



# da<sup>®</sup>

design and architecture  
[www.designandarchitecture.com](http://www.designandarchitecture.com)

## CSC@CHANGI BY DP ARCHITECTS

dwell

34/36 TOH CRESCENT hyla  
LANTANA AVE HOUSES gad  
ITTKA HOUSE KL fabian tan

RICE LAB studiogoto  
LOKE THYE KEE RESIDENCES mod

Nightscape 2050 LPA

review

Sheltered: Documents For Home



ISSUE 088. 2015 | S\$8



# INFUSED WITH NEW LIFE

BY YVONNE XU | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDWARD HENDRICKS/CI&A PHOTOGRAPHY

With Loke Thye Kee Residences, Ministry of Design offers a proposition for what heritage hotels in George Town, Penang could look like.

Stepping into the reception, we are immediately relieved of the intense heat and humidity, as well as of the din of road traffic outside. The air, crisp with air-conditioning, is also faintly, pleasantly scented. In this box-shaped antechamber, a mint-coloured latticework rises from the rear wall to overhead as a ceiling feature. This seems to play up the sense of shelter and coolness. A second look reveals that it carries the intricate design of Peranakan tiles typical of the Straits Chinese style shophouse – only this is abstracted and constructed from MDF boards that have been machine milled into pattern. We are in the foyer of a pre-war shophouse, but there is a distinct shininess and newness about. Indeed, in this UNESCO World Heritage Site town where most other conservation buildings fall predictably back on traditional experiences, this one is a breath of fresh air.

Loke Thye Kee Residences (LTK Residences) is a five-suite hospitality concept housed in a row of five turn-of-the-century shophouse units. Premium boutique property development and management company 1919

Global Sdn Bhd's operational brief to Colin Seah of Ministry of Design (MOD, the appointed design architect and interior designer for the project) was to redesign the space so it captures the essence of its hundred-year-old history, but still provides the luxuries of modern amenities. The challenge was not to set the stage for orchestrating a unique guest experience per se, but to find room for relevant design innovation within a heritage and historical narrative. This is a task and discussion MOD has previously negotiated in projects such as the Macalister Mansion in Penang and New Majestic Hotel in Singapore.

'In this case of LTK Residences, as with New Majestic Hotel and Macalister Mansion, our heritage based work is always interested in questioning how heritage is defined,' Seah says. 'We believe that heritage isn't just a moment in time rooted in the past, but that it is a continuum of time, from past, present and even into the future. we think of it as "living heritage".'

Indeed, LTK Residences does not pander to nostalgia, even as MOD took inspiration from old

Penang – specifically, 'the romance of Penang in the 1900s' whose bygone mood and design Seah personally finds beguiling.

'We wanted to recall a similar charm in our design for the LTK Residences...but our design isn't a throwback to the past; neither does it attempt to preserve it. Our designs give these older buildings, which are often disused or abandoned, a new lease of life, and allow them to be part of a living heritage, not merely something resigned to the static past. We believe in drawing from the past in a quirky, contemporary way. In Macalister Mansion, we drew from Penang's colonial British heritage and integrated not only the existing historic architectural cues, but also the tale of Norman Macalister as an underlying quasi-historical narrative...in a way, history itself has been "adaptively reused".'

In LTK Residences, the narrative is told in the dialogue set up between the old and the new. Features such as the latticework in the foyer, installed with strip lighting along its edges so it appears set apart from the original architecture, demonstrates MOD's approach



LOKE THYE KEE  
RESIDENCES

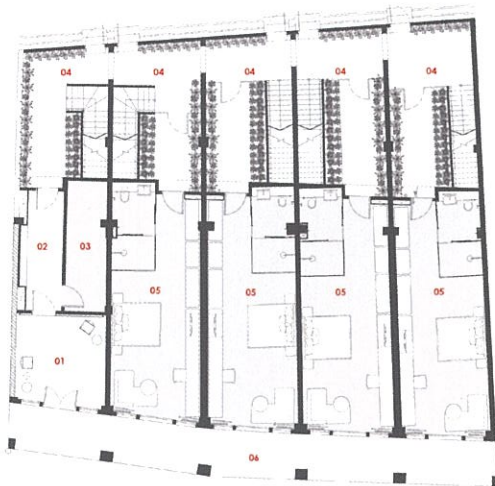


MARKET





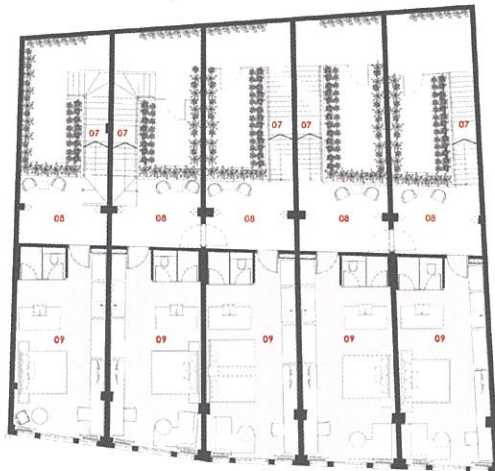
- 01 FOYER
- 02 PASSAGEWAY
- 03 STORE
- 04 PRIVATE GARDEN
- 05 GUESTROOM
- 06 FIVE FOOT WAY



