



DESIGN

DYNAMIC

**MALCOLM KLUK AND
CHRISTIAAN GABRIEL DU TOIT**
ARE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED
WITH ON THE LOCAL
FASHION SCENE.

DANIEL SCHEFFLER
CHATS TO THEM ABOUT
THEIR LATEST VENTURE,
THEIR THIRD BOUTIQUE,
WHICH THEY
RECENTLY OPENED
IN PRETORIA

Africa's fashion twins have been offering the South African market superb designer garments for the past 12 years. In fact, they are famous worldwide, as Kluk CGDT has shown its magnificent creations to the Paris fashion cognoscenti at Paris Fashion Week, and have collaborated at various Fashion Weeks both locally and in Nigeria and Angola.

The design duo first operated from Cape Town, where they opened a very popular inner city flagship boutique. But the Johannesburg market longed for their own taste of Kluk CGDT, and moaned that their seasonal trunk shows weren't enough. So Malcolm and Christiaan bit the bullet, and opened their Parkhurst store five years ago. And now they've just opened in Pretoria as well, in Charles Street.





complement each other where necessary. Basically, we love what we do and we love doing it together.

HOW HAS THE BRAND KLUK CGDT EVOLVED?

Christiaan: I think we have come of age after 13 years, like most teenagers. We know who we are. We know what we can and will do and we know who our customers are. This is not to say we don't have plans and new ideas for the future.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR SIGNATURE AESTHETIC?

Malcolm: This is a tough question to answer. We are known as much for our romantic bridal and eveningwear as our ready-to-wear. I think the truth is – we are bold in our colour choices and prints, we do not rest on last season's best sellers, we take risks but are trustworthy enough not to make our customers look inappropriate to their occasions.



WHO IS THE KLUK CGDT WOMAN?

Malcolm: I'm not keen to give our customer a label or fit her into a demographic. She is somewhere between matric dance and mother of the bride. She travels and knows



We chat to the designers about fashion, the future and what luxury means to them.

HOW DID THE TWO OF YOU GET TOGETHER?

Malcolm: I returned from a stint at Harrods in London and worked for Jenni Button. Then I decided I wanted to design under my own name, so in 2001 I opened a store at Cape Town's V&A Waterfront. I built up a great following there, but felt the shopping centre was too commercial for me, so in 2003 Christiaan and I opened a store together in De Waterkant. There we developed personal relationships with our customers, collaborated together and were completely hands-on. Our service and the garments were both more in line with what was happening internationally.

Christiaan: Before we opened the store, I'd completed an apprenticeship with Gert van der Merwe and was concentrating on made-to-order clothes. From the moment we opened in De Waterkant, Malcolm and I worked very closely together, and we found that our customers appreciated our collaboration and having a second opinion. We then moved the store to Green Point and then in 2004, we opened our custom designed flagship store.



WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO OPEN A STORE IN PRETORIA?

Malcolm: The reason for opening in Pretoria is twofold. Firstly, a number of our customers live here – we dress some Cabinet Ministers and foreign diplomats – and it was hard for them, with their hectic schedules, to make it to our Johannesburg store. Now we will be able to give them better, more personalised service closer to home. We also wanted to maintain the exclusivity we offer our clients, and by opening in Pretoria, we are growing the business, and remaining exclusive.

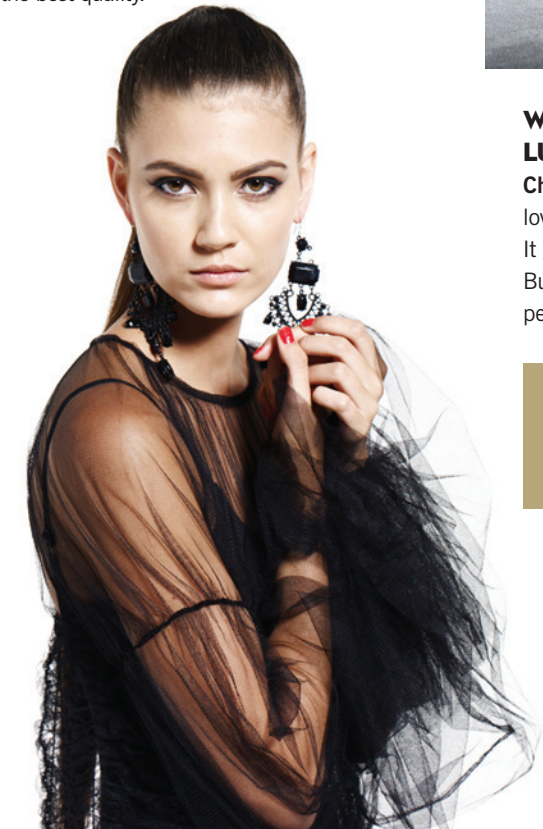
HOW DO THE TWO OF YOU MANAGE TO LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER AS PARTNERS?

Christiaan: We are often asked this, because many people don't understand how we manage to be a couple and work together at the same time, something we've achieved for the past 13 years. We are honest with each other and have been from the start. We have similar goals and ideals but are different enough to

“WE ARE KNOWN AS MUCH FOR OUR ROMANTIC BRIDAL AND EVENINGWEAR AS OUR READY-TO-WEAR. **I THINK THE TRUTH IS - WE ARE BOLD IN OUR COLOUR CHOICES AND PRINTS**”



She is professional
and needs to
be a leader in
the boardroom;
**SHE NEEDS TO
STAND OUT
FROM THE
CROWD**



what is happening internationally. So of course we must offer her clothes that coordinate with what she can buy overseas. She is professional and needs to be a leader in the boardroom; she needs to stand out from the crowd within the confines of her profession. She is also a homemaker with an executive lifestyle and needs to be contemporary within the global language of fashion.

TELL ME ABOUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN FASHION SCENE, THE PEOPLE AND OF COURSE THE TALENT

Malcolm: We have a lot of talent here, but right now the local fashion industry needs to focus on developing quality and service together with design. Also there are two misnomers in the South African fashion industry. The one is that the rest of the world is waiting for us. It's important to strengthen the local market before trying to make it internationally, which would necessitate actually living and working overseas. The Rand is not in our favour in terms of production, machinery and fabrication. International businesses are so big they can have design assistants specialised in very niche areas, whereas we need to do everything ourselves. The second misnomer is that the local market believes that everything imported is better. Our international customers know that Vera Wang only makes five bespoke dresses a year; the rest is off the rack, so they come to us for a made-to-fit dress that they would not be able to buy overseas. Remember, something that is imported is not necessarily the best quality.



WHAT IS PERSONAL LUXURY FOR YOU?

Christiaan: For us, luxury is time off. We love to travel and experience new places. It gives us time to think and be creative. But I think the best luxury would be peace of mind. 🏠

For more on Christiaan and Malcolm, visit their site, www.kluk.co.za