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The Launch of KLAFF2018 Merdeka Interviews Book

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Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM), or the Malaysian Institute of Architects, launched the Kuala Lumpur Architecture Festival 2018 (KLAFF2018) Merdeka Interviews Book at the Kuala Lumpur Tourism Bureau, Jalan Tangsi on Monday, 2 April.

The event was launched by KLAF2018 Royal Patron YAM Tengku Zatashah binti Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah and the ceremony was witnessed by Guest of Honour Tan Sri Mohd Amin Nordin Abd Aziz, KL Mayor; Ar. Zairul Azidin Badri, President of Lembaga Arkitek Malaysia (LAM); Richard Kirk, National President of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA); and Ar. Ezumi Harzani, Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia's (PAM) President.

The Merdeka Interviews book is a collaborative effort between Dr Lai Chee Kien, architectural historian, and Ar. Ang Chee Cheong, Director of KLAF2018, which puts together, in a single volume, research and interviews conducted over a decade with key architects, engineers and artists on projects such as the University of Malaya, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Stadium Negara, Muzium Negara, Parliament House, Masjid Negara and Subang Airport. It also captures stories of women and men that have contributed to the development of Malaysia.

During the event, PAM President Ezumi lauded the collaboration on the book and encouraged the architecture fraternity to continue with more efforts to preserve heritage buildings for future generations. "We must realise that preserving historic buildings is a herculean task for us because as architects, we, too, play a pivotal role in instilling national identity and pride in our young ones."

In his speech, the PAM President also thanked the KL Mayor for his generosity in providing the Kuala Lumpur Tourism Bureau as a venue to host the Merdeka Interviews Book launch ceremony. He shared that these buildings along Jalan Tangsi hold historical significance for PAM as it was previously their headquarters for 39 years. The building next door, formerly known as Loke Hall was the birthplace of one of PAM's pioneer presidents, Ar. Kington Loo, who is also one of the 17 subjects in the book.

Ezumi also hoped that the book will mark the beginning of other architectural publications that will record not only the early years of independence but also the progression of buildings and our nation.

The KLAF2018 Royal Patron YAM Tengku Zatashah in her speech also lauded efforts in providing recognition to the ordinary women on the frontlines of nation-building.

"I am proud to see that the book recognises the unsung heroes of Malaysia's nation-building story such as the lai sui muis or Kongsi Women, who toiled in the muddy fields to bring us iconic buildings," said Tengku Zatashah.

"For far too long, ordinary women like them were unheralded and absent in our historical records. The Merdeka Interviews is an ode to our nation and a fitting tribute and recognition to these women and other contributors to the landscape of Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas," she added.

The Royal Patron also shared that she was heartened that the framework of interviews drew inspiration from a speech by the then DYMM Agong in 1963, which highlighted respective virtues of citizenship closely tied to key buildings and institutions, such as the parliament house where democracy is practised, stadiums to celebrate sports and groom patriotic, healthy citizens, a university to educate the Rakyat, among other buildings to benefit citizens and establish a cohesive nation.

During the event, PAM had announced that their online bookstore, www.PAMonlinestore.com will go live on April 6 (Friday). Visitors will be able to purchase a copy of the Merdeka Interviews Book and other architecture publications from its online store.

For more information on KLAF2018, kindly visit the website: www.KLAF2018.com or visit our Facebook and Instagram: KLAF2018.