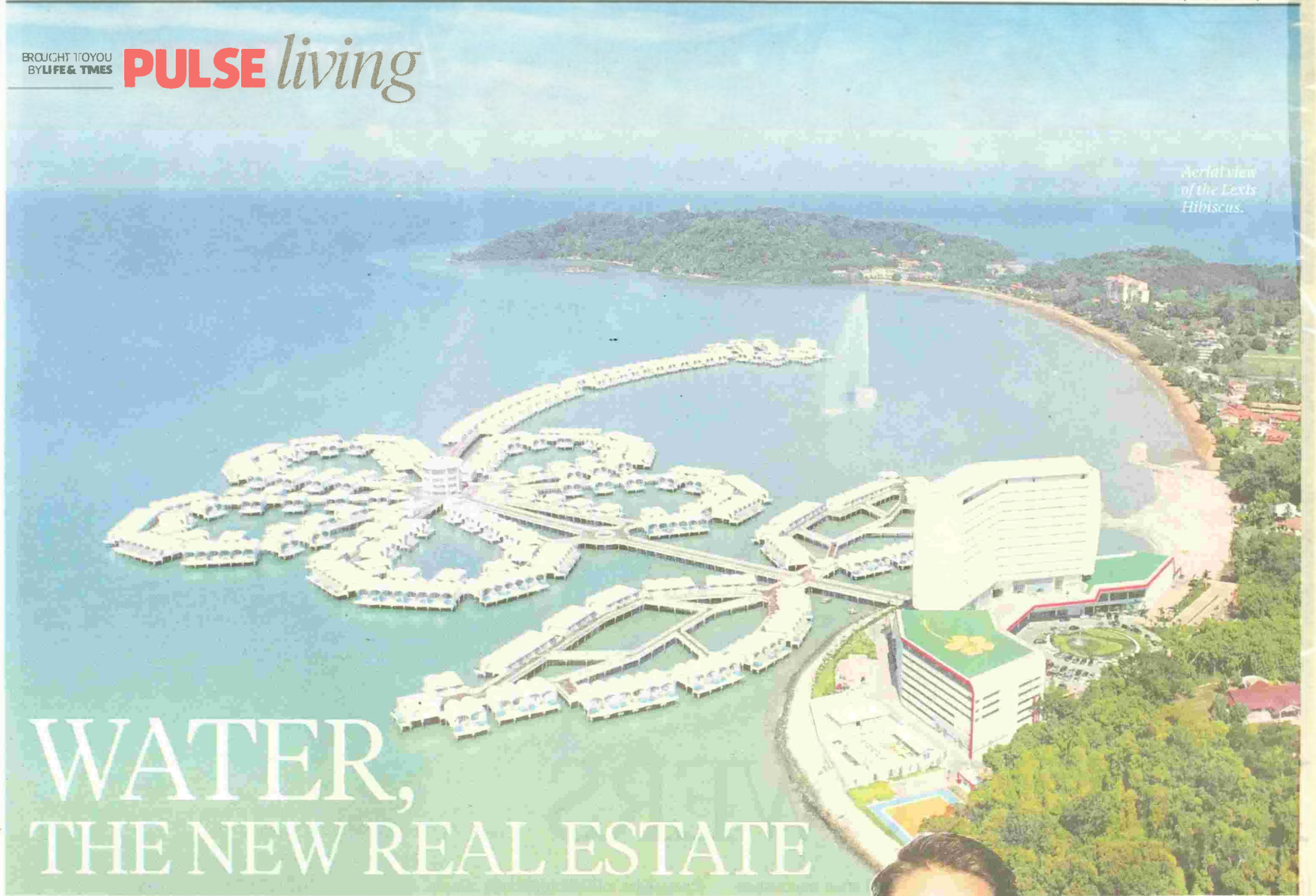


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**PULSE** *living*

Aerial view of the Lexis Hibiscus.



