

# 125 JOO CHIAT PLACE

The Lucky One



**Owners:**

Mr Low Junrui & Ms Wong Huiwen Denise

**Architect:**

CHANG Architects

**Engineer:**

City-Tech Associates

**Contractor:**

Allegiance Construction Pte Ltd

**W**ith no hint of subtlety, this 1920s Transitional-Style shophouse, formerly The Lucky Book Store, has been restored and reinvented for its new purpose as a modern family home. This surprising and delightful outcome is a high impact, budget-friendly transformation that lays bare much of the building's past.

### Portal To The Past

The well-preserved façade of the shophouse belies a spectacular architectural odyssey that is behind the shophouse's reinstated timber casement main door. Elements like the fading Lucky Book Store signage on the square column of the five-foot way tell of its past life. The many layers of paint were expertly removed to reveal the original patina of age on the walls, adding authenticity without giving the feel of dilapidation. The entire façade wall has been protected with a clear coat of sealers to prevent flaking and to preserve the 'oldness' of the property for all to see.

### Baring Bricks And Bones

Inside the house, the old and the new meet in a bolder and more dramatic juxtaposition. The original brickwork of the party walls is left exposed to stunning effect. Cavities in the walls, where timber joists used to be, are intentionally retained to reflect how the internal spaces were once configured. Fragments of the old boundary walls are also kept to provide clear demarcation between the old and the



Transitional-Style shophouse restored as modern family home

new. At both levels, the front portion of the shophouse and the clear vistas on the sides maintain a visual connection to the rear of the house. The removal of the second storey side passageway slab at the rear service block creates a spectacular double volume dining area that leads the eye to the project's equally unconventional new rear extension.

### New Living, Out Of The Box

The clever and interesting use of the land at the back of the main house deserves high praise. Rather than taking the conventional path of building new extensions that maximise the built-up area and tower over the conserved building, the team opted for a low-density, single-storey configuration. The outcome bodes well for tropical climate living. Playing

up on unsheltered connections between the old and the new, and clever vertical and horizontal apertures that bring the outdoors in, the good old days of running barefoot on the grass and feeling the pitter patter of rain on your head are here again for the lucky occupants of the house.

This project is a good example of how bold thinking can contribute to a well-integrated old and new development that is affordable, honest and unpretentious. In embracing the imperfections of the original shophouse and meeting its purpose, the project team has clearly shown that conservation is not just cosmetic work but the retention of various aspects of history.



*Upper storey bedroom*



*Decorative mouldings at upper storey façade*



*Fading Lucky Book Store signage kept*



*Double volume dining room*



*Exposed original brickwall at party walls*



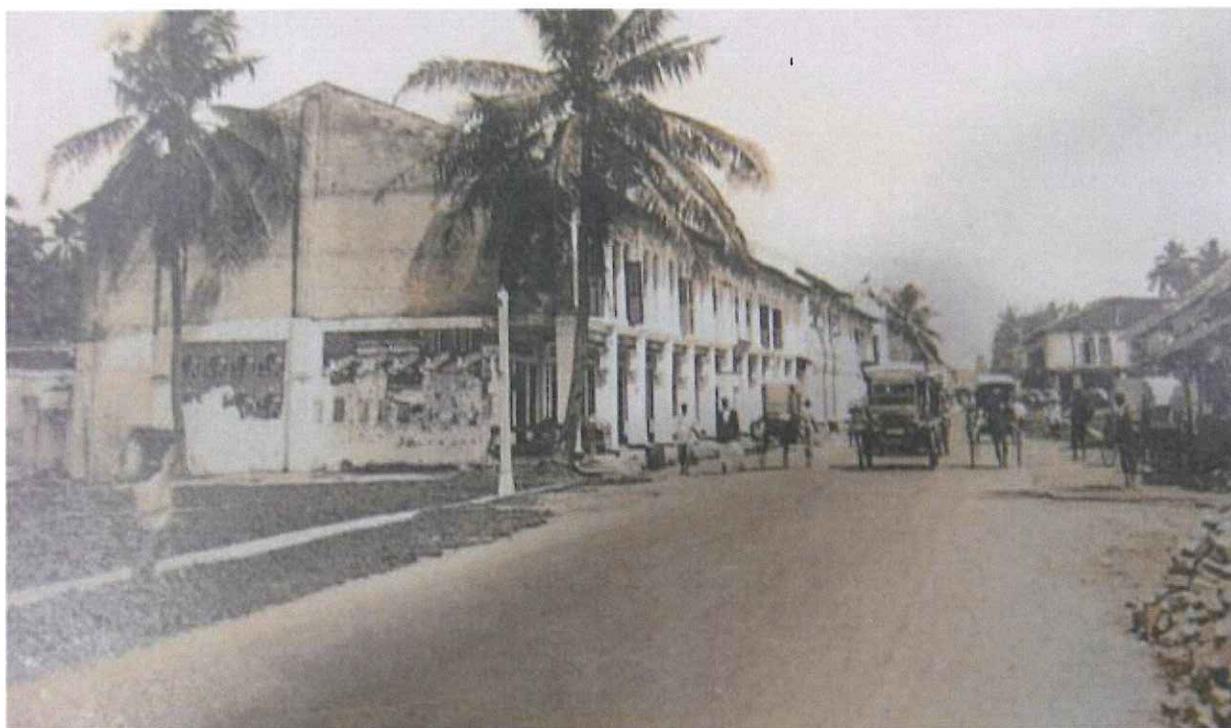
*Rear of conserved shophouse with sliding balau panelled doors*



