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HOUSE NO. 10 / KERANJI HOUSE / THE DATAI LANGKAWI / 12 WAVES LOGISTICS CENTRE / ANTARA RESIDENCE GALLERY / SABAYON AT SKY51 / #SPEAKEASY_PAMELA TAN: UNBOUNDED ASPIRATIONS / MINI ARCHITECTURE: LITTLE MOBILE LIBRARY / SAYEMBARA IBU KOTA NEGARA (IKN) INDONESIA 2019 / EMERGING VOICES: HOUSING



^ KARWA MOSQUE BY ELEENA JAMIL ARCHITECT



Pamela Tan/ Unbounded Aspirations

"I started taking an interest in the architecture field because it dabbles with spatial design and form making. However, I struggled a lot when I did my three years of architecture degree here locally. I think it's because we were taught to constantly come up with a solution-based design for most of our projects. I didn't do very well back then and I remembered feeling defeated and accepted the fact that perhaps I wasn't very good at this..."

I decided to give architecture a second shot and pursued a master's degree in the United Kingdom (UK). I discovered, to my surprise, that their teaching approach was entirely different from where I came from. We were taught to mainly question the subject content of our project. That simple approach changed many things for me because all along, I had been struggling and forcing myself to produce answers and solutions through design but never actually stepped back and placed much time to think about and question the subjects of my research. Before that, I never knew that I could dwell deeper into research and develop in-depth content.

My interest in installation art started while pursuing part two of my master's degree in architecture. During my time there, I had the opportunity to travel to different cities in the UK and around Europe, where I visited and experienced various installations. Some of the more memorable ones that I personally enjoyed were 'Sensing Spaces: Architecture Reimagined' (2014), an architecture exhibition with works by seven architects, including Kengo Kuma and Álvaro Siza, held at The Royal Academy of Art, London and Olafur Eliasson's 'Olafur Eliasson: Contact' exhibition (2014) at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris.

I found that these kinds of installations not only alter one's perception of space, it also evokes an immersive spatial experience that can leave visitors questioning and contemplating about the subject content of the artwork. It can leave one emotionally overwhelmed, which was how I felt recently, after experiencing Antony Gormley's Exhibition (2019) at the Royal Academy of Art, London. What I loved about these forms of art is how the existing site context is also considered and interrogated in relation to the art piece - fundamentals, which I felt that good architecture would adhere to.



When I returned to Malaysia, I landed my first exciting project called 'Footprints' by chance. It was an architectural bare-boned sneaker design in celebration of Air Max Day. The aim was to produce a medium that expressed a marriage of architecture and sneakers. After completing it, I realised that I have an innate desire to pursue this line of work. However, I didn't have the confidence to do so because it was unconventional, and I assumed that it was one of those once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity type of project. Thus, I decided to join a local architecture practice.

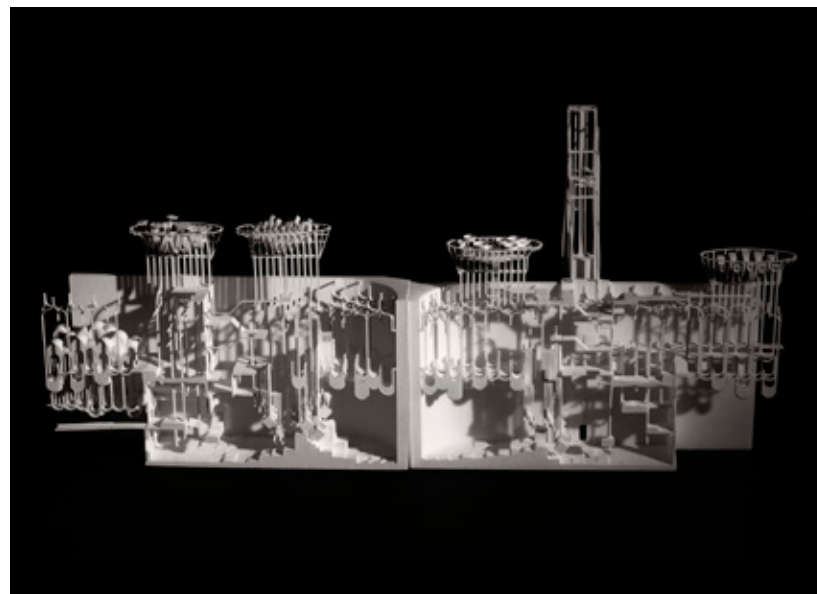
A year on, I had the opportunity to design a large-scale public art mural for a community centre in Petaling Jaya, under the architecture firm I was working for. It was my very first public art installation. The project was an example of how the fields of art and architecture merge in a sense that it uses a multi-dimensional approach to address the brief, which was about designing in ways that include and highlight the community. I believe that murals can play a significant role in and acts as a catalyst for the neighbourhood and community to establish and strengthen a sense of place and integrate social values within the neighbourhood.

