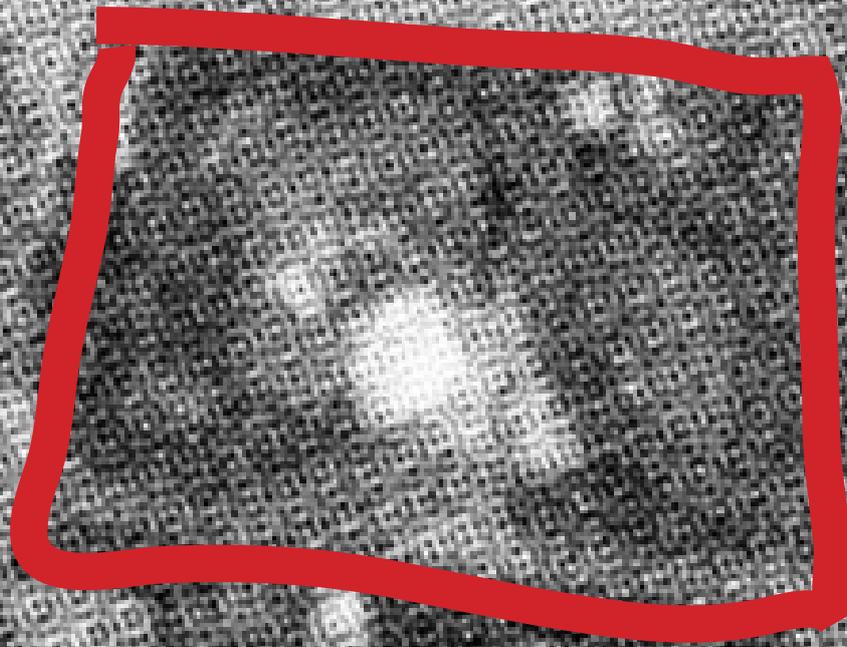


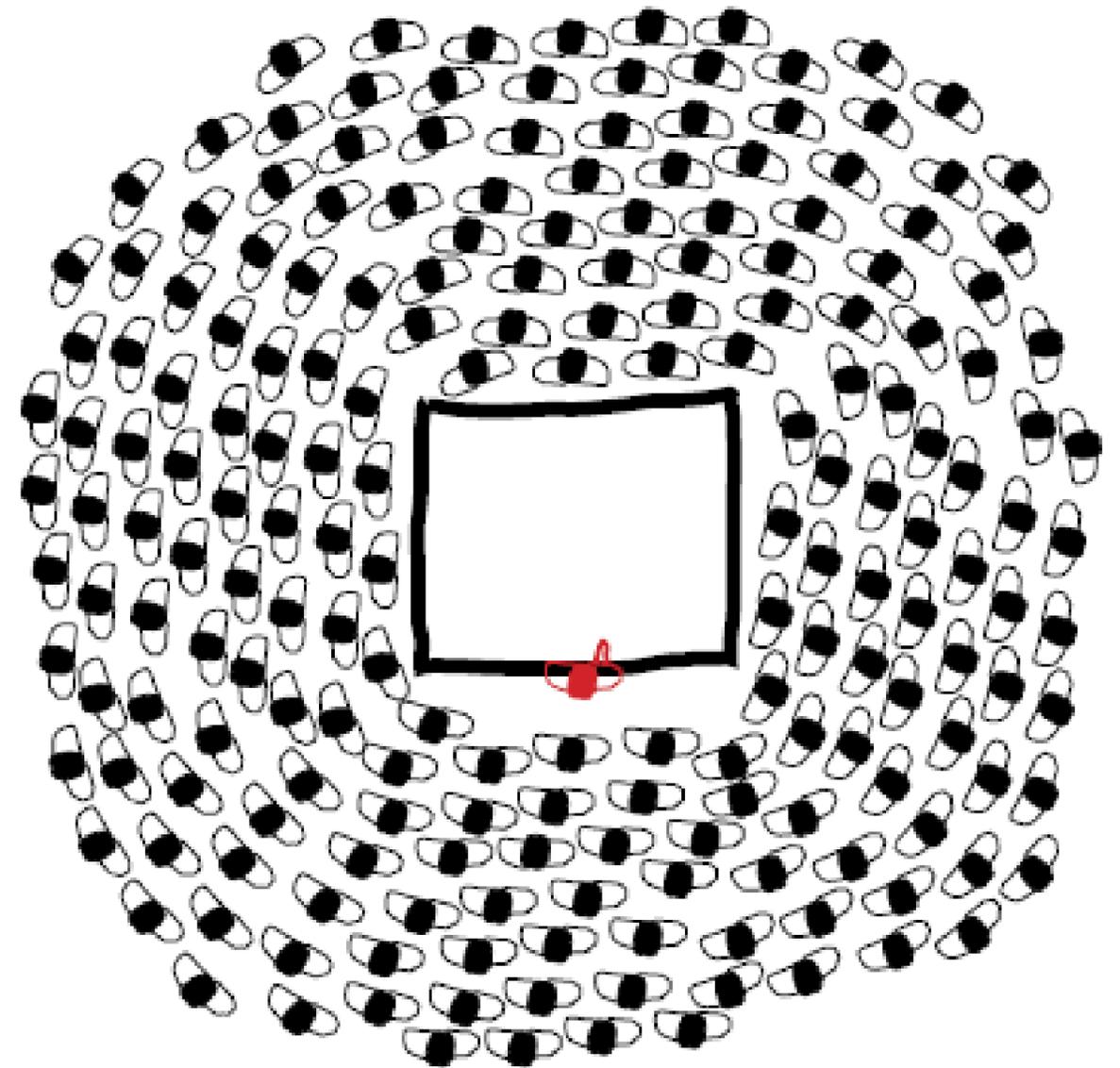
# WHY DO WE NOT STEP INTO THE SQUARE?

