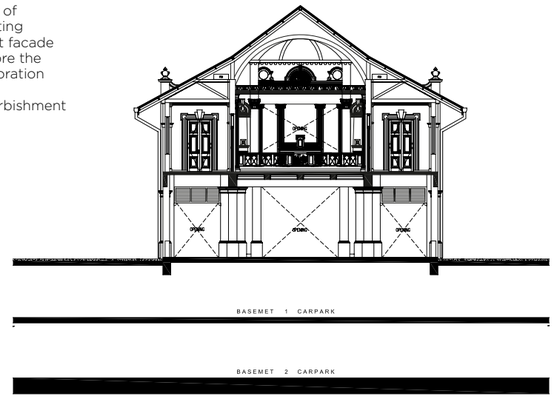
ST JOSEPH NOVITIATE

Situated right in the middle of a masterplan, this category 2 conservation project portrays colonial architecture with its design elements adapted to respond to the local climate.

Part of existing front facade before the restoration and refurbishment



Section View

View towards front facade after the restoration and refurbishment

Bordered by Gurney Drive on the north and Kelawei Road on the south is a 41,560 square metre mixed development project consisting of serviced condominiums, a shopping mall and a corporate office tower. Prior to this, the site was a training college for Christian Brothers (1918-1988) before it was finally leased to Uplands International School (1988- 2005). The site was acquired by the present developer in 2006, and Uplands School was duly relocated to Batu Feringghi, Penang.

Central to the novitiate is a 2-storey chapel which is the only portion in the entire complex identified for Conservation Category 2 under the Penang State Structure Plan. This classification allows the adaptive reuse of the building's internal spaces, whilst requiring its façade to be restored to the original outlook. Located right in the middle of the project site, the chapel initially posed a challenge, as the overall development was masterplanned around the chapel, making it the focal point of the development. The architects mooted the idea to extend the conservation exercise to include a 3-storey novitiate block that is connected to the rear end of the chapel. The T-shaped composition of the 2 and 3-storey wing, aptly known as St Joseph Novitiate, is maintained to enhance the physical presence of the chapel within the entire masterplan, and to render the scale of conservation more significant in relation to the entire mixed development.

Part of external front facade after the restoration and refurbishment

As a retail component of the mall, St Joseph Novitiate is to house new boutique F & B spaces, new toilets and a new lift to cater to the accessibility of the less-abled. Although portraying typical features of Colonial Architecture with repetitive windows, keystones and pilasters, most building elements had been adapted to respond to the local climate of Penang as evidently shown in the generous openings, high ceilings, wide corridors and high doors along the exterior facades. The internal space planning, typical of an institutional building, also emphasises on linearity and openness. Apart from the buttress-type structure at each building corner, elements of the novitiate block are also different in proportion to that of the chapel, understandably due to the different period they were both built. In the course of restoration however, common building defects were found in both wings, such as crumbling plaster, roof leakages, water seepage, watermark staining, termite infestation, rising damp, salt contamination and organic growth. These problems were addressed systematically with the guidance of a conservator.

The most challenging feat before the commencement of restoration works was the engineering of two basement levels below St Joseph Novitiate, to house carparks for the serviced condominiums. As a result, the project became a one of its kind 'under-pinning' construction of a heritage building in Malaysia. The process was a tedious and time-consuming exercise that involved the introduction of new micropiles and ground beams to support a new transfer slab where the entire structure would sit on. Subsequently, careful excavation was carried out level by level below the building between the exposed micropiles before proceeding on to the casting of basement slabs and columns upon which the building stability is achieved.

