

AM

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



The Keranji House in Tabuan Jaya, Kuching, dramatically turns its back to the street front, featuring a tactile wall of pierced fair face brickwork devoid of glazing that dominates the front façade.

BY KENNETH CHEONG

Turning Heads





Designed by Ar Arlene S M Chew of S.M.L. Architects, the Keranji House is precariously located in a trapezoid-shaped site with the apex fronting the point of a 90-degree angled street. The only apparent openings to the house is the front door and a linear peep window from the kitchen. A rectangular tube on the first floor, encased in pierced brick on one side is turned 90 degrees so the side of the tube becomes the façade that faces the street front.

The severity of this bold move, explains Arlene, is purposely necessitated by the existing site conditions, “The response to the site was clear from the beginning. The four large existing Acacia trees had to be kept and they became pivotal to the whole design; one tree in front, one in the middle and two at the back. Naturally, we decided that the house should have a more reserved and formal frontage towards the street and then open up and embrace the existing garden and trees at the back.”

“The four Acacia trees dictated how the house was to be planned. Adopting a north-south orientation, the building was designed around these trees; one marking the entrance and the others forming the courtyard beyond where the plan of the house maneuvered around.”

Beyond the front door, the house opens literally to the back garden. Three encased spaces are placed in a generous plan infilled with a wide barrier-free circulation space Arlene terms a conversation terrace.

The living and dining space are encased in a glass box with sliding doors on all three sides. The back of house consisting of a kitchen, maid’s quarters and staircase in another glass box and finally a study opening directly into the garden.

Open to the outdoors, the interstitial space between these rooms operate beyond being mere functional circulation space. With the sliding doors of each glass encased box open, the threshold for the rooms dissolve to create an open plan living space truly embracing the outdoors.

“We were approached to design a small and simple house that could capture the essence of the site and be a home where they could connect with their green surroundings. This was to be a retreat for their family and a haven for their extended family of rescued cats and dogs. They had an appreciation for what was natural, honest and embraced the idea of openness.”

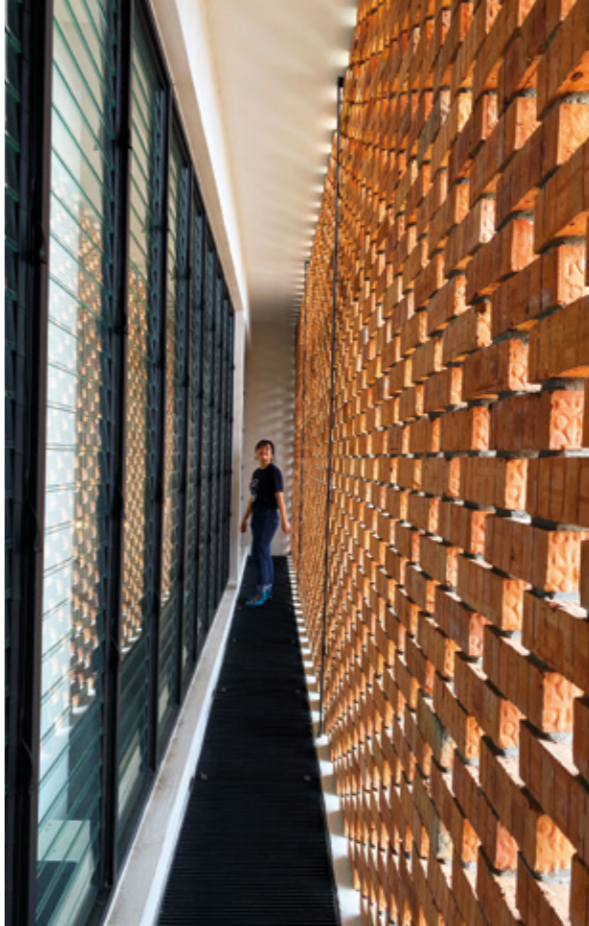
Central to the programming of the spaces in the house is the kitchen. The dramatic double-height



PREVIOUS PAGE While the front is reserved, the rear opens onto the gardens beyond

LEFT PAGE A floating steel staircase connects within the central double-volume kitchen

RIGHT Behind the veil. The laced bricks provide shade from the sun, privacy to look out to and a changing play of light and shadow into the spaces behind



Walkway leading to the central terrace from the service area. This is one of the two links that constantly draw air into the space beyond, creating a wind tunnel effect



Kitchen becomes the focal point on the ground floor taking centre stage with generous frontage to the courtyard. A steel plate staircase suspended from steel rods fixed to the ceiling draws the eye to the first floor. As the heart of the house, the double-height space of the kitchen links the first and ground floor visually and provides communication between the upper and lower floors.

