

# CONTENTS

## PART 1

- 1 | True Tropical Skyscrapers
- 2 | The Rise Of Boutique Hotel

## PART 2

- 3 | Architecture in My Hometown
- 4 | Beyond Postmodernism

---

Following this introduction, as seen in the content, there will be two types/parts of writing samples. The first type of writing sample is similar to magazine articles with pictures as supporting narrative - the contents are my personal commentary and thoughts about Archinesia Architectour with Singapore Hospitality Design as the highlight. The second type will be short essays limited to 300 words conveying writer's idea and some criticism towards topics that are related to architecture. Enjoy!

# PART 1

# TRUE TROPICAL SKYSCRAPER





*Oasia Hotel Downtown as the red building amidst the towering buildings in Singapore.*

Covered with curtain walls, fully air-conditioned, occasional greenery in the lobby - a very typical high-rise building in every city in the world. Since the possibility of using steel beams and modular curtain wall systems, those buildings have always been monotonous regarding its envelope. The most creative ways of making the building envelope better are colour-play, better yet, shaped cantilevers and recently we could see towers using secondary skins of perforated metal plates or some other unusual materials. Tower or skyscraper is an epitome of human disregarding and neglecting nature as a part of human life. Those kind of buildings could be seen as the enemy of nature - taking the land and resource without giving back at all.

Defensive statements of environment sustainability are present from countries in continental climate zone saying building envelope is what it is and should protect users from the ever-changing seasons. There could still be no answer to build season-adaptive towers in those countries - but what about tropical countries? The only things a building should be able to hold are rains, hot sun, and occasional storms - yet most high-rise building are made in exaggeration of extreme weather protection. In Singapore, throughout the history, storms are so rare - hence rains and sun is the only thing a building should protect users from. WOHA, well-known for its forte in creating environmental-friendly building, created a prototype of what a tropical skyscraper could be.

Located in the heart of Singapore CBD, a red building, covered with greeneries is a recent and eye-catching tower that could not be missed. Housing a hotel, office, and car parks, Oasia Hotel Downtown has the usual mix-used affair with unusual way of delivering it as a remarkable highlight of the neighbourhood. The most prominent feature of the building, apart from the red shades of the aluminium-mesh secondary skin covered with 21 different species of creeper plants, is three monstrous voids located on three different sides of the building.



*Several voids on the building.*



*Lush setting in the building voids as urban scale veranda.*



*Garden-like experience on the ground floor.*

The voids, regarded as sky gardens, provide urban scale veranda to the building users. The sky gardens contain different reception areas for both hotel and office. Through the lush veranda, visitors could see amazing cityscapes without obstructions. The veranda is also designed to let breezes pass through the building as to provide good cross-ventilation to reduce the usage of air conditioning machines that use substantial amount of energy. As it is mostly sheltered throughout the day, the thermal comfort surrounding the sky gardens is exceptional.

The lush atmosphere and garden-like experience could also be felt from the ground floor around the building. The ground floor is designed to be green and sheltered corridors allowing pedestrians to commute comfortably. Of course the garden-like experience is obtained by what was mentioned before - through planting 21 different species of creepers on the red-coloured perforated metal plates. The vertical mini ecosystem is expected to even provide food for birds and insects, bringing diversity to the glass-covered concrete jungle in the vicinity. The automatically-hydrated and low-cost vertical garden is also said to achieve 1,100% of Green Plot Ratio for the building itself - a number that is impossible to be reached by conventional way of designing a high-rise building.



*Contrast building envelope - tropical versus glass-covered.*



*The building rooftop - two pools on both end is visible by the blue-coloured surface.*

On the top of the building, guests will enter an oasis-like environment. There are two swimming pools on both ends of the building and playful design of relaxing seats is between. Bricks are covering most of the walls with coconut trees rising along the beams supporting the perforated ceiling materials - creating a very tropical surrounding. The lavatories serving the floors are equally green. They are designed as an open concept area with water features and directly exposed to the building main exterior covered with greenery that obscure indoor and outdoor experience.

The most interesting part of this project lies within the agreement between the client and the architect. To sacrifice a great number of rooms that could probably be more profitable than the sky gardens, yet in the end WOHA could provide a win-win solution that the client accepts. Turns out, the idea to make this project a totally new high-rise building prototype brings more fortune as the building has now become one of the cityscape highlight. It is also impressive to know that WOHA has even envisioned the sky garden to be sky bridges connectors in the possible future. As one of the most prominent examples of WOHA projects, Oasia Hotel Downtown truly apply the principle they always hold - that is "To preserve nature by integrating it into the built environment."

