

Historic Building Appraisal
No. 188 Queen's Road East,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

After the arrival of the British in 1841, Queen's Road East, which ran along the old waterfront of Hong Kong Island, was developed into a European commercial and residential centre. By the 1860s it had become a mainly Chinese residential, labouring and shop-keeping community. *Historical Interest*

The three shophouses are located at the junction of Queen's Road East and Amoy Street (廈門街) in Wan Chai. They are believed to have been built in the 1930s, but they were not the first buildings on the site, as the house numbers were recorded in the Street Index of 1910. The ground floor is rented by retail shops and the uppers are let as residential tenancies. Tai Shing Goldsmith (大盛金鋪) has run its business in the ground floor of No. 188 for over 60 years.

The four-storey shophouses have shops on the ground floor and residential accommodation on the upper floors. The first and second floors have front verandahs which jut out over the pavement supported on columns to form a covered walkway or pedestrian arcade. The construction appears to be reinforced concrete. The style is very plain, the only decorative features being ornamental grilles in the verandah balustrades, a curved parapet abutment on the side elevation, **Art Deco** band motifs and Greek key patterns motifs on the front elevation. The windows to the upper floors in the side elevation are regularly spaced with simple cills and projecting lintels. The overall appearance is rather shabby and run-down. *Architectural Merit*

As traditional shophouses are now becoming very rare, these three shophouses must be considered as valuable built heritage in spite of their uninspiring appearance. Alterations and additions have been carried out over the years such as replacement of original windows, enclosure of verandahs, rooftop structures, and ugly typhoon canopies. Nevertheless the shophouses have retained their distinctive appearance. Most of the alterations and additions appear to be reversible. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

The social value of the shophouses lies in their historical role in the commercial development of Wan Chai, and the cheap living accommodation they provided for the working class. As examples of the once common **Verandah Type** shophouses they have local interest and are a part of Hong Kong's history. *Social Value & Local Interest*

Shophouses on Nos. 6, 8, 10 and 12 Burrows Street (巴路士街), Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8 Hing Wan Street (慶雲街), Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11 Mallony Street (茂羅街), Nos. 72, 72A, 74 and 74A Stone Nullah Lane (石水渠街), Old Wan Chai Post Office (Declared Monument), Hung Shing Temple (洪聖古廟) on Nos. 129-131 Queen's Road East and Wan Chai Market (灣仔街市) are other historic buildings nearby. **Group Value**

The elongated plans of the shophouses with their narrow frontages do not allow much scope for adaptive re-use. No doubt they could be restored and upgraded to current standards. The best use appears to be that for which they were intended i.e. shops on the ground floor and storage or living accommodation on the upper floors. It is understood that the shophouses will be preserved by the Urban Renewal Authority, as they are within a URA redevelopment project site. **Adaptive Re-use**