The staircase leads to a naturally ventilated open deck with the steel rods attenuating to become a porous security wall to the upper level of the double-storey height kitchen. Two bedrooms, a master bedroom and family room trace the boxes below with the infilled circulation space enlarged to become an open family deck infilling the rooms.

On the upper floor, the sheath of pointed brick wall reveals itself to be a cooling mechanism for the house and not a mere accoutrement of vanity. The brick wall membrane is offset from the outline of the house to provide a porous protective layer to the rooms inside. A walkway of steel grating traces the wall and infills the offset cavity space to create a naturally ventilated air cavity. The pointed brick wall becomes a buffer and a Bernoulli mechanism which draws air into the air cavity to cool the house internally. A bedroom, the upper level of the double storey-height kitchen and a family room opens to this air cavity through a threshold of full-height operable glass louvres to fully take advantage of this cooling effect.

The sophistication of the openness and porosity of the house explores the complexities of tropical design further than the conventional architecture deployments of deep overhangs and solar orientation. The house breathes through the naturally ventilated double-storey height kitchen as the heart of the house and arterially through the generous open corridors resulting in an air-conditioning-free house with the exception of the bedrooms.

"The Keranji house reflects the essence of tropical living. It shades, it breathes, and it welcomes the outside in and embraces the elements. Permeability is expressed consistently through a play of laced bricks, concrete blocks, steel screens, timber and glass; permeable to the elements, permeable to the residents."

According to Arlene, "We believe that when designing a private house, we are charged with the responsibility of interpreting our client's dreams and desires for an ideal that is deep set in all of us; everyone a little different, the dream springing from a place of love, safety, comfort, delight and happiness. The house become a physical manifestation of the owner's dreams and desires and therefore affects the lives that dwell in it. Designing a home should never be something to be taken lightly."

The extrapolation of the rooms in the Keranji House into an open plan with a barrier-free circulation space invites a new lifestyle where inhibitions are left at the front door and one truly lives freely in commune with nature. AM



LEFT The front gate of folded perforated sheets allows visual connection to the house and air to pass through

PREVIOUS PAGE
The entrance draws one in and then out to the courtyard beyond

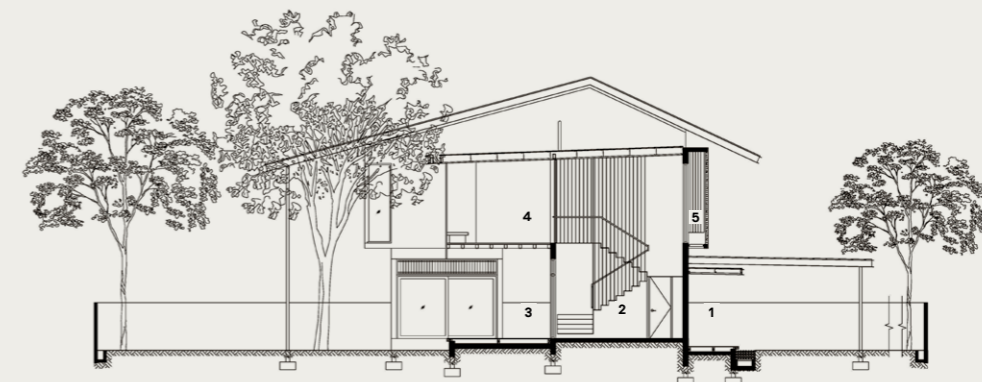
RIGHT, FROM TOP
The transition space becomes an infill to the glass boxes / The living room encased in glass