It took me nearly two years while working in that practice to realise that I still truly wanted to do what I did before I joined the practice. During that period, I met Anton Garcia Abril from Ensamble Studio, one of a few architects I look up to. He gave me a piece of advice that gave me some level of courage to pursue what I was afraid to do. He encouraged me to continue getting involved in projects like Footprints and expressed that he wished that it could be built ten times bigger – like the scale of a building. I remember laughing in disbelief at his comment but thought about what he said the following day and began thinking that it was quite possible to do so, and all I needed to do was just try.

I spent nearly a year experimenting and producing various ranges and scales of designs. It was during the end of that year that I received the opportunity to design a temporary spatial immersive installation called 'Eden' for a new retail mall. That project was my first large-scale installation that took two months to complete. Eden garnered a fair bit of public attention, which eventually landed me another public art installation project called 'Projection' a year later. Looking back, thinking about Anton's advice for me, it hit me that my initial disbelief was proven otherwise.

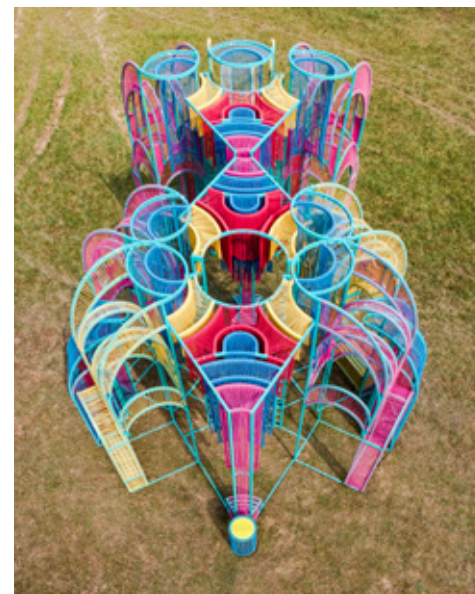
Although installation art is nothing new in various parts of the world, in Malaysia, it is still an unfamiliar territory yet to be explored in depth. This can prove challenging in pursuing this line of work. However, as said by Oprah Winfrey, "Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new centre of gravity. Don't fight them. Just find a new way to stand." I have since moved on with a new goal – to continue to surprise myself!" AM

BELOW Model of first year student project, Mappa Mundi: A Map Maker's Dream



PREV PAGES & ABOVE Eden, a temporary spatial immersive installation at a retail mall in Kuala Lumpur

BELOW Projection:kite, a public art installation project at the Good Vibes Festival 2019

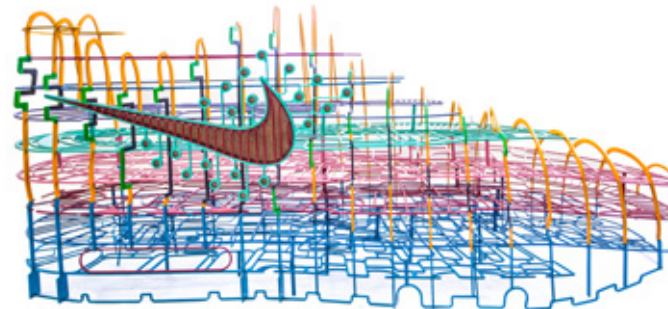


ABOVE PJ Kita street and wall mural for a community centre in Petaling Jaya



RIGHT COLUMN Aerial view and soil production landscape model of second year student project, Soil City

BELOW Models of Footprints, an architectural bare-boned sneaker design in celebration of Air Max Day



Pamela Tan is an architectural designer that explores various fields in art, architecture and design. Her work blurs the boundaries between disciplines that embody narrative and values in all forms. She aims to propose speculative ideas that seek the subtle unseen and unveil the unknown delights in all scales. Pamela obtained a Masters in Architecture RIBA Pt. 2 from the University of Greenwich, London. Her first year architecture design project entitled 'Mappa Mundi: A Map Maker's Dream' was selected to be exhibited in The Royal Academy of Arts. She was the recipient of the PAM-Tan Sri Ar Chan Sau Lai Award 2016.

