



MEET THE EIGHT RECIPIENTS OF

OUR ASIA'S MOST STYLISH AWARD



ASIA'S MOST STYLISH

Acclaimed photographers from
across the continent capture

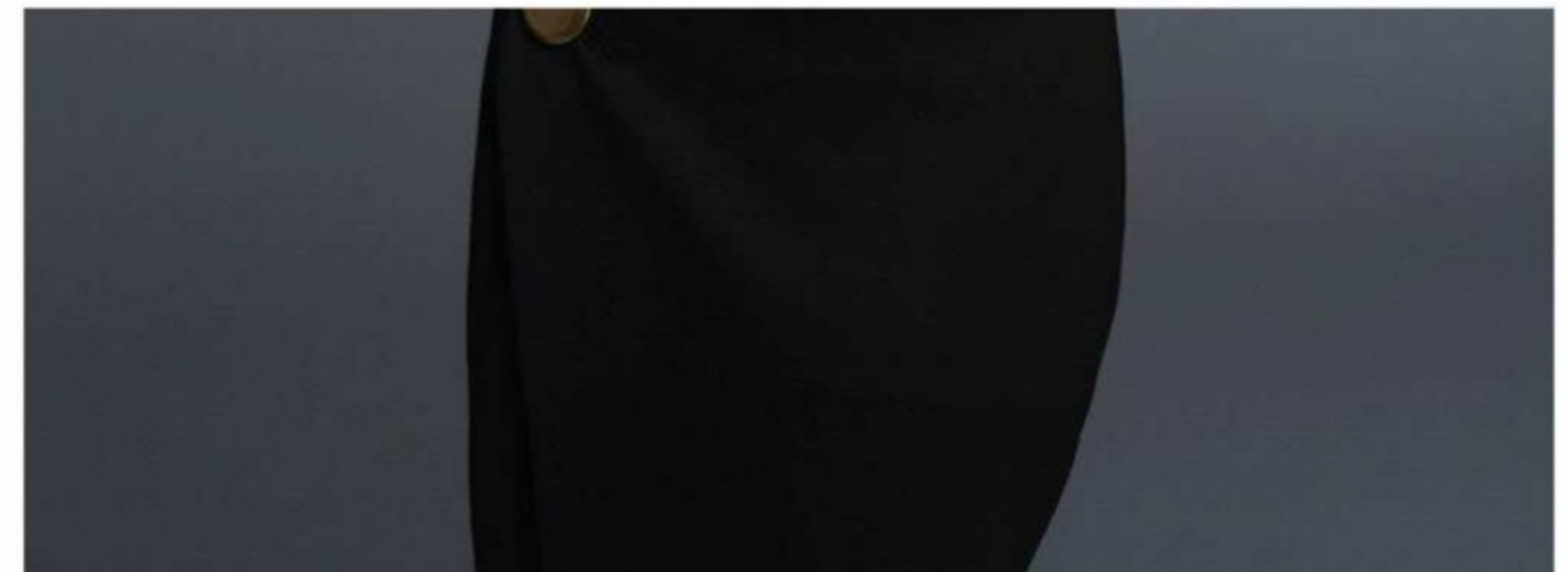
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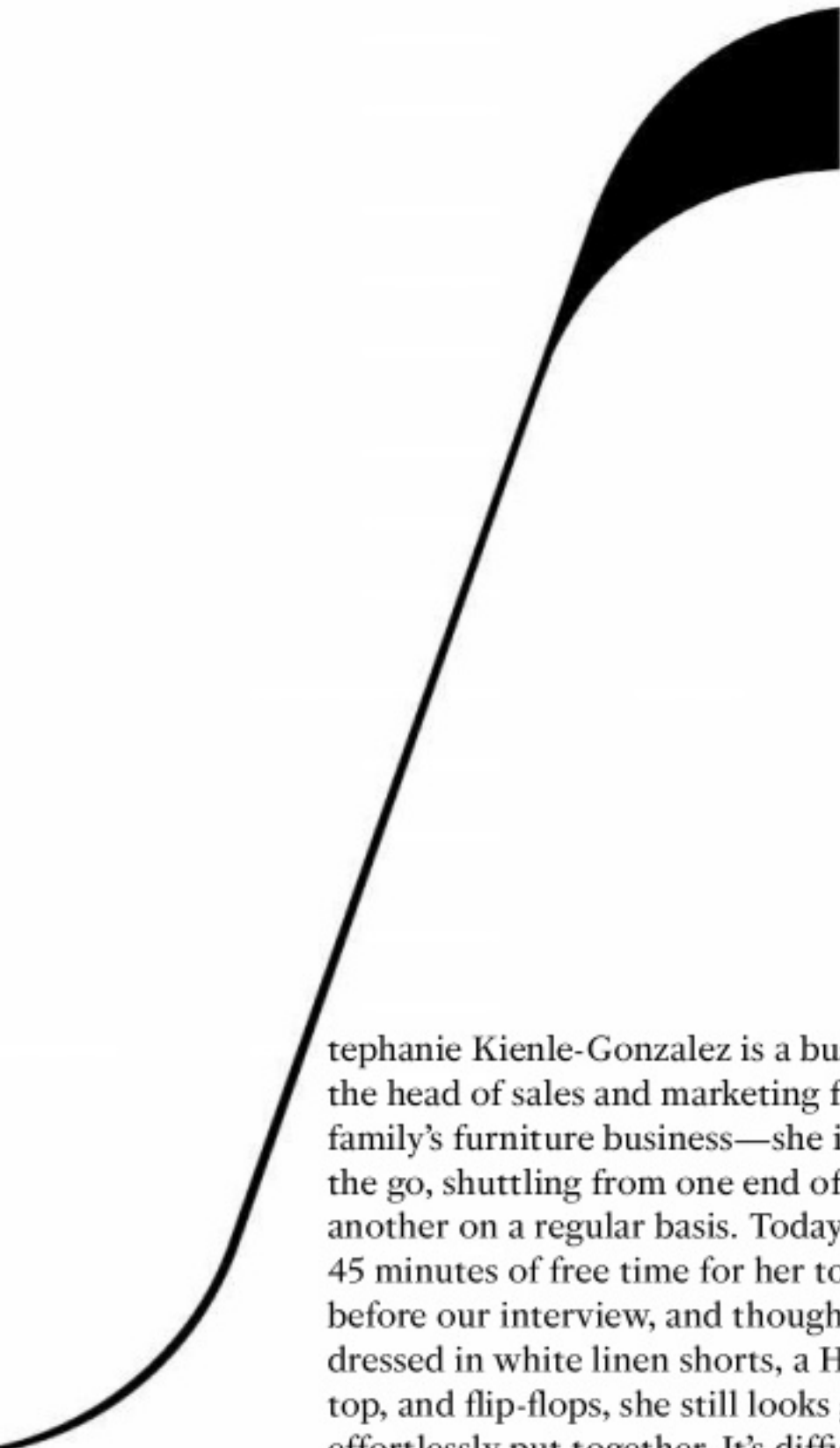
of Asia's most glamorous women
at a variety of dazzling locations in
our ultimate celebration of style.

