

| ANALYZING AND THEORIZING ARCHITECTURE OF AR.EMMANUEL CANLAS |

Ar. Emmanuel had devoted himself into architecture career since young. Throughout the years his endless passion in architecture drives him to explore in different kind of projects ranging from residential to skyscrapers. However, he claimed that his favorite design project was Queensbay Mall in Penang. (Figure 1) There are 3 external contributing factors for Ar. Emmanuel's design to be discussed here which is: Geography, Socio-Culture and Architecture theory.



Figure 1: Overview of Queensbay Mall

In year 2002-2004, Ar. Emmanuel work in RSP Architects Sdn.Bhd. as a project architect. Back then, he had actively engaged himself in various types of master planning and urban development projects. The reactivation and master planning of the existing Mega Mall at Bayan Bay Penang (now Queensbay Mall) is one of the remarkable achievement in his career path.

Due to its strategic location, (Figure 2) Queensbay has received overwhelming response from home buyers and investors. Strategically located along the south-eastern foreshore of Penang Island, Queensbay is midway between the Penang Bridge interchange and the Bayan Lepas Industrial Park. It is also situated in an area declared as the Penang Cybercity 1 (PCC1) which forms part of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). Accessibility to Queensbay is supported with excellent infrastructure via the dual carriageways of Bayan-Lepas Jelutong expressway. (Pen Properties, n.d.)

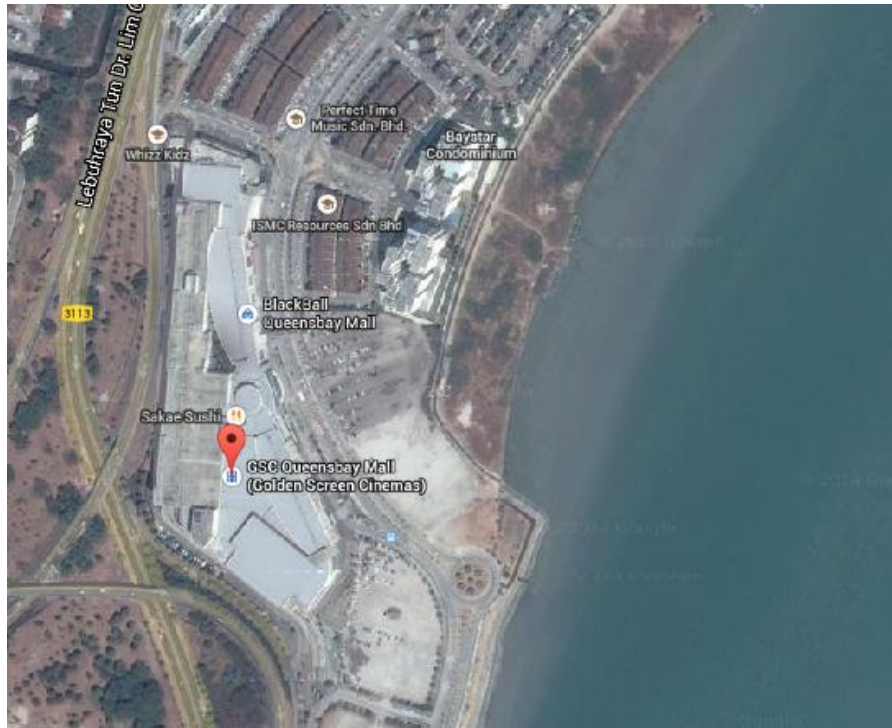


Figure 2: Queensbay facing waterfront

Queensbay Mall is currently the largest retail mall development on Penang Island, boasting a gross built up area of 2.6million square feet. It had emerged as one of the landmark in Penang. Even more interestingly, Queensbay Mall has revolutionized the retail scene in Penang as truly family orientated lifestyle shopping mall with its variety of food, fashion and entertainment outlet. (Pen Properties, n.d.)

Sited in a waterfront avenue (Figure 3), Ar. Emmanuel thinks that it's the most challenging yet the most interesting part. Since he is inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, responding to nature context had always been his design objectives. He intended to create sustainable buildings that is respond to the environment and functional, which can accommodate the societies' needs.



Figure 3: The waterfront avenue

To engage with the society and environment, one of the key issues is to create an active and viable waterfront. During master planning stage, Ar. Emmanuel strived hard to design a form that respond to the site's topology. As he mentioned, he is a nature lover and his inspiration did come from nature too. The views of seaside inspired him to design a 'sea shell' form which maximize the views and aspects of waterfront. (Diagram 1) Ar. Emmanuel designed Queensbay Mall in a way that the building line swept in a smooth manner where the curves follow the bay's curvature to provide a harmony sense, at the same time provide panoramic viewing experience. The center plaza is slightly protruding with transparent facade, giving an indication which it serve as a viewing platform.