Part of Level 1 corridor after the restoration and refurbishment

CLIENT
HUNZA PROPERTIES (PENANG) SDN BHD

LOCATION
GURNEY DRIVE, PENANG

YEAR COMPLETED
OCTOBER 2011

ARCHITECT
BYG ARCHITECTURE SDN BHD

PROJECT PRINCIPAL
AR MICHAEL ONG CHIN KEONG

PROJECT TEAM
LA CHEAH
LINA TEOH
KJ LEE
SK HO
DENNIS YEOH
GL YEAP

SITE AREA
41,560 SQUARE METRES

BUILT-UP AREA
4,020 SQUARE METRES

CONSERVATOR
BUILT HERITAGE (MR SHAHRUDDIN SHABRI) IN COLLABORATION WITH ASSOC PROF DR A GHAFAR AHMAD

CIVIL ENGINEER
ARUP JURURUNDING SDN BHD

M&E ENGINEER
KTA TENAGA SDN BHD

QUANTITY SURVEYOR
KUANTIBINA SDN BHD

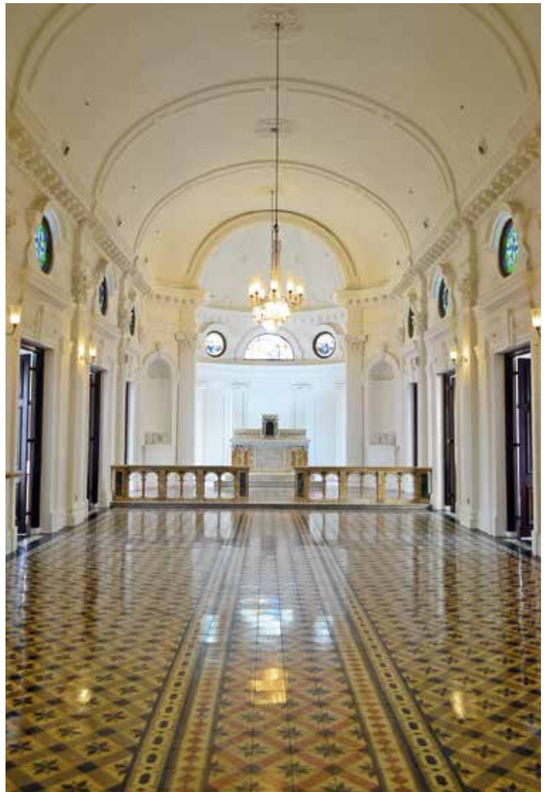
LANDSCAPING
CONSPEC BUILDERS SDN BHD

CONTRACTOR
UBAHAN SELERA SDN BHD

LIGHTING
ACCENT LIGHTING DESIGN SERVICES

PHOTOGRAPHER
STAEK PHOTOGRAPHY
B S TIO
ANG WAI KIT

The interior of Level 2 chapel area after the restoration and refurbishment



After the under-pinning was completed, the restoration process began with the demolition of incompatible additions and alterations to the existing building. The restoration focused mainly on the building's facades, by reconstructing all existing decorative features, finishes and to retain all original spaces. Common construction materials used included lime plaster, hard wood, granite stones, recycled bricks, Marseille roof tiles and stained glass. Decorative cement floor tiles and timber roof trusses were also carefully restored and replaced where necessary. New building structures were kept to a minimum, such as steel supports for the staircase, cable bracing, steel structures and glass panels for the new lift. These elements were deliberately exposed to embrace the new structure as a need to support the contemporary usage of the building.

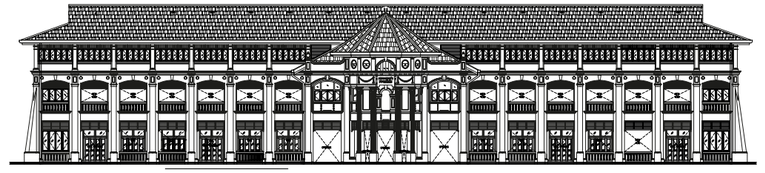
One of the most exciting spaces within the novitiate is the chapel building known as St Joseph's Chapel. The chapel has a double volume vaulted arch ceiling ornamented with sophisticated cornices and coves. On the other hand the ground floor is an open congregational gallery. The interior spaces bear influences of European Baroque Style in which Classical forms and motives were transformed by the inventive use of spaces and decorations. This can be seen in the stained-glass panels and roundels illustrating saints, coved ceiling, classical capitals, keystones, festoons, cornices, marble altar, decorative floor tiles and high doors made of the finest Burmese teak. A caption in Latin — ANNO SANCTO MCMXXV (translation: Holy Year 1925), was carved on the exterior wall of the Chapel facing the Gurney Drive, representing the year it was built.

