Cultural landscape along the margins of urban progress:
narrated through the transformation of the "Artists Village"

by

Leong Pui Shan
HD99-1287Y

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Architecture on
29 November 2000 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Architecture

Abstract
Singapore takes pride in her urban progress and success. Shaping the process of
modernization is a set of national ideologies that have been constructed to guide its
path. These ideologies are rooted in the rhetoric of nation building and often, they
represent a centre from which events and actions originate, are controlled and dictated
by.

Urban myths are conditions designed to cast a web of control onto the development of
the nation. They are constructed and believed to be all-encompassing and not to be
violated. By the very nature of inscribing a center of focus and mythical assertion,
there will be elements left out of this inscription when they do not subscribe to the
designed conditions and might consequently suffer marginalisation.

An investigation of the cultural terrain that dwells at the fringe of urban progress will
be undertaken.

The body of the paper is narrated through the transformation of The Artists Village
from 1989 up till today. While speaking about this transformation, the paper also
endeavors to unearth pictures of marginal critical landscape that have impact on the
course of cultural development in Singapore. In this unfolding process, such fringe
energies will be surfaced against a backdrop of the urban context in time. The
occurrence of events, in a time-space relation, is to be read off from a larger framework of urban progress.

The notion of "fringe existence" needs to be clarified conceptually. Cultural terrain along the borders is construed as being in an entangled relation with the center. Instead of these edge conditions existing outside of the system, they exist within a time frame of a similar context with the center and both are casting gazes at each other across the created spatial gap. They are aware of each other's presence and do not [outright] reject the other because one needs the other.

It is about surfacing the love-hate/manifold relationships between the created fringe and the centre and how tensions and ambiguities are managed; and the nature of the marginal landscape that is cultivated as a result of the fringe's contestation for space and existence with the centre.

Dissertation Supervisor: Mr T.K. Sabapathy
Title: Senior Lecturer