



# sexy basic

BY KENNETH CHEONG | IMAGES COURTESY TUJUAN GEMILANG SDN BHD AND STAEK PHOTOGRAPHY

In his design of the PJ Trade Centre (PJTC), Kevin Mark Low makes a bold move by turning his back on the shiny happy corporate office building archetype.

**L**ocated on a hillock prominently visible along the SPRINT Penchala Link Highway at the entry of Damansara Perdana (a burgeoning bourgeoisie mixed development), a porous sheath of concrete vent block scales the facades facing the highway like a protective blanket from the busy highway. Conventional idioms of what a corporate office should be are challenged as with global shifts in the corporate work ethos. The PJTC interrogates how we work, how we view our working space by providing a space rich in textures and delight, a trajectory from the sanitized shells we often associate with corporate efficiency. The PJTC questions the relevancy of this dated work ethos in an ever-changing global climate.

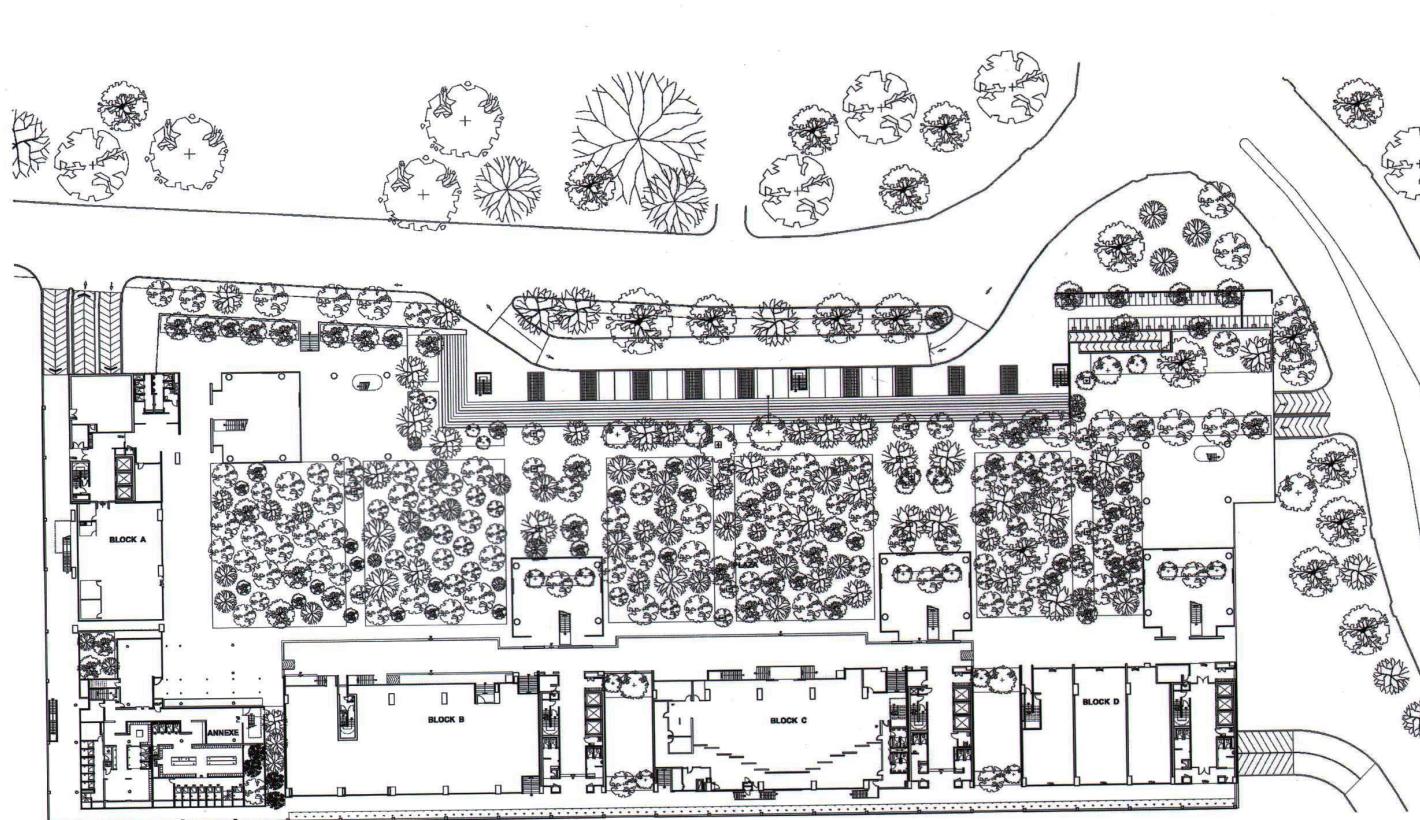
Low is synonymous with small bespoke residential projects, hence his studio's namesake, small projects. One can only wonder how this maestro of the small would perform with such a large scale project as the PJTC. Would ideas developed and refined for domestic aspirations be equally effective when extrapolated on a larger scale in a building of a different use.

