

# 9-19 KRETA AYER ROAD

Singular Sensation



**Owner:**

*Hanru Investments Pte Ltd*

**Architect:**

*Liu & Wo Architects Pte Ltd*

**Engineer:**

*KH Consultants*

**Contractor:**

*Soon Soon Lee Construction Pte Ltd*

**2011 AWARD**

**CATEGORY A**

**C**onstructed between 1840 and 1900, the six units of narrow two-storey transitional style shophouses in the Chinatown Historic District of Bukit Pasoh, have been converted into one modern, open-plan corporate office space brimming with yesteryear charm.

## Reviving the Envelope

Before approaching the challenge of adapting the old space for a new use, the project team faithfully used the “Top-Down” approach in the restoration process. Exercising maximum retention, sensitive restoration and careful repair, the team carefully reinstated the key elements of the buildings’ traditional exterior. The original moulded capitals, pillars and the granite thresholds on their façades and five-footways were restored as were the precast vents at the front and rear of the shophouses. Additional ground beams and footings were introduced to take care of the new loading and to ensure the integrity of the party walls.

## Breaking the Barriers

To achieve the single volume of space, the party walls were opened up to the allowable maximum of 50%. On each level, great care was taken to ensure that the new space still echoed the shophouse character and proportions. The choice of broad timber strips for the upper storey floorboards and the secondary timber ceiling perpetuate the heritage shophouse aura. The double layer floors cleverly concealed the mechanical and electrical conduits and ensure sound insulation by absorbing the footfall of busy executives above.



*Six shophouses reconfigured into a corporate headquarter for 200 staff*

To minimise the sloping site, steps were neatly introduced at passageways with workstations ingeniously placed to camouflage the level differences. The firemen’s requirements were fulfilled by installing the fire rated roller shutters such that they blend in with the party walls, thus minimising their bulk. Besides reinstating the pintu pagars of original design on all the shophouses, the iron security

bars were also retained. The new main entrance signboard in gold foil on carved Chinese characters enhances and completes the authentic residential front experience.

## Letting in the Light

The team is commended for the many ways of introducing natural lighting into the interior spaces. These spaces originally stifled by dark corners and dim corridors have been illuminated by new skylights between the passageways, vertical slot openings in the restrooms, new jack roofs at every unit and the generous French window openings that wrap around the lush roof deck gardens at the open-to-sky second storey terraces. These bright ideas energise the new work environment. Even the central air-conditioning units are tastefully screened away from sight with carefully chosen plantings and their sound muffled by water features.

This project is indeed a masterful restoration of shophouses sensitively reconfigured and revitalised to a modern office space for 200 lucky staffers.



*Residential front complemented by a signboard of traditional design*



*Second storey terrace roof garden with water feature*



*Pintu pagar of original design reinstated*



*Vertical slot openings in restroom for natural lighting*



*Rear roof gardens*



*Entrance to meeting rooms*



*Open-plan corporate office space*

This project comprises of 6 units of two-storey Early Style shophouses, constructed between 1840 and 1900. Buildings of this style are generally simple in detail and relatively low in scale. With masonry party wall, they are built in rows with simple pitched roof. The facade is a means of filling the space between the two end walls. Squat pillars projected over the pedestrian walkway support the upper floor facade, which is bordered by plain masonry pilasters at each side. Ornamentation on the building is minimal.



Street elevation of unit 9,11,13 & 15 at Kreta Ayer Road

The project is within the Bukit Pasoh Conservation Area, one of the sub-districts of Historic Chinatown. Also known as the 'Street of Clans', Bukit Pasoh was developed in the early 1900s, an extension of the already densely populated Telok Ayer area then. It is home to many conservation shophouses.



Aerial view of units 9 to 19 (odd numbers) Kreta Ayer Road highlighted in colour