An Urban Activity Centre: 
Kallang Airport – Evolving Infrastructure

Synopsis

This thesis stems from the notion of an ever-changing Singapore environment. How do new developments due to the demand generated by the environment tread itself within a developed area? This need for new infrastructure is an ever-present challenge, which needs to be addressed. The project aims to investigate and demonstrate issues of the growth of a piece of infrastructure and its site surroundings. Its value to itself and the surrounding environment when built upon and around is questioned. The design and/or adaptation of an infrastructural element through the understanding and realizing of its intrinsic, inherent as well as its potential value are also studied.

The site chosen is a historical site where Singapore’s first commercial airport was sited. Unfortunately, with the new demands for land and infrastructure, the site no longer reminds one of the past grandeur of the airport but barely hints of one though albeit distorted through time and the environment. This sets up an intriguing position where the issues mentioned above can be tested. Quoting one of the lines in a poem by Edwin Thumboo, it said, “To preserve the past, ensure the future.”

The vehicle chosen is a Recreation Centre run by the People’s Association. It is a community facility that provides a place for social as well as sporting activities for the public. At its core is the Youth Flying Club of Singapore that programmatically is most apt to be placed on the site chosen.
The proposed building deals with the current elements on site but with the main focus centered towards the disused hangar. The choice was made as it best symbolized the 'value' of the past as well as the perceived 'value' of the future. The rich inherent characteristic of the hangar is addressed as a symbolic object that was transcended from a utilitarian purpose with an imposition of subtle strength on the inside and a more subtle insertion of a backdrop surrounding it. Moving through the building is envisioned as a series of visual and spatial interactions with the symbolic object. As a result, the audience is always referenced to the symbolic much like a ritual through the use of the building. When one begins to use the complex more frequently, the more the symbolic ritual begins to surface. The circulation also acts as a mediating element that binds the various programs of the community center, which tries, also to foster greater interaction. More adaptable spaces are considered due to the various mix of disparate programming of a recreation centre.