Developed by Tujuan Gemilang Sdn Bhd, the entire PJTC development sits on a 5.4 acre site, where 1.1 million square feet of office space are spread over 4 towers of 20 to 21 storeys each. At grade, a sea of mature trees dotting the ground floor plaza becomes a sort of green forecourt to the towers. Kept vehicular-free, this 2.5 acre landscaped plaza also becomes a social hub with food and beverage outlets lining the periphery spilling out, animating the entire development.

## PJTC, PETALING JAYA, SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

DESIGNER  
PROJECT ARCHITECT  
QUANTITY SURVEYOR  
C&S ENGINEERS  
M&E ENGINEERS  
SECURITY CONSULTANT  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
LIGHTING CONSULTANT  
SIGNAGE CONSULTANT

SMALL PROJECTS  
YELILL ARCHITECT  
YSCA CONSULTANCY SDN BHD  
JPS CONSULTING ENGINEERING SDN BHD  
MEP ENGINEERING SDN BHD  
GDSS SYSTEM SDN BHD  
SEKSAN DESIGN SDN BHD  
LUMINO DESIGN CONSULTANTS SDN BHD  
TRINITY VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS SDN BHD



### permeable skin

In plan, the towers are dog-legged in layout, hugging the landscape on the podium. Navigating through this forest of green, four naturally-ventilated glass boxes at the tip of each dog-leg signal the formal entrances to the four towers. With over 1,400 mature trees planted in the entire development and 12 sky terraces between buildings to bring landscaping up vertically, the wall of towers imparts a quality of space to the forecourt which might give visitors reason to pause and reflect on the buildings' physical and metaphorical presence.

Viewed from the highway, some might argue that Low's erections are a rude gesture in the landscape. Shrouding

the PJTC in fortress-like mystery, the wall of concrete vent blocks makes for a powerful and confronting visual statement. Imposing and austere from the highway, the walls, solid when viewed from afar but porous close-up, belie a working environment, lit with soft filtered light and incredibly open to the panoramic views of the lush green hills on the other side of this wall. The permeable skin defines a duality to the site and context, and a strategic move to respect the preferred aspect – that of the green hills behind the development.

A simple concept – to look at the materiality of the building to age gracefully. A simple concept to consider, that is well executed resulting in a scheme which is materially very strong. The concrete vent block wall is envisaged to be rendered with creepers and moss as time goes by, breathing life to the wall rather than deteriorating as the building ages.

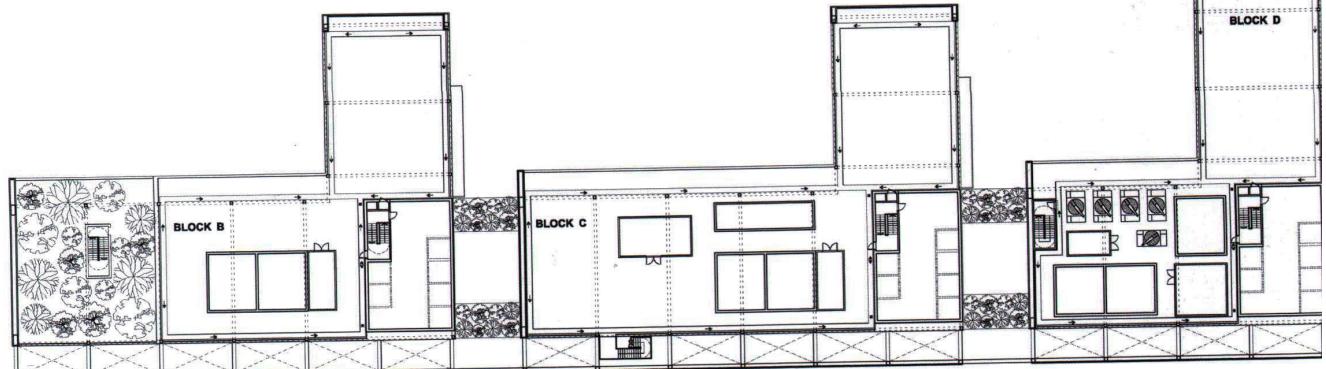
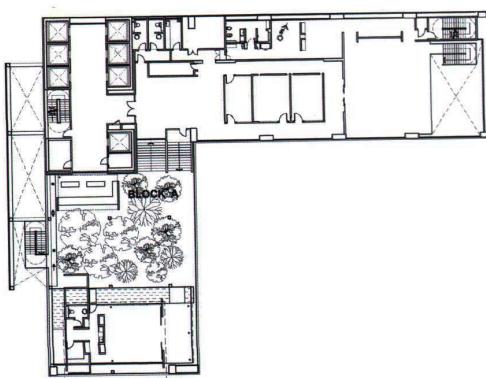
Where conventional green buildings depend on accouterments of solar panels and sun-shading panels to qualify themselves green, PJTC communicates with the occupants on a more basic level. The PJTC is able to engage the occupants on a much more personal level with the acute tartness and rawness of its materiality.

