

Historical gems for future generations

Skyline walks you through some of the recently gazetted conservation buildings.

by Mark Goh

Historical buildings are a gracious presence in any city. They remind us of the past and form a valuable part of our heritage.

Identifying buildings for conservation is an important part of URA's work. URA first drew up the Conservation Plan in 1989 and over 5,600 buildings have been gazetted for conservation since.

This process of identifying buildings for conservation is an ongoing one. Recently, another two clusters of buildings and three individual buildings have been added to the conservation list.

Eclectic Charms

This row of buildings, located at the tail end of Orchard Road near the Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station, demonstrate a rich and diverse mix of architectural styles. Ranging from the ornate and decorative features of the Eclectic style to the simple Art Deco style, these buildings are architectural gems.

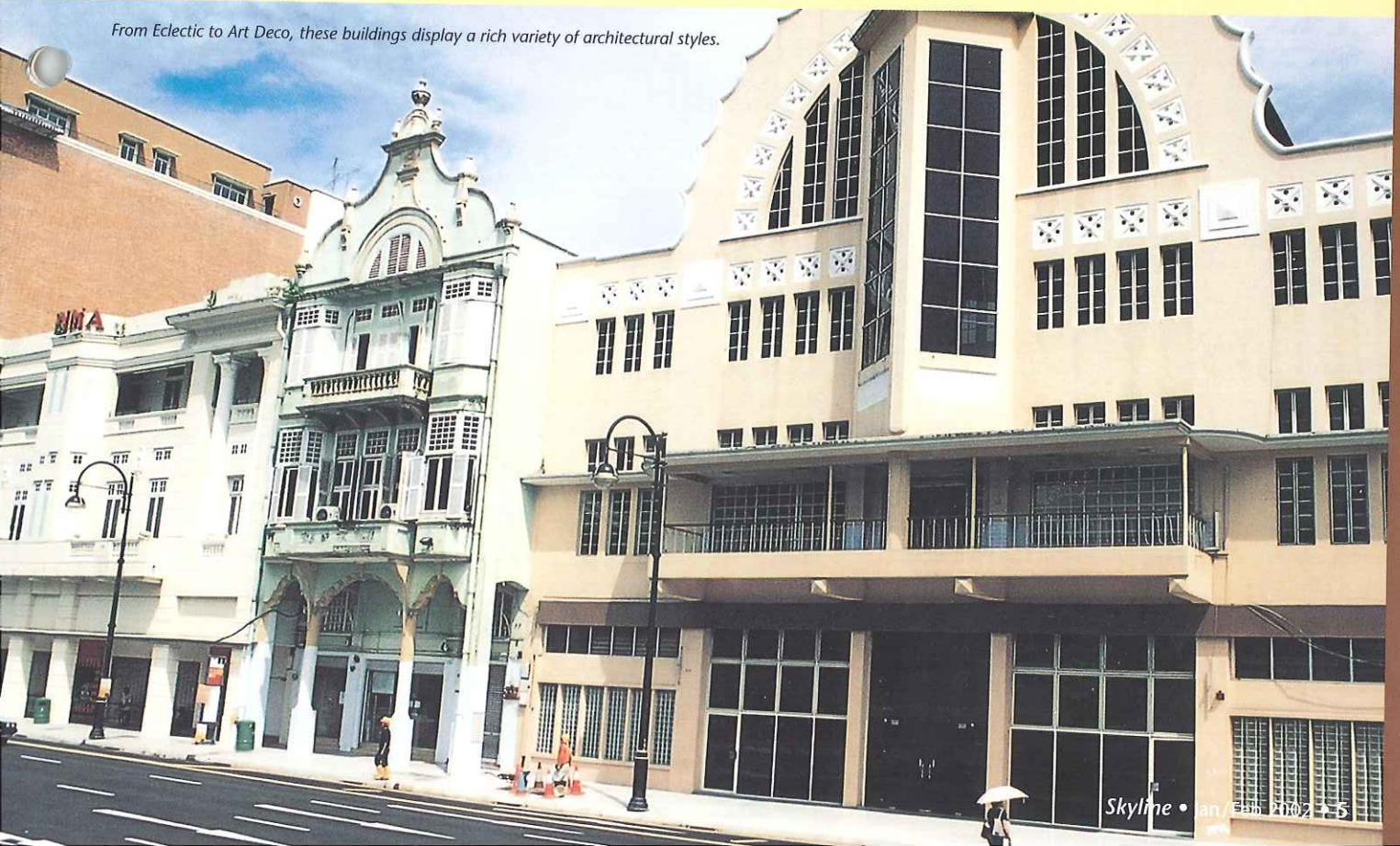
Built after World War 1, it is the only remaining street-block of buildings left along Orchard Road, which hark back to the days before the development of modern shopping complexes. This stretch was well-

