

2 TO 28 MURRAY STREET

Soul Survivor



Owner:
AEW Asia Pte Ltd

Architect:
Strategic Design International

Engineer:
BK Consulting Engineers Pte Ltd

Contractor:
Sunray Woodcraft Construction Pte Ltd

2010 AWARD

CATEGORY A

A lot of heart has clearly been put into recapturing the soul of this cluster of fourteen three-storey vintage shophouses. Rescued from decades of neglect and incoherent modifications, the property has been resourcefully transformed into a modern and commercial space with renewed assurance of a brighter future.

Recovering The Past

Many unique features distinguish this collection of shophouses - a lion head motif, claw-like protrusions on the sides of the building, octagonal-shaped columns and intricately latticed ventilation panels, to name a few. Among the most distinctive is an exterior wall featuring a mixture of plastered and exposed bricks. Hidden under several layers of paint, the wall was painstakingly repaired and cleaned to reveal the splendour of the original fair-faced brick wall underneath.

Key characteristic elements such as timber windows, that had badly rotted, were faithfully replicated when they could not be salvaged. Within the building, timber floors, windows and doors were repaired or replaced where necessary. Sturdy timber door frames were cleaned and repainted



Shophouses transformed into attractive upmarket development

and fitted with new hinges and holders. A fresh coat of white paint on the building's façade shows off its exquisite and elaborate features.

Spaces That Work

Taking full advantage of the many windows, high ceilings and balconies of the existing property, dark and congested internal spaces were redesigned into large amalgamated spaces conducive to the needs of modern offices. This involved the removing of the individual staircases leading to the separate units. Two new lift lobbies built into the structure allow for improved vertical access.

Clearing The Clutter

On the second storey of the conserved property, the addition of a rear slab created more usable communal spaces. A centralised area to house the air-conditioning condensers at this level is a clever and discreet way to integrate modern amenities into the old architecture.

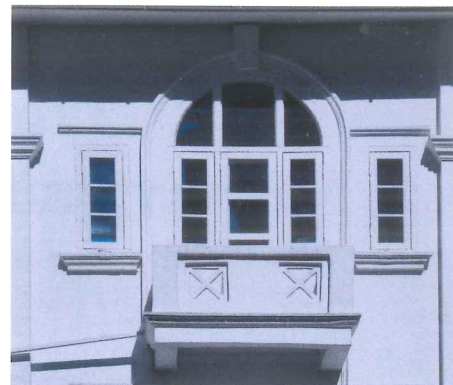
This project is a good demonstration of how restoration can successfully be combined with commercial practicality to create an attractive and upmarket development.



Claw-like protrusions repaired



External side facade with elaborate features



Third storey French window with semi-circular fanlight



Five-footway restored



Fair-faced brick restored



Lion head motif



Outdoor communal space at second storey



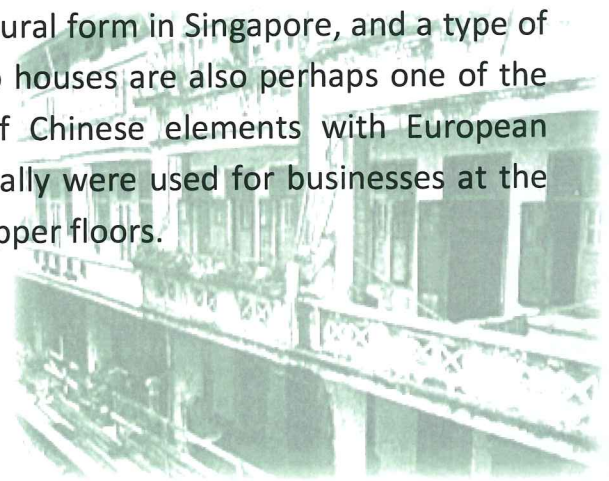
Interesting internal space

1.0 BACKGROUND



Murray Terrace is a block of 14 pre-war built contiguous shop houses located in the Tanjong Pagar (Chinatown) Conservation Area. The property is located along the pedestrianised Murray Street with frontages to Maxwell Road and Cook Street.

Shop houses are a traditional architectural form in Singapore, and a type of building indigenous to Southeast Asia. Shop houses are also perhaps one of the earliest forms of “fusion” with a blend of Chinese elements with European colonial architecture. These buildings typically were used for businesses at the ground floor level with living spaces on the upper floors.



2.0 HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

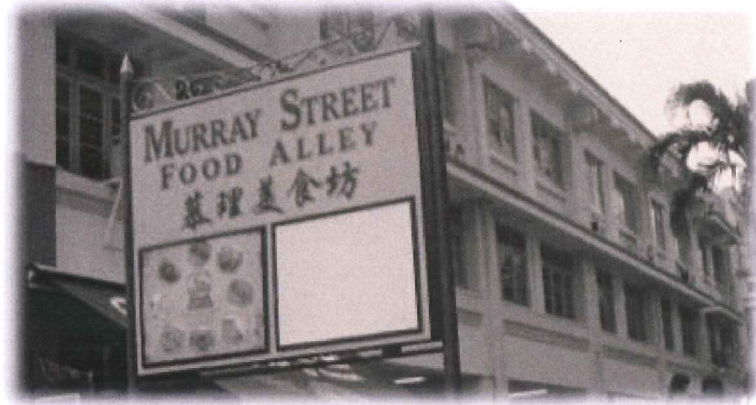


Murray Terrace is a unique part of Singapore architectural history. Although no records on the buildings actual construction are available, most believe that the 1929 inscribed on the buildings fourth floor facing Maxwell Road is the best indicator of when this building was constructed.



Murray Terrace could have been more than a typical pre-war built shop houses that served merchants in early Singapore. Indeed, distinct architectural motifs such as a flag post and the insignia of a lion head carving on the Maxwell Road facade suggest that the building may have served as an army barrack at one time. Furthermore, this military link may be supported as Murray Street/Terrace was believed to have been named after Colonel A. Murray, a colonial engineer and surveyor general of the Straits Settlement.

In terms of use, Murray Terrace had its last majorly refurbishment and rebranding in 1977 (as Murray Terrace Food Alley). In this incarnation, Murray Terrace became a well known dining destination for locals and tourists as it offered a distinct collection of famous hawkers. At its peak Murray Terrace Food Alley was characterized by a bustling atmosphere with customers spilling over into the five foot ways and into the open areas of Murray Street.



Buildings like societies are dynamic and have to evolve with changes in their environment. Murray Terrace, since its last rebranding in 1977 has however not kept up with these changes. Food Terrace by the early 1990s had lost its original appeal as the famous hawkers gradually and increasingly were replaced by relatively non-descript offerings. This resulted in Murray Terrace losing its vibrancy and distinct character. Little money was also being spent to upkeep the building, which other than the ground floors has in most part become obsolete for modern commercial uses. Many of the non-ground floor units lacked air conditioning and were poorly maintained, with some units being primarily used as storage despite the property's very central location.