

A photograph of a swimmer in a pool, viewed from above. The swimmer is in a streamlined position, wearing a white cap and goggles, and is swimming towards the right. The pool is filled with clear blue water, and the tiled floor and walls are visible. The lighting is bright, creating a clear view of the swimmer and the pool's structure.

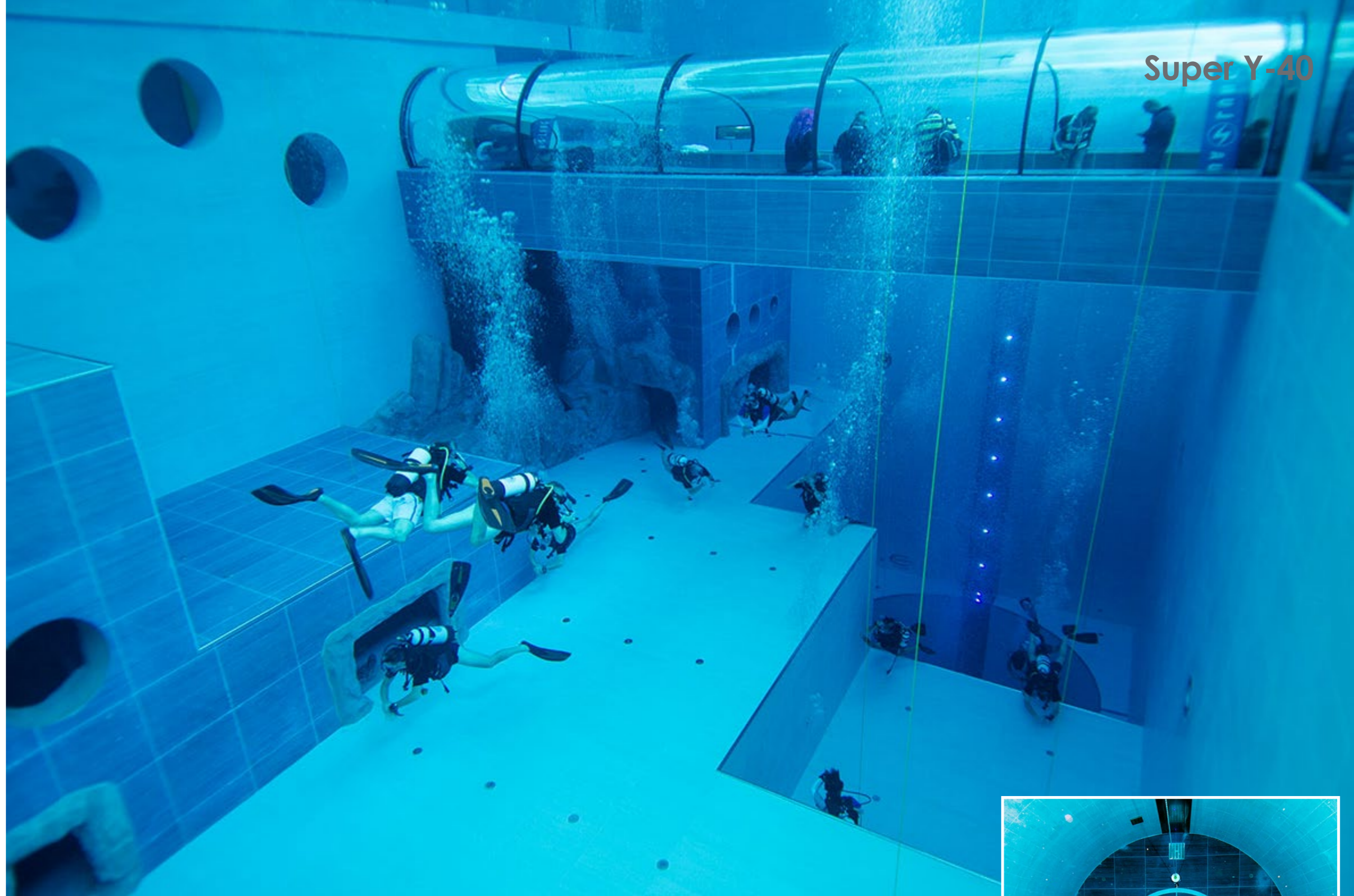
Italy's Super Y-40

— *A Record-Setting Pool*

Text and photos by Marco Daturi
Translated by Peter Symes

It took only a year to transform the idea of a super pool—40 meters deep—from concept to blueprint and alluring 3D renditions, before it opened its doors to the public in June 2014.

The pool sits within the complex of the four-star Hotel Terme Millepini in Abano-Montegrotto Terme, Padua, Italy, where it is fed by the same unique thermal water that also feeds the resort's swimming pools and spas. The cylindrical pool, which was designed by Italian architect Emanuele Boaretto, features artificial caves and a suspended, transparent underwater tunnel for guests to walk



through. It includes platforms at various depths, which provides ideal circumstances for training. Classrooms adjacent to the pit can be used for pre-dive briefings or training courses. The water is maintained at a constant temperature of 32-34°C, so it is not necessary to use any suits.

"The best parts are underwater," said Marco Mardollo, technical director of Y-40, inviting us to try a dive after a brief tour of the facility. Y-40 is pronounced "epsilon minus forty" to make it easier to memorize and pronounce for foreigners as the locals in Abano Terme mostly come in for the spa treatments.

The first impressions were intriguing. From the lobby, which has a bar, showroom and space for relaxation, there is a clear view of the deep pool. At a depth of five meters, there is a glass tunnel crossing the pool. Our party paused for a while to take in this most unusual scenery. It was like some sort of human aquarium—fun and