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF STAGES AND SOCIAL THEATRE



CONTEXT COURSE 2019  
FRANCINE CHAN

DO NOT STEP



INTO THE SQUARE

**AN EXTENSION OF THE HATE BRIEF: DO NOT STEP INTO THE SQUARE (DIS)ENGAGE YOUR DISSENT**

**INTRO//ESTABLISHING A SOCIAL STAGE**

Theatre, where spectacles are enacted to be interpreted - often with the intention of lasting intention. Execution stands, prisons, schools and courtrooms can be considered social stages where power and authority can be established. Objects as understood in the post structuralist era are free from the perceived dichotomies of the past between "form" and "substance" (Miller, 2006). When interrogated, they not only carry its physical materiality but its historical and social identity of the time before during and after it. (Heidegger, 1927) Deconstructing these spaces and objects into their lateral elements reveals an object's substantial materiality (Derrida, 1963) which allows me to view them as their "form" - stages which can assume to any form of architecture or medium and their "substance" - Social Theatre.

The stages listed at the start, when viewed as the casual, or surface dimension of its material identity may seem like architecture built for vastly different functions. (Miller, 2006) However, when viewed from the logical dimension, originating but evolving from the structuralist view of "logos" to include a lateral approach to considering an object's substance, their architectural form is transient to the culture and time of when they were constructed (Heidegger, 1927) while their metaphysical substance remains similar - despite variations in approaches and audiences, its intention of creating a semiotic identity (Peirce and Buchler, 1955) around Social Theatre remains similarly linked to establishing an authoritative role within society. Semiotics as discussed here looks at signs in the material world as objects of consequence where it's both processual and entangled within its discourse of social value. (Miller, 2006)

Space, which is fundamental in any form of communal life (Crampton and Elden, 2016) acts as a stage that anchors the enactment of Social theatre to exercise power, which I refer to in this case as the societal performance of an individual or collective group of people which situates them within their role in the social hierarchy anchoring the power of a tradition of practice and weaving it into the historical narrative of a space. (Parker Pearson and Richards, 1994)

The "form" and "substance" of an object is used to deconstruct the historical and social materiality of stages- not to dichotomize and isolate but to uncover the evolution of authority and power masquerading within the spatial discourse. In order to extract the narrative that social theatre drives into society, I will draw upon this structure to look into their spatial identity (Hodder and Hutson, 2009) and explore how these social stages support the application of political ideologies and its projection onto society.

