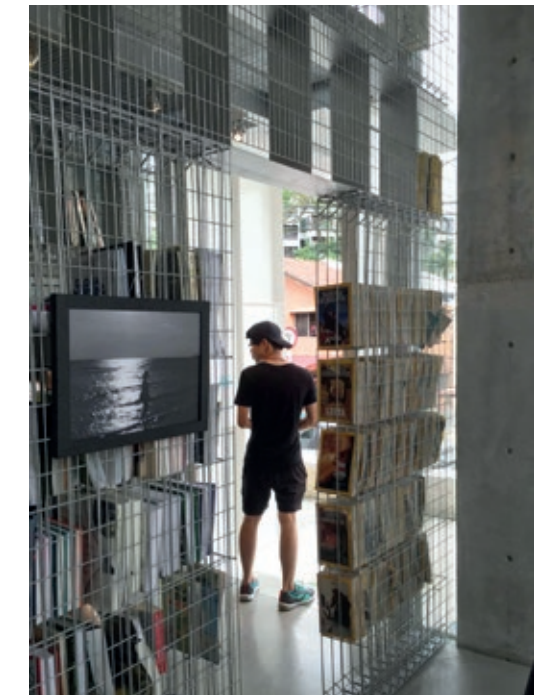


# LIBRARY IN RESIDENCE

BY KENNETH CHEONG | IMAGES BY ADAPTUS

The function of L45 by Wong Wei Ping of Tetawowe Atelier is unconventional, to say the least. But then again, its location in the bohemian enclave of Jalan Kurau/Tengiri/Bilis in Taman Weng Lock, Bangsar, is anything but conventional, with the office of Seksan Design holding court amidst a collection of concrete houses. Sitting on the end lot of a row of 1960s terrace houses, the monochromatic concrete and steel L45, mimicking the proportions of the original house, almost seems to recede into the background.



‘Due to the height of the building, we maintained the existing roof profiles and roof height from the front elevation.’ On the front façade, ‘a skin of recyclable wire mesh screens over large internal openings for shading and privacy, overwriting the conventional use of curtains in residential buildings,’ says Wong. On the rear façade, glazing seemingly arranged at random interjected with galvanised iron security fencing boxes (to house air conditioning condenser units) punctuates an off-form concrete wall hinting of the convoluted platform levels within.

## bipolar program

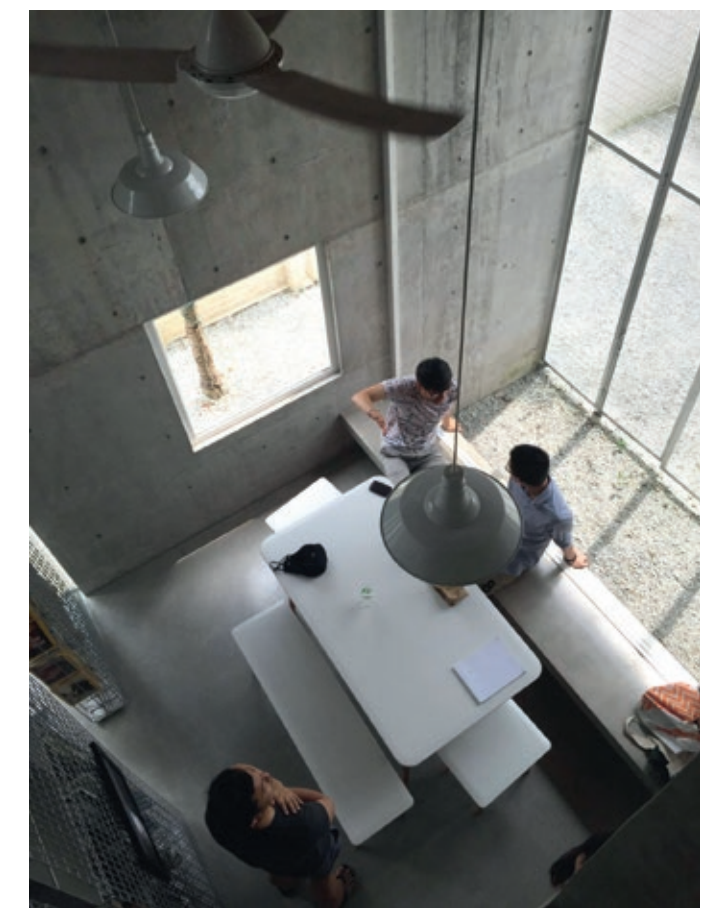
The Client who wishes to remain anonymous entrusted Tetawowe Atelier with a rough brief to convert a double-storey corner terrace house into a civic space for the local community with communal living space – a program on polar opposites, one very public and the another very private. From this point of departure, Tetawowe Atelier developed a program questioning the notion of communal living within the public realm,

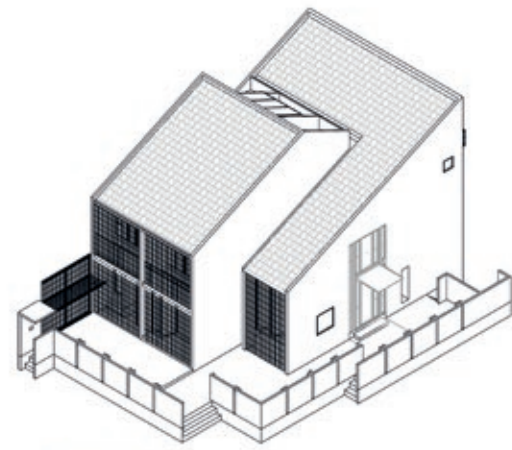
intertwining student housing into a public community library. L45 is essentially a collection of eight loft rooms with ensuite bathroom in three permutations sharing a common kitchen with a generous dining area and laundry area. The public library is an insertion into the centre of the house.

## interlocking spaces

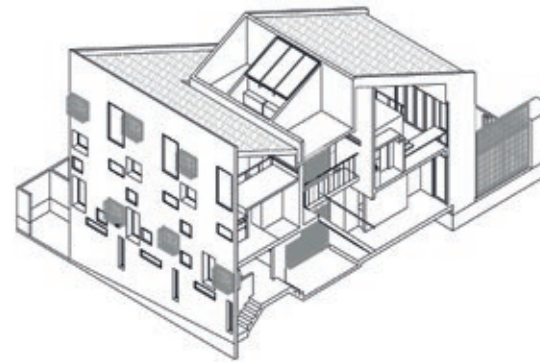
The challenge of fitting a substantial number of rooms and a sizable library space into the existing structural frame of the original house (within a 20 x 60 ft footprint with an additional 10 x 30 ft extension) meant that Wong had to navigate the layout of each space in three dimensions filling in all residual spaces. ‘We planned the spaces and programmes vertically along with interesting interlocking pocket spaces...within the existing frame under the original roof profile.’

In section, the original two storey terrace house is extrapolated into 4 storeys or 2 loft accommodation units stacked on top of each other. The accommodation units are then compressed into mezzanine floors with staircases winding up and down to link the various platform levels interlocking all the accommodation

