Synopsis

The starting point of this thesis is the site, Haw Par Villa, a whimsical garden depicting Chinese myths and narratives in figurines, tableaux and other representations. The garden used to be very popular in the 1930s when it was free then. Whole families will turned up and every child in that period of time and beyond, had a photo taken there. But right now, the garden is neglected by the new generation of youngsters fed on multimedia and virtual reality. The thesis proposes a multimedia visitor centre to draw these youngsters back to the garden and thus learn more about their cultural roots.

The thesis aims to revitalize Haw Par Villa and subsequently the Science Park region it is in by reinterpreting the garden as a historical garden, and not a theme park. It proposes that the Science Park developments extend into the STB site and form a situation in which Haw Par Villa can be reconciled with the surroundings and form an exciting interaction between the two mediums of representation, as well as the old and the new. Haw Par Villa will then be a landscape historical garden for the public as well as the researchers and workers at Science Park.

The thesis proposes a linear circulation spine up the hill to an omnimax theatre, which serves as the new focal point of the science park-cum-Haw Par Villa complex. This spine acts as both a barrier to protect and conserve the historical garden, and also a datum for further links between the garden and the new developments of the science park. The new developments are also proposed to reflect certain elements of the garden with the spine as a mirror. Within the spine, the tedious climb up the hill is replaced by a semi-underground cable rail system. This will bring visitors directly up the hill through a tunnel of media walls, to the onimax theatre where they view an omnimax movie about Haw Par Villa. After which they go along and down the spine to experience the site. The spaces of the galleries in the spine are designed to juxtapose contrasting spaces, for example, the gallery showing the repair work of figurines is next to a hologram gallery, to show the difference in technology of representation. The whole experience is derived in part from the metaphor of a pin-ball machine and internet webpages.