**PROJECT DETAILS**  
 Architect: WOHA  
 Interior: Studio Patricia Urquiola  
 Client: Far East SOHO Pte Ltd  
 Built: 2016  
 Location: Singapore  
 Area: 19,416 sqm

*Rooftop lavatory, open air concept to obscure indoor and outdoor.*



*Brick wall finish in the rooftop pool area and coconut trees' trunk rising along the black columns.*



# THE RISE OF BOUTIQUE HOTEL





*The New Majestic hotel exterior - using four heritage shophouses as the facade.*



*The New Majestic hotel pool with portholes as the skylight of the restaurant under.*



*The lobby exposing the original ceiling as it was along with the newly renovated interior.*

Initiated by the intricately designed New Majestic Hotel which was built in 2006, the boom of boutique and design hotel has been overwhelming in Singapore. Colin Seah, a Singaporean architecture lecturer that turned into a pioneer of boutique hotel designer, oversaw the rise of distinct needs of unique hotel across the globe and turned an old row of typical shophouses into an award-winning hotel. New Majestic hotel delivered its design following a new way of process that breakthrough the typology of hotel interiors - thus creating 5 new hotel room typologies, very experimental, which are adored by the new wave of hotel enthusiasts.

The conservation of heritage building is also carried out differently. Visitors could see how the architect preserved the ground floor's ceiling in its exact state to showcase unique way of combining old and new in harmony. The dash of orange and turquoise finish on the original concrete ceiling was used as the colour palettes of the lobby's randomly set furniture. The main winding staircase then leads visitors to an intimately designed swimming pool with some portholes on its base that acts as skylight for the restaurant under.

In its 30 hotel rooms, arts are ever-present. Every room has its own distinct artworks made by nine emerging artists of Singapore. The room experimental and unique typologies are created through Colin's detailed observations of young Singaporeans and/or Asians' lifestyle that provokes most of the guests the first time they visit the property. The most unusual and popular room in this hotel is the Glass Room which is located in the attic with no natural lighting. The room was initially thought to be a linen room - until Colin came up with an idea of making the room mostly mirrors that heighten self-awareness and experimental feels to guests staying in this room. At the moment, the Glass Room is the most popular room in the hotel - proofing that inadequate room could still be designed into an enjoyable and profitable space.



*The Glass Room.*



*Artworks of the interior by local artists.*



*Loft room design is very rare at the time the hotel opened in 2006.*



*New room typology through unique approach of observations.*

### **PROJECT DETAILS**

*Architect: Colin Seah (Ministry of Design)*

*Interior: Colin Seah (Ministry of Design) with collaborating local artists: Safaruddin Abdul Hamid (aka Dyn), Andre Tan, Lee Meiling, Heleston Chew, Tay Bee Aye, Kng Mian Tze, Miguel Chew, Sandra Lee and Justin Lee*

*Built: 2006*

*Location: Singapore*

*Area: 2500 sqm*



*Three warehouses transformed into a boutique hotel along Singapore River.*

Conservation is a big business in Singapore nowadays. Not only shophouses, even old warehouses are being conserved to show some insights on how the city did business back then. Looking at how the majority of conservation projects took place in Singapore, hotel is surely an easy and reliable choice of redevelopment and restoration objective. The Warehouse Hotel, one of the newest additions of boutique hotel, uses a different manner of converting a heritage building into a hospitality property. The Warehouse Hotel doesn't boast on its expressive art installations but rather gives industrial yet luxury feels to the guests.

Entering the lobby, the retained shape and structure of the ceiling will bring a spacious experience - while the installation of diverse cartwheels and a whole area of brick wall finish represents the industrial and trading era in Singapore. The uses of black as one of the main colours, repeating classic patterns and modernised 70s furniture in the lobby reminisce the era when these buildings were used as an exclusive and secretive societies quarter. Hotel rooms are plotted on the back of the building facing the Singapore River. The attempt to provide privacy and quietness could be seen by the security doors installed before the guests could access the rooms' corridor.

