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JASON POMEROY: RIGOROUSLY GREEN

29 OCT 2012



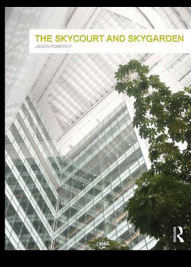
Architect, master planner, and professor Jason Pomeroy founded Pomeroy Studio in Singapore in 2012. In a well-attended seminar at BEX Asia 2012, he discussed his studio's work in zero-energy development, greening urban spaces, and vertical urban theory. Afterward, Narelle Yabuka continued the conversation.

You mentioned that you're working on a book about vertical urban theory. Sounds interesting. Tell me more.

The book summarises about 10 years of my research into skycourts and skygardens as alternative social spaces for the 21st-century urban habitat. It tracks the evolution of such spaces right from the hanging gardens of Babylon, through to global projects under construction, to the future visions of designers, filmmakers, and today's students. It also profiles some leading architects, and how they tackle the issues of urbanisation and climate change. I think it will be a useful guide for the design of skycourts and skygardens.

When will it hit the shelves?

It's being released in 2013 by Routledge.



"The Skycourt and Skygarden" by Jason Pomeroy

How do you merge your research work with your design work?

At Pomeroy Studio, we have a catch phrase: 'creative vigour and academic rigour'. We balance creative flair with the objective science of our research that covers social, economic, environmental, spatial, cultural, and technological parameters. We avoid subjective conversations about design, and focus on objective answers to critical questions.

We're thus able to discuss with our clients how we undertake, for instance, computational fluid dynamic analysis to understand the airflow through the building in order reduce reliance on air conditioning by X%, or how we use spatial configurational analysis to consider the socio-cultural character or sensitivity of a place.



Idea House. Image courtesy of Trends Ideas

What kinds of projects is Pomeroy Studio working on right now?

In Singapore, we're working on two eco houses that approach zero energy. This is a natural progression from my research into zero-energy development that I started when designing the Idea House (the first zero carbon house in Asia) with Broadway Malyan for Sime Darby. That house reinterpreted the Malay kampong tradition.

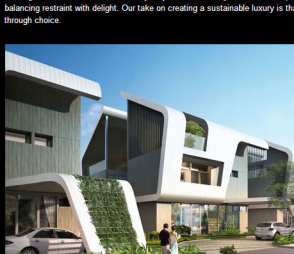
The new pair of houses – which we call B Haus – reinterprets the black-and-white bungalow tradition of Singapore. It evokes a sense of the verandah and courtyard, and uses these alternative social spaces as a means of capturing natural light and ventilation. B Haus incorporates rainwater and grey water harvesting, solar hot water technology, and modular design for rapid construction.



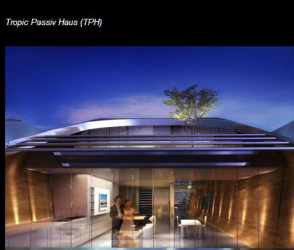
B Haus

Would it be easy to use some of these ideas in multi-residential projects?

Yes, in fact we have a 250-bungalow housing project in Kuala Lumpur [Tropic Passiv Haus] that similarly allows us to explore elements of the past to inform the present. We're evoking the longhouse tradition as a contemporary house typology. It's close to being a zero-energy development. We're also working on a 6-star eco resort in Malaysia [Passiv Eco Pod]. We've been exploring the complex idea of balancing restraint with delight. Our take on creating a sustainable luxury is that it involves empowering through choice.



Tropic Passiv Haus (TPH)



Passiv Eco Pod (PEP)

Tell me about your high-rise projects.

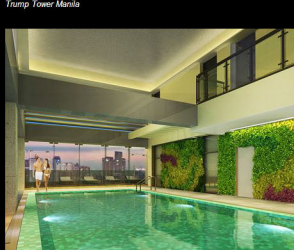
Pomeroy Studio is working on Trump Tower in the Philippines (to be completed in 2016). Despite being a luxury condominium we're still able to reduce energy consumption by 25% – no mean feat for what will be the tallest residential tower in the Philippines.

And scheduled for completion in December 2012 is the tallest skypark in the Philippines, called the Gramercy Skypark. It will be housed within the Gramercy residences.

We're also working on a mixed-use tower in Kuala Lumpur – a vertical city containing retail, residential suites, office spaces, a hotel, restaurants, and sky bars – all with skycourts embedded. It will evoke the cultural identity of Malaysia with reinterpreted mashrabiya screens that will counteract low-angle sun and act as a bio-climatic environmental buffer.



Trump Tower Manila



Gramercy Skypark

How does Singapore perform in terms of legislating for sustainable architecture and design in comparison to other locations?

Legislation plays a very important role in terms of trying to define a sustainable future for the urban habitat and for the citizens of Singapore. The URA guidelines on private terraces, skycourts, and skygardens; the promotion of renewable technologies and energy sources – these are certainly the way forward.

It's not just happening in Singapore. You see it also in the UK where there's legislation that by 2016 all new residential properties will need to be carbon zero, and all new civic buildings by 2019.

That's quite a piece of legislation!

It is. And it shows the difficulty in its implementation. The legislation is being redefined now, as certain things were hard to formalise – for instance the use of household appliances that are not continuously plugged in and drawing energy. I think legislation requires small incremental steps that are a marriage between state and private interests; but they're very noticeable ones in Singapore. You can start to see the urban habitat being transformed by the URA's guidelines.

Images courtesy of Pomeroy Studio unless otherwise stated

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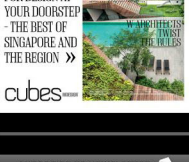
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