

28 ORCHARD ROAD

Returning the Grandeur



Owners:

Temasek Trustees Pte Ltd (Lessee) & Singapore Land Authority (Owner)

Architect:

Surbana Jurong Consultants Pte Ltd (Design and interior fit out in collaboration with Asylum);

Engineer:

KTP Consultants Pte Ltd

Contractor:

Sunray Woodcraft Construction Pte Ltd

This century-old three-storey building has been rejuvenated with a new mission of 'giving back' to society. It now stands proudly in its former grandeur as a community space along the busy Orchard Road. Through thoughtful repair, re-imagination and sensitive reuse, it is a showcase of sustainable development.

A Landmark Changes

Built in 1928, this building was originally conceived as a townhouse with commercial space on the ground floor and residential apartments above. Over the years, it had served a variety of uses including being a furniture shop, an eatery, and even as a department store. Today, with its restoration, this old landmark brings in a new sense of vibrancy to this historic stretch of Dhoby Ghaut.

Shaping a New Form for Use

The original spirit of the building was one adapted to the tropical climate of Singapore. This has now been enhanced in several ways. The former dingy rear court is transformed into a delightful garden lavishly planted with native vegetation, reintroducing city folks to the natural world while also supporting local biodiversity. The roof has also been reinvented as an open outdoor terrace. The beautiful verandahs fronting Dhoby Ghaut, which were neglected over the years, are now rediscovered and refreshed as sheltered spaces designed to take in the cool tropical breeze with views of the city.

Internally, openable windows make it possible for the building to function with natural ventilation. Complementing these, the project team has introduced new environmentally sensitive technology such as a ducted evaporative cooling system.



Townhouse along Orchard Road refreshed

At the internal atrium, a multi-level green wall has been introduced, bringing the outdoors in and serving as a focal point feature that provides a sense of the grand and yet invoking a warm sense of coziness. The atrium also opens out at the front and rear on the first-storey, encouraging flow through the building and creating new connections to the surroundings.

Recovering for the Future

Facade features and details such as long hidden ceiling cornices, have been reinstated as part of the restoration works and now showcase the elegance on the public facing part of the building. With the removal of false ceilings at the five-footway, the restoration now accentuates the original double height columns. The bulky internal escalators from the 1980s, have also been removed and in its place, a new two-storey atrium has been introduced to bring in a sense of spaciousness.

The removal of the enclosure, helps to recover the sense of form and space. This revealed a pair of spiral staircases and windows, allowing natural air and light into the building's atrium. These exposed features extend the building's conversations with the streetscape, allowing passersby to look into the building which was previously obstructed.

New Beginnings

With new life injected into the building, this project serves as a good showpiece of how our built heritage can work alongside and fit into our modern 21st century agenda. This is also symbolic of the building's new use as a cradle for social impact and how the first storey is now used as a public space. This almost forgotten building is now set to enliven the streetscape in the same way it had done so when it was first built almost a century ago.



Landscaping supports local biodiversity



Rear facade rejuvenated to connect to streetscape



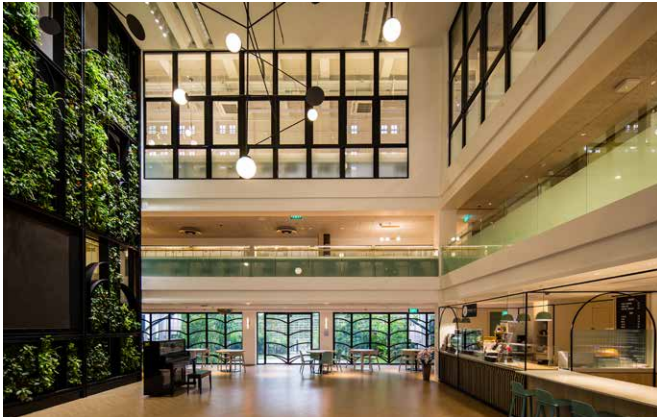
Double volume entrance reinstated and opened up



Original spiral staircase



Timber windows and plasterwork restored



Newly introduced internal atrium to enhance circulation



Removal of rear enclosure exposes spiral staircases and open verandahs



Roof terrace



Capital of Corinthian columns



Verandahs offer new vistas of Orchard Road



Double volume space reinstated to expose fanlights



Enhanced quality of natural light



On-site storytelling

A Walk Down Orchard Road

From Orchards to a Shoppers' Haven

Opened up as plantations, Orchard Road used to nestle in a valley flanked by hills such as Cairnhill, Emerald Hill and Fort Canning Hill. It has witnessed many significant developments in Singapore's history and development. Today, it is an established retail belt which has won international acclaim over the years.



View of Dhoby Ghaut (now Orchard Road), 1971

Dhoby Ghaut Green today is believed to be a part of the early Botanical and Experimental Garden that Sir Stamford Raffles had envisioned in the early 1820s. It might be hard to imagine that this street, stretching from Tanglin to the Dhoby Ghaut area has been on maps since the 1820s. Maps made by John Turnbull Thomson in the 1840s already made reference to Orchard Road.

Of Dhobies and Donuts

The Temasek Shophouse sits in the part of Orchard Road leading into Bras Basah Road, commonly referred to as 'Dhoby Ghaut' or 'Dhobi Gaut'. It was a popular spot for Indian laundrymen or 'dhobies' to wash and dry laundries on the banks of the Sungei Brass Basaa. This 'sungei' or river in Malay was a freshwater stream that ran parallel to Orchard Road. The stream emptied out into the sea at the end of Stamford Road. From the late 1800s, embankments were added to gradually convert it into a canal, parts of which are still visible from the outdoor garden of the Temasek Shophouse.

Over time, Orchard Road developed into a suburb with a mix of residential, religious and educational buildings. In 1921, elements of commerce entered when Amber Mansions housed the Amber Arcade on its ground floor. One could find a steakhouse, a bookstore and children's apparel here. In the 1970s, Dhoby Ghaut was a popular

destination with homegrown department store, Metro at Supreme House (later Park Mall) and Japanese import, Yaohan Department Store at Plaza Singapura. Singaporeans were introduced to sugar donuts and an-pan buns as well as high-end cafes in these two shopping malls. The Temasek Shophouse in the 1980s and 1990s was also a popular apparel and department store with trendy but affordable merchandise.

A Transportation Hub

This lower end of Orchard Road has always been associated with transport. Today, the Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station is one of the important subway interchanges that connects the MRT lines. Little known was that since the late 1800s, the area was home to many horse carriage firms and stables.

With the advent of the motor age, Dhoby Ghaut also became the home of car showrooms up to the 1980s. As early as 1916, car dealers like Cycle & Carriage and Borneo Motors, were selling well-known Continental, American and later Japanese brands. The former Malayan Motors showroom at 20 Orchard Road was one of the last surviving car showrooms in the area.

Reviving the Neighbourhood

It was no wonder that the original developers of 28 Orchard Road had chosen the street to build the townhouse in 1928. Commissioned by a pair of wealthy Melaka-born businessmen, Mr Ee Kong Guan and Mr Chee Guan Chiang, it was designed by leading architects Westerhout and Oman. The building's location at the mid-point between Orchard Road and the Padang, as well as its understated yet elegant design made it a talking point then. Its new purpose and restoration will surely cement its role as a landmark in the Dhoby Ghaut area.