

ROOM

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EUROLUCE 2011 REPORT

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GREEN FINGERS

Modern homes with a tree-hugging, kampong spirit

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CONSTANT EVOL UTION

ARCHITECT FARAH AZIZAN PUTS HER
OWN SPIN ON HUMBLE MATERIALITY
AND SEAMLESS INTEGRATION WITH
NATURE FOR THIS HOUSE AT 15 TENGGIRI

In a little corner of vapid, gentrified Bangsar, there is a quiet revolution in the air. The old school vibe around these 1950s terrace houses densely built around a sliver of a park has taken on a whiff of cool bohemia with more recycled bricks, unfinished concrete slabs, and tactile landscaping than your average suburb.

Kevin Low and Ng Seksan, two of Malaysia's most celebrated proponents of architecture defined by honest materiality and integration with nature, have had properties in the area for some time, and now BC Ang, who has ties with both architects, is knee-deep in the renovation of another while Farah Aziz, who has worked under Kevin and Seksan, is completing not one but two projects. The house at 15 Tenggiri is a milestone for Farah as it is the first house she has renovated under her own steam, although the young architect has done small interior projects independently of Seksan Design.

The entire profile of the house will be eventually obscured by a green curtain when the creepers grow in profusion



THE EXTENDED WRAPAROUND
BALCONY ON THE FIRST
FLOOR LOOKS AND FEELS LIKE
A GIANT WALK-IN AVIARY

THE ANTITHESIS OF PRISTINE WHITE KITCHENS, THIS ONE EMBRACES IMPERFECT RAW EDGES AND HUMBLE BUT HARDY CONCRETE FINISHES. ITS GLORIOUSLY OPEN CONCEPT INCLUDES A GARDEN AS WELL.

Farah had just bought her first home when her friend coincidentally bought a house in the same neighbourhood, and promptly became her client. Although the corner terraced lot had immense potential, it had passed through several hands and been unloved for many years.

"When I first visited the house, it was a right state. Dark, damp and dank, it felt so claustrophobic I just wanted to open it out," Farah explains. She proceeded to rip out the accumulated layers of haphazard add-ons that included the unfortunate garden that had been completely tiled over. Although reducing the original layout of three rooms to two may sound foolish, losing one room was a small price to pay for the new rooms – both opening out to a newly added balcony which wraps around the outside of the upper floor.

Courtyards and an air-well were also created to bring as much light and air as possible into the house. In a nod to Farah's landscaping pedigree, greenery was also brought into the house via rows of metal planter boxes that form part of the wall facing the back alley, and a trio of trees growing in the middle of the kitchen.



ROOM 64



The bedroom on the upper floor has a private view of the kitchen through the folding accordion doors.



ROOM 65

INSTEAD OF CROWDING THE UPPER FLOOR,
FARAH SACRIFICED AN EXTRA ROOM AND
GAINED A WONDERFUL DOUBLE-HEIGHT VOLUME
STREWN WITH A LIGHTING INSTALLATION OF
BULBS HUNG ON ELECTRICAL INSULATION ONCE
SEEN ACCOMPANYING RICE COOKERS



Having the luxury of a friend as a client was a boon for Farah who admits her design process is very organic. "Apart from planning the programme of the space, everything else was achieved on a week to week basis," she says. For instance, the rugged look of the stairwell looks like a rather cool sponge painting technique but is actually layers of old paint that have been uncovered and left untouched.

"Before the walls were painted, they were being primed but I liked how they looked when the workers had scraped off the paint so I kept it as a feature," Farah enthuses. "I don't like things which are too polished. Really, really perfect interiors are not what I subscribe to. I like the patina, a bit of history is important to inform people and give it character."

Farah's love for experimentation in finishes can also be seen in the poured concrete. "I love concrete because the outcome of the concrete comes from the mould. With the kitchen island, I used a ream of leftover bubble-wrap in the office to produce the speckled effect. This is why the aesthetic of 15 Tenggeri from the raw but weathered surfaces to the mottled wall-edges embody the Japanese Zen concept of wabi sabi, finding beauty in things which are imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete.

In the midst of this unfinished, almost industrial canvas, Farah incorporated retro details that feel very right for the house. "I wanted to add something that reflects the old school vibe of the neighbourhood," she emphasises. Some of the accents were originally there and left in their natural state like the beautiful curved wooden stair banister with Art Deco balustrades, and the air-vents embedded in the walls. Others like the woven trellis and bench on the upper floor balcony were crafted from humble PPE rope.

"I wanted a green face for the elevation of the house because you can see the upper balcony from the road. The PPE rope I used to create the creeping trellis and woven bench is basically the type used in laundry yards," Farah reveals. "I guess subconsciously I had the 1950s vibe of the neighbourhood in mind because after the bench was woven, it's reminiscent of the woven rope furniture of that era."

The upper floor was designed as modular spaces which may be converted for different uses



As the trees grow and flower, and the creepers begin their slow, steady ascent up the ropes, the interesting thing about 15 Tenggeri is that it feels like the beginning of a new chapter in its life. "This is something which I learned from Seksan. After you complete a project, the planting won't look the same in 10 years. It's an evolving process. In the same way, that's my approach to architecture. I'm not precious about the building that I do. It's important that the people who live there put their own stamp on the house, and that it grows and adapts with them." R

EVEN IN THE UNCOMPROMISING CONCRETE VISTA OF THE MASTER BATHROOM, THERE ARE RETRO TOUCHES LIKE THE CIRCULAR SHOWER AREA REMINISCENT OF WATER WELLS FROM THE PAST

LEFT IN ITS ORIGINAL STATE, THE WOODEN BANISTER WITH ITS BEAUTIFULLY SHAPED IRON RAILINGS GIVE AN INKING OF THE HOUSE'S HISTORY



ROOM 08



ROOM 09