# WATER, THE NEW REAL ESTATE

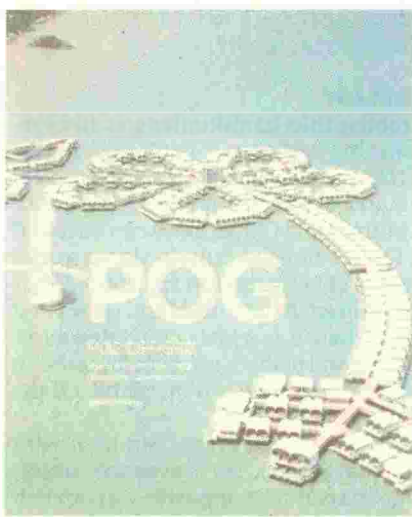
With more open spaces being usurped for development, perhaps it's time to look to the waters, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

**A** LITTLE boy and his father climb up the 259 steps to the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In The Whispering Gallery, which runs around the interior of the dome, the boy is about to learn a charming quirk in its construction. He stands on one side of the Dome and his father on the opposite side. The boy whispers something against the wall. A while later, his father whispers back.

"I thought it was a miracle that my father and I could have this conversation," says Prof Jason Pomeroy at the launch of his latest book, *POD Off-Grid: Explorations Into Low Energy Waterborne Communities* (Publisher: ORO Editions)

Other than the sheer volume and beauty of that iconic building, Pomeroy was taken with the fact that its architect, Sir Christopher Wren, was also a notable anatomist, astronomer, geometer, mathematician and physicist. What also stayed with him was the interdisciplinary nature of Wren's work that led to the creation of so many structures that have had such an impact on London.

Though born and brought up in



London throughout his childhood, the 41-year-old Pomeroy visited his mother's hometown in Taiping every summer. "We would spend at least two weeks of the holiday in Kuala Lumpur. I have seen how it's grown and become a dense city," says the award-winning architect. With many of our open spaces being usurped for development, Pomeroy wondered where children would go to play.

**IMPORTANCE OF WATER**

The amalgamation of all his experiences and study led this suave man down the path of pursuing a career in architecture. In the process, this self-confessed bookworm observed that many cities grew as a result of trade via water. Indeed, 35 of the major cities around the world are located near a lake, river or ocean. As these cities grew, the population moved



**"All over the world, such cataclysmic events are happening. We are seeing more and more floods or drought."**

*Prof Jason Pomeroy*

further inland.

With the depletion of natural resources and rising sea levels, Pomeroy wants us to understand that our cities are no longer permeable. Indeed, the evening before the interview, Kuala Lumpur came to a standstill for several hours because of a tropical thunderstorm. To emphasise the point, Pomeroy says: "All

over the world, such cataclysmic events are happening. We are seeing more and more floods or drought."

In spite of all the challenges, there is no doubt that many people still find it necessary to work and play near water. As such, the agenda that this Principal Founder of Pomeroy Studios promotes today is one he calls Evidence-based

living **PULSE** BROUGHT TO YOU BY LIFE & TIMES

**Interdisciplinary Sustainable Design.** An illustration of such a design is a solution he's come up with which is to create water-borne developments and communities.

A physical manifestation of one such solution, and the primary case study in Pomeroy's book, is the Lexis Hibiscus property in Port Dickson. The idea behind the project was to create a floating water-borne development of holiday villas. Today, there are 522 water villas, which makes Lexis Hibiscus the largest development of its kind in the world. Each one of these five-star resort homes is

a luxurious piece of real estate that comes equipped with its own private pool and sauna room.

**DISTILL, DESIGN AND DISSEMINATE**

As he explains the entire process of how Lexis Hibiscus came to be, Pomeroy gives an insight to his methodology. The starting point for the key architect of the project was to focus on what he believes in, which he calls the 3Ds. They stand for Distill, Design and Disseminate.

Together with his team, Pomeroy started off by distilling the essence of past building traditions and their socio-

cultural and environmental intricacies. With Lexis Hibiscus, the idea was to combine both land reclamation and floating waterborne pavilions to create the form of a Hibiscus flower. The hibiscus is, of course, Malaysia's national flower.

