THE PERFORMING CITY
School For The Arts

by

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to bring the arts to the public, as opposed to the conventional concert hall or the ‘black box’ where the performance and the audience are being secluded from the public. This is investigated through

a) Understanding the nature of performance
b) Exploring performance in the context of the city
c) Redefining the relationship between performance and audience

The site is chosen at the mid-point of Mohamed Sultan Rd to serve as a pivot and a linkage between the concentrated activities at the two ends of the road. The vehicle is a School of the Arts, comprising of educational facilities, hostels, cafes and clubs; aims to act as a showcase of the performing arts to the public, so as to integrate the school into the city life.
The thesis redefines the notion of 'performance' such that performance is no longer limited to the formal act on the platforms of a stage, but extends to the activities in the backstage. The preparation before the stage act becomes part of the holistic performance. Hence, the backstage activities are being showcased on the building's facade as a bridge between the two theatres. All the other activities that occur within the building are also being presented as part of a performance, where the 'performing' spaces are being extruded out from a concrete skin.

In order to respond to the city, the design of the school addresses the views towards the Singapore River, such that a visual linkage is established between the school and the city from the platform of the stage. The visual linkage is orchestrated by the transparency of the theatre, where the glass screen of the theatre allows the city to act as a backdrop setting for the performance to occur. This also allows the public to be enticed into the life of the building.

By blurring the boundaries between the interior and the exterior, the relationship between the performance and the spectator is hence extended out of the boundaries of the theatre. The transparency of the performance is also created by internal courtyards, which provide the setting for an activity, which is at once immediate, intimate and interactive, which seeks to bring theatre back to the ground plane, the community and its roots in daily life.

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