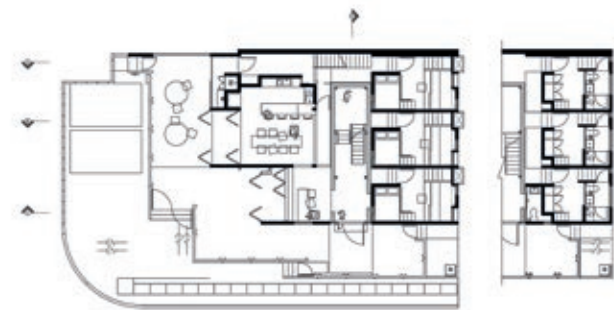




ISOMETRIC FRONT



BACK



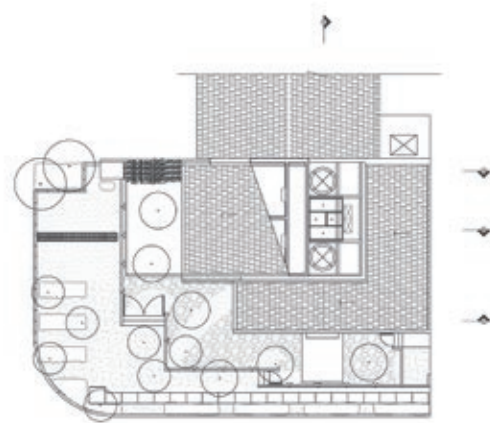
GROUND FLOOR



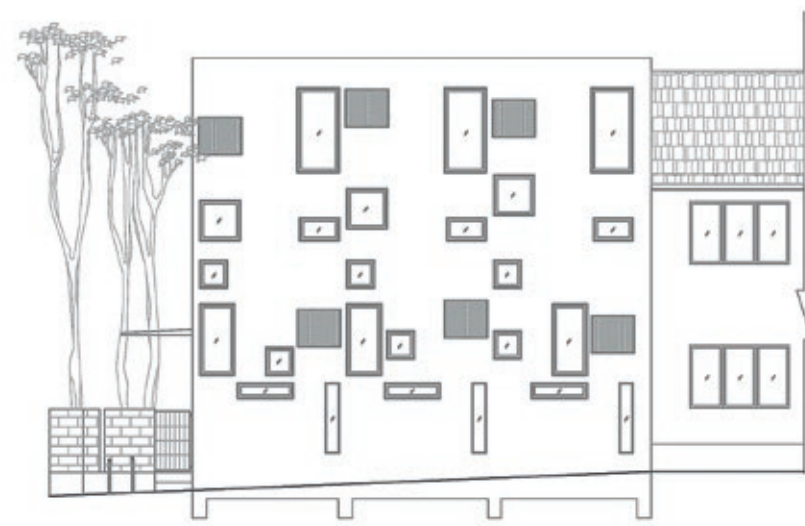
FIRST FLOOR



FIRST MEZZANINE



ROOF



ELEVATION BACK

**L45 AT LORONG KURAU, BANGSAR, KUALA LUMPUR**

**DESIGN FIRM** TETAWOWE ATELIER  
**DESIGNER IN CHARGE** WONG WEI PING  
**DESIGN TEAM** WONG WEI PING, TEY TAT SING, ONG SHIEN CHII

is through a door on the original front façade. Being a corner lot with the side facing the entry access to Taman Weng Lock, the wider more prominent facade becomes the entry to the Library.

The internal circulation to the loft units is via a corridor wrapping the library. The lattice steel book shelf becomes a threshold which affords visual connectivity whilst offering physical separation. In the day, from the library, the porous wall of bookshelves is animated with students walking in and out of their accommodation and at night, the library shaft becomes a light well to the corridors. 'This duality is further highlighted by the contrast in materiality. The rooms are constructed in heavy concrete and white blocks that projects solidity and privacy, while the lightness of the steel structure of the library portrays lightness of knowledge.'

In the accommodation units, concrete is folded into niches for study tables and extended as shelving from



units. 'The multiple levels of planes suggest spatial versatility which provides a variety of intimate corners and interactions.'

**the library**

Central to L45 is the Library, which becomes a fulcrum to the house with the eight accommodation units arranged around it. Naturally lit from a sky light, the library becomes a vertical light shaft clad in galvanised iron security fencing. Eight pieces of steel columns were erected to support three levels of steel decks. The floor decks are laid with mild steel grating to allow light to filter through.

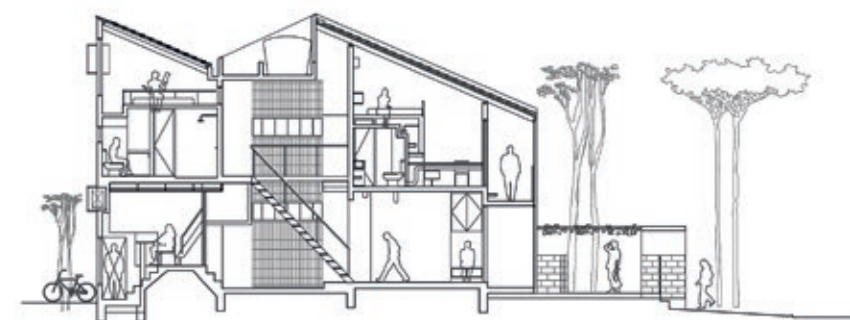
The bookshelf fashioned from galvanised iron security fencing becomes a porous threshold between the library and student accommodation. The bookshelves are designed with three layers of security fencing to support books slotted in between steel rods – oscillating between porosity and solidity as books are returned and borrowed.

'Books are slotted in between the rods which depicts the analogy of how the library is slotted in between corridors and how meaning is slotted in between words.'

