APPROPRIATION OF DIGNITY
A Discursive Study of Monuments in Singapore

By

LEE CHEE PENG CHRISTOPHER
HD 982528 M

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Abstract
Monuments are not mere buildings that can be handled and treated like other buildings. They embody significant values that distinguish them from the rest of the urban fabric. If not approached with sensitivity, the value of monuments will be diluted and distorted, and the dignity of these architectural artifacts compromised.

The general apathy towards the gazetted national monuments of Singapore may largely be due to the architectural interventions that are imposed on these significant buildings. The problem that confronts the issue of Monuments in Singapore is that they are not handled and treated with appropriate sensitivity. As a result, these ‘reminders and representations of our past’ have become askew depictions of the ‘character, identity, history and memory of the place’.

The scope of the dissertation covers the analysis of the nature and meaning of monuments and their role in society, with an emphasis on the appropriate handling and management of these architectural artifacts. This paper discusses the essence and the constituent elements of the monument within three broadband classifications, substantiated by case studies of international models within these three general categories. Issues pertaining to these monuments are analyzed, and a general framework or guideline is then derived pertaining to the appropriate management of these ‘treasures’. Through this framework, an attempt is made to assess the relative handling and treatment of Gazetted National Monuments in Singapore.

Dissertation Supervisor: Mrs Chan Yew Lih
Title: Senior Lecturer