SYNOPSIS

"Modernity is not a stasis, the state of some societies which can be specified by a set of characteristics. It is rather a certain violent transformative dynamics which arises out of social encounters among heterogeneous people."
- Naoki Sakai

The manner in which people within one community congregate and interact, and the way in which they exert a particular usage upon a given space has strong reference to the people's culture. Often, these habits are also strongly by the climate context in which they exist. This is even more strongly felt in the South-East Asian context where a large part of everyday usage of spaces still revolve around ritualistic practices.

The thesis begins by first extracting the essence of the notion of "South-East Asian space". This was established by examining both the traditional village layouts as well as the public streets and spaces in the urban situation. It has been observed that the traditional notions of "uses of (communal) space" perpetuate the urban context of the public domain. Although the contemporary urban context provides the public domain with a different morphology where space making is mainly based on the Western models of plazas, piazzas, squares, boulevards, etc., these spaces need not necessarily appeal to the South-East Asian people. Here, the people may be more comfortable with tighter communal spaces of intimate enclaves and organic pathways that are well-shaded and protected from weather elements rather than the completely open vast open spaces of the Western model.

The thesis establishes that in the South-East Asian streetscape, it is the intimate interstitial spaces between buildings and the shaded peripheries around the buildings that have become successful spaces for social transaction and interactions.

The proposed South-East Asian Cultural Exchange's main objective is therefore to experiment with the treatment of interstices and edges within and around the building masses to allow for these spaces to be more meaningfully used. In fact, rather than become "negative left-over spaces", these interstitial and peripheral spaces are treated such that they serve as "ad-hoc" or "unintentional" spaces that are conducive to spontaneous cultural activities both traditional and contemporary. These public spaces simultaneously provide the building with a readability of its cultural identity.

The manipulation of the enclosed interior and the adjacent communal spaces supports a natural and comfortable cultural behaviour unique to the South-East Asian people.

Programmatically, the proposed facility promotes two main objectives:
- To provide a forum for creative and critical dialogue through performances, exhibitions, multi-media projections, seminars and workshops amongst the diverse regional arts, traditional and contemporary.
- To foster cultural exchange and camaraderie at the regional level promoting all varieties of cultural activities.