known for its many car showrooms. One of which is the Singapore Manufacturing Association House. Previously the Malayan Motors Building, it is now the only car showroom building left in Orchard Road.

Interesting Snippet

Art Deco was a style in architecture that developed in the 1920s to 1930s in Europe and the United States. The distinguishing features of the style are simple, clean shapes, often with a "streamlined" look. The Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building in New York are perhaps the best known examples of this style.

From Eclectic to Art Deco, these buildings display a rich variety of architectural styles.





Corner towers mark the end of the block.

Art Deco Attractions

This unique row of shophouses along Jellicoe Road (off Lavender Street) was built in the late 1920s by a Swiss civil engineer, Henrich Rudolf Arbenz.

This distinctive street block is one of its kind in the whole of Singapore. These shophouses, built in the Art Deco style, are anchored on both ends by corner towers. The ground floors of the buildings in the area were traditionally used for light industry while the upper floors were used as homes.

The buildings have a unique large span of continuous butterfly roof and protruding balconies constructed out of reinforced concrete, which was a new material introduced to Singapore in the late 19th century. The conservation buildings along with the adjacent vacant land parcel have been placed on the URA Land Sales Reserve List.

Interesting Snippet

Jellicoe Road was named after Viscount Jellicoe of Scarpa (1859-1935), the first sea lord of the British Admiralty.



The continuous butterfly roof forms an interesting roof profile.



Ornate columns frame windows.

Victorian Jewel

Located at 178 Neil Road, the Public Works Department constructed this 3-storey building in 1912 to house the Fairfield Methodist Girls' School. This handsome and stately building

is one of the few remaining heritage landmarks of the Victorian style. It is a well-proportioned symmetrical building with ornate details and high-quality masonry craftsmanship. A key feature of the building is the semi-circular pediment at the front

top centre of the building. The building will be restored to become a childcare centre for the Singapore Police Force.

Interesting Snippets

From 1942 to 1944, the Fairfield Methodist School Building was used by the Japanese military force.

Victorian style refers to a style of architecture of the late 19th and early 20th century based on the revival and eclectic combination of older styles such as Gothic and Romanesque. Although named after Queen Victoria (1837-1901), her husband Prince Albert was the actual promoter of this style.



An old photograph capturing the beautiful details of this former school building. Notice the decorative semi-circular pediment at the centre

Tropical Treasure

Located at Punggol, Matilda House was built in 1902 for Mr Joseph Cashin whose family history in Singapore can be traced back to the early 1840s. The building is a fine example of an early style tropical bungalow.

The tropical style of the building is accentuated through its architectural features such as open verandahs, raised floors and the use of timber framed lattice and louvres to permit cross breezes.



The bungalow, when restored, will be a landmark for the future Punggol new town.

As the only remaining historical bungalow in Punggol, the conservation of Matilda House

will serve as a significant landmark for the future Punggol new town and as a reminder of "old Punggol".

Neo-Classical Landmark

Sitting proudly among the skyscrapers of Raffles Place, this grand old building on Robinson Road was built in the 1920s and is one of the last remaining heritage landmarks representative of Singapore's business district of that era.

It is built in the Neo-Classical style, the same genre as other stately civic

buildings like City Hall, Fullerton Building and the former Ministry of Labour Building.

Previously known as the Telecommunications Building, the building today has been renamed The Ogilvy Centre. Restaurants and shops now occupy the ground floor while Ogilvy & Mather, an advertising agency has taken over the upper floors of the building, giving it a new lease of life. 

Interesting Snippet

Neo-Classical style in architecture is characterised by grandeur of scale; simplicity of geometric forms; dramatic use of columns; and a preference for undecorated walls. This style originated in the middle of the 18th century and flourished through the 19th century to the early 20th century.



A beautiful heritage building amidst skyscrapers along Robinson Road.