Rethinking Ritual In The Malay House
Who Is Your Best Friend?

This manifesto is a tale of two ‘serambi’ or reception decks, arrange oppositely in regards to the central corridor of ordinary Malaysian apartment. The object aims in one aspect in particular, to draw an explicit line of guest segregation, and implicitly marked the gender separation. The attributes between the two ‘serambi’ create an anomaly, as one stood open and the others find its place behind a glass frame; one promotes barefooting before the main door and the other allow you to walk passed the door with your shoes. The oppositions between open and close gesture demonstrate different levels of social degree and sense of respect between the two families, justifying the variance of semi-public and semi-private space, friends and best buddy. Various positions between the two ‘serambi’ compliments social relation in the Malay society. Once the relation getting closer, the thought behind gender segregation is becoming relevance.

The story describes the impact of ‘serambi’ on the social relation of modern Malay families, which are the author and his neighbor, Rustam. In this scenario, the author would like to hold a feast or ‘kenduri’, which he invited the whole neighborhood to attend; especially his closest neighbor Rustam.
Johari and his family finally arrived. It has been quite a long time that we haven't met like this. Sabina, my wife stood there at the main door, while waiting for Johari's wife, Ashah and their daughters putting their shoes at the shoe rack.

Many people were invited tonight. I did invite Rostam, who lived in front of my house. But since early morning, I didn't spot any of his appearance. The glare of his keranji glass blinded my view. Perhaps he was inside his house.
Pak Ali, our neighbour was the first person to be here. Sitting at the 'Jerambi', Pak Ali really enjoyed the evening breeze, with a cup of coffee.
Rostam was my new neighbor. He had three children, two teenagers and one still in primary school. His wife, Aryan, had never spoke to us. But we did saw her once a while. Rostam was a quite person. He didn't talked that much, but he was barrowed with a nice smiley face.
Luckily I shared my scrambi with Pak Ali, who had the same type as mine. I can always ask for his favor if I need more space, especially when I hold a 'kenduri' like today.
In my apartment, shoes were taken off before you enter the main door. The other one is just opposite. I think that walking with barefoot as you enter the house provide more sense of respect, and my 'serambi' will be clean as well.
If Rostam is my next neighbor, perhaps I cannot have the same help as Pok Ali was giving to me, simply because his room was totally closed.
Although Rastam family was new, something for sure that his teenage children always making some 'noise'. Well, you know, teenagers business. So, I might shut my door, because it is not that comfortable for me.
This manifesto is about a centralized kitchen cabinet, which taking its position in the middle of an open plan apartment. The object aims in questioning various implications of rituals on the Malays’ dinning etiquette. The duality of kitchen surface allows the sitting rituals to represent specific routine. Beginning from a sitting platform for preparation, the surface is converting into cooking countertop, which then transforming into dining table and finally dining platform. In the preparation zone, the platform accentuates the Malays habits in preparing food collectively. Meanwhile in the dining area it encourage the culture of eating food by hand. The fact that it is a centralized kitchen criticized on the rituals of gender segregation, as it moves beyond its encapsulate domain to a universal space. However, its flexible compartment made the decency appears. Hence, for Malays, the secret of being ‘decent’ is always initiates from the kitchen, as this is the place where a mother moulds her children.

The story describes the intention of the author to have a unique kitchen environment that will tie her family together. At the same time, she could also shared all of her secrecy in creating a delicious Malay cuisine for the entire family.
It was quite unpleasant working in an open kitchen when the guest had direct view on you. My husband had the same thought as well.

Johari, my husband’s friend came to our new house for visit. It was early in the morning and my daughter were helping me for our house warming feast tomorrow.
After a year, I managed to renovate my house a little bit. This time, I got a nice kitchen that suited my style. Ever wonder how I came out with this idea, but it fit well in my apartment.
Whenever I cooked, I want my daughters to learn it, especially when it comes to today's cooling.

