

THE age of the super-condominium has dawned with developers rivalling each other to build the swankiest, trendiest living space money can buy.

It used to be when a 3,000sq ft (279sq m) penthouse would suffice, but nowadays, penthouses span 5,000-8,000sq ft (464sq m-743sq m) or more.

While condominium developers in Kuala Lumpur's Golden Triangle — within sight of the Petronas Twin Towers — demand an outrageous RM1,000 per sq ft, other areas of development are no less cheap.

Among the more desirable — and still relatively affordable — neighbourhoods to buy a super-condominium unit these days is the Mont' Kiara housing enclave. It is estimated that there are at least 15 property developments including townhouses, service apartments and bungalows with the majority being condominium complexes.

And depending on location and the quality of interior design details, condominium prices range from RM400-RM550 per sq ft.

With two international schools in the neighbourhood and the growing presence of Japanese, Korean and lately, European expatriates, it looks like developers will have to seriously compete in the art of fine living. Show units have to be as luxuriously outfitted as possible. Decorating with modern classic furniture is de rigueur as buyers are likely to recognise design icons from Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe or Eileen Gray.

In order to sell style, one must have taste. Gone are the days when developers can simply embark on a do-it-yourself interior design scheme by a family member. Therefore, a Poul Henningsen artichoke lamp that costs RM16,000 for a showroom display is nothing, if you are trying to sell a RM1mil home. And when it comes to art works, sophisticated buyers would instantly recognise a RM50,000 Jolly Koh painting from a Tajuddin Ismail or worse, a cheap poster.

Developers with overseas experience have been quick to notice that affluent buyers don't just want a pokey — 800sq ft (74sq m) or less — studio unit but will willingly fork out RM1mil or more if the layout seems luxurious enough. And top architects and designers are worth their weight in gold.

According to Lim Ech Chan, Binaderas Sdn Bhd CEO — which is developing the Kiaraville project in Mont' Kiara — buyers were more

High expectations

With the arrival of Singaporean investors and property developers, condominium-living in Malaysia will no longer be the same as they up the ante by offering state-of-the-art designs, finishings and accessories, reports **JOHNNI WONG**.



keen on the 2,400sq ft (223sq m) unit than the 1,600sq ft (149sq m) unit.

"We are developing a total of 404 units in five blocks that range in height from 10 to 33 storeys. The largest unit is the penthouse which spans 5,500sq ft (511q m). The land area spans 6.8 acres (3ha) and the value of the development is RM400mil.

"Buyers are mainly professionals and entrepreneurs in the 30-40 age group. But there are also a significant number of parents buying for their adult children. Some don't just buy one unit.

"We have been pretty successful with 90% sold, 15 months after our launch. We commissioned a group of architects led by BEP Akitek principal Kam Pak Cheong to come up with practical, functional and spacious floor plans. There are no odd corners or un-usable space."

And what do buyers get for their money? Design-wise, there will be two entrances — main door and yard door — to each unit. Ground floor units come with a private garden. All units come with a balcony and have 10ft (3m) high ceilings. And for some units, owners get an unobstructed view of the Petronas Twin Towers. Facilities include swimming pools.

As for fittings, buyers can expect imported accessories from Hans Grohe and Toto such as the "Rain-dance" shower system. The units are fully air-conditioned and for flooring, marble is used for the living and dining area, and timber for bedrooms.

Best of all, owners can move in immediately when keys are handed over as wardrobes and kitchen cabinets are all provided. **W**



Clockwise from top left: Binaderas Sdn Bhd CEO Lin Ech Chan in one of the condominium units; the famous artichoke lamp in the dining room which opens out to a "lanai"; (L-R) Mary and Bernard Chandran, Fann Wong, CapitaLand's Chan Say Yeong and Ireka's Lai Voon Hon; a RM50,000 Jolly Koh painting in the master bedroom. — Starpix by YAP CHEE HONG, IBRAHIM MOHTAR, ENG TAY & IREKA LAND SDN BHD

BUYERS are already snapping up condominium units at the Tiffani by i-Zen development right next to Kiaraville. The project launch will only be in July. This development is by Ireka Land Sdn Bhd in collaboration with CapitaLand Financial Limited, a subsidiary of Singapore's

Breakfast at Tiffani's

CapitaLand Limited, South-East Asia's largest property company. CapitaLand's subsidiary, Ascott International will manage the project when completed.

The units range in size from 815sq ft (76sq m)-3,729sq ft (346sq m), with the penthouse spanning a huge 8,011sq ft (744sq m).

