

30B Phillip Street  
**Shrines of Stories**  
2014 Award Category A

Owner: The Ngee Ann Kongsi  
Architect: Raymond Woo & Associates Architects  
Conservation Consultant: Laborans  
Engineer: Chong & Lee Consultants  
Specialist Contractor: Shantou Ji Chuanying Ancient Construction and  
Decoration Designing Co. Ltd

*Well known for its richly ornamented roof, vibrant wall reliefs and frescoes outside and within its walls, the Yueh Hai Ching temple built in the 1820s has been faithfully restored to articulate detail showing deep respect for the monument's architectural roots. At every turn, this stunning restoration demonstrates thoughtful choices informed by extensive archival research and technical consultation with local and overseas architectural experts and temple craftsmen. Last month, it was also recognised with the Award of Merit in the annual UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. Other conserved buildings that have been awarded by UNESCO can be found in **Annex B**.*

### **Faithful from the Start**

The methodology for restoration was clearly well thought through and executed. After a thorough search in Guangzhou, China, the project team engaged a Class 1 contractor with a team of master craftsmen seasoned in a wide range of trades, from ceramics to timber structures, timber carvings, frescoes and gold gilding. Sketches, measured drawings and photographs were compiled to document the existing architecture.

The project team stayed faithful to the 3R principle from start to finish. Adopting the “Top-Down” approach, a temporary roof was erected over the temple to protect it during the restoration works. Great care and attention to detail were demonstrated in the repair of the beams and structures, and the retention of the granite floor slabs at the front courtyard.

Past renovations which obscured the original character of the temple were removed. Using authentic materials, traditional techniques and sensitive construction method, every part of the temple was faithfully and painstakingly restored. Laudable examples include the reconstruction of the boundary walls based on archival photographs, the repainting of life-size door gods in true multi-chromatic Teochew style, and the reinstatement of the colourful dragon and tiger sculptural wall relief panels within the temple.

### **For the Love of Lore**

Of outstanding excellence is the exquisite detailing which revitalises the intricate three-dimensional ceramic ornamentations on the spectacularly adorned roof and internal and external walls. Once again, the dioramas which depict Chinese folklore and classical stories come alive in the most densely decorated Chinese temple in Singapore. These captivating works of art have

been meticulously recreated piece-by-piece in the experienced hands of professional artisans.

The traditional 'bao hu' mixture of hydraulic lime was used on the roof, while ash from burning shells was used as the bonding substance on the decorative porcelain. The team applied a chemical protective layer to the relief paintings on the upper panels of the front façade before painting. This ensures that the original paint layer can be recovered should the new paint layer be removed in the future. The plaster relief on the lower panels was beautifully reinstated.

**Sanctuary in the City**

The restoration of the Yueh Hai Ching temple has successfully brought back to life many rare and refined features typical of the building's Teochew architectural heritage. More than an institution of great significance to the devotees and visitors, it stands as an important and delightful specimen of Teochew cultural legacy.

145 Neil Road  
**Vintage Vogue**  
2014 Award Category B

Owner: Ms Ho Ren Yung  
Architect: ONG&ONG Pte Ltd  
Engineer: JS Tan Consultants Pte Ltd  
Contractor: Sage Builders Pte Ltd

*This terrace house of Transitional Style has been skilfully transformed through a series of clever interventions. Its charming vintage features have been retained as much as possible and lovingly restored. Elements that required replacement were reinterpreted with a refreshing touch to fulfil the building's purpose as a modern dwelling.*

### **Passion for the Past**

The project team clearly observed the approach of maximum retention and sensitive intervention to achieve its vision, both outside and inside this two-storey house. Rich and unique detailings on its façade – Chinese inscriptions and friezes adorned with ceramic chips, timber doors, windows and shutters, green Chinese awning tiles and glazed Peranakan tiles, and the red cement flooring along the five-foot way – were painstakingly repaired and restored. The process to determine the original colour used for the house's facade also demonstrates good conservation practice. Layer upon layer, the old paint was gradually stripped off to reveal the authentic and striking blue tone that was eventually used.

Behind its masterfully restored exterior, the home's interior has been largely retained. Much of the upper storey timber floor joists and boards, and original elements like the window shutters in the courtyard, tiles from the former timber staircase, and the oxidised iron-gate were repaired and reused. An original doorframe that supported a Chinese plaque made from plaster at the second storey was salvaged and now serves as a portal to the secondary staircase that leads to an attic bedroom and roof terrace. The terrazzo finish evident in the master outdoor bath and other bathroom floors shows the innovative use of an old material that is now a rarity.

The team is also lauded for retaining the first-storey terracotta floor tiles and reinstating the open-to-sky courtyard which has antiquated pigmented cement wall tiles punctuated by a fish-mould waterspout centrepiece. A water-based protective coating was also applied to the otherwise friable exposed brick walls of the original party wall that extends beyond the first storey living room to the upper quarters.

### **Something Old, Something New**

The spirit and character of the old shophouse clearly inspired the design and planning approach taken to extend the building. Its interior spaces were also skilfully organised with the old flowing effortlessly into the new rear extension. Generous courtyards draw light into spaces that are intimate yet connected, relaxed yet purposeful.

**A Bold New Future**

The spatial quality of the traditional shophouse has been successfully kept and the house elegantly transformed into a modern abode.

2,4,6,8 and 10 Townshend Road  
**Checking in to a New Era**  
2014 Award Category B

Owner: Octojet Holdings Pte Ltd  
Architect: SZ Architects  
Engineer: Case Consultants  
Contractor: LBD Engineering Pte Ltd

*This boutique hotel project has enhanced the qualities of five conserved two-storey shophouses and added a new six-storey tower to the neighbourhood skyline. The outcome is understated yet tasteful, and makes a considered and positive contribution to the surrounding streetscape.*

### **Refreshing the Old**

Adhering to the “Top-Down” approach, the project team started work by replacing the original roofs of the Transitional-style shophouses which were found to be unsalvageable. The pitch roof structure was retained while damaged elements like the timber rafters and battens and original clay tiles were appropriately replaced. To update the building to suit its new purpose as a hotel, insulation was added at the roof and jackroofs were incorporated to allow light into the attic spaces.

While the main structures including the front columns and party walls were in good condition, the team did well in sensitively repairing damaged, and replacing missing, elements and features like windows, balustrades and pre-cast vents of the shophouses. At the first storey, the wall is recessed for a “mama store” to recall the past.

### **Accommodating Past and Present**

Through good design integration, the rear modern extension complements the linework and colour scheme of the conserved portion to give a unified development on the prominent site at a road junction. The minimalist-style straight lines introduced via the hotel tower’s windows and grilles clearly reflect the horizontal and vertical features of the conserved building’s façade. The full glass windows on the new block also echo the original French windows.

Great care was demonstrated in fitting the hotel rooms fronting the main road neatly into the existing grid of the shophouses. Potentially unsightly M&E amenities were carefully screened away from view to preserve the aesthetics of the development and neighbourhood. Design and planning for the hotel, including meeting the requirement for barrier-free accessibility and car park lots for hotel guests, also demonstrated careful thinking and good use of materials.

### **Interacting with the Locals**

Besides breathing new life into the pre-war buildings, the project has a positive transformative effect on the mixed use neighbourhood, which has since attracted more visitors, tourists and new businesses.