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A conversation between Talang-Talang Island and Roxy Sematan.

ROXY SEMATAN SERVICE APARTMENT

by AkiEdge Sdn. Bhd.

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

On the coast of Sarawak, nestled amongst verdant mountains of the Lundu District lies the sleepy town of Sematan. Over 100 kilometers from the Kuching city, Sematan has always enjoyed a certain tranquility not afforded to most city-dwellers. Recent completion of PAN Borneo highway and efforts to transform the town into a major tourist destination have resulted in Roxy Sematan. With completion of two of its phases, the Roxy Townhouse and Roxy Clubhouse, in 2021, the Roxy Beach Resort is the most recent expansion. This newest development is split into two phases: a hotel block and a service apartment complex overlooking the Talang-Talang islands and South China Sea beyond.

As we make our approach by way of Jalan Seacom, Roxy's apartment complex rises slowly above the dense foliage, making for a striking image. The structure consists of three 7-storey blocks, connected by a link bridge on the first floor. The center block houses the complex's main drop-off point, which acts as a central hub. The building's south facing facade has been constructed with a combination of vent block, exposed stairway and off-form walls, creating a modern yet natural-looking building that absolutely oozes with rugged charm. Miniature gardens line the balconies of each floor, the plants draping over the ledge add an image of nature to the facade. In front of the complex is a wide car park constructed out of grasscrete pavers to allow excess rainwater to seep into the turf, reducing surface runoff.



7-storey apartment blocks with exposed stairways.



Main drop off point with shaded roof.



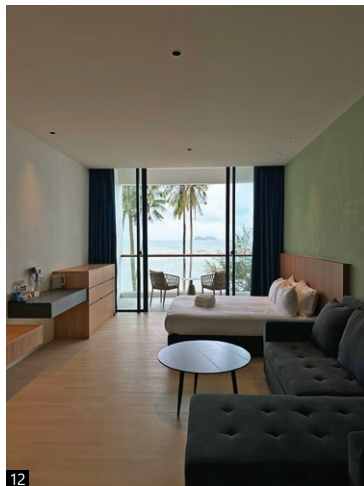
What is immediately obvious upon entering the complex is a strong feeling of openness. The main drop-off point exemplifies this perfectly: both its north-facing and south-facing side remain open, giving occupants a fantastic seaward view. The complex's central plaza has thus transformed into an open space where freedom of movement is emphasized. This quite straightforwardly communicates a sense of freedom to the residents staying there, a sense that they are no longer constrained by the tiring restrictions that plague their daily city life.

As we move forward, it opens into a sprawling landscape designed by famed Thai landscape architecture firm WM Koncepto, comprising a garden to the right, a multipurpose area to the left, and in the center, an infinity pool looking out to sea. Stone walkways meander through the greenery, guiding us through the lush landscape. The landscape's design strikes a delicate balance between hardscaping and softscaping, resulting in a mesmerizing interplay between the elements: wooden function decks overlooking an expansive yoga lawn, a neatly trimmed garden maze conceals a private pavilion within, sunken seats and dining tables hide amongst carefully trimmed hedges, residents lounging in the infinity pool and watch as its waters appear to flow into the sea. Further ahead is the beachfront, on which a sand lounge was constructed; residents can sit, reclined on beach chairs, as they gaze upon Talang-Talang island and the lapping waves of South China Sea.

The ground floor is also where some of the building's more practical facilities are housed, chief of which are the rain harvesting tanks. These tanks are surrounded by sleek aluminum frames, on which black metal bars are then vertically latticed. This prevents it from becoming eyesores to passersby. As we comb through the ground floor's passageways, another purpose of the facade's vent block walls becomes apparent, as they provide some much-needed ventilation by allowing the occasional breeze in.

