

# 127, 129 & 131 SERANGOON ROAD



**Client:**

Precious Hill International Trading (Pte) Ltd

**Architect:**

AMC Architects International

**Engineer:**

Proteam Consulting Engineers

**Contractor:**

Kinglee Construction Pte Ltd

## 1997 AWARD

**L**ocated in the Historic District of Little India, the three units of two-storey Transitional shophouses were originally in a derelict state. The roof of unit No. 131 had caved in and was on the verge of collapse, with weeds and shrubs sprouting from most of its walls and its remnant tiled roof. Debonding of the plaster



*Facades carefully restored to their original splendour*

and minor cracking were also observed in some locations. The key architectural features of the building, for example, the arched openings at the second storey, were bricked up and small rectangular windows introduced.

Prior to the restoration, a photographic inventory of the existing features was carried out. The measurements of the details were carefully recorded on site. This was to facilitate the restoration of the elements to their original

design and dimensions.

During restoration, alternative supports were introduced to the walls to ensure the structural stability of the buildings. No more than two roof members were removed together at any one time. The same careful approach was also taken in the removal and replacement

of the timber floor joists. The arches at the second storey were reinstated with the removal of the brick infill and careful restoration of the mouldings. The roof parapet walls with ceramic bottle balustrades and moulded coping were similarly restored with the replacement of missing parts and the repair of mouldings.

The overall restoration works, which were sensitively carried out, retain the spirit and character of the place.



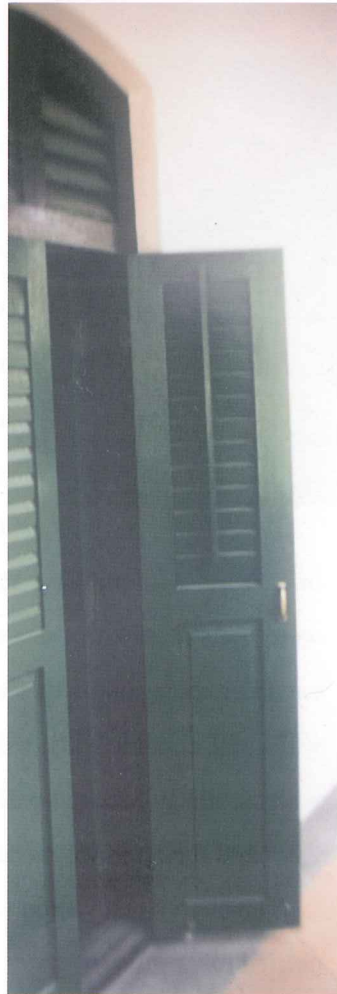
*Carefully restored architectural features on the facade*



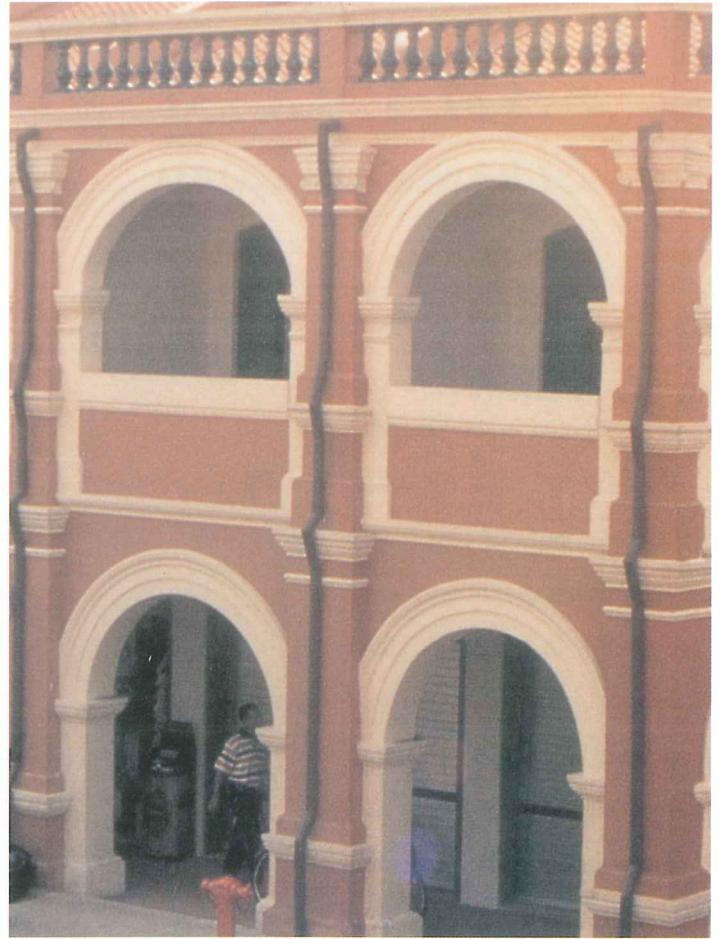
*Colonaded covered five-footway*



*Ionic column capital between the moulded architraves*



*Timber louvre/panel French window*



*Handsome facade of well-proportioned arched openings*

Serangoon Road is the main artery which runs the length of "Little India". Originally an area, where migrant Indians were engaged in cattle related activities, developed gradually into a busy commercial area. A large influx of population to the area during the last two decades of the 19th century resulted in further development to the built environment of the area. These developments can be considered as part of the "suburbia " which had been firmly established by the 1920's. Serangoon Road was originally the hub of the cattle trade where people like Mr. I.R. Belilios and Mr. Desker thrived on this particular commercial activity. In fact, the shophouses we were entrusted to restore are situated at the junction of Serangoon Road and Belilios Road - the latter named after Mr. Belilios himself (fig. 1).

The shophouses at 127,129 and 131 Serangoon Road were probably built between 1900 and 1940 and falls within the category of the Late Shophouse Style where the use of ornamentation was considered spectacular (fig.2). These shophouses were found in quite a derelict state. The roof has caved into the building, almost on the verge of collapse, and weeds have already crept into most of the walls and on to the remnants of the tiled roof (fig.3). Several changes had been made since the original design, most apparent being the filling up of the upper storey arches reducing the openings of the external wall to small rectangular windows (fig. 4,5). This has completely changed the face of the building which in its original form had very sensitively formed the junction of Belilios Road and Serangoon Road maintaining a handsome front facade of well-proportioned arched openings.