

Viewing and the Art of Being Viewed

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HABITABLE SCULPTURE

This exercise is the first of a series of projects in the Mini-Eco Resort studio project. Having explored the 'meaning of timber' in the previous exercise (Prologue: The Spirit of Wood), students become more sensitive to the significance of timber in architecture. In this exercise, students produced a design made for timber construction. To achieve a strong design concept, students conducted research on ecotourism as well as ecological design issues. The project is called a sculpture instead of a wakaf or a viewing tower, etc. to avoid students from being constrained by their prototypes. The objective of this exercise is enabling students to develop a design idea to a buildable construction. The knowledge of timber construction serves as a vehicle to enhance the skill of manipulating spaces by rationalising structural principles.

It was envisaged that this sculpture functions in the overall eco resort design perhaps as, a performance stage, a landmark, a waiting space, an informal discussion space or even a viewing tower. It can be a place where people can best view nature at 360 degrees from a high place. It may be a platform for watching birds or observing animals that pass by the jungle ground. It provides a high vantage point in the eco resort. Environmentally, the sculpture is a comfortable place where people may want to take relief from the tropical heat by exploiting the occasional jungle breezes. It provides protection for occupants against rain and harsh sun.

The main construction material is timber on concrete footings. The space is naturally ventilated. The choice of roofing materials and infill panels (if any) should conform with the chosen design concept. The proposals presented by the students show various levels of understanding and creativity. Some are novel in terms of defining a natural ecological process or idea. Overall, there seems to be a good grasp of the inherent quality of timber construction and its potential in expressing an abstract content.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL GALLERY BUKIT MELAWATI – HISTORICAL EXCURSION

History is an excursion into our past and covers all aspects of our daily life. We will not learn anything from history if we only record its important dates. Architect should look at history from all aspects and study how it affects the architectural solution at that point in time. It will serve well as a guide in creating the architectural offerings for today.

Bukit Melawati is a significant point to the State of Selangor, not just regarding her Sultanate but also the height of pride for her people and cultural development. At the height of this hill-fort, it was serving as a grand gateway for the shipping line to trade in Selangor. It had commands respect from those around it, whether from land or sea. The historical value of this hill is not just its mere size, location and its importance as an administrative centre, but more so of its commanding respect and pride for the people of Selangor.

This is the essence captured in the *Archaeological Gallery* design project presented in this book. It is not about copying or representing the same architectural outlook. Neither it is a search for a historical metaphor to present its history. It is a design exercise linking the significance of Bukit Melawati's historical past to the Selangor people of the present day.

The *Archaeological Gallery* provides the linkage to the historical significance of Bukit Melawati and it builds the emotional link to the past, recalling and reinstalling the pride of this historical point to the current generation. This pride forms the backbone for a strong sense of belonging and becomes the strength for the people of Selangor.

KAMPUNG BOY GALLERY

This project challenges the students' skills in interpreting a well known masterpiece into a gallery meant for exhibiting the works of the artist himself. The project is a proposal for the design of a gallery explicitly exhibiting the works of Datuk Lat, who is internationally known for 'The Kampung Boy', a cartoon novel depicting his experience growing up in a village. The challenge for this project is to use ideas from the novel as the main concept for the overall design.

The whole development concept is based on the book. First published in Malaysia in 1979, the book has been reprinted 14 times as of 2008. To date, the book has been translated into nine different languages. Although the story circles around the life of a small boy in a remote Malaysian village in the 1950s', people of various cultures and nations found the story captivating. An interesting point to note is that the reason for its appeal is the universality of the stories that people of different backgrounds in the world can relate to. The innocence of a child viewing a changing world around him gives this charm. The gallery will also display other works of Dato' Lat and other cartoonists as well. However the concept for the building itself has to be drawn from the Kampung Boy phenomenon described above. Rather than the imagery of a Malay Kampung, it is the universality of the idea of innocence, freedom and adventure that serve as the main conceptual premise for portrayal. The focus on this theme allows significant relationship to the objective of the gallery which is to gather people together in recognising that human experience is universal and that people are equal and of the same origin.

The challenge posed by the site is that it is situated in Kampung Baru, a famous suburb in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. Kampung Baru has been the interest for many urban design studies due to the uniqueness of a *kampung* in a city. However the project will not delve into the urban issues due to the complexity limitation at 2nd year's studio project. The site is an empty lot at the junction of Jalan Raja Muda Aziz and Jalan Daud across a stadium. This is quite a busy road and needs consideration for vehicular access. Kampung Baru itself is a tourist magnet due to the charm of a *kampung* within the city. As well as attracting visitor groups to the gallery by mass transportation, casual visitors to the area are also expected on foot. Students were required to know the history and development of Kampung Baru as they would be helpful during the development of their design proposals.

The works by the students showed refreshing definitions about a gallery. Due to an early precaution against direct imagerial transposition, none of the schemes showed the familiar traditional Malay pitch roofs. Instead, dynamic forms and patterns and non orthogonal axis seem to do the job. Urban issues, nonetheless, were tackled in most schemes by engaging existing public pedestrian lines with new ones that weave graciously into the site and into the building.