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AV3 HOUSE- 'WHEN FUNCTION FOLLOWS FORM'

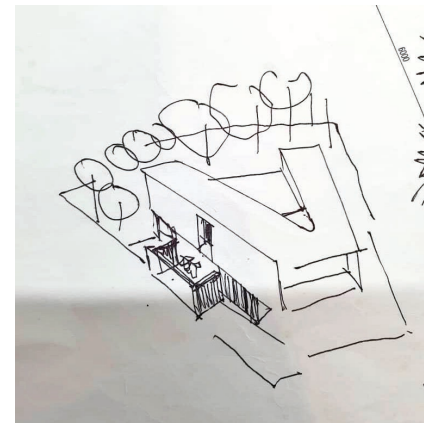
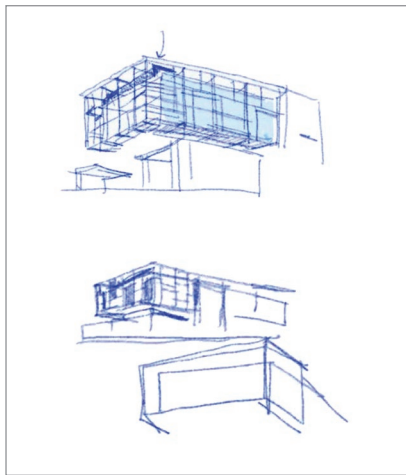
by Design Network Architects
Written by Ar. Mervyn Wong

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

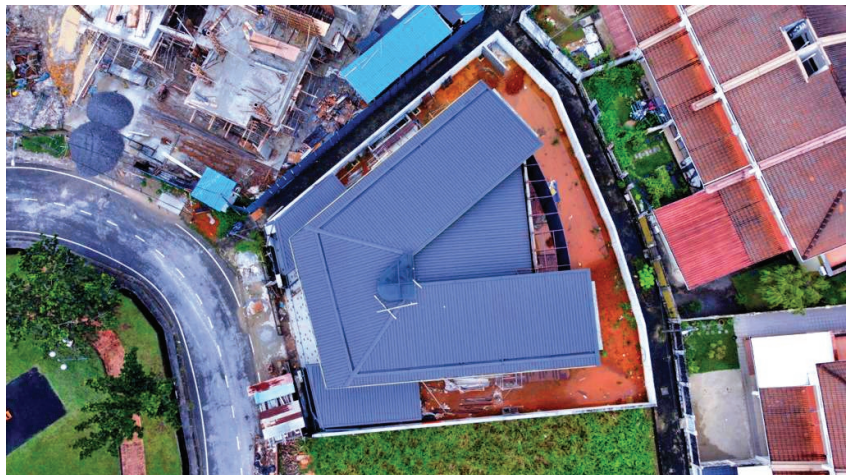
AV3 house sought its name after the first three letters of the client's family members. The client reached out to us back in 2017 with a vision of his family home. Upon first look, the trapezoid-like formation of the site immediately presented itself to us as an opportunity rather than a setback.

The idea of 'Function' can be interpreted in different ways. This building acted as an exercise in allowing the site to compel the overall form of the building, essentially allowing us to explore the way we could respond to the needs of not just the family, but also the built landscape.

In this instance, we achieved this by offsetting either side of the building line from the boundary, resulting in two distinct projections. Here, the natural termination point of the left and the right projection also raised a unique opportunity. Rather than culminate in a severe point, we chose to instead soften the profile with a curved feature, yielding us a full height curved glazing as the focal point of the house - earmarked for a feature tree to be housed in the future.



An earlier version of the design without the overhang roof.

