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7 PROJECTS RECOGNISED FOR OUTSTANDING RESTORATION

by Serene Tng
Introduced in 1995, the URA Architectural Heritage Awards are given out yearly to promote quality restoration of monuments and buildings with preservation and conservation status in Singapore. The awards recognise owners, professionals and contractors who have gone the extra mile to lovingly restore their heritage buildings to their former glory for today’s use. With this year’s seven winners, the total number of projects that have received the award has risen to 107.

Presenting the awards to the recipients on 3 October 2011, Minister of State for National Development, Mr Lee Yi Shyan said: “The seven winners have proven themselves deserving of the awards through their admirable efforts in sensitively restoring and retaining the unique and interesting qualities of these buildings...let us keep in mind that every stakeholder, every view and every contribution in this conservation journey deepens our appreciation of the important and meaningful mission of retaining our precious shared memories.”

There are two categories of winners for the Architectural Heritage Awards. Category A is awarded to National Monuments and fully conserved buildings in the Historic Districts and Good Class Bungalow Areas. Buildings fully conserved according to the restoration principles in other areas can also be considered under this category. They are assessed based on how far they adhere to quality restoration principles of maximum retention, sensitive restoration and careful repair. The winners under this category are six units of two-storey transitional-style shophouses in Chinatown and the Wanderlust Hotel in Little India.

Category B is awarded to integrated old and new conservation buildings in the Residential Historic Districts and Secondary Settlement areas. They are assessed based on the quality restoration of the old elements, as well as how new elements were innovatively integrated with the old by drawing inspiration from the original architectural design. The winners under this category are the Fullerton Heritage (Clifford Pier building and Customs House), Hotel Fort Canning, a Black and White bungalow at Cable Road, a two-storey pre-war transitional terrace house at Cairnhill Road and a two-storey Late Style shophouse in Geylang.
2 CABLE ROAD
Built in 1913 by a former government architect, David McLeod Craik for the Municipal Commissioner, Mohamed Namazie, this two-storey grand old Black-and-White bungalow has been faithfully restored and given a new pair of wings. The placement of the symmetrical new extensions and a linear lap pool at its front demonstrates a novel approach to integrating the “old and new”.

128G CAIRNHILL ROAD
This charming two-storey pre-war transitional terrace house with a discordant layout has been eloquently revived. Today, it is a spacious and stylish family home that embraces the heart of contemporary living without losing its vintage soul.

2 DICKSON ROAD
(WANDERLUST HOTEL)
This four-storey 1920s Art Deco style building in Little India was once the Hong Wen School. Today, it has been repurposed as the hip and playful Wanderlust Hotel. Its resurrection effort is a good illustration of creativity and adaptive reuse of a rare beauty.

FULLERTON HERITAGE
(CLIFFORD PIER BUILDING AND CUSTOMS HOUSE)
Built in 1933 and the late 1960s respectively, the Clifford Pier building and the Customs House once facilitated the arrival of leisure seekers and traders to and from Singapore. Today, these two historical buildings have been expertly refurbished with stylish dining establishments and a bayfront luxury hotel.
THREE FORMER SCHOOLS CONSERVED

Three former schools have been given conservation status, as announced at the 2011 URA Architectural Heritage Awards ceremony. They are the former Chong Cheng School at Aliwal Street, the former Anglo-Chinese School at Cairnhill Road and the modern block of the former St Anthony’s Convent at Middle Road. Although the schools have since moved to other locations, the buildings continue to be familiar and memorable landmarks. These three schools add to the over 7,000 buildings that have been conserved across Singapore.

11 CANNING WALK (HOTEL FORT CANNING)
Through a massive yet respectful restoration effort, this former military command centre has been resurrected for its venerable new role as a heritage hotel within an existing recreational club atop the historic Fort Canning Hill.

19 LORONG 24A GEYLANG
This early 1900s two-storey shophouse of the Late Style, characterised by an extensively ornamented façade, has been sensitively restored. Its revitalised interior with a new two-storey rear extension exudes the aura of a modern gallery-style home with vintage pedigree.

