

10 Greening the Landscape Spaces with the Paradox of Culture and People

Suhardi Maulan

Jury Review

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Greening the Landscape Spaces with the Paradox of Culture and People

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In this era of greening (or re-green) the built environment, often the priority of Landscape Architects or Planners alike would be on the relationship of the design with environmental quality. Regrettably, it is observed that in many cases, less attention is given to the cultural values of the sites in the design process even though the tenet of sustainability is about dynamic interactions among environment, economy and society (read culture). In our pursuit for environmental sustainability, the paradox will be: can we generate green design while keeping the local culture of a particular site intact? These five projects try to answer this particular question because the project sites are located in the areas where the preservation of the environmental quality is the main concern and yet the local culture is so rich waiting to be celebrated.

Tan Zhi Lin argues in her proposal for Kek Lok Si Temple in Penang that sustainability can be achieved with culture in mind with direct application to the design. At Kek Lok Si Temple, she uses Buddhism philosophy as the basis for design. The idea of Buddhism which promotes nature as an entity that should be respected is well articulated in her design. For example, with respect to the existing landform, spaces are connected in a strong sequential path which is enhanced with plants that have meaning for a Buddhist such as bamboo and willows. As such, she managed to integrate culture and nature in a simple but profound way. For Norman, in his design for Candi Lembah Bujang in Kedah, he interweaves historical values of the site with a modern landscape design form reflected in a strong pattern of curvilinear walkways and mounds. The idea is to provide modern touch as well as to attract viewers to experience the spaces. Contrary to the historical landscape conservationists approach, his thought is bold enough to challenge normative thinking and creates a dialogue: can landform and history be correlated; would the historical value be diminished if a design goes against the natural characteristic of the sites?

Unlike Kek Lok Si Temple and Candi Lembah Bujang, Ghazal Park by Juliana Abdul Aziz does not have existing culture on site to be reflected upon. Rather she analyzed the culture of Johor Bharu or Johor as a whole before she chose *gambus* (a traditional Johor musical instruments) as a metaphor for her design concept. Juliana relied heavily on the strong image of the *gambus* to highlight her design but adopted minimalist approach for her planting design. The situation might be against the landscape architecture norm

arguing that in order to be sustainable the landscape should be well vegetated. However, she compensated the loss of vegetation with roof top gardens in which she allowed the plants on the roof top to grow cutting across a couple of the building's floors.

In another project, the designer poses this question: should we, in the first place, design a traditional village that might appear to be sustainable after all? Siti Hajar responded to the enquiry through the landscape design of Kampung Relong in Kuala Lipis, Pahang. The site analysis indicates that whilst the village is sustainable in terms of environment and socio-culture, it lacks economic development. Therefore, Siti Hajar decided to revive the economic condition of Kampung Relong with landscape design. She introduces modern agricultural plots, improves the fish ponds and provides facilities to enhance the cultural and eco-tourism activities. The design may not be celebrated in terms of aesthetic but rather pushed the landscape architecture envelopes by looking at how landscape can enhance the economic dimension of sustainability when it is carefully planned. Meanwhile, Mohd Zaidib's project for UPM campus is a classic landscape architecture planting design exercise. Interestingly enough, even though the main problems of the sites are about shades and thermal comfort, he envisions the use of plants not only to solve outdoor thermal comfort problem but also to revive campus learning environment by adding seating as well as water features. His design is implying that plants alone cannot bring sustainability to the landscape; the landscape spaces need to have functions or they will be merely for aesthetic and subject to be neglected over time.

The designers of these five projects demonstrate that the design of the landscape beside aiming for greenery should also be about and for people and culture. People's needs and culture should not be sidelined while we are striving for a greener world but rather complement the green design. It is true that concern about environment should be a priority when designing landscapes. Nevertheless a landscape with strong cultural values will make it more meaningful because it will be more enjoyable and unforgettable. These two factors will enhance the survival of the landscape or spaces in the future. Survival of the landscape is one of the key factors for the sustainability of the environment for future generations to enjoy.