The units are also targeted at foreign buyers, namely Singaporeans. In fact, Singaporean actress Fann Wong who has signed up for two units has been roped in to promote the project in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

Priced at RM450 per sq ft, the Tiffani by i-Zen units compare favourably with other nearby condominium developments that are already priced at RM500-RM550 per sq ft.

Marketed as a home for the glamorous and famous, even fashion designer Bernard Chandran and wife Mary Lourdes, a veteran model, have been engaged as role models for other buyers. Members of royalty like Tunku Naquiyuddin of Negeri Sembilan have also bought units, while international couture shoe designer Datuk Jimmy Choo has booked one for investment. And what are they buying into? Buyers have two interior design choices: "contemporary design" on even-numbered floors and "modern classical design" on odd-numbered floors.

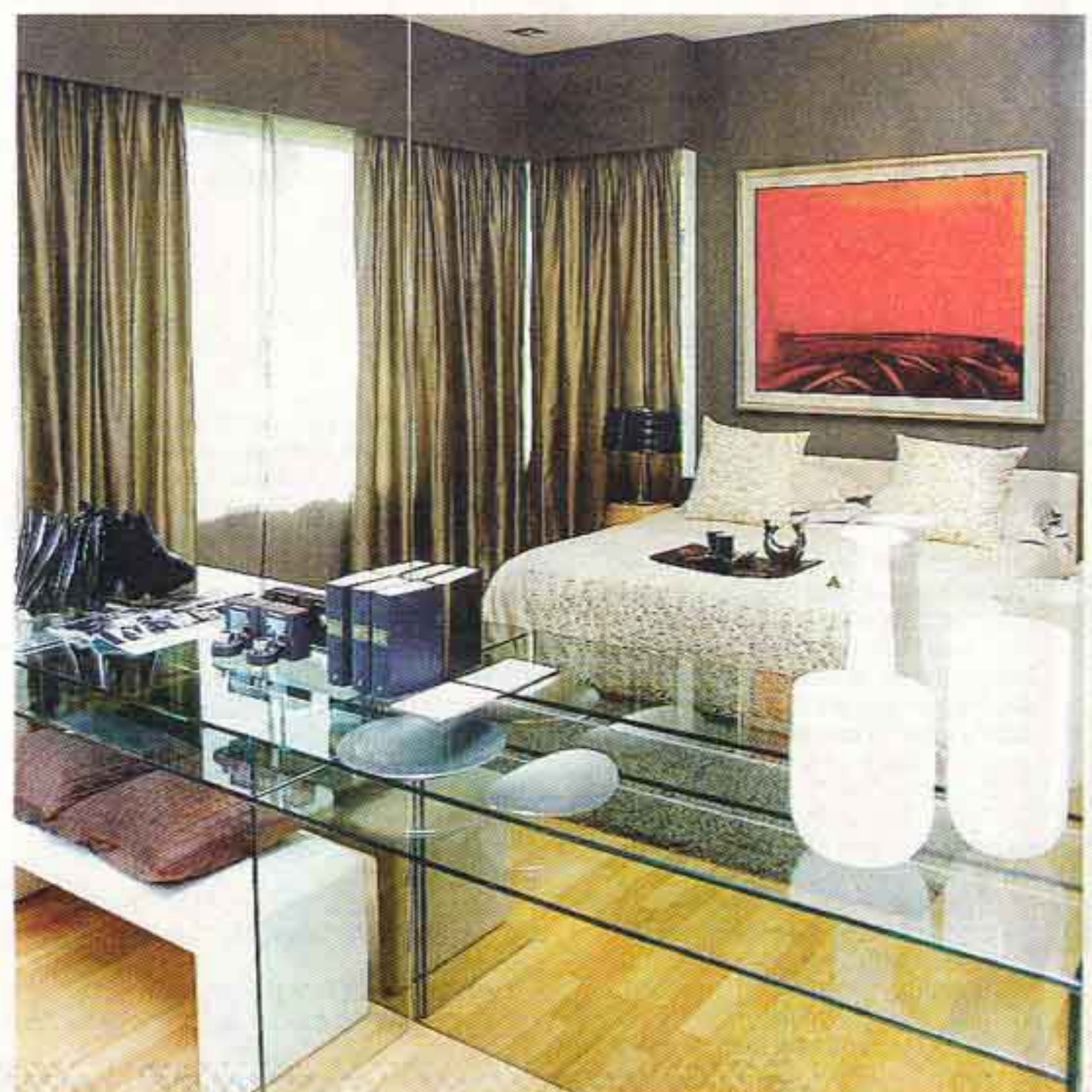
The units come with kitchens fitted with high-quality electrical appliances and walk-in closets or built-in designer wardrobes with lacquered door panels.

