



THE PRODUCTION OF DISCOURSE ON AUTONOMOUS ARCHITECTURE IN
THAILAND



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Doctor of Philosophy (Architecture)
Department of Architecture
Graduate School, Silpakorn University
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By
MR. Satanan CHANOWANNA

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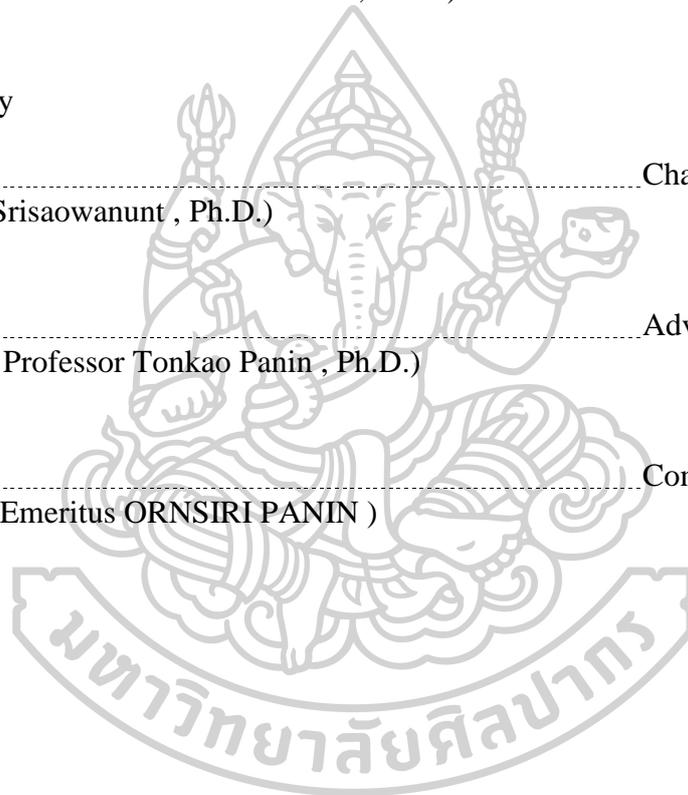
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Starting in the 1960s, and gaining intensity since the turn of the millennium, the identity of Thai architecture has been a subject of much discussion and written discourse among architects, academicians, persons who commission architectural designs, and the media. A major topic of this dialogue has been a quality labeled “Thai-ness.” There have been questions about its existence, its possible loss or alteration due to global influences, and its substance. In this thesis, I have attempted to explore these questions in two ways. I have studied 16 structures designed and built since 2000 to describe and interpret features in them that might express their identity, and I have studied the discourse on contemporary architecture to try to discern how architects addressed structural features and what their intentions might signify. In this effort I have explored historical and global trends that have been significant for Thai designs.

It has become clear that since 2000, the trends in and focus on Thai structural identity have been transformed. Architects have shifted from directly borrowing traditional Thai styles to adapting the vernacular styles when they could solve a problem. This has generated an architecture that is true to itself but does not necessarily have a familiar Thai appearance. The focus is on how a structure will be used and its practicality for modern life. Elements such as spaces, roof forms, openings, wall surfaces, and materials have been designed in an abstract, modern form. This has minimized the plainness of pure form and broken the box by merging form with location in logical ways. Naturalism, sufficiency, and localism have become part of the story of contemporary identity.

Various types of discourse have been produced by architectural stakeholders to legitimize the new identity. The media, especially, created a greater awareness of and familiarity with the region’s broader and abstract meanings. I argue that it may not be necessary to define the national architecture in terms of “Thai-ness” (as it has been in the past) and that this definition has led to a narrow, limited discourse and struggles of interpretation and application. A better definition may be “autonomous architecture,” a form that encompasses place, time, and individual.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The issue of cultural identity in Thai architecture has been the source of much discussion in recent years, and it continues to be a factor on the current architectural scene. Discussions on the topic began in the 1970s, when a group of cultural reactionaries formed an anti-Western movement. This led to a dramatic debate on identity in the late 1980s, which concerned the unsettled theoretical issue of the style Thai architects should adopt for their buildings. There were frequent criticisms from conservative architects of that era that designs lacked Thai-ness. The rising concern was that the country might be on the brink of losing its architectural identity. Tensions from a clash of the new and the old became a dilemma. The problems were due to the emergence of modern architecture and its influence on the architectural practices of Thai professionals. For three decades, the problem aroused numerous debates and produced much discourse and a search for an authentic Thai architectural form.

