

Self-microsm to Macro Realm

Mohd Fakri Zaky Ja'afar & Abdul Rahim Mohd. Zin

The year's projects are organised from micro scale to macro. The very first project, ANTHROPONEST, dwells with the most basic need of a human being—shelter from the elements. The Putrajaya Information Office requires students to deal with the design issues of a public building, albeit a single function with minimum space requirement. In Taiping, the brief was to design a full-blown public building. The proposed Taiping Heritage Gallery has a specific function in conveying the spirit of the past in a refreshingly contemporary context.

Anthroponest

Preceding this project, students had investigated the cultural significance, meaning and symbolism of a particular plant in a chosen culture in a project entitled 'prologue'. This understanding has to be conveyed through a poster and interestingly, through a play. This exercise prepares students to appreciate the materiality of building materials in a holistic manner.

Having looked at nature in a new perspective, Anthroponest, the project that succeeds, dwells on the question of how human survive in nature.

Man, like some species of the animal world, achieved a high rate of survival by being able to moderate the natural elements to survive in various climates and conditions. In this exercise, students were instructed to produce a 'nest' for human which can moderate the harsh elements of hot and humid natural setting like the Malaysian climate with its tropical flora and fauna, as well as to protect against the natural enemies ever present from the animal world.

The requirement is to provide a single space, habitable by a few humans, providing a minimum degree of protection from the elements. However, what really distinguishes man from other species is the ability to think of abstract ideas and associate meaning to these objects. Therefore, in creating the nest, abstract ideas drawn from observing nature must be evident in their proposal. The level of abstraction is opened for students to explore, be it a pattern observed in nature, the survival techniques of a certain plant, the decorative pattern found or the intangible human emotion evoked by observing natural phenomena.

Putrajaya Information Office

Putrajaya is a new township built in an old palm oil plantation south of Kuala Lumpur. It is meant to be the hub for Malaysia's federal administration. The planning of the city is such that it is meant to cater all federal government offices in one district. It is a reasonable strategy to gather several government agencies in a well-planned district as an administrative city. However, with numerous agencies sprawled in the district of a sizeable area, the task of locating a place of business can be quiet daunting. The proposal is for an information office to be located at the heart of Putrajaya Boulevard, a 4 km vehicular spine running from the Prime Minister's office in the northeast, to the Putrajaya International Conference Centre to the southwest.

The office is to serve as a one stop info centre for visitors who have business with government agencies around Putrajaya, providing information and direction to the various offices. Visitors can also expect to have personal consultation on the general guidelines of various official procedures for the different agencies. A bus stop is also provided for hop on - hop off service buses travelling between the offices. Parking for staff is to be provided on site while parking for visitors is at the existing general parking area situated across the boulevard.

Taipung Heritage Gallery

Architecture is not only about designing a building but also designing a 'place'. One of the overriding ideas in architecture is to identify the spirit of the place and translate it into design. Hence, it aims at a building in harmony and affectively right for the place. This project producing trains students to capture the spirit of a place and translates it into the design of a gallery. The place chosen for this exercise is Taiping, a town rich with the history of colonial Malaya. Its corners and streets remind us of our historical connection with the Great British Empire. The declaration of 40 firsts in Malaysia (first railway, first prison, first swimming pool, first lake Garden, etc.) shows how important this town is in shaping the history of Malaysia. The whole town is teeming with a unique *genus loci* (the spirit of the place), making it a good choice for this exercise.

A gallery is to be proposed in the Taiping Lake Garden vicinity to provide a one-stop centre for visitors in a hurry to have a glimpse of the historical of Taiping. The proposal calls for a gallery facilities meant to depict the rich history of Taiping while at the same time, capturing the spirit of the town for its visitors.