

# Jury Review

## Beyond Housing

### Lee Chor Wah

Malaysian architects are renowned for our expertise in housing and township developments. As could be expected, the students' projects in this category also exhibited competency in handling such project type. Out of the 11 projects in this category, the four selected projects are the more creative ones which attempted to challenge our standard or preconceived ideas of what housing should be. They recognised the need for communal style of living, incorporated some green design features such as green roof and explored the possibilities of innovative methods of construction. The project *Growing Beyond Green* stood out as a visionary scheme using biomimicry for a harmonious coexistence with nature.

In reviewing these students' projects, I must commend on their technical prowess in computer skills. While I was dazzled by their CG (Computer Graphics) skills, not having worked with them in person, I am a little concerned about the real, physical, and human dimensions of things. Architecture is for people and the craft of building is still about making things with our hands. It may therefore be instructive to be reminded that some of the current high-tech or avant-garde gurus like Lord Norman Foster, Frank Gehry, Tadao Ando and Mario Botta still draw with pencil and pen. Santiago Calatrava and Steven Holl are known for their exquisite water colour sketches while Zaha Hadid paints with acrylics and oils. As such, it may be worthwhile for students to pick up the art of designing with our hands through sketching and drawing rather than just clicking away with the mouse. The connections, proportions, sensitiveness and nuances that could be expressed, explained or resolved by hands would be more responsive to the architecture that is ultimately built by the hands of people for the people.

As third and fourth year students of architecture, their works have been adventurous and exhibited quite a high level of maturity and competency in design such as site planning, massing, space planning and composition. The apparent lack of competency in construction is perhaps understandable at this stage of their studies. While the works are not parochial but they do reflect current international design trends to the extent of generally devoiding of pseudo vernacular pastiche, it may be worthwhile to consider instilling a greater sense of place and tropicality in their designs. With the current trend towards sustainable design, it is hoped that students would take advantage of the collaboration on Green Building Index (GBI) between UPM and PAM and make their designs truly green and more rooted in its place.

Having demonstrated their skills in the mechanics of design, students are well advised to further develop their groundings in philosophical and theoretical positions in the remaining one or two years of architectural studies. As a practitioner, it is always a joy for me to visit schools of architecture to review students' works. They have certainly inspired me and given me the confidence that future Malaysian architecture will be all the more richer with contributions from these students in time to come.

### Ahmad Bashri Sulaiman

Generally, the selected schemes display refreshing and comprehensive ideas on mass-produced housing. Attempts to address the sustainable issues are commendable but further development are encouraged. Issues regarding housing problems would enrich their design solutions.

One particular scheme proposes interesting ideas relating water bodies amidst green areas which are nicely articulated and giving a clear sense of place. The same scheme also displays how simple individual form can create an interesting urban ensemble. Interesting condensed and comprehensive presentation drawings with adequate computer-generated images strengthen the design intention. Another scheme which is highly explorative derived its design intention from the mangroves which are abundant around the site that reinforced its sense of place.