

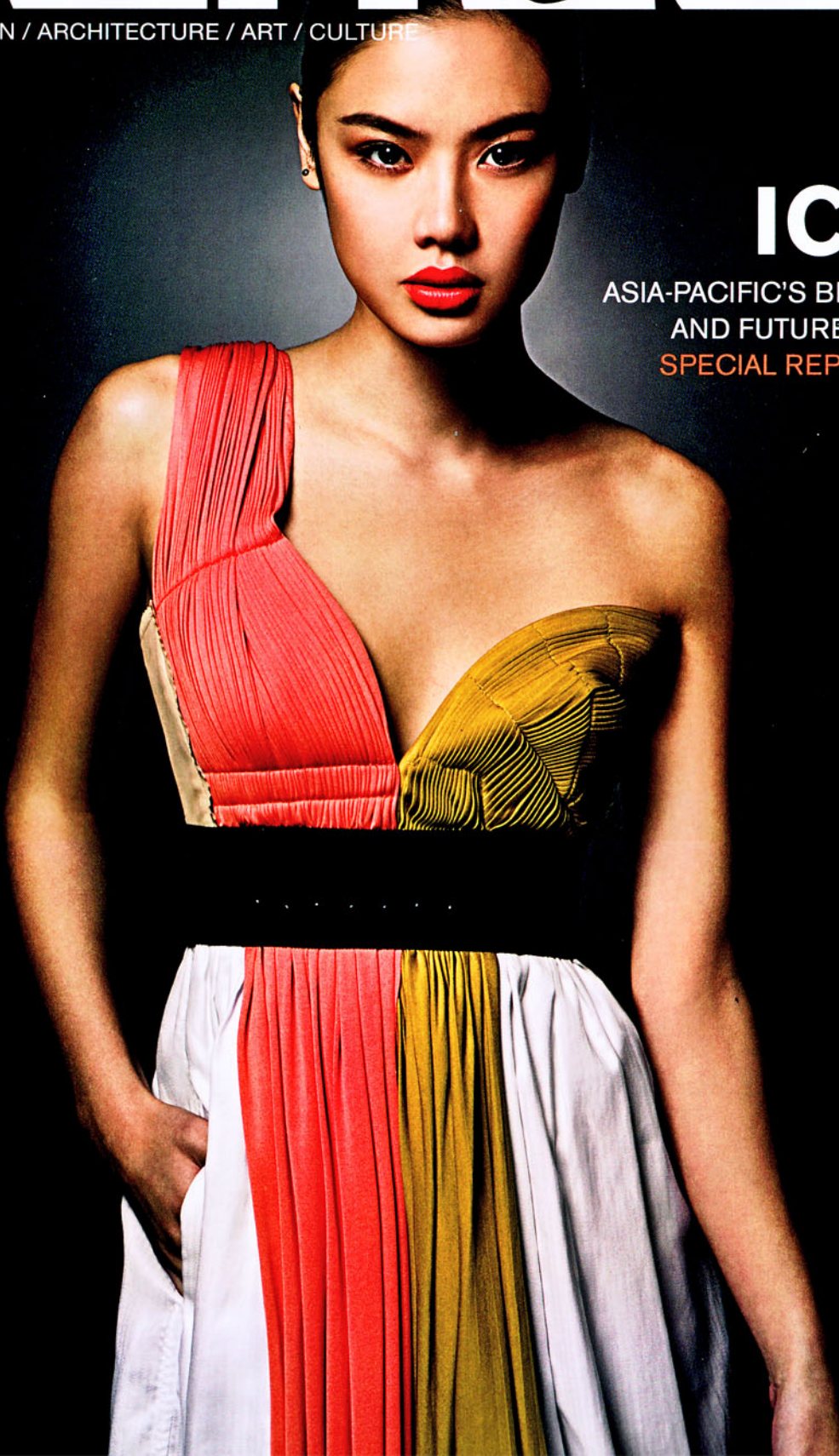
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FASHION / DESIGN / ARCHITECTURE / ART / CULTURE

