

The Penang Shophouse Series

KOTA KITA

Plan of George Town in 1814



Don't try to be funny



Waachaaa!!!



Step right in



Waachaaa!!!



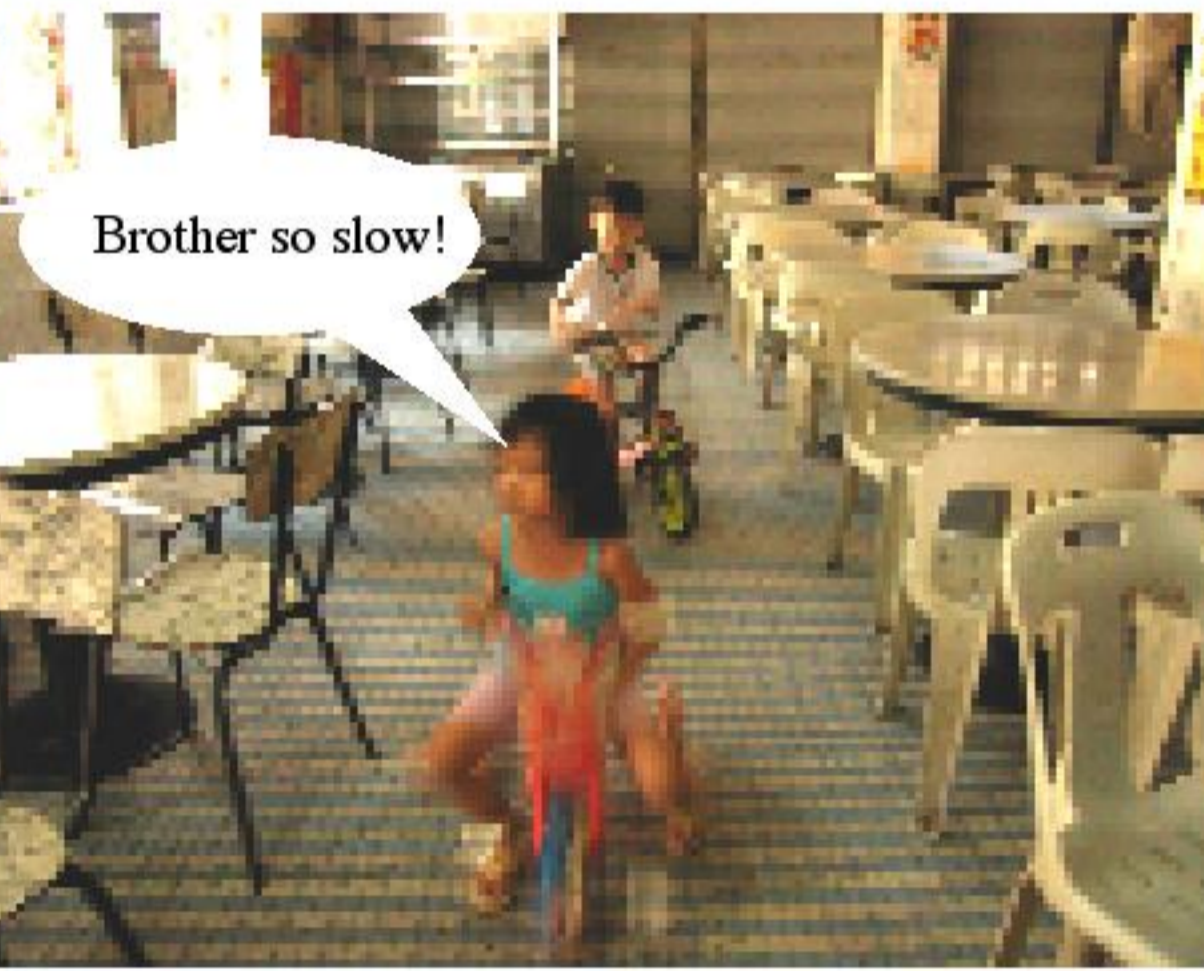
When are you going to restore my house?



Makan angin



Suailah!!!



Brother so slow!



Higher up, better view ma!



Mmmhmm



Man's best friend



38 Armenian Street after restoration

MY SHOPHOUSE "Bringing it to Life"

by Teresa Pereira Capol



38, Armenian Street

After being a tourist guide for 14 years I was looking for something interesting for my clients, (visitors to Penang). I was inspired by a heritage activist in Penang to include heritage aspects of the city into my tours. I began an in-depth study of streets and buildings in the innercity and asked myself why people of all walks of life are so drawn to this place. Everything changed once I discovered its beauty.

I hate to see things being thrown away. I try to save things by collecting them, repairing them and putting them to good use again. When my husband and I were considering buying an apartment, I said 'Let's buy a traditional shophouse instead and save it (by restoring it)!'. The one we looked at was awful. My husband thought I was crazy to suggest purchasing property that was so rundown. We acquired this late 19th century shophouse in the year 2000. It was in a really dilapidated state, termite eaten and holes in the cement floor but I had a feeling for it.

My husband and I painstakingly restored it bit by bit and adapted it into a café. The café is named after my favorite flower 'Edelweiss'. In the restoration process, much care was taken to maintain the 'façade' or front of the shophouse.

The five-foot way was in bad shape, just broken-up cement. You will notice that it is now a beautiful granite walkway. We sourced these old granite slabs from traditional shophouse owners who had discarded their granite floor and opted for a modern tile floor! I had a local granite engraver from Armenian Street to carve the Edelweiss flower on the five-foot-way.