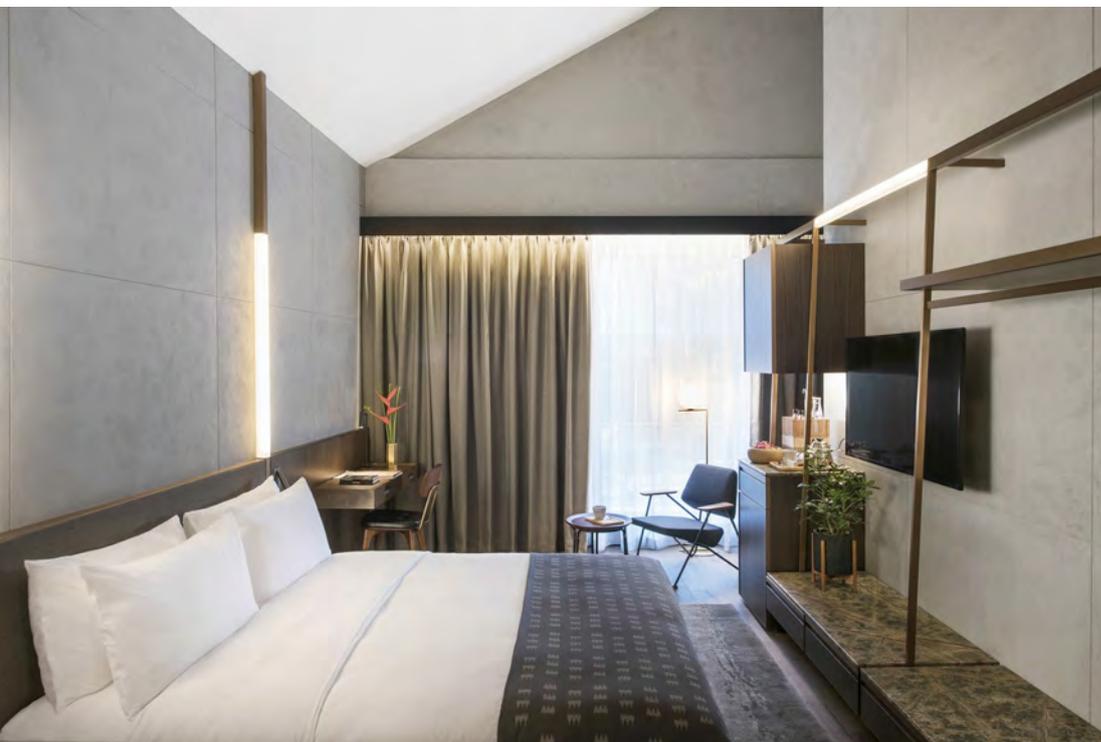
The rooms are pretty much distinguishable from how boutique hotel trends in Singapore are. Designed by local architects and interior designer (Zarch and Asylum respectively), every single room showcases sleek industrial looks with the touch of the original structures from the warehouse. The Warehouse Hotel doesn't compromise with guests' comfort - even the smallest



*Industrial luxury with soaring height of the original ceiling and roof structures on show.*



*Black is the prominent color of the whole interior.*



*Second floor rooms come with high ceiling in respect of the original building interior.*



*Room area is not compromised even with a very limited space for development.*

room is 27 square meters wide, which is very spacious in comparison to the heritage boutique hotel rooms in town. Moreover, the rooms that are located on the second floor boast the soaring height of the original ceiling and structures. The shape and feel of the original sloping roofs' structure which is steel trusses could be seen being used as ornamental and even structural parts of the furniture in each guest room.

In spite of a very limited space for the hotel facilities, the hotel is able to provide a stunning infinity pool facing the Singapore River. Using a C-shaped 2" thick acrylic as the pool walls and elevated on the second floor is surely a bold move. The Warehouse Hotel is catered for those seeking luxury in a very personalized way. The way the design doesn't compromise on the area of the rooms and how the lobby is exclusively designed make this boutique hotel a fresh addition to those seeking for new experience on boutique hospitality.



*The only additional structure to provide an infinity pool with spectacular view of Singapore River and vicinity.*

### **PROJECT DETAILS**

*Architect: Zarch*

*Interior: Asylum Creatives*

*Built: 2016*

*Location: Singapore*

*Heritage Building: 1895-built warehouses*

The boutique hotel craze doesn't stop at 'artsy' or 'luxury'. Satinder Garcha, one of Forbes Singapore's 50 Richest, heightens up the game through Hôtel Vagabond Singapore.

Looking at the exterior of the building, it would be just a vintage art deco building established in 1950, not old enough to be called heritage - but how Jacques Garcia transform the interior is what makes this property such a one in a million.

Parisian chic or glamour style is carried out throughout the overall design of the hotel.

Vagabond Salon, an area that comprises most of the ground floor, applied an open-scheme and seamless interior that connects a bar, a restaurant and the reception area. The only partition the salon has is a stretch of velvet curtains that could also transform the restaurant into a small cinema. The



*Hotel Vagabond Singapore residing in a vintage 1950 art deco building.*



*Glamorous Parisian-styled lobby interior with brass rhino sculpture as the reception desk.*



*Brass Banyan Tress is a common furniture while the brass monkey behind the bar is one-of-a-kind.*



*The moving electronic artwork by Michel Platnic.*



*Brass Elephant as the decoration of both sides of the hotel elevator.*

presence of brass sculptures with the shapes of elephants, rhinos, monkey, and banyan trees across the salon transports the guests into a glamorous jungle. Complimenting the gold-coloured brass sculptures by Franck Le Ray, velvet covering most of the furniture, walls, and floors are what make this hotel feels extravagant and over-the-top - a very characteristic of Garcia's maximalist work.