Jury Review

Perpetual Garden at Kek Lok Si Temple, Penang by Hasanudin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

Tan Zi Lin had an opportunity to design a site where many landscape architects can only dream about it. The site is rich with historical and cultural icons and the genius loci of the site demand the designers to really have spiritual insight about Buddhism. Nevertheless, Zi Lin has demonstrated her ability to digest the site information thoroughly and manage to design with careful interpretation of Buddhism from the use of plants and hard landscape design especially on the use of symbolic patterns and motives. She has done well in establishing the facets of Buddhist concept of life and death based on FengShui philosophy. In addition, Zi Lin's design of pathway from the bottom of the hill to the top and the sequence of spaces with activities along the route is well articulated. The only demerit for her design is in terms of practicality but it should not be a barrier to celebrate the idea. Among the shortfalls are parking areas design and circulation and insufficient shades for the pedestrians. Zi Lin should address soft landscape design more on functions rather than mere symbolism. Overall, it is a very commendable effort by the designer to come out with an intriguing landscape design within a complex religious and cultural premise.

Golden Reflection by Phua Chin Eng & Anuar Mohd Nor

This project is about site planning and the site is very much challenging because the students have to deal with cultural and historical issues. Furthermore, Candi Lembah Bujang at Bukit Batu Pahat has very valuable and sensitive archaeological sites. At a glance, the site should be enhanced with careful conservation process and activities to project the archaeological values to the visitors. In addition, the site's "genius loci" is well presented from the physical landscape such as the topography and ecosystem. Norman Abd Rahman has used "Gold" as a concept, in which he tries to revive the golden era of Lembah Bujang. Nevertheless, he uses the concept rather literally and gets the design mixed up between idealism and fantasy. As a result, the designs end up with typical, mundane and repetitive form that can cause the design to be less meaningful. The proposal needs a design programme that is pertinent to enhance the site archaeological values and the design should avoid design features that are incompatible with the main purpose of the site conservation.

Ghazal Park of Johor Bharu by Hasanudin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

The idea of having a cultural park in the middle of modern city of Johor Bharu is very commendable. Furthermore, the site planning indicates a control of organic characteristic which is appropriate for a rigid urban setting because the design will be able to juxtapose or stand out from the typical daily city scenes. However, the expansion of gambus as the central idea for the design may not be very well explored even though the selection of gambus as a concept is appropriate. The direct translation of the gambus form into the design is less than

appealing. Furthermore, the use of gambus as a concept poses a question about the cultural diversity of Johor; would the site celebrate only Ghazal (a musical event, in which gambus is the major musical instrument) but not the other cultural activities? It will be interesting if gambus is used as a basis for environmental sculpture on the sites but less on the overall site planning and design. Nevertheless, the idea of preserving culture in the midst of chaotic urban area of Johor Bharu is highly laudable.

Bucolic Revival for Kampung Relong, Kuala Lipis by Hasanudin Lamit & Nik Malik Zainal Abidin

The site is a traditional Malay village but falls short of social and communal spaces and opportunities to improve economic standing of its inhabitants. The aim of Siti Hajar is to address both issues without sacrificing time-honoured qualities of traditional Malay village. It is refreshing to see Siti Hajar pursuing landscape design to enhance economic condition of the village by proposing money earning facilities and activities and she tries to blend the design of those facilities to be harmonious with traditional landscape character of the village. Siti Hajar also hopes the money earning facilities and activities would also be communal spaces that are important for traditional village social interaction. Whilst tangible traditional village activities are well accommodated for economic revival, the less tangible activities are less explored; for example, food and eating activities, which can be easily complied having rearing fields and traditional restaurants. In addition, some of the detailed design especially the hard landscape is too urbane in nature. The design is not deemed to be inappropriate but more in congruence in a town or city. The controlled and manicured quality of the spaces is worth noting unlike the more rustic and naturalistic personality of the other traditional Malay village. There is tendency for the designers to impose lifestyle that they think the community should have: towards urban living. The designers must capture the richness of the place and failing to will make the design looks mundane and become a typical neo-modern village. Nevertheless, any form of proposals to improve the economy and lifestyles of a community especially of a traditional Malay village is applauded.

