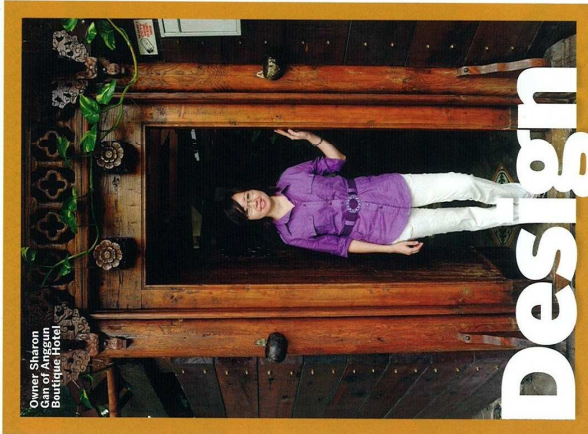




Architect Mas of Bank Home



Owner Sharon Gam of Anggun Boutique Hotel

Book yourself into one of Kuala Lumpur's boutique hotels for rooms with a design edge

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PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDY KHO

# Inn Design



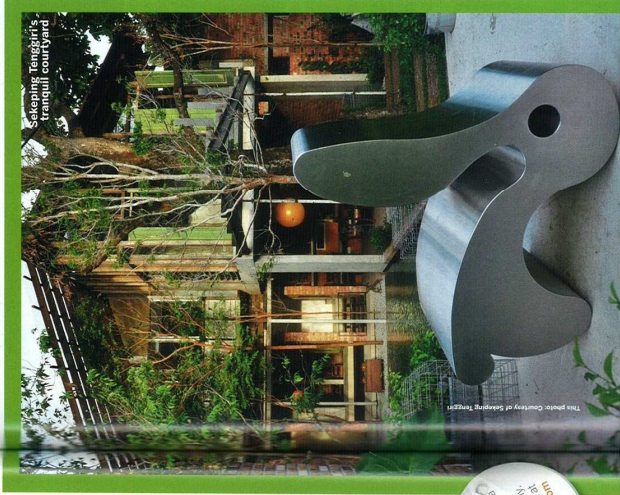
Bayan Indah's architect, Michael Quek



**For** the adventurous traveller looking for something unique than the average hotel room, the distinctive guesthouses becoming popular in Kuala Lumpur (KL) will appeal. The city, which has more than its fair share of luxury five-star hotels, seems to be waking up to the potential of designer accommodation.

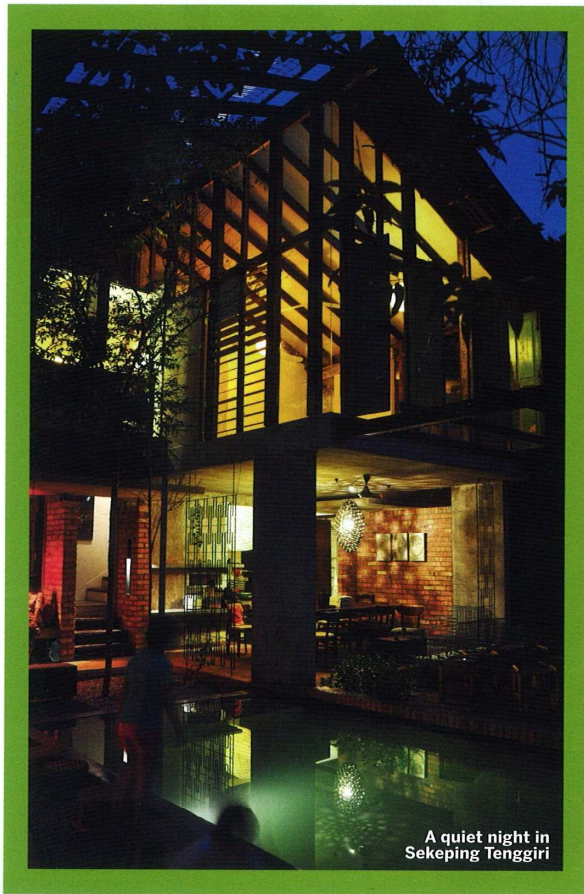
**What a Catch**  
Ng Seksam is no ordinary innkeeper — this award-winning landscape architect's signature contemporary style has earned him top-tier clients and a sparkling reputation. Preferring to use natural materials, he creates unfinished and humble materials in his personal projects.

