Established in 2005 and based in Kuala Lumpur, Eleena Jamil Architect (EJA) has earned a reputation as one of Malaysia’s leading architectural practices. With its series of expanding portfolio, it successfully engages with the Asian city and with history - that of architecture, art & culture - traditions that bring an accumulated richness of expression to the work produced.

Projects produced by EJA office are informed by the desire to root them to place by way of exploring the experiential potential of form, material and construction and a concern for the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability. EJA aspire to create a design-led architecture that is contemporary and rooted in its context, at all scales, and are committed to a research-based approach, supported by the principal's academic work.

Founded and directed by Eleena Jamil, the practice has won recognition from architectural critics and numerous national and international awards. The working method of EJA office remains intimate and responsive. The office has grown slowly and its size is controlled, to ensure that each member of staff can be deeply involved in every commission from conception to detailed Importantly, Eleena also still make time to teach and write as a way of enriching and elaborating the practice’s way of thinking in architecture.

Eleena Jamil Biography

>>Eleena Jamil was born in Penang, Malaysia and currently lives in Kuala Lumpur. >>She is a Professional Member of PAM and registered with Malaysian Architects Board. >>She is also a Professional Member and Chartered Architect of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) London UK and registered with Architects Registration Board UK. >>She has degrees in Architecture from Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University, Wales, UK. >>Her M.Phil thesis is titled Urban Frameworks for Housing and her Phd thesis is called Rethinking Modernism: The Sugden House and the Mother’s House. >>
THE BAMBOO PLAYHOUSE

Location: Perdana Botanical Gardens, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Completion Date: November 21, 2015
Role: Architect

Positioned along the edge of a lake at the Perdana Botanical Gardens, the Bamboo Playhouse is an open structure with raised square platforms set at multiple levels. Inspiration for the playhouse stems from traditional vernacular structures called the ‘wakaf’ which are originally found in villages or ‘kampungs’. These structures are essentially freestanding shelters that can be used freely by anyone in the community as a place to rest. Here, the playhouse can be described as a series of ‘wakafs’ grouped together to form an animated and playful bamboo structure that blends harmoniously with the beautiful greenery of the botanical garden. It offers a series of indeterminate spaces, offering various opportunities of use and occupation.

The pavilion is a repetitive modular structure made entirely out of bamboo. Use of bamboo in contemporary buildings is very rare in Malaysia and this building explores its potential as a sustainable building material. The pavilion consists of thirty one identical square decks set at various, seemingly random heights, creating a playful three-dimensional floorscape. From the centre of each deck, a tree-like column rises up to support the roof. ‘Tree-houses’, in the form of bamboo baskets hung off the columns add another dimension to the experience of the playhouse.
MERANTI PAVILION

Location: AIA Conference 2017, Orlando Florida, United States of America
Completion Date: April 26, 2017
Role: Architect

The Meranti Pavilion is designed for Malaysian Timber Council to be placed at the expo of the AIA Conference on Architecture 2017 in Orlando, Florida. The Meranti Pavilion uses local Malaysian hardwood called ‘meranti’ and is designed to showcase the beauty and versatility of the material. Commissioned by Malaysian Timber Council, the pavilion forms part of the organization’s initiative to promote use of the local wood sourced from sustainable forests as building material.

The design brief calls for a structure that is easily assembled and disassembled to facilitate the re-use of the timber pavilion in other locations all over the world. As such, the pavilion is designed based on the concept of modularity. Each module is approximately 600mm wide by 700mm high x 165mm deep, making it small enough to be handled by one person and allowing ease of assembly and transporting to other locations. There are 232 identical modules in total and they will be stacked, slotted and then screwed together to form a simple rectangular pavilion of 6 m by 6 m by 3.4 m high.

