



THE winner of this year's Young Landscape Architect Award, Siti Maisarah Salahudin, hopes to be a role model and inspire young landscape architects, especially women, to further contribute to the profession and the community.

The award was presented to Siti Maisarah, 35, at the 9th Malaysia Landscape Architecture Awards organised by the Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) in April in conjunction with World Landscape Architecture month.

"I'm passionate about landscape architecture because it is all about engaging people with spaces. I want to change the common perception that landscape architecture is about planting trees, and that landscape architects are glorified gardeners.

"I find this offensive, because our scope is beyond that.

"As stewards of the land, we design the landscape by taking into consideration all aspects to create a conducive living environment, which strikes the right balance between the natural and built environment for the people," said Siti Maisarah, who is an associate with Walrus Designs Sdn Bhd.

ILAM is Malaysia's national professional association for landscape architects.

It aims to raise the visibility of the profession to larger audiences and promote the role of landscape architects in the outdoor built environment, through activities, seminars, conferences, awards and public awareness campaigns.

Siti Maisarah received her degree in Landscape Architecture from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2006. She has 10 years of work experience with a range of landscape companies under her belt, including Walrus Design Sdn Bhd and Tropicana Corporation Berhad.

She has been involved in high-end projects, including hotels, townships, commercial, institutional and residential projects and parks.

As president of UPM's Alumni Club of the Faculty of Design and Architecture (Kasel), she spearheaded the publication of a book, titled *35 Landscape Architects Entrepreneurs* to showcase the alumni's achievements and inspire other landscape architects.

"To be a career woman, wife and mother of two, is no easy task. My early career was the toughest for me. There were never-ending deadlines, work and family responsibilities which consumed a lot of time.

"I still regret not having spent enough time with my late father because I was too busy working, and seldom had time to



Siti Maisarah Salahudin (left) and Nurulhuda Hayati Ibrahim

FLYING HIGH

'WE ARE NOT GLORIFIED GARDENERS'

Female landscape architects, Siti Maisarah Salahudin and Nurulhuda Hayati Ibrahim are regarded as trailblazers for women in the landscape architecture industry. They tell SUZANNA PILLAY about the demands of the job

balik kampung.

"It is important to strike the right balance between your personal and work life.

"Never ever give up, and strive to do your best. Before you step into the reality of working life, you need to be mentally prepared for whatever challenges you might face in the future.

"Remember, every profession has its own challenges."

Another landscape architect, Nurulhuda Hayati Ibrahim, 52, said there were more women architects today than before.

"To be successful in this field, you must have the right mindset and work attitude.

"If you are eager to work hard and are receptive to learning on

the job while working on projects, you will improve greatly on other skills and techniques that textbooks cannot teach you.

"The hands-on experience of working in a team will allow you to interact better with different parties, involved in the execution of a project," she said.

The principal landscape architect and owner of Landskap has been in the industry for 21 years and has been involved in many landscape architectural projects, in the public and private sectors.

They include Taman Putra Perdana, Putrajaya, Commonwealth Hill Park at Kompleks Sukan Negara and Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

When she first started out as a

landscape architect in the early 1990s, Malaysia was recovering from the 1988 recession and the landscape architecture industry was in its infancy.

"After completing my master's and bachelor's degrees in landscape architecture in Harvard Graduate School of Design and Utah State University in 1990 and 1988, I asked a friend how the job situation was at home.

"She told me to be prepared to knock on doors for employment.

"I was lucky that I didn't have to wait long before a company offered me a job.

"My first pay cheque was for RM1,400.



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SITI MAISARAH SALAHUDIN

Winner of this year's Young Landscape Architect Award

"I considered myself lucky because some graduates were forced to work for RM900 just to earn an income.

"But by 1993, things had started to pick up."

After working for a year with her employer, some colleagues invited her to join them to start their own company.

"It was a steep learning curve; something I wouldn't advise a newly-qualified person to do in a hurry.

"Take at least three or four years to work for a mentor, because when you first start out, you will be making so many mistakes

along the way.

"Learn from the mistakes before starting your own firm."