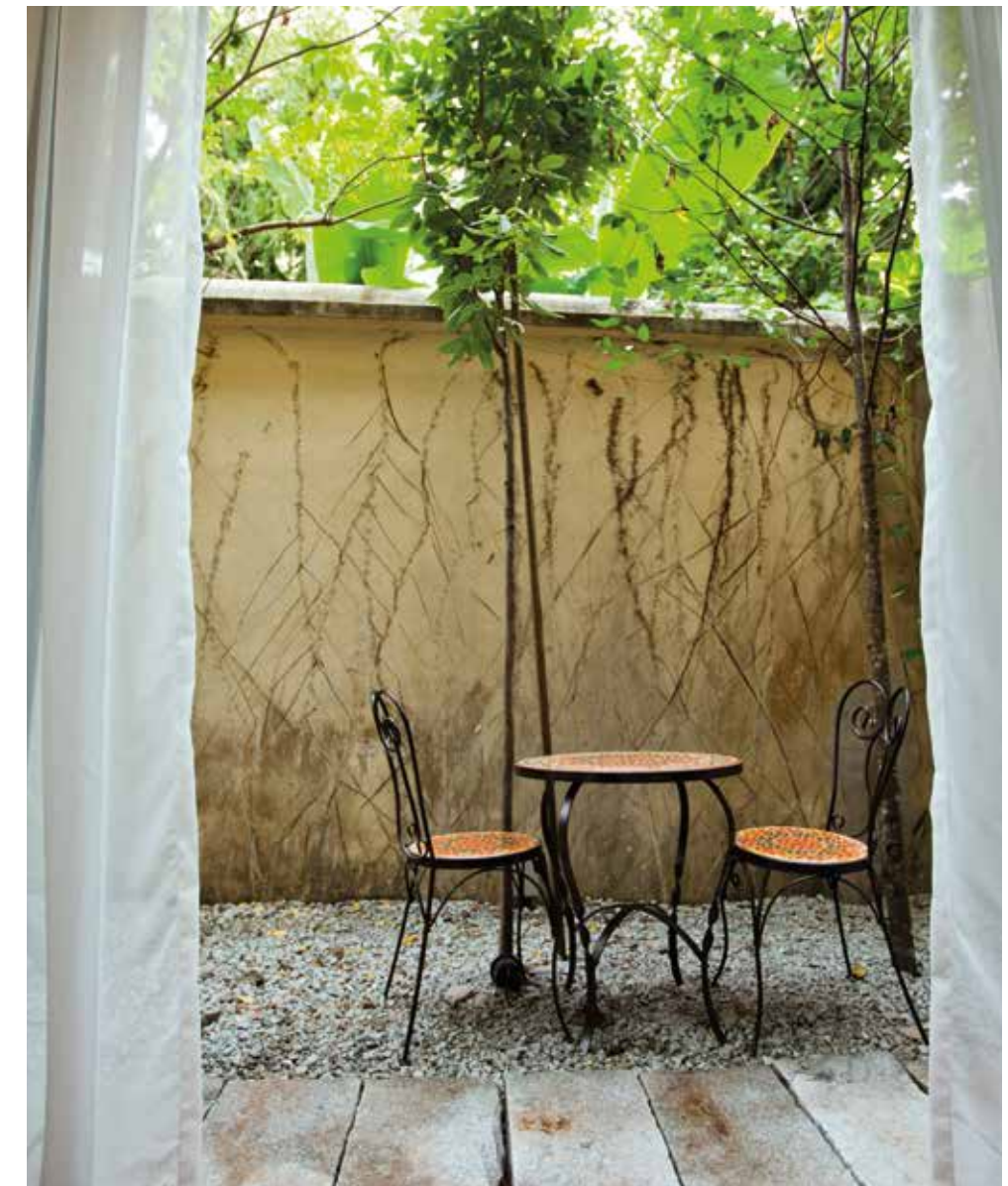


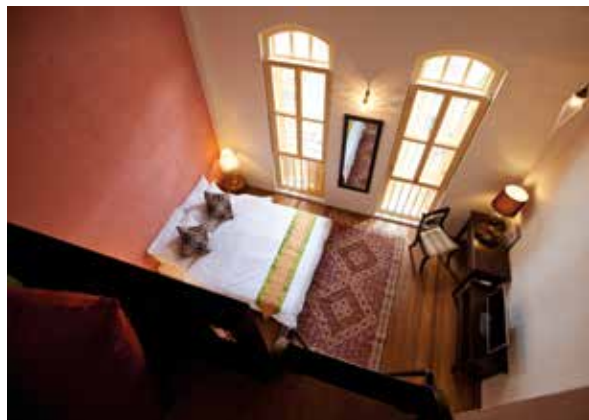
SPICES

Inspired by its own history, this boutique homestay features elements of old and new that spices up the urban infill it is sited on.