Super Y-40

definitely original.

Across from the underwater tunnel, a hallway branches off into two classrooms—each of which can accommodate up to 100 people—and changing rooms, which can also be accessed from the first floor where one enters the water. This is also where all the rental equipment is kept, including a full kit of Aqualung gear. We dipped our toes in the water and found it pleasantly warm and inviting. We had just donned the basics: fins and masks, regulators and stabilization jackets (BCD), but no wetsuits or weight belts. It felt almost unreal when one is used to kitting up with heavy wetsuits or drysuits for a dive in cool waters.

Diving Y-40

Once submerged, we saw the platforms at five and ten meters right below us as well as the fantastic glass tunnel we had walked through only minutes earlier—only now, we were the ones being observed by some other spectators. It only seemed fitting then to shoot straight down the deep duct and hit the 40m mark. At this respectable depth, we

were not accustomed to be able to see the surface, but in this case, we could.

Time flies when you are having fun, but as we were only allowed a few minutes at this depth before our computers began calling to us, reminding us that our decompression obligation was imminent, we begrudgingly started our ascent along the string of safety lamps.

On our way up, we couldn't help but poke our heads into the artificial caves that were constructed for use in training cave or technical divers. We couldn't really stick around too long, so we continued our ascent and headed towards the glass tunnel, which was now full of people watching the divers—only now, there were also lots of children having a blast watching the