*Low density single-storey unsheltered new extension in a garden setting*

## History of the JOO CHIAT CONSERVATION AREA

The Joo Chiat Conservation Area stretches along the entire main Joo Chiat Road, the upper portion of Onan Road, parts of Joo Chiat Terrace, Joo Chiat Place, Everitt Road, Koon Seng Road and Tembeling Road. It also includes the stretch of East Coast Road from Marshall Road to Telok Kurau Road.



This area was accorded conservation status on 23 July 1993. Categorised under the Secondary Settlement areas, this part of Singapore was developed as a result of an outward movement of the population from the city centre. It contains mainly two-storey shophouses/terrace houses of the Transitional, Late and Art Deco Styles. Buildings of the simple Modern style were conserved on 1 December 2003.

This area was originally part of a coconut plantation which stretched inland from the coast to what is Geylang Serai today. Part of this area was owned by the Alsagoff Family (of Arab descent), and a large portion was owned by Mr. Chew Joo Chiat after World War I. Mr. Chew built roads, bequeathing these to the Municipality and subdivided the area for shophouses and terraces, which were built in the 1920s and 1930s.

The area is not only rich in architecture and history but is also a thriving commercial and residential node today. Joo Chiat, with rich historical links to the Peranakan culture, is a renowned food paradise. A wide variety of

shophouses and bungalow styles which reflect the prevailing architecture at the turn of the century can be found within this area.

The conservation guidelines for this area require the front portion to be conserved and restored, while the rear portion can be redeveloped to a maximum of 4 storeys. For this stretch of shophouses, the guidelines require any new redevelopment to be converted for residential purposes.

### No. 125 Joo Chiat Place - the Lucky Shophouse



LOCATION PLAN



0 5 10 15 20 25 30m

Built in the 1920s, this shophouse used to be a book shop called the 'Lucky Book Store'. The ground floor was the retail area, while the upper level was partitioned for storage.



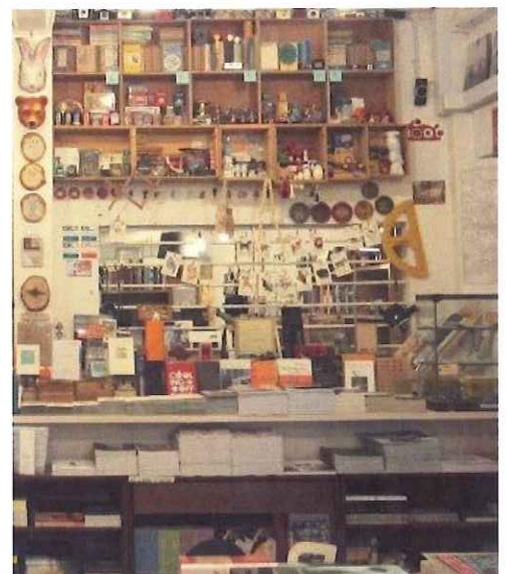
The façade of the Lucky Book Store.

Behind this shophouse was a vacated long, narrow strip of concreted land. Surrounded by 3 to 4-storey service apartments and semi-detached houses, a portion of its side faces a back lane, flanked by houses on both sides.



Left: View of the rear, vacated, concreted land.

Right: The look and feel of the old book store.





Above: View from the rear of the shophouse, overlooking the rear plot of land, and the surrounding neighbours.



Left: View of the rear of the old shophouse.

## The Client

The Client are a couple, both working overseas and had plans to move back to Singapore. As they grew up in this Katong area, buying a shophouse in Joo Chiat was in many ways homecoming for them. This is a site where they could see their childhood days relived.

And so they purchased this shophouse, along with the rear vacant land. Together with their architect friend, the plan was to convert the shophouse into a dwelling place and to transform the concrete land at the rear into a garden where a single-storey house extension sits. The brief called for flexible usage of spaces, for visiting parents, in-laws and relatives, whilst they are overseas.

