

No. 3 Fullerton Road

Refreshing Reflections



Owner:
Far East Organization/Sino Land

Architect:
MINKTan Architects

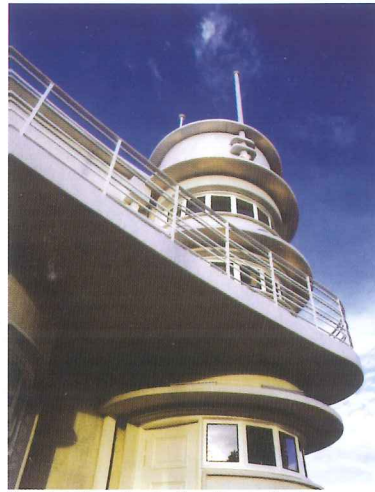
Engineer:
KTP Consultants Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Hexacon Construction Pte Ltd

During the 19th century, Singapore River was the heart and soul of the trading life of this British outpost. The Waterboat House was later built at the mouth of the river. With its restoration, this two-storey maritime landmark gives us a fresh look into our past.

On the Waterfront

The Waterboat House was built in the early 1900s by the architectural firm of Swan & Maclaren. Designed in the Art Deco Style, the building possesses a uniquely elegant and curved façade. A glass enclosed lookout deck on top of the building and circular windows complete the nautical imagery.



Shanghai plaster façade of maritime landmark painstakingly restored

Retro-Fitting Begins

But time left visible signs of neglect and cumbersome additions. Repairs thus became the first priority for the architect.

The architect removed a partial drywall box-up allowing the openness of the waterfront balcony to prevail. Ironmongeries like the window frames and hinges were kept and fitted back.

The architect also discovered the original colouration of the plaster finish under years of overlays and this same shade of grey is reinstated to strengthen the Waterboat House's visual linkage with the former General Post Office (now the Fullerton Hotel).

Most of the original half-height windows were retained. A selected few were modified to full-height French windows or doors to

maximise the waterfront views while encouraging the interaction of the building with the outdoors and to maintain the rhythm of the old façade.

Located around the building was the pier deck where the Merlion was once sited. It was in urgent need of repair. Instead of replacing the existing stones, the architect opted to repair the cracks and damages. Special paint was used to restore the original look. The surroundings was then decked over with timber to give it a breezy boardwalk feel.

Braving New Seas

To augment the building's new function, a glass annex was added to the back. Enveloped by curved glass, a highly visible staircase within highlights the state-of-the-art steel structure of this lightweight addition. The new wing now serves as a tourism retail space on the first floor and offers diners a magnificent skyline view from the second floor.

A glass link bridge connected to the old building provides a symbolic journey from the original Waterboat House to the new glass annex. The nautically styled staircase winds along the perimeters of the glass shell and enhances the maritime effect.

The sharp new roof profile now gives the building the distinct impression of a ship at sea. Standing out against the background of One Fullerton, the Waterboat House seems set to sail on, leaving lasting impressions in its wake.



Open balcony facing the waterfront kept



Original architectural elements retained



Elegant front façade restored



Sensitive old and new interface



View of The Waterboat House from the mouth of the Singapore River



Timber decking at the roof of the new extension enhances the conserved nautical rear façade



New timber pier deck at old Merlion site

Located at the entrance to the Singapore River and adjacent to the Merlion statue, the Waterboat House was built in 1919.

In the 18th century, heavy investments by the British government resulted in the transformation of the Singapore River into a major trading route. As the volume of ships increased at the river, getting water supply from inland seemed inefficient and slow. The Waterboat House was thus needed to ensure an effective supply of fresh water to traders on ships. "Waterboats" were employed to ferry fresh water from the main building to the ships anchored offshore. This was to prevent congestion at the Waterboat House as well as to reduce waiting time.

During this period of time, local architects were few and far between. As such, foreign architects were hired to design and develop buildings. Renowned architectural firm, Swan & Maclaren who were famous for their colonial building typology, was invited to design the Waterboat House. Built in the style that is art-deco, the Waterboat House possessed a unique yet elegantly curved facade. The glass enclosed lookout deck on top of the building and circular windows added to the nautical imagery.

Situated along Fullerton Road, the Waterboat House and its surrounds were given conservation status on 21 March 2002.