Since the original doors and windows were in good order they were retained with the original paintwork. The signboard above the door was missing and a new one had to be made. My husband (who had since become very involved in the restoration process) designed and hand-crafted the signboard and his father engraved the decorative signboard hangers adapting the design from traditional carved wooden panels usually found over the front door of traditional shophouses.

A former state executive councilor once in-charge of tourism asked me what tourism products could be introduced to visitors to Penang? I replied that we did not need one because the innercity and the people itself was a product.

RUMAH KEDAI KU "Jika tak digilap tak bercahaya"

38 Lebuhr. Armerian - oleh Teresa Pereira Capol

Saya tidak suka melihat barang-barang dibuang begitu sahaja. Saya suka 'menyelamatkan' barang-barang itu dengan mengutip dan membuat pembaikpulihan ke atasnya supaya barang-barang tersebut masih boleh digunakan. Apabila suami saya dan saya hendak membeli sebuah pangsapuri, saya bercadang kepadanya, "Jom, kita beli sebuah rumah kedai tradisional dan menyelamatkannya (dengan membuat pemuliharaan). Kami telah melawat ke sebuah rumah kedai yang sangat buruk keadaannya. Suami saya berpendapat bahawa saya telah hilang akal dengan memilih sebuah kedai rumah yang kelihatan begitu usang. Namun demikian, kami telah membeli rumah kedai tersebut pada tahun 2000. Keadaan pada masa itu sangat teruk, banyak kawasan telah dimusnahkan oleh semut putih dan banyak lubang-lubang kelihatan di sekitar lantai. Tetapi saya mempunyai perasaan terhadap rumah tersebut.

Saya dan suami saya telah membaikpulihan rumah kedai itu sedikit demi sedikit dan mengubahsuainya sehingga menjadi sebuah kafe. Kafe ini dinamakan sempena bunga kesukaan saya "Edelweiss". Dalam proses baikpulihan, langkah yang teliti telah diambil untuk mengekalkan bahagian depan rumah kedai.

Ruang kaki-lima pada masa itu berada dalam keadaan yang teruk dengan simennya yang pecah. Namun begitu, pada masa sekarang, ia adalah dalam keadaan baik dan bergranit cantik. Kami telah mendapatkan granit dari rumahkedai lama yang lain di mana tuan rumah telah membuang batu granit mereka, dan menggantikannya dengan jubin baru. Saya telah mendapatkan seorang pengukir granit dari Lebuhr Armerian untuk mengukir bunga Edelweiss.

Pintu dan tingkap asal dikekalkan kerana mereka masih dalam keadaan yang baik. Papan tanda asal yang hilang telah digantikan dengan yang baru. Suami saya dan bapanya telah mereka-cipta dan membuat papan tanda baru.

Seorang bekas eksekutif perbandaran negeri yang bertugas dalam bidang pelancongan pernah bertanya kepada saya, apakah produk pelancongan yang boleh diperkenalkan kepada para pelancong? Saya memberitahunya bahawa kita tidak perlukan apa-apa produk kerana kota dalaman serta penduduk yang menetap di situ merupakan produk yang terbaik untuk pelancongan.



Dekor di dalam Kafe 'Edelweiss'



PEN HERITAGE CONSULTANCY SDN BHD

arts-ED ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS



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MOVING INTO GEORGE TOWN "A Window of Opportunity"

by Lim Hun Eng

As a real estate agent, I see 'a window of opportunity' in investing in the Inner City. How often do you get 12,000 units of pre-war houses coming into the market?



Front of restored shophouse

92, Church Street

Many have asked me why I chose to work in the Inner City when many of its residents have left for the suburbs with the repeal of the rent control act. Experience has taught me that when there is a crisis there is an opportunity.

The first three cardinal rules in real estate investment are..... Location, Location, Location. The Inner City has it all except for the infrastructure which needs to be improved and upgraded.

The rental of my previous office shot up four times more than what I used to pay, but my business could not improve that much overnight to keep up with the payments. In such a crisis, many simply choose to give up or retire. As adversity is the mother of innovation, I adopted the idea of having a modern functional office in a prewar house in the Inner City. I was inspired by a long time friend, a florist who had completely rebuilt and restored his pre-war shophouse in Ceylon Lane rather well despite its small size.



Interior of shophouse adapted into an office

With my limited budget, I rewired the whole premise, changed the plumbing and refurbished the toilet. I tried to retain as much as possible of the old house and adapt it to our use as an office.



Wall placed air compressor

I air-conditioned the whole shophouse. I placed glass / transparent plastic over the ventilation holes to prevent the cool air from dissipating. This was so that I could retain the beautiful traditional ventilation features of the shophouse such as the windows, air vents, air-well and the jack roof at the back. The air-con compressors were well hidden above the five-foot-way.



Incorporating glass over traditional door and window

When I found that the wooden doors were not practical in our business, I added a remote controlled, tempered glass door. The wooden door is always open but the glass door is closed to keep in the cool air and at the same time keep out unwanted visitors.

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The air-well provided the much needed natural light in what would otherwise be a dark and gloomy atmosphere. The air-well was covered with tinted plastic sheets to keep out the rain and allow some sunlight into the indoor garden.