Diagram 1: Form of Queensbay Mall follows the waterfront, providing panoramic view experience

Matching to Queensbay Mall's exciting lifestyle concept, the retail, food and beverage outlets, entertainment spaces, community activities integrated with the site

context and generate a distinctive experience to the users. It provides a vibrant waterfront living to its residential development that is guarded in an enclave that exude a sense of tranquility and peace. Whether it is a leisurely sunset walk by the waterfront, alfresco dining on the wharf or shopping galore at the nearby mall, residents will enjoy the best of urban living and natural surroundings. (Pen Properties, n.d.)

According to Ar. Emmanuel's design principle, not only rigid structural elements are important, landscape plays an important role in integrating the building with nature environment too. Landscape can influence the microclimate. The form of the landscape can have a beneficial effect on the energy consumptions of the buildings and will therefore reduce costs. (Tzonis.A, 2001) In this case, the vegetation has served as a very good windbreaker for the sea breeze coming from waterfront.

As shown in figure 4, the master plan had defined the public domain through structured landscape elements including hardscape and soft scape that connect the individual precincts visually and environmentally. These elements temper the outdoor environment and create a series of integrated landscape outdoor spaces.

The landscape is essential for shade within the tropical environment creating an ambience for pedestrian encouragement. However the trees are in a human friendly scale as to promote intimacy between human and nature and allows visual permeability to the seaside. The trees lining up had serve as an invisible barrier that divide the roads and soften the hardscape. At the same time it also serve as a visual axis that guide users walk around the building, optimize the circulation experience.



Figure 4: Landscape design around Queensbay Mall

As Penang is a famous tourist spot and waterfront are more likely to attract tourists, Ar. Emmanuel intended to create multivalent characteristic for Queensbay mall, which not only accommodate locals' entertainment but also serve as recreation spot for the tourists too. Ar. Emmanuel as an outgoing and passionate individual, he believes that a balanced community of both permanent and tourist population will ensure a vibrant population. Coupled with the provision of entertainment and food and beverage for tourism, this will assist in the variety of opportunities and outlets for the permanent residents. (Mardhiah L., 2013)

To achieve the target as a recreation spot as well as social hub, having public spaces to congregate users are essential. The master plan's scheme encapsulates a large public open space containing community and social activities. The square (Figure 5) is activated by retailing and food beverage outlets. (Mardhiah L., 2013) It is the center point of the shopping mall and the interior is lighted up by day light through the skylight. Ar. Emmanuel has employ the sustainability elements in his design which is using natural lighting and it subsequently reduce the running costs of the mall as well as increasing energy efficiency.

During festive seasons there are events and activities held in the square (Figure 5) and attract users. The space contains the provision for carnival and outdoor theatre and entertainment as well as being a transport node for water taxis and water transport. From the users' point of view, a vast open space with a significant scale difference had unintentionally directed users to walk towards the space. Through these features, it becomes the point of convergence and dispersion, increasing user flow. That are the form that activates the movement pattern and activities to engage with the users.

Besides that, by playing with volumetric differences, there are several cavities (Figure 6) form within the building which allows visual and physical permeability, creating an interesting circulation experiences. The voids draw users' attention to view through different levels and allow them to witness the activities going on and they get directed

by these activities to certain destination. These features had encourage user interactions and is one of the strategy to realize the space as a social recreation spot.



Figure 5: Public space which allow Users to held activities and gather The crowd

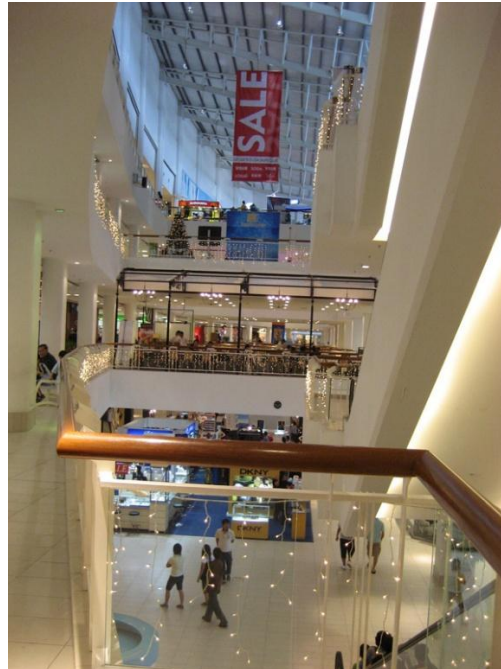


Figure 6: Cavity spaces bring interesting circulation experiences and the permeability allow users' interaction

Being a Philippines that live and work in Malaysia, Ar. Emmanuel noticed the differences in architecture style in both the countries. Although he didn't stressed on critical regionalism as his design principle, but most of his works possess the characters of it unintentionally. The way he design and plan meticulously according to climate factor, site topography, cultural background, trying to bring the best of the building's identity in this tropical region.

