

Bring back history alive through transformation of old building into museum

Norashikin Abdul Karim, Siti Norlizaiha Harun¹, Salwa Ayob²

¹Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

²Faculty of Art and Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

E-mail: shikin6463@gmail.com

Abstract. When looking at the old building, it has aroused the curiosity of the glorious history of architecture and interior space in the past, such as the furniture, features, fittings, furnishings and interior layout. To save our old and heritage building from decay and loss of the heritage value, one of the Malaysian government efforts is to restore it to become a new function as a museum. There are some criteria should be considered for the transformation of an old and heritage buildings into a museum, there are; integrity of history; original structure and materials; new space and new function; showcase display and interpretation; and visitors' perception. This paper will highlight the literature review on consideration factors in heritage museum restoration. This writing paper is also part of continuous research aimed at developing the criteria for assessing the old and heritage building as a museum. The proposed criteria could serve as a basis for heritage organizations to prepare guidelines to manage the transformation of an old and heritage building into a museum in Malaysia. Indirectly, it contributes the ultimate goal to give best heritage experience for the tourist in a museum tour.

1. Introduction

An old building is a historic building that was built at any time in the past [1]. It can also be termed as a heritage building because of its high historical value to a community. But not all old buildings can be labeled as heritage buildings. Old buildings also defined as a historic building. Briefly, a historic building is one that can give a sense of wonder and to know more about the people, culture, architecture, aesthetic, historical, documentary, archaeological, economic, social and even political, spiritual or symbolic values and the first impact is always emotional, for it is a symbol of our cultural identity and continuity is a part of our heritage [8]. While, Heritage building may be perceived as having some aspects that are considered important to the community. It also called a heritage-listed building had been evaluated as having aspects that it is considered necessary to preserve it [10]. Almost all of the old buildings, are deteriorating and need to be restored. Restoring it into a museum is a one way to preserve the old building and it can



disclose continuous care of the buildings. It is important to have this concern because, without it, the historic buildings will never be preserved or conserved properly. Also, it is important to retain existing and possible rare examples of buildings, architecture or craftsmanship or historic interior scheme which would otherwise disappear [1].

Why can the museum be a tool to bring back history alive of historic buildings? From a traditional understanding of what form a museum was defined in functional terms. Hence the intent of museums was realized as concrete and tangible, paralleling the substance of the ‘material evidence’ [19] which historically has been the main focus of museums [4]. A museum also as an interpretive medium communicates focusing on a big group of the public with the intent of transfer information, ideas and reaction relate the material evidence of man. The main purpose to set up a museum was revealing and unravel the history of the building and building components can be as a collection, thus confirming public trust in the museum as caretaker of the societal record [5].

2. The transformation of historic buildings into museum in Malaysia

Most of the historic building in Malaysia is scattered around in the country consists of various types of buildings and functions. The chart below (Figure 1) presents the historic building that can be divided into 16 building categories such as fort/military, churches/mosques, palaces, clock tower, prison, government office, institutional and commercial, residential, schools, railway stations, hotels & guest houses, monuments, mausoleum, dam, warehouse/storage, and public building. Of these 16 categories, some of the buildings have changed their function and some have remained their original function. There are 5 categories of historic buildings have changed their function into a museum such as 4-fort/military, 5-palaces, 7-government office, 11-institutions and commercial and 3-residential, the total of numbers are 31 buildings and most of the buildings are gazetted.