I wanted an environment friendly office and have adopted the idea of having 'an office in the forest'. Here stag horns, ferns and other wild tropical plants flourish. The gold fish pond and a fountain complete the ambience. The renovation and upgrading is still ongoing.

I foresee many will move back to the Inner City to live and work, once it is safe, clean and habitable.

Symbolic Motifs on Shophouse Front



The Doorway

The Chinese doorway itself was a symbol of safety, hope, protection, sanctuary and resting station to the early Chinese. The colours of the door and on the door each have special meaning: blue for peace, red in different tones for good fortune and happiness.



Carvings on Door

The front of a traditional shop house is usually decorated with motifs intricately carved on wood or moulded with plaster. Each motive has symbolic meaning that is used to ward off evil forces from entering the building, to bring good luck or to denote special qualities of the owner. The carvings can be found on the doors while the plaster relief (or stucco work) on pillars and concrete beams of the two storey buildings. Often the air vents above the lower windows would also have carvings. These motifs invite prosperity for the inhabitants.

A vase is identified with peace and, when filled with flowers, would signify that the inhabitants of the shop house would enjoy peace at all times.

The Signboard

Above the door and on both its sides can be found panels carved in Chinese characters. The wooden panels on top of the door states the name of the district, village or province from where the owner original came from in China. This carries his sir name. The side panels contain symbolic and poetic verses telling of the Confucian ethics of the owners and the high esteem in which they are held. These panels are usually given to the occupants during the house warming.



The lion is often found carved in wood or on the top hinges of the door. It is an emblem for loyalty and bravery, popularly used as guardians of shop houses converted into official buildings and temples. It is also used to ward off invisible forces.



Fire 'Huo'



Wood 'Mu'

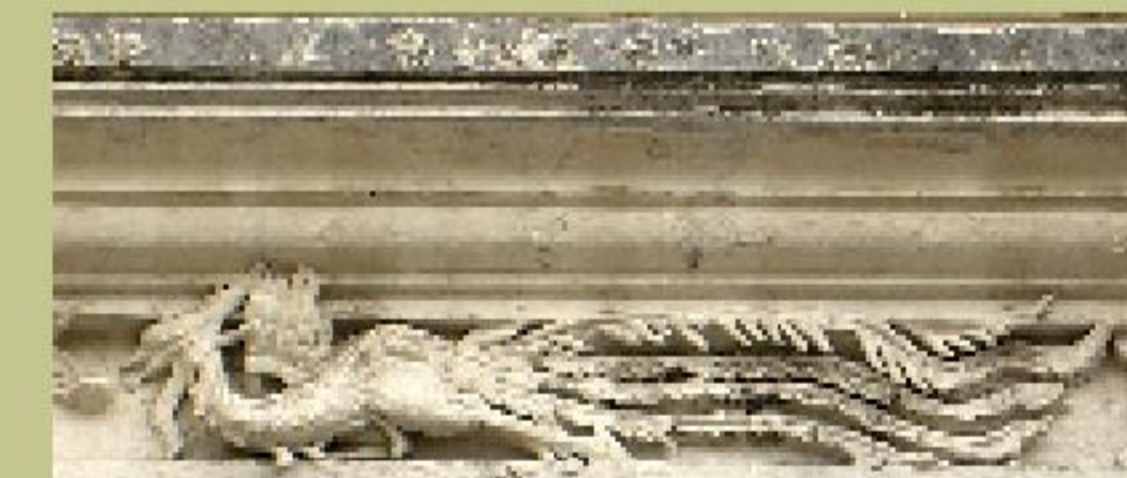


Gold 'Jin'

The shape of gable ends can be related to the Chinese belief of Wu Xing (five elements in Feng Shui; round as gold (metal), straight as wood, curved as water, pointed as fire, and square as earth). The gable end in an immigrant city like Penang can indicate which particular dialect group or community the building was built by, owned by or lived in by. For example the round shaped gable end Jin can be found more in the roofs of the Hokkien settlement around Armenian Street while the Mu shape is favoured by both Hakka and Teochew people along Lieth Street.



Decorative Plaster Moulding



Phoenix

The Phoenix, queen of the birds or 'Feng Huang' is the legendary immortal bird known for her beauty. The head represents virtue, the wings justice, the back courtesy, the chest benevolence and the belly faith.

The carp symbolizes success and is often found in pairs. Carved carp sometimes are given dragon heads, symbolizing the attainment of success.



Carp



Lotus

The lotus is a flower often found carved into the front of the shop house, be it on the door or the plaster work. It symbolizes ultimate purity and perfection because it rises untainted and beautiful through the mud. Because its petals are many layered it has layers upon layers of good meaning from social success to advancement in examinations.



Chi Lin

The Chi Lin - is a lion-like creature combined with features of other animals. It has a spiny dorsal fin, a fluffy tail, fish scales for skin and a single horn.

Airvent carved with bats

Bats are often found carved into the wooden air vents or at the corners where the roof meets the wall. They will bring good luck and happiness. Five bats shown together represent the five blessings: a long life, riches, good health, a love of virtue and a good natural death.



Deer, crane and God of Longevity in metal work

The Chinese believe that there is no better luck than long life. Thus the symbols of longevity are very important on the facade of the house. Most doors will have panels with the deer or crane symbolizing longevity. Often the older wooden doors are carved with two deer. These indicate high official position, symbolize wealth and also longevity.



