

No. 175 TELOK AYER STREET

A Work Of Art



Owner:
One Seven Five Pte Ltd

Architect:
WOHA Architects

Engineer:
Worley Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Sinwah Timber Builders

Circa 1870, the area upon which 175 Telok Ayer Street now stands was a waterfront property known as the Telok Ayer Basin. Before being acquired by its present owner, the shophouse was used by a paper merchant. Today, rejuvenated and restored from the wear and tear of yesteryears, this three-storey shophouse has been bestowed the new role of a modern office-cum-art gallery.

Restoring To Original

In restoring the property, the architects worked top-down. They went to great lengths to retain as much of the original elements of the façade as possible.

Decorative plasterworks were carefully restored. Previous alterations by way of brick tiles and canopy were removed to reinstate the original look. Front corbels were stripped of heavy layers of paint that concealed exquisite granite carvings of old. Windows, still in excellent condition, were stripped of their paint to reveal their natural timber finish while new windows, which were added, followed the proportion and detailing of the originals. During restoration, an old granite footpath edging was uncovered and kept at the front boundary of the house. Floorboards saved from minor termite and water damage were reinstated.



Restored and rejuvenated three-storey shophouse

Much of the original interior structure of the house was retained for its simplicity and spatial quality and a new mezzanine level added. A number of innovative and ultra-modern concepts came into play with the renovation and redesign of the interior.

A Bold Addition

A new and boldly contrasting feature was a 'rough-and-ready' spiral staircase which led

to all levels of the house. This provided both visual impact and practical functionality. The spiral design also saved space, gave an 'open' look to the house and allowed more light to filter in from the front and rear of the house, brightening up the darker centre recesses.

A Clever Courtyard Concept

The asymmetrical courtyard space on the second storey had, since inception, been a feature to be enjoyed by occupants from every level of the house. This interactivity was further enhanced by glass floors on either sides of the courtyard that worked like skylights to bring light into the first storey and mezzanine below.

Gardens In The Sky

To provide respite from the concrete surroundings, the architects added two areas of greenery to the house. The first was at the second storey courtyard and the second, on the rooftop terrace that had been converted from a flat rooftop. Keeping to its Chinese roots, the courtyard was landscaped with bamboo while the rooftop terrace emanated a Zen-like feel amid the cozy landscaped garden.

As a result of this, 175 Telok Ayer Street has a new role in a new world that respects and continues to draw inspiration from its past.



Restored shophouse along Telok Ayer Street



Decorative plasterworks



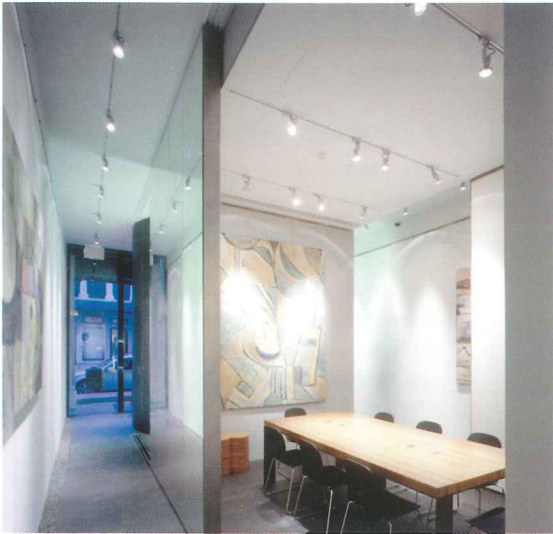
Timber beam reused as a bench



Original window and plasterworks retained



Garden in the sky



First storey gallery



Carved corbel revealed



Naturally-lit office space



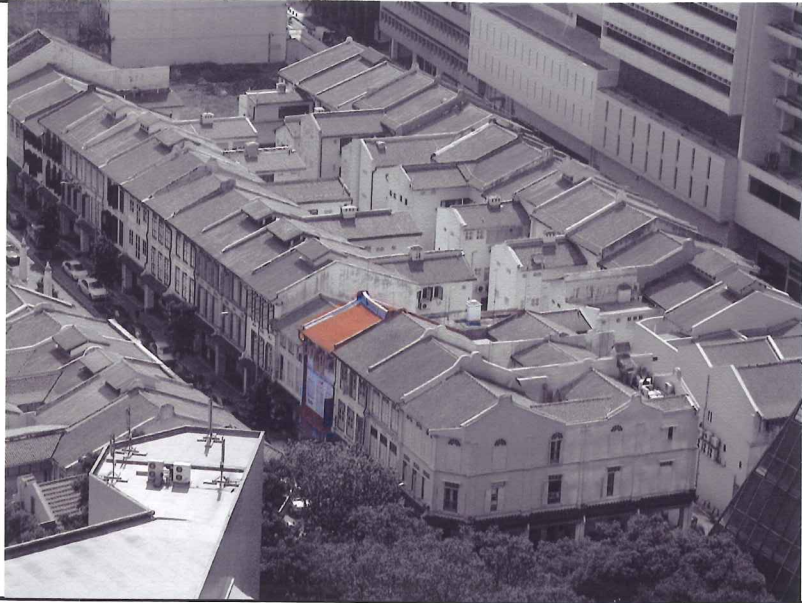
Bold new spiral staircase



Original granite edgings



Bamboo landscaped courtyard



Aerial View of Telok Ayer Street



Old Facade



Old Shop Interior

Research into the building was done as follows:

- Oral history, from talking to the existing owner.
- Typology history, from publications on the shophouse typology.
- Locality history, from publications on the Telok Ayer vicinity.
- Architectural design research, into the potential of the shophouse to provide a contemporary office environment.
- Structural and architectural research, into the existing condition of the building.



Previous Owner



Old Shop Signboard