

# Heirlooms and Heritage Honoured

by Ivan Teng

Skyline salutes six splendid gems of our built heritage that have been thoughtfully, sensitively and lovingly restored to their former glory. The latest winners of this year's Architectural Heritage Awards will certainly make wonderful additions to our city's collection of timeless treasures!

While skyscrapers dominate the signature Singapore skyline at Raffles Place, at the street level, the humble row of picturesque shophouses along Boat Quay pulls at one's attention to no lesser degree. This delightful juxtaposition of the vintage and the modern is a manifestation of Singapore's ability to celebrate diversity in its urban cityscapes.

This year, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) continues to exemplify this spirit as it honours six projects in the 13th annual Architectural Heritage Awards (AHA). The winners span an array of architectural types from a regal museum, a Tudor-styled house, a luxurious hotel and spa, a historic university campus, a terrace house, to a diminutive and cozy shophouse. These winners, four in Category A and two in Category B, join 71 award-winning predecessors.

## Protecting the precious in our past

The AHA honours owners and building professionals whose inventiveness and creativity have contributed to the quality conservation, restoration and adaptive use of heritage buildings.

The Category A of the awards is for National Monuments and fully conserved buildings in the Historic Districts and Good Class Bungalow Areas. In this category, maximum retention and overall building authenticity are key criteria for qualification.

Category B, on the other hand, allows for the integration of old, restored buildings

with new developments such as rear extensions. This four-year-old category encourages innovation in conservation efforts in Residential Historic Districts and Secondary Settlement areas, giving relevance to architectural traditions in modern Singapore.

## Kudos to our partners!

Presenting the awards on 1 October 2007 at the oldest building among this year's winners, the 120-year-old National Museum of Singapore, Minister for National Development Mah Bow Tan said, "Protecting and restoring Singapore's built heritage cannot be done by the Government alone... Increasingly more and more enlightened developers and owners have willingly expended resources to buy and restore their conservation buildings for the benefit of the larger society and our future generations. I want to thank them for their laudable effort and encourage others to follow in their footsteps."

Commenting on Singapore's conservation journey ahead, Minister Mah said, "To build a home that will root our people to this land, we will continue to strike a fine balance between protecting our built heritage and ensuring development needs are met. We will have to continue seeking out creative solutions to conserve buildings such that development potential and design flexibility are not compromised unduly, while allowing us to retain the memories of the place meaningfully."



Chek Jawa Visitor Centre



NUS Law School



13 Martaban Road



Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa



62 Niven Road



National Museum of Singapore

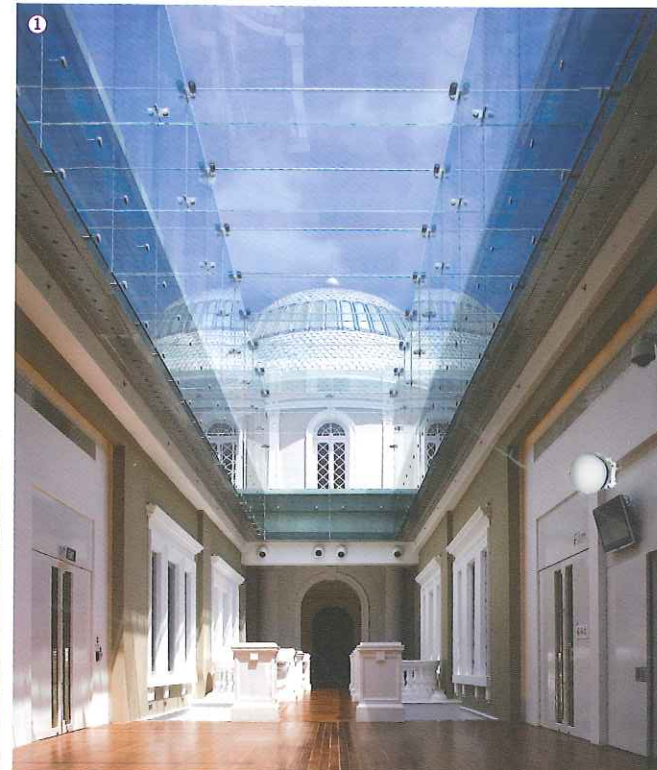


## CATEGORY A

**93 Stamford Road – National Museum of Singapore**

Affectionately termed the “grand dame of Singapore’s architectural heritage”, this two-storey 19th-century building of British colonial architecture has taken on various roles and undergone several face-lifts over the years. However, her latest reinvention into National Museum of Singapore, complete with a reflective makeover and its park setting, may be her finest yet.

- ① It took close supervision and utmost meticulousness to restore the 120-year-old museum to its former majesty.
- ② The original façade of the old building’s posterior can be viewed from within the new wing, dynamically harmonising the old with the new.
- ③ Every one of the unique zinc fish-scale tiles from the dome of the old building was painstakingly repaired and repainted, and reinstalled in their original order.

**1 Pulau Ubin – Chek Jawa Visitor Centre**

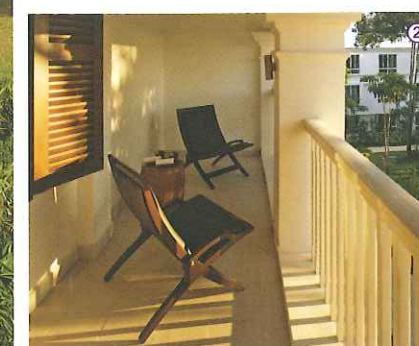
Located at the eastern tip of Pulau Ubin, House No. 1 is believed to be Singapore’s only remaining authentic Tudor-style house with a fireplace. Its uniqueness fits in nicely with its new function as a visitor centre to Singapore’s nature treasure, Chek Jawa Wetlands.