Nestled in a quiet residential neighbourhood, Sekeping 'Tenggiri' (named after the road it's on; 'tenggiri' means fish) is a seven-room guesthouse which embraces the tropical climate with rooms opening up to private courtyards and sexy open-air showers. There's also a splash pool in the garden beside a small organic vegetable patch, and a gallery housing Seksam's extensive collection of local art. The bathroom fittings and furniture are all either recycled or custom-made by hand. In fact, many of the lighting fixtures were made by Seksam's artist wife, Carolyn, from objects such as empty Yakult bottles and juice cartons.



Sekeping 'Tenggiri's tranquil courtyard

The photo: Courtesy of Sekeping 'Tenggiri'



A quiet night in Sekeping Tenggiri

This lived-in feel is Ng's response to what he terms over-finished and glitzy elitist architecture: "Sekeping Tenggiri is an experiment in doing something that is more appropriate in our third world context, something that celebrates simple living which is not drastically alien to how 90% of Asia lives."

#### Cheap and Chic

A backpacker's lodge may seem like an unlikely choice for an architectural award, but the Architects' Association of Malaysia (PAM)'s recognition of Back Home in the Adaptive Re-use category is richly deserved. What used to be a row of derelict shophouses in the heart of old KL has been transformed by Masyerin MN Architect in collaboration with MMN Design Sdn Bhd into a space epitomising the maxim of form and function. According to owner Ng Ping Ho, the idea was to transform the sleazy and grotty backpacker accommodation so common in KL into something different that would redefine the shophouses.

Architect Mas accomplished this by offering a design revolving around the

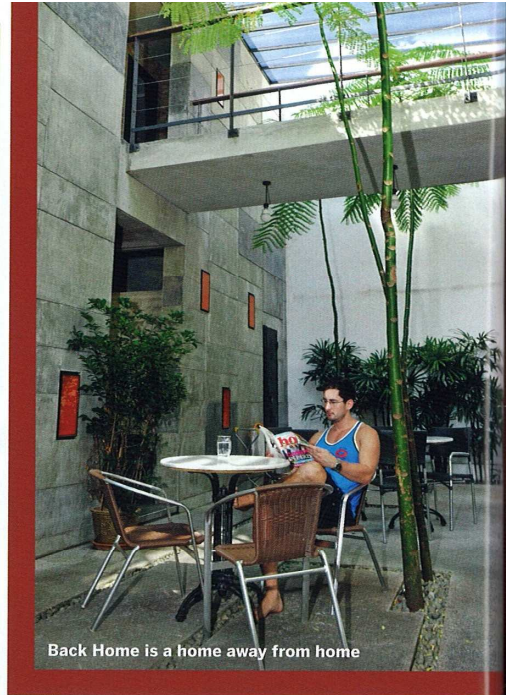
basic notion of shelter and keeping to the integrity of the materials. "The building elements are in their expressive natural finish — honest and unpretentious.

Concrete, bricks and timber elements are all in natural stained finish to reveal their innate beauty," he explains.

After the old structure was fortified, an internal courtyard was created and several energy-saving design elements were introduced, including PLCE and LED lighting, louvered windows to minimise the use of air-conditioning, and a heat exchanger unit to recycle the heat emitted from the air-conditioner compressor for the hot water tank.

#### Home Goodness

Architect Michael Quek confesses he was lured by chef Rohani Jalani's delicious cakes when he undertook to transform Rohani's home into a culinary retreat. Although Rohani had been running cooking classes from her home for as long as she could remember, it was only when her



