

Habitat for Humanity Regional Head Office, Jalan Tabuan, Kuching Utara, Sarawak

Wan Srihani Wan Mohamed

The final project for the semester is to design a regional operational office of HABITAT FOR HUMANITY (HfH) where its resource centre harbours all affiliates and organizational partners together under one roof in order to contribute each of their involvement in HfH Malaysia. HfH assists in realising those in need of houses, or referred to as "the needy", by coordinating labour of international volunteers in groups according to the construction phases of the house. The Asia-Pacific region comprises a distinct and diverse community. So, a housing solution that is significant in one place may work differently in another.

It is expected that HfH Resource Centre for Asia Pacific Regional Office should broaden its programme not only to provide services in construction, skills training, financial literacy and housing micro financing but also innovative services that make the built environment more habitable for humanity such as permaculture, empowerment to be self sufficient and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) linkages. Therefore, the keywords that describe the functions of HfH Regional Office that is to be located in Sarawak are: Attentive, Advise, Assist, and Assemble. The compilation of selected students work in this section is clustered in several design strategies which have isolated keywords to describe their schemes.

Jury Review

Faridah Adnan

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY REGIONAL HEAD OFFICE, JALAN TABUAN, KUCHING UTARA, SARAWAK

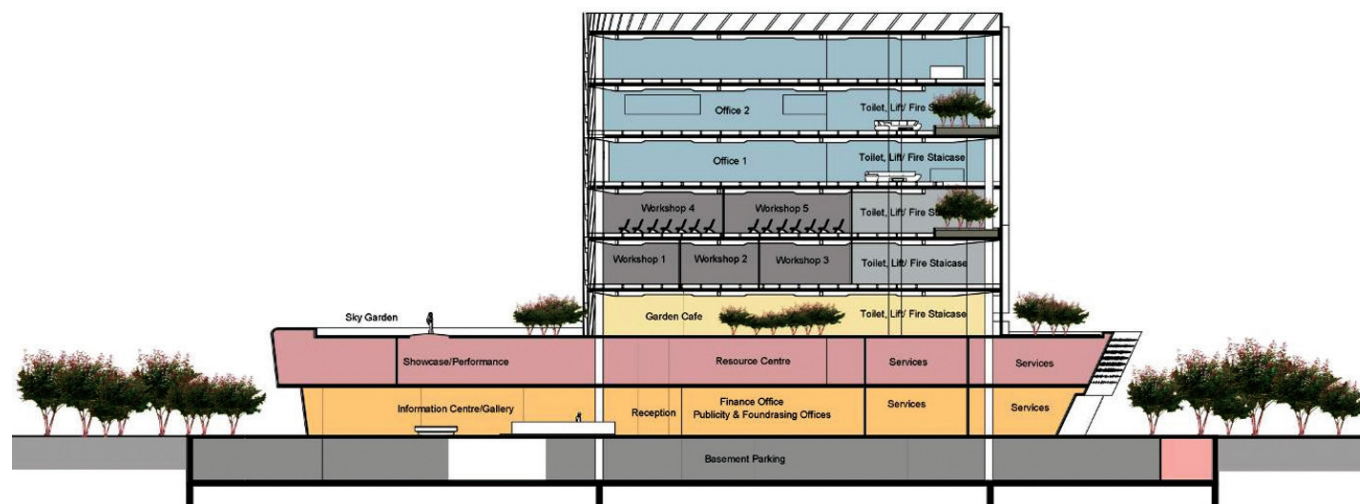
In line with the aspirations of Habitat for Humanity, the concept statements for the various proposals were well written and these were aptly accompanied by thumbnail sketches to further explain the ideas and approaches. As an NGO that strived to advise, assist and assemble while being attentive, the building for their regional head office had to portray certain qualities. The building must be welcoming and yet had a sense of solidity. It needed to be reassuring and it was important to lead people to the building. It must possess a sense of openness while retaining its corporate entity. The form must be modern plus conducive for the Malaysian equatorial climate. At the entrance level, the consensus solutions applied by the students were the hollowed-out ground floor as well as setting the building back to create public plazas that beckoned.

