

# OPEN WALL POLICY

Eminent architect Gregory Dall shares his intriguing perception on designing for the tropics

WORDS ZOEY MOO



Architect  
Gregory Dall

**Typically, the most popular seats in a room are those where one's back faces the wall.** Apart from providing a full view of the space, the position prevents unexpected surprises (or attacks in the olden days) from the back.

Gregory Dall, Managing Director of the Pentago Group of Companies, defies this convention, choosing to sit at the outer edge of a huge L-shaped table placed along the wall. "I like to move around when I'm working," he says, gesturing to the spacious area in the centre of the room.

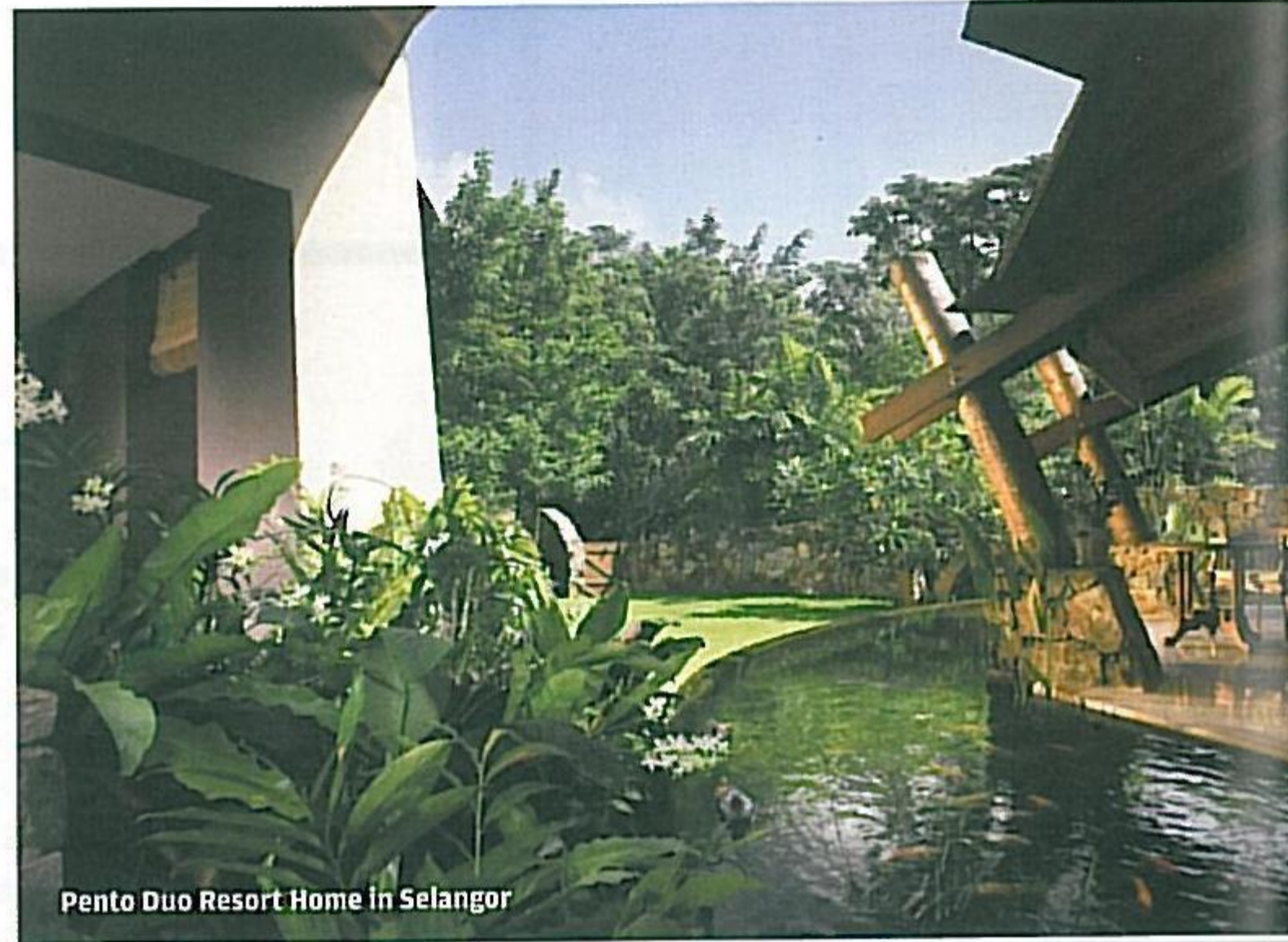
His love for being in the open is also apparent in his ardent relish for outdoor activities like trekking and fishing, both which capitalise on the warm and humid Malaysian weather. In a way, this love is also reflected in Gregory's architectural style. His designs tend to blur the notion of the inside and outside, at the same time allowing the building's occupants to enjoy cooling breezes and lush gardens.

He says, "It's all about the location

and creating a sense of place. I'd like to think that I'm one of the few architects in Asia that actually designs for the tropical climate. If you stay in the Antarctic, it would be madness to build igloos out of marble, steel and bricks; but when you're in Malaysia, with its torrential rain and steamy temperatures, you need features like pitched roofs and big overhangs."

With the constant threat of crime in the country, some instantly recoil at the idea of a house with doors and windows that are left open for the larger part of the day. This mindset, Gregory assures, will vanish once they understand that security and openness don't have to be mutually exclusive in a house.

"The worst thing you can do to a home is to barricade it with grills. First, it's a signal to a would-be assailant that there's something of value inside. Worse still, it's a safety hazard for occupants in case of a fire because they can't escape. Instead, all houses should have a safe room that also offers at least two hours



Pento Duo Resort Home in Selangor



Residence in Bukit Gita Bayu

of fire protection. Once someone breaks through the fence or building and sets off the alarms, the family can head to the safe room and ring for help," he explains.

Citing Australian architectural firm Troppo Architects as one of the main influences of his design approach, Gregory says that their work in Darwin are textbook examples of architecture that references nature and the local environment. Even as far back as 30 years ago, the buildings designed by Troppo Architects had already incorporated systems like cross ventilation and thermo-siphoning.

Nevertheless, Gregory admits that not everyone can accept his radical style. He says, "I've seen people that visit our projects, sit at the

poolside and take photos. There's just one problem - they are too worried about insects and security to live there. However, in my 26 years of living in Malaysia, I've also discovered that once people take that step off the edge and choose a Pentago-designed home, they'll never live anywhere else." ▼



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