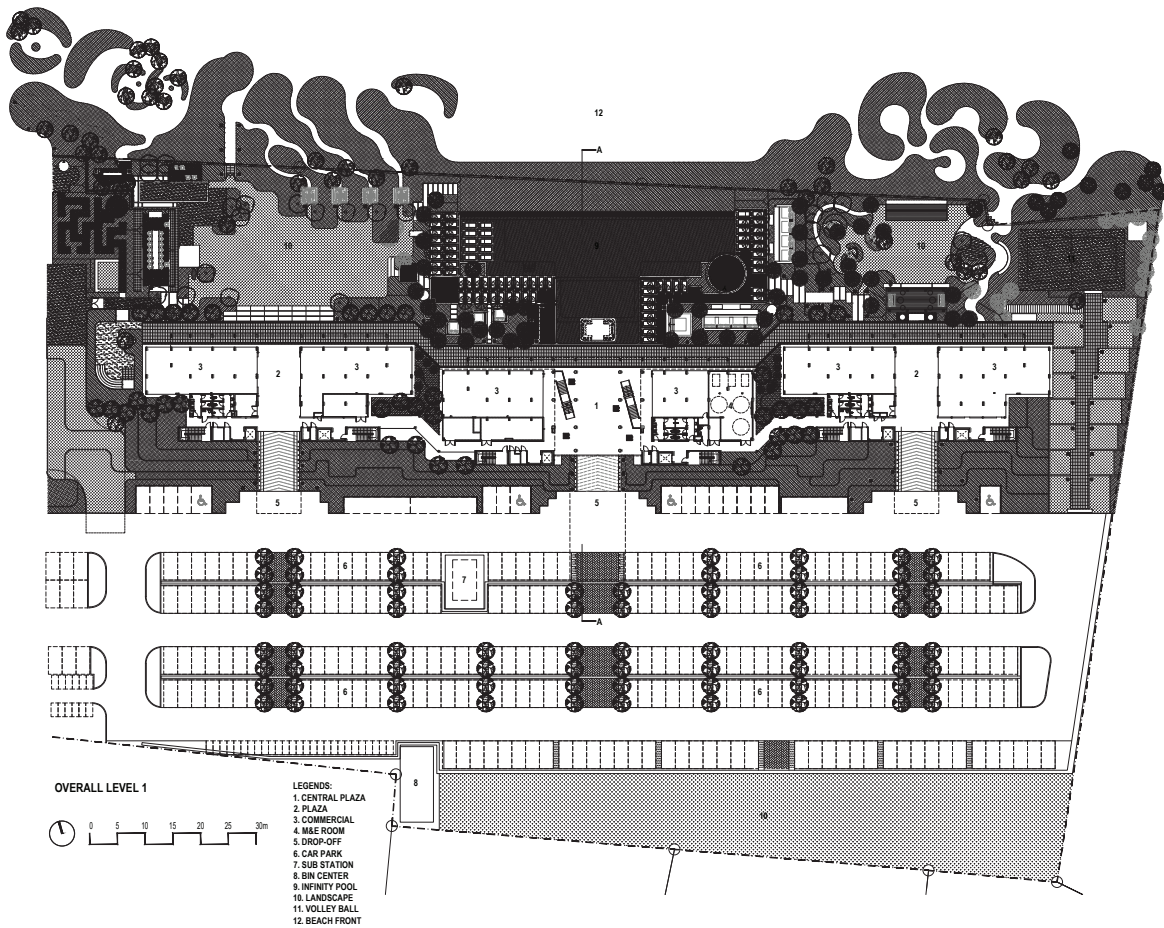
CAPTIONS:

1. Outdoor swimming pool surrounded between hardscaping and softscaping landscape.
2. Expanse of blues.
3. Aluminum screens cover rainwater harvesting tanks with link bridge on the first floor.
4. Voids and open corridors with plants for natural ventilation and ample lighting.
5. Central Plaza and infinity pool with a seaward view.
6. Roxy Sematan facing the South China Sea with Gunung Rumpit as its backdrop.



CAPTIONS:

- 7 & 8. Vent blocks and off form walls as facade design material palette.
- 9. Talang-Talang Island as the centerpiece of every unit.
- 10. Aluminum screens cover rainwater harvesting tanks with link bridge on the first floor.
- 11. A stay with nature.
- 12. Studio apartment with a view towards Talang-Talang Island.
- 13. Vent blocks and off form walls as facade design material palette.
- 14. Top level penthouse with sweeping living space and wide balcony.
- 15. Rooftop seating area and breathtaking views.



