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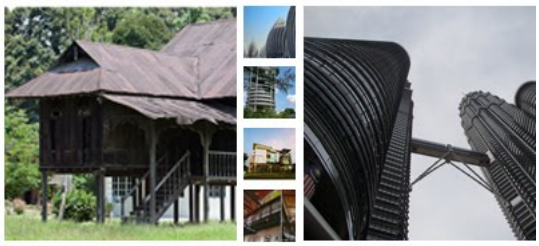

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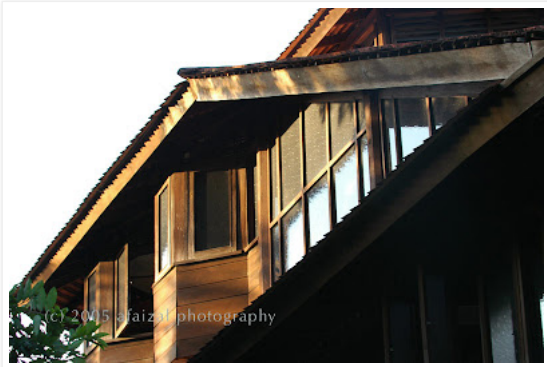
Saturday, 11 February 2012

Salinger House by CSL Associates

Architect's Brief

The initial brief of the Salinger house was a weekend retreat away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Dr. Hj. Rudin Salinger and his wife Puan Munira Salinger were then living in Petaling Jaya, 15 minutes drive from the central Kuala Lumpur. At the time, the site was highly undeveloped and essentially a rural district located on the outskirts of a small Malay village. With their knowledge and understanding of Malaysian culture, the clients were looking to build a modern home which would embrace their Malaysian heritage and Muslim faith. Having lived in Malaysia for over 30 years, Dr. Hj. Salinger had developed a great interest in Malaysian's heritage and culture. This has since a number of papers written on timber woodcarving and handmade roof tiles as well as the ability to cook many local dishes.

The program was simple. To design a house with two bedrooms, a kitchen, a living and dining room. With his culinary skills, Dr. Salinger requested that his kitchen be easily accessible and in direct contact with the dining room. An area with a direct relationship with the garden was necessary for him to indulge in another of his bobbies, gardening. However, what was of greater importance was the clients' desire for a distinctively Malaysian house.



Evolution of Design Concepts

The house is designed with ecological and sustainable principles in mind. It is located virtually in the middle of north-south of the site and about 6m away from the western

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boundary. The house is on a high elevation to reduce water run-off through the building during the monsoon rains. It is oriented to capture the prevailing winds. In a hot and humid climate, the main factor for thermal comfort is natural ventilation since it creates air movement that disperses humidity and allows evaporation.

The architect's intention in lifting the house on stilts was to reduce the impact of the structure on the land an the environment. No major earthwork were done, the natural contours of the site were kept, and the topsoil was preserved. The landscaping around the house was kept as natural and as undisturbed as possible. The client has since also added a variety of trees that produce spices and fruits relevant to his culinary hobby such as a cinnamon tree and cloves trees.

The client;s brief was cnetred around a three activities: cooking, dining and living. This three-point relationship was interpreted geometrically as a triangle for indoor living that was juxtaposed onto a triangle for outdoor living. This created a new trilogy of living, dining and terrace. Hence the basic form of the plan is two equilateral triangles abutting each other. The separation between public and private is complete as each is ona separate floor. Also, the geometry of the house is such that in the private space, one of the walls faces mecca as in the orientation of the traditional Malay houses. Vertical circulation space is kept to a minimum within the granite core that connects all the floors.

The main influence on the design of the house is the climate. The open plan ensures cross ventilation, the large overhanging roof ensures solar protection for the walls and protection from the monsoon rains. Cross ventilation grills over the windows and in high points in the roof. Air is thus pulled through the whole space of the house. Open ventilation grilles made up of three vertical timbers crossed by three horizontal timbers, known locally as sekawan tiga or three friends, are the only decorative features on the facade.

Sturcture, Materials & Technology

The builidng utilises the traditional Malay construction system using a post and beam timber structure. The foundations of the timber columns are reinforced conctrete with 1.80m deep foundation pads. The core of building is a reinforceed concrete frame with granite rublle walls. The timber is a local hardwood called chengal. This is a very dense timber that is used for boat building as it is highly resistant to water and termites. It is known traditionally as the king of the wood. It seems that although all the infill panels and framework are made from this timber, there are three studs in one of the walls that are of a different wood. When the carpenter was asked about this he explained that the whole house cannot be of chengal as the king needs subjects.

All joints are made of timber. There are no metal connections at all. Where required, timber dowels and traditional joining tecniques were used throughout the house. Originally, the details were designed with various metal fittings, however, when the carpenter got involved and it became possible to build the project ina completely traditional way, the architect, in co-operation with the carpenter, changed all of his details to fit the craftsman's way of doing things. The only nails utilised are in the anjung. The floors of the hosed are also of chengal and ar simply laid, and are tongue and grooved. This allows the timbers to move, reinfrocing the special experience and the quality of the timber construction. Ceiling, when they occur, are of fibre coment board but on the whole the underside of the roof is left exposed showing the tiles and the structure. The roof tiles are hand-made locally. Thier variation is colour adds a lot of richness to the house. The drudge tiles had to be formed expecially due to the unconventional geometry of the triangular roof. The floor tiles on the ground floor are locale slate.

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