

Designing solutions that matter

THE world of interior design is constantly evolving. To meet the ever-changing needs of the people and to invent solutions that tackle global crises, the teaching of interior architecture needs to be pertinent to current trends and issues taking place globally.

As such, today's interior architects need to be equipped with not only a broad body of knowledge but also the skills to adapt their designs to a changing world.

The burning question is, "How are they imbued with this adaptive trait?"

At UCSI University, interior architecture students are constantly introduced to key issues and trends in the field through various platforms.

This includes the recent 17th MIID Interior Design Competition organised by the Malaysian Institute of Interior Designers that saw a group of students clinch 13 prizes in various categories.

Themed "Re-invent", UCSI students bagged first and second place in Residential Design and Commercial Design, first place in Hospitality Design, Installation Design and Performance, and another six awards in other categories. Forty-five of them from UCSI's School of Architecture and Built Environment teamed up to net the multiple wins, notably the biggest haul in the school's history.

Passion for environmental conservation

Heading the 11-man winning team in the Installation Design category, final year students Morteza Bozorgi and Edward Gan created a unique structure fully made using recycled items that demonstrates their passion to protect the environment.

They created a wooden box with an internal rotating gear inspired by teamwork and automotive systems. Removal of any part will cause the machinery to stop working.

Bozorgi points out that this is very much like a team project.

"We also wanted observers to join in the fun by using the handle to spin the wheel. When they do, you can hear the 'voice of their emotions' through the gear motions," he says.

Equally strong in her belief for eco-friendly structures is Tan Chir Eye, who clinched first

place in the Hospitality Design category.

Focusing on eco-living space, Tan's concept board titled "Where simplicity meets nature" saw her converting an abandoned building in Port Dickson to a lovely retreat.

Deciding to reinvent an existing building, she took four elements – earth, air, water and wood – and weaved each into separate bedrooms to create different moods.

While each bedroom is unique, the key message Tan underscores is the importance of preserving Mother Nature and she hopes that her artwork successfully conveys that to those who view it.

The right space to work and play

The urban sprawl has also sparked much distress among interior architects and one aspiring interior architect, Wong Sye Jia, who was placed first in Residential Design.

Drawing inspiration from the small office/home office (SOHO) concept, she designed a compact-yet-cosy home to tackle the issues of not just uncontrolled urban development but also exorbitant land prices.

As part of her project, she interviewed Malaysian sculptor Ramlan Abdullah.

Without question, such experiences provide a good platform to help students like Wong, Tan and Bozorgi's team relate design to the real life needs of the community.

By consistently exposing students to hands-on projects and competitions, the school has shown exemplary commitment to nurture learners who actively take on leadership roles to tackle global crises and industry concerns.

It is worthy to note that UCSI is the first private institution of higher learning in Malaysia to be awarded an accreditation by the Board of Architects Malaysia and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency for the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture degree programme.

■ To find out more about UCSI University's School of Architecture and Built Environment, call 03-9101 8882 or e-mail www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry. Info Days will be held on Dec 21 and 22 from 9am to 5pm.



Bozorgi doing a quick check on the structure after the 17th MIID Interior Design Competition.