

Historic Building Appraisal
Ma Tau Kok Animal Quarantine Depot
No. 63 Ma Tau Kok Road, To Kwa Wan, Kowloon

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The former Ma Tau Kok Animal Quarantine Depot (前馬頭角牲畜檢疫站) is the only surviving pre-war cattle slaughterhouse in the territory. It was constructed in **1908**. The total cost of construction was \$66,889, of which \$18,000 was contributed from the Railway Funds as the development was necessitated by the railway construction. Managed by the Sanitary Department, the whole compound had an area of 17,000 square metres, which included a general slaughterhouse, a room for Indians, a fodder store, offices and quarters as well as three sheds with capacity of 120 cattle, 200 sheep and 400 pigs.

*Historical
Interest*

The Depot served as a slaughterhouse (abattoir) and quarantine base for almost a century until mid-1999 when a modern centralized abattoir was set up in Sheung Shui. Renovation and conversion works took place in 2001 and an artist village known as the “Cattle Depot Arts Village” (牛棚藝術村) was set up to house local artists relocated from the Oil Street Arts Village (油街藝術村) in North Point.

Originally the cattle depot comprised a large complex of animal sheds and yards, including the five red-brick blocks which are the subject of this summary. These blocks are built in the vernacular **Arts and Crafts** architectural style featuring red-bricks walls, Chinese tiled roofs, corbelled gables, Dutch gables and 3-ring rough brick segmental arches over window openings. The main block is the Main Office facing Ma Tau Kok Road, a long one-and-two storey building composed of offices, stores, kitchen and toilets. The old Slaughterhouse has an interesting ridge vented pitched roof with Dutch gable ends. Mention should also be made of two adjoining brick-and-concrete sheds with usual barrel vaulted roofs.

*Architectural
Merit*

These buildings comprise a rare collection of Victoria style farm buildings with obvious group value and considerable built heritage value. Although having undergone conversion in 2001 into arts studios the original external appearance remains fairly authentic.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The historical social value of the buildings lies in their original function as a public slaughter house and quarantine depot which functioned for over 90 years supplying hygienic and safe fresh meat. Complaints were often made by neighbours about the noise and odour, and the depot was well known by the local community.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Ma Tau Kok Animal Quarantine Depot is physically close to items graded *Group Value* by the Antiquities Advisory Board including the Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) on Ha Heung Road and Pak Tai Temple (北帝古廟) on Ma Tau Wai Road.

The conversion to an artists' village seems to have worked well and there are no plans to convert the buildings for other uses at present. *Adaptive Re-use*