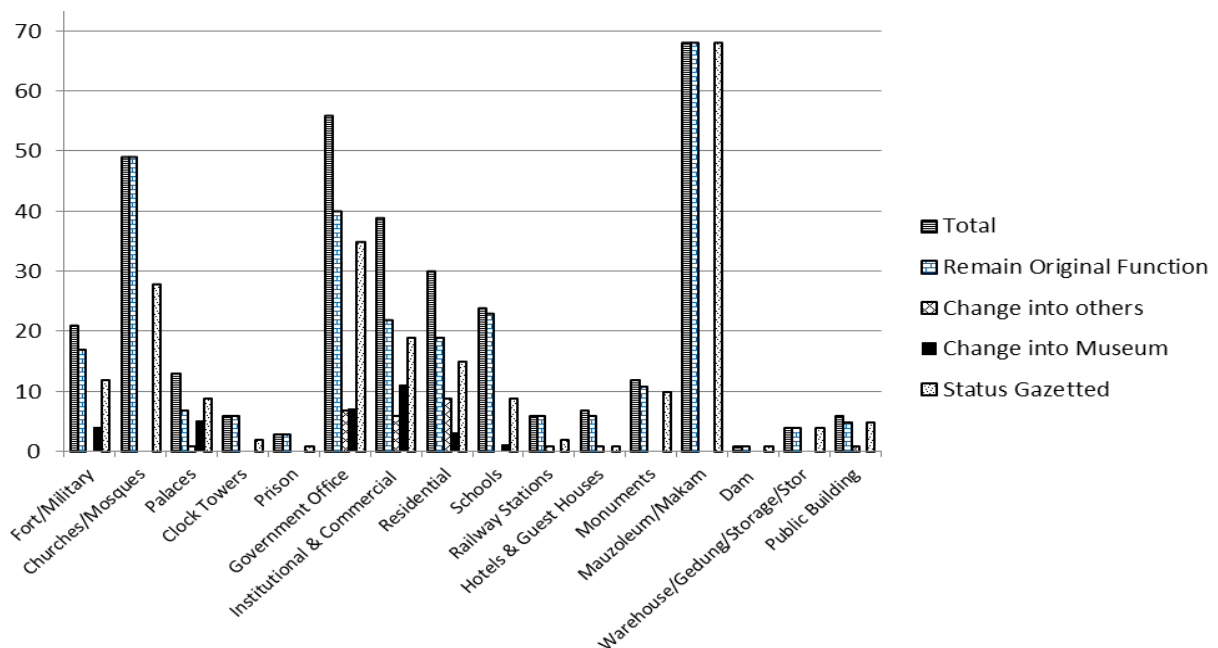


Figure 1. The categories and change of used of historic building in Malaysia

3. Transformation criteria of historic building into a museum

3.1. The meaning of building transformation in the understanding of historic building conservation

The term ‘transformation’ in the understanding of historic building conservation, has carried their own meaning. The meaning transformation here referred to the building has fewer changes [8] and it has been a change in the term of ‘conjectural reconstruction’ or ‘re-creation’ [3]. These philosophies represent an acceptable action and seek to create an earlier appearance when the building transform their function. It can be concluded that the building transformation is a process to change the old building appearance according to the new function of the building like to be a museum. It requires an idea and the history of the building to recreate the same scheme as the original scheme of the building as an exhibit material in the museum. Indirectly, this transformation can restore and revive the historic interior scheme to visitors. There are some criteria should be considered for the transformation of historic buildings into a museum, including the integrity of history; original structure and materials; new space and new function; showcase display and interpretation; and visitors' perception (Figure 2).

