

Soak up the industrial vibe

Industrial estates are home to more than the typical factory, warehouse or office. Here are some interesting things you can do there

Amanda Chai

Navigating down the winding third-floor corridor of industrial building 44 Kallang Place, you would never guess that behind one of the innumerable identical grey doors, a love of ceramics art flourishes.

The 400 sq ft space is home to Common Touch Craft Unit, which was opened by Mr Zestro Leow and Ms Fyon Cheong, both 25, in October last year. The couple, who are dating, run daily workshops there.

With its high ceiling and natural light, the modern studio allows pottery enthusiasts to learn in the privacy of a more intimate space.

The pottery studio is just one of a growing number of businesses which have set up shop in industrial estates.

These days, a trip to one can unearth surprise finds like thrift stores, artist studios and the odd fitness gym.

According to guidelines from the Urban Redevelopment Authority, 60 per cent of gross space in industrial buildings must be set aside for core industrial uses such as manufacturing and warehousing, with up to 40 per cent allowed for ancillary purposes such as canteens, childcare centres and workers' dormitories.

As of November 2014, selected commercial uses such as minimarts or fitness gyms are allowed in outlying industrial estates located far from existing commercial areas.

For Mr Leow and Ms Cheong, who graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 2015, an industrial unit had always been their first choice for their pottery studio. The lower rental and cosy size, in comparison to shopping centre units, were the main factors in their decision.

Their studio comfortably fits up to 12 people at a time – a jump from the five or six they could host in their previous space, a unit half the size and one floor below. Grateful for the landlord's flexibility in leasing out units, the couple moved their studio upstairs in March this year for a more "breathable" space.

Here, they can fit three throwing wheels, a kiln and a table for people to sit around and build clay.

Their neighbours in the six-storey building, which is operated by real estate management services group LHN Limited, include independent retailers of goods such as health supplements, bedsheets, balloons, watches and children's clothes.

With a newly installed back gate, the building is a 10-minute walk from Kallang MRT station.

The location also makes for good networking opportunities, says Mr Leow, adding that the management organises annual gatherings for the tenants.

"It's part of the perks of being here," he says.

Hand-lettering artist Tee Ewe Jin, 35, is also working out of an industrial space. After working from home for a few months, the father of a two-year-old son moved to a workspace in an industrial building in King George's Avenue in July last year.

It's part of co-working space The General Company, which occupies two floors of the building. Mr Tee occasionally books the common area to host corporate workshops for brush- and hand-lettering.

He has also landed the occasional design job from a few creative agencies which also operate in the space.

While his co-working space comes nicely done up, he says: "It's still very much an industrial building and I like the fact that it is not nicely renovated."

"I still feel very comfortable here. I like how cosy it is – if you need to take a walk, you can just walk around. And I personally like hardware stuff too."

The last class he hosted was a sign-painting workshop that required cumbersome transporting of wooden signs. That was where the building's cargo lift came in handy.

"I love it. I think the space, the location is just perfect. There's maybe a minor concern that people have trouble looking for the space because it's an industrial area," Mr Tee adds. The building is a five-minute walk from Lavender MRT station.

Accessibility was the top priority for the three owners of vintage clothing store Wholly Vintage when they were looking for a shop space.

The trio, whose business first kicked off as an Instagram project in November 2017, knew they wanted to start with a small space, but ruled out many industrial buildings because of their locations.

When they arrived at Gordon Industrial Building in Eunos for a viewing, however, they were immediately sold on its proximity to Paya Lebar MRT station – just a five-minute walk away. They moved into the 300 sq ft space in November last year.

To help customers get to their store, they put up directions on their Instagram profile.

"We have not received any complaints regarding our location," says co-owner Adillah Mustafa, 22.

Mr Leow and Ms Cheong had visited other industrial buildings while shopping for a space for their pottery studio.

"I saw buildings that offer facilities like gyms and swimming pools," he says. "It's just how (industrial buildings) look on the outside, and people might worry that there's no air-conditioning, that it's hot, dusty and very noisy."

He says they settled on 44 Kallang Place because it was newly renovated – with new air-conditioning, brightly lit toilets and passenger lifts that feel safe, which make it more pleasant for visitors.

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Mr Zestro Leow and Ms Fyon Cheong of Common Touch Craft Unit at their studio at 44 Kallang Place that can fit up to 12 people. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

1 Take a spin on the pottery wheel

Getting your hands dirty in a clean, air-conditioned space is not what most people would expect of a pottery class.

But comfort is key in retaining customers, say the owners of Common Touch Craft Unit, Mr Zestro Leow and Ms Fyon Cheong, both 25.

Hand-building and wheel-

throwing classes start at \$75 a person for a three-hour session and there is no minimum number of participants required. Packages, including a 12-lesson one at \$550, are also available.

The owners will fire up your finished product for you to collect two weeks after.

