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Jury Review

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Streaks of History

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Self-microsm to Macro Realm

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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.

Taiping 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.

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The selected works are refreshing examples by students whom, as they are developing their awareness of architectonics behind the familiar world around them, strive to manifest them as detached as they could from what they have already known. Such a process is commendable at a stage as early as their sophomore year. The components of the selections do evoke familiarity but there is not much left to it after the ideas are put together. Such opportunities would further allow students to tacitly expand their knowledge and sharpen their acumen of the more technical aspects as they strive to make their unique ideas work.

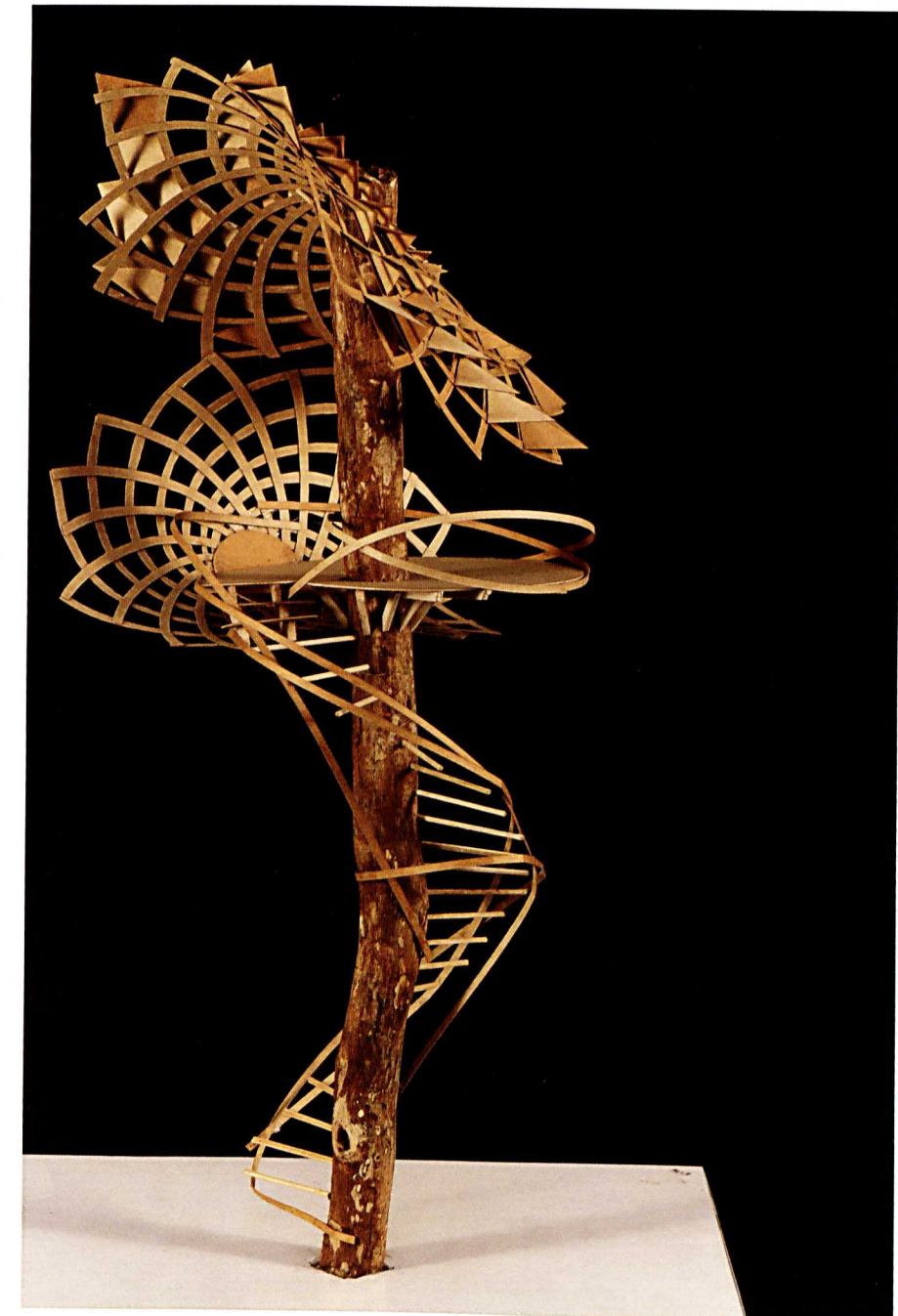
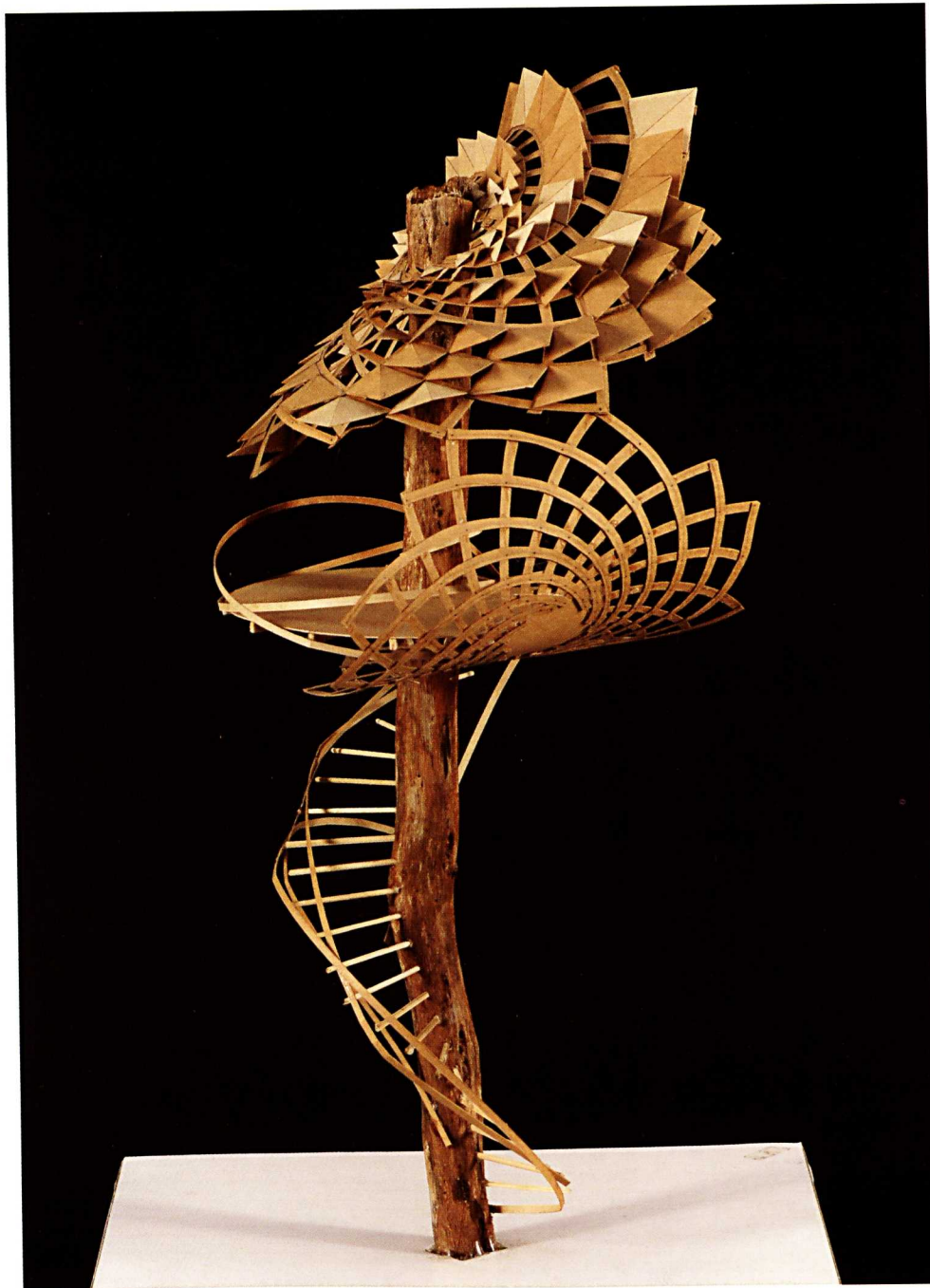
The projects display the generosity in the latitude granted to the students in exploring their own ideas rather than constantly binding them to the generic, the conventional or the clichéd.

Twirling Web

Nur Dalilah Dahlan

The anthroponest project touches many aspects of survival within the rainforest setting of Ayer Hitam forest reserve. Located more than 6 meters above the ground, the design incorporates lightweight timber construction.

Despite the lush vegetation and insect interferences, the author finds the surrounding playful and worth exploring. His twirling web-like design reacts as a vertical circulation route and a safety barrier. Given the fact that it is built more than 6 meters above ground, the design celebrates the forest's lushness at slightly more unique vantage points. The irregular overhead structural arrangement is designed to shade the spaces underneath from excessive sunlight in a way that creates a second layer of silara that portrays a man-made intervention that complements with nature.



Chan Chong Chong

The rhythmic arrangement of the intertwining structure distinguishes between the human spaces and the natural surroundings. By creating radial structures, Chan Chong Chong disguises his anthroponest to imitate the spider web.

The project embodies the concept of organic ornamentation, a strategy that is in accord with the natural setting of the hot and humid rainforest of Malaysia. Splendid vertical circulation evokes the challenging atmosphere of gravity defiance. Nevertheless, the journey promises not only as an aesthetic engagement but also encourages interaction with the surrounding biome.

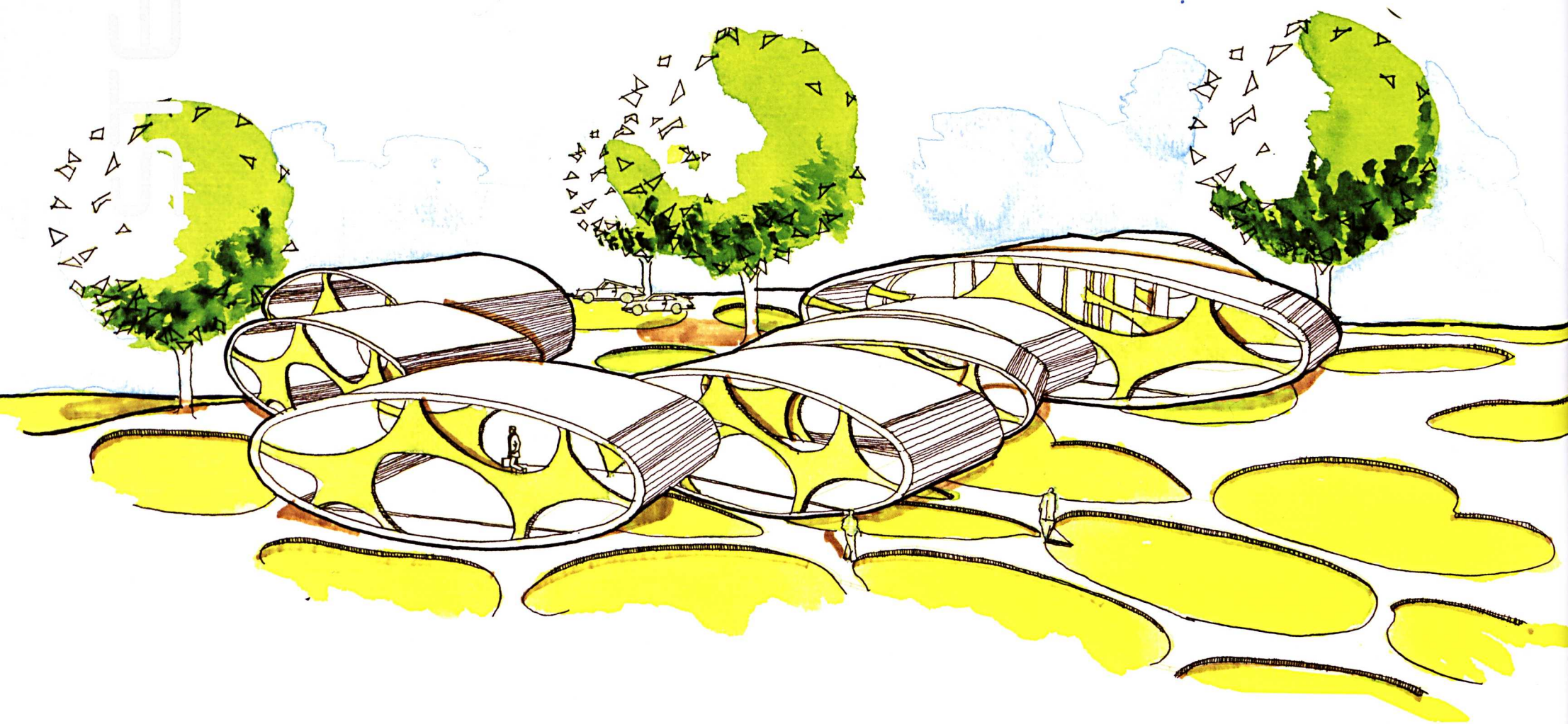
Slicing Time

Nur Dalilah Dahlan

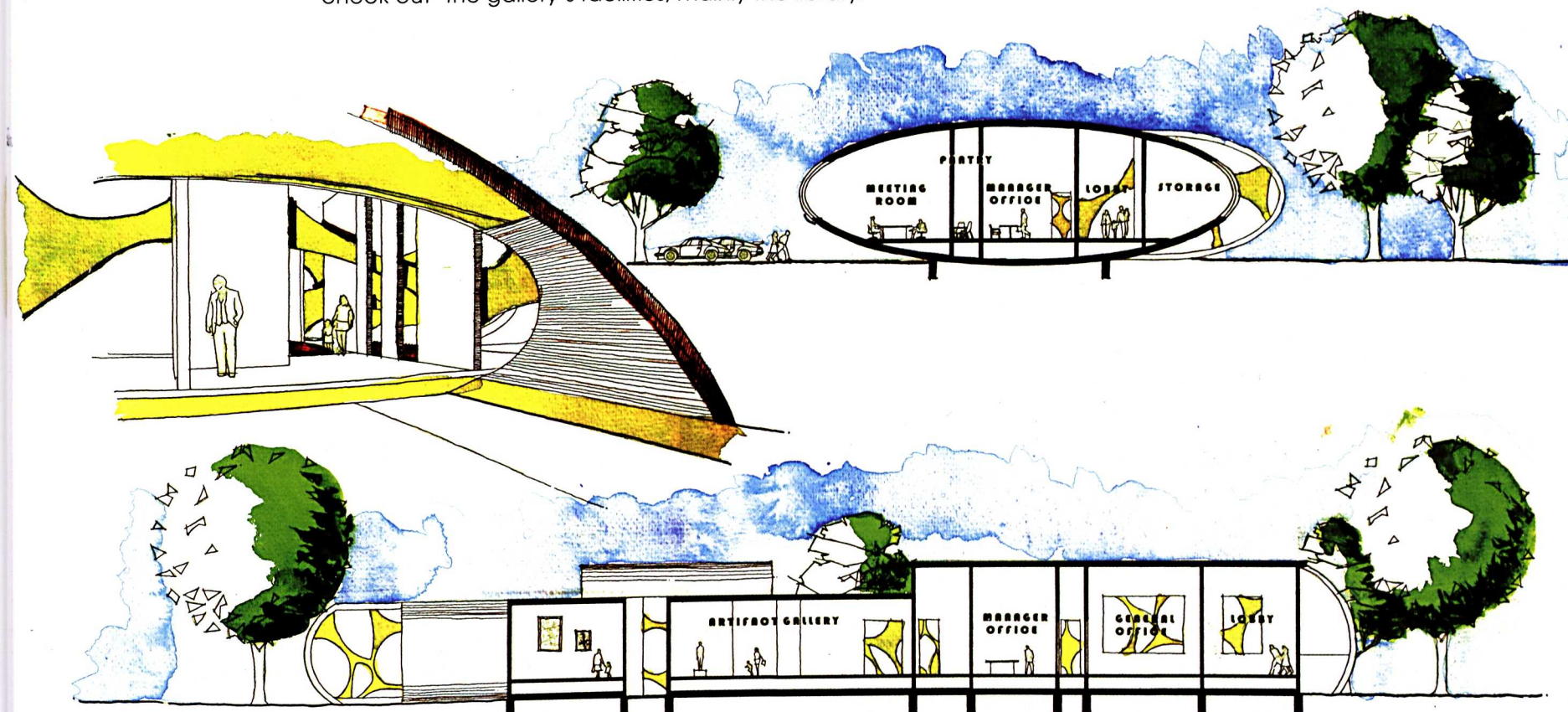
The serenity of the Taiping Lake Garden is framed through the web openings of Nurul Atteya's Gallery. This modest sprawling structure displays a fine degree of contrast yet settles on the site brilliantly surrounded by century old trees.