Back Home is a home away from home



A good sleep in Back Home

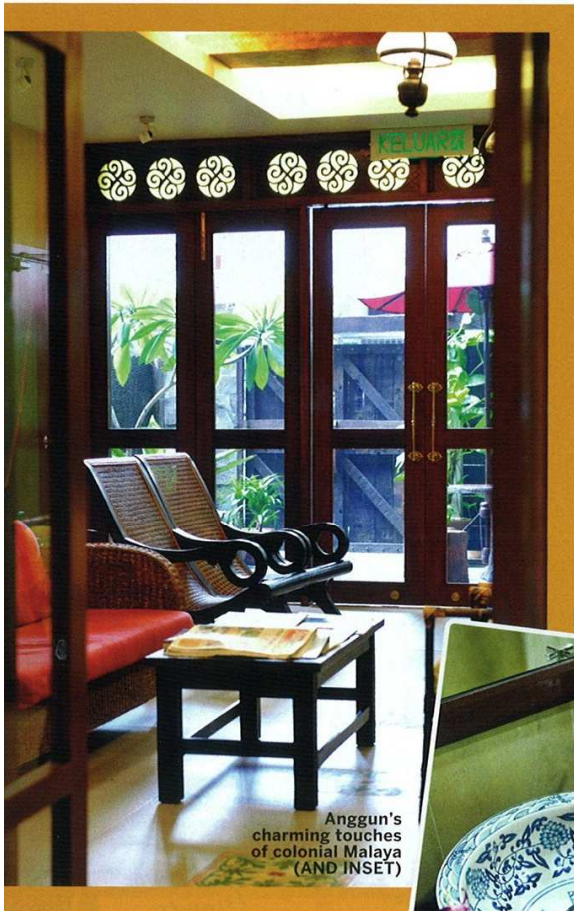
## BACK HOME'S BUILDING ELEMENTS ARE NATURALLY HONEST AND UNPRETENTIOUS

children left the nest that she decided to expand the kitchen and offer accommodation. Rohani's modern, tropical-style house in the peaceful surroundings of a Malay village is now Bayan Indah.

At the heart of Bayan Indah is the huge, open-concept "teaching" kitchen. "The 'teaching' kitchen is connected to the small stream and herb garden and is totally open. The

Photo: Courtesy of Sekeping Tenggiri (top left)





Anggun's charming touches of colonial Malaya (AND INSET)



Look out of Bayan Indah into greenery



kitchen and the dining hall are the focal point for guests to the house," explains Quek.

Four rooms named after Malaysian spices are available and have been furnished tastefully with splashes of vibrant colour, a manifestation of Rohani's taste. "I like patterns and colour — not colour for the sake of being-showy, but nice warm exciting colours that cheer you up and make you feel comfortable, relaxed and at home," she says. "And of course, some nice dramatic patterns so that one doesn't get bored!"

#### Heritage Haven

Time seems to slow down as visitors walk through the traditional Chinese doors off bustling Tingkat Tong Shin into the grounds of Anggun Boutique Hotel. The inspiration is colonial Malaya as owner Sharon Gan explains: "Our concept is to provide a unique combined experience of harmony with nature, culture and history."

This raison d'être imbues the charming hotel, which was fashioned from two 1920s houses with

minimal disturbance to the original architecture. There's a green courtyard fenced with recycled railway sleepers, and 200-year-old encaustic tiles line the lobby floor salvaged from Peranakan houses in Malacca.

Sharon has kept the number of rooms to an intimate 18 and each features romantic four-poster teak beds, locally crafted furniture, period lights and ceiling fans. Keeping with the pre-independence feel, the rooftop restaurant and bar Kupu-Kupu is rustic and relaxed — one can almost imagine Somerset Maugham sipping on a G&T amid the wicker furniture and fish-trap inspired lamps.

Diversity is always a good thing and alternative styles of accommodation will only add to KL's allure as a destination. As architect Mas ventures: "It's not only places that travellers see, but also the places they stay in which become an important part of their travelling experience." ★

Although radio producer **Shefah Szetu** has an apartment in KL, she's decided it would be fun to put her visitors and herself up at Sekeping Tenggiri over Christmas. Staying in two rooms over three nights, she described the homely experience as like visiting an old friend. "I absolutely loved the way Seksan has integrated old fittings and created air and space within an existing structure. It's minimalist and well thought-out."



## Take Me There

- **SEKEPING TENGGIRI**  
48 Jln Tenggiri, Taman Weng Lock, Bangsar, tel: +60 (17) 2075 977, tenggiri.com
- **BACKHOME KL**  
30 Jln Tun H.S Lee, tel: +60 (3) 2078 7188, backhome.com.my
- **BAYAN INDAH**  
Jln Penchala Indah, tel: +60 (3) 7729 0122, bayanindah.com
- **ANGGUN BOUTIQUE HOTEL**  
7 & 9 Tingkat Tong Shin, off Jln Bukit Bintang, tel: +60 (3) 2145 8003, anggunkl.com

