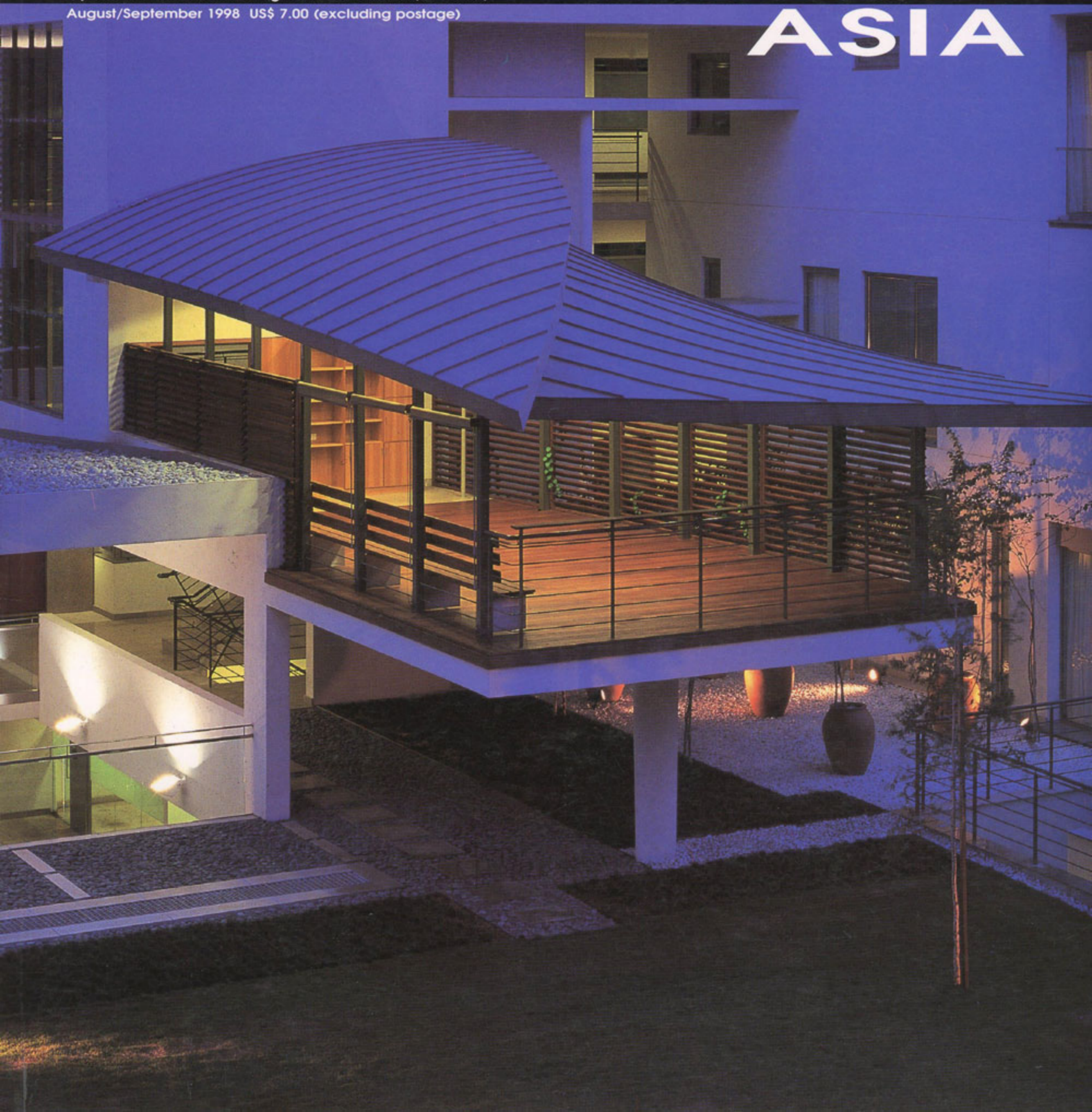


architecture ASIA

a journal of the architects regional council asia (ARCASIA)

August/September 1998 US\$ 7.00 (excluding postage)



Damai Suria - Fringe Urban Dwelling

C' arch architecture & design
EP Architects



Located a stone's throw away from the Petronas Twin Towers, one can glimpse fragments of the towers from the apartment building named Damai Suria. Paradoxically, we are not in the heartbeat of the city centre but thinly veiled within a recognisably verdant residential neighbourhood, casually nick-named "Ambassador Row" for the numerous Ambassadorial offices and residences. The traditional setting is a collage of generous bungalows and a vignette of mature rain trees. The decorum is one of privacy and courteous greetings. It is not by any imagination a participant in the public realm.

Whilst the area has remained primarily residential, the form of dwelling has evolved from generous bungalows to commercial residential developments in the likes of Damai Suria. Transitory interests in the vicinity include restaurants set up in converted bungalows but these structures are few. These sites and "remnants of eras gone by" remain prey to escalating land values and the opportune time to promote another instance of fringe suburban dwelling.

The traditional values of living within the quiet confines of the private individual plot are now transferred to a scheme with collections of many dwellings within a similarly scaled plot. In a development like Damai Suria, the essence is privacy, granted the demands of exclusivity. Contrary to traditional bungalows, the "public" does come into play in the shared spaces of the complex. Its participants being the inhabitants of the complex do not need to engage the street and town.

Disengagement effectively creates an experience of the outside from within the apartment that is basically visual and referential in the context of group dwelling. Views of the gardens and the city are merely a reminder, or points of orientation within the unit. Unlike the private gardens of a bungalow, one is not guaranteed the privilege of a contemplative stroll or quiet solitude within the communal gardens.