Her design highlights series of events starting from the first settlers of Taiping, the tin mining business boom, civil conflicts, moral revival struggle and the Taiping we know now. Located in a close distance with the Taiping Prison (north) and Lake Garden (south), the designer sees her design as a bonding entity that connects those two prominent landmarks.

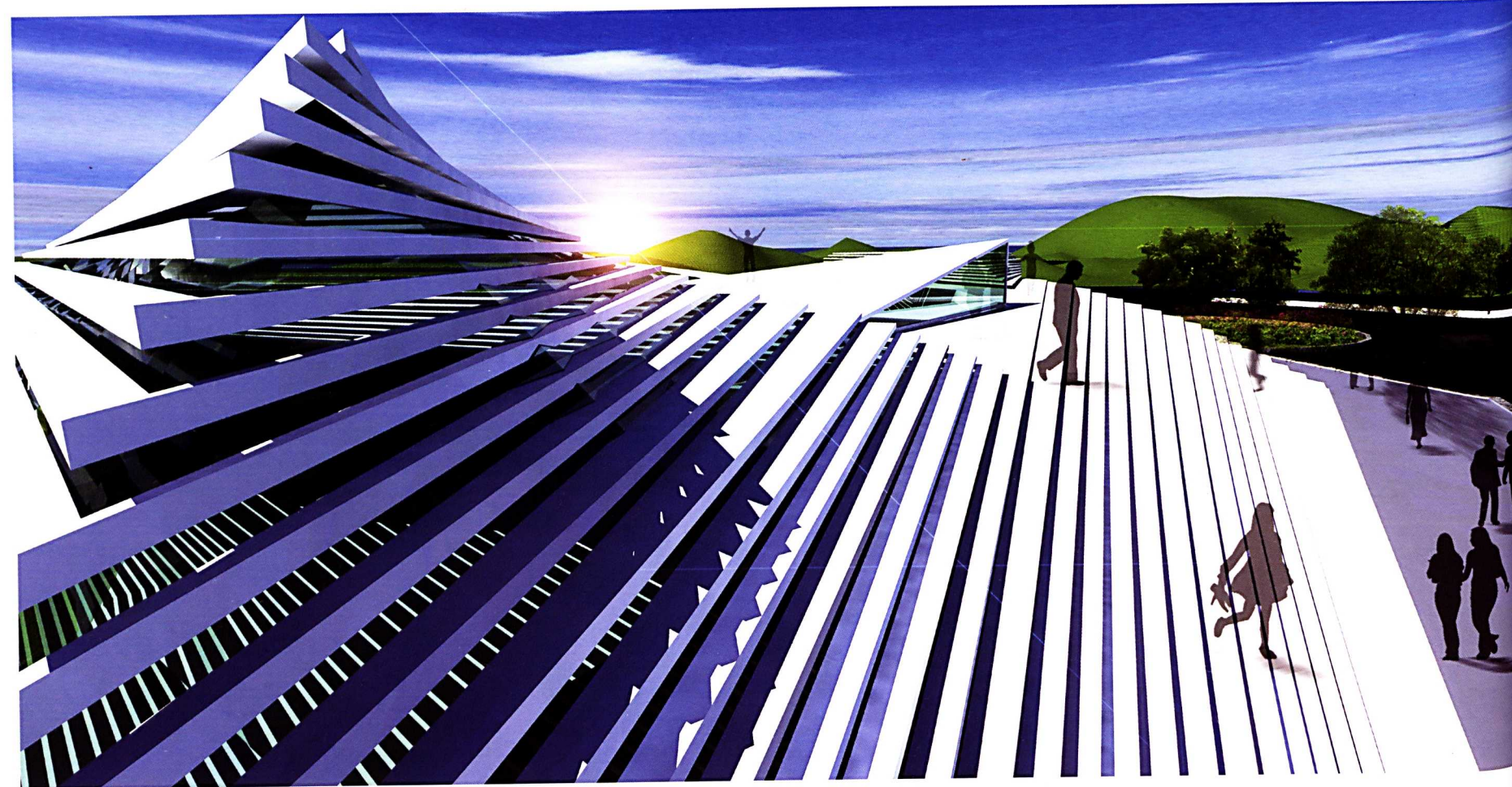
The interpreted connection is masked using a group of organic-volumetric concrete structure and fuses natural lighting throughout the exhibition and library areas. Despite its massive round concrete construction, the interior space which houses the series of events is sliced with thin web like partitions representing the fine line of time continuum. It is a clever way to optimise the interior spaces, turning them into a one long interior lit up with soothing natural lighting.