If what is mentioned before is not maximalist enough, hundreds - if not thousands - of original and reproduced paintings and photographs curated by Peter Millard are decorating all the interior walls of the building. Even the toilet in the salon doesn't fall short of the priced paintings and artworks with one unique electronic artwork by Michel Platnic.

The 41 rooms and suite are designed with similar style with the salon. Crimson coloured velvet, gold-ish walls, and artwork installations are still the main theme in most rooms. The attic of the 'vintage' building is used as part of the room's interior to make the guests aware that they are still in a shophouse-like building. Comparing how the room is designed not as glamorous as the salon, it is clear that the guests are unconsciously led to spend more time in the lavish salon - how not, there is even an original piece of art deco folding screen as seen in *Pretty Woman* movie sitting next to the bar.

Observing how the majority of the new hotel in Singapore go boutique, there will be no stopping of how more freshly made boutique hotel will rise. The contrast and distinctive qualities shown in the hotels reviewed prove that Singapore is the haven of boutique hotels. Moreover, architects and interior designers in the city are now more likely competing to show unique and even bizarre approach to small designs within heritage buildings among the bustling skyscrapers that could somehow threatens the presence of those potentials.

*Real original set of folding screen as seen in *Pretty Woman* movie.*



*Room finished with velvet, golden-colored walls and lighting, with numbers of artworks hanging on the wall.*



*Attic room combined with Jacques Garcia's touch of interior design.*



### **PROJECT DETAILS**

*Architect: Jacques Garcia*

*Interior: Jacques Garcia*

*Built: 2015*

*Location: Singapore*

*Art Curator: Peter Millard*

*Brass Sculptor Design: Franck Le Ray*

## PART 2

## Architecture in My Hometown

Living in a city regarded as the third largest by area in Indonesia, Medan architecturally doesn't thrive as well as Jakarta and Surabaya (first and second largest city). Architecture study in the city initiated around 40 years ago with most of the graduates today work mostly in interior and housing projects, the chance to design bigger projects are usually taken over by Jakarta architects. While talking to the older generations of the city population, architecture is somewhat a new thing to them - some people even never heard about this subject compared to medical study and IT. What went wrong?

Looking at the larger scale of architecture, the urban planning implementation in Medan is disastrous. The evidences of the unprecedented failures of urban planning could be easily seen in the urban zoning. Development of housing complexes and business (or what is called shophouses) is everywhere, even slowly removing many historical buildings, regardless of the potential. Parking buildings are scarce and almost non-existence, hence part of the main roads are often used as the parking space. Without any mass transportation, people commute by private cars and motorcycle. Pedestrians, public space and facilities, and parks are also in a tragic condition. Shortly, there is no design language present in the city that causes no insights of what architecture is.

The people using local architects' services have a great (usually bad) impact on what they are going to build, or most of the architects are the ones who use dull and questionable styles. Today, a minuscule percent of good local architects are emerging, with a bold and positive impact that hopefully could slowly change the people's perspective of architecture. Surely, good built projects could be the only way to change the people's perspective and understanding of the importance of architecture.

## Beyond Postmodernism

Since the rise of modern era of architecture, "Form follows function" seems to shape most of the buildings around the world. Glass covered buildings without any ornaments are the easiest typology that everyone can adapt. Ornaments are even considered a crime that time. Afterwards, people and architects seem to be longing for a bit of ornaments without wanting to diminish the perfect functionality of the building they are getting used to. Then, box-shaped buildings finally come with some ornaments outside without challenging the structure even though the ornaments take huge part of the building. Explicitly, buildings that occurred in the wake of postmodernism era were essentially modern building with make-up on them - or "decorated shed" which was mentioned by Robert Venturi.

Along with most art movements, contemporary style emerged - which is still happening until this day. No more rules to follow, no typologies that could be distinguished between a building and the other in terms of function. The only thing restraining the architects from expressing the ideas into buildings is technology, which is also moving in an unstoppable pace. Building with unthinkable shapes, playful repetitions of functional façade materials, distinctive feels of spaces are now common. Since then, people could enjoy architecture more than ever. The architecture could even be the only reason for one to travel. Architecture took a greater role in the city it belongs.

In the future, imagination of a city which could only be seen in the movies perhaps will be fulfilled. Integrations and harmony throughout every elements of a city possibly could be what will be experienced in the following decades. The fear of the world becoming a monotonous complex of boxes building has subsided since then. Or could it be that what we see today become dull in the future?