

JEWEL ON THE HILL

WITH ITS EXPRESSIVE SILHOUETTE, THE NEW EXTENSION OF THE BOH TEA CENTRE BRINGS IMAGINATION AND CHARACTER TO THE LARGEST TEA PLANTATION IN MALAYSIA.

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Overlooking the verdant Sungei Palas valley, the BOH Tea Centre has, for well over a decade, been a favourite attraction in Cameron Highlands.

Drawing visitors and tea lovers near and far, the acclaimed 145m-by-9m-long building of concrete, steel, glass and timber remains to this day a delicately-balanced architecture of unapologetic materiality and considered flourishes.

The Centre's design has since been revisited, expanded to meet new requirements. Where a legacy vocabulary could have been persistent, there was an opportunity for a trajectory shift.

And seize it, the architects did.

THE CHALLENGE OF SUCCESS

Both the award-winning Phase 1 building and its Phase 2 extension were designed by renowned local practice ZLG.

"It's a very linear building, based on a simple concept of sustainability, no cut-and-fill, and elevated," describes Susanne Zeidler, Partner at ZLG, of their original piece.

"It was very site-specific, (we knew) where we wanted to have the views, where we wanted to have the main cafeteria, all connected back to the existing offices."

The request to enlarge the centre would come 10 years later, finally completing in 2018.

But adding to such a successful and much-lauded icon posed its own concern; the

1. Constructed perpendicular to the original building, the BOH Tea Centre extension interprets the undulation of the surrounding hills through its irregular folded roof structures.



possibility of marring the outlook of the existing building was a real consequence.

“It was a big challenge, you know. Because you build something (like that), so on its own, so present and strong, and now you’re supposed to do an extension. How do you respond?” says Zeidler.

Additionally, the programmatic requirements of VIP areas, a bigger cafeteria and an admin

building had to fit into the scheme.

The architects’ response was therefore to fashion an envelope that departs from the original; springing perpendicular are two extension blocks that hug the contour of the hill, each featuring an asymmetric concertina roof that folds down to frame a clear glass façade.

ABOVE.
The extension modules are poised insertions lifted off the ground, relying on the natural lay of the land to present a jewelled proposition amid native flora.



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ABOVE.
The use of materials such as cement board, coloured cement and different finishes of concrete adds to a diaspora of surfaces.
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Says Zeidler, "As an architect, you change, hopefully. Of course, it's not going to be a duplication of the existing. The idea for those roofs come from the surroundings.

"You have the contours of hills, slopes, different formations. So I thought it was a nice answer to have the roofs in irregular pitches, a poetic response."

ABOUT PRACTICALITY

While the new extension may at first glance appear playful, it is nevertheless rooted in pragmatism.

"Pitched roofs in general work better in this climate in the long term, especially with leaves and water discharge. So in our response there is always both; it's not just pure form, it's also about practicality," Zeidler emphasises.



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SUSANNE ZEIDLER,
PARTNER,
ZLG
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She adds that the Onduline roofing and cladding material, a bituminous corrugate, possesses insulating properties on top of its rich dark brown aesthetic, able to reduce noise from rainfall when compared to standard metal deck roof systems.

The approach to the extension's structure and materiality is in congruence with the original; concrete plinths are used,



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SITE PLAN
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BOH TEA CENTRE
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LOCATION
Pahang, Malaysia

/ **COMPLETION**
2018

/ **SITE AREA**
7,500m²

/ **BUILDING AREA**
2,888m²

/ **GROSS FLOOR AREA**
1,230m²

/ **DESIGN ARCHITECT**
ZLG

/ **SUBMITTING ARCHITECT**
Mastor Bin Surat

/ **DEVELOPER**
BOH Plantations

/ **CONTRACTOR**
Dimensi Contracts

/ **C&S CONSULTANT**
Edge Consulting
Engineers Malaysia

/ **M&E CONSULTANT**
ABI Consulting
Engineers

/ **QUANTITY SURVEYOR**
CPK Associates

/ **SANITARYWARE**
Johnson Suisse

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similarly elevated off the ground, and above them steel structure set to the same height.

Steel is also maintained in the glass façade framing, a series of concatenated square modules.

Altogether, this assemblage of elements establishes a visual coherence between old and new, not just in construction but also in proportion and language.

A COLLECTIVE BELONGING

Plywood panels line the ceiling of the extension's spaces and walkways, similarly staggered like the façades.

Says Zeidler, "Over the years, we actually did other buildings with plywood, and we became more confident with using it, since it's not that simple to apply.

"In the old building, we used bamboo for the ceiling. In the end, both bamboo and plywood are very similar because they're a local, non-imported, vernacular material, that is warm and has a natural look."

The use of other materials such as cement board, coloured cement, different finishes of concrete and tile inlays adds to a diaspora of surfaces that not only enhance that sense of warmth, but also communicates

ABOVE. Through concatenated black frames of clear glazing, the naturally-ventilated cafeteria extension offers visitors an uninterrupted view of the hills, an experience enhanced by dynamic ceiling planes and floor finishes of coloured cement and Peranakan-style tiles.



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2. With its shared kitchen facilities, the new extension's cafe counter is a bright and functional addition with a play of inlays and patterns that lend expression and character to the interior space.



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3. Architectural and interior design touches blend to define the cosy yet refined ambience of the extension's VIP room.



4

a richness of character both inside and out.

"When you look at our work, we are always looking at materiality. And when we do projects, we like to do the whole thing; we see architecture and ID holistically," speaks Zeidler, of their process.

Against the panorama of plantation, native flora and sky, the BOH Tea Centre's newest extension elicits delight and joy for the astute and the masses.

Yet, through the masterful use of scale and vocabulary, it manages a contemporaneous appearance, a collective belonging to its older counterpart, that is in itself worthy of accolade.

4. Plywood panels line the ceiling and walls, chosen for them being a local, non-imported, vernacular material.