

# No. 50 KEONG SAIK ROAD

Going By Basic Instincts



**Owner:**  
*Dr Loh Pek Har & Mr Loh Lik Peng*

**Architect:**  
*Chua Ka Seng & Partners Chartered Architects*

**Engineer:**  
*NexG Group Design*

**Contractor:**  
*Bestcon Builders Pte Ltd*

*Built in 1929 and used at separate times as a trading house, rental apartments and a budget hotel, 50 Keong Saik Road is now home of a boutique hotel with an edge. Not just because its entire structure is of an unconventional triangular shape, but also because a bold and instinctive architectural design, has filled it with a few delightful surprises.*

## **Sound Foundation**

As the building had recently undergone renovation works, structural conditions were relatively good at the onset. The main structural work done involved the replacement of the existing triangular-shaped second storey metal roof at the rear portion of the building with a new reinforced concrete flat roof and a landscaped garden.

## **Roof Spaces**

Besides Singapore Chinatown's first open-air jacuzzi at the newly built second floor roof terrace, another roof terrace, featuring an outdoor shower and skybath, was added on the fourth floor, making it probably a first for commercial shophouse properties as well.

Two attic rooms were attached at both ends of the roof terrace with these "moonlight delights". For those who preferred to be on



*Restored to a hip boutique hotel*

solid ground, the building also had inspired innovations on the lower levels.

## **Mirroring Effect**

The architect installed mirrored walls in the lobby in an attempt to bring into the hotel the vibrant pulse of street life just outside the hotel's main doors.

This innovative use of mirrors connected the interior of the building to the excitement at street level. The hotel restaurant also shared the same bar counter and front desk. A feature mirror was also found in the restaurant and it similarly, brought in the "street life".

## **Rooms With Views**

Prior to restoration, the third floor was the only level with proper rooms with views of the garden and Keong Saik Road. Improving the poor room layout was one of the design challenges as the walls were not straight. Due to its odd triangular shape, there were some intriguing space constraints to be overcome. In addition, every room was to have natural ventilation and lighting. This was achieved through clever use of space. Colours, walls and furnishings also created a welcoming and soothing ambience upon entry.

On the outside, 50 Keong Saik Road's largely intact original façade looks like a charming piece of monochromatic architecture trapped in time. On the inside, it is a colourful burst of ideas and innovations that not only demonstrate an exciting fusion of old and the new, but, more importantly, display the sterling results of efforts to overcome the odds and accentuate the positives in the pursuit of architectural excellence.



*Original façade retained and restored*



*Night-lighting to bring out the building's splendour*



*Art Deco pediment*



*Original windows*



*Open-air jacuzzi at second storey roof terrace*



*Use of glass and mirrors to bring the street life into the interior*



*Cantilevered balcony*



*Pre-cast concrete vents*



*Lobby area*



*First storey space with bright colours*



*Room with a view*



*Naturally-lit room*