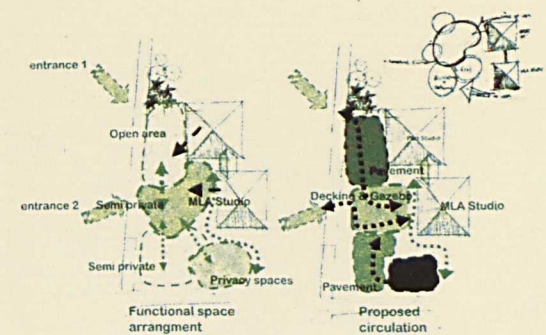
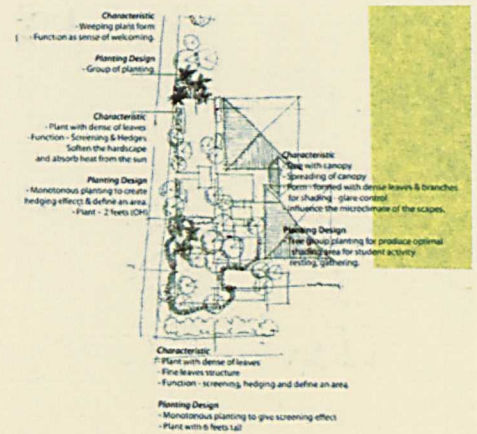
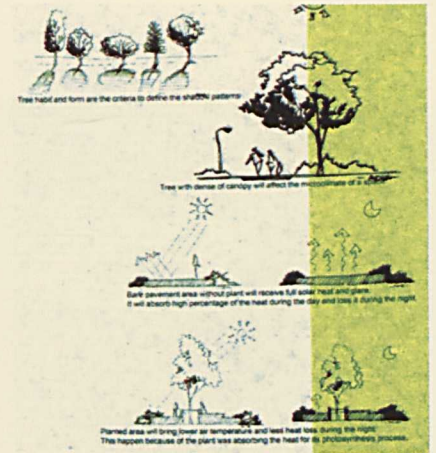
Latticed Canopies by Phua Chin Eng & Anuar Mohd Nor

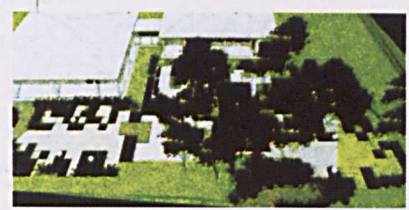
Overall, Zaidib has shown a good planting design scheme to solve the issue of lack of shades and proper spaces for people to gather. He clearly designs the space according to his design objective which is to create comfortable area for students and staff to be together. The design is practical such that it devises the environmental demands of the site to produce planting scheme that is functional and appropriate. The design process shows that the well-articulated site analysis and systematic procedure are approached consciously and positively to bring idea into reality. Zaidib is also able to achieve the distinction of art principles in design and in meeting the rational and logical need for plants to grow simultaneously in an academic environment. Lastly, Zaidib has detailed planting maintenance schedule that would be very valuable to manage the design once it is constructed.

Latticed Canopies

Mustafa Kamal M.S. & Ina Krisantia

The planting design scheme of the project attempts to moderate the discomfort of being in the tropical outdoors. The careful selection of trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers resulted in aesthetically interesting and functional outdoor spaces for students. The planting of dense canopied trees in groups, pergolas and lattices create comfortable shady spots. To entice students to move out of their design studios, water features provided a cool and relaxing surrounding to restore tired minds. The proposed planting design contributes to enrich the outdoor space as well as reduce energy use to the adjacent studio building.