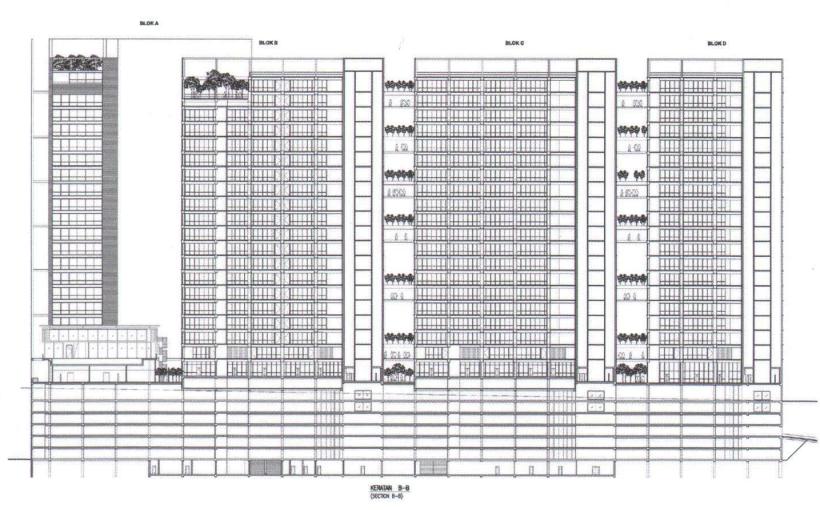
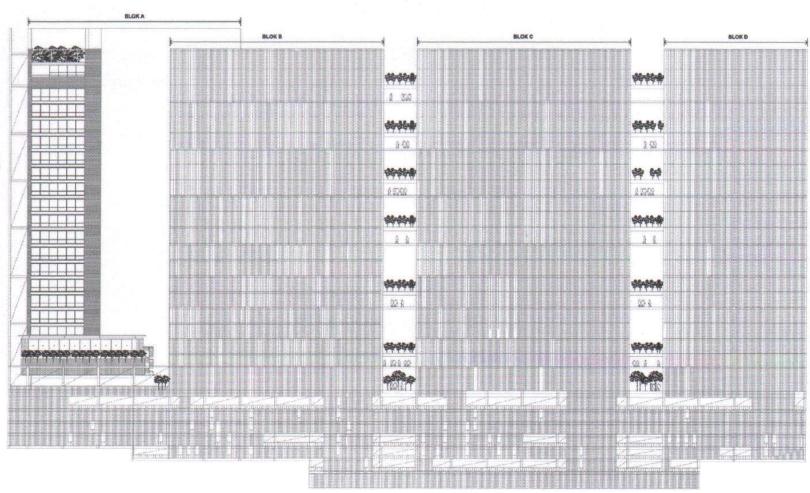
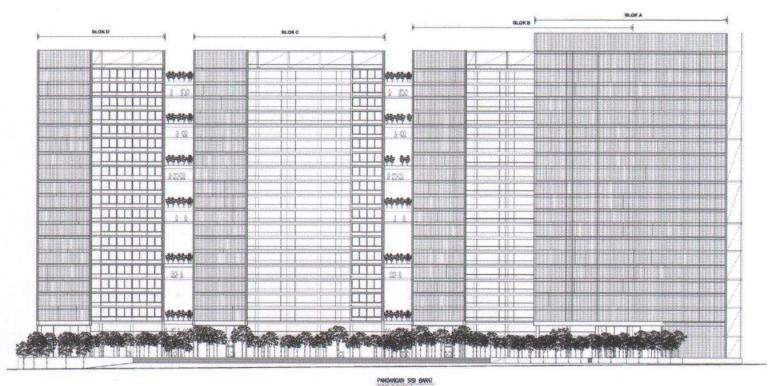
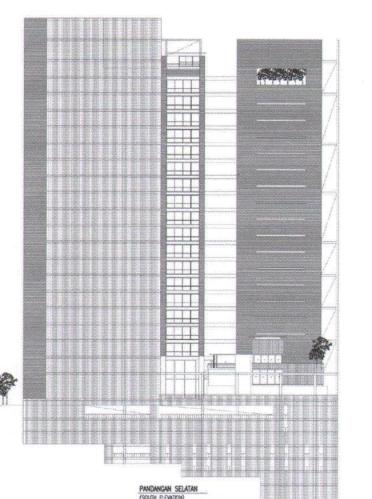
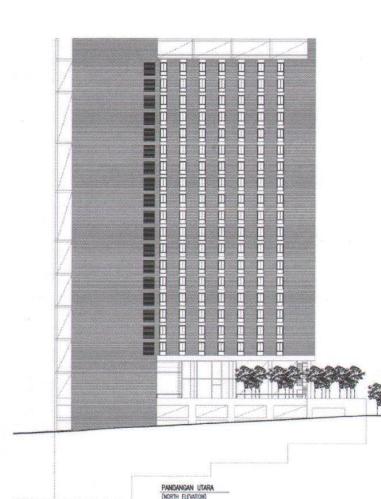
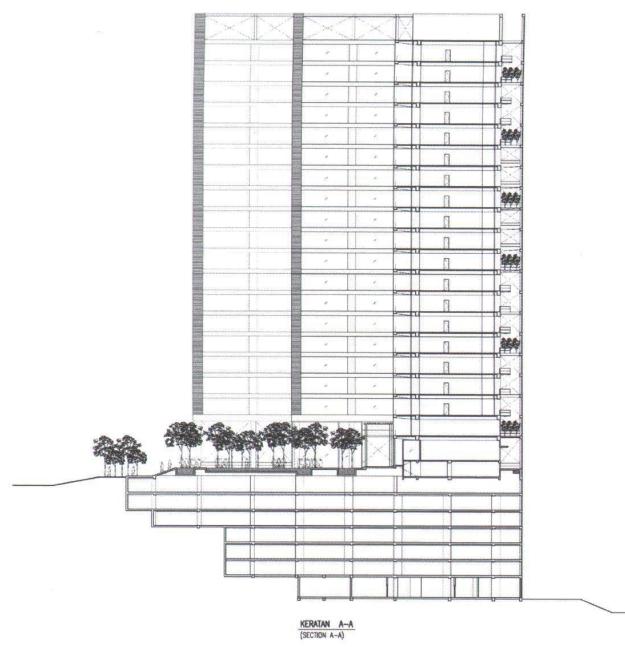
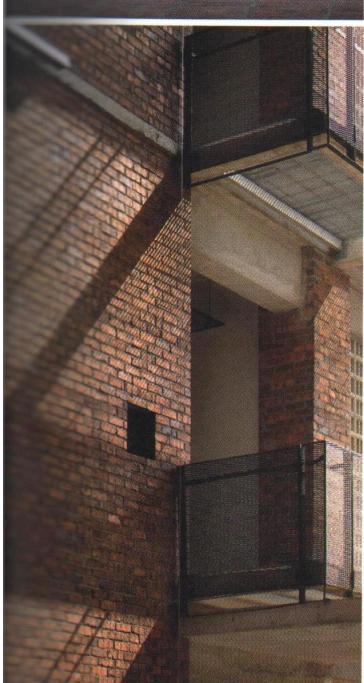
Passive solar design solutions, such as deep verandahs and the concrete vent block wall, effortlessly integrate sustainable design initiatives to enhance occupant comfort.

