



Entering Bugis Street is like entering a slum - more like a wet market of low-quality tourist souvenirs and clothes than a gentrified walking street. Its space is tight and overcrowded. Venture beyond the main corridor and you enter a dense labyrinth of greater chaos. At every corner there are stores full of dizzying LED lights with merchandise sprawling beyond their compounds. The different aesthetics of individual stores clashes with one another.

Stores compete for attention by displaying flashier LED signages which disorderly and stalely brightens the otherwise dim interiors. Messy and crammed, one can only feel unsafe from pickpockets and molesters in the crowd. Its dark red walls are rotting off and its low ceiling runs naked with exposed ducts and wirings. It takes a short circuit to set the place ablaze.

This place is hell for me but a playground for my mother whom I often accompany. She loves exploring this retail maze in search of cheap thrills. Truly its bazaar-like interiors that organically developed are honest to its function, it excites the bazaar visitor its target user.

I celebrate that it is going to give way to a rejuvenation project by CapitaLand. Covid-19 is a perfect opportunity to rethink Bugis Street, for it is way too tightly spaced for pandemic resilience. In the absence of tourists, now is a good time to revitalise and gentrify this grand bazaar of Singapore for a post-pandemic future.