The thesis begins with a concern in the public development of the visual arts in Singapore. In the past decade, with the support of the Government and its agencies, arts development has gained momentum in our society. One notices, however, that this development is not always balanced. While the performing arts is doing very well, development in the field of the visual arts is not as ideal. This is observed in the way Singaporeans tend to consume art as commodities or investments, rather than appreciating it for its intrinsic values. More often than not, art appreciation is viewed as an elitist activity. It is important that art appreciation be promoted at the public level, for the masses. The thesis therefore proposes a visual arts centre for this purpose.

The thesis views direct interaction with the various types of visual arts as a strategy for it to reach out to the masses. The issue is therefore to propose an architecture that enables interactions and participation in the visual arts by the masses. It proposes a centre that is very much integrated to the activities of the site, that supports informality and spontaneity of activities and events, where the participants and the activities themselves acts as an attraction to draw the interests of the public. Reference to the typology of the museum thus cannot be drawn, much as the centre is involved in the exhibition of ‘art works’. Rather, parallels may be drawn with the modern interpretation of the museum as a cultural centre of activities.

As much as the programme of the centre plays an important part in enhancing interactions and participation in the visual arts, the architecture of the centre plays an equally important role. Not only will it enhance the experience of the activities; it becomes a sculpture of the site, a focal point. This raises the issue of architecture as an art form.

The center which also houses the National Arts Council, becomes a place where the passer by or the local resident is attracted into by the activities generated by the resident artists and the various workshops held. Instead of the usual finished art works he sees in a museum, he is introduced to the process involved in making the work and therefore may better appreciate what he finally sees. He is also encouraged to participate in the workshops and interact with the artists.