

# architecturemalaysia

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# SHOPHOUSE OFFICE

Serving as the offices for a young architectural and interior design practice, this shophouse conversion was done on a tight budget that employed interesting use of recycled materials and elements preserved from its origins as shophouses.





**CLIENT**  
INTEGRATED DESIGN  
CONSULTANT AND  
DESIGNEAST

**LOCATION**  
KUCHING, SARAWAK

**YEAR COMPLETED**  
MARCH 2012

**ARCHITECT**  
INTEGRATED DESIGN  
CONSULTANT

**PROJECT PRINCIPAL**  
ALAN LAU  
TIMA LAU  
NG CHEE WEE

**PROJECT TEAM**  
GERRY VILLANUEVA  
JENNY THO  
FLORENCE CERENA  
CHLOE LING

**SITE AREA**  
400 SQUARE METRES  
**BUILT-UP AREA**  
400 SQUARE METRES

**CIVIL ENGINEER**  
JURUTERA BASA  
(SARAWAK) SDN BHD

**LIGHTING**  
JUSTLIGHT  
ENTERPRISE

**TIMBER FLOOR**  
AMHOME FLOORING

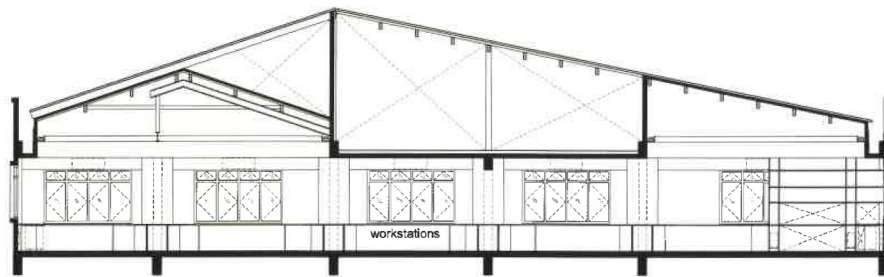
**WALLPAPER**  
GOODRICH GLOBAL  
(JRY) SDN BHD

**PLYWOOD**  
811 PLYWOOD  
INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

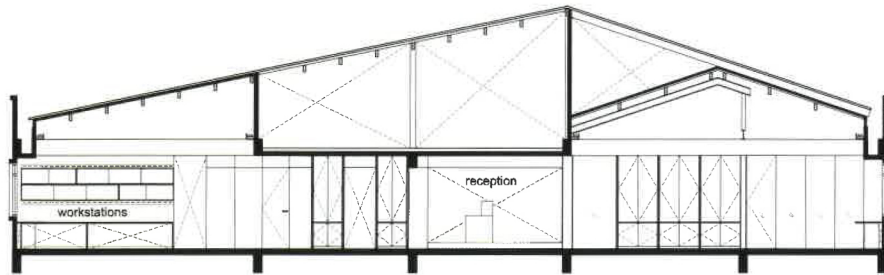
**CONTRACTOR**  
STAMPIN TIMBER &  
CONSTRUCTION  
SDN BHD

**PHOTOGRAPHER**  
ALAN LAU

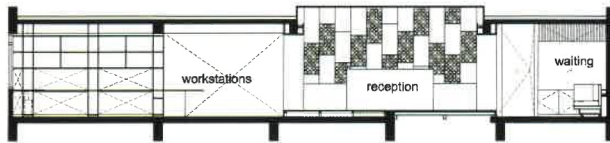




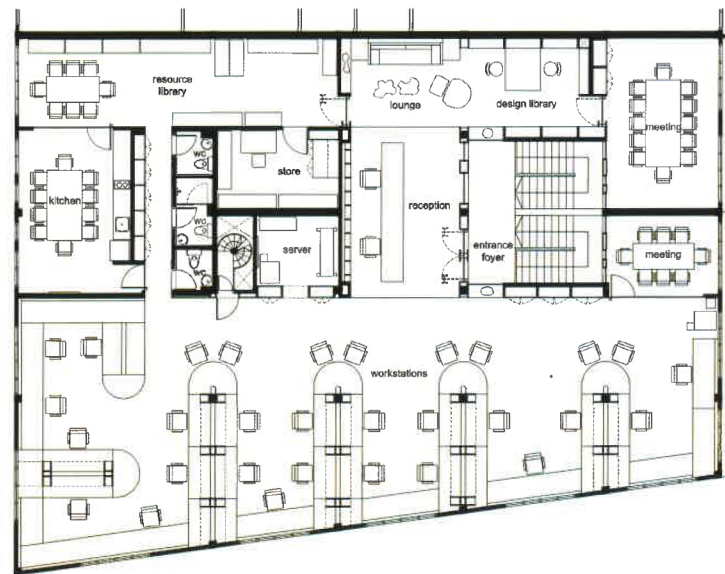
**Section A**  
0m 1.5m 3m



**Section B**  
0m 1.5m 3m



**Section C**  
0m 1.5m 3m



**Floor Plan**  
0m 1.5m 3m

Originally built in the 1960s, these shophouse units were a warren of small rooms in a typically long, deep plan. The challenge was to create spacious, light-filled offices that provided a conducive environment for the architectural and interior design practice. Positive points of the site included extensive views of the Sarawak River and a wharf from the end unit, and the possibility of utilising the roof space to create interesting new volumes.

Due to the tight budget and the relatively large floor area of 400 square metres, it was decided that a restrained palette of materials would work best. The extensive use of raw plywood, oxidised steel, poured concrete floors and recycled elements not only references the industrial nature of the area (the wharf is still in use, while the area is dominated by warehouses), but also shows how humble materials can be used to create sophisticated architecture and interiors.

One of the advantages of the top-floor shophouse unit is the



From top: Meeting room; kitchen





Lounge



Design library

potential of utilising the roof cavity. Here the designers stripped away ceiling boards to expose the original raw timber trusses to create dramatic, peaked spaces above the workstations. Interestingly, one of the existing walls marked for demolition was found to be supporting the roof truss! The solution was to insert a huge prefabricated steel 'arm' to transfer the load to the existing concrete

columns, a feature that has since become one of the defining elements of the final design.

The project makes extensive use of recycled elements: discarded cardboard tubes for newsprint were cut into varying lengths to create an interesting entrance feature wall, backlit and lined with cork wallpaper. The reception desk is lined with oxidised steel plates and with water-damaged timber

floor boards that were no longer fit for their original purpose. An old industrial steel screen was transformed into a ceiling light fixture for the large meeting room. An exposed brick wall in the waiting area serves as a textured backdrop for a collection of tribal objects and old utilitarian ceramic vessels.

The designers also detailed both fixed and loose furniture out of raw plywood in keeping with the

sleek industrial aesthetic. Local Lala timber was specified in the plywood for its unique honey-blond colour and fine grain. The use of special plywood also dispensed with the need for additional interior finishes. Plywood workstations were designed with integrated up and down-lights, as well as to conceal a row of concrete columns that divide the main working space. /am

Lounge