The proportions of all architectural elements in the chapel gives it a sense of nobility and distinction, making it distinctively exceptional from other such edifices in Malaysia.

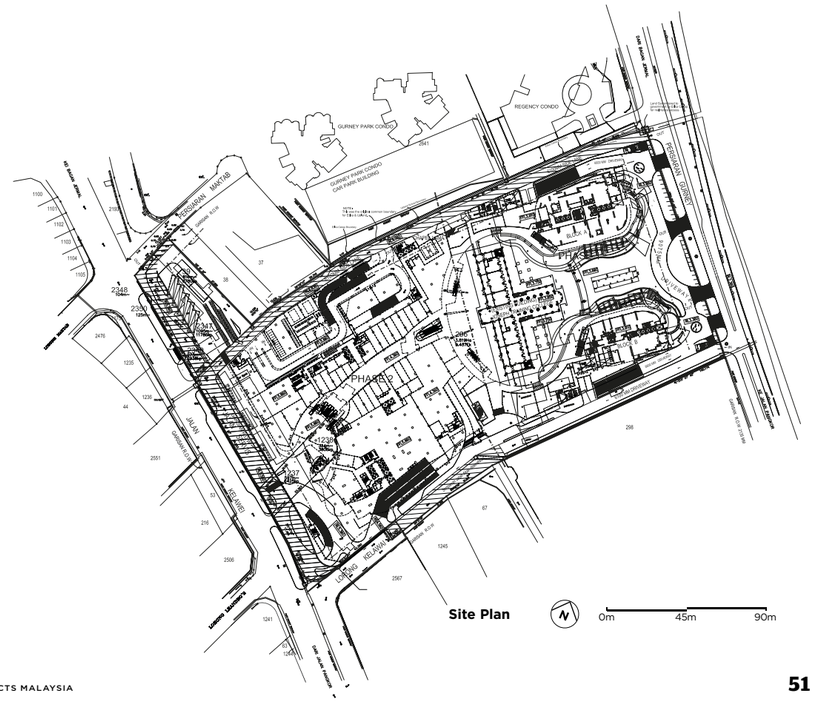
Going the extra mile in promoting heritage within the George Town World Heritage Site, the masterplan celebrates St Joseph Novitiate with a 120 feet traffic free plaza to bring the obstructed vista to the front façade of the building all the way from Gurney Drive, whilst integrating the rear façade with the shopping mall currently under construction with a roofed over triple volume atrium. The retail podium at the lower levels of the two serviced condominiums flanking the plaza are connected to the mall in a series of covered walkways set a distance apart from St Joseph Novitiate at all 3 levels, to allow visitors to appreciate the intricacy of the building façade from different angles and elevations. The conception of an entry from the open plaza into the future Gurney Paragon Mall through the gallery at ground floor of St Joseph Novitiate creates not only a unique ceremonious approach into the mall but also offers enthusiasts a walkabout experience of the conservation works undertaken for the building.

It should be noted that the overall restoration of St Joseph Novitiate is made possible with modern engineering, especially with the under-pinning. Both the under-pinning and the interior refurbishment were carefully carried out with minimal intrusion to the existing structures in order to enhance the true architectural and heritage significance of the building. For the architects, this project represents an enlightenment and appreciation of heritage values, but more importantly, to demonstrate the commercial potential of conservation and restoration projects toward the overall success of tourism and economic development within the state of Penang. /am

The construction involved the introduction of new micropiles and ground beams to underpin a new transfer slab that supports the entire structure



Front Elevation 0m 6m 12m



Site Plan 0m 45m 90m