Bamboo motif in metal work

The bamboo is especially auspicious because of its durability. The plant stays evergreen throughout the four seasons and in all conditions of growth.



Gourd in stucco work

The bottle gourd is both a Taoist and Buddhist symbol of good fortune. It signifies an abundance of blessings.



Lanterns

The Hokkiens are the only southern Chinese community practicing the hanging of lanterns at their doorways. A pair of cloth lanterns (tua teng), one painted with the clan surname and the other with the district of origin, were hung on both sides of the main door. The Chinese characters are done in red. If there is a death in the home, the lanterns are taken down during the period of mourning.

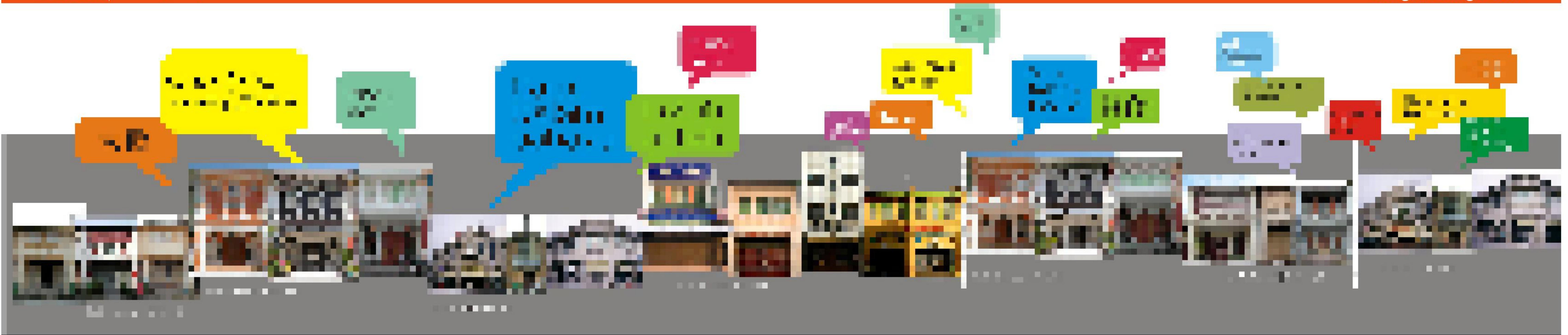


Another type of lantern hung right in the centre of the doorway is known as the Heavenly Lamp (thean teng) in honor of the Jade Emperor. It is a six-sided lantern made of clear glass panels. It is also hung by childless couples who wish for a son.

