



## OF PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

*Within one of Kuala Lumpur's most tranquil enclaves,  
the Annexe house extension reconciles its modernity and  
the past by embracing the power of family.*

WORDS NIZAR MUSA / PHOTOGRAPHY ADELA ASKANDAR & SHAMIN SAHRUM



**D**riving into Damansara Heights is like putting on a pair of noise-cancelling headphones; one minute, you're surrounded by the endless cacophony of Kuala Lumpur traffic, the next, total silence. It's an impressive feat of escapism considering the area's proximity to the city. As I take a winding road past homes from various eras, it's evident that residents here continue to enjoy their relative peace and calm. Even the trees, branches and vines grey with age, contrive towards seclusion and solitude, obscuring entire houses like the ones lining the cul-de-sac I've turned into. Among these homes, is Jelutong House.

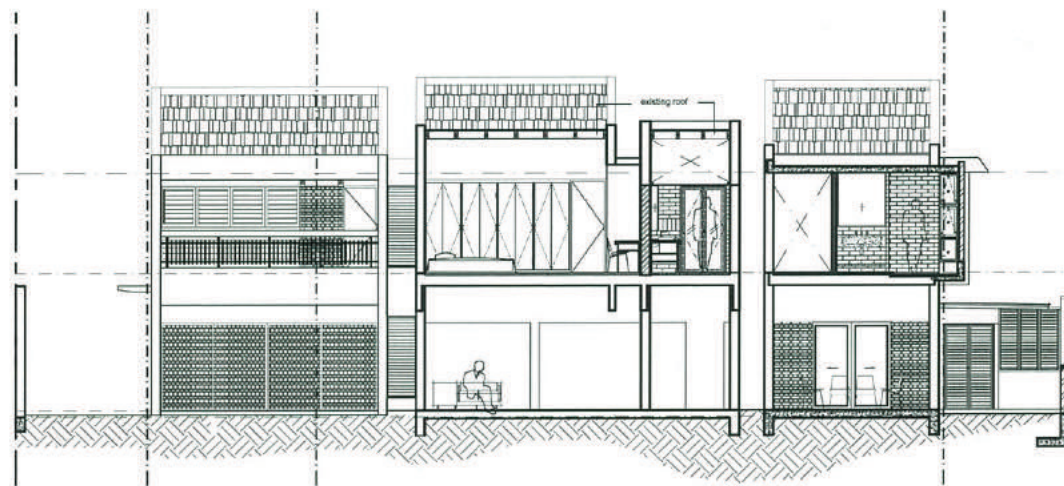
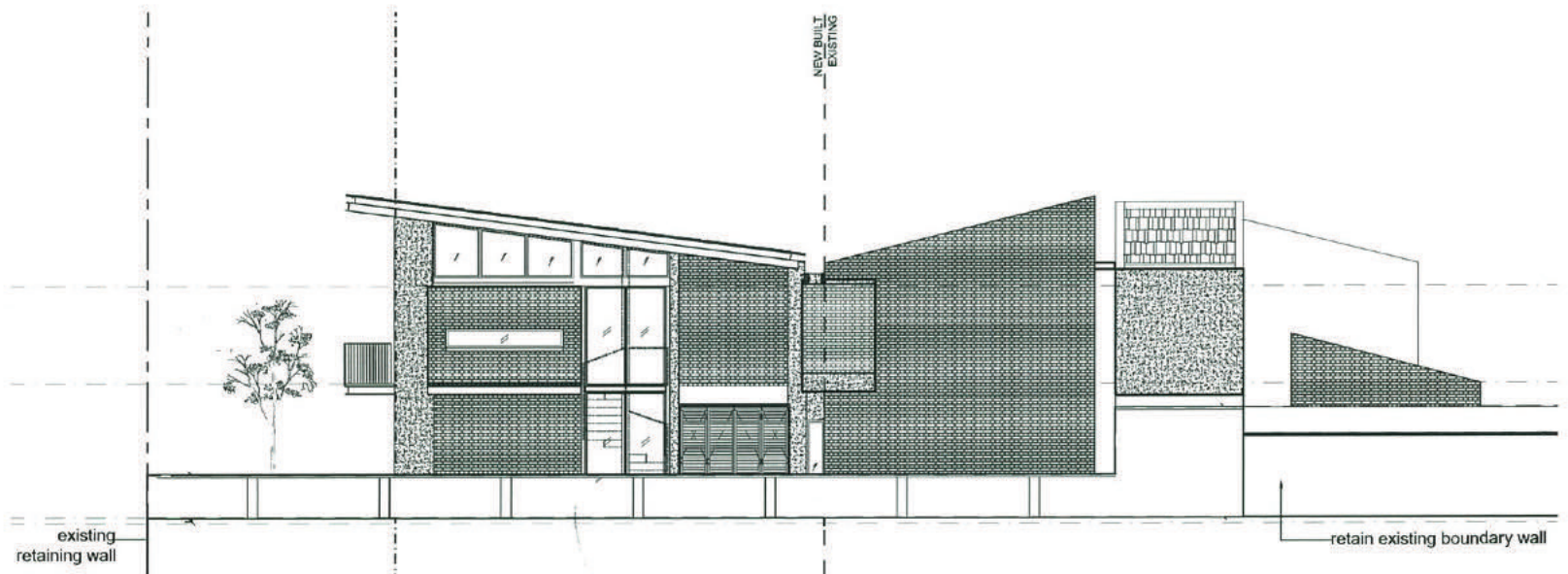
The familiar sight of a late-sixties and early-seventies Malaysian bungalow greets me, with its trademark sloping car porch, white stucco walls, red brickwork and black-painted grilles. Something else projects out from this old residence, and it's very twenty-first century. And as far as extensions go, rarely have I seen one that fits in with the original quite like this. I make the short trek up the inclined driveway to meet the owner and her intriguing abode.

