

No. 14 CABLE ROAD

Black & White Beauty



Owner:
Mr Khoo Ken Hee

Architect:
Chan Sau Yan Associates

Engineer:
Web Structures Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Milliard Pte Ltd

Once a mess hall used by staff of European trading company, McAlister & Co, this classic mock Tudor-style Black & White has reinvented itself as a contemporary family home, complete with a masterfully designed new annex.

Rekindling The Old

Built in 1920, this bungalow was in its original form when the present owner bought it. However, it was in a state of disrepair. The project team retained and strengthened the entire first storey load bearing brick walls. The second storey timber structure, however, was badly rotted and deemed unsalvageable. Each timber element including the roof beams were replaced one by one, in top-down fashion.

Grey cement roof tiles of the colour and profile matching the originals were air-flown from Thailand. Windows and door panels were reinstated where possible or replicated. Key original features such as exposed timber joist ceilings, and ornamental doorways were kept. The original Palladian layout was retained for the family rooms.

The former drive-way leading to the *porte cochere* was reoriented to the new main entrance by the new annex block. This made way for more garden space and the *porte cochere* was reinterpreted as an open sitting area complete with nostalgic black and white tiles. Perfect for breezy weekend afternoons.



Sensitive integration of new with conserved 1920s Black & White bungalow

A Masterful Blend

The *pièce de résistance* of this project is the masterful integration of the new double-storey annex to the existing structure. Of scale and proportion echoing the conserved bungalow, the new extension houses the new master bedroom. It is connected to the main house by a one-sided open linkway and kitchen on the first storey, and an enclosed bridge with roof terrace on the second storey.

Adjustable louvred windows, inspired by the conserved house, are used in the linkway bridge. Instead of timber, the updated version which adopted a seamless colour tone, was recreated in aluminium.

New Levels Of Thoughtfulness

The top levels of the new and the old can be accessed by one cleverly positioned folded plate steel staircase with a fitting timber finish. Another naturally-ventilated staircase near the entrance now leads to a newly created basement area. A sunken courtyard covered by metal gratings brings some natural illumination into the basement which is used as a pool room.

Overall, the black & white colour scheme and careful choice of materials in the new extension further demonstrate outstanding commitment and sensitivity to the spirit of conservation.



Linkway with adjustable louvred windows seamlessly connects the old and new buildings



Conserved house seen from the raised pool deck in the foreground



Existing railing kept



New shower introduced at second storey roof terrace



Family room at second storey



Glass box over staircase for better security to second storey



19th century timber divider continue to define internal spaces



Former main entrance transformed into an open sitting area complete with black and white tiles

The 2-storey McAlister mess at 14 Cable Road sits on a 1463.50 sqm subdivided plot from an old estate of sprawling green where it used to be linked by covered walkways to four single storey bungalows. Swan & McLaren were commissioned in 1920 to build the mess together with four bungalows for McAlister & Co, an established trading house during the colonial era. It was common back then for European firms to have a mess for unmarried members of their staff to live and take their meals together. The house was still standing in its original form when the owner bought it more than 2 years ago, except that it was in a state that is in need of repair.

This postwar black and white house has the classic mock Tudor style with Doric columns for the porte cochere and louvred panels used as sunscreens in lieu of balustrades for the verandah at the upper storey, which seemed to be the characteristic feature of Swan & McLaren's style then. Another characteristic feature was the diamond-shaped cement shingles used in place of roof tiles, which were subsequently discovered to be made of clay instead of cement. The ground floor was typically built in load bearing bricks while the upper storey comprised of timber frame with in-filled half brick panels or noggings.