

by Tan Shin Bin

It isn't often that you get to live in a shop you once frequented in your youth. So when a Singapore couple bought a shophouse that formerly accommodated a bookstore they used to visit, they seized the chance to create something special, marrying elements from the past and present.

At first glance, 125 Joo Chiat Place presents a regally faded front, quietly resplendent in its pale, washed out colours and worn but intricate ornamental motifs. Inside, however, is a completely different story. The doors open up to a bold landscape of warm exposed brick and dark wood floors, starkly framed by black metal girders.

The owners of this conservation property grew up in the Katong area, but eventually moved away and worked abroad. Their decision to relocate back to Joo Chiat and to make this shophouse their home was a unique homecoming, marking both a re-visitation of their younger days as well as the start of a new chapter in their lives. The restored shophouse reflects this charming dichotomy of old and new.

HONOURING OLD MEMORIES

The double-storey shophouse was built in the 1920s according to a "Transitional" style, and once housed a bookstore called "The Lucky Book Store", with the ground floor reserved for retail and the second level for storage. The bookstore had been an old haunt for the couple, both of whom had fond memories of browsing through the stacks of comics and buying music cassettes and cheap chewing gum.

The couple worked with an architect friend to conserve the shophouse and convert it into a home. They also bought a plot of concrete land behind the property and transformed it into a single-storey extension of the house, surrounded by a garden that links the extension to the main shophouse.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW



/ design

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