

# History as the Genesis of Sensorial Expression

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### **History versus Historiography**

History plays a vital role in evaluating the past and in understanding the future. Historical value will give meaning to the constructing of an architecture. Even so, taking history as a reference should be seen in a more comprehensive and not as a refuge or easy solution to address the issues of semantic of architecture.

Anthony C. Antoniades (1992) categorised history in two different approaches, namely the approach of history and historiography. Historical approach is when we take history as a whole and seen from the physical and spiritual aspects. Historiography is different as it looks at the importance of a sole form. It addresses the problem of architecture in a shallow dimension. In this approach, history is seen in the form without any observations and insights into the hidden meanings behind it.

Bruno Zevi (1957) was very critical of the confusion caused by the shallowness of meaning (the predicament of semiotic) due to a shallow understanding of history, and he named these architects of the "comic pedigree" (comic breed) that produce weird architectural image.

According to Anthony (1992), the best appreciation of the history of architecture is through the understanding of the fragment or chronology (ie; understands the history of architecture) where we can see and understand the sequence of the process of evolution. This will give you

an understanding of the environment that influenced every era. Besides, it will also lead to the clarification about what should be understood as an inclusive appreciation of the history of architecture.

Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim (2000) observed the study of history in parallel perspective which touches the ideology that contained therein,

*"Philosophy of history is the study of the thought of history; not only the psychological analysis of the actual procedure, but analysis of the ideology that is already in place".*

Certainly the importance of studying history is not just by mimicking or repeating the form. It should be observed in a deeper and comprehensive dimension in identifying the values and factors towards the dynamics of architectural expression.

### **History In Poetic Space**

Reasoning, narration and interpretation of the history of architecture is a creative process. Thus, the importance of understanding history is a prerequisite in creating a dynamic and progressive architecture. Anthony (1992) says...*"the correct use of history is the prerequisite to architectural design that is genuinely evolutionary"*.

In his Poetics of Architecture: Theory of Design Anthony C. Antoniades explained on the vitality of history inclusivity which

observed history in a deeper perspective. According to him, history inclusivity is the study which combines the analytic and synthetic value in an attempt to get a comprehensive overview of the parameters in understanding architecture. History investigation should encompass these two values.

### **Transforming History**

Transformation is a process of change that occurs due to the changing of the environment. However, these changes do not occur recklessly without any filtration and digestion of idea. Jorge Silvetti (1977) describes the transformation process related to architecture as an explanation that goes beyond our understanding of two dimension which affects human value. He further explains the transformation as *"...those operations performed on the elements of a given existent code which depart from the original, normal, or canonical usage of the code, by distorting, regrouping, reassembling, or in general altering it in such a way that it maintain its references to the original while tending to produce a new meaning."*

The definition given by Jorge Silvetti (1977) is seen as a model for the transformation of architecture. It does not only look to the existing code, but changes and refers to the original which makes the architecture as a part of the community, and the area where it is produced.

Although the evolution of architectural transformation as described by Silvetti happens naturally, over time, through the evolution of civilization, there are approaches that try to change the perception of this transformation with a different value. Peter Eisenman saw the transformation as a subjective concept which ran from logical value. However, this perception should be viewed in the context of architectural expression evaluation that allows diversity of ideas towards the achievement of a more dynamic architecture.

### **The Transcendence and Geometric Intervention**

Two projects have been chosen to portray the intimate correlation of history and site. The first project designed by Muhammad Shafiq bin Zulkifli explores the possibility of adopting and adapting modernist language onto historical and regimented site (Figure 7).

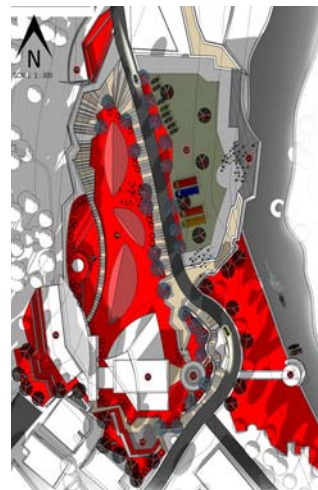


Figure 1: The master plan.



Figure 2: The conceptual endeavour.

The project, entitled Transcendence, a preservation of Tengku Kudin resident at Kubang Pasu, Kedah is an intriguing adventure of design narrative embedded with nostalgic and retrospective value. In this project, the designer seeks to redefine traditional cultural heritage and historical value by providing varies experiences for the visitor through art, architecture and environmental preservation. In this endeavour, he tries to capture the moment of history by narrating it through the space organisation, spatial intergration, spatial articulation, architecture and landscape connectivity and integration. In doing so, the designer tries to raise the historical value not by mimicking the existing landscape but by further enriching and creating new and dynamic vocabularies. An important aspect of landscape design is to make people understands the importance and significance of its spatial integration and organisation (Figure 2).

The second project, the Geometric Intervention is looking into the complexity of the existing urban fabric which is embedded with rich historical narrative. Designed by Mohammad Saifuddin Mazlan, the waterfront development echos the historical ripples of sungai Muar (Figure 3). Here, the spaces is fragmented into compositional phrases which clearly defined the spaces and its activities. Space articulation and hierarchical order is the protagonist of the composition. He creatively introduced different proportion and hiearchy of squares and rectangle to create a spatial quality with the intervention of hardscape and softscape. Geometric form handsomely intervened the spatial composition creating a dynamic and intriguing expression. Though the intervention of the fragmented phrases seem to create paradox to the existing fabric, the logic of aesthetic combines with functional strategy revealed an unprecedented sympathy to the site. The squares and rectangular form of the existing fabric (the buildings) is subtly transformed into a three dimensional functional spaces (Figure 4-6).



Figure 3: The historic Muar town

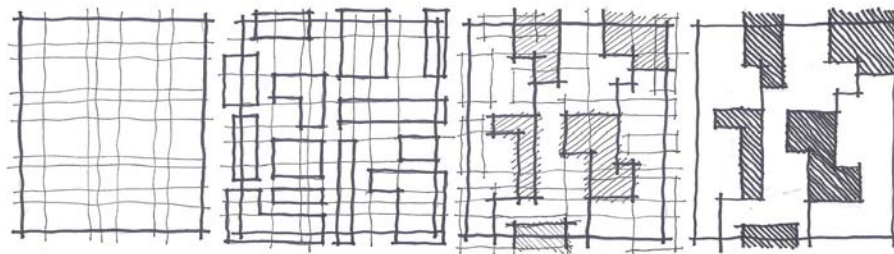


Figure 4: The fragmented phrases



Figure 5: The master plan



Figure 6: The space intervention

In this composition, space does not remain as an abstract phenomenon but created into a realistic three dimensional illusion which bridge the visible physical elements and invisible historical narrative. This act will further enhance the inter-relationships of geometric forms, subdued with sensorial experience, soften with organic landscape elements, revealing a theatrical expression.

### **Conclusion**

The synergy of history and design allows one to explore the sensorial experience and dimensional illusion of the past. The creation of euphoria as a means to narrate the architectural dimension of a space will further enhance the character of the designed space. History as a catalyst and impetus in the making of euphoria, does not only engages visitors to the past but embarks on the new future as well. In summation this exploration, one can trace the discovery of the new past in a dynamic and experimental engagement.

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