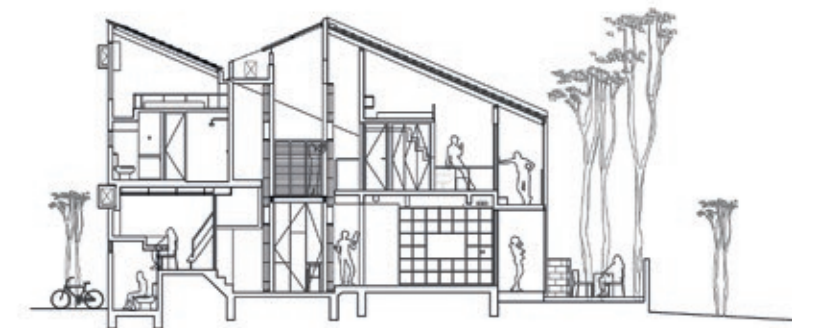
according to Wong. With a seating capacity of only 18, the double-storey height doors to the library and a side room open the library to the garden furnished with benches to encourage outdoor reading.

**boundaries between public and private**

'The planning and circulation of this project required distinctive separating paths that emphasize privacy; private corridors for the students and public walkways for library users so that they do not intertwine with each other.' The main access to the student accommodation



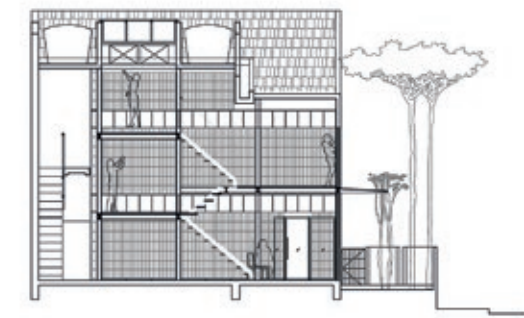
SECTION A



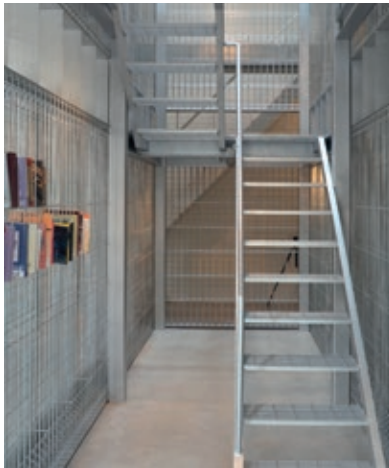
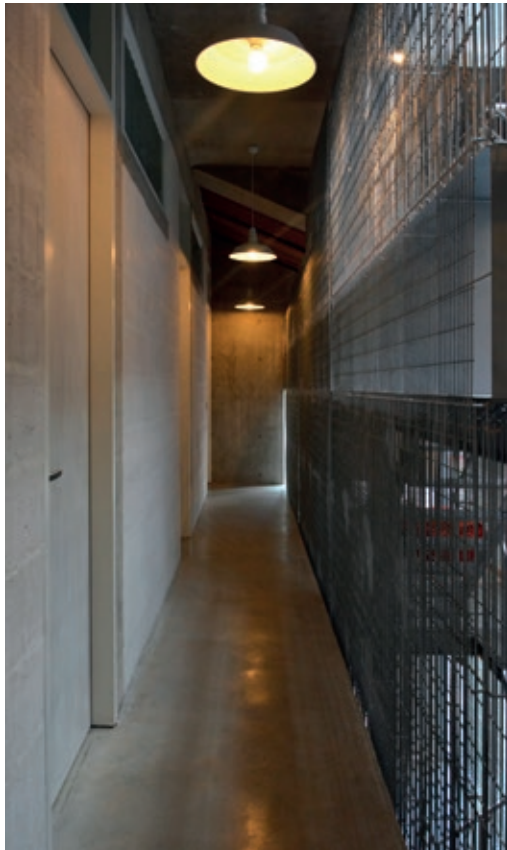
SECTION B



SECTION C



SECTION D



The rooms are constructed in heavy concrete and white blocks that projects solidity and privacy, while the lightness of the steel structure of the library portrays lightness of knowledge.



the polished concrete floors. Cabinetry in honey-hued plywood adds warmth to the monochromatic colour scheme. 'In this project, we reduced material wastage by demolishing only the back section of the house. The finishing of the new materials are kept to a bare minimum; aerated light cement block, white calcium silicate brick and concrete walls are left untreated.'

perhaps a homage to its elusive and anonymous owner. Sitting on prime real estate and rented out at extremely reasonable rates for its choice location in an upper class neighbourhood, L45 is clearly not a conventional commercial enterprise. Egalitarian in intention, L45 is perhaps a very expensive experiment in the creation of spatial democracy. +

#### **spatial democracy**

Monolithic and monochromatic, L45 has the distinction of sitting at the junction of the main access leading to the Taman Weng Lock neighbourhood, 'its presence is rather prominent, despite its colourless presence,' said Wong -