

1 The forest wilderness concept incorporates a more unkempt look, with overgrown plants and less managed landscape, to create a forest-like feel. Seen here is the Tamarind Square commercial hub in Cyberjaya.

2 Biophilic design incorporates natural materials, natural light, vegetation, views of nature and other experiences of the natural world into the modern built environment. Seen here is the Seri Riana condominium in Wangsa Maju.

3 Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) president LAr. Dr Osman Mohd Tahir.

4 Oval, curved and irregular lines and shapes have taken centre stage as they create a less formal feel to a landscape design. For example the SPICE Arena in Penang.



TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE

MLAA continues to set high standards for practitioners in the industry

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FROM its inception in 2007, the Malaysian Landscape Architect Awards (MLAA) initially recognised landscape architects only.

"At that time we were hosting the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) World Congress.

"It was an honour to be hosting the prestigious conference, and we came up with the idea of nominating landscape architects who made significant contributions to the industry or country," recalls Institute of Landscape Architects Malaysia (ILAM) president LAr. Dr. Osman Mohd Tahir.

After two years of recognising the best in the profession, two more categories were added to include

other vital components in construction.

"We realised that when it came to landscape development, other key players such as developers and contractors had helped the industry become better," Dr Osman explained.

Today, MLAA has 11 categories that recognise multiple organisations and individuals in the industry.

"Collaboration among several parties in any industry is significant. The progress that we have achieved is because of the inclusion of landscape architecture by developers and local authorities at planning.

"On top of that, we have students and academicians who have done extensive research to improve the field," said Dr Osman.

Moving forward, MLAA plans to honour contributors from the media industry as well as those involved in landscape photography and videography.

"People take photos all the time, and we found that the pictures reflect the landscape of that particular area," observed Dr Osman. "Being the only award presenter for the industry in Malaysia, it is vital for us to include contributions that have helped raise awareness on the importance of landscape architecture.

Raising the industry bar

As more categories were added over the years, MLAA received an increase in the number of entries.

"In 2009, only two categories were contested. This year, we have record participation of 164 entries in 11 categories," said Dr Osman. "The rise in the number of participants each year is an indication that people look forward to the awards.

"From the various project entries received, we noticed that the quality of work

and the technology used in creating the landscape has risen over the years," he added.

"By recognising the efforts made by all parties in the industry, MLAA has somehow impacted the overall development of the field and in the process benchmarked the very best in the landscape development."

Dr Osman added that ILAM published the top trends observed from the entries in their quarterly bulletin Landskap, and interested organisations could incorporate them in their next design.

The 25th edition of the bulletin highlights architecture trends in 2018, including productive landscape, biophilic design, and intercity green networks.

Dr Osman said that productive landscape is a trend where landscaping works

make full use of fruit trees instead of ornamental trees.

"Of course we are not talking about durian trees and the like. There are lots of other fruit trees that can be incorporated into the architectural design to beautify a landscape. For example, Rokam tree or even Asam Jawa tree.

"Planting vegetables and herbs in small plots of land can also be considered productive landscape," he said.

"It is a recent trend where residents, especially those who grew up in urban areas, are enjoying urban farming. They plant trees, flowers and herbs at their premises in the city."

As for biophilic design, Dr Osman said it is a concept that includes nature in the modern building environment.

"Biophilia is defined as the inherent human inclination to affiliate with nature. Biophilic design uses natural materials or green products, and incorporates as much of the natural elements as possible into the development, such as sunlight, vegetation, and greenery," he added.

Last year, MLAA added the Manufacturer category to recognise the importance of manufacturers who produce green products. "Hopefully, we will see more companies providing environment-friendly materials in the market," said Dr Osman.

10 years and beyond

With the objective of endorsing the best practices in the landscape industry, MLAA recently opened up entries for international projects.

"We see this as a way to raise standards further and set new benchmarks and trends in the industry. Practitioners in the local industry will have to take on the challenge of competing internationally."

"Then hopefully, they will keep improving their designs in order to compete internationally," said Dr Osman.

Commenting on the industry, Dr Osman believes that the role of a landscape architect will continue to be an essential part in the development of the country.

"The scope of landscape architects is not just designing the landscape to be incorporated into a project. In the construction of mass rapid transit (MRT) and high-speed rail (HSR) systems, we are involved in determining the best view seen by passengers as well as creating a path that will not interfere with the existing natural environment.

"As its role has broadened, ILAM has been pushing for a Landscape Architect Act to be tabled so that practitioners can be governed by a legal body," he said, adding that the act will benefit the public the most.

With the population predicted to be living mostly in urban areas in the future, Dr Osman sees the landscape field playing a crucial part in future developments. "Amid urbanisation, disruptive technologies, and a hectic lifestyle, people forget that having nature surround us could help improve our quality of life and productivity.

"Not only is it important as a way to protect the earth, it is also seen as helping to improve the social and economic conditions of the country. I foresee that landscape will make a bigger impact than just adding aesthetic value," added Dr Osman.

BY RECOGNISING THE EFFORTS MADE BY ALL PARTIES IN THE INDUSTRY, MLAA HAS SOMEHOW IMPACTED THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIELD AND IN THE PROCESS, BENCHMARKED THE VERY BEST IN THE LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT.



A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME THE STORY OF MLAA