The Meranti Pavilion is lattice-like, with a repeating motif of overlapping squares and protruding rectangular sections in a three-dimensional arrangement. The geometrical pattern of meranti wood in their natural colour of rich reddish brown refers to the warm feel and intricacy of local traditional woodwork. There are no vertical columns or beams to hold up pavilion, instead the modular elements work together in locked system to provide stability to the overall structure. The corners are held together by special butterfly metal angles which links the pavilion walls by the pointed corners of the modules.
The Sepang House is defined by a large sheltering roof with deep overhangs, shaded terraces and balconies along its edges. It uses raw concrete, bricks and wood to develop a material language that echoes its tropical setting. Different materials are used to distinguish different elements of the house. For example, raw exposed concrete is used for all external walls, bricks for spine walls that runs along the centre of the house, and timber for roof structures, ceilings and the floor. All other surfaces are plastered and painted white. This approach to materiality creates a richness of texture in the house - an interesting backdrop for contemporary family life.

The design of the house is driven by the desire for the main living areas to face the cool and shaded northerly aspect and the garden. In order to achieve this, spaces are organized along a pair of central brick spine walls. Staircases are organised between these spine walls. The main spaces such as living, dining, guest and master bedrooms organized to the north of the spine walls, whereas the kitchen and other bedrooms to the south. Openings in the spine walls and multiple double height volumes create opportunities for visual and acoustic connections within the house and outdoors, making the house feel more intimate and warm.
Desa Mahkota School seeks to improve the standard typology typically found in Malaysia. Like its predecessor, the school's classrooms, labs and offices are strung along open corridors one side. Here, classrooms are single banked, and have openings on the windward and leeward side, allowing cross ventilation to occur. This means that rooms are naturally well ventilated and brightly lit. In the tropics, east and west facades are generally more problematic to shade due to the direct exposure to morning and afternoon sun. This school avoids the problem by having all windows and door openings face north and south. Fins and overhangs on all south facades and open corridors on the north facades help shade rooms from direct sunlight and reduce glare. Ceiling fans are used to increase the movement of air in a room.
The Sri Rampai Pedestrian Bridge spans across a busy dual-carriageway in a thriving residential and business neighbourhood, east of Kuala Lumpur. It forms part of the wider redevelopment of Wangsa Maju area, an existing residential neighbourhood - into a vibrant self-contained township in its own right, featuring malls, housing, shops, offices and restaurants. This 100-metre long bridge provides a safe crossing between a public transport system and the thriving mixed development area, previously disconnected from the LRT (Light Rapid Train) station by the busy road. The pedestrian bridge is a

Taking the cue from the vibrant and bustling neighbourhood, the design express this dynamic characteristic through the structural system, the finishing of materials and dynamic lighting solutions. Here, a sculptural triangulated pattern occurs homogeneously throughout the structure – from the flooring pattern on the floor deck, to the handrails and the fabric roof structure. The slim structural frames above deck level feature built-in LED rope lighting, illuminating the bridge at night in changing loop of colours.
From the outset, the owners agreed to the idea that the house will be rough, to feel real, inside and outside – and to do away with ‘cosmetics’ of paint and plaster. Brutalism and its aesthetics were discussed, where exposed structure and services can be an interesting background for everyday life. As such, the house displays its raw construction and tectonic quality, thus effectively giving it special poetic dimension.

**VERMANI HOUSE**

**Location:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
**Completion Date:** August, 2014  
**Role:** Architect

This is a remodelling exercise of an existing house to turn it into a family home for a couple and their young daughter. The existing house has been stripped bare leaving only its reinforced concrete structure onto which walls and roof were added. A new pavilion is added to the rear to accommodate the private quarters such as bedrooms, study and gym and it is separated from the main house by a circular courtyard. The house turns its back to the street with minimal openings on the front façade, effectively providing its occupants maximum privacy. Conversely, it opens up fully onto the outdoor terraces around the rear courtyard. The courtyard is very much the heart of the house where it bustles with daily activities.
SHADOW GARDEN PAVILION

Location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Completion Date: September, 2016
Role: Architect

This temporary installation is designed by Eleena Jamil Architect and sits in a small courtyard at the Shalini Ganendra Fine Art (SGFA) Gallery in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. It is built by students from the School of Architecture, Building & Design (SABD) Taylor’s University Malaysia and it forms part of SGFA-led annual art program called the PavilionNOW series, which is now in its second year.