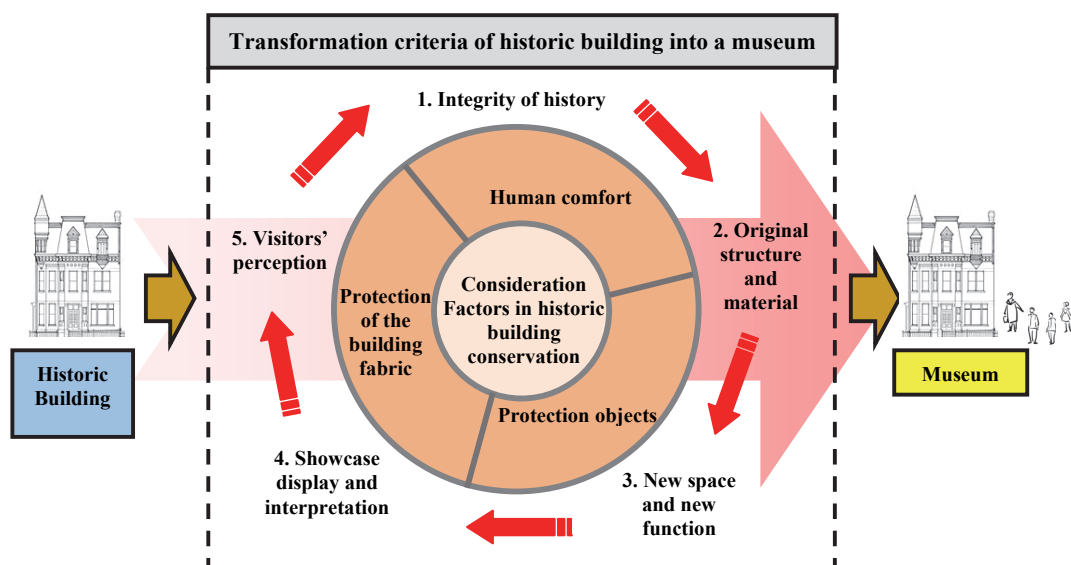


Figure 2. The transformation criteria and consideration factors for historic building conservation

3.2. Integrity of history

The most important criteria for setting up a museum in a historic building is honesty in reviving history. To apply integrity of history in the museum building, it is crucial to understand the importance of the building through a combination of survey on the ground and a desktop study to expose the building's history and to understand deeply what in the interior is authentic [7]. However, any historical study of such a building should include the client who commissioned it, together with his objectives which led to the commissioning of the project and an assessment of the success of its realization; the study should also deal with the political, social and economic aspects of the period in which the structure was built and should give the chronological sequence of events in the life of the building. And also the names and

characters of the actual creators should be recorded, if known, and the aesthetic principles and concepts of composition and proportion relating to the building should be analyzed [8].

3.3. *Original Structure and Materials*

To transform the historic building into a museum, the original structure and presentation of material should be concerned because these are the potency medium to bring back the building history alive. These criteria are an important part of an exhibitor material which most visitors excited want to see. Because of that, the aim of exhibiting the conservation is to create and contribute preservation-friendly exhibits that attracting and to be informed to the public. And an effective museum exhibit can achieve its educational purpose, be aesthetically appealing, and meticulously safeguard the components on building display [16]. The structural and material condition must also be studied: the different phase of construction of the building complex, later interventions, any internal or external peculiarities and the environmental context of the surroundings of the building are all relevant matters. The original structure which is common in the historic building and should be respected are beams, arches, vault, domes, trusses and frame, walls, piers and columns. And he considers there are two main structural materials found in historic buildings which is timber and masonry [8]. Every existence material and original structure built up in the historic building should be strictly observed and the below table (Table 1) is some guidance need to be considered [3] ;

Table 1. The International Charters Guidelines

International Charters	Guidelines for works on site
Athen Conference (1931), Venice Charter (1964), Burra Charter (1979) & Appleton Charter (1983)	Should be highlighted in the choice of material and the techniques, even the respectfulness against traditional practice.
New Zealand Charter (1992) and code of ethics (1993)	The use of modern material substitutes is appropriate only when; they provide a significant advantage which can be identified; their material used has a solid scientific basis; and the material physical has been carried by a body of involved.
Thessaloniki Charter (1992)	The new material should compatible with the expression, appearance, texture and form of the original.
Declaration of Tlaxcala (1982)	Should meet the requirement of both the physical and geographical conditions and the manner of life of the population.
Venice Charter (1964), Budapest Resol's (1972), Washington Charter (1992), Burra Charter (1979), Desch. Decl.(1982), Washington Charter (1987), Appleton Charter (1983) & Thessaloniki Charter (1992).	When assessing the aesthetic integrity and coherence of the whole, the factors should be taken into account are; the relations of mass and colour and ; the traditional background, the stability of its structure and its correlation with its environment; form, scale, colour, texture and materials; tone of shape, appearance, segment, filled with ornament , and overall formation; existing and original patterns of movement and layout; and lastly the (vernacular) plan, volume and shell.