In order to imbue the power of authority into objects, ideology must be manifested into tangible forms to be read and understood by society. In discipline and punish, Foucault defines how torture is a technique and not lawless rage (Foucault, 1977). Therefore it transcends the physicality of punishment and is capable of being adapted across time and culture.

The ritualistic nature of torture involves the intended marking of an individual either by scar or spectacle. (Foucault, 1977) Cases of social theatre regards the latter in order to project the intent of ceremonial justice and order. In such situations, the dynamics of hierarchical power is displayed within such spectacles where there is a judge, the condemned and the observer.

A theatrical reproduction of punishment is described by Foucault as not about

the form of the punishments but the ideology behind it (Foucault, 1977) where each segment is ritualistically scripted to reinforce societal awareness by performing the judicial power of law and concretize the idea of political justice. (Conquergood, 2002)

In such cases, a social hierarchy of power is established through the administration of justice (Conquergood, 2002) in instances where power of the "sovereign" is eclipsed and restored. (Foucault, 1977) In such cases, the judge and the condemned are just mediums used to convey the purpose of a spectacle.

The 1830s saw the redrawing and relocation of punishment from public squares to prisons. This shift redefined social theatre from public spectacles to perceptions of architecture where this ideology was resettled. (344, lethal theatre) Upon this merger of ideology and space, there was a profound shift in the dramaturgy of administering authority within societies. (Parker Pearson and Richards, 1994)

It was not necessarily a change within the technical form of architecture but the merger of ideology and space which meant that spaces would be increasingly entangled and bear the language of authority within society. (Crampton and Elden, 2016)

Spaces cannot be constructed to be of societal consequence without figures of authority to maintain order, it relies on human presence to govern a space, and enact the rituals of social theatre to enforce power. (Crampton and Elden, 2016) It is the act of how social theatre is read when reflected onto objects of architecture that creates the identity of authority, transforming these objects into semiotic representations of power that bears the weight of political literature addressing the maintenance of order and requirements within its society. (Crampton and Elden, 2016)

However, as a consequence of displacing a linear narrative of social theatre as a public spectacle into the different stages of architecture, the history and knowledge of this ritual is concealed behind the material form of the space, (Heidegger, 1927) isolating its intentions of enforcing order through disciplinary examples within the constraints of the stage.

This does not mean that the knowledge of this social awareness is lost behind the materiality of the stage but that a new form of power has been established through the evolution of social theatre that led to the creation of authoritative establishments. (Conquergood, 2002)

Stages of social theatre individualizes bodies within its location and creates a hierarchical framework that polices people in accordance to the requirements of law and order within that society. (Foucault, 1977) Individually they function as different identities of authority but when combined, an overarching narrative of disciplinary power enacted through it reflects how society reads and responds to these sites of knowledge.





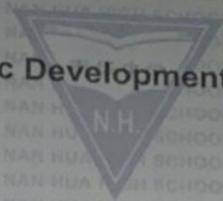
#### **I NOT STUPID (2002) - REPRESENTATION OF PUBLIC CANING IN SCHOOLS**

On this stage hierarchies are established. Awards are distributed in front of an audience. (Kouo, 2019) Apologies are addressed towards an audience. Punishments are handed out often- in front of audiences. 5-6.(I Not Stupid, 2002) This form of social theatre is to be performed by those on the stage and observed silently by those below. This is not a participative program. This is the symbolism of authoritative ascension, display of control and degradation of hierarchical status. The stage doesn't exist individually or simply as an elevated platform. The platform symbolizes the structure of thought that builds it and understood as a judgement of one's place within that hierarchy.



# NAN HUA HIGH SCHOOL

## Holistic Development Profile



Page: 2 of 3  
Date: 24 Oct 2011

Name : FRANCINE CHAN WEN XIN

Identification No. : S9713489H

### Personal Qualities

Personal Qualities	Assessments	Rating	SDP Domain
Confidence	OVERALL	Demonstrates	Morale
Integrity	OVERALL	Strongly Demonstrates	Social/Moral
Leadership	OVERALL	Adequately Demonstrates	Leadership
Respect Others	OVERALL	Adequately Demonstrates	Social/Moral
Teamwork	OVERALL	Strongly Demonstrates	Social/Moral

### Physical Fitness

#### BMI Weight Indicator:

Severely Overweight [ ] Overweight [ ] Acceptable [  ] Underweight [ ]  
Severely Underweight [ ] Others [ ]

#### Physical Fitness Test Award:

Gold [  ] Silver [ ] Bronze [ ] Nil [ ] Absent [ ] Exempted [ ]

### Community Involvement Programme

Activity	Organisation	Role	Duration
			h min
Mid-Autumn Festival Celebration	Nan Hua High School	PARTICIPANT	009 30
Active Citizenship Day	Nan Hua High School	PARTICIPANT	003 00
Awareness talk by Hospice	Hospice Association	PARTICIPANT	001 00
Home Visit to Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital	Nan Hua High School	PARTICIPANT	003 00
Total Duration			016 30

### Co-Curricular Activities

CCA Name	Event/Competition	Involvement Name	SDP Domain
TAEKWONDO	-	Member	Physical

#### CCA Attendance :

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Overall
4/4	6/7	8/8	0/0	18/19 94.74%

CCA Name	Event/Competition	Involvement Name	SDP Domain
NCC (LAND)	-	Member	Physical
	NOT APPLICABLE	Lance Corporal	Leadership
	Camp Steel	Participated In Uniformed	Physical
	NCC Day Parade 2011	Participated In Uniformed	Physical
		Organisation Annual Parade/Event	

While this projected knowledge sets the scene for maintaining order within institutions of learning and is effectiveness in projecting intent through this object, it also probamatically creates a narrative for a top down social hierarchy created by the ministry of education, allowing political influence (Ong, 2016) which imparts greater knowledge to those who are deserving. With this structure of social theatre modeled after the ideology of creating discipline, it inevitably spawns a social ranking system 7.(Francine Chan. 2012) that internalizes this need for gaining power and authority within an institution of knowledge where there is the need to conform to this structure in order to gain approval in society when an individual's value no longer depends solely on their academic knowledge.

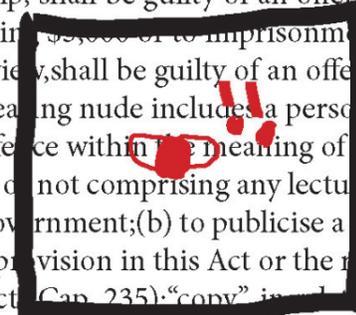
On the other end of the spectrum, there are also stages where social theatre occurs in a non enclosed space. How does this affect the logic and language of politics within these spaces and how is authority enforced and interpreted? Using the the same society as a comparison, the Speaker's Corner in Singapore is constructed as a stage for protests, modeled after that in Hyde Park. (National Library Board, 2019) However, an interesting dichotomy between its form and substance, the constructed identity and how it's perceived, has emerged with the evolving complexity of the discourse behind social stages, the dynamics of authority is once again, no longer that clearly laid out.