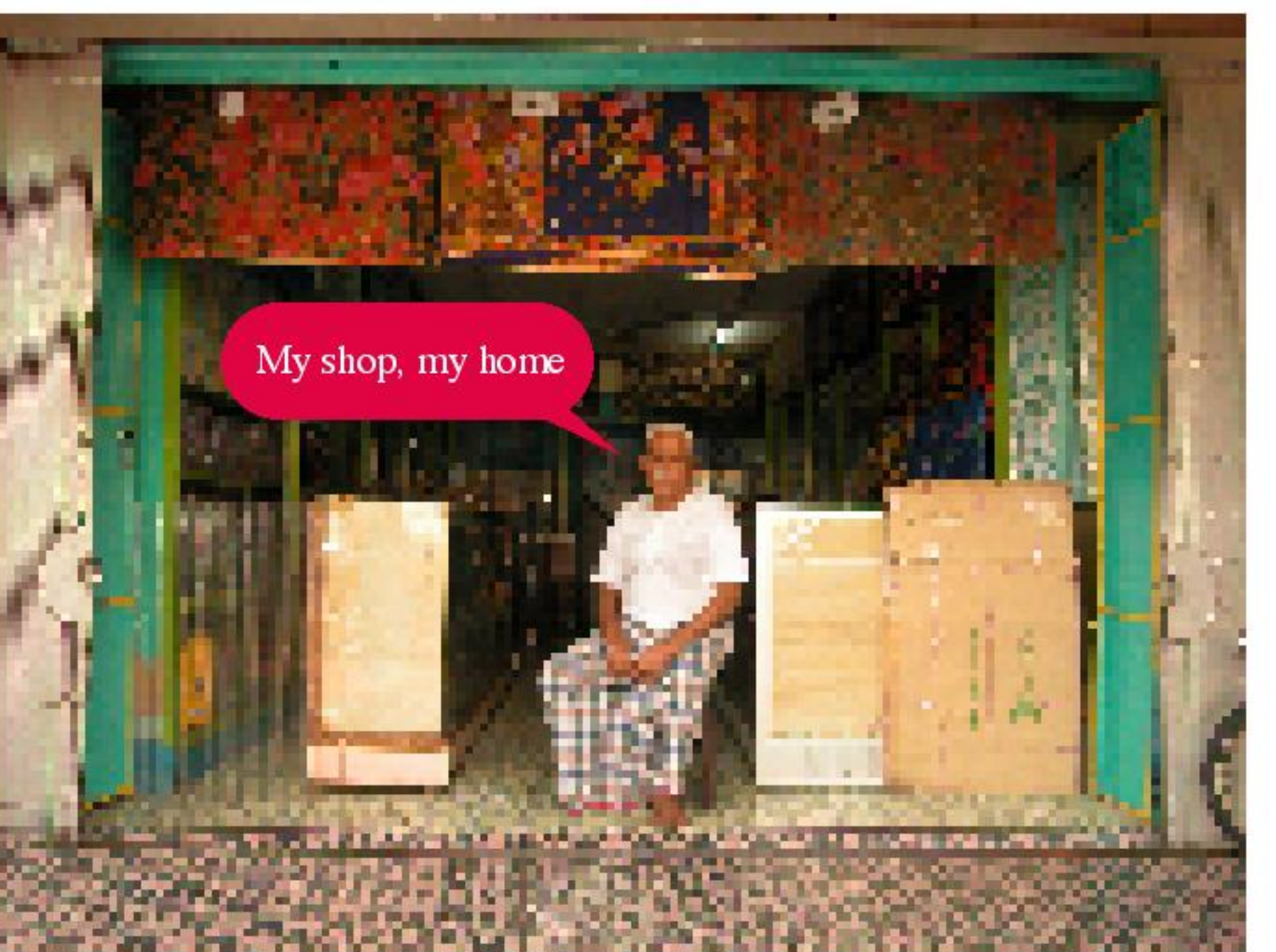
Peony

A Peony, which is considered the queen of flowers in Chinese culture, is an emblem of wealth. It also a symbol of spring and renewed growth.





The Unheard VOICES of George Town



Name: Ch'ng Chin Sim
Age: 56
Address: Jalan Seang Tek
Years of residence: 40 years

Likes: I like living within the city area and easy car parking. No need to wait for lifts like those living in high rise flats or fighting for car park space. There are familiar faces in the neighborhood who lend a helping hand to one another. Many passers by are also good for business.

Dislikes: The lifting of Rental Control Act forces many old residents to move out. I feel sad to bid farewell to them after years of staying in the same area. Of course there will also be a drop in business volume after these residents move out.

Suggestions: I hope the rent will not be raised any further and let us have some peace of mind. If the rental goes up, more will move out from the old houses and affect the surrounding business. If my income drops, I'm thinking of moving out too.



Name: Hemediran s/o Ravendran
Age: 12
Address: 38 Lorong Pasar
Years of residence: 12 years

I was born and grown in Market Lane. However, in this coming Depavali, my whole family will move to Paya Terubong because the house is going to fall apart resulted from the damage caused by the rain during the raining season. There is a big hole on the roof, the rain is falling into the house while raining.

I will have to say goodbye to the innercity and this will be my very first time that I do not celebrate Depavali in the inner city.

I love to stay in Market Lane because this area is surrounded by buildings with beautifully hand crafted carvings and it is very suitable for study. During the school holiday, all my friends will gather in my house and we used to have a lot of fun. Sometime we play football at Padang Kota Lama, and sometime we 'lepak' in KOMTAR.

I really wish that I could still visit the house at 38 Lorong Pasar after we have moved to Paya Terubong.



Name: Muthuveloo Karupiah
Age: 70
Address: Queen Street
Years of residence: 65 years

Likes: I don't need transport and can manage with a bicycle. It's so easy to buy things because the market is nearby. I also find it easy to find part-time work in old age.

Dislikes: My house used to have clay roof tiles so it was cool and nice. Now the owner has changed it to zinc roof so it's hot the whole day until night time. However I have many worries because the owner has also raised the rent.



Name: Teoh Chee Seang
Age: 12
Address: Weld Quay
Years of residence: 12 years

It's nicer to live at Weld Quay. It's nearer to the sea and there's lots of wind. I swim in the sea 3 times a week and go fishing as well.

I have stayed here for 12 years since the day I was born. Most of my best friends and school-mate are staying in the same area. Every evening I play badminton and football with my friends at the empty car park. I spent most of my jolly hours in that car park with my friends, my bother and sister. This is one of my favorite places in the inner city.

My father has a small stall selling iced drink in the innercity. I often help him in his stall.

During the raining season, my house often flooded with water. I love to help my family to 'sapu' the water. However, the flood never stopped me to go to school, as the school is very close to my house.



Name: Anne Cutter
Age: 78
Address: Argus Lane
Years of residence: 40 years

Likes: We like living here because the place is so cool, what with the high ceilings and the cross ventilation. It is also so central. We are close to the market, the schools, the church and even the post office.

Dislikes: Nowadays the traffic is so heavy I'm afraid to cross the road. The drains should be repaired. They are cracked and broken and water seeps into the ground, so the foundation of the house is affected.

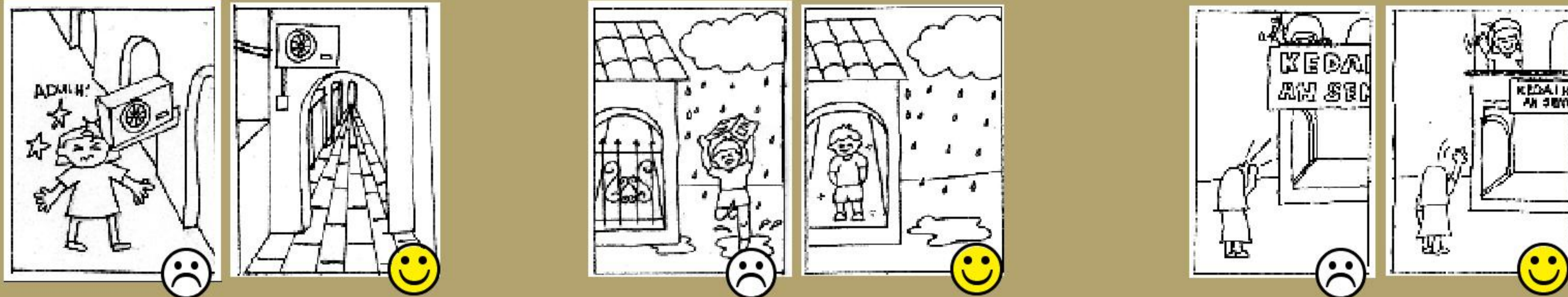


Name: Mah Sow Har
Age: 60
Years of residence: 34 years
Add: 63 Stewart Lane, 10200 Penang

Likes: I find easy to move around in city area. My house is close to the supermarket. Besides that the landlord is very friendly and in our case, rental is still reasonable.