Hand-picked by *Tatler* editors in
each region, these fashion mavens
talk to Nadine Nicolson and Chloe
Street about couture, careers, and
everything in between



STEPHANIE KIENLE-GONZALEZ / THE PHILIPPINES





Stephanie Kienle-Gonzalez is a busy woman. As the head of sales and marketing for Philux—her family's furniture business—she is always on the go, shuttling from one end of the city to another on a regular basis. Today, she has found 45 minutes of free time for her to get a pedicure before our interview, and though she is just dressed in white linen shorts, a Harlan-Holden top, and flip-flops, she still looks glamorous and effortlessly put together. It's difficult for Stephanie to carve out time for herself, but she takes it all in her stride. "As someone who manages people, you need to be strong, because it's always three steps forward, two steps back. It's never a happy fairy tale, but you just need to be positive."

Did you always know that you were going to be in the family business?

No, not really. I lived in New York, in Paris, and I was very interested in the interiors industry, so I interned with an interior firm in New York. I guess this was because of my parents' business. With that kind of exposure, my eye was developed at such a young age. But I also loved fashion. I interned with fashion house Marchesa for a little bit in New York. I was kind of in limbo trying to decide whether I would push through with starting a career abroad or joining the family business at home—I ended up choosing the latter.

Why did you choose that?

Because of my husband [businessman Christian Gonzalez]. We met in 2004, and we had been in a long-distance relationship for three years. He was very sweet because he let me live my life in these wonderful cities. It was very difficult, but I'm happy I experienced all of that. He then moved to Manila,



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and I knew that I wanted to be with him. He was [and is] the love of my life, and we wanted to start a family together. I also wanted to explore that Sex and the City life, but after thinking it over carefully, I knew that Manila was home. I just needed to take the energy that I feel when I am abroad, bring that back to Manila, and try and see what I can do here with that energy. The first thing I need to take care of is the family business, but there are also a lot of other things I want to explore a little further once I get that down.

What are some of these things?

I wish I could get more involved in development, whether it is working with a particular foundation or developing my own one day. I'm very interested in conservation. I don't have much experience or knowledge about how that works here, but I was so impressed with how things were done in South Africa when I visited there, and I wish I could bring that kind of model back home. However, I'm very preoccupied with our family business, and being a mother and wife of course. Those are my priorities now.

What's it like working with your family?

It's gotten better since Andrea, my daughter, came into the picture. It used to be very difficult to separate work and family time, but now when she's around, we try to avoid the business talk. I guess that's kind of like the beauty and the curse of being an entrepreneur. My time is flexible and I'm able to spend time with my daughter during the day, but work follows me wherever I am. It's very difficult to switch off.

How do you switch off?