The first objective of the project was to integrate limited urban contextual issues in building design. To this end, photographs of the site within the context were included and the concept sketches took these urban design aspects into serious consideration. However when the building was designed it was very much by itself. In the sections, elevations and 3-dimensional drawings the new regional head office was not shown with the neighbouring existing buildings. The urban context that was evident in the development of the ideas, approaches and concepts were missing in most of the finalised schemes. These drawings were important to test the scale, proportion and rhythm of the new building within its existing context. From the site photographs it seemed that the surrounding buildings were very low-key, banal even. So how did the new iconic form blend in with that existing context?

The second objective was to develop awareness and skills in spatial-technical qualities. The students

embraced this notion and responded boldly with conventional rectilinear planning as well as the unorthodox angular planning. In one of the rectilinear plans interest was created by a subtractive concept whereby multiple-volume spaces were hollowed out from the conventional box. With angular planning it was always easy to go overboard in utilising acute angles thus resulting in very non-functional spaces. However, the students have applied restraint and, in a matured manner, articulated the angular planning with certain rectilinear planning. This paid off not only in catering for practicality, but also to create balance and contrast, within the planning.

Another objective was to apply secondary structural system and develop detail design of key components of the building. Since the building had a basement parking, it was easy to get an efficient parking layout with a rectilinear plan for the office floors above the basement. It was more difficult with angular planning. But even so this was competently done with the structural grid following through from the higher floors down to the basement. There were several proposals that pushed the conventional methods, one of which was to rotate the rectilinear floor plans with respect to the lower floor thus generating a very dynamic twisting form. The student probably adopted the structural concept of Sendai Mediatheque by Toyo Ito and Phaeno Science Centre by Zaha Hadid whereby columns were not merely structural but they manifested as architectural spaces. There were 10 or 11 of these circular 'arch-columns' within the confines of the rectilinear floor plan. They appeared and disappeared, such that when the plan form was rotated the floor structure became cantilevered at an economical distance from the 'arch-columns'. This exemplary structure with the architecture to match should certainly increase the level of confidence in the people to approach Habitat for Humanity in sorting out their house problems!



Amalgamating Community and Environment

Ida Suriana Ismail & Mohd Zairul Mohd Noor

Merging the community and the surrounding environment into a design scheme can be a way of 'giving back' the space to the public and environment. Mohd Hafizal's way of 'giving back' is clearly established in his proposal via his design that allows the public to occupy a large part of the ground level. The integration of community into the design also suits the image of the clients, which promotes charity and transparency in its organisation. The environmental relation is implemented in the planning layout whereby a rhythmic sense is created by utilising the flow of existing site topography. This is further enhanced with other means of passive design strategies such as maximising the use of

natural lighting and ventilation at the atrium, apart from introducing sky gardens at the rooftop level and harmonising the landscape elements with water features. The proposal of a 'harmony court' in the middle of the site which houses an information centre and a gallery gives a direct connection with the outdoor and the public. Hence, public participation inside the site is evoked through the amalgamation of communal requirements within environmental comfort and pleasure.



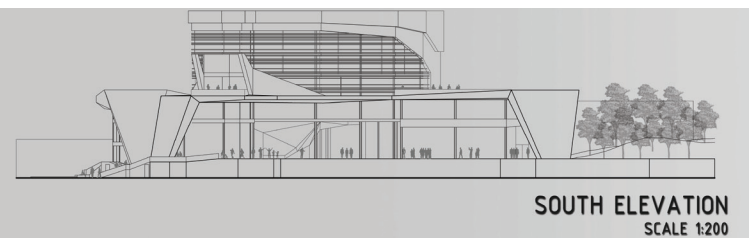
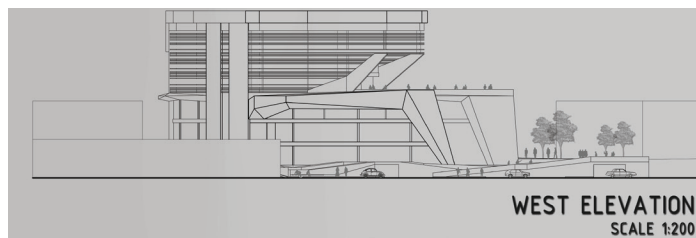
■ Mohd Hafizal Ab Kadir