9, 11, 13, 15, 17 AND 19 KRETA AYER ROAD
constructed between 1840 and 1900, these six units of narrow two-storey transitional style shophouses in Bukit Pasoh, Chinatown, have been converted into one modern, open-plan corporate office space brimming with yesteryear charm.
More than 50 architects, students and other passionate individuals spent two Saturdays dreaming up new ideas on how to develop the historic KTM railway land and its immediate surroundings, in a workshop organised by the Friends of the Rail Corridor, in association with the Nature Society of Singapore, and supported by URA, on 1 and 8 October 2011. Beyond the ideas, what was clear from the workshop is the passion and excitement amongst the participants. Everyone took the opportunity seriously and wanted to make a difference. The principles that guided the teams in their considerations were that the continuity and authenticity of the Rail Corridor had to be retained. There should be a respect for its biodiversity and sense of history. There should also be sensitivity to communities around the corridor and the communities must own these spaces. The ideas from the workshop will be submitted to URA for consideration.

Beyond the workshop, an exhibition is being held from 3 October to 2 December 2011 at The URA Centre, showcasing potential ideas for the future of the Rail Corridor by architecture and landscape students and design professionals.

WHAT’S NEXT?
The public can still give their feedback and ideas for future development plans of the railway lands at www.ura.gov.sg/railcorridor. By early 2012, a design competition will be held on how the land space can be used and in 2013, a draft masterplan will be unveiled.
More than 360 intimately drawn sketches of wonderful places, moments and memories of life in Singapore are now out in a book and exhibition. Over 30 artists have lovingly illustrated the charm and grit of Little India’s spice streets, the last kampung at Lorong Buangkok, the landmark Tanjong Pagar railway station, dragon kilns at Lorong Tawas and many more.

Launching the book and exhibition on 21 October 2011, URA CEO Mr Ng Lang said: “These sketches serve as a powerful illuminating guide that challenges us to re-examine our surroundings, encouraging us to reflect upon and appreciate the smaller and sometimes overlooked details of our beautiful urban landscape and charming architecture.” Both the exhibition and book are supported by URA as part of the Architecture and Urban Design Excellence (A.UDE) Promotion Programme funding. Started in 2005, the funding programme has supported 44 projects that have creatively promoted architecture and urban design excellence in Singapore.

Tia Boon Sim, the founder of Urban Sketchers Singapore and publisher of the book says: “In sketching, an unspoken aim is to capture moments and memories of places and events, in some cases preserving a record of them before they disappear forever; what better way to do so than in a collection of sketches immortalised on paper, bringing out the beauty of the physical spaces we inhabit. We encourage everyone to take on sketching as a way to enjoy and understand our physical environments.”
REDISCOVER SINGAPORE THROUGH SKETCHES

From popular neighbourhoods like Tiong Bahru and Holland Village, historic districts of Joo Chiat and Chinatown, to industrial estates of Kranji and Eunos, vibrant Orchard Road and Marina Bay and tranquil Pulau Ubin, the rich and varied sketches offer a fascinating and intriguing journey into Singapore’s hidden corners, narrow alleys and some forgotten gems. Not only are buildings and landscapes captured, communities, individuals and special moments are also documented in the drawings, revealing a unique insight into the communities and life that revolve around our urban landscape. The exhibition showcases a larger collection, covering other areas like Geylang Serai and overseas locations like New York and Vietnam. The sketches show a personal view of how artists experience and understand familiar places and distinctive buildings around us.

Some of the key exhibition highlights are:
+ a mega wall that invites collaborative ‘live’ drawings during the exhibition period
+ panoramic sketches of Club Street and Ann Siang Hill
+ a short film about the Urban Sketchers Singapore group
+ exhibition merchandise such as pin badges available for purchase

Urban Sketchers Singapore: Volume 01
is exhibited at:
The URA Centre
ADDRESS
45 Maxwell Road, first storey atrium
DURATION
21 October to 24 December 2011
OPENING HOURS
Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 7.00pm
Saturday, 8.30am – 4.30pm
Closed on Sundays and public holidays
Admission is free

Go to www.usksgvolumes.com for updates on sketch walks and talks during the exhibition period. The 250-page hard cover book is on sale at selected bookstores.
ABOUT URBAN SKETCHERS SINGAPORE

Urban Sketchers Singapore is part of the global non-profit group dedicated to raising the artistic and storytelling value of on-location drawing. The Singapore group was formed in 2008 by Tia Boon Sim, an Interior Architecture & Design course manager at Temasek Polytechnic. What started as a solitary sketching activity in Club Street became a full-blown torrid love affair when Tia started sharing her sketches online and connecting with others who shared the same passion. The group now has 40 active members, with over 400 members in the Facebook group to date, and actively organises monthly sketch walks and other regular activities. For more information, visit www.urbansketchers-singapore.blogspot.com.
In Conversation with The Urban Sketchers

Where is your favourite location to sketch in Singapore?

**Tia:** Club Street, Little India, Esplanade and Marina Bay. I also like to sketch people in coffee shops, cafes and restaurants.

**Miel:** Almost anywhere in Singapore. I like it too when aunties and uncles criticise or comment on my sketches - they are very appreciative AND brutally honest.

**Paul:** Tiong Bahru is still one of my favourite places to sketch. The architecture of Tiong Bahru fascinates me. Every corner, every detail tells me a little more about how public housing started in Singapore.

**Don:** There is no one favorite yet. But I have found myself often drawn to Chinatown (Keong Saik Road), Tiong Bahru, and Kampong Buangkok.

What is most challenging to sketch?

**Tia:** Iconic buildings with special architectural features and their strong shadows.

**Miel:** Old shophouses with their floral details. You can see dragons and peonies in them.

**Paul:** People in urban streetscapes.

**Don:** Urban buildings. There are too many windows.

How can sketching help us appreciate the places and buildings?

**Tia:** We sketch or draw what we see and not what we know. A few minutes into sketching on location, there is a sense of peace and nothingness. Sketching a building encourages a sketcher to find out more about the history of that particular building and the neighborhood.

**Miel:** It is about getting intimate with the place. It’s like tracing with your pencil or brush the unseen qualities of the place that are often neglected by the cursory glance of the everyday.

**Paul:** We slow down and look beneath the surface and try to see the intangible qualities that urban spaces and architecture embody. As we draw and construct our sketches on paper, we are inevitably invited to step into the building creator’s shoes.

Any stories you have come across while sketching?

**Miel:** Yes, people will volunteer stories about a building being sketched, especially the old-timers. The sketches help them remember or cause them to remember about the good old days - of a bygone era in Singapore’s history. We are not only sketching a building or a place per se, we are sketching a memory.

Tia, Miel, Don and Paul are key artists for the Urban Sketchers Singapore: Volume 01 book and exhibition. Tia Boon Sim is the co-founder of Urban Sketchers Singapore and publisher of the book. Dengcoy Miel is an award-winning editorial cartoonist and illustrator-designer at The Straits Times. Don Low is a freelance illustrator and designer while Paul Wang is an art and design educator.
THROUGH THE LENS

I LOVE SINGAPORE CITY LIFE!

By Chye Hui Sze
Close to 1,400 young budding photographers captured the buzz and quiet moments of the city, in the recent “I Love Singapore: City Life” photography competition. Check out the six winning entries from the Children and Youth categories.

“I Love Singapore: City Life” photography competition was organised by URA and the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Council for 8 to 25-year olds, to photograph parts of the city, capturing its spirit, identity and soul. As part of the competition, 200 youths got a chance to understand the careful planning that went into shaping Bras Basah.Bugis, Singapore River and Marina Bay areas. They also learnt photography tips from the award-winning photographer Mr Willy Foo, Adviser to NYAA’s Young Photographer’s Network. The competition from April to May 2011 was part of URA’s outreach efforts to help youths better understand the significant role of planning and urban design in transforming our physical landscapes.
ABOUT TIMES SQUARE

Times Square is located in the heart of Manhattan, New York in the United States. It is a bustling square known for its many Broadway theatres, cinemas and animated neon and LED signs. The square is a prominent public space and very much a symbolic centre of New York City. In history, as the growth of New York City continued, Times Square became a cultural hub filled with theatres, music halls and swanky hotels. In popular culture today, the square has been featured in countless movies such as "Deep Impact", "I Am Legend" and even "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen". More notably, Times Square is the site of the iconic annual New Year’s Eve Ball where an estimated one million New Yorkers and even more worldwide will join in the revelry and soak in the energy of this dynamic urban metropolis.
TIMES SQUARE & MARINA BAY

WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

By Tim Tompkins

Many people want to hear about Times Square’s transformation. Singapore wants to learn relevant nuggets of experience from messy, ungovernable New York to bring back to clean, efficient Singapore. Aren’t these cities at opposite ends of the spectrum? Of course they are hugely different. But what interests me are the things they have in common.

The Times Square Alliance began as the Times Square Business Improvement District (BID) in 1992, as a non-government organisation. The BID started because businesses were desperate and angry. For decades, grand schemes were not implemented. When a New York Times employee had his face slashed while buying a newspaper, the New York Times mobilised the theatre industry and others to create a BID. For the first decade, it was about making Times Square clean, safe and friendly. The BID’s early work involved simple things like picking up trash or having a security officer stand in a doorway – something that was immediate and visible.
PLACE = IDENTITY + PHYSICAL QUALITY

By the time I became the head of the organisation in 2002, the issues I had to deal with were of a different nature. First, the public realm experience was miserable. While it used to be that you could barely get through Times Square alive, now you could barely get through it. The second issue was people felt that Times Square was not the “authentic” New York; that in removing the “grit”, something unique had been lost. We spent the last decade chipping away at those two things – making Times Square a world-class public space and changing people’s perception about the authenticity of Times Square. Those are the issues I see playing out in many places in Singapore as well.

We made some progress. First, we focused on rebuilding Duffy Square, the small park in the heart of Times Square. We not only doubled the amount of pedestrian space by “taking back” two lanes of roadway, but also made a commitment to world-class design by building the world’s largest all-glass structure. Second, we managed the steps and the park to a far higher standard than the City had, and we programmed it creatively with public art and events. For the first time, people wanted to linger longer in Times Square.

During the last decade, we have also been relentlessly working to improve Times Square’s image and “brand.” The quality and nature of its public spaces are crucial to those perceptions, and hence the importance not only of good design, but of design that grows out of and references the core characteristics of Times Square. We re-branded our organisation and conducted a brand analysis of Times Square. Using that analysis, which highlighted the Square’s enduring qualities as Creativity, Energy and Edge; we made sure that our public space programming reinforces those qualities.

SPACE IN-BETWEEN BUILDINGS THAT MATTERS

Fundamentally, a city is defined by not only its buildings, but also the space in-between buildings. It is there that the alchemy of urban life takes place, where the mix of people and activities creates something new, where friction creates dynamism and change. Design and details matter enormously, as do smart management and distinctive programming. Above all, a successful public space must reflect the essence of the place and the people who inhabit it. The importance of public-private partnership and a highly engaged group of stakeholders cannot be overstated. The stakeholders know their own needs best. Just like in housing, people who feel they have a stake in something take greater ownership over it, and a space that people feel ownership of will thrive. When people maintain and programme a place, not only does that place better reflect their priorities and values, it also does better. Public-private stewardship is ultimately more sustainable.
SCIENCE AND ART OF PLACE MANAGEMENT

As urban observers like Jane Jacobs have noted, the “micro” details of what happens in a city’s public spaces hugely affect the “macro” image and economy of a city. Thriving cities – and the public spaces that literally define them – are by definition unpredictable, ever changing places where different people and elements mix to create something new. Place management is both the science and art of letting cities be cities. It is the science of keeping a space clean, orderly and appealing. But it is also the art of expressing the essence of a place through creative programming, and creating space for the unexpected. It is choreographing the sweet chaos of city life; with ever so gentle a hand, and still being surprised by what comes back at you.

If a city’s public realm does not have that innate, uncertain energy, then something is lost. Because it is in a city’s public spaces that its public life is made manifest, and that is where one sees the spirit and identity of a city. The paradox is that very energy is created by meticulous stewardship. I see us making progress on all of these public space goals in Times Square, and I saw it happening throughout Singapore, especially in Marina Bay. What I saw halfway across the world during my visit to Singapore are many similar issues faced between the two cities.

Singapore has no issues (at least to this American’s eyes) with clean and safe. But I see it consciously examining its image in the world, and exploring how its architecture and public spaces express or change its larger identity and “brand.” I see it struggling with sensitive questions about who it should be catering to – the tourists who are crucial to its economy, the locals, or both. I see it refurbishing and repurposing its distinctive architecture like shophouses, being careful to preserve the old as it nurtures the new. I see it grappling with the right way to convert old rail lines into a different kind of public space that enhances neighbourhoods.
MARINA BAY – GETTING IT RIGHT

Then there is Marina Bay. A huge project like Marina Bay could go very wrong. Giant projects can take on a life of their own, or bend too far in catering to private interests in order to be achieved. But in my limited time visiting this last July, I was enormously impressed. Unlike one effort in the U.S. in the 1970s, where a desperate Atlantic City essentially turned over the keys to the city to the first casinos permitted outside of Las Vegas and provided no context, no design guidelines, no connection to the sea, I saw in Singapore something very different. I saw a complex plan with a diversity of uses – convention centre, shopping mall, museum, a signature pedestrian bridge, housing, offices, and a great public space that anticipated image-shifting events.

I saw an intense attention to design and programming detail – from the type of wood and pavers to the sightlines to the water to the determination to find the right operator for a food concession. I saw a great awareness that these details, combined with the appropriate management and programming of the public spaces, would profoundly shape Singapore’s image to the world, and potentially its economic future. And I heard sensitivity on how the development of Marina Bay had to fit in with and complement the rest of Singapore’s economic, branding and planning goals.

It is of course too early to know how all of those things will play out. If Singapore is as vital and complex a city as it certainly seems to be, it will be messy as its people debate and discuss its future and as ever more stakeholders opine in an ever more transparent and pluralistic society. But to my initial eye, the core ingredients are there: an intensely strategic and well-researched approach to urban planning and economic development, mixed with the attention that must be paid to every single detail of how a vibrant city, and especially its public spaces, must be built, managed and programmed. It is a matter of keeping up with the endless questions – and questioning – from stakeholders and planners alike. And as has been the case with me in my interactions with Singapore to date, it is about learning as much from the questions as from the answers themselves.
Organised by the Singapore Institute of Architects and supported by URA’s Architecture and Urban Design Excellence (A.UDE) Promotion Programme funding, Archifest has become an inspiring platform to discuss the significant role that quality architecture plays in shaping our physical environments and lives.

This year’s theme of Common Spaces for the annual festival looks at how the nature of our shared spaces and experiences are influenced by our global environment. It explores three key aspects of common spaces – our physical surroundings, media and virtual space; and our perceived space.

The month-long festival from 3 to 28 October 2011 features more than 60 exciting events and an array of exhibitions, forums, tours and fringe events. These include the ever-popular Architours, a major exhibition at the National Library, over 50 fringe events, and a photography competition. For more information, please visit www.archifest.sg.

**URA’S ARCHIFEST FRINGE EVENTS**

**Challenge for the Urban and Built Environment 2011**
Fancy eating your way from Fort Canning to Singapore River or closing Waterloo Street for arts-related activities? View winning student ideas from URA’s annual planning competition at The URA Centre. The exhibition runs until 2 December 2011. More information can be found on www.facebook.com/CUBE2011.

**Architectural Heritage Awards Winners**
From the historic Fullerton Heritage to charming office and residential shophouses in Geylang and Chinatown, URA’s annual Architectural Heritage Awards continue to recognise outstanding restoration and conservation works. The seven award-winning projects are on display at The URA Centre until 24 November 2011.

**Urban Sketchers Singapore: Volume 01**
The Urban Sketchers Singapore: Volume 01 exhibition and book present over 360 beautiful sketches that capture moments, places and life in Singapore by the Urban Sketchers group. See Pg 06 for more information about the exhibition and book.

