

No. 85 Sultan Gate

A Royal Salute



Owner:
Malay Heritage Centre

Architect:
CPG Consultants Pte Ltd

Engineer:
CPG Consultants Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Towner Construction Pte Ltd

This royal abode was originally completed 165 years ago in 1840 by Sultan Ali, the son of Sultan Hussein Shah. Located in the heart of the Kampong Glam Historic District, the restored two-storey Istana Kampong Glam is now put to adaptive re-use as a museum.

An Elegant Palace

A building of European architecture with Malay influences, the design of Istana is similar to that of other popular 18th century Palladian Style buildings. Understated and simple, yet elegant, its symmetrical plan, details and the front façade held distinct traces of the famed architect G.D. Coleman's influences.

The brief called for new ancillary facilities to house staff offices and workshop studios. A new performance area cum multi-purpose hall, and retail spaces were added to serve as an important focal point for Muslim festivities.

Reviving a Royalty

To restore the palace to its former glory, the architects did meticulous research through archival drawings, photographic and pictorial records.

The original building had suffered from benign neglect and careless repair. Many undesirable additions such as shed-like structures had sprung up. Termites infested all the existing timber doors and windows, and the existing timber roof trusses were badly damaged.



Restored Palladian Style palace adapted to a museum of Malay heritage

The additions were removed to recover the inherent spirit of the building and its compound. Doors and windows were replaced with new ones of the same design and details found in archival drawings. The timber roof trusses were removed in parts and replaced with a similar roof system. Some of the existing timber members were salvaged, treated and made into benches. Existing intact clay roof tiles were cleaned and sorted out in quantity for reuse on the roofs of the side entrance gates.

The new ancillary buildings did not reduce the prominence of the former Istana building, but instead acted as a neutral foil to the majesty of the estate. Boundary walls were retained and openings inserted to improve connectivity with the surrounding developments.

A central water feature was added to the front courtyard to highlight the main axis of the building, updating the design while promoting the regal feel of the palace.

Lasting Legacy

The restored Istana is now a place of pride in Kampong Glam and offers everyone an appreciation of Malay heritage and culture. The richness of Malay culture is retold through the reinterpretation of the traditional architecture, which allows the open-yet-closed, traditional-yet-modern aspect of the building to shine through.



Night lighting enhances the details of the restored building



Arched entrance porch restored



Secondary windows added to existing French windows at the upper storey for air-conditioning purposes



Scale and massing of the new ancillary buildings kept subservient to the conserved building



Spacious interior used as a gallery



Original roof tiles reused at side entrance gate



Aerial view of the museum complex in the heart of the Kampong Glam Historic District



Salvaged timber members made into benches



Restored hardwood staircase with handrails

FORMER ISTANA KAMPONG GELAM MALAY HERITAGE CENTRE

The Istana Kampong Gelam was completed 165 years ago by Sultan Ali, son of Sultan Hussein Shah. Strategically positioned in the Kampong Gelam Historic District, the former Istana building sitting on a land area of about 8620 sq m surrounded by a 6 feet high boundary wall. It was a palace built for Sultan Hussein in 1830s and rebuilt in 1840s. Subsequently, the Government acquired the Istana building and the land including the neighbouring building Gedung Kuning.

The Istana building is adapted for reuse as a museum and with the insertion of the ancillary buildings offers the facilities for visitors an insight into the Malay's roots, culture, lifestyle and traditional arts.

HISTORY

The Istana building is typical of the palladian buildings which were so popular in the second half of the 18th Century. The design is deliberately understated and simple, yet elegant. The columns and pillars are reminiscent of classical architecture but mostly unadorned with carvings. Its symmetrical plan and details and the front façade echoes Architect G D Coleman's earlier works. It is a building of European architecture with Malay influences that become an important focal point for Muslim festivities.