Dislikes: It has become too quiet at night after many residents moved out from the inner city. It is getting lonely and dangerous at night walking on the streets after residents moved out. A lot of empty houses, have become occupied by drug addicts. Empty houses have also become a threat to the residents who stay around, because the houses might collapse one day.

Restoration and Repair of Shophouse Front

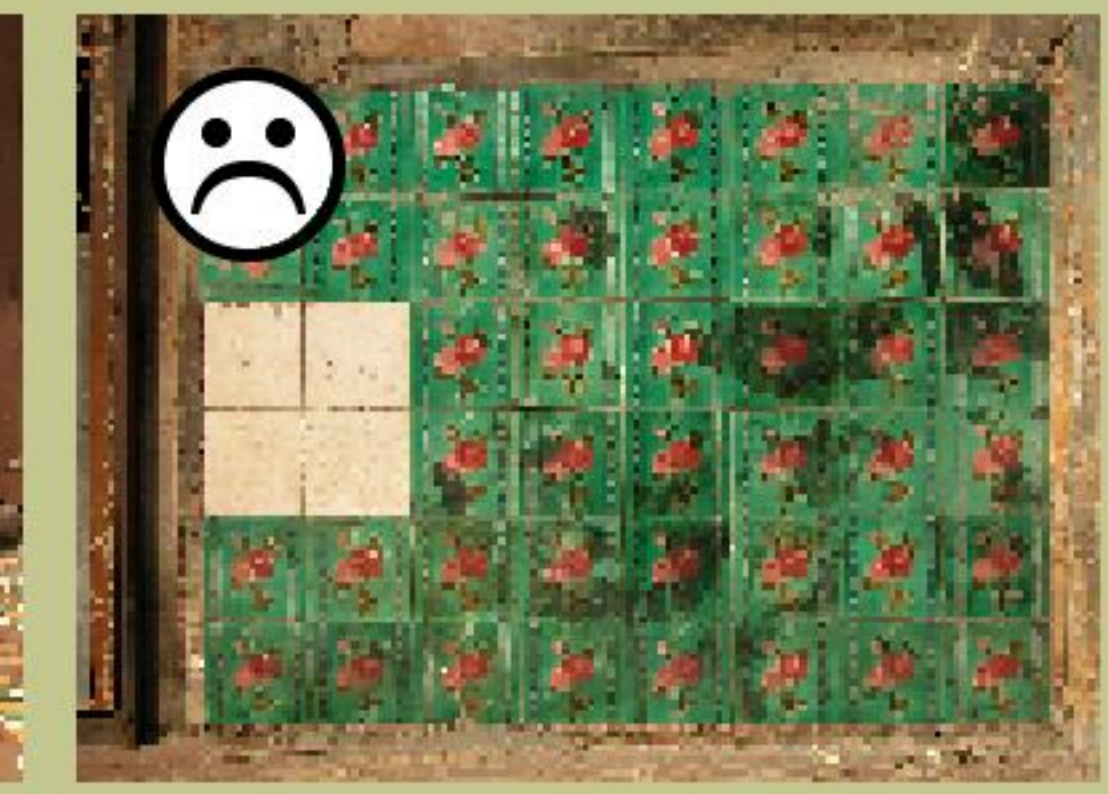


OK!

