

**“WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE AND
WHO IS AN ARCHITECT?”
(FOR NST EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
BY MR. JIMMY CS LIM – PRESIDENT OF P.A.M.)**

1. What is Architecture

Architecture is very often referred to as the ‘Mother of all Arts’. It embodies all aspect of Art expressions; Vision, Touch, Sound, Space, Time and Motion. A structure becomes Architecture when it embodies all these qualities and more.

In Malaysia, we would include Tradition, Culture, Contextualism and Regionalism as the modern architectural history is based on Western values and roots. Let us examine the different aspects, which make up architecture.

Vision	: It has everything to do with seeing. It must be beautiful and exciting to look at.
Touch	: Beautiful buildings should not only be good to look at, they ought to be good to touch, and to feel the texture of the materials used. And what temperature responds to touch.
Sound	: Music has to do with the art of sound. So has architecture. Sound can be introduced into buildings by using water, gravel or stone, wood etc. Any materials which are sound producing can be cleverly introduced e.g. the Moorish gardens used water to produce and create a soothing effect.
Space	: The planning, creating and control of spaces on the horizontal plane or on a vertical stack to produce delight and surprise are important in architecture.
Time	: As buildings have bulk, to enjoy a delightful building, one requires time to move through to experience it. Therefore, time is an essence in good architecture.
Motion	: To move through space, that is motion. Space, Time and Movement are inter-related and interdependent upon each other. You cannot have one without the other.
Tradition	: Architecture should respond to the tradition of the place it is in. It should reflect the traditional craft, way of building and building materials available.

- Culture : Cultural values, way of life, customs should be reflected and the spirit captured in modern architecture.
- Contextualism : Architecture cannot survive on its own. It has to interact with the environment where it is located, be it natural or the built. When in a natural environment, architecture must complement nature. In the built environment, architecture must contribute to enhance the quality of the man-made environment.
- Regionalism : Architecture must be responsive to the region it is in. The climate and geographic elements must be properly addressed and analyzed. Tropical architecture should provided for maximum shading and wind movement to induce comfort and not be reflective of the cold temperature zones.

Generally Art has everything to do with beauty but nothing about function and responsibility to end-users; whilst Architecture may be termed as “Art with Responsibility.”

Putting up a building is simply not architecture, if it only serves the utilitarian purpose. When the building not only provides utilitarian function but also creates an emotive response that provides a spiritual uplift to the end-user, is Architecture.

2. Where is Architecture?

Architecture is everywhere. We live it, we work it, we use it everyday, some of us love it, whilst some of us abuse it. Our homes, schools, hospitals, libraries, offices, mosques, churches etc; are architectural edifices.

Architecture touches the lives of everyone. In this respect the architect must be a universally read and learned person.

An Architect must be:

- a) a Psychologist : so that he may understand people, their nature, their temperament and solve their psychological need in architecture.
- b) a Sociologist : so that he may understand the social problems of the society e.g. Malaysia, with different ethnic groupings, their values and needs are different.
- c) a Historian : so that in understanding history and our past, he may design buildings that are sympathetic to our cultural and traditional spirits.

- d) a Geographer : so that he may understand the elements of siting, wind and rain directions; and to sensitively orientate his building to maximizes advantage for comfort.
- e) a Planner : so that in understanding the function and different activities he has to plan the requirements in a logical manner.
- f) a Space Designer : so that as a 'conceptioneer' and 'imagineer' of space utilization, that he may design and plan the spaces in the building to make they attractive and usable.
- g) a Evaluator of Cost : so that he may be able to estimate and provide some guideline and control to his projects.
- h) a Builder : so that he may understand the problems associated with construction and is able to instruct the builder how to go about work on site. This will also strengthen his ability to supervise and ensure work is properly done.
- j) an Engineer : so that the structure which the architect designs will have an 'order' and 'system'. In order to design one must understand how loads act and react; and the lines of force and movement. Some engineering knowledge is essential to allow him to conceptualize, co-ordinate and check the engineering details and drawings prepared by consultant engineers.
- k) an Environmentalist : so that he will be more sympathetic to the environment, and nature. The Architect must respect what nature has provided and not to waste all that is given to Man.
- m) a Landscaper : so that architecture and nature may form an integral part of overall 'harmony', a working knowledge of plant and plant-life is essential and helpful.
- n) a Conservationist : so that he is sensitive to and against wanton waste. Where possible architects try to reuse recycled materials, conserve energy in designing buildings, and conservation of heritage for prosperity.
- p) a Quality Controller : so that he can be a 'custodian' of good

taste, good sense, and sensitivity towards all aspects of life. Architects should be the preserver of quality of life, lifestyle and all of that which is embodied in our heritage.

From the above it can be seen that the architectural profession demands responsibility, is wholesome and interesting. It is responsible for ensuring and dictating the quality of life, and interesting in that it has so many aspects to consider. There are no dull moments and the challenges are many.

3. Who should be an Architect?

Besides passing all the examinations and getting the necessary grades to qualify for admittance into a architectural course in a recognized school of architecture, the student ought to have a love for;

- a) the Arts;
- b) and appreciation of Forms;
- c) Heritage and Tradition;
- d) And a sensitivity for all matters related to our Senses;
- e)

as afterall, Architecture is all about *people* and, about *things of beauty*.