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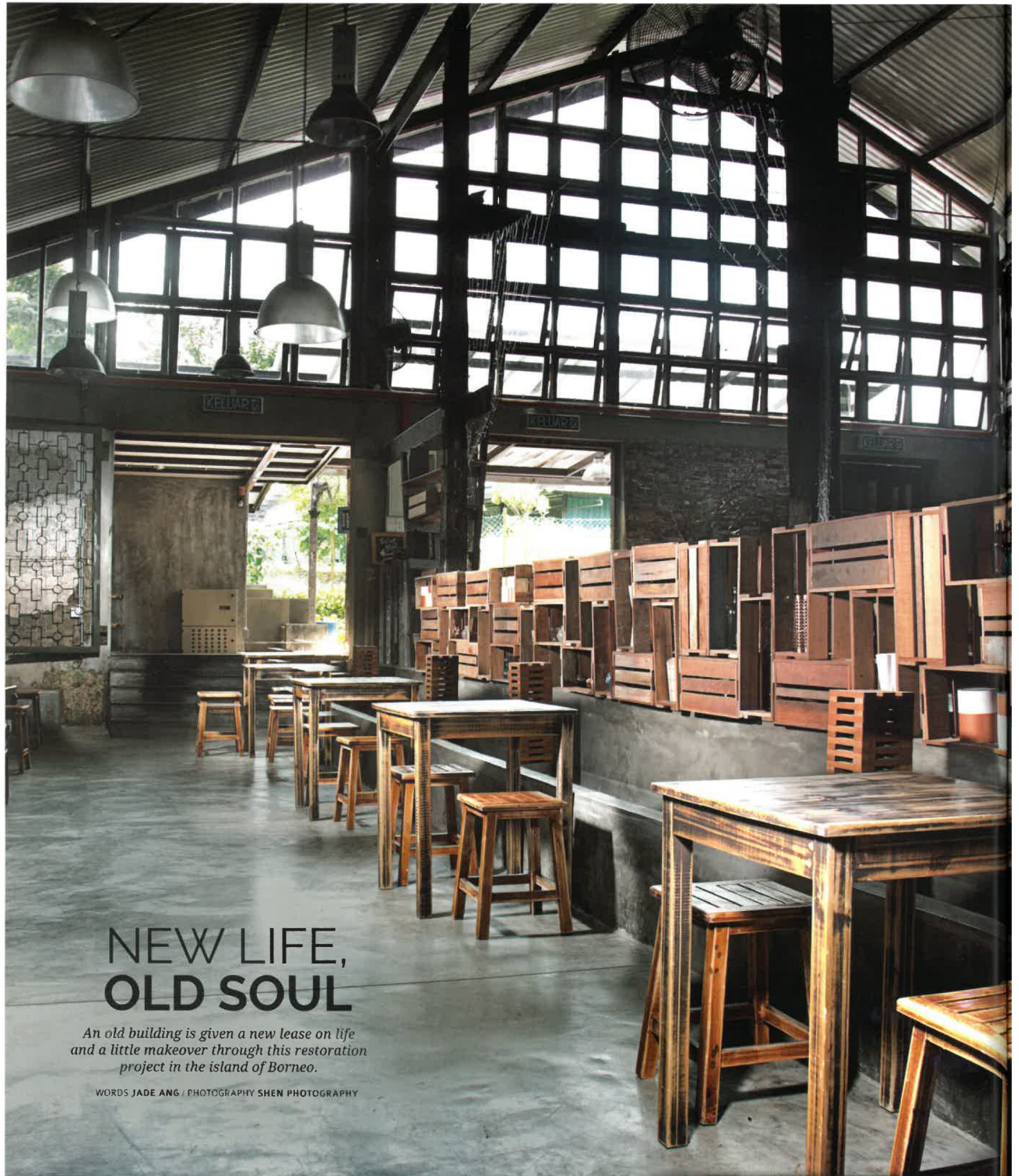
87 LEONARD GRADE NEW YORK  
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## NEW LIFE, OLD SOUL

*An old building is given a new lease on life  
and a little makeover through this restoration  
project in the island of Borneo.*

WORDS JADE ANG / PHOTOGRAPHY SHEN PHOTOGRAPHY





Living in an age of progress and surrounded by continuous advancements as well as improvements, we are constantly moving forward to newer and better things. While growth and development are wonderful, there is no harm in taking a step back. Looking to the past does not mean moving backwards; it is all about preservation and recycling because the latest buzz phrase that is hanging on everyone's lips is 'going green'.

With the spotlight on conservation, there is an increase in restoration and refurbishment as well as repurposing projects. The terms 'reuse, recycle and repurpose' can be applied to furniture, clothing and even buildings. It is amazing how a little time and attention can transform a rundown space to a stunning piece of art.