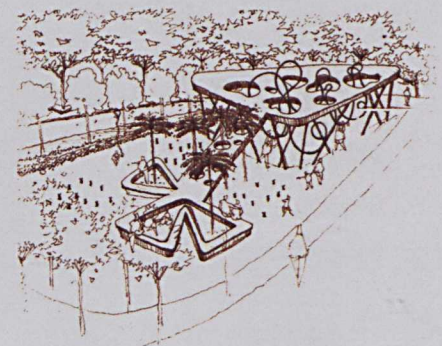
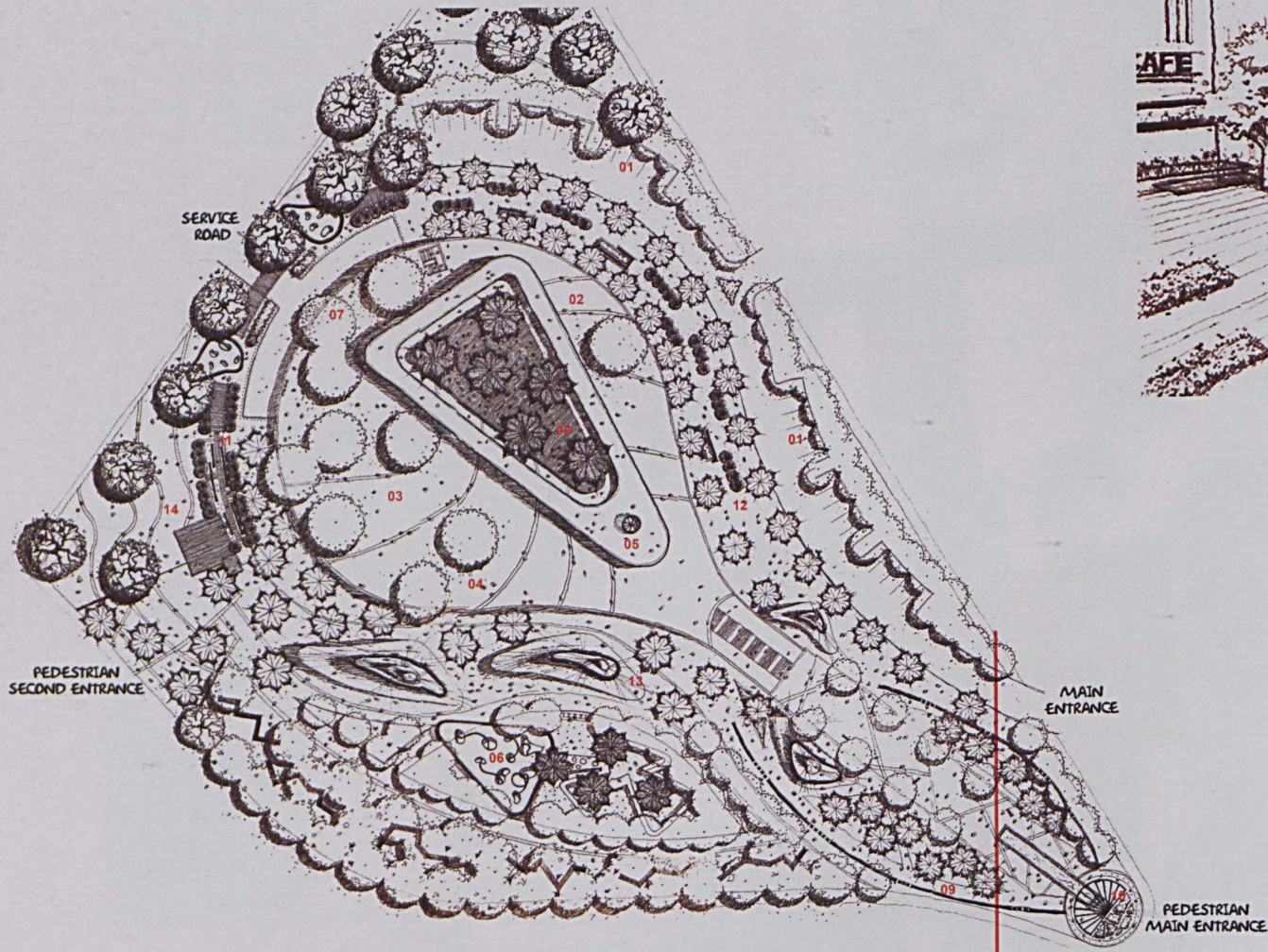
