Abstract

This thesis started with the observation of a sort of cultural disjunction/discontinuity between older and younger generations of Singaporeans. Traditional culture that relates to the older generations seem alien to the younger generations brought up in a global mass media culture. This project aims to bring about a reconnection to a cultural heritage through the chosen vehicle of Chinese theatre (wayang) - a seemingly stagnant traditional art form that is perceived as no longer relevant to present day culture.

The proposed site is at the junction of Middle Road and Bencoolen Street, a newly proposed arts+entertainment hub. This is to tap upon the consumeristic and entertainment-oriented lifestyles of the younger generations and to bring about a direct confrontation of the arts(culture) in the city (public spaces). Thus, this project aims to investigate issues of art+entertainment (Chinese theatre used to be a form of entertainment for the Chinese masses as compared to present perception of it as a rather ‘exclusive’ art form) as well as the injection of art spaces in the city (public spaces), reminiscent of the traditional street wayang performances, while generating interest and awareness in this art form through passive or active interaction with it in the city. And present day theatre-going is very much a purposeful event, losing the ‘accidental’ and casual encounter nature of the street performances.

The proposed building consists of primarily 3 components, namely, the school (learning and training facilities), the auditorium/theatre (performance space) and the public spaces which includes facilities such as retail shops, café, teahouse, multimedia area, information resource centre, exhibition spaces, discussion and meeting areas. The ‘public spaces’ provide an informal, non-institutional setting in which for people to learn about Chinese theatre while allowing passive engagement with the school and the theatre. While the academy serve to provide training facilities for serious learners (would be performers) as well as introductory lessons for the general public.