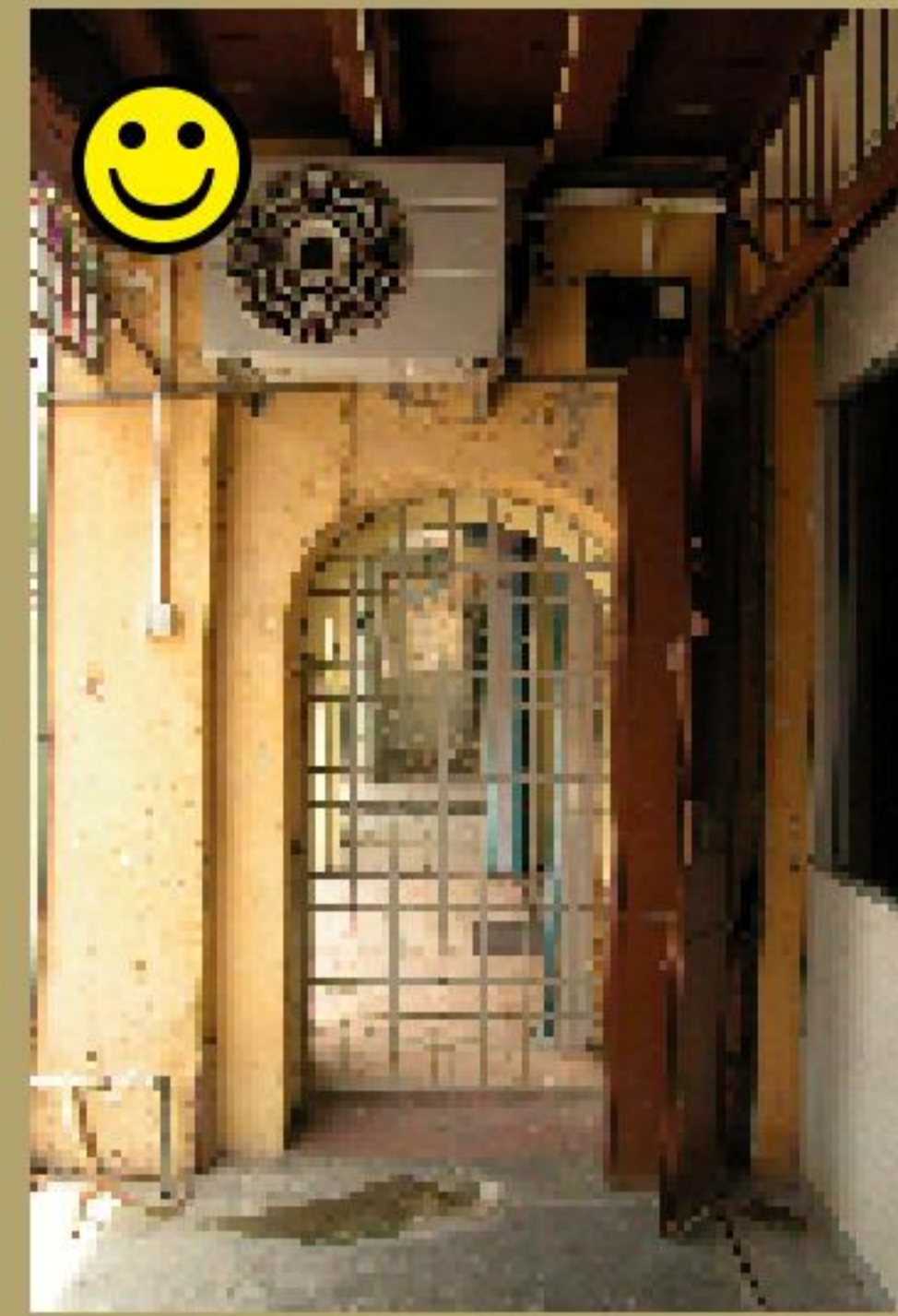
NOT OK!



TILES



If stolen, you can buy back in Padang Stadium!!



AIR-CONDITIONER



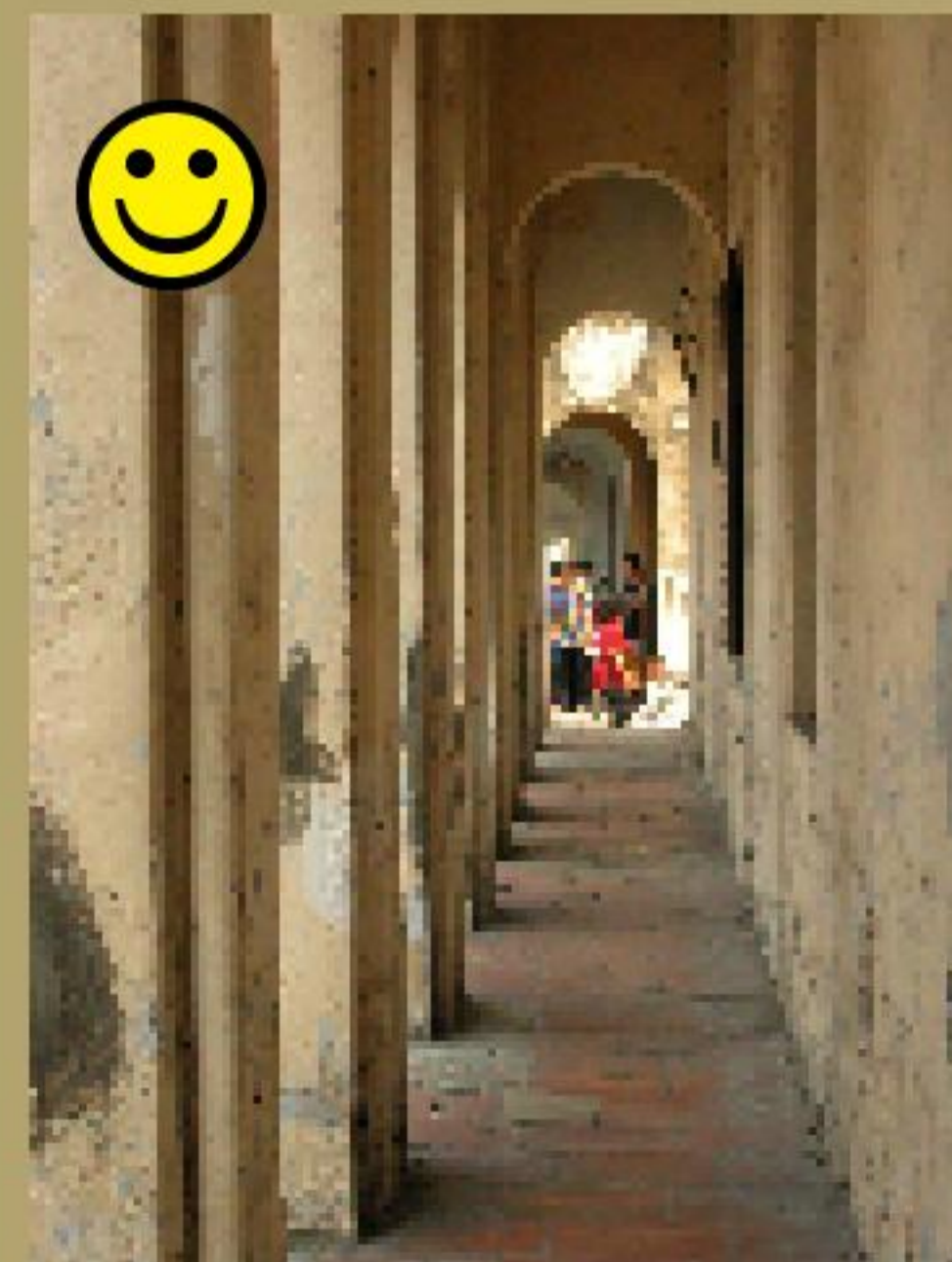
Air-con units posing as exhibits?