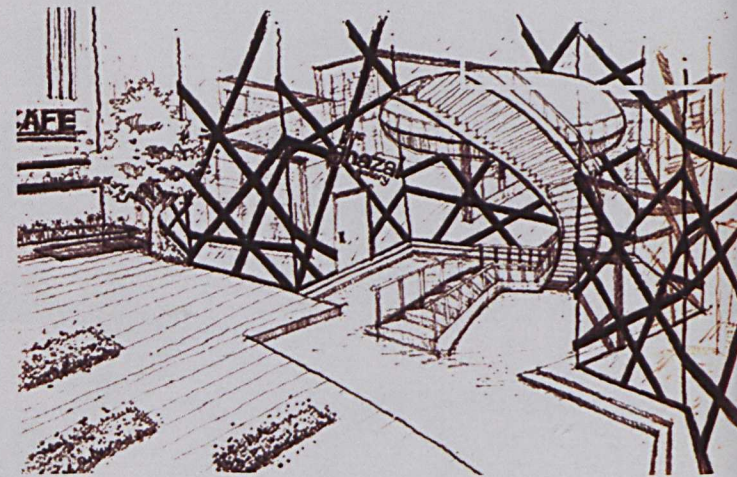
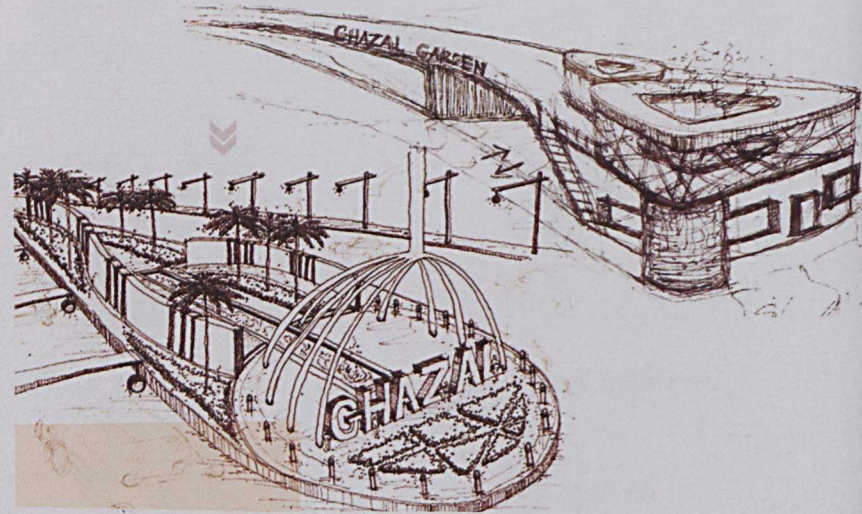




