



Seen here in Manila, Pomeroy visits six cities for season two of 'City Time Traveller' in light of architectural appreciation.

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Picture courtesy of Channel NewsAsia

"I KNOW! I know, tea without milk. I mean we, the British, we're the only ones who bastardise it. Tea was never drunk with milk. The Dutch never take milk. The Chinese have never drunk tea with milk," said Professor Jason Pomeroy, award-winning eco-architect, founding Principal of Singapore-based Pomeroy Studios, urban planner, academic and now returning TV presenter of Channel NewsAsia's *City Time Traveller*, growing weary following a second request of supplementary milk to accompany the breakfast tea.

Pomeroy is a man, by his own

Pomeroy is a man, by his own admission, with "plenty irons in the fire". — Picture by Adib Ramli



admission, "with plenty irons in the fire".

Following intense deliberations initiating a tea-filled afternoon at the Majestic Hotel, we finally get around to talking travel, architecture and finding the balance in life.

Season two of *City Time Traveller* brought Pomeroy, 41, to Kuala Lumpur in a quest for Malaysia's architectural identity, reflected an Islamic vision. Other excursions took him to Manila, Kolkata, Shanghai and locations off the beaten track such as Paro, Bhutan and Amritsar, North India, reckoning six cities in all.

The overarching aim was one of architectural appreciation, "Our past ancestors got it right — buildings of the past provided natural light, natural ventilation, water conservation and appreciation of local crafts and materials. They were celebrations of cultural traditions that brought society together."

He continued: "These concepts have been somewhat challenged by urbanisation, population increase, technological advancement. The TV series is about how we used to design the built environment — cultural architectural

enlightenment for the masses — television is a wonderful medium to communicate with the broader public."

Pomeroy explains everything in concise detail, keeping it in layman's terms, serving as the paramount draw to his show.

Though it's not just profound expertise that carries Pomeroy's profile, architecture is an impassioned trait that simply doesn't switch off — as we converse the esteemed architect is already assessing the structure of the Colonial Suite we occupy, "this low-lying louvre is angled to prevent driving rain penetrating the space yet air can percolate through while the glass above is frosted to prevent direct sunlight — everything serves a purpose."

There's a pause. The milk still hasn't been brought. He goes to retrieve it personally.

For *City Time Traveller* Pomeroy, half-Malaysian by birth, deciphers Kuala Lumpur's grandeurs. Be it KL Sentral's "Moorish, Mughal, saracenic" appearance or Datuk Baharuddin's coconut tree pillars, inspired by his hometown Jeram, erecting Masjid Negara, Pomeroy unearths the fascinating and presents it in the same vein.

From childhood building wigwams in his mother's backgarden to being taken to St Paul's Cathedral by his father at eight, Pomeroy went on to study at Canterbury School of Architecture and University of Cambridge before holding an honorary professorship at

University of Nottingham and a tenured professorship at Universita Iuav di Venezia. Nowadays he's a "relentless traveller", constantly in meetings as Pomeroy Studios develop green cities for the future. All the while his mind will be ticking, every location there'll be a check on wind direction, annual rainfall, humidity levels — a drive bent on a thirst for knowledge and constant reinvention captured by infectious entrepreneurialism — in his words.

Teaching students in Venice twice a year sipping hot coffee at the Yacht Club is considered enjoyable respite, overlooking the Adriatic sea, no less. Trips home to Singapore are "intense" in the studio, though does allow time to spend with his wife and daughter.

"It does fill me with fear that one day I'll wake up and think: 'Have I sacrificed my personal life in lieu of creating built environments and a body of research for the general public?'" Pomeroy muses.

"I'm immensely grateful for the life I have. I feel I'm giving back to society through designing the built environment, teaching and educating about it."

"Trying to find that balance is my holy grail."

Episode three of *City Time Traveller* (Kuala Lumpur) can be accessed via www.channelnewsasia.com. The remainder of the series will be broadcast every Saturday, 8:30pm on Channel NewsAsia (ABNXcess channel 293).

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