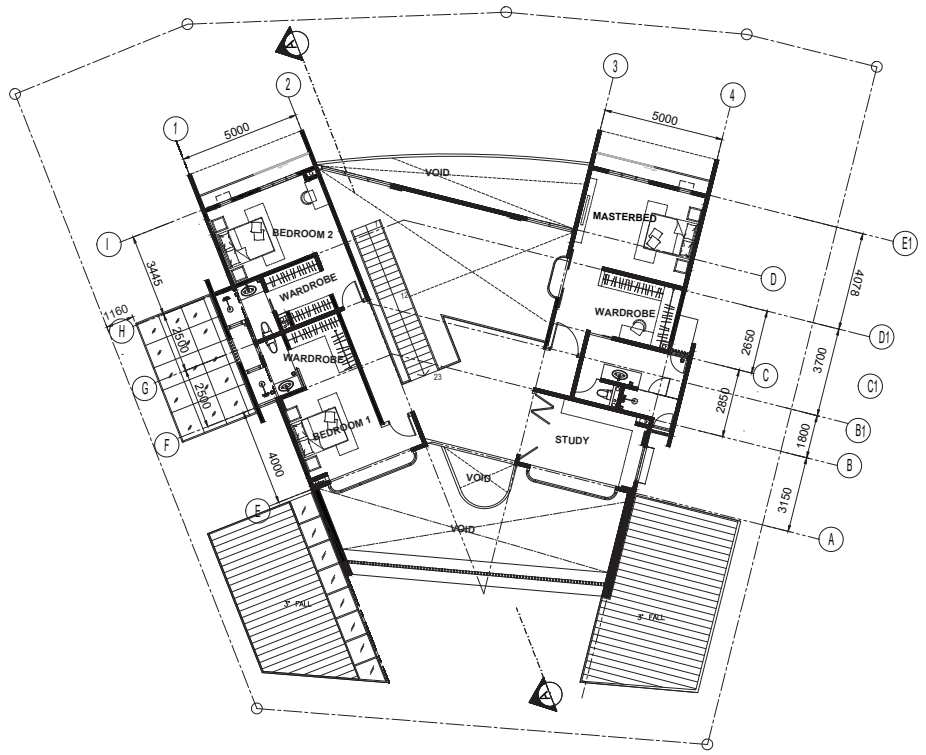


A drone shot showing the shape of the building design in response to the boundary of the site.

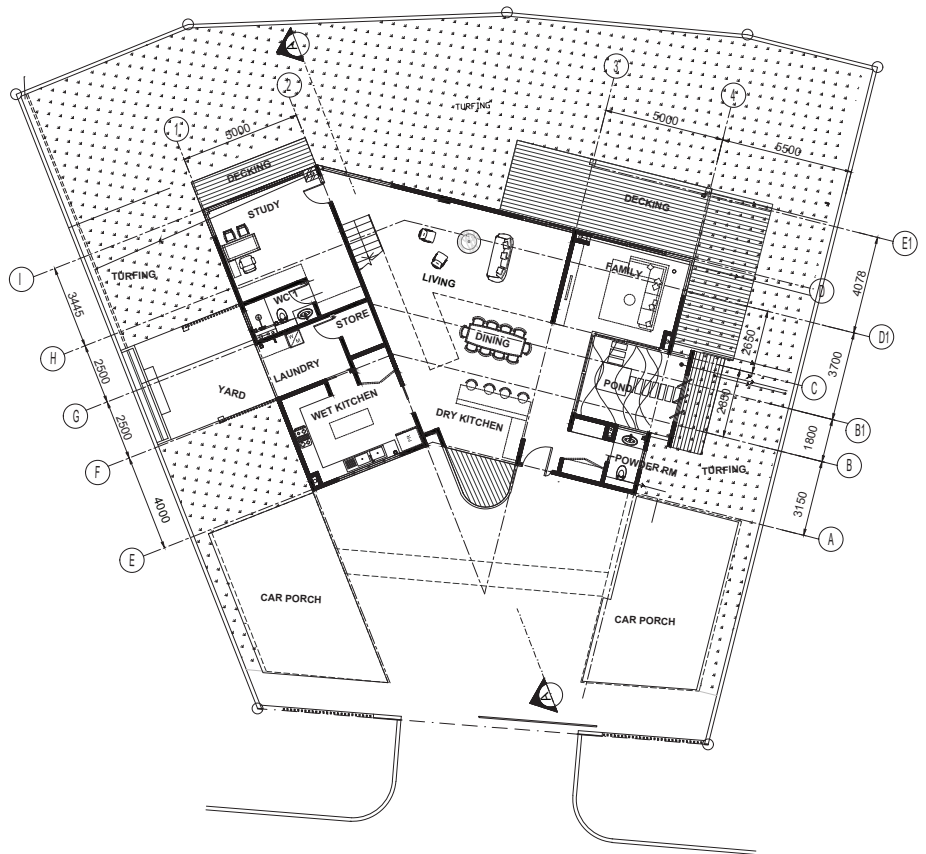
The entrance and drop off area of the house was planned as a double volume space, allowing for grandeur and spatial ambience in the entryway. The lofty space is punctuated by a linear feature of mechanical pivot screens that the client can open and close to suit the weather and site conditions.