In terms of getting the message of education across, Nurul Atteya introduces a design that manoeuvres its interior spatial programming to highlight Taiping's history. Its inviting form is proposed to attract the local younger generation to 'check out' the gallery's facilities, mainly the library.



■ Nurul Atteya Adnan

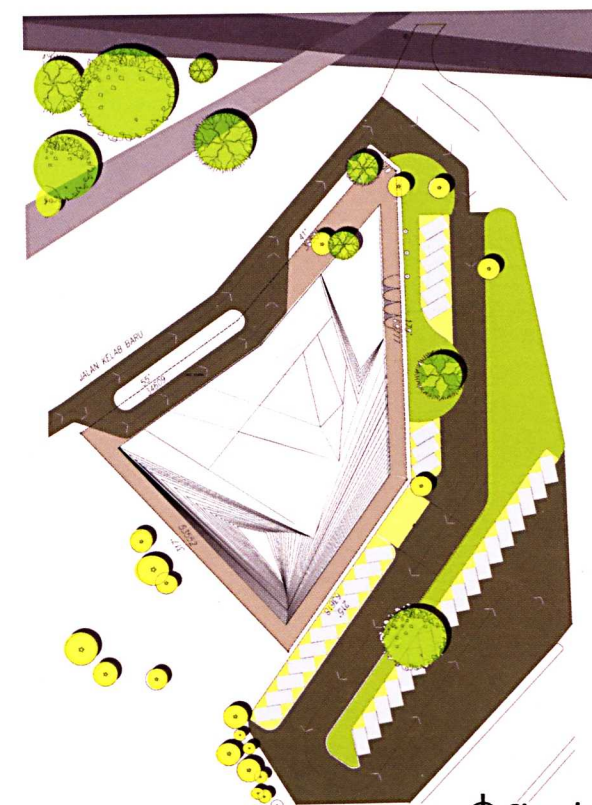


Streaks of History

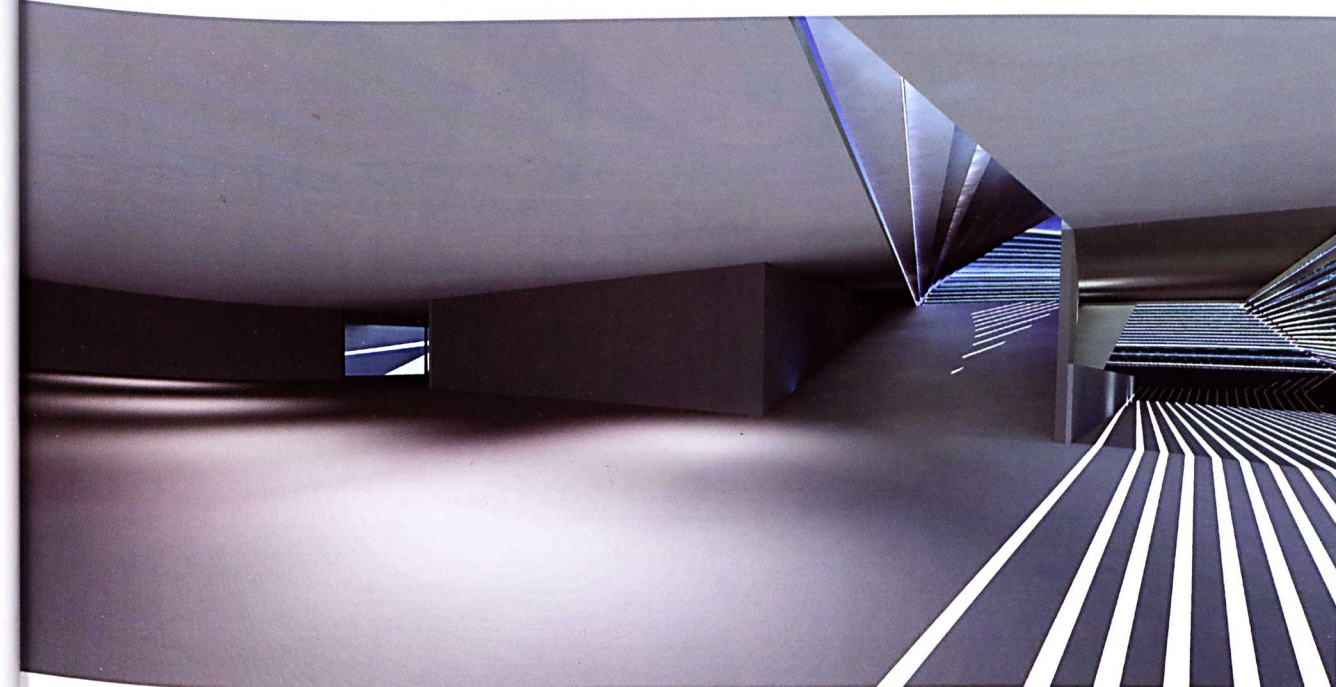
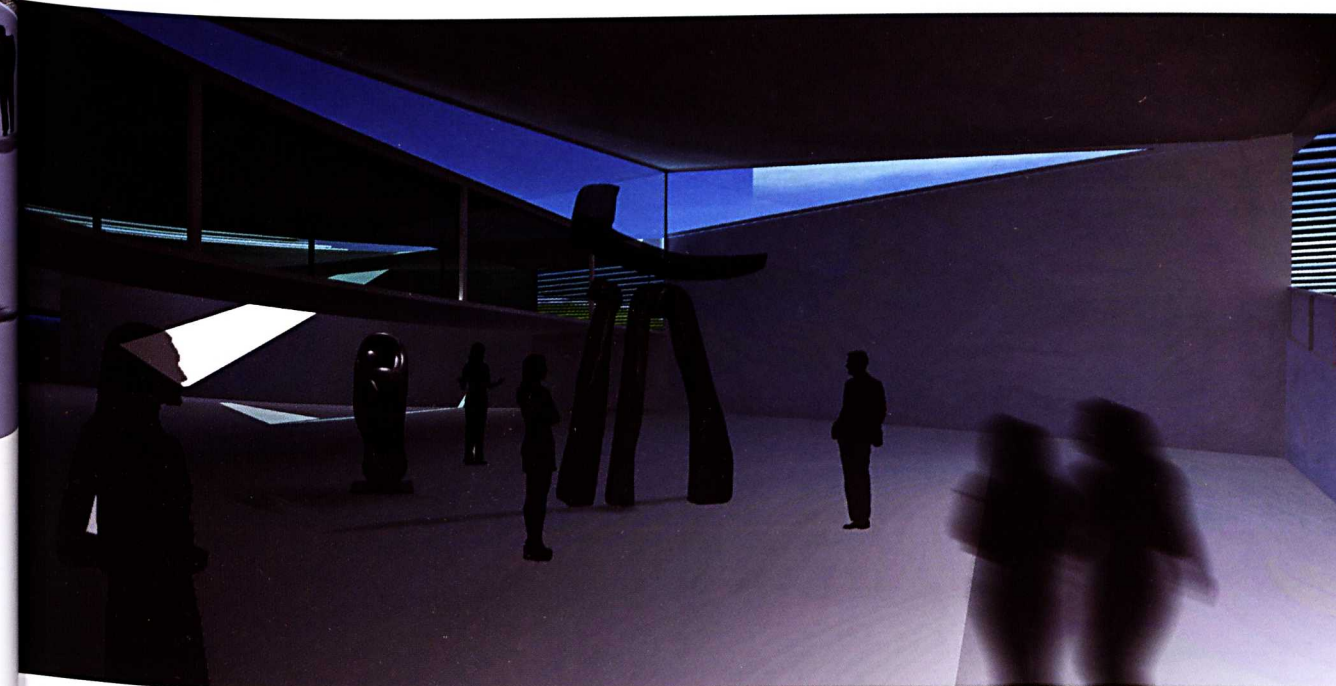
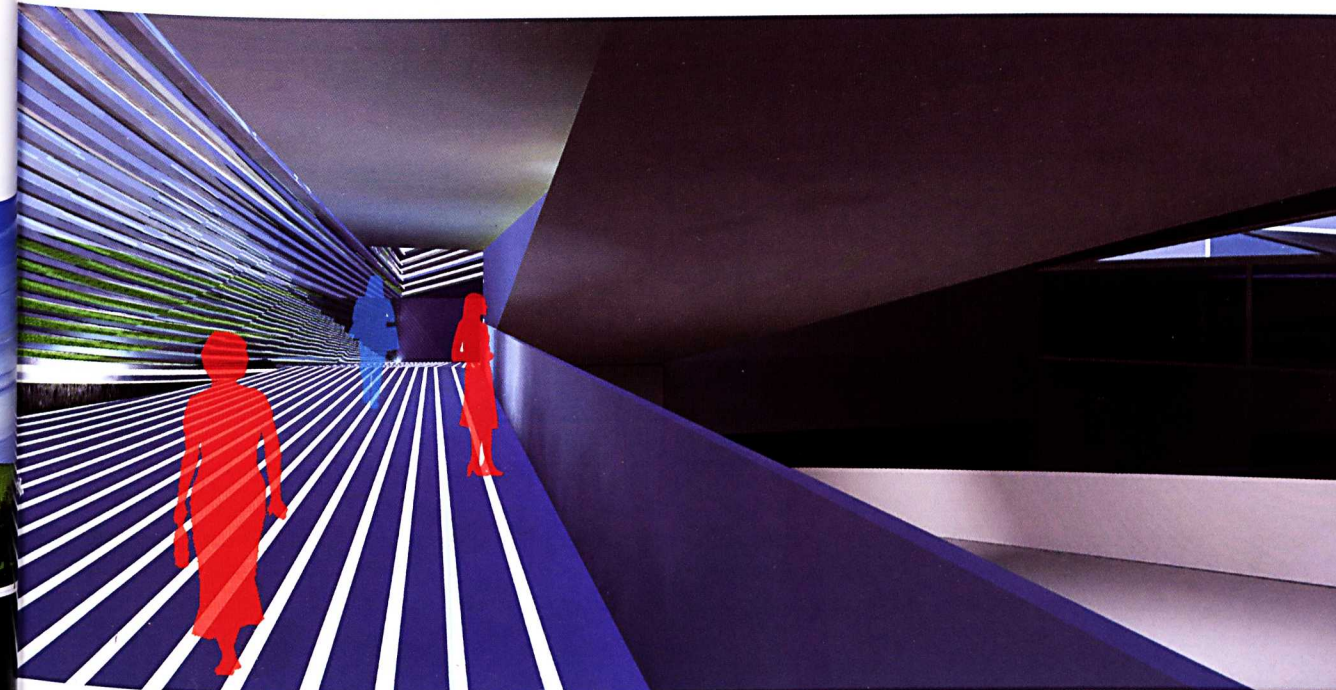
Mohamad Fakri Zaky Ja'afar