Then, Pomeroy's team evaluated the project's social, economic, environment, spatial, cultural and technological impact. The base of Lexis Hibiscus would house all the recreational amenities, food and beverage places. Much like a tree that has its base firmly rooted in the ground, the base of the hotel would be located on land, from where it would draw its energy and water. Thereafter, the flower, leaves, and stem of the hibiscus would take shape as a series of intricate walkways connecting the various villas that all appear to float on water.

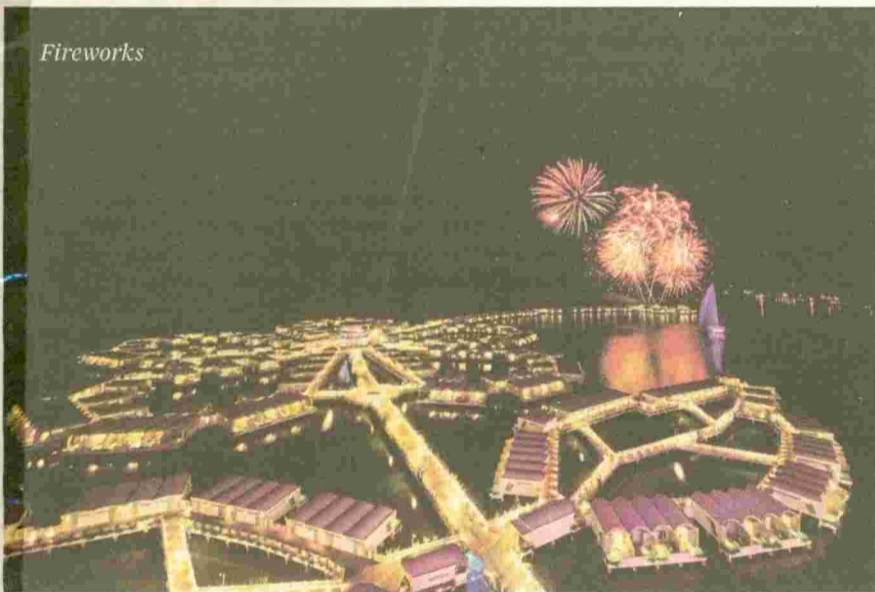
Socially, the design created showed a clear delineation between the public (formal reception area), semi-public (verandas) and private (bedroom) spaces in each villa. A courtyard, which is evident in most Southeast Asian homes, was included in each villa. As a response to the environment, Pomeroy says: "The verandas are punctuated with plunge pools so that sea breeze can percolate deeper into the villa to aid passive cooling. If you feel it's cool enough, you don't need the air conditioner. You can switch on the ceiling fan."

Coupled with shallow floor plates that optimise daylight penetration, there's a marked reduction in the overall power load and energy consumption.

All this means is that the eventual design is one that is in sync with the present. Indeed, as a response to modern technology, all the villas were conceived as modular units that could be prefabricated off-site. Materials used had to be environmentally friendly and recyclable as much as possible. There was also extensive use of rainwater harvesting which reduced consumption by 50 per cent. The various options of villa types and hotel rooms that a customer can choose from sought to appeal to singles, couples or families.

The book, *POD Off-Grid: Explorations Into Low Energy Waterborne Communities*, is a way to fulfil the remit of the third "D", which is to disseminate the lessons learnt from Lexis Hibiscus and other projects. He reiterates the point that the book marks the culmination of a year-long research project that responds to some of the pressing issues facing global cities. They range from flood risks related to climate change and land shortage to population increase and carbon emission woes.

To sum up, Pomeroy's main question is this: Instead of urbanising our cities, can we venture out onto water, instead? His answer is a resounding yes. He believes that whatever approach is taken by professionals of the future, it must balance the pragmatism of the builder with the flights of fancy of the artist. Such a balance will, hopefully, mean that the eventual environments created will be sustainable.



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