Synopsis

"The city is a stage where man meets man, the place of dialogue; where architecture is the instrument and witness of human encounters."

Robert Van Pelt

Central to the issues, objectives and strategies presented in the thesis are the ideas that an articulated public realm holds together the structure of a city and that the main element in any city is its people. Within the context of the rise of contemporary cities, recent rapid developments of large-scale commercial projects (such as Ngge Ann City, Suntec City), has created independent city blocks of self-sufficient shopping malls. These mega-constructions produced decontextualized interior environments totally oblivious to the outside world. The resultant public spaces between such city blocks are poorly articulated and negate socio-cultural activities. These public spaces are relegated to places where one "goes through" instead of "goes to."

The thesis deals with the urban issue of re-integrating civil life into the public realm, and the connection of separate urban elements in the city into a coherent urban space. Architecturally, the thesis aims to explore ways of architectural response so as to maintain the integrity of existing buildings within the site. The thesis also deals with the issues of light directing movement, light as a physical and programmatic connector of interior and exterior spaces and light as genius loci.

The Singapore International Design Centre is proposed as the vehicle to explore these issues. The centre will set the stage for interactions on several levels. It will provide the setting for activities that encourage greater design awareness among the public. The centre will organize design events for the meeting of the professionals, the industry and the businessmen. It will also facilitate dialogue between itself and other established local cultural institutions and international design centres. The centre will also provide a place to promote the young designer and his work. Through its activities, the centre will thus form an urban node, contributing a sense of vibrancy within its precinct. It is to be sited at the reclaimed land parcel opposite Fullerton Building. This re-establishes the importance of the area as a major activity node and the waterfront as a part of our cultural heritage. In this respect, the area will echo Van Pelt's vision where the city becomes a stage for dialogue and where architecture becomes the instrument and witness of human encounters.

The proposed building is sunken underground and is organized around four light towers which directs movement, lights the underground exhibits and act as physical as well as programmatic connectors. In the day, movement through the building is envisioned as a series of vantage points and choreographed events directed by successive light towers, which signals the different exhibition platforms. Though physically underground, the visitors are constantly made aware of the external environment and the passing of time through the varying intensities and shifting locations of light passing through the towers. In the night, the four towers serve as a landmark and an architectural focus for the activities of the bay.