Selflessness Beyond Boundries

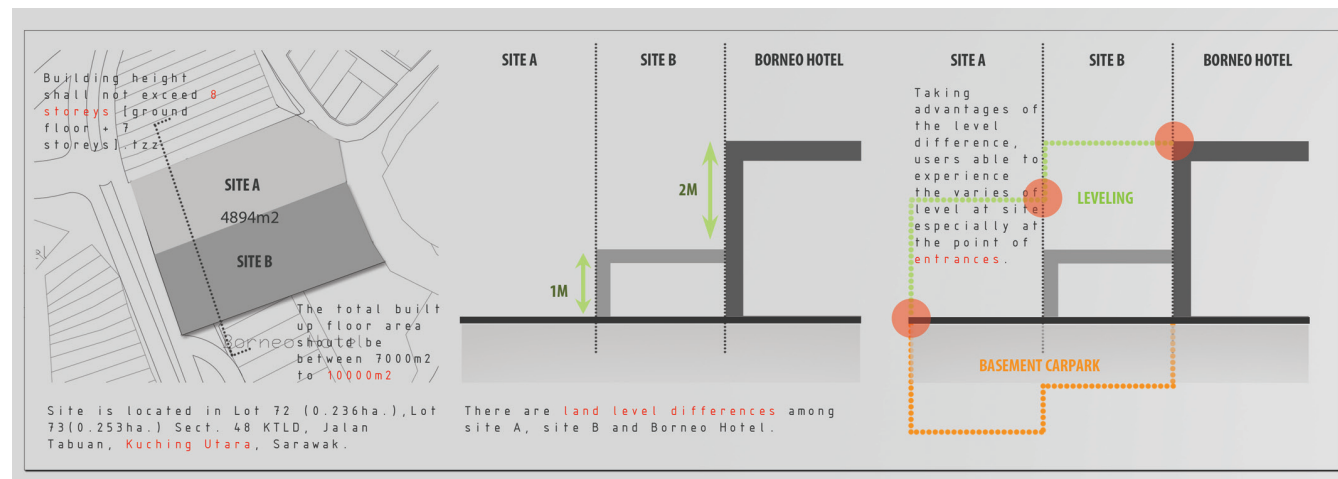
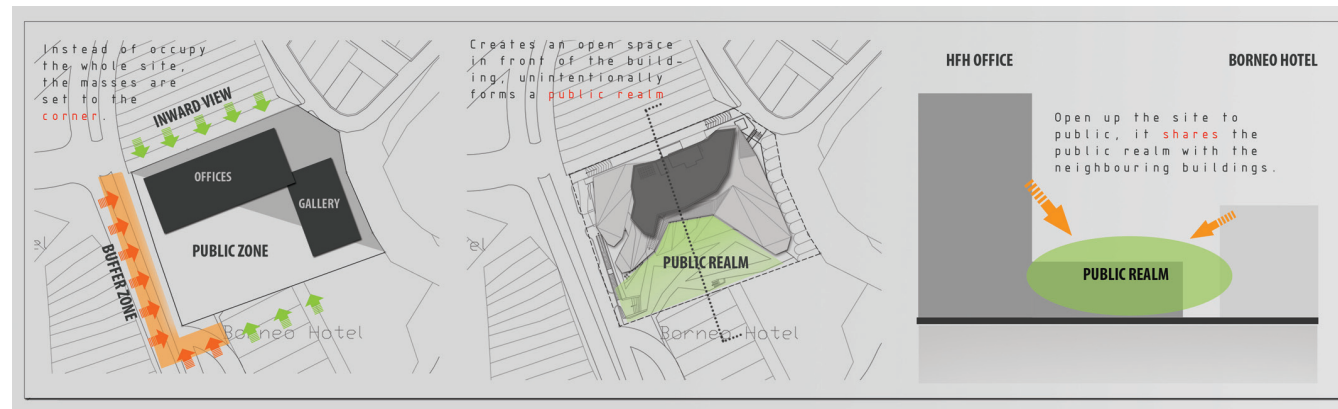
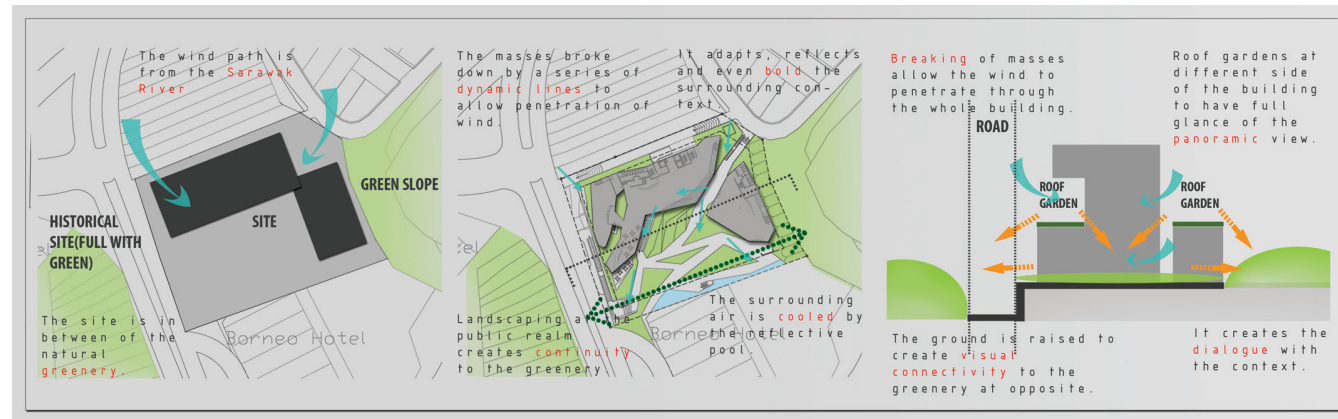
Wan Srihani Wan Mohamed & Zamri Ismail