#### EARTHLY TIES

I step into a generous living area-cum-hall that I imagine must've hosted quite a few parties in its day, suggested in part by the classic green-leather-upholstered bar counter near the main entrance. And while parts of this interior have seen a modest upgrade, certain elements like the vertical timber wall panelling and white terrazzo flooring, continue to speak of their time. In fact, it's hard to believe the area being anything other than an old KL suburb, yet according to Datin Valerie Yong, the home owner, Damansara Heights was once just a rubber estate on a hill. "The whole place wasn't even developed," she tells me, recollecting a time when she and her late husband had acquired the land with the help of his employer. "Of course, we had no money to build a house. So, we sold the land to a contractor, and bought a linked house instead."

The Yongs' relationship with the property would persist over the years. Having built the original house, which incidentally won a PAM House Award in 1970, the contractor then sold it to a family of doctors, who so happened to be acquainted with the Yongs.

**1. The Jelutong House scratches on the importance of family values through an integrated design scheme**



"In 1973, they wanted to migrate to Australia," Datin recalls, "and when we bumped into each other at a party, they asked my husband, would you like to buy back your land? So, we did. It's so funny, we were destined to live here." Since 1975, the house has put a roof over three generations of Yongs. The vicissitudes of life, however, would prompt its first major transformation in forty-five years.

#### HOME WITHIN A HOME

"When my daughter, Beverly decided to come here and look after me, they didn't want to just move in. They wanted their own privacy, their own wing," recalls the Datin. With that direction agreed upon, Beverly, who is an art consultant, got in touch with renowned local practice, Studio Bikin, and the project began in earnest.

"It's a self-contained unit, it even has its own kitchen," explains Shamin Sahrum, the assistant architect of Studio Bikin who oversaw construction. Built on the existing patio and garden,

the two-storey Annexe is compact in its 10m x 4.5m footprint, and is connected to the main house on both levels. To me, it resembles a studio apartment, a sentiment Shamin shares, but it's far from being a tiny home. Generous floor-to-ceiling heights, offered by an unadorned concrete soffit below and a soaring flying roof above, make spaces seem considerably larger.

Coupled with folding doors that open out to lawn and patio, and windows with panoramic views, all of which almost full height, you instantly have a home that offers more than those three or four times the size. Even when you're climbing the Annexe's *piece de resistance*, a staircase of perforated metal treads arrayed around a tubular core, you're constantly connected to the outside world – well, as connected as your vision can take you before those huge trees get in the way

#### STITCHING OLD AND NEW

Designing an extension for an old house isn't as straightforward as you might think. There are always choices to be made,



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- 2. There is a touch of 'brutalism' in the structure with deliberate exposure of raw concrete finish
- 3. Looking at the dining space, the composition is calm and collected; much like the entire structure itself
- 4. Unique juxtaposition seen at the staircase area