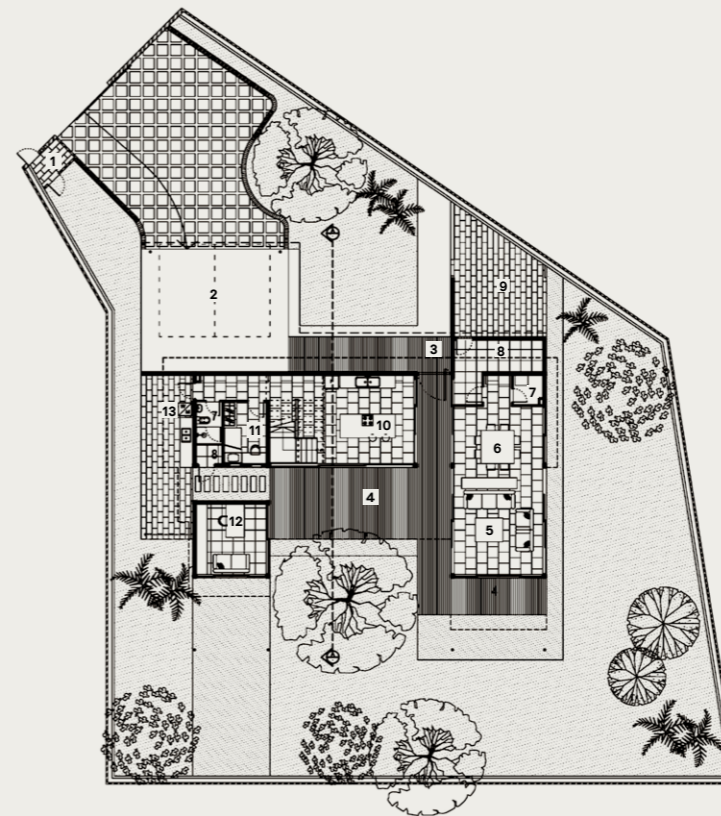
LEFT Deep roof overhangs shade the volumes within the house

LOCATION KUCHING, SARAWAK	PROJECT TEAM LANCE LIM SEOW LIANG	DATE OF COMPLETION 25 JUL 2019
PRINCIPAL USE PRIVATE RESIDENCE	DESIGN PERIOD SEP 2015 TO FEB 2016	SITE AREA 1,115SQM
ARCHITECT FIRM S. M. L. ARCHITECTS	CONSTRUCTION PERIOD MAY 2017 TO JUL 2019	FLOOR AREA 557SQM
PROJECT PRINCIPAL ARLENE CHEW SWEE MEI		PROJECT COST RM1.8MIL
		CONSTRUCTION COMPANY PRECIOUS CONSTRUCTION SDN BHD
		CIVIL ENGINEER PERUNDING J. L. MAJU
		PHOTOGRAPHER ARLENE CHEW SWEE MEI



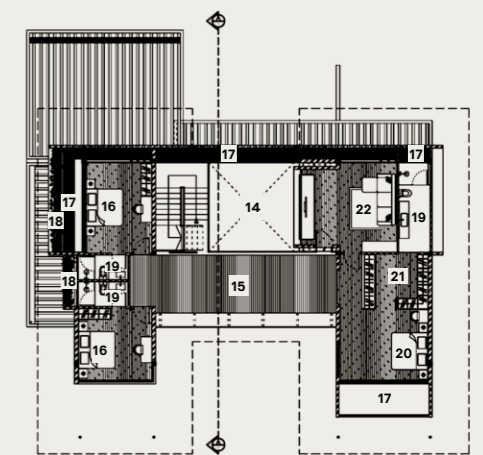
Section A

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Double Volume Kitchen
- 3 Terrace
- 4 Open Family Deck
- 5 Screened Gallery



Ground Floor Plan

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Bin Centre | 5 Living | 10 Kitchen | 15 Open Family Deck | 19 WC |
| 2 Car Porch | 6 Dining | 11 Maid's Room | 16 Bedroom | 20 Master Room |
| 3 Entrance | 7 WC | 12 Study Room | 17 Screened Gallery | 21 Walk-in-Wardrobe |
| 4 Conversation Terrace | 8 Storage | 13 Laundry | 18 Planter | 22 Family Room |
| | 9 Private Yard | 14 Void Over Kitchen | | |



First Floor Plan