Relating “selflessness” and housing for the needy has helped Xin Yin to exploit the Kuching site into a massive tangential links between forms and public open spaces resulting in a boundary-less architecture. It accentuates the movements of pedestrians across the site, making the open plaza a public park ingeniously built for visual connectivity to the triple volume lobby. The spaces and voids juxtaposed by diagonal lines generates excellent natural ventilation throughout the building. The designer’s intention to charm the public into her space is effective as

there is nothing to hinder their paths. This project has steel structure as its main supporting members and constructed with lightweight concrete for better thermal insulation; hence, reducing the energy consumed for air conditioning. Such raw materials are applied to display a sense of honesty and humility even for an imposing form in the middle of Kuching City. The design theme, “selflessness”, drives the proposal for the regional office to use both materials and metaphor.



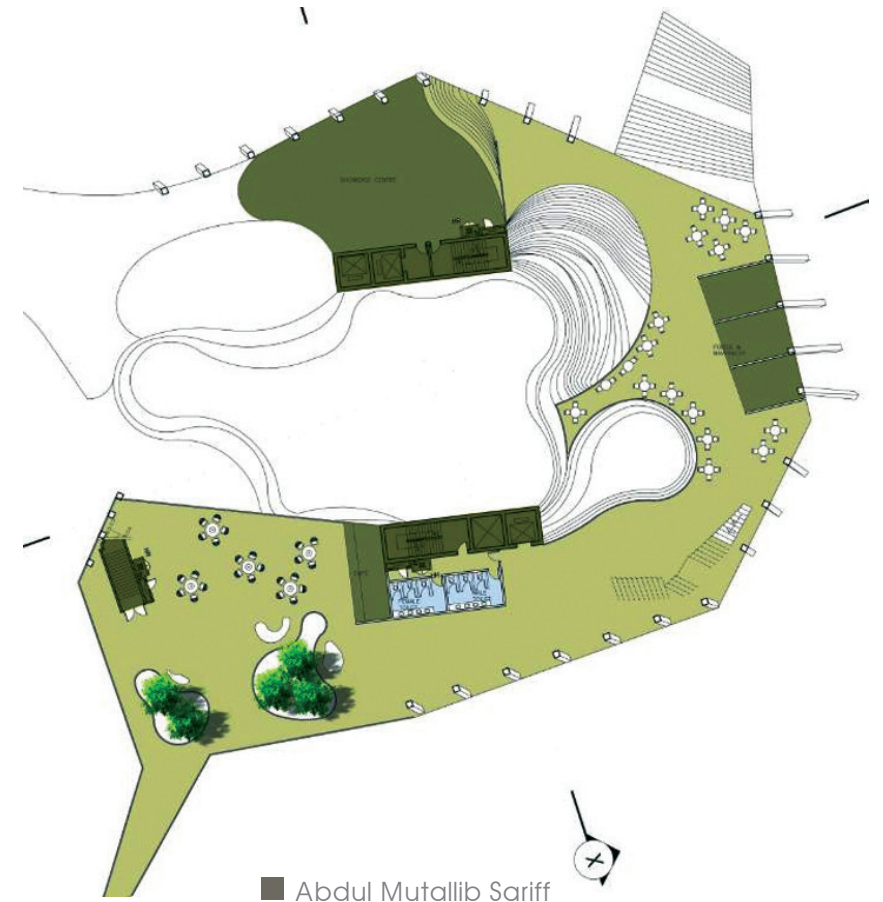
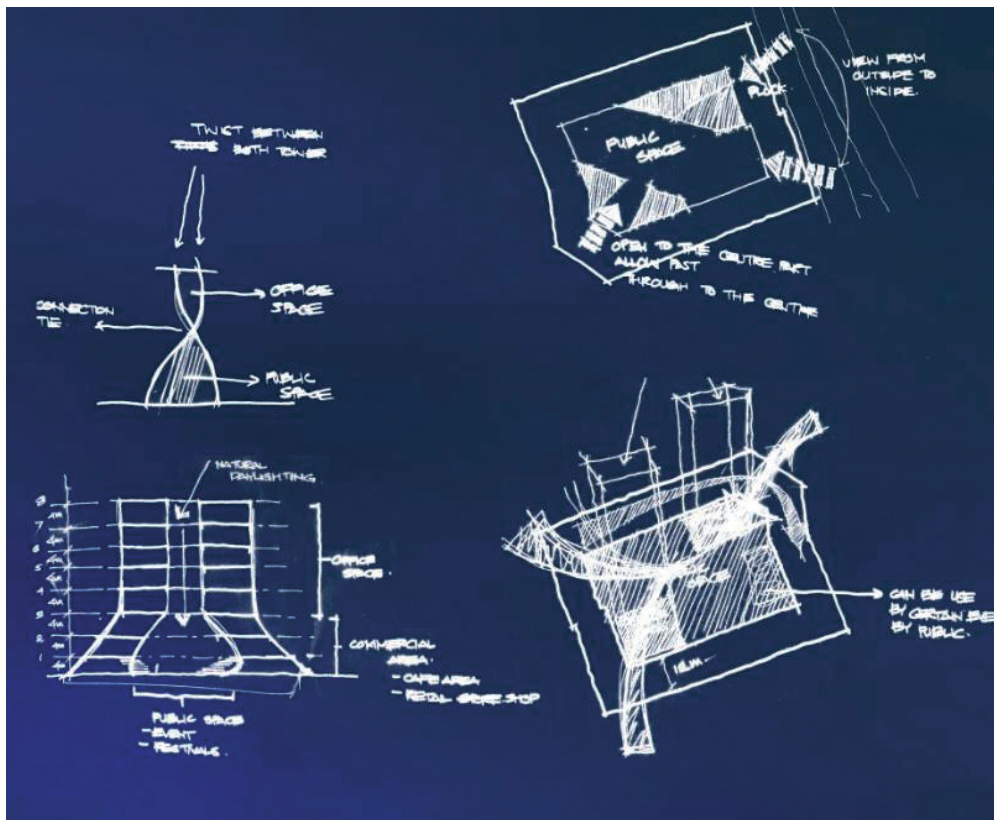
■ Chuah Xin Yin