The Shadow Garden Pavilion consists of a system of pressed galvanised steel shutters connected to planter boxes by a system of ropes and pulleys that are hung from a simple timber structure. The planter boxes are filled with aromatic and fragrant plants and herbs that are commonly used in local cooking. The act of opening and closing the shutters moves the plants up and down, transforming the space within and around it with ever changing shadow play. Moving the shutters and plants to different positions offer variable shading from direct sun – appropriate for the delicate herbal plants which often don’t need prolonged exposure to sunlight.
MILLENNIUM SCHOOL (BAMBOO SCHOOL PROTOTYPE)

Location: Camarines Sur, Luzon, Philippines  
Completion Date: February, 2010  
Role: Architect

This bamboo classroom prototype built as a result of an international architectural competition. Located at Nato High School in Sagnay, Camarines-Sur of the Bicol Peninsula, it is designed to be wind resistant as this region is exposed to devastating strong winds. The prototype consists of 2 identical classrooms with a shaded corridor placed along one side. The standalone building sits between existing school structures and the contrast between old and new is very apparent. Here, the new building takes the form of a typical vernacular domestic structure found all over the archipelago, with large sloping roofs and shaded verandah. From the outset, the idea of a big sheltering roof was important as a means to shade and protect from the elements.

A number of design factors are taken into consideration in making the building wind resilient and making it easy to rebuild and rehabilitate in the aftermath of strong wind. Here, the idea of working against the climate and working with the climate is given equal emphasis. Bamboo is light and easy to handle without the use of heavy machinery. Locals can build this school with little training. Bamboo is also a pliable material, meaning that it is not easily broken when moving in the strong forces of the wind. Rebuilding is made easier with repetitive structural elements. Each structural bay has similar joint details and bamboo elements, making it easier to repair damaged sections without having to dismantle the whole structure. Locals will be able to pick up the skills of jointing bamboos easily due to the repetitive nature of the building. Another possibility offered by the design is prefabrication, where ready-made structural sections could be delivered and assembled on site.
RECOGNITION

AWARDS
>>LEAF Award 2016, UK, The Bamboo Playhouse, Best Sustainable Development, Shortlisted
>>Plan Award 2016, Italy, Sepang House, Finalist
>>World Architecture Festival 2012 Barcelona, Moving School (School for Burma) Thailand, ‘Learning Category’ Shortlist
>>Philippine Presidential Citation for the Millennium Schools Project (Be Better Build Better Program), 2008

COMPETITIONS
>>#Flitched Upcycle Competition, Canning Town, East London, 2013, Third Prize
>>Triumph Pavilion London, Summer 2013 Build Project, 2013, Honourable Mention
>>‘HOME’ Elderly Homeless Shelter Singapore (organised by Building Trust International, UK) 2012, Honourable Mention
>>School for Burma (organised by Building Trust International UK) 2011, Thailand, Special Mention
>>Floodproof House UK (organised by RIBA & Norwich Union) 2008, Winner
>>Millennium School Competition, Philippines (organised by MyShelter Foundation) 2008, Winner
>>Welsh House of the Future Competition, Wales, United Kingdom 1999, Shortlist

SELECTED PRESS
>> Bamboo Playhouse in Architecture Asia, second quarter 2016.
>> Vermani House in ‘architecture malaysia’ Vol 27 Issue 1, Feb 2015.
>> Desa Mahkota School in FuturArc Nov-Dec 2014 Issue

EXHIBITIONS
>>SPACE TIME EXISTENCE Exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2014 organised by Global Art Affairs Foundation
>>SMART CITY: The Next Generation, Focus South East Asia Exhibition at AEDES Berlin 2013
>>Wood 2013/Architecture of Necessity” Exhibition at Virserums Kunsthall, Sweden
>>Moving School Exhibit, Pop Up Space, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, Building Trust International 2012

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