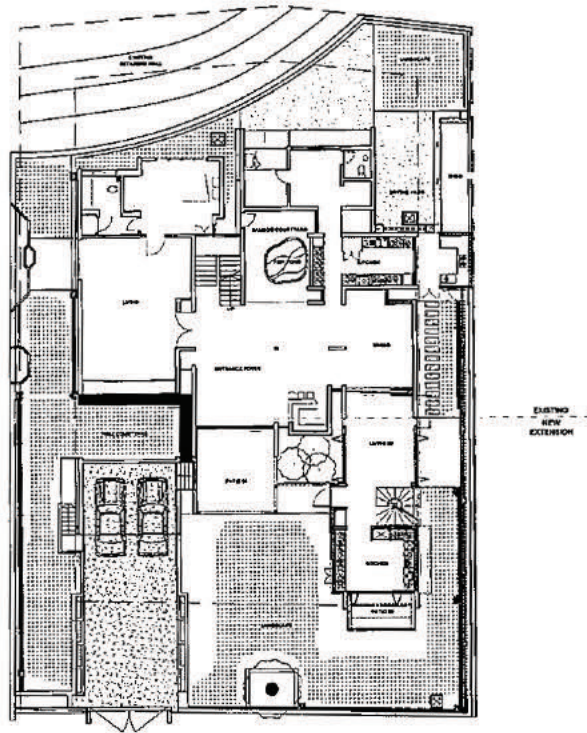


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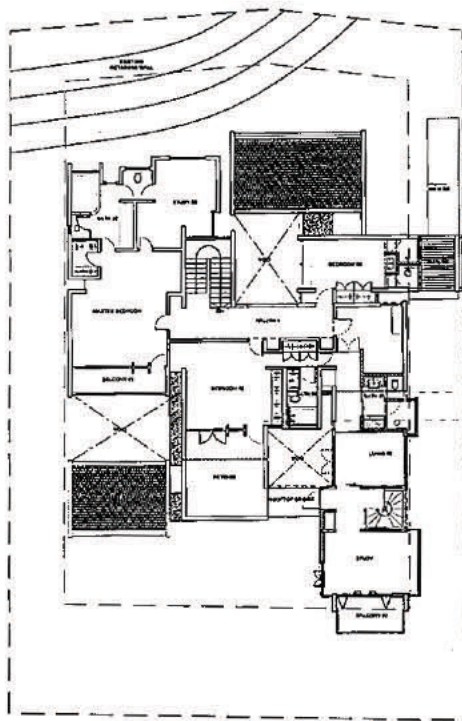


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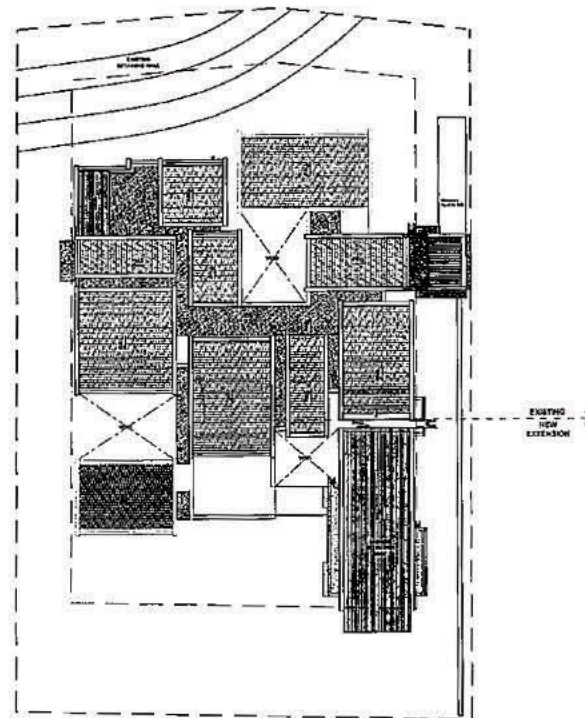




PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED ROOF PLAN

and sometimes, for no good reason. I've seen new builds opting to decouple themselves from the get-go, their designers preferring a bold, rejectionist approach that doesn't pander to romantic notions of legacy or continuity. On a bad day, I may be guilty of such ideas. Bikin, thoughtfully, have eschewed that mindset in favour of respecting the original, yet imbuing enough of their trademark lines and palette into the Annexe to show that it is, by and large, a contemporary addition.

Looking at the end result, you'd be fooled into believing the design exercise was easy. The form is a balanced affair, equal parts solid and transparent, with an all-glass-and-steel street-facing façade, and capped by a slender flying roof that mirrors the gradient of the main house. Par for the course, it seems at first.

Then you start zeroing in on the details, and you begin to realise the amount of effort, and refreshing guile, Bikin has put in.

Using exposed brick to mimic the existing red, then dousing that in a coat of white to resemble the original stucco, is one of a few subtle moves Bikin employs to harmonise appearances. Another is the main house's balcony balustrade, which, at a glance, looks as if it was around during the 1970 prize-giving ceremony. But it isn't. Not just any safety barrier, Bikin's deceptive addition extends the balcony right up to the Annexe via a steel walkway, connecting the new upper floor to the master bedroom, which, incidentally, lies in the old house.

Internally, there is little jarring effect between spaces. Perhaps on the ground floor, where seventies charm meets modern



5. A spiral staircase is employed as the center point of focus

6. Despite its cool concrete look, the interiors are infused with warmth and a relaxed understated luxury



**JELUTONG HOUSE**

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- BUILDING AREA / 7,120 FT<sup>2</sup>
- COMPLETION / 2017
- ARCHITECT / STUDIO BIKIN
- LEAD ARCHITECTS / ADELA ASKANDAR, FARAH AZIZAN
- PROJECT TEAM / DAPHNE YAP, SHAMIN SAHRUM, ATIKAH IDAYU AHMAD
- CONTRACTOR / BINA IMPERIAL SDN BHD
- ELECTRICAL / TCL GREAT ELECTRICAL SDN BHD
- ENGINEER / PERUNDING HASHIM & NEH SDN BHD
- QUANTITY SURVEYOR / YONG & MOHAMAD FAIZ SDN BHD



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