

The building guaranteed to make a splash

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Tuesday October 23, 2007

Who'd have thought spending a penny could inspire a \$1.6m (£791,000) construction project? That's how much South Korean politician Sim Jae-Duck has splashed out on his new 419 square metre home – designed in the shape of a toilet.



A computer graphic of the lavatory-shaped home

Forty kilometres south of Seoul, the two-storey concrete-and-glass creation houses two bedrooms, two guest rooms, and, naturally, three luxury loos, each replete with sensor-activated lids and bladder-relaxing music. Sim has named the building Haewooja: "a place of sanctuary where one can solve one's worries".

Perhaps the soothing sound of flushing water reminds him of the womb – 74-year-old Sim was born beside a lavatory, in line with his family's belief that people born in rest rooms will enjoy long lives – and now he hopes to die in one. The project may sound like toilet humour, but there's a serious message behind his actions. For more than 10 years he has campaigned not only for "clean and beautiful resting places imbued with culture", but also for better hygiene worldwide, highlighting the fact that billions of people in poorer nations still go without WCs.

For those who are – sorry – flush, the house is currently available to rent for \$50,000 a day, with the proceeds going to his World Toilet Association's initiative for improving sanitation in developing countries. Some might consider it money down the pan, but anyone interested in "elegant water fittings" and calming mist-producing devices will be in for a treat.

Sim himself moves in on November 11, and looks forward to hosting the WTA's inaugural meeting there soon after. He envisages his unconventional home as "a new concept to place toilets in the centre of our lives". The building is undoubtedly the first of its kind – and also, one suspects, the last.