Car parking spaces were lined along both sides of the house to maintain the visibility and continuity of the building frontage. As you move along the house, the left and right projections naturally widen up and lead into a sprawling living space, spilling onto an exterior timber decking and soft landscaping punctuated by curving concrete profiles.

END



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



Contractor holding a scale model, photographed by the client; a vision of things to come.



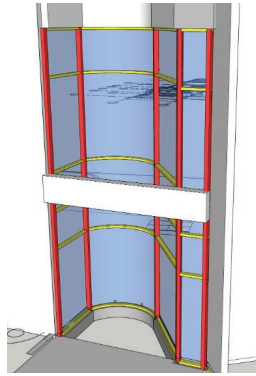
Sometimes, we just have to meet on the ground.



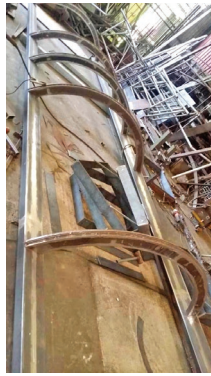
In a meeting with his sunglasses on- the hippest contractor in town.

Client	: Alex Lim LS
Architect	: Design Network Architects Sdn Bhd
C&S Engineer	: Jurutera Alpha Millennium
M&E Engineer	: Jurutera JSW Sdn Bhd
Project Team	: Ar. William Khoo, Ar. Mervyn Wong

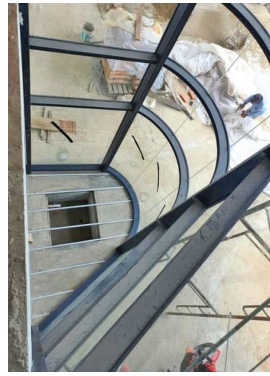
THE MAKING OF THE CURVED GLAZING



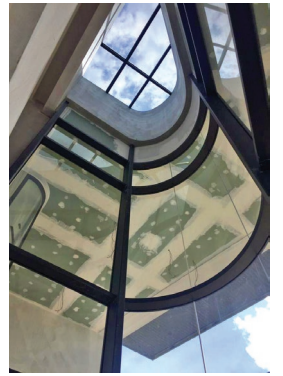
A simple coloured 3D image was built for the contractor for the ease of understanding the details.



Curve steel fabrication in a factory.



The complete assembly of the curved glazing leading into a skylight.



INTERVIEW WITH AR MERVYN WONG

Miri House by local architecture practice, **Design Network Architects** won the Best Sustainable Design Award at the Tatler Malaysian Homes Design Award last week. Intersection (Flash) met up with Ar. Mervyn Wong who received the award in Kuala Lumpur, with a few questions to find out more about this house which also won a Gold Medal at the PAM Awards last year.



The Tatler Homes Design Awards 2023 ceremony was held in Royal Selangor Visitor Centre on 31st May 2023.

F: Flash M: Ar. Mervyn Wong

F : ***Congratulations. This project won an award last year, given by the Malaysian Institute of Architects for design excellence. This time it won the prize for Best Sustainable Design, can you tell some of the sustainable design features that impressed the judges.***

M : Sustainable design was factored into the equation early on. The site planning of this multi-generational compound naturally gave shape to the introduction of gazetted common areas shared and sprawling between the multiple houses. This opportunity was quickly grasped and utilized to form a number of pocket garden spaces. Time was taken to carefully consider and design each of these pocket spaces- assigning each a different function whilst ensuring a cohesive language throughout. From rocky, pebbled gardens to low-lying, burbling water features, each garden invites in the natural landscaping and explores a different facet of the houses- and their owners.

Selected landscaping peppers the large shared courtyard, denoting ground zero where the three families gather against a double backdrop of natural stone, timber and steel. Miri House (T House) humbly boasts the lowest profile among the three houses, not just as a gesture of deference to the larger profile of the parents' house, but also to regale the compound with views of the nearby Luak Beach. Cool air rolls in from the oceanside and imparts the three houses with ample ventilation and natural cooling. The gardens also boast serene swathes of water- strategically placed alongside large stretches of glazing.

The architectural design approach for the Miri House allows for more greenery to be brought inwards. Through a reduction of the concrete built-up, a large interior courtyard lays claim to the central core of the house. This courtyard is where the homeowner's personality really makes a statement. Large, full height trees are adorned by lush, wild ferns and underscored by wild green undergrowth. Spanning a double volume, this brash, bold courtyard is delicately accented by a hanging staircase with a structure so lightweight it serves only to enhance the greenery. The permeable mesh structure was conceived with the direct involvement of the client's steelworking and ship building knowledge. This feature helped to ensure that natural sunlight and breeze passed through the space unhindered.

M : Sun-facing room with large openings were treated with pivot and louver screens to regulate temperature and light. Large format full glass panels ensured seamless connectivity between the outdoor and indoors, and also gave the homeowner the option to seal it off if need be. The introduction of timber sunshading screens also played a large part in controlling the overall comfort level of the interior courtyard. Apart from its whimsical contribution in the form of light and shadow, these screens function to deflect excess heat and daylighting or let sunlight in accordance with weather conditions.

The principle of sustainable design can not be merely an afterthought. Here, the concept of green design is intertwined with the very core of the project, encapsulating the essence of modern, tropical living.



The three houses - linked by a myriad of open terraces and gardens.



Greenery brings an element of softness to sharp edges and sleek finishes.



Thoughtfully designed landscaping creates a juxtaposition against the 'box-like', sleek structure.

F : ***The houses that won awards this time, they're all large and luxurious finishes. Do you think a large construction budget is necessary for good design execution? For projects to have a chance to win awards?***

M : It is our firm belief that the budget available does not correlate with the calibre of design execution. Although it is true that a large construction budget opens more avenues to obtain resources and execute design ideas, at its basis, we believe that great design is a multidimensional- a showcase of creativity and innovation.

Most housing projects that we acquire are predetermined to some level. Each client, in their own right, has their own vision, be it contemporary luxury, bespoke opulence or even bare simplicity. The ball is then in our park to be the visionaries; As designers, it is about finding inspiration within the site constraints, and highlighting the nuances found through design exploration.

Designers carry the role of storytellers. A strong concept with a heartfelt narrative is just as important as good design planning and detailing in each of our submissions. We draw inspiration from many aspects- oftentimes the client's values and experiences play a large part in helping to shape the narrative and drive the design direction. To achieve homogeneity in all aspects of a design, factors of sustainability, functionality and aesthetics should be addressed and resolved whilst maintaining the integrity within the design intention.

Recent years' competitions have been fiercely competitive, with the winners excelling at resolving site context issues and innovating within given constraints. Good design execution can happen within any range of budgetary constraints as excellence in design rests on the shoulders of innovation.

F : ***Lastly, DNA has continuously won architecture awards, especially for your houses - this will no doubt set DNA above others as an award winning firm for house design, will this limit your range of future clientele for other building types?***

M : Our firm has always had a hand in a wide range of residential projects that range from simple renovations to sprawling detached residences. It is undeniable that residential house design allows for maximum involvement among the client and the designer, opening up avenues for a building perfectly tailored to ones' routines and preferences. However, our firm has branched out in recent years, taking on projects of larger scope and scale. Besides the profitability that comes from these projects, a challenge is posed; one that requires us to solve problems beyond personal taste.

Our ongoing projects in the hospitality and industrial sectors allowed us to continuously revisit the intent behind each design. In the future, we hope to broaden our portfolio whilst seeking out the best ways to elevate the user experience, and to design spaces that are responsive to the context yet ultimately leave a meaningful contribution to the wider social and physical setting.

Ultimately, DNA's accomplishments in the residential design sector serves as a testament of our abilities and vision, and we hope to attract clientele that value the personal touch we bring to projects as we continue to challenge and develop the firm's identity.