Critical regionalism aimed to reflect and serve the limited constituencies in which it was grounded and cultivate a contemporary place-time oriented culture. (Frampton,K.,1983). It is a progressive approach to design that seeks to mediate between the global and the local languages of architecture.

According to Frampton, critical regionalism emphasize on climate, topology, light, tectonic rather than scenography and the tactile sense rather than the visual. Ar. Emmanuel has the same approach with Frampton. Besides respond to climate and site topology, he likes to employ passive design into his building. Speaking of tactile sense rather than visual, it can be seen that Queensbay Mall has rectilinear façade with humble light color rather than angular or organic façade with garish colors that attract users visually. However, the tectonic presentation and the texture play a more important role.

As shown in Diagram 2, the metal roof, plastered walls and curtain wall portrays a contrasting relationships of materiality, which then creates solid and voids in terms of visual permeability too. (Figure 7) Light, metallic structural elements provide a good alternative to the opaque massiveness of masonry. The result is an attractive contrast between the solid, robust masonry and the gracefulness and brilliance of the metal used. Glass add its transparency and brilliance to this contrast, as well as providing reflections. (Tzonis.A, 2001)

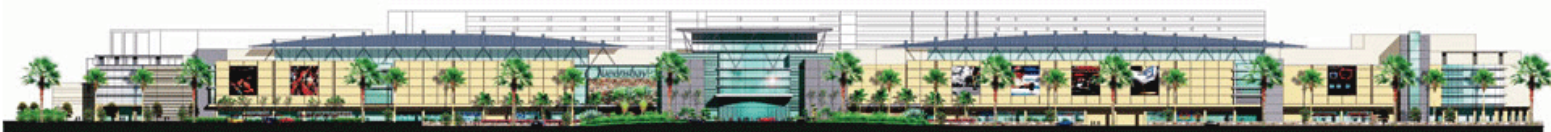


Diagram 2: Façade elevation



Figure 7: Strong contrast of materials

Frampton also mentioned one of the critical regionalism characteristics is using top lighting and exposing the elements of construction, speaking more or the relationship of the building to its space. From figure 8, it is to see that the metal trusses on center public square are exposed to show the material truthfulness. Besides that, the natural lights penetrates through small windows around the metal roof, giving an illusion of dancing lights coming in from clerestories around the dome. As put forth by Tzonis and Lefaivre, critical regionalism need not directly draw from the context, rather elements can be stripped of their context and used in strange rather than familiar ways. This is the evidence where Ar. Emmanuel deals with conventional materials with extraordinary ways to generate new characters and identity to the building.



Figure 8: Building elements exposed

From the article 'Three tropical design paradigms' by Bay Joo Hwa Philip, he had mentioned the three main aspects of tropical architecture. The three interrelated aspects are:

1. Regional expression: as a result of responding to needs related to the tropical climate
2. Performance: in providing climatic comfort and convenience for social and cultural requirements
3. Materials and means of building: appropriate to the tropical zone (Tzonis, A, 2001)

The aspects above are all mentioned and applied by Queensbay Mall. Despite fulfilling the tropical architecture criteria, Ar. Emmanuel has put effort in establish a Malaysian urban identity through Queensbay Mall's design. This is to promote the uniqueness of Penang Island and set up its own characteristic in terms of architecture. There are two primary elements have been designed to establish the urban identity of Queensbay mall:

Firstly, the waterfront promenade containing a range of landscape experiences. The tropical plants brought to the context and established a distinctive interstitial space for the users, promoted the interactions between human and nature. The landscape as an intermediate elements that seamlessly merge the building and the waterfront. It brought the crowd in and hence portraying a unique waterfront identity.

On the other hand, the public square containing community focus. Due to its strategic location it attracted local users as well as tourists. The waterfront emerged as one of the strong identity in that area. Penang's specialties other than culture and heritage it is the scrumptious food that make the city famous. Somehow, function of the space signified certain semiotic language which then giving a certain impression to the users. Such as the top floor of Queensbay mall is a food court, it can be a potential node in the context. With the activities happening in the space, such as retail, food and beverage outlets, recreation and combination with the nature environment it had depicted the vibrant lifestyle concept of Queensbay Mall.

Meticulously planned and integrated, Queensbay Mall distinctive architecture designs and world class amenities would put this development as a most sought after and a source of promising investment opportunities in the region. It also realize Ar. Emmanuel's dreams of creating a sustainable and functional building which accommodate social needs, at the same time emitting its own identity, emerged as the local landmark that can be one of the representatives of critical regionalism building, ignite the nation identity and make the locals proud of it.

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