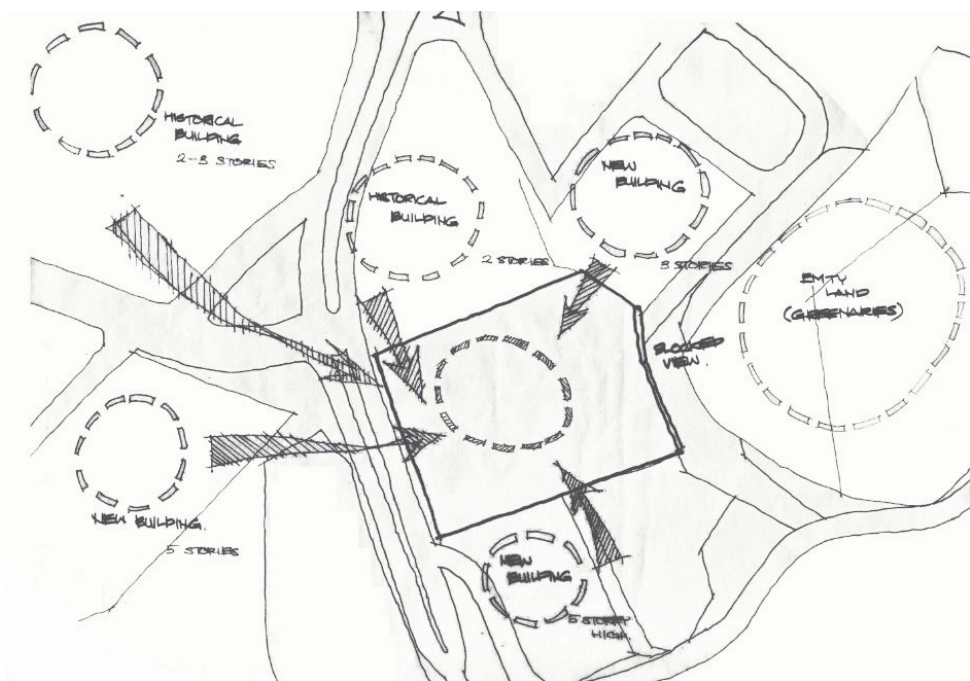
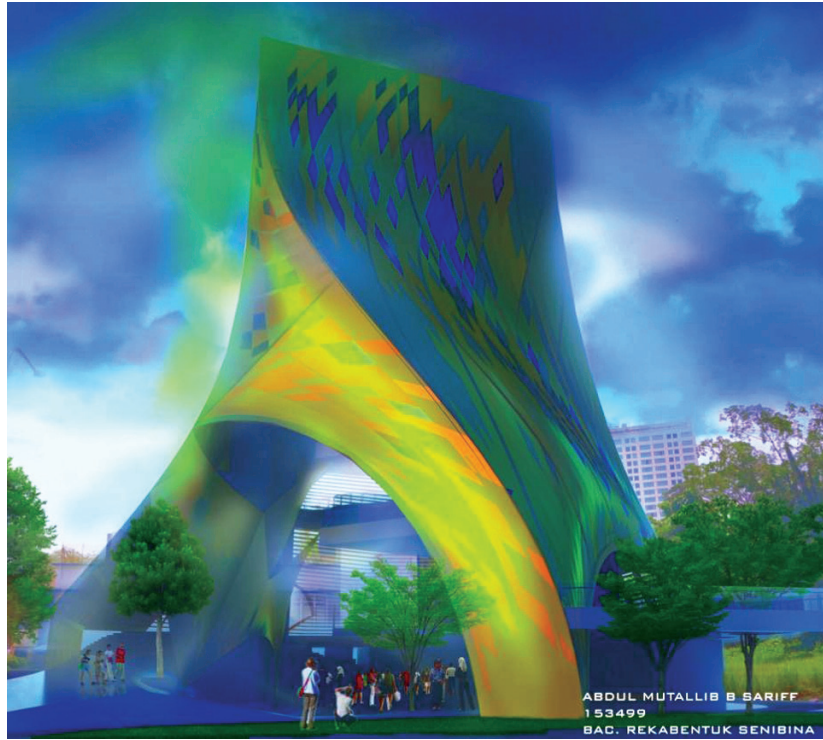