3.4. *New Space and New Function*

To proposed new space and new function into a museum, it should start with exhibition layout and understand the exhibition environment [16]. However, the most important concern is in the context of

interpreting new scheme of space and function. Participation and obtained knowledge always present the best context in the study of the scheme; and each scheme needs understandeness and difference that will require particular research to allow it to be allocated firmly within its setting of time and sense. Compatible work may glance at another contemporary scheme by the identical client. Perhaps, it involves a comprehensive study and assimilation of contemporary sense such as colour theory, archaeological and antiquarian obsession, or scrutinize about style-setters [9]. Interpreting research is used to recreate method to generate scheme for existing space in historic building to be used as a new function for the museum exhibition. Below (Table 2) are some of anxiety that can undermine the final look of a reinstated scheme [9] ;

Table 2. The typical concerns on reinstated scheme for historic building converted into a new function

Main concern	Advices
Function & Room Usage	The usage of room, historic room layout and original surface finishes should be investigated.
Replacement of furnishing or material	Be conditional on what already exists in the room, furniture, upholstery, carpets, wallpapers, painted decoration and pictures may be needed. All will need to be sourced with an understanding of authentic making and also of what is technically practicable.
Existing furnishings, fixtures and decoration	Avoiding the technical complexities of the different conservation disciplines, and the various admissible ways of cleaning and making good, conserved object ultimately have to be satisfied within a decorative scheme.
Artificial lighting	The reinstated scheme required a constant environment, and artificial lighting may provide to reinforce an authentic sense, or affect it, both in the fittings impart and in the type, color and quality of the light fabricate.
Gaps in evidence	Well-dispute cases need to be made to fulfill gaps or doubts, as the evidence base for a room's reinstatement is seldom finish. The last choices become easier once the project team has an understanding of the situations and feel that shaped the original scheme.
Clarifying a scheme	There are many interpretation approaches that may explain a room's display. These options may require developing, and a display be fine-tuned, in answer to changing technologies. The main criterion is that no approach affects the practical conservation of the architecture or collection and that all significant hardware and display material is fully reversible.

3.5. Showcase Display and Interpretation

Interpretation of the object display is the physical presentation of an interior itself, there are further levels of interpretation to assist the visitor experience involved in the story of how the room was first created, and how it came to be recreated. Exhibitions, either in a minimal form, a discreet display within the recreated room or larger, separate exhibitions covering wide aspects, can incorporate to the understanding of a recreated scheme within a building [9]. The museum showcase display should always be open to identifying and attracting a new audience. Factors such as special interests within the museum's constituency change, and as the factors change, so does the visitors and potential visitor. The museum staff must be aware of the changes and make the exhibition and programming decisions about developing

new audiences [5]. However, the most important link is that of the type of successful visitor interpretation aims to create, and interpretation is attempting to produce mindful visitors; which is visitors who are vigorous, excited and always questioning. On the other hand, has been discovered to be related to reduce visitors' attention, which can be seen as an indicator of mindlessness. It is possible that mindfulness and mindlessness are valuable concepts in thoughtful how visitors react to the interpretation of object display in an exhibition [14].

3.6. Visitors' Perception

Visitors that going to museums or other historical location are especially searching an image of the past which is recognized as very far [13] rather than an authentic historical exposure [18]. The sensory perception of authenticity in a museum is multiplex because both authentic and inauthentic exposure coincides in equal parts in being part of the visitor experience [11]. There are 3 different levels to be taken into consideration when involving with museums and authenticity such as artifacts, edifices and encounters [15]. However, objects displayed in museums and the information provided by these objects are in general recognized by the visitors to be authentic. As a result, the museums must appear themselves as places where visitors can acquire knowledge, to discover, acquaint something, and enhance their own culture, rather than as spaces created in a destination in order to attract visitors' attention [2]. What do people expect to find at the museum? The main visitors wish to see the genuine object the 'real thing' [5]. Visitor observes show that the most dominant types of interactive exhibits are those in which visitors react to an informed guide, a museum demonstrator or an interpreter, perhaps in period costume, this person-to-person interaction can be among the most effective experiences that a museum can bid, especially if staff or volunteers are trained to obtain questions and visitors will be involved in their presentations [12].

