

Borneo Mansion by Design Network Architect

Villa Sielen Diva

Jinhold Hotel &
Serviced Apartment

Sabah State
Library

King Henry
VIII College

National Institutes
of Health (NIH)

Liu Men Hotel

The Wood Box

#speakeasy
Salam Cempeng

Interview with
RIBA Scholarship
Winner Siti
Nurafaf Ismail

PAM Housing
+ Urbanity
Symposium

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Situated within an uninspiring neighbourhood of terrace houses built in the 1950s, the Borneo Mansion is designed to make a bold statement. Experimenting with unconventional construction methods and integrating a rather uncommon choice of material – ordinary raw concrete – the project is challenging the notion of luxury by celebrating the beauty found within the ordinary.

Bold



The project site is located in the outskirts of Kuching at Jalan Batu Kawa, in a densely residential area on a long and linear piece of land that is double fronted, with the legal access facing the terrace houses. Borneo Mansion is the first double-storey house in a series of three houses planned for the entire development. The client is an interior decorator from Kuching but is now based in Bali and runs a furniture gallery.

An adaptation of Contextualism, The Borneo Mansion's design concept is largely referenced to its wider surroundings, ultimately embedded in the larger Borneo narrative; incorporating concepts of textures and layers found in the Borneo tropics (the Pinnacles and Borneo rainforest) into functional living spaces. The consistent dialogue of contrast (an adamant feature of the Borneo

landscape), is further continued through the usage of contrasting materials, textures and greenery as a theme throughout the house. Plants are creatively layered and integrated into the modern spaces to generate aesthetic intrigue, adding both dimension and depth. This creates unique focal points and facilitated both a sense of privacy and curiosity, ultimately resulting in a private dwelling with a public presence – such as the inviting yet mysterious spirit of Borneo.

Asides its Borneo inspiration, the Borneo Mansion is very much a reflection of the nature and character of its charming and unassuming client, who is an avid explorer, collector, and storyteller. His rather humble persona but rich life experiences is further represented in the predominant usage of concrete (a humble construction material) to

Main Entrance



EQULY
Facade Inspired
by Mulu Caves





THIS PAGE, FROM TOP
By the pool / Car
porch frontage

RIGHT PAGE, FROM TOP
Sunlight filtering through
the trees in the courtyard /
The layering of natural and
built living spaces



construct a luxury home. Aligned with the Borneo narrative, "To see beauty in the ordinary", the house is designed to be his home and work space when he is back in Kuching. The client's brief asked for a house that is at once homely yet standing out as a uniquely designed studio. One that is modern and rooted in Asian tropical design that can respond well to climate and culture.

A refreshing departure from classic detached houses, the double-fronted Borneo Mansion challenges the notion of luxury by converging the courtyards (commonly exterior spaces) into an extension of 'interior' living space. Architectural luxury here redirect occupants to their surroundings by allowing them to be immersed completely in nature without compromising modern-day comforts. It focusses on a new luxury – the luxury

of transitional (interior and exterior) spaces.

Borneo Mansion is nominated for the natural luxury that it creates. Aside from the natural finishes of raw concrete, the house is also placed in the middle of a lush, informal landscape with a courtyard garden and multiple wall openings, creating a home that exudes luxury whilst at the same time harmonises the built-environment with its surrounding nature.

The Borneo Mansion has no evident dividing line between the house and garden. This 'law of contradictions' was resulted in celebration of the building's contextual placement – paying tribute to the island of Borneo. The multiple layering of spaces, as well as the dialogue of organic (nature) and structure (concrete), gives the suggestion of blending and contrast, a common characteristic

of the natural scene in the forest and tropics of Borneo. It is a process of balancing divergences and affinities.

Heavily influenced by the Borneo narrative, the design of the house aims to be a translation of it into tangible spaces for people 'to search deeper within'. Much like the mysteries of Borneo, the house constitutes a myriad of vibrant spaces – all unique, unexpected and most importantly, functional. Its fairly humble exterior served as a diversion. Visitors are transported through a compendium of collectibles and stories through the spaces, inherently done by sparking curiosity in all the details.

Inspired by Brutalist Architecture, the double-storey house is constructed entirely using a 1.2m x 2.4m module (plywood formwork) to facilitate an economical and efficient construction process of

recycling the plywood formwork for various parts of the house. During construction, wet-works are minimised by limiting them only to the bathrooms and wet areas. M & E plumbing and electrical wiring are also integrated into the structure.

The architect chose to use concrete construction for its tectonic qualities, durability (security) as well as the monochromatic nature of the concrete surface, which makes an ideal backdrop to showcase the client's collections. This project is celebrated for its modern, Asian tropical design and its usage of modular concrete construction, creating an economically-sustainable project which does not lack, but instead maximises the aesthetic aspects by utilising the beauty of raw concrete. AM

TEXT BY THE ARCHITECT

Link bridge above the courtyard



TOP The mansion's double frontage