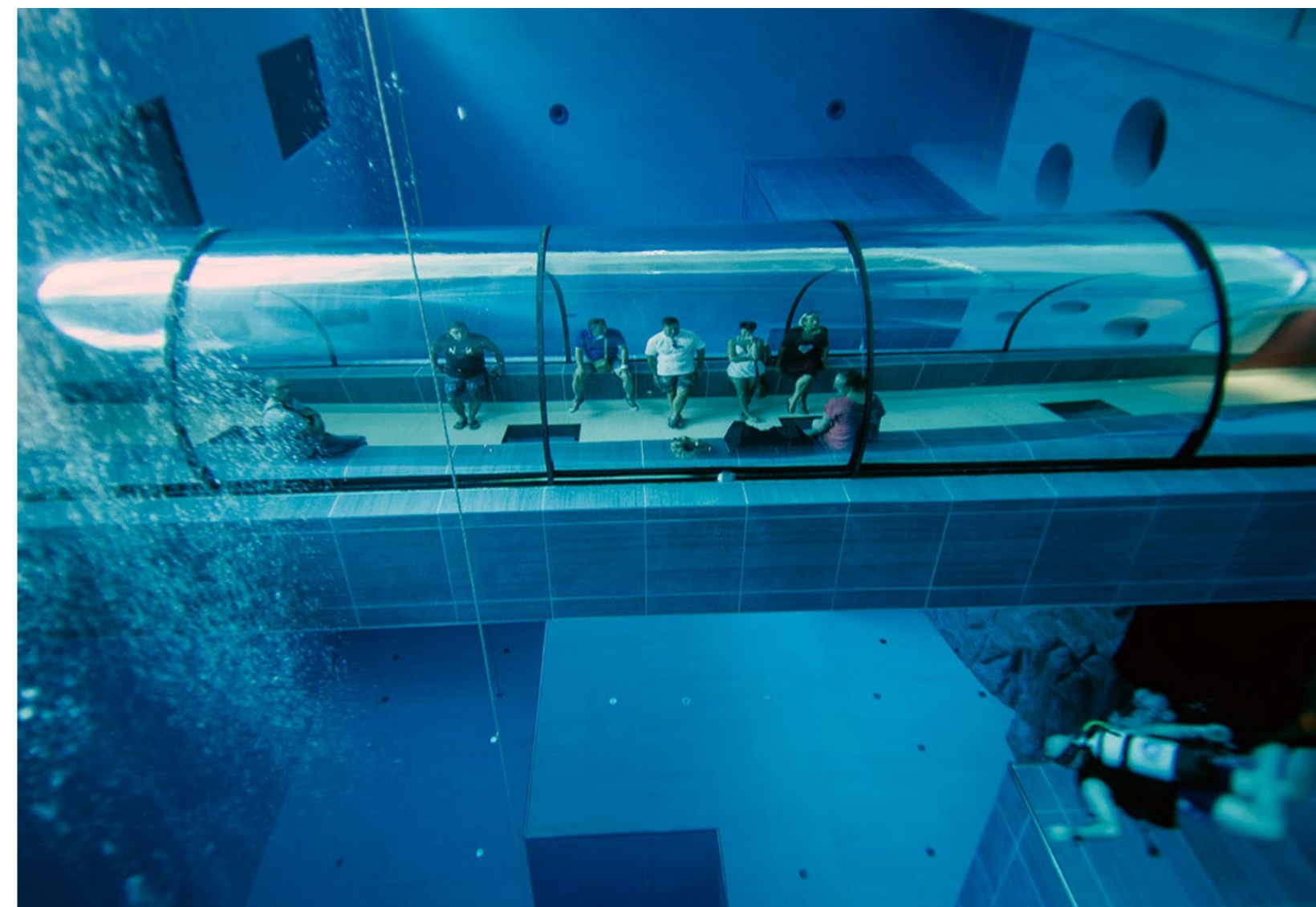


underwater scene. We were not putting on any show, but the kids seemed quite entertained nonetheless.

Visionary thinking

Y-40 came into being thanks to visionary, risk-taking entrepreneurs as well as an architect with foresight. The modern complex design using lots of glass is much more than just a record-setting pool but is a showcase of what innovative thinking can make possible. The modern complex where the thermal waters are also used to heat the compound comprises facilities for relaxation, gyms, a hotel and restaurant as well as the Eugene Spa—one of the great spas of Europe. ■

LEFT TO RIGHT: Entrance to Y-40 pool; Dive course conducted in pool; Exterior view of building housing Y-40; Training for cave divers



Underwater walkway allows visitors to watch divers in action in super pool Y-40