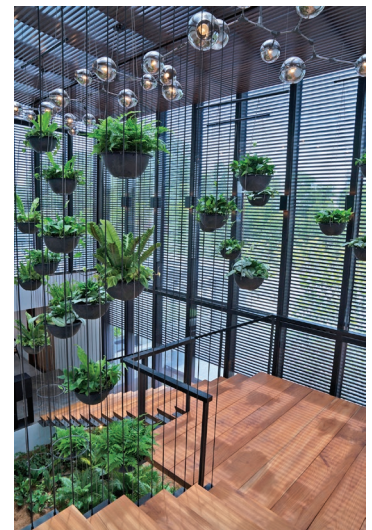
Pivot screens allow the homeowners full control over various levels of privacy.



A homogenous circulation is made possible by the installation of the timber pivot doors.



Spiral stair expertly crafted from steel plate, an homage to the family's years of expertise in ship building.



The hanging ferns create visual interest along the stairwell.



A central courtyard hones the balance and tension between the pair of houses; both accepting, both unrelenting.

END

An extract from The RIBA Journal

NATURAL PROGRESSION

Lebanese-born Lina Ghotmeh designed this year's Serpentine Pavilion. Now Paris-based, she talked to Isabelle Priest about life, work and influences.

IP: Isabelle Priest LG: Lisa Ghotmeh

IP : **Why and when did you start Lina Ghotmeh studio?**

LG : I started my studio in 2016. In 2006, I began a partnership with Dan Dorell and Tsuyoshi Tane. I had been working at Jean Nouvel on a collaboration with Foster + Partners near St Paul's Cathedral. I was always looking at competitions and found one for an Estonian National Museum. Estonia had regained its independence in 1991 and joined the European Union in 2003. I identified with this country that had lived through occupation and war. I was 25 years old, and we won. It was a long ride. Coming from Lebanon, you learn to pull things along yourself. People didn't believe it would get built. We delivered the project 10 years later, but during the collaboration I naturally started developing my own way. I started Lina Ghotmeh Architecture by taking over some of that company.



The Serpentine Pavilion 2023 design is shaped to avoid the surrounding tree canopies and roots, becoming structured like a leaf. (Lina Ghotmeh Architecture, Courtesy Serpentine)



An early sketch of the Serpentine Pavilion design Built with Nature, which will open on 9 June. (Lina Ghotmeh)



French-Lebanese Paris-based architect Lina Ghotmeh. (Portrait: Gilbert Hage)

IP : **Tell me about the studio.**

LG : We are an international team of 25-30 people. We're in Paris, but we have people from everywhere: Africa, the US, Europe. It's a microcosm of the challenges of our world.

IP : **You were born in Beirut. How has this influenced you and your work?**

LG : Growing up, I saw the city destroyed by war. I witnessed what humans can do to places and each other. At the same time, I saw the power of nature, because between the ruins nature spurred, giving beauty and hope. Symbolically and physically, it made one think about architecture as an act that brings people together and the pleasure of feeling at home. Beirut has been buried seven times. Wherever you walk you have texture and layers of history, and a feeling of unfinishedness. I was and complement my culture. I went to French fascinated by the process of searching, tracing, assembling and constructing a story. I wanted to be an archaeologist, but I also wanted to be active in the space rather than relating only to the past.

Unfinished spaces unleash the imagination. It's precious how as architects we can allow spaces to be open. Beirut has a porosity. For example, the sidewalk is a public space to sit, put a table, have a coffee or appropriate. This fluidity is spontaneous. It's inspiring to think about architecture not as an act of creating closed spaces or boundaries, but of relationships and porosities. At our Hermès project, which opened in April, you enter a courtyard that's open. It feels almost like a ruin, which allows it to be used in many ways.

IP : **Why is the studio in Paris, and what are the differences between Beirut, Paris and London?**

LG : Paris is where I first landed from Beirut in 2006. In a way it's a coincidence, I had an apartment to go back to. There are different ways of thinking about creativity in London or Paris. London is more cutting edge and experimental. Paris is more historic. They are an interesting mix and complement my culture. I went to French school and I did my studies at the American University of Beirut. Paris is an in-between point between Beirut, London and the rest of the world.

IP : **How did you come to be an architect?**

LG : My mum was studying architecture when I was little, submitting her diploma when I was six or seven. I remember her models and Rotring pens. This was from 1980 to 1992 during on-off bombing. Creativity was the place where one could unleash, imagine, dream of another world. I spent so much time drawing. My mum never practised as an architect, she taught design. When I started studying, I was also interested in genetic engineering. I was fascinated by the body. At the American University you can do other courses so I did some in biology. Now, when I think about them, they're all interlinked. Architecture is an expansion of the body and nature.

