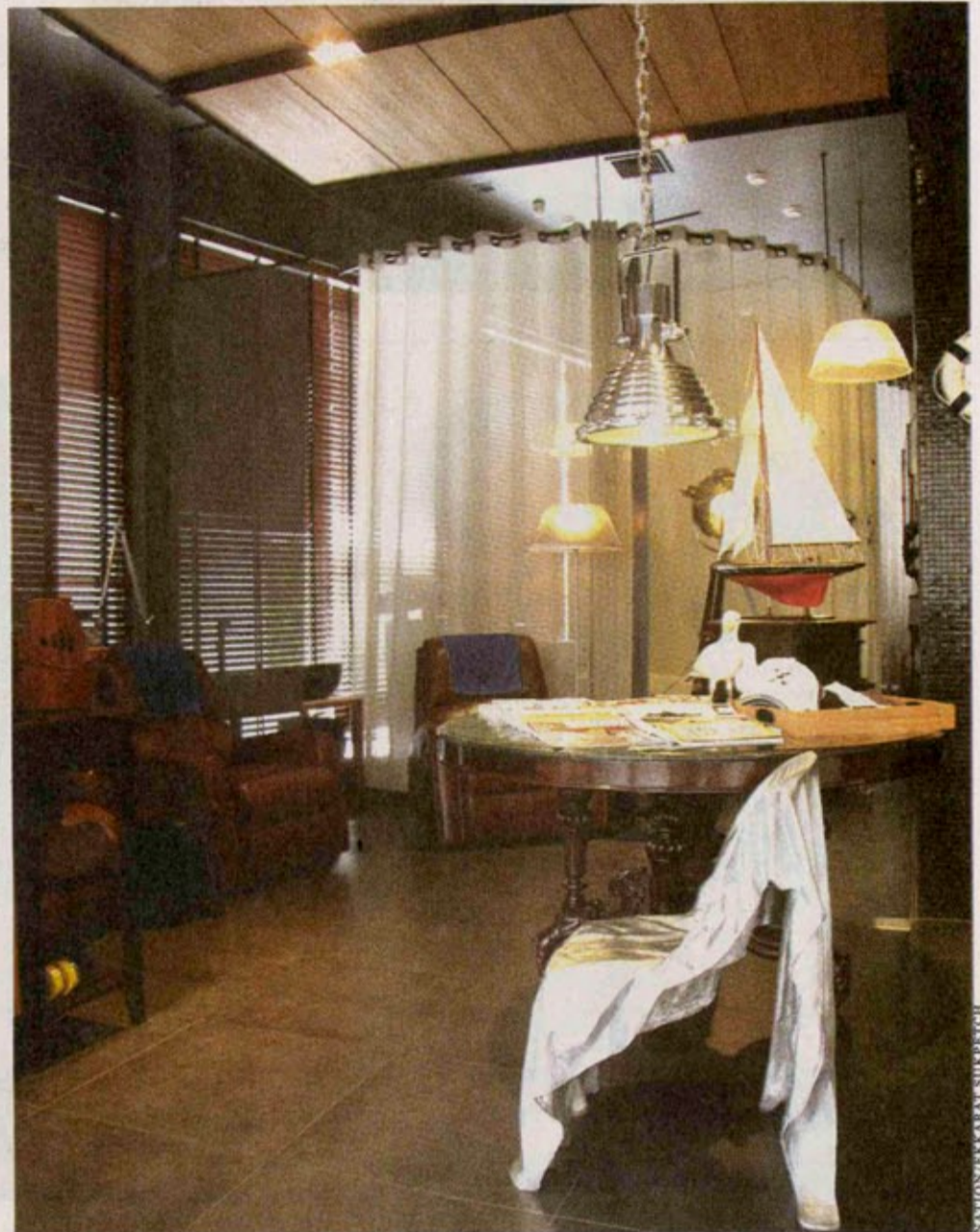
"You should have your ears cleaned too, and don't worry about hygiene because all the equipment is sterilised."