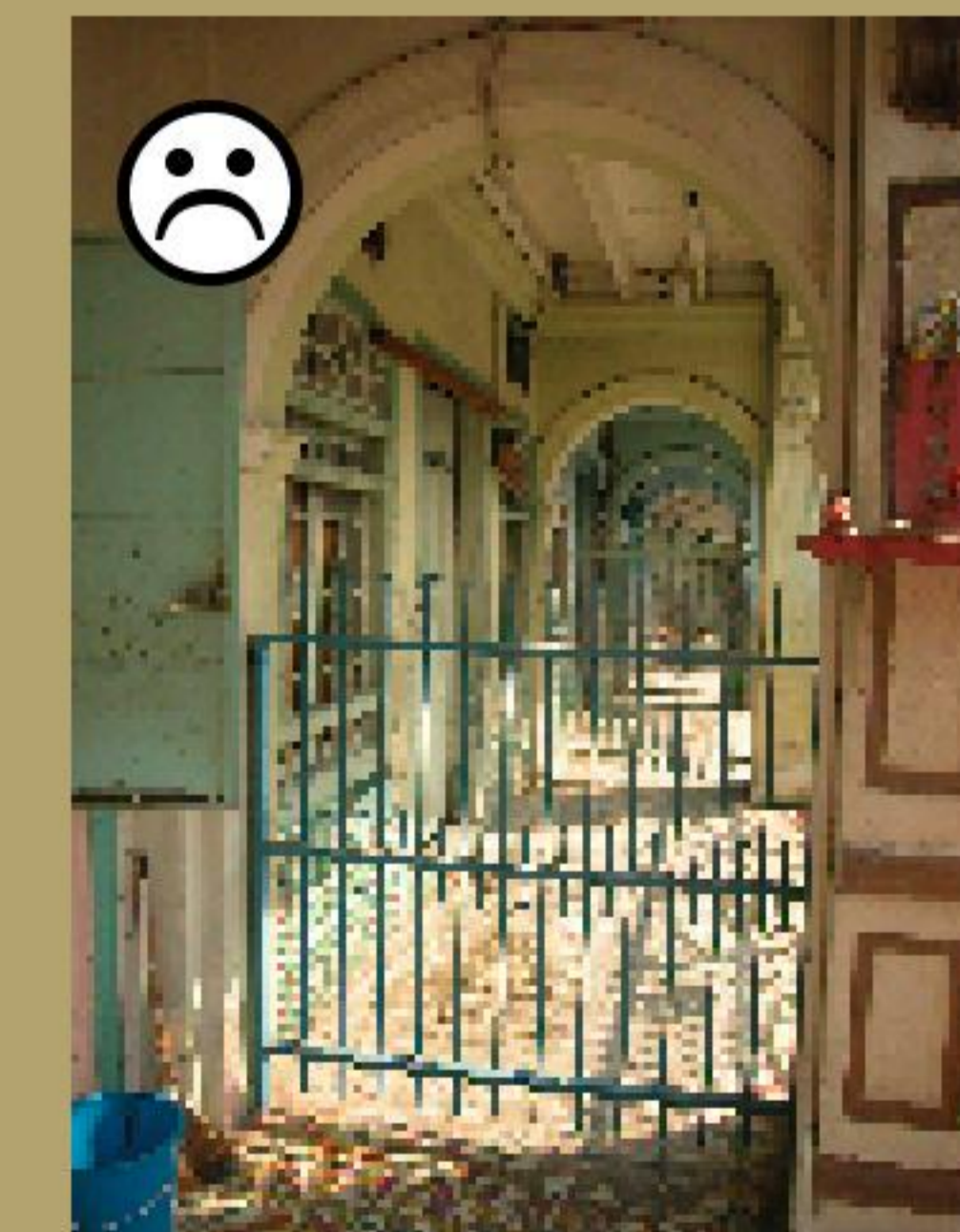
STEPS



Granite is easily available, so why use cement?



FIVE-FOOTWAY



Building barricades? The five-footway is public passageway. Not "My Way"



SIGNAGE



So big and gaudy! Is the shop for sale??

Pemuliharaan & Pembaikan Bahagian Luaran Rumah Kedai

