

59 EMERALD HILL ROAD

A Model Heritage Abode



Owner:
Ms Dawn Chan

Engineer:
KEON Consult Pte Ltd

Contractor:
HB Resources Pte Ltd

Conservation Specialist:
Studio Lapis Conservation Pte Ltd

Additional Team Members:
Mr Frédéric Blachier (Interior Designer)

Foo Woodmaking Pte Ltd (Timber Restoration Specialist)

Laim-Tec Pte Ltd (Tiles Restoration Specialist)

Characterised by a blend of European and South-East Asian architectural features, 59 Emerald Hill Road stands out for its well-preserved internal and external historic elements. With a focus on minimal intervention, the project serves as a model for other owners on how to be good custodians of their historic homes.

An Intact Historic Townhouse

59 Emerald Hill Road is a rare example of a largely intact historic townhouse. Developed by Low Koon Yee, a merchant who spearheaded the development of 16 other units in the area, the house remained within the Low family for three generations. Designed by architect R.T Rajoo in 1924, the house is notable for its combination of Western classical pilasters, ornate plaster mouldings, and a range of polychromatic tiles – both imported and locally manufactured, to give its distinct Singaporean aesthetic.

Minimal Approach, Maximum Effort

Given the remarkable intactness of the house and the owner's enlightened approach, the team adopted minimal intervention. A thorough pre-condition survey assessed the building to be structurally sound. However, signs of wear and tear after a century of use were evident.

The systemic research and documentation guided the scope of the restoration works. The later-added curved "pantile" roof tiles were removed and replaced with traditional V-shaped tiles, reinstating the roof's original design. The façade, previously covered in thick layers of paint, was restored through detailed paint analysis. Archival research, manual paint stripping, and delicate stucco repair revealed the building's original 1924 palette. White paint was used on trimmings of the restored plaster mouldings, enhancing the façade's visual depth and accentuating its crisp architectural details.



A historic elegance carefully revealed

Localised repairs were only needed to the interior elements as they were highly intact and in good condition. Rare examples of gilded lacquer work as seen in the built-in wall cabinets, window and door screens were carefully cleaned to retain their rich patina, while historic ironmongery was reconditioned and reused.

The house's original walls and floors, featuring majolica, cement encaustic, and rare locally manufactured artificial marble tiles, were carefully preserved, with minimal repairs carried out using

precise colour-matching techniques. Custom-made dado tiles were reinstated, matching the dimensions and colours of the originals. Electrical works were strategically planned, restricted to areas above the dado tiles on the first storey, ensuring the historic tiles remained untouched. This meticulous approach preserves the home's authentic materials and details.

Time to Rediscover

Also outstanding is the preservation of the house's original internal layout to maintain the townhouse's historic and classic character. A key discovery was a 1920s timber-framed room with removable skirting boards and a delicate lattice above the partition, hidden for decades behind newer boards. The owner chose to keep this rare ensemble, now a centerpiece of the restored home.

A Home Across Generations

Through meticulous restoration and minimal intervention, 59 Emerald Hill Road has been transformed into an elegant, timeless family home that retains its historical integrity. It serves as a model for other owners of intact historic homes, showcasing how sensitive conservation can preserve the past while adapting a property for modern living.



Long hidden timber lattices - a rare feature, were discovered and carefully restored



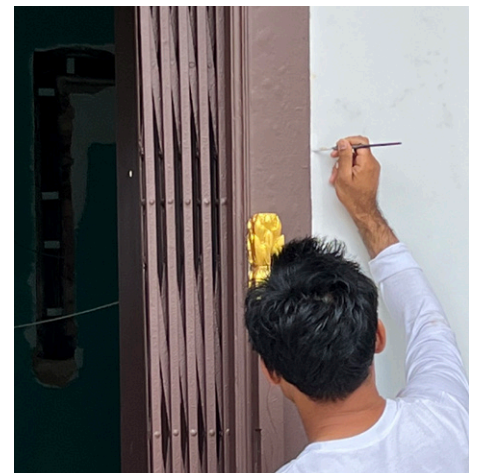
Skilled expertise engaged throughout in the cleaning and repair of original elements such as the plaster and timber work



Restored rare artificial marble floor tiles shine alongside vintage furnishings to create a home that seamlessly combines heritage with comfort



Original interior elements and decorations meticulously restored to reveal period charm



Careful repainting with conservation paints breathes new life into historic facade

59 EMERALD HILL ROAD

2024 Award for Conservation

Skilful restoration and minimal intervention have re-energised this rare, intact heritage terrace house into an elegant timeless family abode.

Through the team's detailed investigation and inventory of the building's historic layers, unique interior elements such as a “peep hole” into the five-foot way, timber partition with removable timber skirting board, and rare artificial marble tiles, have been kept. Of impressive credit is the recovery of a long-hidden rare timber lattice – one of only few known in Singapore.

After masterly restoration which mainly entailed localised careful repairs, diverse ensemble of traditional elements like tiles, cast-iron grilles, and ornamental plasters now exude with historic charm. Extraordinary effort has also been noted in the sourcing of authentic vintage materials which complement the existing period fittings and cabinetry. With a colour scheme thoughtfully chosen after meticulous paint stripping and colour matching to harken back to its original 1924 look, this house is posed to enhance the distinctive character of Emerald Hill.

This exemplary project shows that with care and understanding, a historic home and its valuable interior features can still meet present-day needs. It serves as a shining model for owners of other intact interiors to follow.

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