Spices at Lumut Lane, off Lebuah Acheh (or Acheen Street) is one of the most recent additions of boutique homestays in the heart of George Town. It is a restored residence that is adapted to provide a unique and exclusive 'bed and breakfast' experience within what seems to be a row of 4 units of shophouses. Units 3 and 5 have been built identical to the Penang-style typology of the early 1790s to 1850s – at the time when Acheen Street was first developed, whilst unit 7 and 9 replicate the 'Straits Eclectic' style of the 1890s to 1910s, with ornamentations and characteristic which are evident of European culture. Incidentally, the rear elevation of Spices is aligned with the compound wall of the Acheen Street Mosque.

Acheen Street was once the centre of Islamic studies in Penang, and a thriving Muslim settlement that was frequented by traders from the surrounding Malay Archipelago, Arab and India, and was once referred to as the Second Jeddah, as pilgrims from nearby congregate here before departing to Mecca by sea. Every time the Haj season begins, Acheen Street was thronged by pilgrims and their families. However, all this





FROM TOP: The front facade; double volume guest room with a mezzanine floor; guest room at ground floor; selection of modern bathroom fittings and sanitary wares to ensure comfort to guests

ended with the establishment of the Lembaga Tabung Haji in the 1970s.

Meanwhile, as an offshoot of Acheen Street, Lumut Lane became part of a Muslim settlement that was occupied by Muslim traders, grim brokers involved in the Haj pilgrimage and writers since the turn of the 18th century. The area also has a small Indian population since the mid 19th century. From the middle to late 19th century, Lumut Lane was then a path leading into the Malay village of Kampung Wakaf, a small settlement built on endowment land of the Acheen Street Mosque.

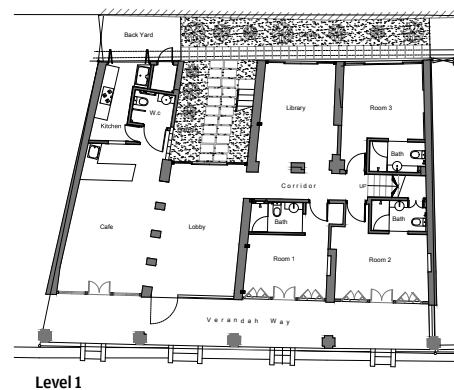
Fast forward to 2010, when the owners first acquired the property comprising of 4 shophouses with a mere 46.45sqm footprint each, it was but a ramshackle and unoccupied place of despair. The half collapsed roof of unit 3 exposed the internal part of the building to rain causing further deterioration of the structures. Unit 5 was literally an empty plot overgrown with ground-covers and trees onto its walls. Unit 7 and 9 whilst intact, were badly ridden with white ants. The former owner had intended to capitalize on this property for rearing of swiftlets.

Despite in its sad state, the owners were first attracted to the pristine foliage of the Bodhi Tree and its brawny trunks on the party wall of the empty plot of unit 5, which were reminiscent of the ones they have seen in the ruins of Angkor Wat. These now become the feature that decorates the garden wall and shades the courtyard today.

The eventual idea of the owners was to retain unit 3 and 5 as the owner's living zone,

whilst unit 7 and 9 are to be occupied by rooms to be let out for short and long term guests. From the street, the external façade of the 4 shophouses i.e; the ornamentations, pilasters, doors and windows, have been restored to their original forms, except the ground floor façade of unit 5 where a glass door with vertical security grilles is consciously introduced as a new yet subtle element to grace the main entrance.

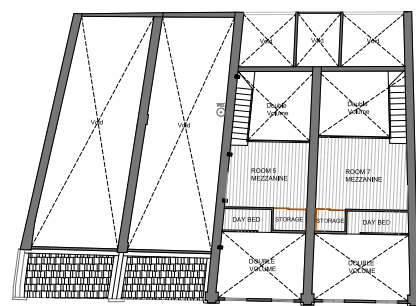
Upon entry one would be greeted by a generous lobby with a direct view of the open



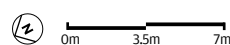
Level 1



Level 2



Level Mezzanine



Upon entry one would be greeted by a generous lobby with a direct view of the open courtyard at the rear

courtyard at the rear and the dining hall located to the left through the archways created between unit 3 and 5. The multi-tone colours and textures of the exposed and unplastered brickwork at the lobby creates a warm and cosy atmosphere whilst inviting one's attention to the canopy of the Bodhi tree at the courtyard where two local forest species, hopea odorata and sindora wallichii are randomly planted.

An outdoor staircase leading to the 1st floor is constructed alongside the wall that is adorned by the roots and trunks of the Bodhi tree to allow one to sense, feel and touch the growth of the tree. The upper floor of unit 5 is a semi-outdoor lounge that buffers the owner's studio suite on the upper floor of unit 3 from the guest rooms at unit 7 and 9.