02

ICONIC

ASIA-PACIFIC'S BIG NAMES, PLACES
AND FUTURE STARS IN DESIGN
SPECIAL REPORT: HONG KONG



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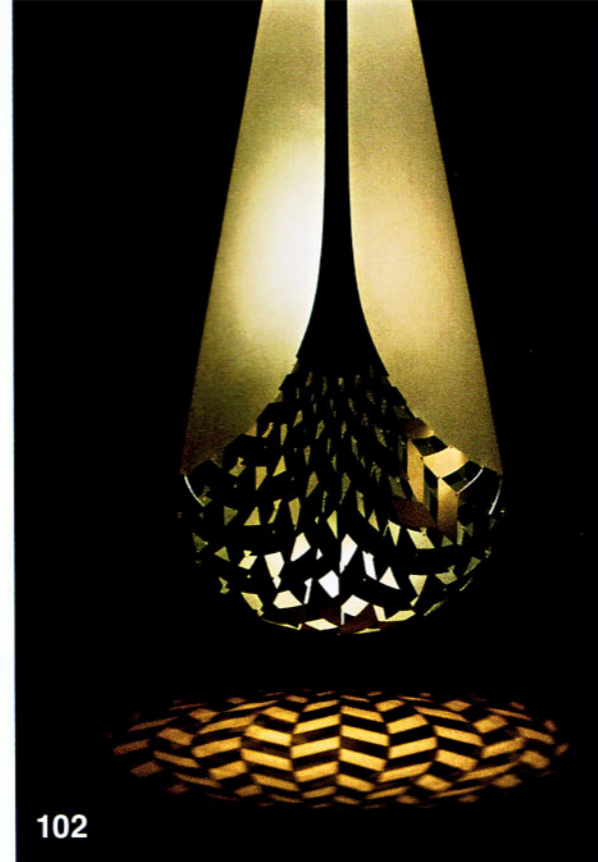
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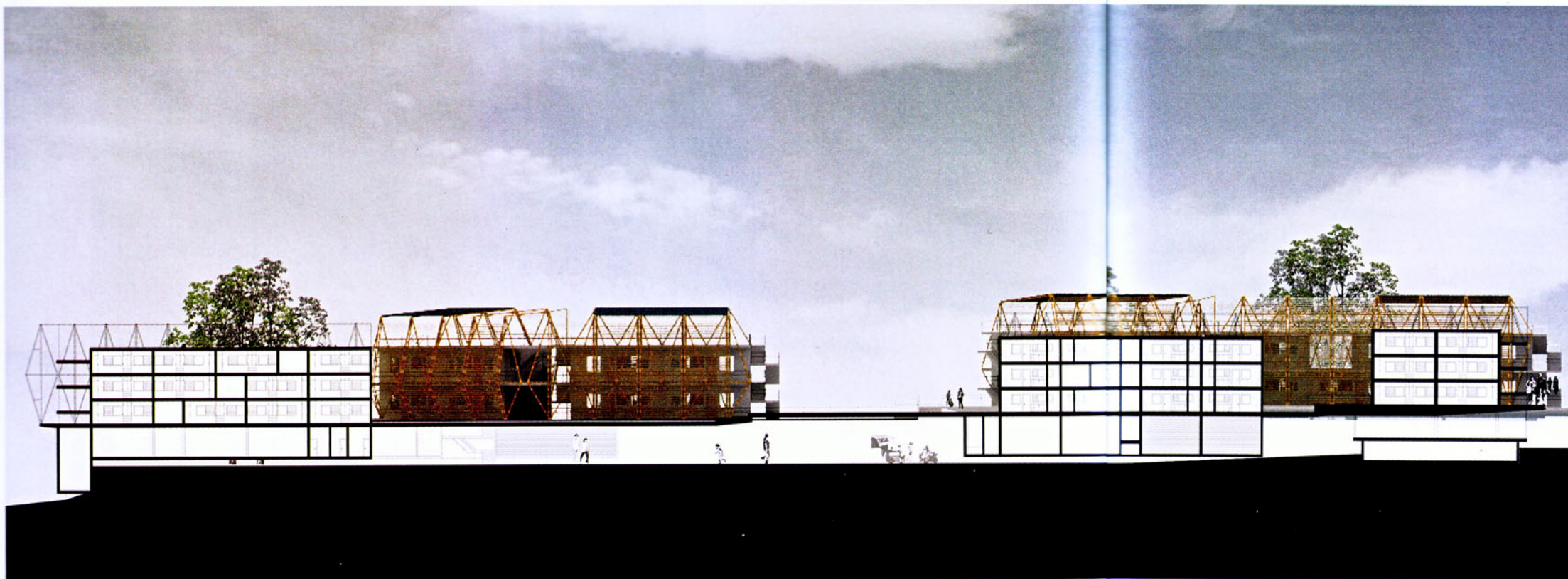
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COVER