Branded split-unit air-conditioning systems are standard features as well as hot water supply for bathrooms and wet kitchen. There is also provision for wireless connectivity (broadband services) and centralised Astro receiver as well as intercom with the latest security systems.

The larger units at the Kallista Tower come with a private lift entrance. And there is an exclusive clubhouse with pool deck and a spectacular "Infinity Pool" on Level 27.

Unique features include "The Sanctuary", a lushly landscaped courtyard, lockers at carpark floors to keep golf bags and other items.

For those who want exclusivity, the penthouse units of 6,537sq ft (607sq m) and 7,950sq ft (738sq m) at Ideale Tower have private pools with a rooftop garden.



Eng Tay working on one of the two wax figures before casting them in bronze.

Art of Eng Tay

MENTION the name "Eng Tay" and Malaysian art collectors will think of rotund musicians and plump maidens.

Whether rendered in painting or sculpture, Eng Tay's figures always seem to be looking askew, self-absorbed or carefree.

After years of making bronze sculptures averaging 30cm high, the 59-year-old artist will cast two whopping bronze figures for the entrance of the Kiaraville condominium for all to see. When completed with pedestal, the figures will tower more than 3m — the largest modern bronze sculptures in Malaysia.

The move by Kiaraville developer Binaderas Sdn Bhd — owned by Lai Siew Wah and family — in collaboration with CapitaLand and OCBC Bank will certainly be a trendsetter in enriching the realm of public art.

Says Eng Tay: "I met Chan Say Yeong (CapitaLand Financial Limited managing director) in Kuala Lumpur and he came up with the idea for Kiaraville. I proposed using enlarged versions of some of my existing sculptures and the project developed from there."

The two sculptures are about 2.4m (8ft) high and are made of cast bronze. They are based on the limited edition *Companion* figure (33cm x 15cm x 10cm) and the *Solo III* female figure (29cm x 28cm x 22cm) (below) which cost RM11,000 and RM24,000, respectively. They will be shipped in from Thailand by the end of the year and erected at Kiaraville at the end of 2007 when the condominium units are delivered.

"The musicians symbolise joy and harmony with the celebration of music," explains Eng Tay.

His theme focuses on the universal concept of family and human relationships. Admirers of his work find a poetic connection not only in his depiction of kinship but of friendship, of music and the natural world.

"These are the largest sculptures I have ever made," says the artist. "With this project, I achieved my goal of being able to share my work with a

wider range of people." Eng Tay regards this project as his most difficult to date, due to the scale and the fact that he has to travel repeatedly to Lopburi in Thailand to complete them.

"I chose bronze for the final casts, as it is a material that conveys human warmth more than other outdoor sculpture material like stone. It is also weather-resistant so it will look good for many years to come.

"I work on my sculptures in Thailand as I have been working with the foundry there for over 15 years. We have a very good working relationship and they understand my work and what I need.

"It is also much easier and faster to ship from there to other countries in Asia.

"I want people to be able to enjoy my work and having it on display outdoors makes it more accessible to many people."

Born and raised in Kedah, Eng Tay moved to New York in 1968 to study at The Art Students League. He graduated from The School of Visual Arts in 1972 as a graphic designer.

He then worked as a graphic artist until 1978, when he undertook several painting trips throughout South America and Indonesia until 1980. These trips formed a basis for his subject-matter — images of people playing music, family moments, market scenes and daily rituals.

Eng Tay works in several media — limited-edition etchings, painting and sculpture. He continues to paint, sculpt and make etchings at his TriBeCa studio in SoHo.

"Will he ever return to settle in Malaysia?" "I did not plan on settling in the US, it just happened naturally. I met my wife after I graduated and had two children, a son and a daughter. I am based in SoHo in New York City and I have a studio there," he explains.

"My son graduated two years ago and is now working in film production in the movie industry. My daughter will graduate next year and she is in Paris right now studying. My wife is a professor of archaeology in Vassar College in upstate New York.

"I travel to Malaysia about four times a year and I enjoy eating local food. "Will I return to live in Malaysia? Well, never say never! Right now I have the best working environment as I have my studio in New York and I get to travel, which I love to do." — **By JOHNNI WONG**

For more on Eng Tay, visit www.eng-tay.com