A precious gem hidden right in the heart of Kuching, capital of the Malaysian state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo, The Granary is one such example. Once a neglected old warehouse, it has been given a new lease on life after its conversion into a restaurant and bar.

#### RESTORING SPLENDOUR

Full of character and history, the old warehouse was relatively unknown; indiscernibly hidden behind the shop houses on Wayang Street. Serving well as a humble workshop for decades, the building was dilapidated but had aged beautifully in a manner that added plenty of charisma and charm to it; so much so that it had been used as a venue for wedding photo shoots even in its ruinous state due to the unique character and enchanting lighting.



Commissioned to handle the project was Integrated Design Consultant, headed by Architect Ng Chee Wee who was more than happy at that prospect. "When we were approached by the client to undertake the project, we were very excited. I have known about the building for quite some time and visited it several times myself. The client had the intention of keeping as much of the building as possible. And so that was the approach we adopted," he shares.

Ar. Ng added: "The main challenge was to work within the constraints of the existing structure. Even though we had done a survey of the building - there were still unexpected surprises such as timber columns that were rotten and had started to collapse. We had to find ways of replacing many of these structural components without destroying the original character of the building."

#### SECOND CHANCES

Modest yet incredibly rich in history, the main entrance retains much of its original look complete with the peeling paint and washed wood; giving off a rustic vibe which just beckons you in to explore further. Once inside, the striking red and the rawness of the exposed brick walls catch the eye, holding within them the stories of the building's past life.

Sitting directly atop the main entrance, a customised signage in monochrome is one of the only few hints of the modern interventions to the space as its sleek finishes juxtapose with the patchy nuances of the original metal frame beneath. Ar. Ng reveals: "Right from the beginning, the guiding concept was to breathe new life into the building as a warehouse for art and culture. The team only made new insertions that would complement the existing structure and utilised recycled materials and components as much as possible."



**Ng Chee Wee, Architect**  
*Integrated Design Consultant*

"The guiding concept was to breathe new life into the building as a warehouse for art and culture"



Designed as a warehouse, the building has a run-of-the-mill gable roof and boasts plenty of natural lighting through the use of glass windows all around. While the use of windows to harness lighting is nothing new, the cluster of windows nestled beneath the roof pitch is quite impressive as they are made up of awning windows which allow them to be opened and closed when needed, as opposed to skylights which are usually dead-fixed.

Over at the bar area, old wooden crates have taken the place of cabinetry to function as storage for bottles and glassware. The bar counter is decked with an aluminium top which is both functional and aesthetically pleasing as the metal blends in beautifully with the rest of the bar counter that is covered in recycled wood planks. This interesting mix of colour and texture gives of a rather homey vibe due to its rugged look.

Whether reclaimed or new, wood is one of the elements that are used generously and the result is a warm and inviting space despite it being located in an industrial setting. Various furniture pieces such as tabletops and stools are fabricated from recycled wood, making them unique, as no two pieces look the same. Wooden crates that are ingeniously used as a sort of railing between the split-levels also double up as display cabinets.

From abandoned dysfunctional warehouse to a bar and restaurant as well as multi-purpose event space, The Granary has come very far from its initial decrepit state and yet, it has not lost any of its identity. It is proof that old does not mean worthless or inept; with a little creativity and wit, progress can be achieved by giving the old a second chance at life.

**1. The rugged look in Granary is refined through its new building programme. As the crowd begins to fill up the space, the place comes to life.**

**2. The metal signage above the entrance is one of the only few hints of the modern interventions to the space.**

**3. Besides wooden crates, recycled wood is also used to fabricate tables, stools and more for the restaurant, making the space warm and homey.**

4. Most of the materials are up-cycled and reused in the most creative way.





## THE GRANARY KITCHEN & BAR

**LOCATION** / KUCHING SARAWAK, MALAYSIA  
**SITE AREA** / 986 M<sup>2</sup>  
**BUILDING AREA** / 500 M<sup>2</sup>  
**GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA)** / 655 M<sup>2</sup>  
**COMPLETION** / 2015  
**ARCHITECT** / INTEGRATED DESIGN CONSULTANT  
**DESIGN TEAM** / NG CHEE WEE, ZHANN BONG, JOSEPH CHAI  
**PROJECT TEAM** / NG CHEE WEE, ZHANN BONG, JOSEPH CHAI, ROSEMARIE WONG,  
**CIVIL & STRUCTURAL** / LIU SUI PIN, LIM LEE KIONG, RAYMOND HO, WONG HA YU  
**CONTRACTOR** / URBAN VILLAGE SDN BHD  
**CIVIL & STRUCTURAL** / PERUNDING JLMAJU