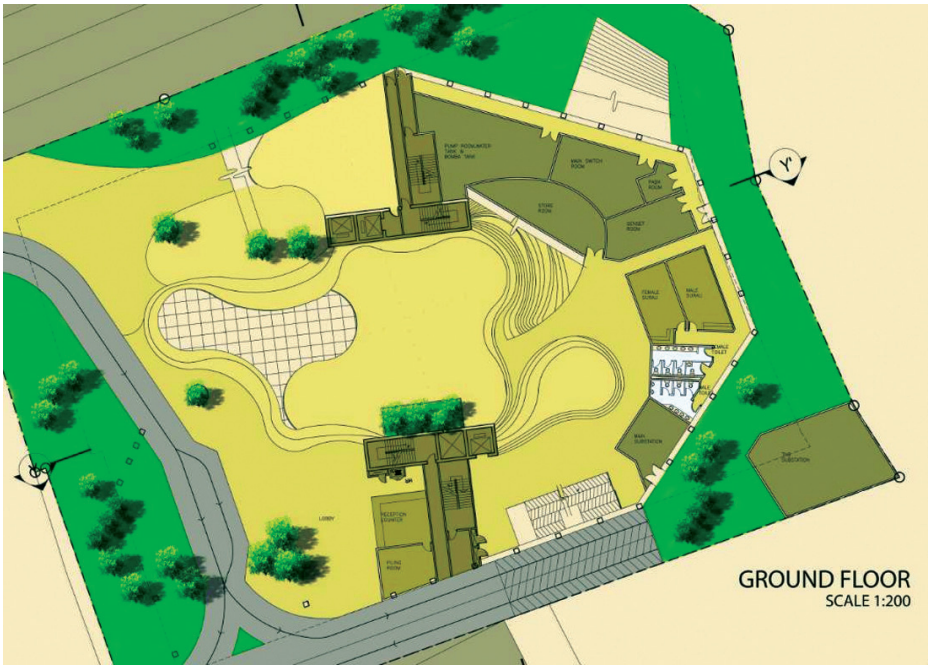
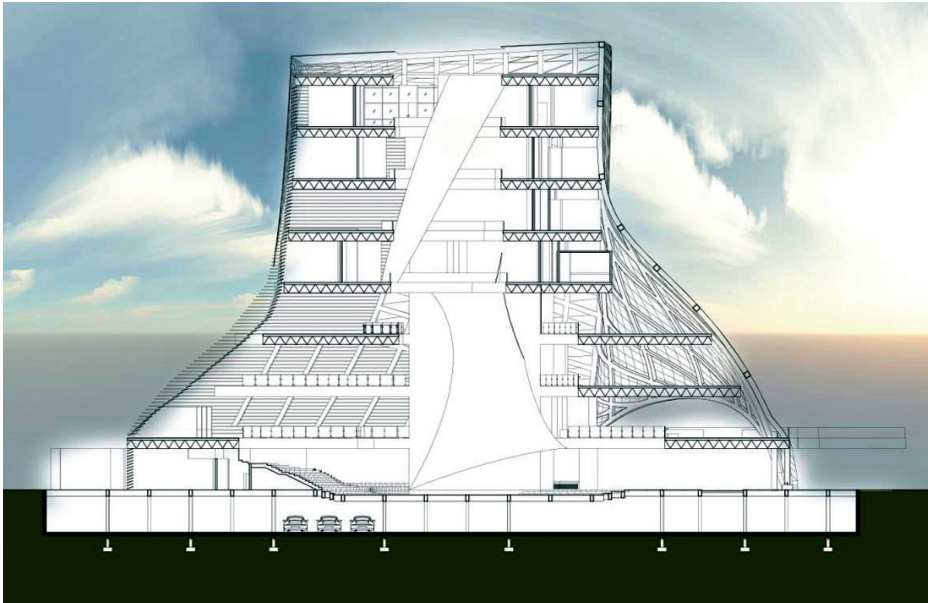