PHOTOGRAPHY **GABOR JURINA**; DRESS **JOSEPH LI**; HAIR **ROY YUN @ PRIVATE I**; STYLIST **JOSEPH LI**; MAKE UP **JACQUELINE MA @ CK NAIL**; MODEL **GAILE LAI**; SHOT ON LOCATION IN HONG KONG



FIRST DATE

Architects, engineers and designers around the world respond to the Philippines' call for a revolutionary kind of disaster-resilient housing.

WORDS CARREN JAO

Pummeled. In 2009, Typhoon Ketsana poured 13.43 inches of rain within six hours (equivalent to a month's worth of rainfall for the area) on an unprepared Metro Manila. Floodwaters rose to a record 20 feet in some areas, major thoroughfares were closed, people were stranded, and 464 official deaths were reported.

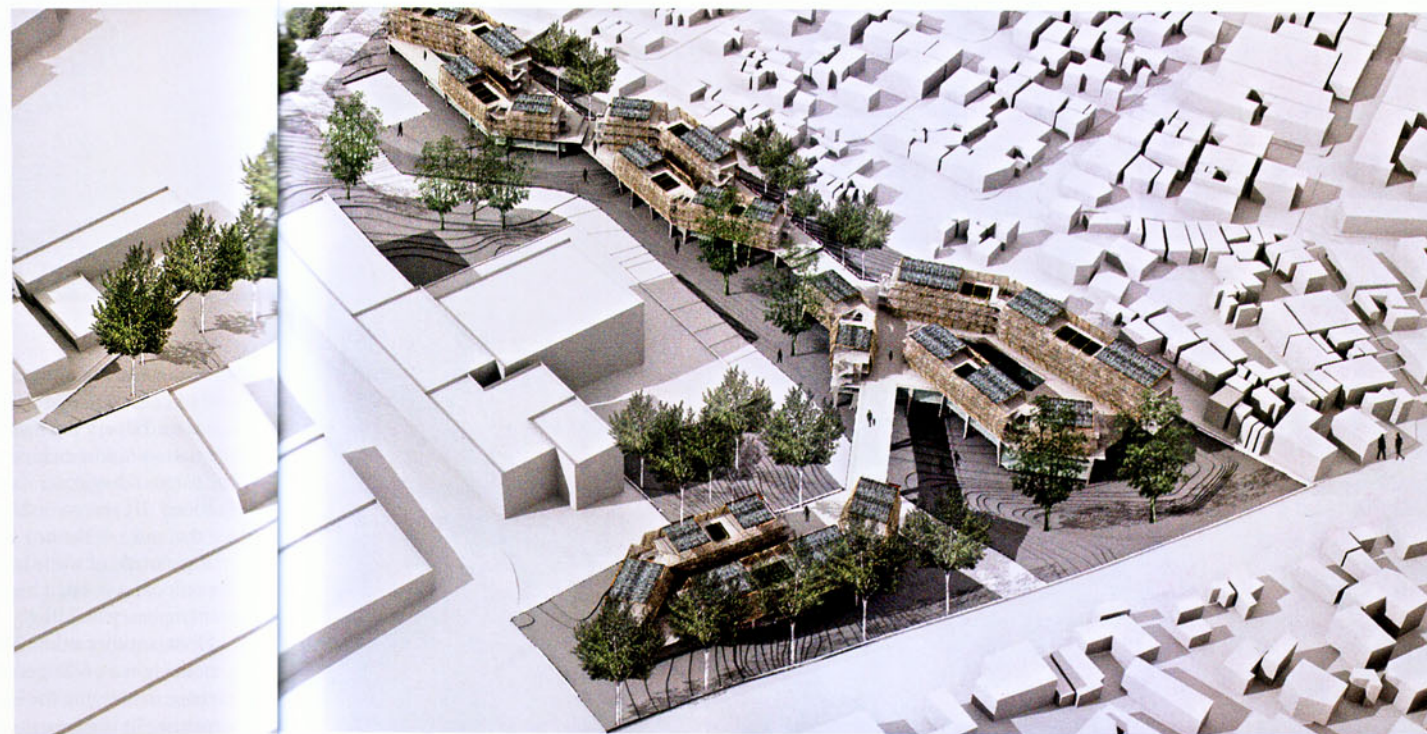
Biblical references to the Great Flood came to mind as Manilenos watched their homes washed away with the waters. And while the rain didn't discriminate between the rich and poor, it was the urban poor community that suffered long after the waters subsided. Seeing Ketsana's far-reaching devastation, especially to the 78 percent of

