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# On the Up

**FROM FAÇADES TO BATHROOM FIXTURES, YTL LAND'S PROJECTS IN SINGAPORE AND KUALA LUMPUR INVITE ACCLAIMED INTERNATIONAL DESIGNERS TO DELIVER A WHOLE-PACKAGE PRODUCT.**

WORDS CHRISTOPHER DEWOLF

Times have changed in Southeast Asia's high-end property market; slick branding and grandiose kitsch aren't convincing anyone anymore. "Homebuyers are becoming more discerning and are not simply drawn by designer names," says Joseph Yeoh, vice president of Malaysian property giant YTL Land. "They look deeper into how these designers have designed the architecture, spaces and furnishings seamlessly. Such designer names add a premium to the property only if the buyers see the true value in the overall designs."

It was with that on their mind that YTL's executives brought in Italian designer Claudio Silvestrin and Australian landscape architect Jamie Durie for its first luxury development in Singapore, Sandy Island, an enclave of 18 houses near the resorts and beaches of Sentosa

Island. Best known for designing a string of Giorgio Armani boutiques and the homes of celebrities like Kanye West, Silvestrin is praised for what Yeoh calls a "timeless, contemporary architectural style with clean lines and geometric forms." So taken was YTL by Silvestrin's work, in fact, Yeoh says the company gave him "carte blanche" to do what he wanted on Sandy Island.

The houses he produced are discreet yet stately, their monolithic façades clad in one of five types of natural stone, an aesthetic Silvestrin brought indoors by installing his clean-lined, elegant Boffi bathtubs and washbasins, along with Viabizzuno light fixtures and wardrobes. "The inspiration comes from the greatest works of art, masterpieces, places, buildings and visual arts, places of contemplation, reflection and

serenity," says Silvestrin. Indeed, there is something decidedly classical in the houses' sculptural form and sense of monumentality.

Monumental, that is, but not aloof. Silvestrin took care to integrate the dwellings into Durie's natural landscape, which is lushly forested thanks to 18 mature khaya trees saved and transplanted from a nearby development site. Timber screens, roller blinds and UV-filtering glass keep interiors cool despite Singapore's muggy climate, while private pools, terraces and docks connect them to the outdoors. "Jamie understood the essence of my concept – the intention to place, to use a metaphorical expression, jewels in a jungle," says Silvestrin.

Sandy Island has been well received, winning a number of awards, including the 2013 FIABCI Prix d'Excellence, and YTL

**LUXURY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY**

(THIS PAGE AND NEXT) High-end natural materials, monumental proportions and a near-seamless connection between interior and exterior define Claudio Silvestrin's work at Sandy Island.





is hoping for similar success with another Singapore project, Orchard Avenue, a 77-unit high-rise being designed by Antonio Citterio. “We believe that a designer must imbue his or her aesthetics in all aspects of the living environment from architecture to interiors to furnishings,” says Yeoh, who says Citterio’s work on Bulgari hotels convinced YTL to bring him to Singapore.

Across the border in Malaysia, YTL has even greater ambitions, embarking on a multi-billion-dollar redevelopment of Kuala Lumpur’s Sentul area. One of the area’s projects is the Fennel, a 916-unit venture consisting of four 38-story blocks that rise in jagged form like folded sheets of paper. Designed by Singapore’s RT+Q, the Fennel’s distinctive profile is achieved by stacking each floor outward or inward in groups of eight. “The result is a distinct profile in the skyline – somewhat gravity defying,” says Dato’ Yeoh Seok Kian, YTL’s executive director. 50-meter swimming pools bridge each of the blocks, hovering over the entranceway to each pair of towers. There’s also an acre of “tropical verandahs” and “sky forests” situated at various points in each of the buildings, offering communal space for residents with sweeping views of the Kuala Lumpur skyline.

With a young, increasingly affluent population and significant government investment in infrastructure, Yeoh expects property prices in Kuala Lumpur and the surrounding Klang Valley to increase rapidly. For YTL, that means more opportunities for high-end development – and especially new luxury properties with a focus on innovative design. “We believe that this appreciation for exquisite design is universal and translates across both Malaysia and Singapore,” says Yeoh. [claudiosilvestrin.com](http://claudiosilvestrin.com), [jamiedurie.com](http://jamiedurie.com), [sandyisland.com.sg](http://sandyisland.com.sg), [rtmq.com](http://rtmq.com), [thefennel.com.my](http://thefennel.com.my), [antoniocitterioandpartners.it](http://antoniocitterioandpartners.it), [ytl.com](http://ytl.com)

(THIS PAGE) The Fennel cuts a striking figure in Kuala Lumpur’s fast-growing skyline. Roof gardens, elevated pool decks and other features create communal space for residents.