In Damai Suria, the configuration of the scheme is a composition of the various ideals from the past which at moments are paradoxically juxtaposed against modern demands and values. Nevertheless, this issue challenges the



orthodoxy of development thinking and urban dwelling in Malaysia.

From the street, Damai Suria is immediately recognisable, as its physiognomy is a composition of considered apertures, movable metallic screens, vistas, courtyards and gardens and a noticeable departure from the pseudo tropical style that adorns most contemporary developments.

The building is essentially a three storey structure with a sub-basement garage under the Jalan U-Thant block. There are thirty units of apartments of various layouts which are assembled in small clusters around four smaller courtyards. These clusters are linked by a fairly generous and deep garden, clubhouse, swimming pool and the entrance forecourt. The entrance is signified by an extremely generous incision in the length of the Jalan U-Thant block and immediately reveals the spaces described above.

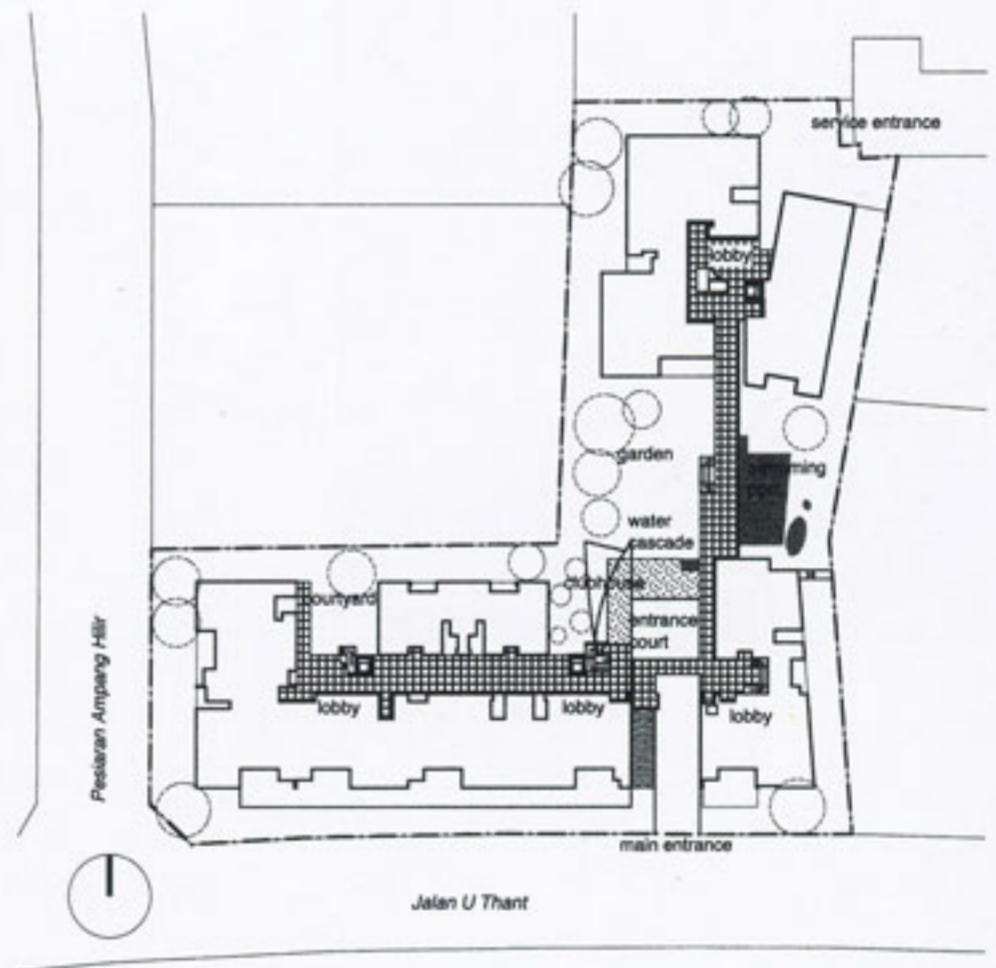
To complement the idea of privacy in this context, louvres were introduced for several reasons. The louvres are designed as foils to the busy street along Jalan U-Thant. These louvres in their adjustable positions allude to varying forms of animation within the building. With the louvers drawn or closed and the blades adjusted, the depth of the terrace is revealed or withdrawn from the street. Lighting and ventilation within the apartment is tempered. Given the propensity of the aluminium to disperse heat, the foil serves as a good heat sink cum diffuser to counter direct solar gain. The layering of building elements also acts to counter the noise from vehicular activities on Jalan U-Thant.

An aspect of the design that was incorporated with care is the element of natural light and ventilation. The public spaces usually draw a cooling breeze through the passages and courtyards and intermingled with lots of natural light, the journey through the complex becomes an enjoyable and effortless experience. In a similar vein, the clubhouse offers a space that allows the casual meeting of neighbours previously not offered.

In essence, the concoction of past refinements, contemporary paradoxes and constructive confrontation with the orthodox are gestures of sensibility.







Site plan

Project Data	Client : Downtree Properties Sdn Bhd	Project Team : Nick Jackson	Civil & Structural Engineers : Arup Jurunding Sdn Bhd	Photographer : Gerald Lopez
Architects : C'arch architecture & design	EP Architects	Eric Parry	Mechanical & Electrical Engineers : Kotrek Konsult Sdn Bhd	Contract Sum : RM 22.75 million
Project Team : Nello Gregori	I-Wen Foo	Henry Teo	Landscape Architect : Sawara Design	Site Area : 1.499 acres
		Wilson Sng	Quantity Surveyor : Davis Langdon and Seah	No of apartments : 30
		Chris Wong	Contractor : Teamwork Corporation Sdn Bhd	Location : Jalan U-Thant, K.L