the affected population living in makeshift homes, a coalition of Philippine organisations stepped forward with Design Against the Elements (DATE), an architectural design competition meant to produce a planned eco-community in Quezon City for displaced low-income communities – the first of its kind in the country.

"Instead of picking up the pieces after a storm has hit, we wanted to design solutions ahead of the disaster," says Illac Diaz, who initiated DATE with MyShelter Foundation, the Climate Change Commission, the United Architects of the Philippines and the Philippine White Helmets. Since its launch last March, DATE has attracted 276 entries from 50 countries, including those as far-reaching as Egypt, Serbia and Venezuela.

Remembering her typhoon-prone childhood in Montego Bay, Vanessa Keith, an Italian-Jamaican-Chinese architect, saw in DATE an opportunity to create tangible solutions. "My family lived through many hurricanes. We've experienced them, we've experienced the damage they caused," she says. Keith's entry via StudioTeka imagines 121 apartments connected by an elevated plinth, which serves as the main artery for pedestrians moving along the site. The apartments are wrapped with a bamboo exoskeleton, that helps cool the building without using additional energy and creates shaded areas to guard against the searing tropical heat. StudioTeka used a combination of plinths and stilts to lift the whole community from the surface, minimising the effects of flooding.

Leaving nothing unexamined, StudioTeka also looked into the natural and urban landscape. By studying how water would flow



(CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT) StudioTeka wants to lift the whole community from the surface, using plinths and stilts; StudioTeka is composed of (clockwise from top left) Vanessa Keith, Dongsuk Lee, Cheolyong Kim, Ana Sucena, Noel Vidal; An oasis for the residents and others to participate in and benefit from.

(OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) A rigid grid foundation of bamboo strengthens cocowood walls to stand against earthquakes; The materials are 100% recyclable or biodegradable, yet withstand the forces of nature; Martin Schorn and Michael Koecher; An integrated rooftop water tank gives an independent source of water.

(THIS PAGE, FROM TOP) Earth, wind, water and light are part of Agunoy and Sta. Romana's design elements; They don't stack the containers like lego blocks only for fun, but also to maximise airflow.

throughout the site and identifying high densities of impermeable surfaces, StudioTeka came up with a suggested configuration for residential buildings. Areas with lots of impermeable surfaces were kept mostly empty, while less dense areas became ideal for human settlements.

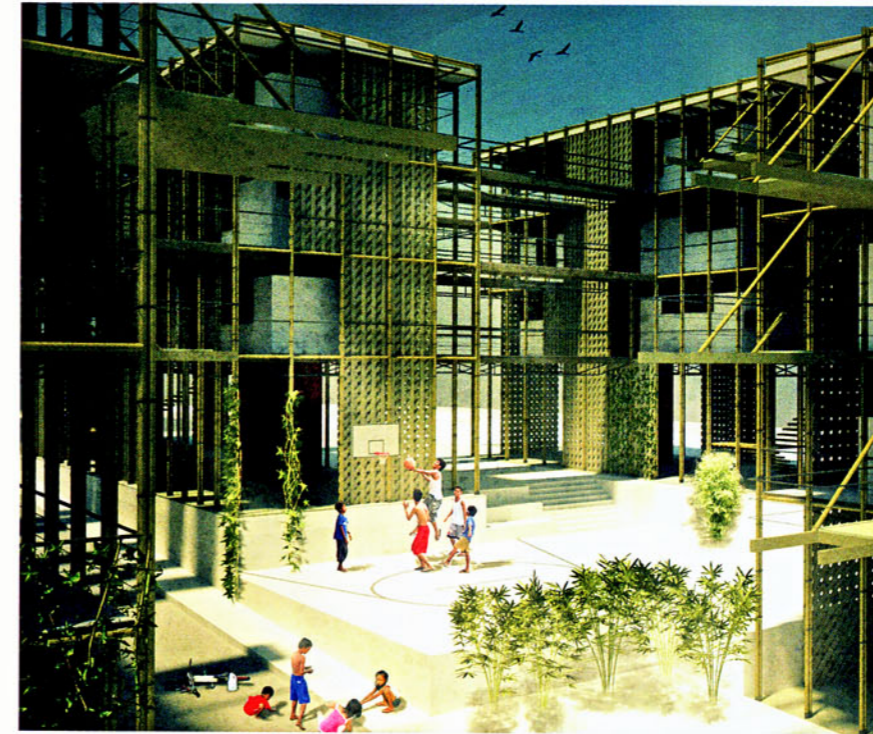
Realising that a disaster-resilient community would probably become a relief centre in times of strife, StudioTeka designed the community to benefit not just the people living there, but those surrounding it as well. "We can't just create an oasis for the residents who live here, and then when a flood hits it's like, 'Too bad you don't live here. We don't want to help you,'" says Keith.