The gallery is set in a green surrounding of Taiping Lake Garden, the first lake garden in Malaysia. It is meant to persuade visitors to immerse in the rich history of Taiping i.e., the tin mines, the Larut wars and the advent of British Colonialism in *Tanah Melayu*.

The design takes a different approach to buildings of heritage and history. Rather than the feel of a museum of yesteryears, the gallery conveys the idea of universality consisting, of modern ideas of forms and meaning. Strong horizontal lines indicate openings for views, light and ventilation. Realising the artefact status of the lake itself, the gallery is subdued by being pushed into the ground. Nevertheless, being at the edge of a higher ground, the sunken level still enjoys outside views of the lower part of the garden towards the lake.



Site plan
Scale 1:200



Non building and anti object seem to be the overriding feature of this proposal. Other than the gentle protrusion of the two entrances on the higher ground level, the spaces are within an enclosure and seems to mimic the existing contour. Nevertheless, the presence of an intervention is made strongly by stripes of white horizontal spandrels. Rather than making a statement of being the house of artefacts which it actually is, it takes the form of a modern shelter for people to view the surrounding of the historic lake, making the connection to the past being felt more strongly. The idea of non-intrusion into the pristine site seems to be served well by the overall strategy. The need to be noticeable is nevertheless achieved by the strong white horizontal spandrels. The connection to the past i.e., direct view of the lake itself, on the other hand, is achieved by the streaks of gap between the white spandrels.

The main spaces are naturally ventilated. The need for air-conditioning is only for the supporting facilities at the rear section at the lowest level. Direct sunlight is purposely allowed to infiltrate the interior to create intriguing play of shadows in the gallery spaces and ramps. Balancing the need between daylight and heat gain is crucial in such an arrangement.

■ Xie Qi lin