Mr Leow used to teach and host

workshops of up to 100 participants at Thow Kwang Pottery Jungle in Jalan Bahar – widely regarded as a heritage site for being the oldest surviving dragon kiln in Singapore.

He and Ms Cheong – they majored in ceramics art and sculpture respectively – also teach art part-time at secondary schools and junior colleges.

Plying their trade in their own space is a big change for the duo, who previously sold their works out of Mr Leow's balcony in his home.

They want to use their business as a platform to share more about the craft behind the art.

Ms Cheong says: "Pottery helps people become happier and generate a positive energy – that's what

we believe."

Where: 03-56, 44 Kallang Place MRT: Kallang

Open: Mondays to Sundays, 11am to 10pm

Price: From \$75 a person for three hours. Packages from \$220 are available.

Info: www.common touchcraft.com



Fassler Gourmet specialises in premium seafood and is among a string of food factory outlets located in Woodlands Terrace. PHOTO: FASSLER GOURMET

2 Land a bargain catch

At Fassler Gourmet, you can prise seafood straight from the freezer yourself. The wholesale retailer specialises in premium seafood and is among a string of food factory outlets located in Woodlands Terrace.

The place is most alive during Chinese New Year when bargain hunters stock up for festive feasts.

Here, you can find quality salmon and tuna sashimi (from around \$20 for 500g), freeze-packed smoked salmon and whole lobsters.

The loot is stored in a large freezer room, with jackets provided for shoppers for the cold.

Fassler Gourmet also delivers salmon via online retailer Lazada, but it is certainly more fun to shop from a walk-in freezer.

Where: 46 Woodlands Terrace
MRT: Admiralty
Open: Mondays to Saturdays, 8.30am to 5.30pm
Info: fasslergourmet.com



Get to sample the different beers brewed at the Asia Pacific Breweries factory in Tuas. PHOTO: TIGER BREWERY TOUR

3 Go on a boozy tour

Find out more about the process of beer brewing at the Tiger Brewery Tour and quench your thirst after with a pint.

Housed within the Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) premises in Tuas, the comprehensive tour starts off with an introduction to the rich history of Singapore's iconic beer. Then learn about the ingredients that go into a boozy brew, before moving on to the Brew House for a look at the tanks and tuns that turn malt into beer.

Your journey ends at the Tiger Tavern, where, for 45 minutes, you get to sample unlimited servings of Tiger Beer and other beers brewed at APB's factory.

Where: 459 Jalan Ahmad Ibrahim
MRT: Joo Koon
Open: Tuesdays to Saturdays, tours start at 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5pm
Price: Tuesdays to Fridays: \$18 a person; Saturdays: \$22 a person
Info: www.tigerbrewerytour.com.sg



4 Pick up brush-lettering

the hand-lettering business. While he says participant numbers are on the decline, he is still most comfortable teaching larger groups of 12 to 15 people.

The minimum number of people required for a class, which lasts 90 or 120 minutes, is six.

Participants learn to write with a brush pen, the basic strokes, and how to construct letters with the brush. They get to take home a card or artwork they make themselves.

Upon request, Mr Tee also provides blank tote bags at an additional fee for participants to customise.

Where: The General Company, 115 King George's Avenue

MRT: Lavender

Open: By appointment only (closed for this month)

Price: \$650 for a 90-minute class and \$750 for a 120-minute class, with an additional \$15 a student for material preparation
Info: www.tee.com



5 Pick up a vintage find

From the outside, Gordon Industrial Building looks more like a factory for mass-produced fashion.

But there is a treasure trove of vintage apparel at a shop unit on the fifth floor of the building in Eunos.

Wholly Vintage, which opened in November last year, was founded by Ms Adillah Mustafa, 22, Mr Jose Alcones, 22, and Mr Marc Laurenz, 21, who started their business on Instagram.

Here, you can scoop up prized 1980s and 1990s streetwear apparel from brands such as Nike, Guess, Adidas, Tommy Hilfiger and Polo Ralph Lauren. Prices range from \$30 to \$70.

You can also find pre-loved luxury labels like Burberry, Fendi, Gucci and Christian Dior for \$40 to \$250.

For more bargains, rifle through the \$20-and-under box. "We're very particular when it comes to selecting items for our store," says Ms Adillah, who runs Wholly Vintage with Mr Alcones fulltime. "We do not simply pick a shirt just because it's old. We



always try and bring in the best quality and well-curated vintage pieces."

Currently, the 300 sq ft space fits about seven racks of clothing which are sourced globally and refreshed weekly.

But the trio have plans to expand their business. "This is a temporary space as we plan to open a much bigger store in the future to give our customers a better experience," Ms Adillah says.

Where: 05-03 Gordon Industrial Building, 113 Eunos Avenue 3
MRT: Paya Lebar
Open: Fridays to Tuesdays, 1 to 8pm
Info: www.instagram.com/whollyvintage

Shop from the racks of 1980s and 1990s streetwear apparel or look out for pre-loved luxury labels at Wholly Vintage in Eunos.
ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM