Historic Building Appraisal

No. 20 Hollywood Road, Central, H.K.

Historical Interest

Hollywood Road (荷李活道) was laid out in the early days of British colonial rule. More than 100 years ago, Hollywood Road was rather close to the coastline and was in the core of the Chinese commercial-cum-residential area of the City of Victoria. In those days, foreign merchants and sailors sold the antiques and artefacts they had "collected" from China here on their way back to Europe. This is how Hollywood Road began its role as an antique market.

Located at the corner of Hollywood Road and Old Bailey Street, the building is immediately opposite to the former Central Police Station Compound (前中區警署建築群). Land records show that the lease on this landed property commenced in 1844 and this must have been one of the earliest lots to be sold; however, it is not known when the lot was first built on. An occupation permit issued by the Building Authority, together with architectural drawings, shows that the building was constructed for "non-domestic purposes" in 1953.

Over the years, a number of owners have been registered in the Land Record. The first owner, registered in the 19th century, is Kot Choy. After the Second World War, the site was acquired by Lam Chi-leung and Lam Chi-ming. As from 1952, the ownership of the building was changed to Chow Chin-yau and Ching Shiu-chueng. The ownership further changed hands later on. The building has been for commercial uses, housing art shops and galleries, for instance.

Architectural Merit

No. 20 is a four-storey building with Art Deco influences. It is finished with painted Shanghai plaster which has been grooved with artificial joint lines to imitate masonry. Architectural features on the street elevations include circular porthole windows to the staircase enclosure, bands of windows united by continuous horizontal canopies and cills, ornamental streamlining, and a corner flagpole with Art Deco sockets. The shopfront facing Hollywood Road is a modern plate glass affair. Plumbing has been confined to the rear elevations. The interior has been modernized, but the Art Deco style staircase with its polished terrazzo steps, handrail and skirting are largely retained.

Rarity, Built Heritage

This type of building is becoming very rare now as older property makes way for redevelopment. Its particular design is probably unique as it almost

certainly was built as a one-off job. It is noted that the surface of the Shanghai plaster wall finish has been painted over. Many of the windows are modern replacements diminishing the original architectural character of the property. Window mounted room coolers, signage, surface mounted conduit and modern shopfront also detract from and spoil the original design. The interior also has been largely modernized and therefore the authenticity and integrity of the property has been compromised. ***Value & Authenticity***

A pedestrian bridge connecting section of the Central to Mid-Levels Escalator runs along very close in front of the Hollywood Road elevation of No. 20 and obscures the front facade.

The building lots along Hollywood Road were some of the first to be sold off after the cession of Hong Kong Island to Britain. The social value of the building to the community lies in the commercial role it has played in this busy part of Central. The building is significant in the evolution of the social, cultural and commercial development of the area, and thus merits some local interest. Its presence reminds us of the past and serves as an important counterpoint against future development. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

The building has group value with the former Central Police Compound (Declared Monument) opposite to it. ***Group Value***

REFERENCES

Document Records at The Land Registry Office, Hong Kong

Property Particulars of Inland Lot Number 116 Sec. G.

Records at Building Information Centre, Hong Kong

Building Authority's Office, Non-domestic Permit dated 13 March 1953 (Permit No.: 43, B.O.O. Ref No.: 2/2326/52).

Books, Articles, Newspapers and Other Sources

梁炳華主編，《香港中西區風物志》(香港：中西區區議會，2011)。

Cheng Po Hung. *A Century of Hong Kong Island Roads and Streets*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (H.K.) Company Limited, 2011.