

# No. 7 KIM YAM ROAD

Urban Oasis



2004 AWARD

CATEGORY B

**Owner:**  
Mr Tan Ju Kuang

**Architect:**  
Eco.Id Architects

**Engineer:**  
HS Consultants

**Contractor:**  
U.SAGE Contracts Pte Ltd

**B**uilt in 1879, this two-storey Transitional Style terrace house is located in the River Valley Conservation Area. Once used as a clubhouse by a Chinese clan association, it is today restored and rejuvenated as a haven for modern living.

### Flowing Through

In the days when the Singapore River was chocked full of boats plying goods to and from the warehouses lined along its banks, owners of these businesses lived in houses just a stone's throw away. One such unit is 7 Kim Yam Road. Today, although the boats are gone from the River, the vibrant life continues as owners seek to give the old buildings a new lease of life.

Before restoration, the house which had a forecourt, two main buildings, a central airwell and a rear court, was in a good structural condition. There were only minor plaster cracks to its existing party walls.

During restoration, the 3R principle was observed. The owner chose to conserve the main buildings and add a new rear extension behind. The design intention was to avoid the tight narrow spaces normally associated with shophouses and to have the ground floor spaces flow seamlessly into one another.

The existing courtyards were landscaped as extensions to the living and dining areas and serve as an oasis where one can take a break from the busy city life. A pond was added to the central courtyard. Sitting in the middle of the pond was a large ficus tree which led the eye upwards for a glimpse of the living spaces above. At the rear courtyard, a tower tree with small delicate leaves contrasted well against the texture of the exposed brickwall. Sculptural



Restored and rejuvenated terrace house with decorative panels

trees potted in exquisite large urns placed in the courtyard garden areas provided visual relief against the stone finishes and added a soft touch. Ornamental lattice patterns executed in different materials and on different surfaces added interest to the courtyard areas.

### Sensitive Detailing

The sense of lightness within the house was further accentuated by the sensitive detailing of its interior. The internal spaces were finished with details that are an abstraction of the traditional materials. They included the timber partition screen at the foyer, timber gate for the house, bamboo lattice details in the wall treatment and exposed brickwall at the rear court. Changes in materials and textures subtly defined the boundaries between areas. Timber-framed full height glass panels with pivoting detail allowed the indoor and outdoor spaces to flow into one another.

The entrance forecourt acted as a buffer to the street activities and its previously raised platform was lowered for direct vehicular access.

### Character Surprise

Great efforts were taken to restore the unique decorative panels above the front façade windows in the foyer area. Three more decorative panels containing ancient Chinese scripts, revealed when the internal face of the entrance wall was stripped of the old paintwork, were retained in their original locations and restored.

The result is an urban oasis for modern living within a traditional house in the heart of the city.



Decorative panels with Chinese scripts



Rich details on upper storey pilaster



Landscaped courtyard with pond, stone finishes and ficus tree creates an urban oasis



Open-to-sky rear courtyard



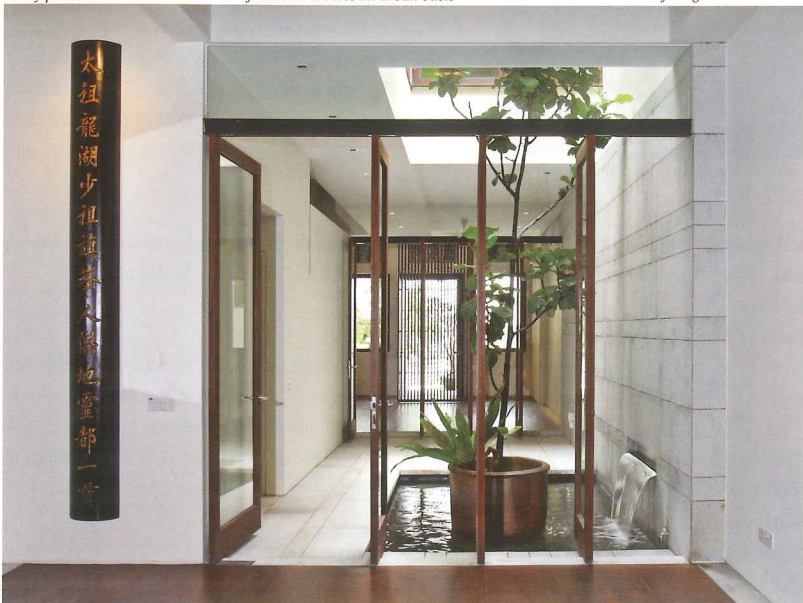
Timber louvred window and fanlight



Bamboo pattern timber screen at foyer



Well-lit dining area



Seamless flow of living spaces



Exposed brickwall at rear bedroom

## History

The development falls within River Valley Historic District, located within the downtown core. It is an attractive residential area, interspersed by other building types in the immediate surroundings, such as the Chinese Temple. There is also the vibrant nightlife of Mohamed Sultan Road just a stone's throw away.

The historic buildings in these areas are predominately two or three-storey shophouses and terrace houses that stand in contrast to the neighbouring new and modern high-rise developments. The shophouses in this area catered to the owners and workers of the godowns and warehouses along the river. Building typology of this specific shophouse can be categorised as Transitional Shophouse Style, which is predominately recognisable by its tripartite elevational order, i.e. elevation with three window openings and uniform facade proportion on all floors.