Historic Building Appraisal

Kowloon Hospital, Block A

No. 147A Argyle Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Historical Interest

Kowloon Hospital (九龍醫院) is the first government hospital in Kowloon comprising a group of buildings constructed between 1925 and 1938. Its establishment was in response to the boom in population in Kowloon which set in since the 1920s. The buildings were designed by the Architectural Office of the Public Works Department. This new institution was of high importance from the view of the Government. After the new Governor, Cecil Clementi, had just arrived in Hong Kong on 1 November 1925, he visited and inspected the premises before its opening on 24 December 1925. During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), it was used by as a military hospital. The first two blocks, A and B, were general wards and opened on Christmas Eve in 1925.

Architectural Merit

Block A is a two-storey building built in 1925. The plan is basically rectangular with a small annex projecting from the southeast corner. There is a central corridor with rooms opening off it on either side on both floors. Fireplaces are provided in some of the rooms. At ground floor level there are enclosed arcaded verandahs on the east and west elevations. An open verandah runs the whole length of the east elevation at first floor level. The façades are rendered and painted with regularly spaced steel framed windows divided into small glazing squares. Exposed grey gauged brickwork is used for the verandah columns and to trim window heads and cills and the verandah parapet coping. The main entrance on the north elevation is set in a concave recess and features an elongated red brick keystone. The roof is pitched and hipped, covered with Chinese tiles and features “cow’s horn” shaped curling ends to the ridge and roof corners. The projecting eaves are supported by ornamental brackets and the gutters drained by exposed rainwater downpipes. The design of Block A is basically Classical Revival with Arts and Crafts and Chinese influences.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

The design of the building is quite rare in Hong Kong. As one of the first blocks to be built in the Kowloon Hospital complex, Block A has built heritage value and also group value. The interior has suffered from alterations needed for operational requirements, and the appearance of the exterior has been marred by window mounted room coolers, exposed pipework and surface mounted conduit. Nevertheless, the building manages to retain its original authentic appearance quite well.

Social Value

The social value of Block A lies in the role it has played in providing

medical services to the community. Its unusual style of architecture and especially the Oriental appearance of the roof gives it local interest. The surrounding area of the hospital is mainly made up of medium-rise low density apartments built in the 1960-70's. The low density and openness of the area match with the heritage, physical and functional character of the hospital.

& Local Interest

The hospital is within walking distance of other historic buildings, such as CLP Power Hong Kong Limited Administrative Building (alias China Light and Power Company Limited Head Office (中華電力有限公司行政辦事處(別稱中華電力有限公司總部), Grade 1), King George V School (英皇佐治五世學校, Grade 2), and the Main Building and Chapel of St. Clare of Assisi of Heep Yunn School (協恩中學, Grade 3).

Group Value