Underneath the elevated plinths, temporary housing systems can be packed flat to a width of 15cm, along with medical supplies, potable water and food. Instead of creating makeshift shelters out of flotsam, residents now have the basic foundation for disaster relief. "[This eco-village] is not just an isolated place that's good for the people living there, it's something other people can come into, participate in and benefit from."

Inspiration came to young Filipino architects Jonathan Alvie B. Agunoy and Francis Jr E. Sta Romana in an unusual fashion. "We were having beer when we noticed the stacked cases of beer stored in what seemed like the stock room," says Agunoy. "It led to stacked shipping containers that were later used as the main building material."

In Manila, shipping containers have found a second life as retail stores and even bars, but have never been used to build a community. "Shipping containers are recycled, which reduces carbon footprint. They can be reused, relocated, and repaired to extend useful life. They're also structurally stable because they are designed to carry tonnes of weight. They're fabricated off-site and are in ample supply," says Agunoy, listing the merits of this overlooked resource.

Cheekily coining their proposal *Design With the Elements*, Agunoy and Sta. Romana plan to use earth, wind, water and light to the site's advantage. Using the containers like Lego blocks, they created protrusions and recesses that maximised airflow in the area. Each building was elevated 2.4m off the ground to guard against flooding. By orienting the shorter side of the container to the west and the



longer side to the north, longer shadows were cast on the ground creating cool spaces that provide reprieve from the sun's rays. Bamboo, a plentiful resource, was also used to cool the buildings, along with plastic water bottles and rubber tyres. Additional water features would also insulate the building, as well as serve as water storage.

Martin Schorn and Michael Roland Koecher, both students finishing their final thesis at the Vienna University of Technology, understand the power of ownership well and have used it to their advantage. Schorn and Koecher designed modular structures that can be arranged and re-arranged by their owners, based on their particular needs. "Guided by professionals, the future inhabitant is requested to build his own unit, choosing his favoured unit size, wall construction materials and interior design," says Schorn. This modular framework allows Schorn and Koecher's entry to be adapted to a variety of sites and climate conditions.

Aside from creating a plan with great flexibility, Schorn and Koecher took care to use materials readily available and either 100 percent recyclable or biodegradable, and configured the plan to withstand the forces of nature. A rigid grid foundation of bamboo-reinforced concrete and shear walls made of cocowood help brace each unit against strong earthquakes. An integrated rooftop water tank in each dwelling provides an independent source of water, while urban gardens directly connected to each unit ensure residents have food to eat during disasters. Each unit is tied together by a connective walkway lifted off the ground, providing residents other avenues for escape during heavy rainstorms.

While the jury – which includes New Zealand Institute of Architects Gold Medal recipient Ian Athfield – continues to debate the merits of one design over another, participants are only happy to have been given a venue to provide solutions. "We did not join this competition just to win, but to share our ideas," says Agunoy. "The whole nation should start designing green buildings. Conventional construction and design methods should be ended. Fast."

"The warmer the oceans become, the more storms we have. The warmer the planet is, the more unpredictable the weather is, the more we have situations that cause political unrest and disrupt the economy," adds Keith. "[Climate change] is the pressing question of our time, and it's up to everyone to take responsibility for these concerns."

Competition winners will officially be awarded this month at the Philippine Presidential residence, Malacanang Palace. Log on to designagainsttheelements.org for the latest updates. ■