So, they helped me to prepare all the ingredients in a designated platform, which Malays called it 'pongkin'. Sometimes my mother stayed with us, and sharing her recipe as well.

My boy, Ahmad wants to be a chef one day. He never missed any lesson at all.
I would say that my kitchen is unique in its own way. I do love open kitchens, but it needs to have a certain degree of enclosure. The original kitchen was too open. I asked my architect to design a flexible partition for my new one, so that I can help myself when I'm cooking.
There was an intention to create a smooth flow of cooking process: from preparation till dining. So, I requested a "hole at my partition." My kids' always peep through it. I'm smiling when Ahmad always say: "Mom, why did you make this hole, when I just can see your hand, but not your face?" I guess one day he will understand it.
It is not decent when children sit with the elders, hearing and interrupting their conversation. So, whenever my parents were visiting me, I will asked my kids to have their meal at our nice dining platform. Sometimes, I cannot resist myself to join them as well, as I recalled back my childhood memory.
Sometimes, my cousin, Pak Long. Pak Long, Pak Long. Pak Long, etc came to my house; and here comes the problem: my dining table was not big enough to cater for a huge crowd.
I love big pendant light. So, I hang two pendants high at my dining space, big enough not only as lighting... but also act as ' tudung roji' or a cover that protect our meals from flies. Oh, I forgot to mention that I have a new boy, I called him Ammar. Now Ahmad is not alone anymore.
I guess my kids are everything to me. Now, I have passed all my secret for them. It was so much fun sharing. Perhaps, it won't be the same if my husband and I stick with the old kitchen that we have before.
Hide & Seek

This manifesto is basically focusing on the curtain as an object, which becoming a design element for children's room. This object intends to substitute the internal wall, and provide possible expansion for a bigger family. The curtain acts as veil. It highlights the seclusion of genders among children, as well as making enclosure to the most private zone in a house, which is the bathroom. At the same time, its attributes may integrate two open spaces. The opposition between seclusion and integration create a meaning towards privacy and respectability. Hence, the curtain is the ultimate instrument of rituals, as it blurring it beyond its purpose. As for the children, the more you hiding something, the more they are going to seek for it.

The story describes a reflection of the author on his room, and his relation with his family. It is a short narration of his daily life and how it grows up within his environment.
I loved my 'room' so much. It was a big space that I shared with my brother, Ammar. My 2 sisters occupied the other space which still inside my 'room'. Whenever I need them, I just pull over my curtain, and called them. Sometimes, I did encroach their zone. Fatimah, my eldest sister will be mad at me. She will chase me around the house.

My grandparents also stayed in my 'room'. They have their own space next to me. So, whenever they pay their visit, they will stayed there. I love to listen to their story. If I wanted to, I can just flipped my curtain, and I'm with them!
Woke up in the early morning was difficult for me. My curtain was not strong enough to hold the 'urath' of my mother, as she sneaked inside with her 'rofan' everyday. So, at 5:00 am, my siblings and I will be prepared for our first prayer of the day.

As we always performed our prayer together, we always used grandma's space and prayed. Dad will always opened the curtain as wide as he can and gathered the rest of it at women's prayer space.
Normally, dad was the 'imam', but if grandpa was around, he would lead the prayer!
Since my sisters left for boarding school, Ammar and I were occupying their space as Dad started to create his workstation in our ‘room’.
Grandma's space also being converted to a wedding's room for my mother's youngest brother, which I called him "Pak Cik".
I noticed that every night, my parents will surely check on us, whether we went to bed or not. Perhaps my sisters were very well lived according to their schedule, but not for me. I will pretend that I was asleep, once they leave, and everything silent, I will crawl and grab my torch and started reading.
If they were guest in our house, mother will ensured that the curtain was tightly closed, so that nobody can peep through it, especially at the bathroom’s entrance.
All characters are based on Lat’s comic:


All original work is presented by its author.

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