IP : **What is the role of sustainability in your work?**

LG : At Lina Ghotmeh Architecture, the 'A' of architecture is a multiple 'A' for architecture, aesthetics, artisanal and artefact. Architecture can envelope multiple disciplines, but the environment has always been at the heart of my practice – what ties us to this world and how can we make sense of what we're making and make it worthwhile, especially with the pressing environmental crisis.

More and more I believe we are climate beings, linked to our geography, the soil, topography, weather and what we eat. We're rooted in a place in the ways we grow up. The relationship to the climate is strong – mine to the Mediterranean, sun, colours and feeling of intimacy on your skin. I look for this in architecture to create places that are warm and cocooning through colour and texture.

IP : **How did you go about designing the Serpentine Pavilion?**

LG : I was invited in August last year. The design is not spectacular, but subtle, and about interior. We started by looking at the concept of the park and how the Serpentine galleries are separated by the lake. Our perspective was how the pavilion can emphasise nature. Historically, the building next to the pavilion was a tea house so this idea of eating and being together was already part of the space. The table became the starting point. Then it was about creating a structure that would not disturb the tree roots and canopy. That gave a circular form that follows the ribbed structure of a leaf. It looks organic, but the same beam supported by two columns constructs the space. This generates a gallery on the perimeter, leading towards an open centre in the roof where people meet. It's playful, almost like a carousel. I've enjoyed that it's time apart to make something from scratch and explore. There are no constraints except for park regulations and low-carbon requirements. It's also open to everyone, a joyful place. That's exciting – as is the seriousness of the discussions that can take place there.

IP : **How do you go about designing new projects?**

LG : It's about materials. Hermès in Normandy is a manufacturing facility for leatherwork. It was a push into how we use local resources, like bricks, and vernacular construction; how to take them forward using technology, our understanding of material consumption and the beauty of architecture. The bricks are made close to site. We did bioclimatic studies on how to reduce the environmental impact, taking advantage of north light and prevailing winds, and using geothermal energy and solar panels. Designers tend to design, then work out the structure. What we did allowed Hermès to be low-carbon, energy-positive and passive with ambitious architecture. We brought back local bricklaying skills that had been lost. The building is on an industrial estate, with hills and nature beyond. We aimed to restore the dignity of the site.



The Estonian National Museum, Tartu, Estonia, completed in 2016 from a competition ten years earlier. (Takuji Shimmura)



The new Hermès leatherwork facility in Louviers, Normandy. The arches echo the movement of horses, the courtyards allow room for expansion. (Iwan Baan)

IP : **What has been your turning-point project?**

LG : Every project is a learning process to push boundaries. However, Stone Garden in Beirut is most personal because it's in my home town. It tries to critique housing strategies in the city. The project started when I met Fouad El Khoury, a photographer. He had inherited land from his father who was a Lebanese modernist architect. He wanted to develop the site next to the port that was destroyed by war. The question was how a residential building can speak of the memory of the city, and not be just another developer tower. The housing does not repeat the footprint. We are in the Mediterranean, so we don't need glass buildings. The openings are spaces for nature, full of planters. I also wanted the building to emerge from the ground, worked by hand. Beirut is a seismic area, so we couldn't build using earth. The facade is a hand-combed render. The photos were taken by Iwan Baan before the explosion in 2020. It wasn't finished, but I'm grateful I had some. The structure was solid, but the windows were blown out. It's an unfolding building.

IP : **What is on the horizon next?**

LG : We have won a competition to design a museum in Saudi Arabia that is in partnership with the Pompidou Centre. The project is a cultural oasis in an agricultural setting, so it plays a role in reviving agriculture, intertwining arts and agriculture, building with the earth and local industry. We are also in the process of finishing a logistics building, where the envelope is sculpted by hand.

A Naive Look at Neoplasticism

Contributed by Ar. Brendan Tong

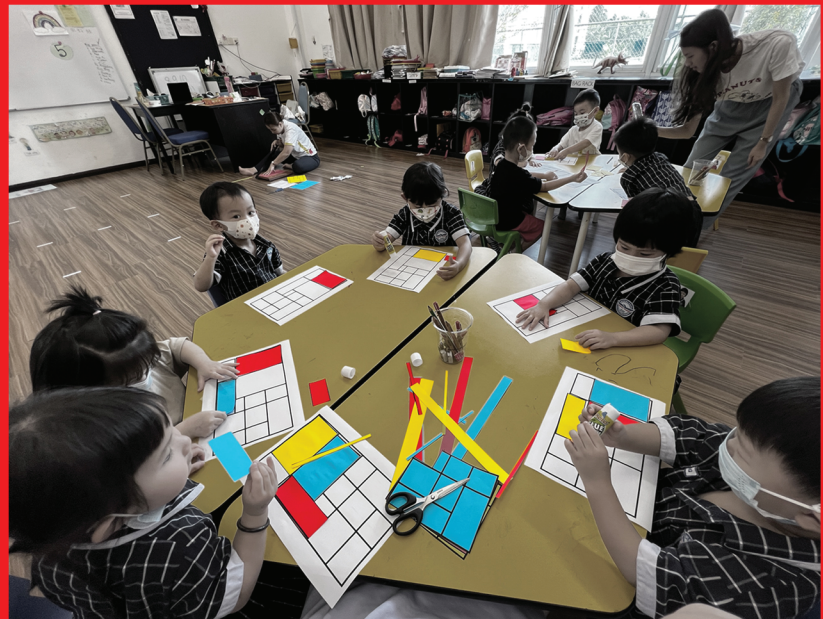
(1) Look up “*De Stijl*” online, and one might get bombarded by the complex personification and aggrandized understanding of an ironically reductive art movement. The advocators Theo Van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian, Geerit Rietveld and their compatriots may have been silenced by the passing of their time, but debate rages on among proclaimed experts and projecting enthusiasts, all equally convinced of their differing interpretations of the nuanced how, what and why of works defined as Neoplasticism.



(2) In a less quiet classroom of Sibū's Woodlands International School, children scurry hereto and thereto, scavenging colored shapes scattered throughout the classroom. They are on a treasure hunt, in search of materials necessary to fill their assigned grid frames. The theme of the session is 'Shapes and Primary Colors'. They are exploring the difference of squares and rectangles. They are learning the composition of red, yellow and blue. Eventually, with the room exhausted of treasure, they gather and compile their works of art. Each, with their equal ignorance of *De Stijl*, producing their own biased composition of abstraction and aesthetic balance.

(3) Teachers Ms Snowy, Ms Stethamnie and Ms Gladia shared with me their passion for Pier Mondrian's work, and how they were inspired by the International Early Years Curriculum (IEYC) unit to develop an artistically driven learning module. They shared their enthusiasm translating his work amongst the children through an introduction of the artist in their “Mystery Gallery”. They shared their joy and surprise at the speed the children were able to grasp and understand the concept with little to no assistance.

I could only listen in envy.



(4) It is rare for us, Architects, wantonly burdened by the need to understand art, to experience true naivety. Presented with ignorantly composed interpretations, we seek logic, sense and reason through uncalled critique. It defines us. It determines and validates us. But art may be unknowing. Art may be borne from ignorance. Perhaps new art is but the ignorance of old art. And if we can accept naivety as a pure form of ignorance, then the childish students of Ms Snowy, Ms Stethamnie and Ms Gladia's class have inadvertently created new art. There, in that very classroom, an exciting morsel of artistic miracle bubbles forth, a talent is found, a preference is defined, and a passion is nursed. Uncertainly, they may never disappear.

More certainly, I was not there. I can only envy.

(5) To the teachers, this is but a common day's work. Art is an education. Learning is a process. They continue to pursue inspiration from the vast and wild world of interpreted art, if only to teach students what a shape and a colour can be. In the context of process, the product is unimportant. Where we seek gratification in the physicality of buildings, they will allow the composition to give way to the decay of time.



Prepared by
 Ar. Brendan Tong
 With the assistance of
 Woodlands International
 School SibU Principal
 Mr. Yong Choo Tiong
 and Teachers
 Ms Snowy Tang Kho Tiaw
 Ms Stethamnie Connie
 anak Jeffery
 and
 Ms Gladia anak Daniel

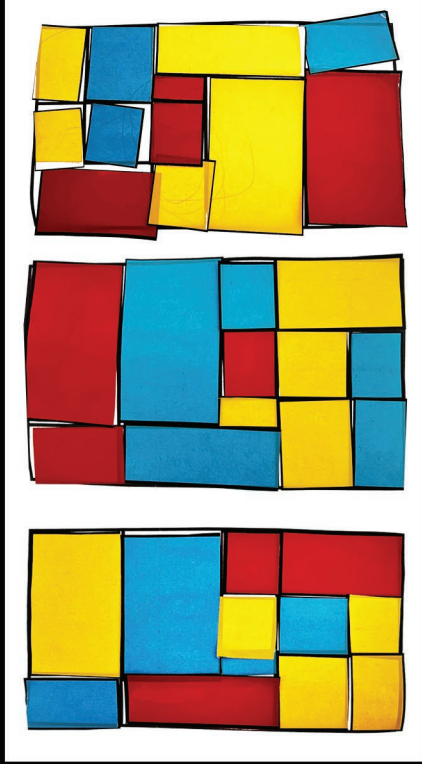
(6) They seek nothing but a reversal of naivety. They will not yearn more than gratitude expressed in proper grammar and vocabulary. But, in the far flung days of tomorrow, long after we have all forgotten both process and product, a literate, once a child, strolls through the *Kunstmuseum Den Haag*, gaze upon the *Composition De Lignes Et Couleur III*, and wonders, out loud:

(7) The name *De Stijl* is supposedly derived from Gottfried Semper's *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten Oder Praktische Ästhetik* (1861-3), which Curl suggests was mistakenly believed to advocate materialism and functionalism.



“Thatlooks familiar”

In general, *De Stijl* proposed ultimate simplicity and abstraction, both in architecture and painting, by using only straight horizontal and vertical lines and rectangular forms.



Furthermore, their formal vocabulary was limited to the primary colours, red, yellow, and blue, and the three primary values, black, white, and grey.



The author is a proud father of a *De Stijl* artist

The works avoided symmetry and attained aesthetic balance using opposition. This element of the movement embodies the second meaning of *stijl*: "a post, jamb or support"; this is best exemplified by the construction of crossing joints, most commonly seen in carpentry.



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 Architecture Malaysia
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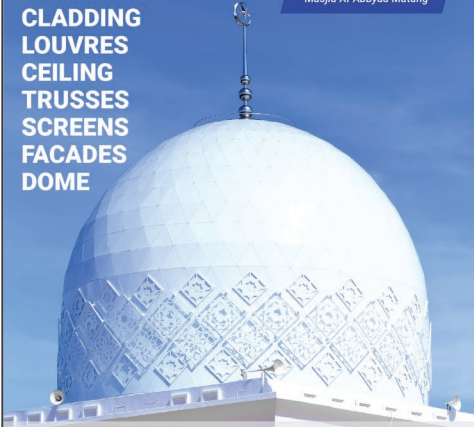


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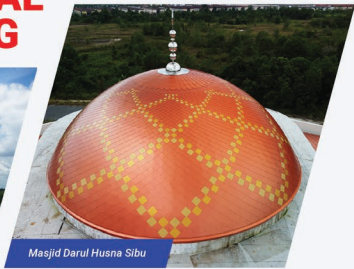
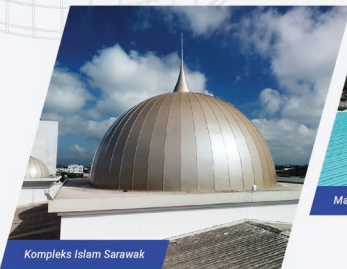


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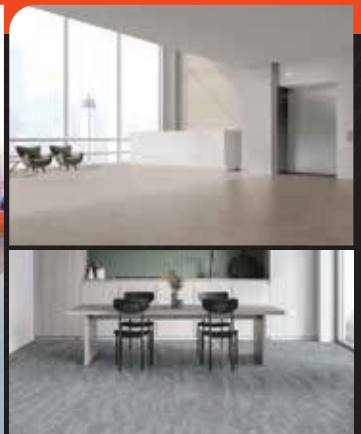
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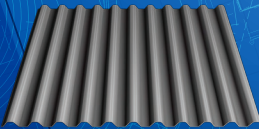
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