

No. 50 EMERALD HILL ROAD

Recovering A Rare Gem



Owner:

Mdm Lim Lian Ho, Diana

Architect:

Quek Associates

Engineer:

LT Ling Consulting Engineers

Contractor:

Blue Star Construction Pte Ltd

In 1908, a Chinese cloth merchant built a row of eight double-storey terrace houses for gracious living at Emerald Hill Road. No. 50 was one of them. Through the years, time and changes rubbed away much of this house's traditional ornamentation and charm. In 1995, a new owner took possession and began an impassioned journey to recover No. 50 and restored it to a grandeur befitting its heritage and history.

A Gem Uncovered

By 1984, No.50 had undergone extensive renovation works. The interior had been altered to almost 'purely utilitarian standards' while the façade of the house had been 'modernised.' One such notable change was the replacement of significant period elements such as the conventional pre-war timber front door with an uninviting industrial collapsible iron gate.

Rebirth Begins

The new owner wished to restore the house to its original splendour in keeping with the best traditions of Straits Chinese residential architecture - the Peranakan heritage.

The challenge for the architects and designers was to create an interior to suit a contemporary lifestyle with an innovative blend of old and new features. There was also the task of



Peranakan terrace house restored for gracious living

balancing the need for more residential space with extensions that will not cause the interior to be congested, dark and gloomy.

Today, No.50 is almost a centenarian and it sits like a rare gem rediscovered on Emerald Hill.

A pair of ornate teak wood swing doors, which locals referred to as "Pintu Pagar", framed the tall timber main doors. On the swing doors were immaculately carved motifs of traditional flora and fauna. These were flanked by complementary window screens framing all the exterior timber windows.

Into The Light

Stepping over the threshold into the house from the five-foot way, one's attention was immediately drawn to the magnificent wood and glass staircase that cantilevered almost weightlessly over an emerald fishpond. An airwell created at the centre of the house drew soft and diffused natural light into the heart of the house, giving a sense of refreshing openness.

The well of light served as the core of the house. It also visually united its various storeys and living quarters.

The staircase led all the way to the third storey where there was a resplendent master bedroom featuring intricate designs and antique carvings. Here, a large window overlooked the graceful Japanese koi swimming in the serene fishpond below.

In With The Old And New

Much effort was put into ensuring an authentic ambience worthy of the building's heritage. New materials, from the choice of teak on the front door to the old-style ceramic tiles in the kitchen, the ornate carvings in the master bedroom and the owner's furniture and collection of Asian art, were selected with care to continue the theme of old and new.

Today, almost 100 years old, No. 50 certainly knows how to turn on the charm.



Decorative capitals and brackets



Second storey front façade with geometric detailings



Original residential front with ornate pintu pagar



Immaculately carved timber screen



Central airwell creates a sense of openness



Master bedroom overlooking the central airwell



Cantilevered staircase with koi pond below



Living area looking towards entrance



Naturally-lit core of the house

50 Emerald Hill Road

History

50 Emerald Hill Road is one of eight houses developed in 1908 by a Chinese immigrant cloth merchant called Hing Pong Kiat. The architects and engineers were a local firm called D'Almeida & Kassim.

In 1984, the houses was completely renovated, and the original exterior was replaced by what was perceived at the time as a more modern style, and the interior redone to purely utilitarian standards. Unfortunately, as a result of this, the house lost much of its traditional ornamentation and charm.

In 1995, the house was purchased. The owner wanted to draw inspiration from the old elements of the shophouse to be incorporated into an innovative and contemporary interior to suit a modern Singapore family.

The house underwent renovation in 1996 under the design and direction of Quek Associates.