In keeping things simple, material selection in PJTC were intentionally selected from a plethora of materials readily available in the mass market – in an attempt to consciously reduce pre-production cost and subconsciously reduce carbon costing.

### more life as time goes by

Where the shiny happy aluminum and glass clad archetype depend on heavy complex calculations to lay claim that it is green, PJTC takes the approach of keeping things simple and going back to basics from the outset. Based on practical needs, hinged on issues of maintenance and the reduction of waste and energy consumed to maintain PJTC, operational pragmatics became the crux of the design process.







#### domestic details on a larger scale

With ascetic discipline, concrete vent blocks, over burnt bricks, expanded metal deck, commercial chain link fencing and exposed concrete became a kit of parts from which Low played with in PJTC. From this base palette, Low has meticulously crafted the PJTC into an office building designed with an intimacy of space and scale afforded only in a designed domestic house.

Low's meticulous care to craft has resulted in a fastidious care to details rarely found on such a large scale, right down to the toilet sinks. Each toilet in each unit in the four towers comes with an in-situ cast concrete trough. Perfectly formed, to repeat this detail on such a scale is a feat in itself.

There is an earthiness to this robust material palette, which perhaps speak to the occupants. The materiality contributes to the honesty and integrity of the project to create harmony rarely found in conventional commercial office buildings.

If the environment we situate ourselves in influences what we do, how we work and our lives, then the PJTC leads the way to point to a more responsible mode of working and living. As a corporate office, the PJTC is at the forefront of changes in corporate identity making and branding. +