LTK GROUND FLOOR PLAN

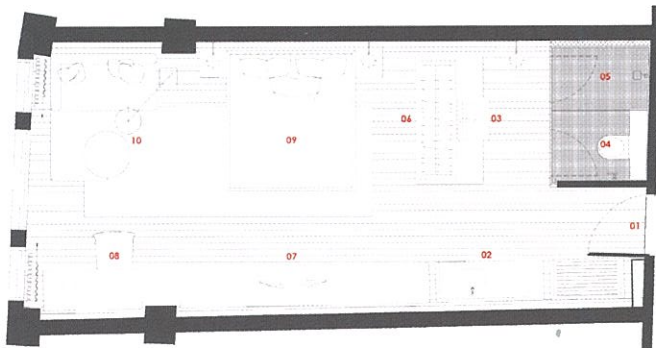


- 07 STAIRCASE
- 08 PRIVATE BALCONY
- 09 GUESTROOM



LTK FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- 01 ENTRANCE
- 02 PANTRY
- 03 VANITY
- 04 TOILET
- 05 SHOWER
- 06 WARDROBE
- 07 T.V. LEDGE
- 08 DESK
- 09 BED
- 10 LOUNGE



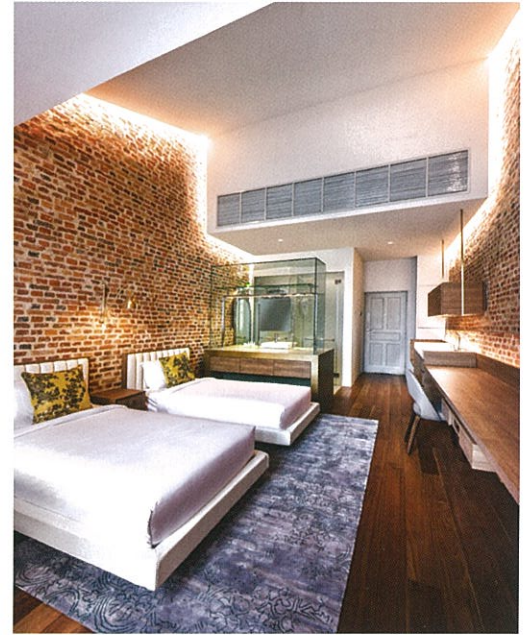
LTK TYPICAL ROOM PLAN

**LOKE THYE KEE RESIDENCES, GEORGETOWN, PENANG**

INTERIOR + GRAPHIC DESIGN	MINISTRY OF DESIGN
DEVELOPER	1919 GLOBAL SDN BHD
CONTRACTOR	SERIOUSBIZ SDN BHD
LANDSCAPE	CAMELLIA LANDSCAPE SDN BHD
C&S	PERUNDING PAKATAN CERGAS
M&E	O&A CONSULT SDN BHD
QUANTITY SURVEYOR	KUANTIBINA SDN. BHD
SUBMISSIONS ARCHITECT	K H TAN ARCHITECT
ARTIST	CH'NG KIAH KIEAN
BUILT-IN GFA	633M <sup>2</sup>
LAND AREA	421M <sup>2</sup>

to brokering the relationship between new ideas and existing contexts.

All through the property, the design negotiates between the retainment of existing structures and features, and, where appropriate, the reconceptualization of them into opportunities to introduce modern ideas and amenities. This created several spatial surprises, including the guest arrival experience into the suites. From the reception foyer, a vestibular passage conducts guests all the way through to the end of the shophouse, where the traditional rear courtyard of the shophouse opens up to the sky. Opened across the five bays, the rear courtyards now perform as a circulation passage, with their brickwork structures forming an arcade. Interestingly, this echoes the arches previously seen in the five foot way out in front of the shophouses – only



this arcade, lush with planting, is an idyllic garden paradise far from the hard, concrete streets outside.

In the suites, Seah thinks the *pièce de résistance* is the original brickwork parti walls, which provides its texture and performs as a foil against which modern and sleeker interventions like glass-box wardrobes, chrome mirrors (abstracted from traditional colonial culture) and hovering timber-clad desks and TV ledges are placed. These customized contemporary fixtures are also contrasted with the traditional timber hardwood floors, and designed to appear as if levitating (with the use of hidden LED cove lighting) – again presented as distinct from the old building.

There are no antiques or vintage items on display in the suites or anywhere on the property. The in-room collateral, also designed by MOD, provided a dash of fun along with information for the modern traveller. Presented in a box set, guests would discover a quirky pillow menu and an insider's food map to track down George Town's best street foods. To bring an additional local element into the suites, Penang artist Ch'ng Kiah Kian was commissioned to create art based on some

of Penang's best known heritage buildings. In the suites, these are backlit in light boxes – an interesting presentation that could be read as symbolic of how Penang's heritage is here 'framed' in a modern way. Indeed, LTK Residences is not one that lives in the shadow of the past.

It is refreshing to see how MOD has confidently contemporized the shophouse typology and has created, even with its material and spatial turns and surprises, a distinctive space experience that is yet not alien to the locale. LTK Residences is a welcome oasis from the harder concrete townscape of George Town – and in wider context, from the uniform landscape of typical heritage boutique concepts in this UNESCO site. +