Epitome of Iconic Landmark

Ida Suriana Ismail

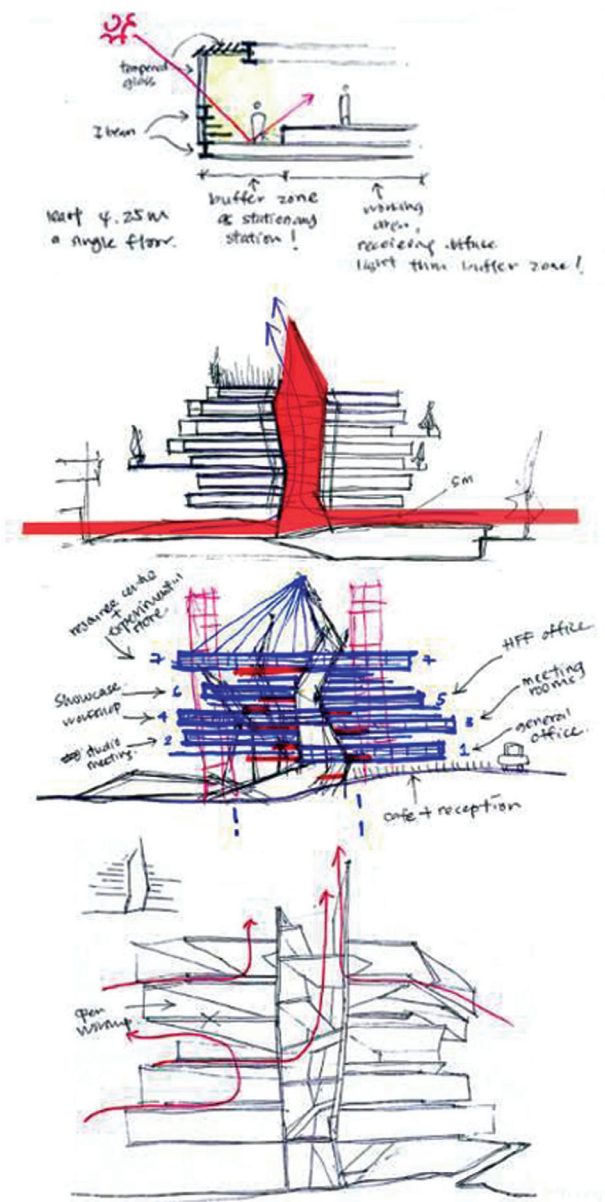
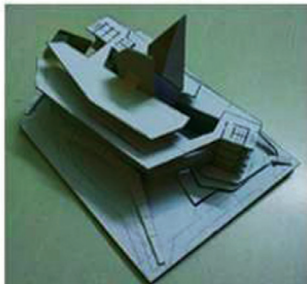
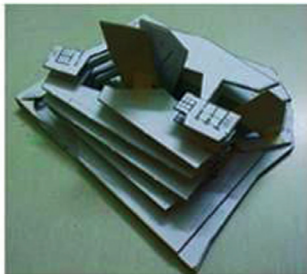
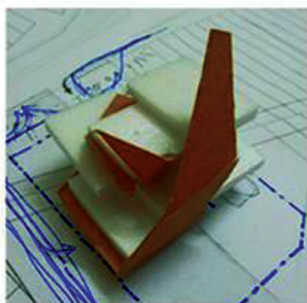
The dilemma of blending traditional essence into the modern milieu can be unraveled in many ways. Abdul Mutallib challenges this idea by first understanding the contextual surrounding of the site's culture and architecture; eventually transforming them into a twist of a representative iconic form. The twisted tower is merged into a pointed top is a dominant form that denotes the symbol of Sarawak's history and traditional cultures intertwined with its modern context. The location of the site itself allows the building to be easily visible from major accesses to Kuching city, even from the waterfront. The meandering building form can be seen as an eye-catching attraction, posed as a modern symbol for the local; hence, creating a new landmark for the city of Kuching. This project reveals that form making which represents something else rather than its physical context can become a meaningful landmark of a place.





Capturing Continuity in Public Affiliation

Ida Suriana Ismail & Zamri Ismail



■ Choy Yu Zhen & Chen Mei Sien

When designing on a site with existing public or pedestrian course, it is good to take advantage of bringing the streams of people into the site whilst sustaining the existing flow, especially in the context of Habitat for Humanity Regional Office Building. Choy Yu Zhen and Chen Mei Sien apply different approaches to draw the public into their sites. Choy uses visual impact and makes a dramatic change to the external treatment of the building to capture attention. This is achieved by having the exhibition space designed as a cantilevered and extruding form, which protrudes towards the road, as if 'calling' for public attention. Chen, however, benefits from the existing natural human flow from the main three points of pedestrian accesses through the site. This gradual flow remains almost unnoticed until the pedestrian catches a glimpse of the building. What both schemes have in common is that they open the building for public use, bringing the public into the centre of the site by creating an attractive activity space. It also permits the free flow of pedestrian traffic across the site; thus, achieving continuous public affiliation.