I actually haven't managed to switch off yet. I still haven't been able to put a vacation response on my email when I go travelling. I'm giving myself three more years before I do that because I have a vision for the company. I need to be on top of everything at all times because the retail and manufacturing businesses are very tricky.

It's something that I struggle with every day. Especially with social media and this deadly weapon beside me [her iPhone]. It can take over your life. I can't live without my phone. It's my work, it's family, it's everything to me. That needs to change, so what I'm going to do before going to

bed at night, or at least when I enter my bedroom, is deposit my phone at a charging station that isn't at my bedside. That way, I can really put everything aside and know that this time is sacred family time. It's time for myself. It's time for me to just breathe, relive my day, and recount what I'm grateful for. You need to give yourself that small moment of meditation and time with your family in order to be a better person.

How has motherhood treated you so far?

My daughter's two-and-a-half years old. She's completely in love with her father. So sometimes I'm heartbroken because she'd go, "Bye mum, I'm going to dad." But hopefully that will change someday. I love her. Motherhood is one of those eye-opening experiences where you step back and realise that this is what life is for. You understand it because there's this beautiful thing in front of you, and you're just in awe at how amazing it is to have this and share it with your partner. It's just been such a blessing and we're very lucky. She has quite a personality; she's a little ham. She has a good sense of humour and she already knows what she wants. It's been very fun and hopefully it'll just get better.

Can you describe your partnership with your husband?

Well, I'm in love. Chris is fantastic, he's just an amazing person because he supports me no matter what. He's basically my unpaid consultant. He's not just my friend, partner in life, and father of my beautiful child; but he's also a colleague, a person I rely on for many things, including business matters. We share all of these facets in our relationship. I think that communication is so important, and we've managed to do that well.

When did you start having an awareness of style?

My earliest memory would probably be watching my mother dress up before going to parties or dates with my dad. As a young girl, I was very curious as to what she would do to prepare, and it was also kind of like our bonding time. I would hang around her vanity and talk to her while she would get ready and just watch that whole process.



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Growing up with such a glamorous mum, did you ever feel any pressure to be like her?

Up to this day I look up to my mum, who is just as beautiful inside as she is out. Rather than feel pressured, I am so grateful to have her in my life. She is someone I look up to for many things.

Do you have any style icons?

I don't think of a particular person. Instead, I think of Paris. It's a place that's very personal to me. I spent a lot of time there, and in terms of fashion, I just think about the average Parisian woman walking down the street—she is carefree, sophisticated, and knows how to put herself together without all the pomp. I just love that air, that natural flair that they have without trying too hard.

How about favourite designers?

There are a couple of Filipino designers that I go to a lot—Rajo Laurel, Rosanna Ocampo-Rodriguez, and Inno Sotto. But I also like mixing things up; I don't like doing everything local or international, or everything high street or high-end. It's not all about the name behind the piece. I'm very visual, so when I choose something it's usually because I like it at first sight, not because it's designed by a certain person.

Do you follow trends?

Not particularly, but I like this whole simple thing going on now. But then again, I say I don't like trends and then I go on a trip and come back with something like a pouch with leather eyelashes coming out of it. Let's just say I don't like sticking to rules.

What would you say are the marks of a man/woman with style?

Someone who exudes subtle confidence and who stays true to who he or she truly is. I was so nervous when I gave my speech at the Tatler Ball. I didn't know what to say initially, but I eventually realised that style is really about inspiration, about what inspires you. It could be a person—an artist, a designer, an environmentalist; or something you read or saw in a magazine; or a feeling you have when you're extra confident and you think, "Okay, I can pull this off." It's really about you at the end of the day. It's not about following a particular

trend or designer, it's about being inspired to express yourself, to be confident enough to wear something you thought you wouldn't dare wear. Why not? You only live once. Enjoy. At the end of the day, it's also knowing who you are and knowing who you are not, and respecting that.

Where do you go to for inspiration?

I travel. When I'm away, I have more time to smell the roses and enjoy my surroundings. We like escaping every month, whether it be just outside Manila or abroad. Our trips are usually timed around work commitments so we try to plan smartly. We also bring our daughter along sometimes, depending on the location.

What has travel taught you?

There's this feeling I have in the bush in South Africa that I don't get anywhere else in the world. It's the feeling of being so minute, of being so insignificant in the world, but in a good way. You realise how beautiful the world is and how your daily problems are just so small. That's what's so great about the place. It really allows you to step back, breathe, gain some perspective, and think, "Wow. I'm alive, I have a beautiful family, I'm so lucky. Why stress over this little thing?"

OPENING SPREAD:
TURTLE NECK BY GUCCI; SKIRT BY BALENCIAGA

SECOND SPREAD:
SUIT BY BALMAIN; PANTS BY JOSEPH

THIRD SPREAD:
SUIT AND PANTS BY MAJE

FOURTH SPREAD:
JUMPSUIT BY SASS & BIDE; HEELS BY GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI

THIS SPREAD:
TRENCH COAT AND PANTS BY ESCADA; KNIT TOP BY BALENCIAGA

WORDS: CRISTINA MORALES

