Arts in the city: Contemporary Arts Centre as Urban Park

Abstract

This thesis calls into question the limits of the museum as an institution, where it investigates into the possibilities of becoming barometers of an urban cultural virility. Being in the city, it performs the role of generators of events and interaction through programs and spatial organization to create a social/cultural interface – the extension of the edges of art and the extension of viewers to the man-on-the-street.

To give the building a public and civic sense, it will need to be opened up, to establish connections between the building and the city, where urban activities are brought into the building. The idea of porosity is used to develop the possibility of a dynamic relationship between the interior and exterior. This deals with the interplay between solid and void, the blurring of boundaries between building and environment.

The vehicle chosen is a contemporary arts centre, accommodating the new demands of new media in contemporary arts where the viewer ‘enters’ the space of the work and the work interacts with the environment in which it is shown. It is proposed to be located within the city, yet juxtaposed from the central commercial thoroughfare of Orchard Road. It acts as a stimulus for regeneration of the back of Orchard Road and a venue to form human encounters.

The site, an existing car park surrounded by three buildings, provides the opportunities of exploring into an urban oasis. To retain the courtyard characteristic of the site, the centre is like an urban park. The idea of ‘path’ is looked into – how the sense of perception is constructed, reconstructed and construed along the path. Movement through is envisioned as a series of choreographed events and vantage points – experientially and perceptually – through the galleries (indoor and outdoor). An art gallery in the city – unlike the overly serious art museums – brings together different people with different intentions. It is like a park, overflowing with greens and possibilities.