Construction of the apartment units with a view of Talang-Talang Island and the lapping waves of South China Sea.



Site inspection at penthouse unit.



16

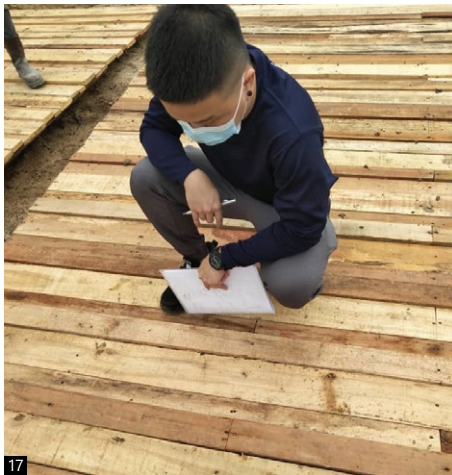
Located on the sides of each block are stairways that snake up the building. The stairways are exposed to the south, a deliberate design choice that invites travelers to gaze upon the emerald jungles and stalwart mountains of Sematan. Off-form walls are constructed in front of each landing, livening up the otherwise monotonous journey and reinforcing the feeling of nature.

The next six floors are dedicated to service apartments, with the three blocks jointly housing 186 units. 2-bedroom apartments are situated on the left and right of each floor, while all the units in between are the studio apartments. More practical facilities have been placed at the apartments' rear; each apartment has bathrooms and kitchens that are situated at its back end, while air conditioner compressors are situated outside on its rear wall. To accommodate this, voids have been constructed intermittently alongside the corridor, allowing for unpleasant air to be expelled from inside without inadvertently polluting the corridors.

As per the theme of freedom and openness, the units are built alongside single loaded corridors. This not only allows for ventilation and natural lighting, but also affords every resident a stunning view of the South China Sea as well as the famous Talang-Talang Islands, which, because of the complex's unique position on the beachfront, will always be the centerpiece of any resident's view when they look out to sea. Balconies with glass railings make each unit feel wider and more spacious, allowing residents to look upon the ocean from the comfort of their own apartment. This blurs the barrier between the inside and the outside world, reminding each resident that the ocean is always close by.

Penthouses can be found on each block's top level, each housing several bedrooms and a large, sweeping living space. The immensely wide balconies give their occupants one of the best views Sematan has to offer. The ocean's gently foaming waves lap on the sandy beachfront, while further out in the surf, the Talang-Talang Islands stand as lone green masses in a vast expanse of roaring blue, making for a true spectacle of sight and sound.

END



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CAPTIONS:

16 & 17. Mockup formwork for the RC off-form walls.

18. Mr. Lee during site inspection.

19. Mr. Lee gazing upon the blue South China Sea and Talang-Talang Island.

20. Group Photo.



18



19

Architect	:	AkiEdge Sdn. Bhd.
C&S	:	Jurutera Minsar Consult Sdn. Bhd.
M&E	:	Perunding CH Engineering Sdn. Bhd.
Landscape Architect	:	WMKoncepto
Client	:	Tecktonic & Sons Holdings Sdn. Bhd.
Design Team	:	Lau Ming Ngi, Kong Yean Wei, Hii Wei Sheng & Tiong Cheong Kei
Photography	:	Hii Wei Sheng, Caryn Wee & Lau Ming Ngi
Architect's statement	:	Hii Mao Ann



Admin Block Front Entrance.