Terrace deck at the upper floor



Family corner in the upper floor guest room

CLIENT
ENCHANTING ESTATE
SDN BHD

LOCATION
LUMUT LANE
GEORGETOWN, PENANG

YEAR COMPLETED
JAN 2013

ARCHITECT
BYG ARCHITECTURE
SDN BHD

SITE AREA
215 SQM

BUILT-UP AREA
394 SQM

PROJECT PRINCIPAL
AI MICHEAL ONG CHIN
KEONG

PROJECT TEAM
DENNIS YEOH

C & S ENGINEER
PDB CONSULT SDN BHD

M & E ENGINEER
TEOH ELECTRICAL
ENGINEERING

QUANTITY SURVEYOR
QUATTROBINA SDN BHD

LIGHTING
BYG ARCHITECTURE
SDN BHD

LANDSCAPING
GREEN ACRES STUDIO
SDN BHD

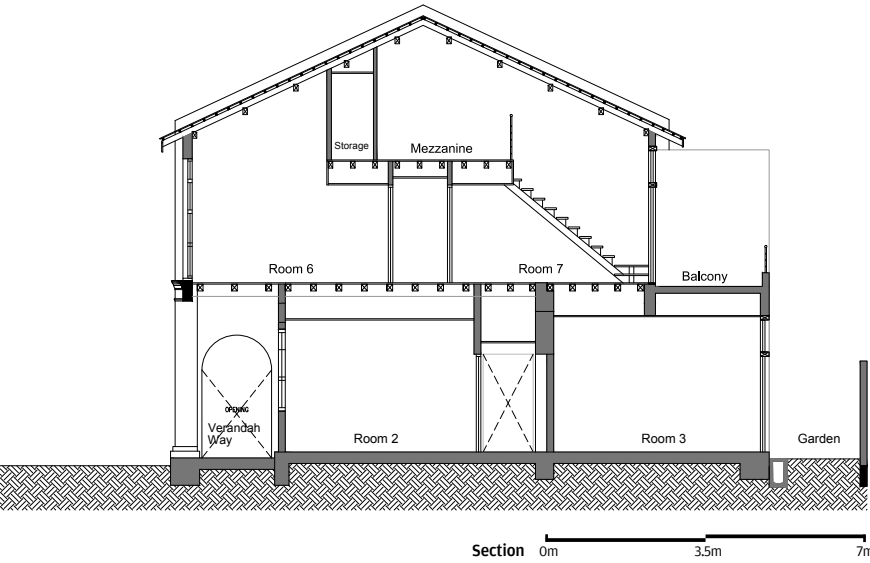
CONTRACTOR
YEE HONG
CONSTRUCTION &
RENOVATION

PHOTOGRAPHS
LUCAS & JOYCE
PHOTOWORKS

View towards the library
from the archway



FROM TOP: The dining hall located to the left through the archways created between two units; Bodhi Tree and its brawny trunks on the party wall of the empty plot; the interior of one of the rooms



Openings are created at the party wall between unit 5 and 7 on each level, to connect to the hallways leading to the guest rooms. The ground floor of unit 7 and 9 are subdivided into a library and a garden view room at the rear portion and 2 standard rooms with direct access to the verandah via the original main doors of unit 7 and 9 at the front portion. Meanwhile the upper floor is subdivided into two loft suites each with a terrace that overlooks the compound of the Acheen street mosque at the rear portion and two street facing superior rooms at the front portion.

The inspiration for the interior architecture and decoration of Spices Residence is drawn from the historical context of Lumut Lane. Efforts are made to echo the function of the shophouses when they were then homestays to pilgrims and traders from the 18th to 20th centuries, whilst furniture and lighting fixtures are picked and collected by the owners and architects from their travels to depict Moroccan and Indian Muslim influences, which is a far cry from the usual Peranakan interiors in almost all the conservation projects in Penang.

In compliance with the prescribed conservation guidelines for a category 2 building, the finishes of ground floors are clay tiles whilst upper floors are maintained as timber flooring. Where new bathrooms are created on the timber flooring, localized areas are strengthened with additional joists before applying fibre glass as water proof trays to contain wet areas. Subsequently, floor patch, a special mixed of cement, sand and a specialist hardener is

applied to form a rustic and contiguous wall and floor finish. However, the selected bathroom fittings and sanitary wares are adequately modern to ensure comfort to guests. For other parts of the building, walls are finished with lime plasters to promote breathability of the walls thus creating natural cooling to the internal spaces.

Volumes are created in the rooms and spaces on the upper floor, where internal ceilings are kept consistent with the profile of the roof pitch, successfully counteracting space limitations. Recycled and reused timber roof beams are deliberately exposed as architectural features. Likewise, newly incorporated elements such as steel balusters and steel frames for staircases are also exposed to depict what is new and what is old.

But perhaps the most interesting idea of the project is the marrying of the courtyard and the back lanes to recreate a whole new urban landscape. The lanes which were once unkempt and not maintained is now a nice landscaped garden that is borrowed as a view for the library and the garden unit on the ground floor. The wall supporting the Bodhi tree was also strengthened by adding on structural steel frames and rafters within the party wall to ensure support to the weight of the growing tree.

The warm and inviting interior of Spices Residence with a private landscaped courtyard is likened to that of a little secret known only to a few. The fact that it is right in the middle of the heritage city yet hidden away from the hustle of mainstream tourist routes has made it even more unique and unforgettable. ✎