3.7. Consideration factors in historic building restoration

The consideration factors in historic building restoration are, it is often the case that the contrast with needs of these three requires a level of compromise such as human comfort; safekeeping objects, including internal finishes and furnishings; and protection of the building fabric [6] (Figure 2). The history and archaeology of the building must be carefully studied, so that the architect is aware of the sequence in which the fabric was put together. Another important part is also should consider the original material, archaeological evidence, original design and authentic documents [8]. For the most historic building if it does not use the honesty of local materials it should exchange them to new uses for a modern material as long as a building proves to be in harmony with itself, its surroundings and its users [17].

4. Discussion and conclusions

Transforming a historic building into a museum is a challenge in creating an interior scheme and require guidance. Because, it involves both not only recreating but preserving the historic scheme. Research satisfies the responsibility to record, acquaint and preserve for historic buildings, collections, schemes and tastes, and helps to unlock the depths of meaning and value behind the display of interiors, it not only exposes artifacts and craftsmanship, but also open windows on history, customs, people and interacting the social life [9]. Many benefits can be obtained by restoring the historical scheme inside the historic building such as visitors can re-experience the true historical scheme. This is the moment that every visitor has waiting to know and they will feel excited approaching historic buildings. Therefore, the guidelines on recreating and preserving historic scheme were needed when the historic building transforms into a museum.

References

- [1] Ahmad, A. G. (1997). *British Colonial Architecture in Malaysia 1800-1930* (Kuala Lumpur: Museums Association of Malaysia)
- [2] Brida J G, Disegna M and Scuderi R 2014 The visitors' perception of authenticity at the museums: Archaeology versus modern art *Current Issues in Tourism* **17** 518-538
- [3] Bell D 1997 *The Historic Scotland Guide To International Conservation Charters* (Edinburgh: Technical Conservation Research and Education Division)
- [4] Corsane G 2005 *Heritage, museums and galleries : an introductory reader / edited by Gerard Corsane Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge)
- [5] David D and Gary E 1996 *The Handbook for Museums (Heritage: Care-Preservation-Management) 1st Edition* (London and New York: Routledge)
- [6] David D 2012 Environment in the historic interior. In M. F. White *Interior Finishes & Fittings for Historic Building Conservation* (United Kingdom and USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd) p 187
- [7] Forsyth M 2012 Conservation of the historic interior. In M. F. White, *Interior Finishes & Fittings For Historic Building Conservation* (United Kingdom and USA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Ltd) p 4
- [8] Feilden B M 2002 *Conservation of Historic Buildings* (Amsterdam, Boston, Heidelberg, London, New York, Oxford, Paris, San Diego, San Francisco, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo: Architectural Press.)
- [9] Finlay J 2012 Recreating historic schemes of interior decoration. In M. F. White *Interior Finishes & Fittings for Historic Building Conservation* (United Kingdom: Balckwell Publishing Ltd) p 173-186
- [10] Hay Gaol Museum (2004) Just because it's old: museums and galleries in heritage buildings. *Museum and Galleries Foundation* 1–26
- [11] Hall CM 2007 Response to yoeman et al: the fakery of 'the authentic tourist' *Tourism Management* **28** 1139–1140
- [12] Lord B and Lord G D 2002 The purpose of Museum Exhibitions. In B. L. Lord, *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* (Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York and Oxford: Altamira Press) p 11-25
- [13] Lowenthal D 2005 *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press)
- [14] Moscardo G 1996 Mindful visitors: Heritage and tourism *Annals of Tourism Research* **23** 376–397
- [15] Pine II B J and Gilmore J H 2007 Museums and authenticity *Museum News* <http://www.strategichorizons.com/documents/MuseumNewsMay07Museums%26Authenticity.pdf> (Accessed 8 september 2012)
- [16] Raphael T J 2005 Guidleine-Preventive conservation and the exhibition process; development of exhibit guidelines and standard for conservation. *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* **44** 245–257
- [17] Robertson M 2007 Conservation and authenticity In Forsyth M *Understanding Historic Building Conservation* (Oxford and Australia: Blackwell Publishing) p 31
- [18] Schouten F 2007 Cultural tourism: between authenticity and globalization In *Cultural : Global and Local Perspectives* Richards G (The Haworth Press Inc) 25-37
- [19] Weil S 1983 The Multiple crises in our museums' in *Beauty and the Beast: On Museums, Art and the Law and the Market* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute)