

# No. 9 TAN QUEE LAN STREET

Double Distinction



2006 AWARD

CATEGORY B

**Owner:**  
Dawnatron Pte Ltd

**Architect:**  
WOHA Architects Pte Ltd

**Engineer:**  
Tham & Wong

**Contractor:**  
Hup Soon Construction Co. Pte Ltd

*Originally used as commercial properties, these three-storey vintage buildings have been remodelled into a modern mix-use development, offering twice the space while retaining their original emblematic façades.*

## A Glorious Restoration

Comprising six pre-World War II Transitional shophouses, the development incorporates a new rear block to double the usable space. Currently, shops and restaurants reside at the ground level while offices were on the second. Apartment suites occupied the rest of the floors.

Work began with restoration of the façade to bring ornamental details back to life. Careful retention, restoration and reparation techniques were applied. Almost all timber shutters were reconditioned and decorative ventilation openings cleaned up. Care was taken to replace damaged sections of windows rather than the entire frame. The decorative ventilation openings were enhanced with frameless glass and acoustic seals were installed, where required.



*Restored shophouses with a distinctive new rear extension*

## Backlane Beauty

Most distinctively, a subtle yet effectively modern-looking rear extension gives this project its winning edge. Rising above the typical shophouse backlane, this commanding new extension sports an eye-catching, skin-like aluminium grey shell within a complementary envelope. Partitions stop short of the ceiling to allow light deep within, while shuttered windows screens and grilles allow privacy to be controlled as did similar shutters in the front block. This new rear addition has a pleasing profile when contrasted against the classic visage of the shophouses.

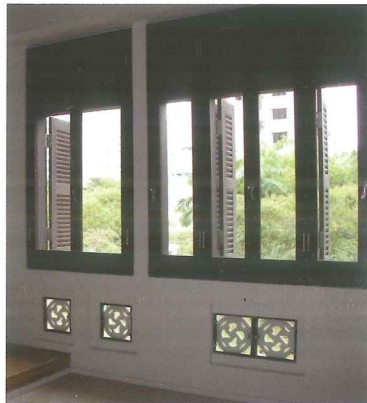
To link the two blocks, eighteen zippered private and common pocket courtyards and lightwells were introduced between the existing front block and the new rear block to create innovative transitional zones and for cross-ventilation between the old and the new.

## Two Views

This adaptive reuse showcases a delightful and innovative configuration of spaces. The result is a well-designed and beautiful melding of heritage with modern utilities to achieves a sublime effect.



*Original timber louvred windows reconditioned*



*Secondary timber framed windows*



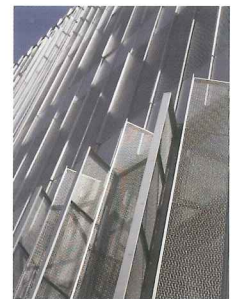
*Modern apartment in new rear extension*



*First storey entrance lobby to apartments above*



*View from penthouse unit at new extension*



*Skin-like grey metallic façade treatment at new extension*



*Double storey residential unit at conserved portion with shophouse living experience*



*Pocket courtyard*



*Modern treatment of rear façade contrasts against the conserved front portion*



*Decorative ventilation openings with frameless glass and acoustic seals*



*Condensing units well-integrated within rear façade*



Yech, Brenda S.A. (2003) *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power relations and the urban built environment*. Singapore: Singapore University Press

Warren, James Francis (2003) *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san: prostitution in Singapore 1870-1940*. Singapore: Singapore University Press

Quah, Yvonne (1986) *We remember: the cameos of pioneer life*. Singapore: Landmark books

Named after a prominent Hokkien merchant and land owner Tan Quee Lan Street was already in existence before the "Singapore and Straits directory" listing began in 1883. While the street does not show in some maps before 1883 because it is short and not a main thoroughfare (like North Bridge Rd and Beach Rd) it was indeed a lively street situated between the borders of the European Town and Arab Kampung of Colonial Singapore.

Early records in 1860s state Tan Quee Lan Street as part of the Malay Street area (Bugis Junction today), considered to be the principal red-light district of that time. Together with Malay Street, Bugis Street, Hylam Street, Malabar Street and Fraser Street, Tan Quee Lan Street constituted the Kampong Glam district.

Both an entertainment district and an urban slum, Kampong Glam housed large number of taverns, brothels and Eastern European prostitutes as well as providing support for small industries and businesses such as cabinet-makers, drapers, florists, laundrymen, doctors.

By 1927 authorities cleaned prostitution out of the street and the government purchased two acres of land bounded by Beach Road, Middle Road, North Bridge Road and Tan Quee Lan Street to improve sanitation conditions and provide open recreation space. The first building plan submission for no 9 – 14 Tan Quee Lan Street was by Mr. Wee Chong Keng with the expected completion in early 1930s. A recognized Hylam (Hainan) community leader from then Tan Quee Lan Street was occupied by his businesses, Sen Wah Press, Sin Hua Seng (Import & Export), Rui Heng Weighting Scale Shop, Vinlux Sports, You Feng Stationery Shop and Yue Lai Kiang Night Club.

In 1997 Dawnatron Pte Ltd bought over this development and today it has been restored and renewed to accommodate for an opportunity of a higher density urban living environment.

