

# 5 & 7 GALLOP ROAD

Culture and Nature in Harmony



**Owner:**  
National Parks Board

**Architect:**  
Kay Ngee Tan Architects

**Engineer:**  
Lee & Lee Consultants  
Pte Ltd

**Contractor:**  
Landscape Engineering  
Pte Ltd

**Additional Team Members:**  
GSM Project (Exhibition)

KL Au Consultants Pte Ltd (M&E  
Engineer)

Kwix Solutions Pte Ltd (Chemical  
Engineer)

Mapei Far East Pte Ltd (Plaster  
Specialist)

Ramboll Studio Dreiseitl Pte Ltd  
(Landscape)

Synergraphic Art Glass (Glass  
Specialist)

**B**uilt nearly a decade apart, *Atbara* and *Inverturret* are two architecturally and historically significant bungalows repurposed into the Forest Discovery Centre and Botanical Art Gallery as part of the Singapore Botanic Gardens' extension. After sensitive adaptation, the delightful pair now have new life as educational and recreational spaces accessible to the public.

## A Shared History

Though each house: *Atbara* (1898) and *Inverturret* (1906) carries its own unique style, the common thread which binds them is the renowned architect, R A J Bidwell, who was behind many notable landmarks in Singapore. Over time, the ownership of the properties has changed hands. Now under the stewardship of the National Parks Board, the recent adaptive reuse binds the two stately properties even closer together in the public eye.

## Windows of Opportunity

The modest budget did not prove to be a deterrent to the project team but an opportunity to carefully stretch the boundaries. The formerly private spaces have been masterfully transformed into a welcoming and inclusive ensemble through a 'right sizing' approach in their reuse. Informed by extensive historical research into the origins of the buildings, the team skilfully incorporated regulatory, climatic and universal access requirements while retaining the delicate period aesthetics. Of note is that the dedicated team and client ensured attention was paid to every detailed aspect of the restoration and development works even though there was no conservation specialist on board.

*Atbara's* unique Moorish arches were uncovered and restored and the lower level was turned into additional useable sheltered space for public activation. The Tudor inspired half timbering effect was further enhanced with a historic paint scheme. Internally, on the second storey, the removal of ceiling boards has allowed a new appreciation of the roof structure.



*Atbara*



*Inverturret*

At *Inverturret*, clever space planning retained the elegant grand staircase and original spaces that have been key features of the house while new access and programming needs were carefully inserted. Edwardian-style features such as the circular hand-blown Rondel-glass panels and bay windows were kept and restored to bring back the original flavour.

Care was also extended in how the heritage of the buildings, site and landscape could be engagingly presented to the visitor. Old plans, photographs and 'viewing frames' reveal connections to aesthetic ideas of the past and history of the houses.

## Lawns of Reflection

The treatment of the landscape reflects how Bidwell, inspired by English landscape movement, had integrated building and landscape into an aesthetic whole. The expansive lawns fronting both buildings were kept and new picturesque planting with winding pathways carefully introduced at the rear. Thoughtful planning deliberately sited new buildings in the background to maintain the original spatial relationship between the two buildings and their prominence.

In a highly urbanised city like Singapore, this place has become an oasis for many to enjoy a breathtakingly unblocked view of the surrounding from atop the Gallop hillock.

## An Authentic Evolution

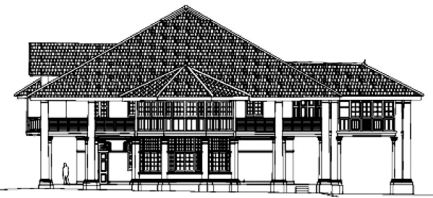
A certain charm and window into a timeless past have been recaptured in this project. The un-contrived and sensitive site planning, restoration efforts, programming and welcoming landscaping has brought out the intrinsic spirit of the place in the ensemble of the two charming buildings. Located in the vicinity of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the whole place is well positioned to become a cherished spot for present and future generations.



*Above and Below: a careful study of the relationship between the buildings, terrain, landscape and planting to guided the integrated approach to conservation*



*Atbara, 5 Gallop Road*



*Inver turret, 7 Gallop Road*



*A delicate new entrance ramp added at the rear of Atbara provides universal access and maintains the visual integrity of the building's historic front*



*Atbara's distinctive arches restored*



*Landscaping enhances prominence of house*



*Finely carved timberwork*



*Ceilings opened up for a spacious feeling*



*Heritage of the houses and site is sensitively presented*



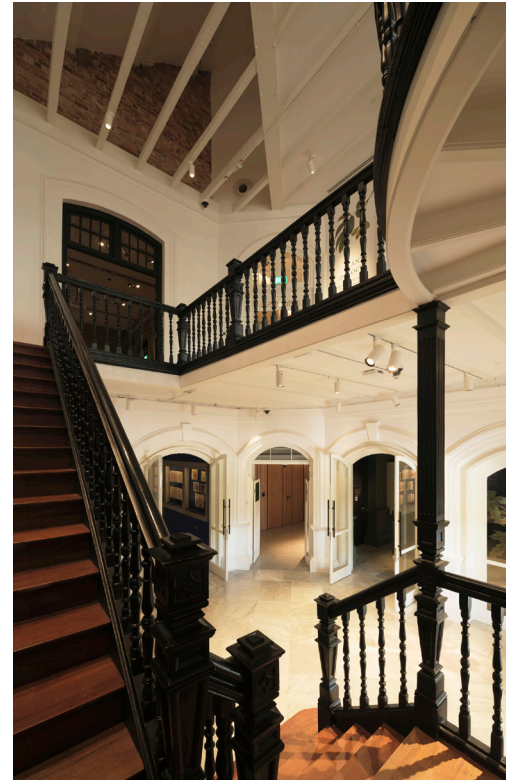
*Interpretative frames to explain site*



*Delicate Asian timber carving*



*Rare 'Rondel' Glass*



*Iconic grand stairs of Inver turret retained*



*Right-sizing of new programme allows for original layout to be retained*



*Visual connection maintained between buildings*