

## Design Value

Architects have always been dreamers and visionaries. They possess an uncanny ability to transform a dream or vision into built reality. The cities and world of the future are already on the drawing boards in our offices and the minds of the young architectural students in universities.

Participants at the PAM Strategic Planning Workshop confirmed through SWOT analysis that the greatest strength of an architect that sets him apart from all other professionals is his unique ability to design. This skill allows him to take on the leadership role in the building team as the key person who has a concept and an overall idea of what the end product would be like. Clients and employers trust the architect's unique skill to deliver a building that - for many months before completion - is nothing more than just a series of promises, sketches, visuals and drawings. All others add and assist the architect to bring this dream into reality.

If the ability to dream, visualize and design is the architects' strongest selling point, then isn't this the particular skill that we should quicken and sharpen so as to ensure that we continue to reap the full rewards available to us? Is this not the reason that a large percentage of architectural education credit hours evolve around design subjects?

The recent emergence of China as the world's factory that can and will make all kinds of consumer items needs to be understood and grasped. The manufacturing plants in China are producing and reproducing at rates never seen before. With such high rates of production and reproduction, coupled with a low wage environment, prices are beaten down to incredible levels. It is no surprise that consumer items worldwide are now mostly 'Made in China'.

These are still early days. We have still not seen the wave of massive cheap sales and dumping of the by-products of this production engine. The building industry is not spared. The age of the 'China equivalent' has been upon us for some time already. An interesting observation in manufacturing and reproduction is that the more you make, the cheaper it gets. The value of the product drops. This can be seen in the illegal ability to "clone" fake branded watches – the clones are getting better or closer to the real thing but the values are dropping. Thus the observation can be drawn that copying and mass reproduction can devalue a product.

In contrast we see a re-emergence of the value that can be added from good design. The resurgence of so-called 'branded boutique goods' is also design driven. Good design can create added value. With proper branding and marketing, the added value is increased many times over.

Property developers and owners in Malaysia are beginning to understand this: creative design can give them an edge over the competition. Whilst location is perhaps still key to any property development, we have seen examples where good design concepts have created enclaves of high valued properties in quite ordinary areas.

One of PAM's objectives this year is to implement and bring again to the fore the architect's creative ability to design. Good design will be promoted through lectures, talks, publications, design discourses, design competitions and awards for design excellence. It should be noted that good design does not necessarily mean large, flamboyant and expensive projects that overflow with dynamism. Good design can be found in the simplest and smallest of projects. At the last PAM Awards for Design Excellence 2004, a refreshing take of the common toilet block along the Plus Highway won.

Architects have a big role to continue to dream, visualize and implement these concepts into built reality. By doing so we are creating and adding wealth and value to society.

**Ar Dr Tan Loke Mun**  
PAM President

### CALL FOR PROJECT SUBMISSIONS

All architects are invited to have their works published by submitting their most notable projects. For further information contact [bluelinemedia \(Ivy\)](mailto:bluelinemedia@ivy.com) at 603 7880 0730 or email [ivy@lineofblue.com](mailto:ivy@lineofblue.com) for submission guidelines, deadlines and enquiries.

#### THEMES

- APR 06** Transportation Hubs
- JUN 06** Renovation, Conservation & Adaptive Re-use
- AUG 06** Architects' Houses
- OCT 06** Schools and Institutions
- DEC 06** Hotels and Resorts