Ghazal Park

Mohd Yazid Mohd Yunos, Emran Mohamad Taram & Suhardi Maulan

The project intends to regenerate the new image of cardinal spaces in the city of Johor Bahru. The landscape design concept is a reinterpretation of Johor local-cultural value in the form of public art, park design and activities. Ghazal Park is profoundly inspired by *gambus*: the most identifiable Johor traditional musical instrument. Ghazal Park design integrates architectural spaces with human activities. It portrays a new city image of energetic and interpretive form of the culture.



LEVEL 3

stairs for service that link straight away from service parking area to the next level

open rooftop: allow / invites natural light and breezy air comes in

rooftop garden allows visitors to enjoy the broader views of johor bahru city especially at night.

LEVEL 2

the decking is where we can watch the most exciting of ghazal performance

open rooftop at the center was purposely designed partially open at the center to allows natural breezy air to pass through

this is the level where the performance of ghazal will be held

LEVEL 1

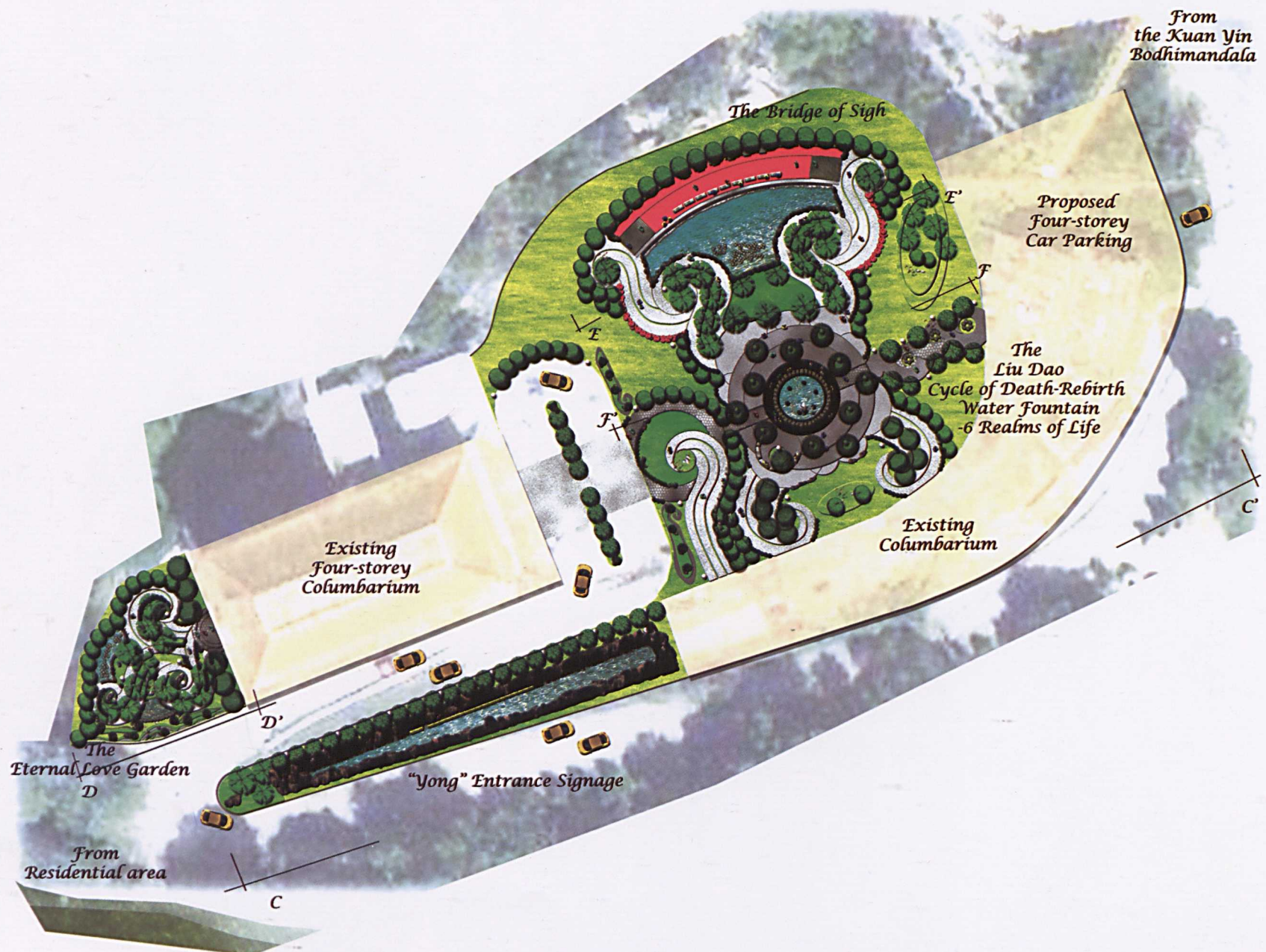
the ground level's space includes the indoor and outdoor cafe area, the gallery of ghazal which tells us

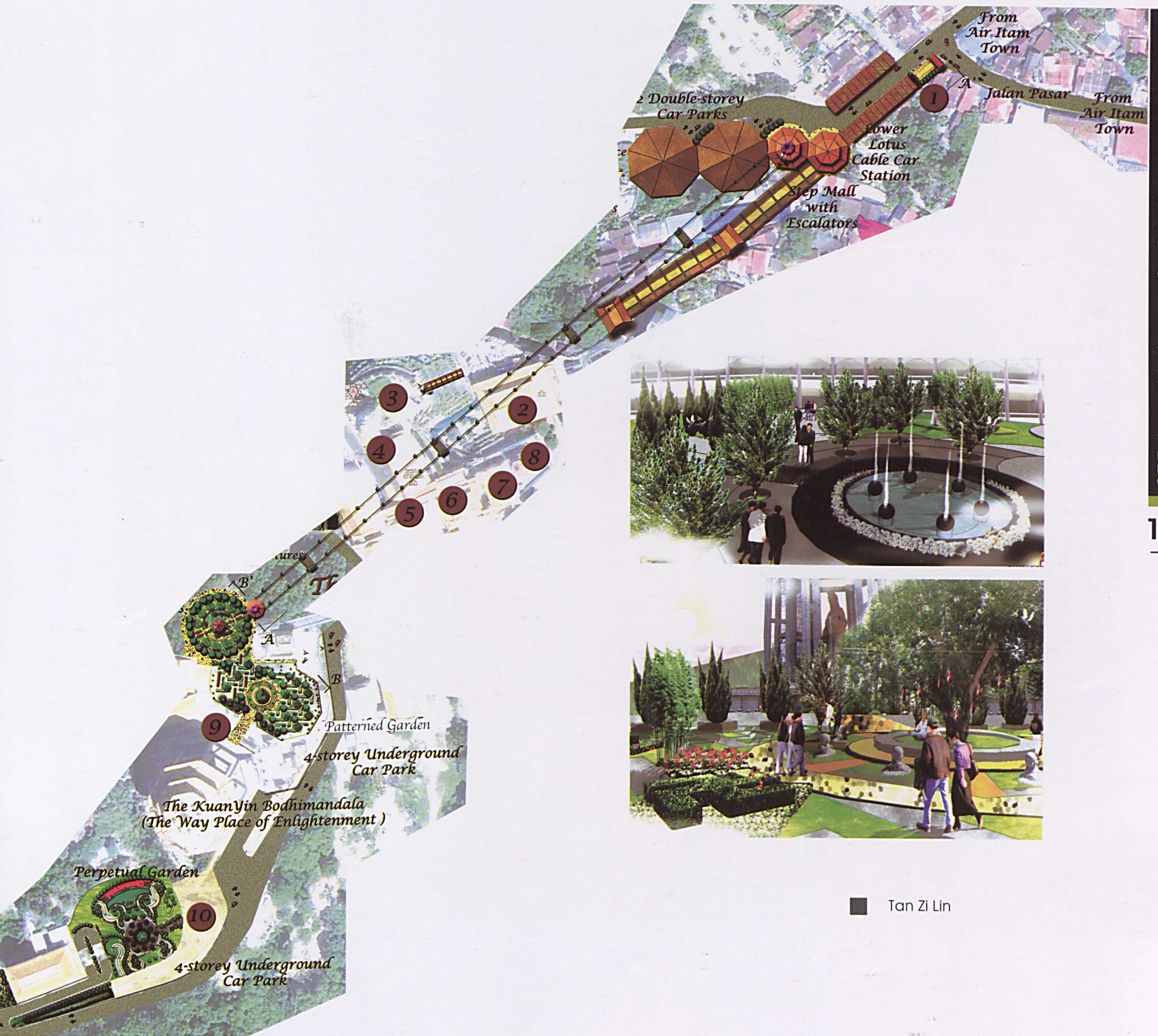
stairs to access to the 2nd and 3rd rooftop level

The Perpetual Garden

Noorizan Mohamed, Nor Atiah Ismail & Mustafa Kamal M.S.

Landscape design of Kek Lok Si Chinese Temple symbolizes the hidden meaning of the coalition between heaven and humanity. The meaning of "impermanence of life" is being portrayed from the cyclical natural process of Death-Rebirth in Buddhism perspective through the landscape design. The aim is to create a comfortable and peaceful environment through the unique forms and patterns of soft and hardscape elements. Culturally sensitive landscape design intervention in the midst of modern economic development will ensure that the Malaysian cultural heritage will not become the 'victim' of unfit tourism development.