**Re-imagining the Rail Corridor**
Want to play your part in shaping the future development of the Rail Corridor? Now you can, through an exhibition organised by the Friends of the Rail Corridor. View early ideas by students and design professionals or you can give your ideas at www.ura.gov.sg/railcorridor. The exhibition at The URA Centre runs until 2 December 2011.
“Jalan Besar today is quite different from the place where I grew up. Beyond the shophouses are high-rise housing developments and shopping malls. Like the mangrove swamps, streets and shophouses, they too will influence the district. What is our vision for the future of Jalan Besar? Might it lie in the history of this place?” In this third and final article adapted from her short book, Professor Woo Pui Leng presents the landmarks of Jalan Besar.
SAWMILLS, ABATTOIRS, INCINERATORS

At the confluence of the Rochor Canal and the Kallang River, the swampland attracted many factories. Sawmills, oil mills and rice mills began to emerge on the banks of the canal in the 1880s. Appearing as ramshackle structures with obelisk-like chimneys, they were part of the industrial heartland of early Singapore (Figure 01). Syed Alwi Road with its large sawmill next to the canal became known as the “sawmill street” – it was a vibrant street market until the 1980s.

The first municipal incinerators were constructed next to the canal in 1889 for systematic disposal of refuse in Singapore. With the growth of cattle trade in Serangoon Road, a complex of municipal abattoirs was built in Jalan Besar in 1891 (Figure 02). Jalan Besar became known as the “slaughter depot in Kampong Kapur”, and Syed Alwi Road “the street beside the abattoirs”. The incinerators and abattoirs no longer exist. Their sites have been developed into public housing and a hawker centre. The municipality also constructed housing for their workers. The two-storey municipal quarters on Hindoo Road are a reminder of Jalan Besar’s role in serving the city.

Between 1920s and 1950s, manufacturing works, contracting business, and engineering services grew in the district. Singapore’s first ice works was constructed on Larut Road by the canal in the 1930s. In the vicinity of the Jalan Besar Stadium, factories and shophouses were designed to attract engineering and auto works. Of reinforced concrete construction and modern expressions, some of the shophouses still function as workshops. They represent a vestige of Jalan Besar’s industrial past (Figure 03).

In contrast to the incessant traffic of Jalan Besar, Rochor Canal is a quiet place. An occasional sampan goes upstream. Elderly men lounge on makeshift hammocks. Not much seems to be happening along this historical route. In recalling the canal as an urban waterway, an edge of two markets (thieves market and Syed Alwi Road), and a seam between two historic districts, we might find inspiration for its future (Figure 04).
TEMPLES, MOSQUES, CHURCHES
On the edges of Jalan Besar are some of the oldest places of worship in Singapore. The Muslim Cemetery already existed in the 1822-1823 map of Singapore. On Serangoon Road are two famous Hindu temples: Sri Srinivasa Perumal (1855) and Sri Veeramakaliamman (1881). The early places of worship in Jalan Besar were founded on plots of dry land. The most prominent one is the Abdul Gaffoor Mosque (1903). There was also a small Chinese temple (1896) off Jalan Besar (Figure 05).

With the completion of the new street layouts in Kampong Kapor and around the Jalan Besar Stadium, several churches were built – the Kampong Kapor Methodist Church (1929), Holy Trinity Church (1941), Church of the True Light (1952), and Hing Hwa Methodist Church (1950). There are many more places of worship in Jalan Besar – most of them are small, and evolved from modest beginnings. A Kwan Yin Temple and the Covenant Vision Centre on Tyrwhitt Road occupy existing structures. The Chi Kung turned Tibetan Buddhist Temple on Beatty Road had experienced a change of faith (Figure 06).

FERRIS WHEELS, GHOST TRAINS, CRAZY HOUSES
The New World opened on 1 August, 1923. A business venture by a group of prominent Straits Chinese, this amusement park appealed to people of all classes. Its popularity transformed the district from a rural fringe area into an entertainment hub. The main entrance was located on Plumer Road (Figure 07). A recessed forecourt and a three-storey eclectic façade heightened the entry experience. Beyond this façade, a world of fantasies – cinemas and opera theatres, dancing hall and cabarets, Ferris wheel, merry-go-round, ‘crazy house’ and ‘ghost train’ – became real for a modest fee.

Completed at a time of economic boom, the New World promulgated not only the development of shophouses but also hotels and lodging houses in the district. The famous ones included Ngung Hin 銀興, Juan Juan 源源 (1926), Allenby House (1928), International 萬國 (1937), Kam Leng 金陵 (1938), and White House 白宮 (1939). Being close to town and affordable, they attracted clerical workers, the occasional tourists, and even out-of-work planters. They were also the venues of entertainment for the growing middle-class population (Figure 08). Jalan Besar rapidly developed into a district of popular pleasure with restaurants, bars, cabarets and brothels in the 1920s.

The New World closed its doors in the 1980s. With demolition of its entrance façade, its forecourt disappeared. For a long time, the only remains of the New World was the entrance
gate on Plumer Road. The gate has disappeared. Instead, a replica “to link the community with its past” has been erected in front of a shopping mall on Serangoon Road – it is a misunderstanding about history.

STADIUM, OPEN SPACES

The Jalan Besar Stadium opened on 26 December 1929 with a football match between Malayan Chinese and Asians. The stadium together with the Victoria School formed a large green space in a 1920s town plan of Jalan Besar. It was the venue for football matches and important events. With slender wooden columns, corrugated metal roofs and concrete tiers, the stadium was designed in a careful and simple manner. The entrance was at a two-storey brick and plaster building on Tyrwhitt Road. When the stadium was full, football fans rented places on rooftops of surrounding shophouses (Figure 09). On nights of important matches, bright stadium lights, roving hawkers and the cheers of the game made the entire area alive.

The layout of open spaces was the influence of the garden city movement and British town planning in the early 20th century (Figure 10). The intention was to create distinct open spaces and a pleasing urban experience. The two squares of Kampong Kapur have largely disappeared. The playfields of the Jalan Besar Stadium and the Victoria School still exist. The rectilinear spaces between Petain Road and Lavender Street deserve our attention. They represent a part of Singapore’s planning history, and retain a sense of quiet beauty in the district (Figure 11).

PAST REVEALS MEANING OF PLACE

There will always be disjunctions between how an individual experiences a place and how society considers its significance. Ultimately it is the study of history – of physical forms and events – that reveals the meaning of places. URA has gazetted 519 shophouses and structures in Jalan Besar for conservation. What seems to be missing is an awareness of its rich history and its influence on architecture and planning. It is my hope that this work contributes to that knowledge beyond the beautiful façades of the shophouses. Revitalisation of the Rochor Canal and the area around Sungei Road thieves market, improved pedestrian connection between Serangoon Road and Kampong Glam, acknowledgement of the 1920s town plans and open spaces, and design guidelines for important street intersections – are some urban transformations that might make Jalan Besar a better place based on the reading of its history (Figure 12).

THE AUTHOR

Woo Pui Leng is Associate Professor at the School of Architecture, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She teaches courses in architectural design and urban theory. Jalan Besar was where she lived between the 1950s and 1980s. This work forms part of her research in urban morphology and architectural typology. She is working on a new book on the urban history of Jalan Besar based on this work. Her contact is plengwoo@gmail.com
Marina Bay City Gallery Welcomes its 100,000th Visitor!

Opened a year ago, the Marina Bay City Gallery (MBCG) welcomed its 100,000th visitor in September. “It was my first time at the MBCG. I appreciate how we have this gallery to share with Singaporeans and tourists the planning and development of Marina Bay. I enjoyed the free guided tour and my kids loved interacting with the touch-screen exhibits,” commented Mr Jason Heng, the 100,000th visitor.

Located on the waterfront, the sparkling two-storey building with sustainable design details the remarkable transformation of Marina Bay. MBCG is located at 11 Marina Bay Boulevard. Admission is free. Visit www.marina-bay.sg for more information and happenings by the bay.