One of the customers coming in for ear-cleanings demonstrates that the place isn't just for blokes – she's a 20-year-old woman.

The ladies aren't merely welcome – there are three pampering beds behind white diaphanous curtains where they can have a facial massage (something Nitis and his dad indulge in too), and three leather sofas that are ideal for manicures and pedicures.

Nitis is in the process of hiring a barber who specialises in women's styles.

Life is very different, meanwhile, at Offworld on Phaya Thai Road, which takes its interior-design inspiration from the sci-fi



MODELS OF SAILBOATS, seagulls and lighthouses add to the fanciful feel at Blue Harbour.



ARCHITECT NITHI Sthapitanonda, left, is a long-time client of barber Savad La-ad, and now his employer at Blue Harbour.

classic "Bladerunner".

Owner Suprerk Rojwongsuriya and his creative director, James Mac, hired David Mayers of the Bangkok-based design firm Whitespace, and his long-time colleague Dann De Witt, to "develop the brand".

Mayers, who designed the iStudio shops for Apple, poses the challenge: "Salons always have a lot of mirrors, so how could we be different with the deletion of mirrors?"

The intended customer, he says, was the creative type who's tired of the "business-as-usual" Bangkok salon. Business as usual, to them, suggested a hall of mirrors at a fun-house.

So they smashed the mirrors.

Broken reflective shards cover the ceiling of a wide-open space that's fronted by a

reception desk of stainless steel.

The four haircutting stations have leather chairs and dark-wood tables with framed mirrors. Above each is adjustable lighting, like that found in a photographer's studio. Customers can see how different hair colours will look in different light.

One of the stations has a high-definition monitor instead of a mirror. While your styling is being digitally recorded, you can play games or watch a movie. Once the stylist is done, he'll record your image as a souvenir.

If the hi-tech stations prove popular, all four stations will be converted.

The shampoo room is something else again. The lighting is dim, the better for reclining clients to enjoy gazing into a starry night – courtesy of an ultra-high-resolution NASA photograph on the vaulted ceiling.

Mayers, who also designed Cut & Curl at CentralWorld and the Chalachon salon at Central Chaengwattana, is particularly fond of Offworld's black mirror on one wall. "It evokes infinity," he says.

Blue Harbour and Offworld are two different worlds, but both enliven the experience, ensuring that the customer doesn't simply leave looking good, but feels good throughout the visit.

TWO SORTS OF SNIPS

>> Blue Harbour is on the second floor of K-Village mall on Sukhumvit Soi 26. It's open daily from 10 to 9. Call (02) 661 2901-2.

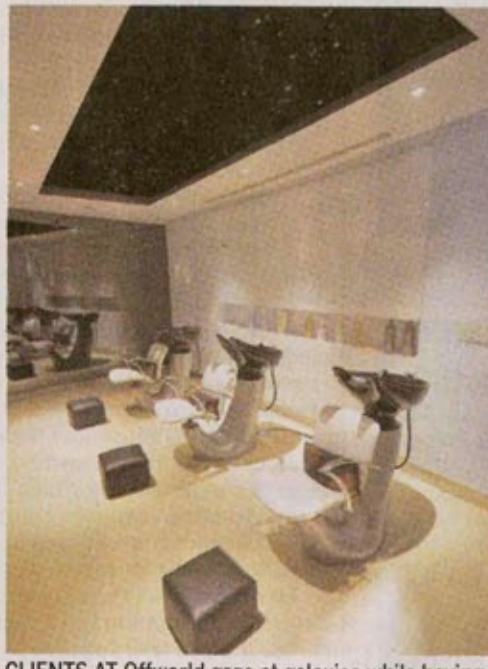
>> Offworld is on the second floor of Chamchuri Square on Phaya Thai Road. It's open daily except Monday from 11 to 8. Call (02) 160 5035.



OFFWORLD'S LOGO becomes a doorknob.



OFFWORLD CREATIVE director James Mac shows a client how her hairstyle looks on the hi-def screen at Offworld.



CLIENTS AT Offworld gaze at galaxies while having their hair washed.