While it is constructed to be a free space for protest, there are still structures of authoritative legislation behind its use. A permit is needed for the speakers corner with separate applications for singaporeans and non-singaporeans, persons or entities.(National Parks Board, 2019) It is interesting to note that there are additional stipulations where a protest require a police permit should it breach the permitted guideline of topics. (Ministry of Communications and Information, 2019)

Behind these guidelines that governs a space constructed for free speech lies the patrolled delegation of power creating a perception of fear surrounding the discrepancies and convolution within what is permitted inducing a state of conscious and permanent visibility ensuring the automatic function of power and self policing. (Foucault, 1977) This fear of authority is supported by additional laws in place such as the public order act and the internal security act which override any relaxation of rules within that social stage.(Fung, 2013) This is due to the fact that the public order act may be used to regulate public assemblies to preserve the maintenance of public order (PUBLIC ORDER ACT, 2012) without clear specifications on what may be considered an act of public nuisance and also the internal security act (INTERNAL SECURITY ACT) which allows the arrest of an individual without prior evidence "guilty until proven innocent".

The problems within the knowledge of authoritative order through social theatre is that people are made aware of the consequences to the act of protest, leading to the lack of contentment towards an assigned authority. Despite attempts by local media to project the intention of this stage as one of free speech (Today Singapore, 2016), and the delegation of the permit away from the police force, the space is still perceived as one of disciplined order due to the fear of surveillance or arrest due to the inconsistencies and lack of contention in power within these grounds. (Dwyer, 2004) These indiscrepancies in the reported discourse surrounding this stage also extends to what is reported nationally where the control of media lies in the hand of political authority as opposed to international sources that are privately funded. (Ungku, 2017) (Lee, 2017)

**DO NOT STEP**



**INTO THE SQUARE**

Foucault describes the success of history belonging to those who are able to seize rules, disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning and redirect the rules. (Foucault, 1977) With these complex forms of architectural stages, the elements of authoritative and disciplinary intent within social theatre can be easily masked behind materiality (Heidegger, 1927) by those in power through social hierarchies surrounding the conditions of speaking or performing within social theatre. When questioned, its purpose and form can likewise be convoluted and hidden behind the need for order and law. In other words, within these situations where the form is constantly changing, the historical discourse of discipline and punish within social theatre camouflages behind institutions of societal order and good intentions.

“The cities, with the problems that they raised, and the particular forms that they took, served as models for the governmental rationality that was to apply to the whole of the territory.” (Crampton and Elden, 2016)

Deconstructing a stage beyond its material form reveals the mechanics of social theatre behind it and the discourse around its intent. Understanding the cultural influence and how it's perceived shows the working of authority and its approaches towards maintaining order within society. The application of knowledge in this instance adapts western structures of authority brought over through colonization (Singapore Law Watch, 2019) but adapted to the majority beliefs in moral and governmental philosophy largely influenced by legalism within Chinese culture which emphasizes for order above all human concerns. This meant a carefully structured code of law ruled by a governmental policing force that would stringently and impartially enforce them even with the most minor infractions (Sunzi, Giles and Phillips, n.d.). As a result, it forms a societal model with the hierarchy created through social theatre but with repercussions of discipline through corporal punishment such as canning and even execution inciting discipline and order through the fear of citizens. (Sarat and Boulanger, 2005)

The objects previously used to situate knowledge within society revealed the use of social theatre to project scenes of discipline and punishment whenever authority is questioned to maintain social order. (Foucault, 1977) The performative example of the repercussions of dissent (Conquergood, 2002) curbs the freedom of speech and creates an automated form of self policing applied which is crucial for the societal integration of an individual. (Dwyer, 2004) This is due to the fact that a hierarchical structure of status and public perception has been ingrained within an individual (Foucault, 1977) and the expression of dissent or non conformity meant the expulsion from the social discourse. (Mydans, 2000)

Which is a problem because without the voicing of dissent there is nothing that can be debated and done to change structures of power within legislation (Fung, 2013) and places the problem of social theatre - or lack thereof within the hands of the handpicked elite, highly educated individuals who have proven themselves to be non confrontational (Tay, 2017) and ascended within the ranks of a society which maintains strict regulations of speech and protest. Stages of social theatre have been used to elevate and create the model societal hierarchy of an environment of discipline, control and governmental rationality.

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