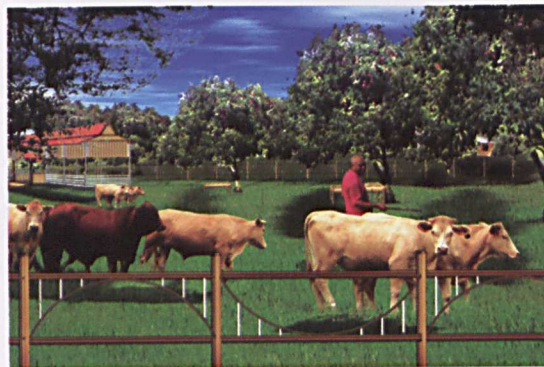




Bucolic Revival

Mustafa Kamal M.S., Noorizan Mohamed & Nor Atiah Ismail

Bucolic Revival is the theme chosen for a landscape design of a traditional village in Kampong Relong, Kuala Lipis, Pahang. This traditional village is largely based on agriculture for its survival. The design is an attempt to revive a village that is retreating towards oblivion into a viable settlement. The environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects are well integrated through sustainable and sensitive landscape planning and site design. Detailed analysis of the site assets and constraints has resulted in a design of a traditional village that is progressing well with the country's development.



■ Siti Hajar Baharuddin

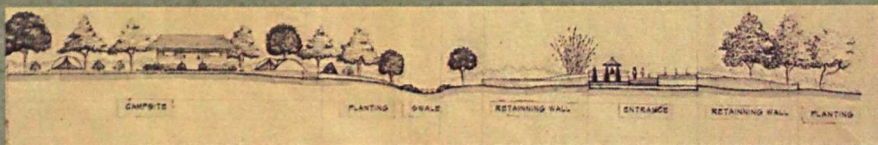


-Climbing
 -See flora and fauna

STEDER III



Trail to the top of Gunung Jerai

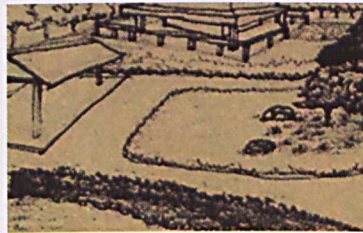
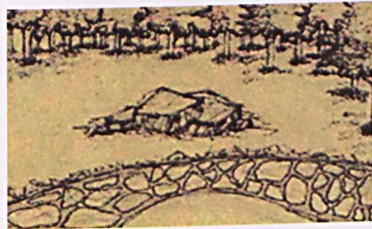
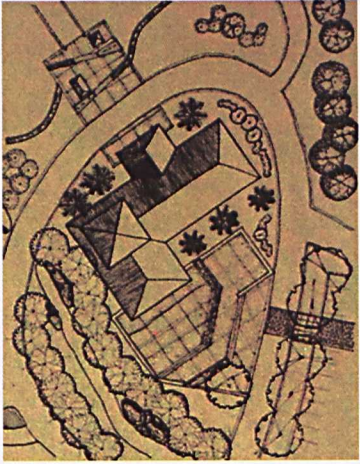


CAMPUS | PLANTING | DRALE | RETAINING WALL | ENTRANCE | RETAINING WALL | PLANTING

Golden Reflection

Nor Atiah Ismail, Abd Aziz Othman, Asraf Abdul Rahman & Ina Krisantia

"Golden Reflection" conceptualizes a design scheme involving archaeological conservation design in Candi Lembah Bujang, Kedah. Its compelling archaeological history fascinates people who wish to understand the human civilization through reflection of the historical artefacts. The design approach incorporates history, physical landforms and a variety of cultural and natural landscape elements. These elements are translated as "gold" reflecting the site as the valuable legend of economic and commercial ports. This project introduces a new idea of designing an outdoor living museum.



■ Norman Abd Rahman