

Colour my world

The word sustainability does not only apply to the green industry. It can be extended to human talent as well, writes

Aneeta Sundararaj

THE word sustainability is often associated with the green industry. Can it be used for anything else?

C.W. Goh, the managing director of ICI Paints Malaysia, extended the use of this word to include human talent. "What about sustaining talent? What about the young people in our society? Can we sustain their talent?"

"I want young people to think, 'If I promote colours and decoration, I feel fulfilled'.

When they think like this, they will learn to appreciate the power of colours and begin to view a hardware store in a different way. It will bring them away from a trading mentality," he elaborates. Goh would like to inculcate the right kind of thinking in the young to promote sustainability for the environment, businesses and ultimately,

the country.

In a candid moment, Goh says that his favourite colour is "something close to indigo". It signifies loyalty, faith, strength and stability. It's a background that makes something such as marmalade sparkle."

If anything, this statement provides the symbolic basis of why he remains enthusiastic about hosting the annual Dulux Emerging Talent Awards, where students from local colleges and universities are free to showcase their talents. "We feel that we're doing the right thing. It's not about winning or losing, but walking away with an experience," says Goh.

Early last month, students who joined the competition were given an empty cardboard box, some paint and two hours to come up with their ideas. They were divided into three different categories and winners in each category won an overseas study trip to London and Amsterdam.

The grand prize winner in the "Embracing The Present — Designing A Dining Space" category was Simon Chong Sin Man, 21.

Simon begins with a story: "When I was little, I would count the tiles in our house and then redraw the house plan. I would decide where the garden should go and the bedroom should be."

Already attuned to space planning, it's no surprise that he chooses to study interior architecture at

UCSI University.

Simon's design for the award was a cafe for factory workers. He punched holes on the top of his box and inserted twisted newspapers into them. "The holes allow natural lighting into the dining room, which is located below ground. The trees (represented by the newspapers) are on top. Once diners are done eating, they'll just throw what they don't eat onto the roots of the tree. This provides compost for the trees."

He adds: "My hometown Sandakan is called the nature city of Sabah and I still remember climbing the rambutan trees in our backyard." No wonder he designed a structure so that people could "feel as though they're eating under the shade of a tree."

When asked why factory workers? Simon answers: "These workers are the people who make up the small parts of a bigger product. They don't understand the impact of what they're creating. They are not exposed to the green concept and the environment. By building a cafe here, I hope they'll have an idea of the part they play."

Johnson Heng Chun Sheng, 20, from Saito College is the grand prize winner in the second category. Heng appears older than his age, especially when he passionately says: "I appreciate 'old wisdom'. I love culture. We forget the past. We're always inventing things then repair our mistakes. In

the past, whatever that was built, was built to last a long time. Look at our old buildings. When I'm in St. Mary's Cathedral, I can sense that the building is full of wisdom. I can feel the history."

Asked to explain his winning entry, he says: "I'm very lucky. The topic I was given was related to my favourite subject — 'Appreciating The Past - Designing A Commercial Display Space.'" What he created was a house with a central courtyard based on feng shui principles.

"Here, we use too much air-conditioning. I wanted to create air ventilation using the orientation of the sun." Based on the Chinese principle of *zuo bei xian nan* (which means supported by north facing south), his structure faces south.

"Since the sun's angle is at about 45 degrees, this place will always be cool. There'll be no direct sunlight. In China, the middle section will be empty. But, here, I propose that we place a water fountain. As the wind blows, it'll keep the place cool. Water acts as a coolant." He's chosen a souvenir shop because, "this is a multi-racial country. We have so many tourists. This way, visitors can also see what we make."

The third grand prize winner

is Melissa Chong Sook Lynn, 22, from Alfa College and her topic was "Answering The Future — Dedicated To An Office Space".

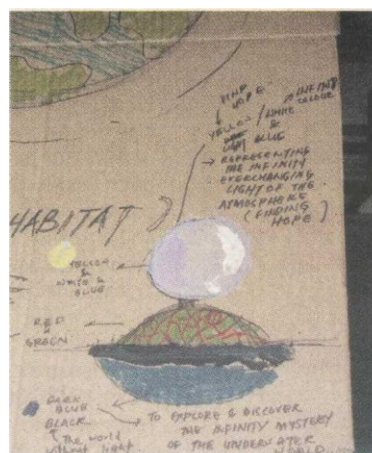
Seeing the world around her increasingly polluted, Melissa asked the question, "What will we need most in the future to survive and become strong emotionally?" For someone who is close to her four siblings, the answer came easily to Melissa: A home and family life. With a tinge of nostalgia, she adds: "At night, while waiting for our parents to come back home, my siblings and I would play games in the house. We would pretend to set the curtain afire and then turn firemen and put it out."

Melissa has designed a research centre called Future Homes Research Centre. "I designed a research centre as I believe that humans learn through observation. Isn't that how humans learnt before? They learnt to survive by observing how animals live in the caves."

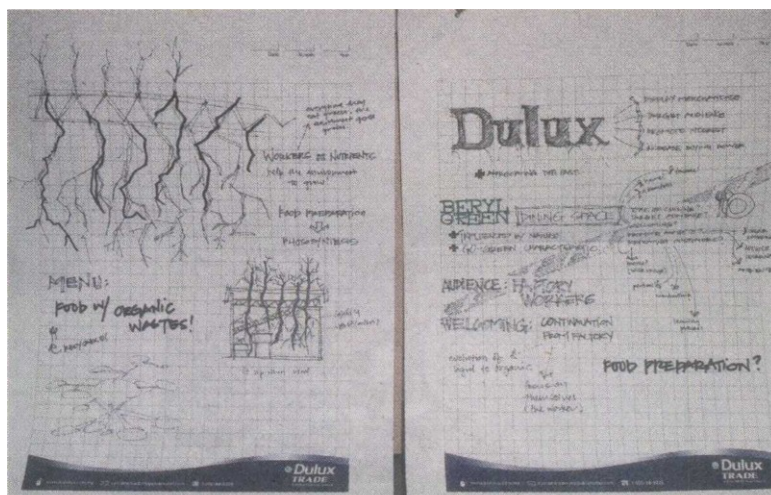
Pointing to a drawing of her design, she adds: "The shape of this research centre is inspired by the shape of earth itself, with the atmosphere, land and sea. So, the top layer is an observatory, almost.

"It's as though we're in an aquarium, observing the sky, birds and life outside."

This part of her structure is white glass, which is tinted to reflect the colour of the sky. The middle layer is where we observe trees and human activity. To reflect land, this part will be in green and red. Finally, the base, which will be underground, will be coloured in dark blue or black "to explore and discover the infinite mystery of the underwater world."



Concept and idea for Melissa Chong's winning entry in DETA



Simon Chong's concept and idea

