

SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS TITLED THE CULTURE DIARIES: STORIES PLACES TELL

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores architecture as a tool to evoke nostalgia and conserve historicity of a place by uncovering lesser known stories about it. Culture evolves over time and leaves its remnants in spaces. This thesis traces the rich culture and performance-embedded history of Malleswaram to make its untold stories visible. Malleswaram is chosen for the strong **ethos of culture** it carries, rather than commerce which has shaped most localities of Bangalore. It stands as an **archive of habits** and continuities. Here, **public space journaling** unfolds in ordinary spaces fused with constant use and memory. The project examines how urban spaces carry cultural memory and identity. The thesis focuses on interventions that mediate everyday experiences and highlight overlooked social and spatial practices.

OBJECTIVES

After uncovering stories that shape Malleswaram, like that of Gupta Circulating Library which has now shrunk in size, workforce and surrounding trees but still continues to keep its doors open to those who still support print media in a digital age, and Natya Institute of Kathak and Choreography that defied all odds and popularised Kathak in a neighbourhood that had long patronised Bharatnatyam, it became evident that Malleswaram gave weight to mundane, ordinary acts and elevated them into something extraordinary. This understanding informed the project's objectives:

1. **CITY LEVEL** - To view the city as a stage where everyday life becomes performance, making hidden cultural narratives visible through spatial storytelling.
2. **NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL** - To reinterpret the ordinary spaces of Malleswaram like conservancy lanes, street edges, forecourts, and balconies as sites of memory and participation.
3. **HERITAGE** - To open the forecourts of heritage villas to the public, using spatial interventions to enhance conservation while fostering community engagement and cultural continuity.

SITE SELECTION AND PROGRAMS

SITE 1 - SAMPIGE THEATRE: Site Area: 3,800sqm; Built: 8,700sqm; Open: 2,200sqm

Basis of Selection - A long-standing cultural anchor of Malleswaram, once a thriving single-screen cinema and a shared memory space for generations. Today it faces imminent closure due to financial decline and shrinking audiences. Its uncertain future makes it a critical site to re-examine, preserve symbolically, and reinterpret.

Proposed Intervention - A series of experimental theatres and a production house that reinterpret the idea of performance in the city. These spaces negotiate between Sampige's cinematic past and the evolving culture of public gathering, offering flexible formats for theatre, rehearsal, and collective viewing.

SITE 2 - VILLA POTIPATTI: Site Area: 2,500sqm; Built: 1,000sqm; Open: 1800sqm

Basis of Selection - A 1925 heritage bungalow that embodied the layered histories of Malleswaram - from private residence to a restored heritage hotel under Neerana. Its demolition in 2018 marked a major moment of loss for heritage conservation in the neighbourhood.

Proposed Intervention - An archive and neighbourhood mapping centre that documents, preserves, and interprets Malleswaram's material and intangible histories. The intervention positions the site as a repository of memory.

SITE 3 - FORECOURT OF PANCHVATI: Site Area: 9,500sqm with existing built of 850sqm; Built: 1,000sqm; Open: 7,650sqm

Basis of Selection - The historic home of Nobel laureate C.V. Raman and Lady Lokasundari Raman, who hosted musical gatherings and cultural evenings here. Recently, it has been repurposed to host immersive art exhibitions.

Proposed Intervention - An exhibition and workshop space in the forecourt that extends its tradition of cultural production.

SITE 4 - FORECOURT OF HVN HOUSE: Site Area: 5,000sqm with existing built of 1500sqm
Basis of Selection - The residence of H.V. Nanjundiah, the first resident of Malleswaram. Later converted into a girls' high school, the house has long functioned as a place of education surrounded by several existing schools.

Proposed Intervntion - A public open library to serve surrounding educational institutions in the area.

DESIGN APPROACH

At the master plan level, the design explores architectural forms that express and enforce “connection” and definition of fluid edges. It also proposes a network of green corridors and revitalises conservancy lanes that are steeped in memory through creation of pocket parks.

The design of the experimental theatres aims to spatialise the four theatres described by Peter Brook in **The Empty Space**. In *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook argues that theatre requires only one person to act and another to watch. Stripped of spectacle and convention, theatre emerges through encounter, attention, and exchange. This idea resonates with the notion of the city as a stage, where everyday life itself becomes performance.

Brook identifies four forms of theatre, which are spatialised in this thesis. The **Immediate Theatre** is based on presence, spontaneity, and direct interaction. It is translated into an open, fluid layout with no fixed stage or seating, where performers and audiences share the same ground and centres of attention constantly shift.

The **Rough Theatre** thrives in the energy of everyday life. Rooted in streets and markets, it is interpreted through layered public spaces where platforms, steps, tree bases, and thresholds become informal stages.

In contrast, the **Deadly Theatre** is rigid, hierarchical, and detached. It is expressed as a chamber theatre with controlled sightlines, fixed seating, and isolated viewing positions that limit interaction.

Finally, the **Holy Theatre** seeks to reveal what ordinarily escapes perception, giving form to larger questions and invisible realities. It is reimagined as a circular, floating volume without corners or directional bias, creating a space of collective focus and contemplation.

In addition, the concept of “seeing and being seen” is explored through a series of balcony conditions while the design aims to rethink the relationship between the audience and performer.

