



| Interview |

Creative Assembly

K2LD Architects marks a new chapter with the Founders' Memorial, while commemorating their 20th anniversary this year *By Luo Jingmei*



Clockwise from top: Forest Study is a home designed to blend in with its luxuriant landscape; a house designed by K2LD Architects as part of the Dalvey 7 project, in which houses located on the family estate were crafted by seven firms; the Golden Box house features a metallic mesh that provides privacy for the bedrooms on the second storey

Opposite page: To be completed in 2027, the Founders' Memorial is designed to merge harmoniously with the landscape; Ko Shiou Hee of K2LD Architects

Architect Ko Shiou Hee has designed many outstanding houses all by himself. But Ko is also passionate about collaborative work. He finds the process invigorating, and often yields rich and unpredictable results.

As one of the founding directors of K2LD Architects, Ko has steered three collaborative residential projects to date, gathering several architecture firms to work together on large plots. The first was for developer Huafa in Zhongshan, China in 2004, where Ko invited five Singapore-based architects to each design a house in their personal style. This was reiterated

for the houses designed for the Lien Villas Collective and Dalvey 7 in Singapore, two sprawling family estates on which the firm worked with reputable studios including Ipli Architects and Aamer Architects. "We are not driven by a particular design style; we focus on the collaborative process that allows us to develop solutions that can positively impact the community around us," says Ko.

His latest partnership is with Kengo Kuma, the famed Japanese architect who designed Tokyo's Olympic Stadium. Together, they won the design competition for the Founders' Memorial, which

commemorates Singapore's pioneering leaders who were instrumental in the country's nation-building journey.

This year also marks the 20th year of K2LD Architects, with teams based in Singapore and Australia—the Melbourne office is led by architect David Lee. We find out more from Ko about the studio's recent projects and plans ahead.

Tell us about your collaboration with Kengo Kuma and Associates (KKAA) on the Founders' Memorial. KKAA is the lead designer while K2LD Architects plays the lead

Images Courtesy of K2LD Architects

architect's role in adopting the design to the local context. Having partnered Kengo Kuma on numerous built projects for eight years, we have become familiar with Kuma's unique way of incorporating local elements while re-interpreting his Japanese sensibilities.

Kuma's design expresses the Founders' Memorial as being part of the land; as Mr Kuma said, "it is a living monument". We believe the result will be a vibrant space to which people can come to learn about our country's past, reflect on how far we have come as a nation, and enjoy wonderful cultural programmes in the beautiful gardens.

What fascinates you about the collaborative residential projects you have spearheaded?

All collaborative projects require the teams to work closely, respect one another and share knowledge for the betterment of the project. Every time a new group comes together, we have to find a different synergy that works best among the team members. For the Lien Villas Collective, the client was keen to try out younger talents. For Dalvey 7, we worked with more experienced architects who are well-versed in bungalow projects because there were sensitive issues

to manage, with the elderly family member living on the site during the project's four-year development.

How do you think the Covid-19 pandemic will change the way the industry operates?

The pandemic has had a severe impact on the local construction industry, as the most affected groups in Singapore are workers living in the dormitories. Our industry is heavily reliant on foreign workers and the restriction of movement not only created an unprecedented delays in all projects, it acutely pointed out that our construction industry needs to be revamped as the traditional means of using cheap, labour-intensive methods of construction are not sustainable. However, efficiency in construction should not lead to repetitive and boring buildings.

One's craft is often informed by other passions. What are yours?

Food makes me appreciate nature's creations. I feel responsible for giving produce made perfect by nature's design a second life by turning it into delicious food and presenting it beautifully. Similarly with wine, I appreciate the terroir and seasons of wine making as they heighten my understanding of nature and time.