Synopsis

LIGHT: The Immaterial Material
An Exploration of Light in an Urban Square

Much have been discussed about light and we believe that all living things, even the least organic of things, need light to be made "alive". The focus of this project is based on the experiential aspects of light. In many architectural works of Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Tadao Ando and Steven Holl, light could find its place because the percipients of their architecture could claim from it "a slice of the sun". The architecture must have been masterfully crafted to interact with the light source such that the percipients could derive a "physiological delight" which Tanizaki describes in his In Praise of Shadows. According to Tanizaki, much of this "physiological delight" is set in a kind of environment that can rarely be found in our present cities and metropolises.

Life in the city can be stressful and sense numbing. There is a need for spaces where one can seek relief. One needs not spend all of one's lifetime getting to the reserves for the hermits or to escape into the faraway lands to retrieve one's being. This thesis project is about introducing spaces of "physiological delight" as described by Tanizaki in the heart of the Central Business District (the most tensed part of the city), which provides the city dwellers with options of momentary escapades so as to be sensitized about one's existence. The project aims to use light as the agent to shape spatial experience that can sharpen one's consciousness of being.

Events of different degrees of contemplation and stillness are inserted to slow down the pace of the city. Each also allows one to escape into another reality. The programmes include reading space, music space, movie-projection pockets, and meditation cells. Each of these spaces is shaped by a certain character of light that reflects the particularity of the mode of contemplation of the activity. Each of them also seeks to manifest the different degrees of opacity in the light and shadows of the tropics. One tends to overlook the nuances in the quality of daylight in the tropics, as there is an abundance of sunlight and no distinct change of seasons. Yet, each shadow cast is not of black alone, but of different tonalities, "light shadows over heavy shadows" and they are in constant change. This project seeks to achieve experiential spaces where one could begin to become aware of such a constant flux and subtleties, where the play of light may move one to reach out and cup it in one's hands.