WISMA SABATI @ JALAN BAKO, KUCHING

by RKD Architects Sdn Bhd

PROJECT OVERVIEW

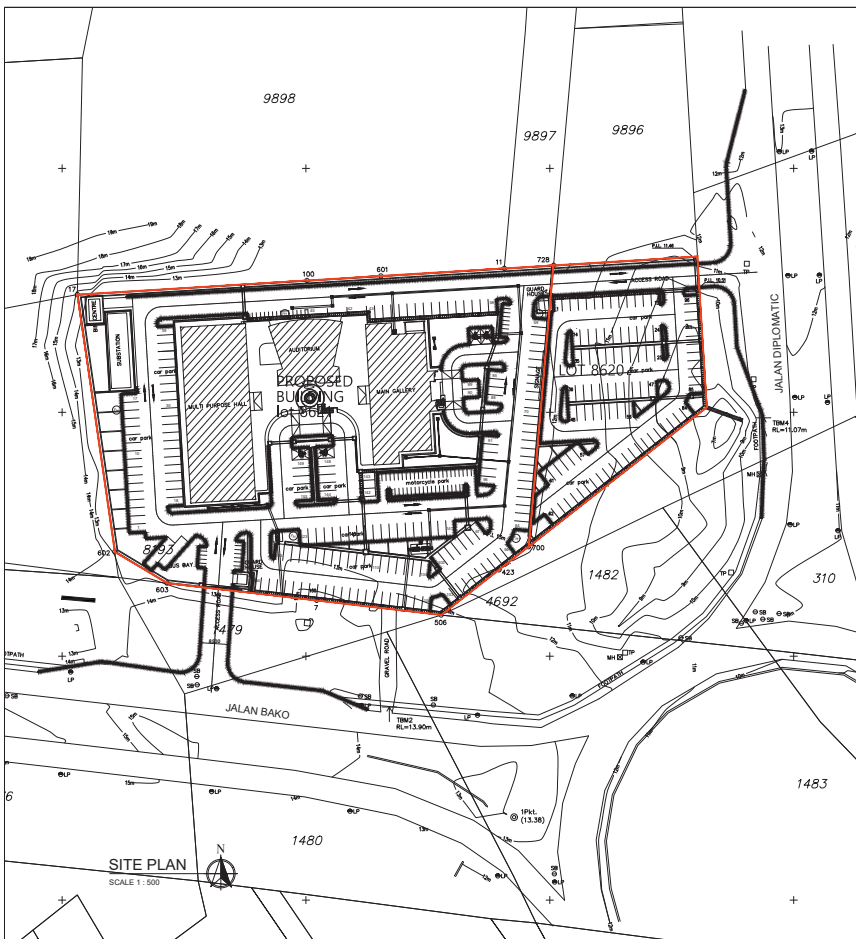
Strategic Location and Design Vision

The strategic placement of Wisma SABATI ensures its prominent visibility from the neighbouring roundabout. The design direction thus aims for distinctiveness, aspiring to encapsulate and represent SABATI's unique design ethos. Situated on Lots 8620 and 8621, Block 19, Salak Land District, the complex is nestled at the intersection of Jalan Bako and Jalan Diplomatik. The site spans a total area of 4.00 acres, comprising 0.8 acres for Lot 8620 and 3.2 acres for Lot 8621. Notably, its proximity to key establishments such as Jabatan Pendidikan Sarawak, the new General Hospital, Wisma Melayu, Medan Hamidah, Mydin, the Sarawak Stadium complex and several schools enhances its accessibility and visibility within the locale.

Design Objectives

As a non-profit organization renowned for its charitable initiatives, SABATI envisions extending its community outreach and organizing diverse events. Wisma SABATI is conceptualized to serve as more than just an office space; it will house a gallery, "Galeri Laila," dedicated to honouring the late Datuk Patinggi Puan Sri Hajjah Laila Taib and highlighting the contributions of Sarawakian Women to the development of the state. Additionally, it will offer rentable spaces such as meeting rooms, office spaces, an auditorium, and a multi-purpose hall, facilitating various activities.





Design Concept and Inspiration

Wisma SABATI encapsulates the multi-cultural essence of Sarawak, merging modern and traditional elements. Each intricacy of the design embodies the rich cultural tapestry of Sarawak, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of its diverse populace and traditions. Drawing inspiration from vernacular, Islamic, and ethnic architectural styles indigenous to Sarawak, the design aims to captivate viewers with its cultural allure.

Layout

Comprising three distinct blocks, Wisma SABATI's layout delineates specific functions. Block A encompasses the administrative functions and features a gallery, the main lobby, a surau, conference rooms and SABATI's management office. Block B houses the auditorium and a splendid 'Anjung' terrace on the first floor. Block C hosts the multi-purpose hall with versatile seating arrangements and facilities across its two floors, offering a space ideal for various events and activities.



Multipurpose Hall.



Admin Block Gallery.



Admin Block Lobby.



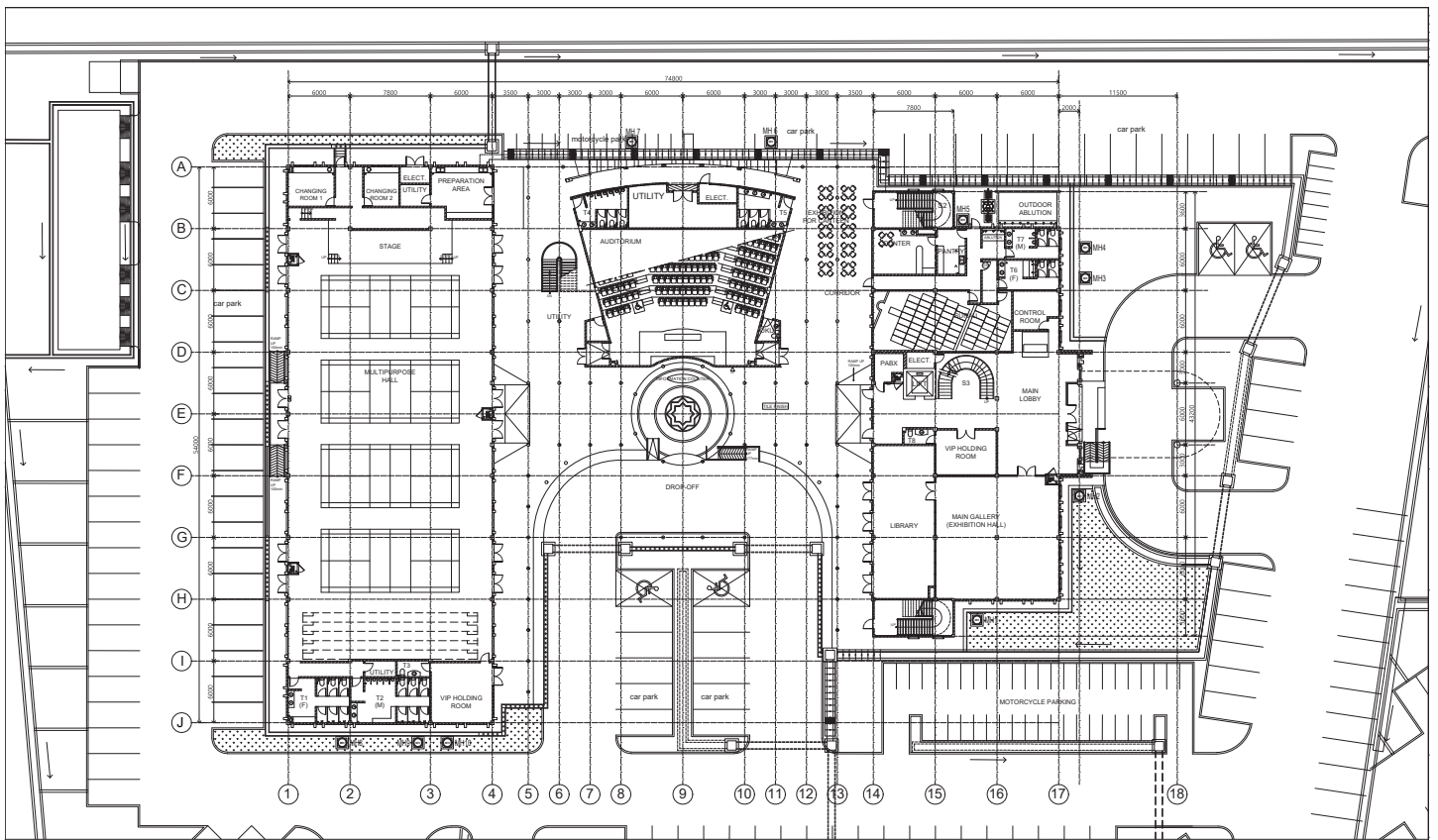
Admin Office Reception.



Admin Office.



Admin Waiting Area.



Ground Floor Plan



CAPTIONS:

1. Construction - Multipurpose Hall.
2. Construction - Admin Block Front Entrance.
3. Construction - Auditorium Tiered Seating.
4. Construction - Middle Courtyard.

Client	: Sarawak Badan Amal Tenaga Isteri-Isteri (SABATI)
Implementation Agency	: JKR Sarawak
Schematic	: JKR Sarawak
Architect	: RKD Architects Sdn Bhd
Interior Design	: RKD Architects Sdn Bhd
C&S Engineer	: ASL Engineers Sdn Bhd
M&E Engineer	: Azmar Engineers Sdn Bhd
Quantity Surveyor	: Pakatan International MD Isahak & Rakan-Rakan (Sarawak)
Main Contractor	: Polybuilding Construction Co.
Gallery Contractor	: Impact Design Associates Sdn Bhd

Interior

Wisma SABATI's interior design concept embodies a fusion of modernity and tradition, a canvas thoughtfully crafted to mirror the vibrant tapestry of Sarawak's diverse cultures and hues. The essence lies in marrying contemporary aesthetics with indigenous motifs and timber tones, a seamless interplay creating an ambiance of casual elegance and sophistication.

Touches of vivid colours punctuate select spaces, injecting life into the canvas of predominantly white walls, a visual ode to SABATI's identity: hues of pink, peach, and purple resonating the organization's essence. Unassuming indigenous patterns grace decorative elements, adorning ceilings, screens, backdrops, and door fixtures, each a nod to the heritage ingrained in every detail.

A harmonious blend of muted tones and feminine accents, complemented by local materials and geometric designs, weaves a consistent aesthetic, subtly reflecting SABATI's brand essence. Wisma SABATI stands as a testament to their unwavering dedication, fostering an environment that nurtures creativity and productivity for their charitable endeavours.

By integrating architectural nuances and functional spaces, Wisma SABATI seeks to embody a space that not only serves its organizational purposes but also resonates deeply with the cultural heritage and aspirations of the Sarawakian community it represents.



Admin Meeting Room under construction.

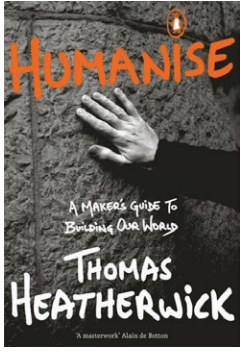


Admin Meeting Room.

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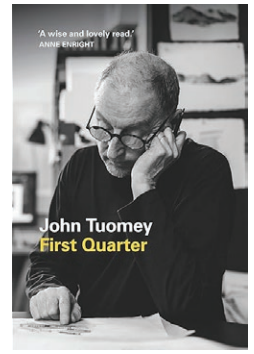
Overall development.



An extract from RIBA Journal :

MARKETING VS MEMOIR

Hugh Pearman reviews *Humanise* and *First Quarter* – two new publications by very different designers – and plumps for the personal over the polemical



One of these books is by a noted designer who does buildings and one is by a noted architect. The first, 'Humanise' by Thomas Heatherwick, is nearly 500 pages long and is a hugely successful, massively publicised marketing exercise for himself and his studio. The second, 'First Quarter' by John Tuomey of RIBA Royal Gold Medallists O'Donnell & Tuomey fame, is 174 pages long and is a reflective autobiography. It ends just at the moment when he and his wife and partner Sheila set up their independent practice in Dublin in 1991. No publicity onslaught for that one.

For all its length the Heatherwick book, presented as a manifesto diatribe against 'boring' (meaning mostly though not exclusively glassy corporate-modernist) buildings, is a quick, flick-through read: the fonts are large, the lines widely spaced, and the whole thing is highly graphic. In fact the book is more images (smudgy monochrome ones on absorbent paper, often with text run over them) than words.

Those words are written almost childishly – Heatherwick's public image has always had a naïve, childlike quality – though towards the end he, or his collaborator and presumed ghost-writer Will Storr, start to use more grown-up language.

The intent is clear enough. Given its subject matter the book itself cannot be 'boring', hence its restless, jumbled-up design. This is very much Heatherwick's more-is-more aesthetic. He adores complexity and things that bristle and move, abhors smoothness, repetition and consistency.

The Tuomey book is modest in comparison. There are a few of his sketches – tiny spidery line drawings, almost vignettes – dotted through its pages, but it is all about the words, the story. It is beautifully written, in plain English. Not a hint of the 'archibollocks' that Heatherwick takes a fullyjustified dig at in his considerably less literary book. Short though Tuomey's is, each lucid and often witty page holds and repays your interest and attention, and you find yourself at moments tracking back just for the pleasure of reading a passage again.

O'Donnell & Tuomey's buildings would probably also score quite well on Heatherwick's 'Boringometer', a software program developed in his studio to assess building designs. In fact, the Royal Gold Medallists' buildings might at times seem almost as wilfully complex as Heatherwick's, for all that they come from wildly different aesthetic and intellectual directions.

“ This is very much Heatherwick's more-is-more aesthetic. He adores complexity and things that bristle and move, abhors smoothness, repetition and consistency. ”

“ Short though Tuomey's is, each lucid and often witty page holds and repays your interest and attention, and you find yourself at moments tracking back just for the pleasure of reading a passage again. ”



Thomas Heatherwick holds up Antoni Gaudí's Casa Milà as an antidote to the 'blandemic' of boring architecture, in a spread from 'Humanise'.
(Photo Credit : HEATHERWICK STUDIO)



Heatherwick Studio's 'Little Island' – a public park on piles in the Hudson River complete in 2021 – provides a fantastical refuge from the bustle of Manhattan.
(Photo Credit : DENNIS GILBERT)



O'Donnell & Tuomey's Lyric Theatre in Belfast (2011) was built to a tight budget, with its function expressed in the form and materials selected and crafted to weather well with age. (Photo Credit : DENNIS GILBERT)

But Tuomey's book skips past his buildings. It's about growing up in rural Ireland with a site engineer father whose work meant that the family was constantly moving house. It's about coming-of-age, first snogs, student protest and campaigning, breaking free from the grip of the Church, escaping to London, working for Jim Stirling at the time of the Stuttgart gallery win, and then returning home at a time when Ireland – and especially Dublin – was emerging from a long economic sleep, with new young talents on hand to seize opportunities such as the then-threatened Temple Bar district.

Heatherwick talks a bit about his youth too, though nothing very personal as Tuomey does. The young Thomas used to visit the old Design Centre in the Haymarket and laments its passing. As a design student in 1989 he found a book on Gaudi and was instantly captivated. 'If buildings could look like this,' he reasoned, 'what else could they look like?' Well, how about a forest of concrete planters on stalks stuck in a river?

Most of the book is given over to modernism-bashing and as always with such things, there has to be a hate figure. For Heatherwick it is Le Corbusier, who he blames for today's boring buildings despite the fact that he personally admires, for instance, the very singular Ronchamp. He tries to suggest that the vigorously-modelled, highly sculptural Unité d'habitation in Marseilles is boring. Really?

As to what modernism IS, exactly, a century after Corb's 'Vers Une Architecture', he's not clear – except that it's nearly always boring, too smooth, too flat, too rectilinear (Tom loves curvy, lumpy things). He claims to see no real difference between postmodernism and Brutalism. Again: really? He also has a bit of a go at Mies van der Rohe which is closer to the mark re corporate modernism, but strangely he scarcely mentions Gropius' Bauhaus (for other modernist-bashers, Gropius is practically the Antichrist). Perhaps this is because the Bauhaus was both craft-based and interesting.

“ He does not go so far as the ultra-Trads, who absurdly describe all styles other than theirs as 'ugly' and only theirs as 'beautiful'. Hence Heatherwick's 'boring'. His own output is certainly interesting in its attention-seeking way but beauty is not really his thing. ”

“ According to her, he took one look at long-haired, bespectacled John and said: 'You'll never get anywhere with that hypothetical-looking fucker.' Read the Tuomey book, I'd advise. It's wise, tender and – human. ”

Apropos of which, nobody has so far bashed modernists so well as Tom Wolfe in his 1982 'From Bauhaus to Our House' and everyone so minded since has just gone over the same ground with much less style. Heatherwick brings nothing original here. He does not go so far as the ultra-Trads, who absurdly describe all styles other than theirs as 'ugly' and only theirs as 'beautiful'. Hence Heatherwick's 'boring'. His own output is certainly interesting in its attention-seeking way but beauty is not really his thing.

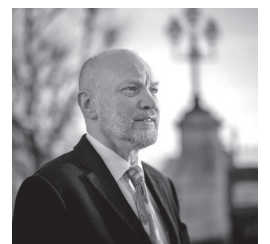
Frank Gehry pre-summarised all this in 2014: 'Ninety-eight per cent of everything that is built today is pure shit. There's no sense of design, no respect for humanity or for anything else.' Though as architecture-related insults go I prefer John Tuomey's account of a bloke in a late 1970s London Irish bar who tried to get off with his girlfriend (Sheila). According to her, he took one look at long-haired, bespectacled John and said: 'You'll never get anywhere with that hypothetical-looking fucker.' Read the Tuomey book, I'd advise. It's wise, tender and – human.

END



John Tuomey. (Photo Credit : AL HIGGINS)

Hugh Geoffrey Pearman MBE is an architecture critic and editor. Previously architecture and design critic of The Sunday Times and editor of the RIBA Journal, he also contributes to many other media in the UK and elsewhere. He is Chair of the UK's Twentieth Century Society and an honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.



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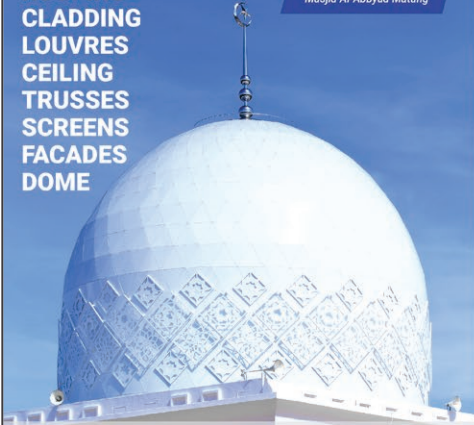


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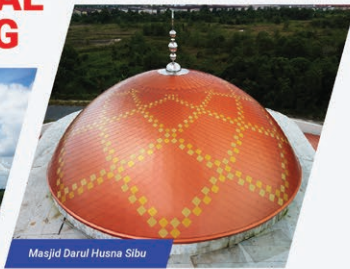
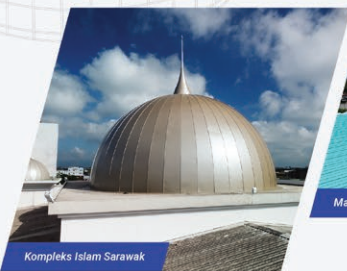


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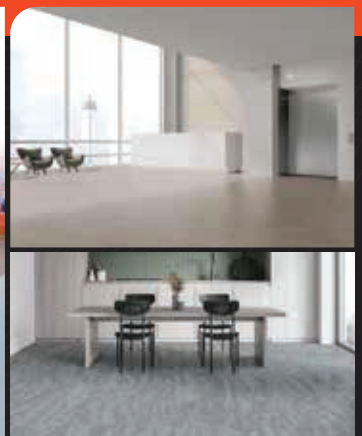
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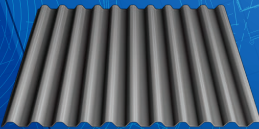
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