- ① Built in the 1930s as a holiday retreat, House No. 1 fell into considerable disrepair. It took 18 months to transform dilapidation into an endearing, quaint charm.
- ② Plaster that was added over the years was removed to display the original brickwork of the façade.
- ③ At one side of the honeycomb-shaped, terracotta-tiled living room stands the only working fireplace left in Singapore.

**3 & 7 Carlton Walk – Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa**

Built on top of a small hill to enjoy the natural sea breeze surrounding Sentosa, these two typical military barrack blocks were originally the living quarters of British soldiers before and after World War II. Now, they have been tastefully transformed into luxurious hotel suites of Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa for world-weary travellers to rest and relax in.

- ① Blk 41 & 42 comprise 12 terrace houses converted into 20 suites, augmenting Sentosa’s collection of historical buildings available for public enjoyment.
- ② Conservation meets business amicably as the Amara retains the original open balconies and verandas, in tune with its approach of a resort retreat in nature.
- ③ Going beyond standard guidelines for conservation, unusual features such as this British Army boot sole cleaner was retained to accentuate the historical significance of the building.

**469 Bukit Timah Road – NUS Law School**

From its early days as Raffles College, to its current occupants, National University of Singapore Faculty of Law, the Bukit Timah Campus has been home to generations of students for more than 80 years. Conservation work sought to keep this rich history alive and yet provide modern amenities befitting a world-class educational institution.

- ① When built in 1964, the Science Tower was regarded as the epitome of campus designs. Its hallmark adjustable sun-shading fins were removed in the course of its 37-year old life and were refitted during restoration.
- ② Besides removing old lecture theatres and a canopy from Block B, two new extensions and a forecourt were also added for new uses. All these were discriminately done to appreciate the original design of the building.
- ③ Some portions of the new textured, hexagonal roof of Lecture Theatre 1 have been there since day 1, complementing the new with the old.






## CATEGORY B

**13 Martaban Road**

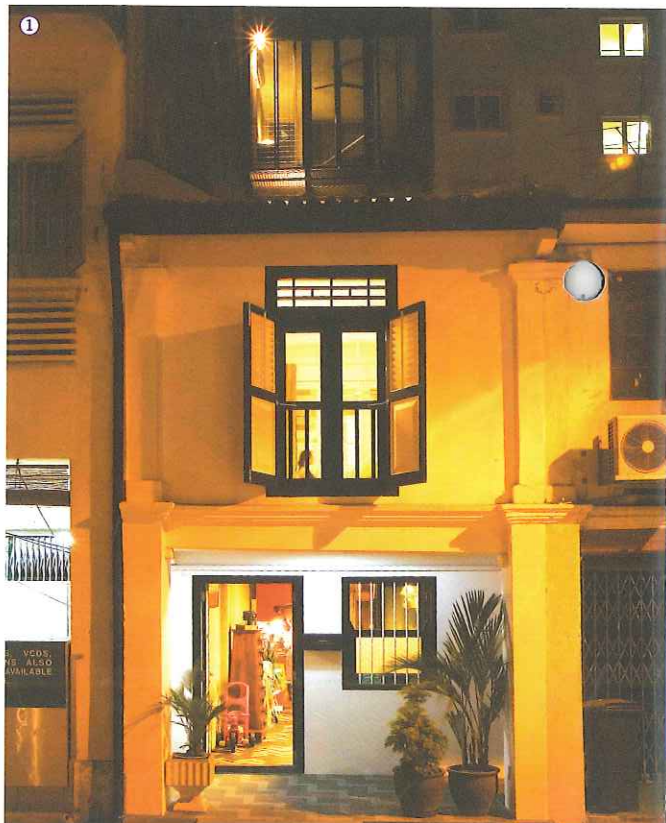
Once used as a dormitory for orderlies from the nearby Tan Tock Seng Hospital, this two-storey Second Transitional style terrace house in the Balestier Conservation Area has now been charmingly turned into a chic, contemporary home without sacrificing its humble heritage.

- ① An old, run-down shophouse is masterfully rejuvenated into an exquisite work of art that beautifies the streetscape of Martaban Road and gives its new owners a piece of history to call home.
- ② Lying between two tall, imposing walls, a narrow courtyard becomes an aesthetic accomplishment of a garden with a floating deck, complete with fish swimming along its perimeter.
- ③ The same kind of wood was procured to fill the gaps caused by shrinkage of the old floorboards in order to retain the integrity of the original design.

**62 Niven Road**

With its extremely narrow width, this two-storey Early shophouse in the Mount Sophia Conservation Area appears small and nondescript on the outside. However, through many novel ways, its interior space has been cleverly used to create a cosy abode. 

- ① At only 3.7m in width, No. 62 is a diminutive shophouse. But through deft restoration and innovative revitalisation, it dwarfs its neighbours in elegance and charm.
- ② The rear extension exemplifies the principle of AHA's Category B, where new elements of conserved buildings draw inspiration from the past and are innovatively combined with the old. A sun-shading steel mesh screen overlies the window of the fourth storey.
- ③ Pragmatic space maximisation is executed with sensitive additions of new materials such as an expanded staircase that connects the bedrooms, leading up to a roof terrace.





More secrets from our precious past were unearthed at the annual Architectural Heritage Awards this year. Read on to find out more about the exceptional efforts that have been ongoing to retain a quaint touch of the old world in the midst of our city's development.



Deep concrete fins for sunshading:  
NUS Law School



Restored glass of dome:  
National Museum of Singapore



Original electrical switches:  
Chek Jawa Visitor Centre



Air raid shelters retained:  
Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa



Original timber louvred windows:  
62 Niven Road



Timber windows retained:  
13 Martaban Road

skyline

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