



A picture of Han Chong alongside the Self-Portrait dress worn by Meghan Markle.

PHOTOS BY AMIRUDIN SAHIB



The third Confluent series is about fashion.

# Work, play and live in style

A lifestyle property developer is embarking on a project where residents can explore the confluence of cultures and narratives at home and around the world, writes Aznim Ruhana Md Yusup



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Joanne Kua

**T**HE world of luxury property is a competitive one, and developers are always trying to find an edge over others. When the pool of possible buyers comes from all over the world, it's not enough to simply go by price or the real estate mantra "location, location, location".

Part of the sales pitch is the showroom, typically decorated in such a way to let prospective buyers picture themselves in that living space. The environment needs to be appealing too, to show that not only are they living at the right address but also among the right people.

"A house is not just a building with four walls," says KSK Group CEO Joanne Kua with regards to its wholly owned subsidiary KSK Land's signature project, the swanky 8 Conlay on Jalan Conlay in Kuala Lumpur. Apart from private residence apartments, the project includes a retail area and the five-star Kempinski Hotel.

"We position ourselves as a lifestyle property developer. We're building places for people to work, play and live in so you have the power to set the scene. The aim is to resonate with potential buyers on their lifestyle choice," she says.

KSK Land does this through its Confluent exhibition series, open to the public and held at its sales gallery on Jalan Conlay. The name was coined by 8 Conlay's hospitality partner Kempinski Hotel to describe the distinct combination of confluence (i.e. Kuala Lumpur or muddy confluence), confidence and influence.

"We wanted to establish 8 Conlay as a stage for people to explore the confluence of cultures and narratives at home and around the world. The first Confluent series is an art showcase while 2.0 is a photography exhibition of KL," says Kua.

## FASHION IS LIFE

Meanwhile, the third Confluent series is about fashion. Called Pret-A-Porter, it features eight Malaysian designers and their most outstanding designs. This includes Penang-born Han Chong of the London-based label Self-Portrait, whose dresses have been worn by British royalty, including Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge a.k.a. Kate Middleton and Prince Harry's wife, Meghan Markle. Two of these dresses are on show at the 8 Conlay showroom.

"Fashion impacts everyone," says Kua. "You may not obsess over it but it does influence you. Fashion brands also engage with customers in every shape and form, and that's what we want to do too as a property developer."

Other designers in the exhibition are Cassey Gan, Moto Guo, Ezzati Amira, Jonathan Liang, Khoo Hooi, Joe Chia and Kittie Yiyi. They're established names in the local fashion scene while also having a significant presence overseas.

"We want to showcase what they've achieved in Europe, in China and all over the world. They are confident, going out there to showcase themselves. We also want to show Malaysians who these designers are and what they have to offer. Perhaps many Malaysians don't know that the designer of Self-Portrait is a local."

Kua adds that support for the local art and design scene will not end with the Confluent series, but will likely continue when 8 Conlay is completed.

The Kempinski Hotel in Berlin has the Concertini, a series of musical performances by artistes at its lobby. So that's something we can consider for the future. The idea is that everything we feature in Confluent will exist in the finished building. That's the advantage of being able to curate a space."

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## WHAT THE DESIGNERS SAY

"CONFLUENTIAL" may be a made up word — it's a mix of confluence, confidence and influence, plus it shares the same first syllable as Conlay — but it has resonated with designers featured in the Confluent 3.0: Pret-A-Porter. Here's what some of them say:

### HAN CHONG

My aesthetic has always been to take a global approach but with an inclusive viewpoint. Although the term "Confluent" was never something I actively thought about when designing, it seems as if it were there all along. By bringing these two perspectives together, Self-Portrait itself is a confluence of sorts.

### JONATHAN LIANG

"Confluent" represents an abstract concept that transcends the literal meaning of "confluence" — the meeting of two rivers. The two pieces we created especially for the exhibit represent a crossing of nature and society around the world, with interconnecting lines reflecting divergence and interwoven plum blossom patterns, like flowers flowing down a river. A collaboration that stays true to the values of the brand as well as 8 Conlay's.

### EZZATI AMIRA

All my collections are a confluence of some kind — contrasting prints and influences, or feminine silhouettes and masculine elements — so that the woman wearing them will be able to find her inner confidence.

### KITTIE YIYI

The label is all about the confluence of loud and smart creativity, and bringing together the joy of dressing up in something quirky. With these two looks, one is smart and the other is feminine, but both are undeniably quirky — two Confluent looks women can wear bravely with a sense of exploration and independence.

### CASSEY GAN

Our design aesthetic has always been a juxtaposition of east and west. Fitting the theme of Confluent, the two outfits selected for the exhibition are a marriage between prints inspired by British artist David Hockney and silhouettes inspired by traditional Japanese costumes.