The definition of the term *identity* is mutable, and arguments can even be made about whether or not a fixed architectural identity exists. This area has been a subdiscipline of cultural studies that has been addressed in discourse and arguments, and it is by its nature fluid and flexible over time and across places. This thesis uses the term *identity* and, more specifically, the term *Thai-ness* as the basic nomenclature for its discussion of this issue.¹

¹This thesis owes much to the definition of *identity* of Thongchai Vinijakul and the interpretations of it by Saichon Sattayanurak, Krittiya Achawakul, and Anuthee Dechthepaporn, as well as Soroth Sirisai. Their contributions in several articles indicated that the terms *Thai-ness* and *Thai identity* are somewhat artificial. They are mutable and may never have existed as definitive terms. One must be aware that they are constantly shifting in both meaning and convention in academia. See Saichon Sattayanurak, "Prawat Karnsang 'Kwampen Thai' Krasae Lak [History of the Mainstream of the Production of Thai-ness] [in Thai]," in *Chintanakran Kwanpen Thai [An Imagined Thai-ness] [in Thai]*, ed. Krittiya Achawakul (Nakhon Pathom: Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 2008).7; Anuthee

Today's contemporary architecture has several features that are based on ideas developed during the 1980s and 1990s. If Thai architecture has an identity, how are its principles shown in contemporary design? The hypothesis of this thesis is that contemporary architecture has to be the direct result of recent history. The hypothesis also states that architecture has certain unified attributes that speak to their own time. The objective of this work is to explain what contemporary architecture is, specifically as it relates to houses. To acquire an understanding of contemporary architecture one must learn what it consists of in the 2000s and also what it consisted of during its recent history, the 1980s and 1990s. This is the subject of this research. This thesis views this subject in two ways, the buildings designed and the discourse about them by architects examining how architecture mediates between cultural discourses, relationship of culture, politics, and economy.

Today's architecture owes a great deal to the crystallization of thought during past decades. A dichotomy has been generated that exists even in the present time. The stormy polemics of the 1980s and 1990s partially pushed the professional realm in a new direction of authentic, or true-self, architecture after a turn towards the disorder of eclecticism, as is seen in works by Rangsan Torsuwan.² (Also see Figure 41: as an example). This thesis argues that since the year 2000, Thailand has followed a more settled and unified path towards what could be regarded as an autonomous architecture. It also argues that there has been a distinct transformation of style that

Dechthewaporn, "Kwampen Thai Lai Na: Karnyangching Lae Bangpan Puenthi Niyam [Multi-face Thainess: Contesting and Sharing of Definition Area]," accessed December 30, 2019, available from <http://academia.edu/2316128/>; Soroth Sirisai, "Kalathesa Khong Kwanpen Thai Amnat Thang Phasa Kab Karnleuksarn Chintaphab Haeng Tuaton Khon Khon Tualektuanoi Nai Chiwit Prachamwan [Space and Time of Thai-ness, Power of Language, and Selection of Personal Imagination of Subordinates in Everyday Life]," accessed December 30, 2019, available from <http://oknation.nationtv.tv/blog/Thaidialogue/2007/12/27/entry-1>.

²Examples are the Amarin Plaza and the Sathorn Unique Tower, both of which are in the style of Western historicist postmodern architecture, whereas the Hyatt Erawan Hotel has architectural elements mostly derived from Thai traditionalist architecture. These projects were under attack by several critics before the year 2000.

has caused a new form of architecture since the millennium; the tensions around new ideas and a literary and artistic climate of sophistication have contributed to this autonomous style.

Once the criticisms of the lack of Thai-ness in design and the blaming for it abated, there was an inclination to search for an appropriate approach to identity. The hope was that architecture might take on an identity based on broader choices and more relevance to place and time. As a consequence, some new projects designed after 2000 directly and indirectly encompassed a particularly unifiable tendency towards a lightness of structures, components, and spaces yet also a complexity of them. This could be related to the concept of lightness that was an aspect of traditional Thai architecture, as can be noted in the discourse on it, and also to a philosophy of sufficiency. Thai contemporary form, however, is an amalgamation of several influences, including Western effects, traditional architecture,³ and vernacular architecture arising from global and local sociocultural factors. The strongest impact was input from the West, which, throughout history, generated dichotomous tensions not only in the creation of physical forms but also in the tenets of discourse. The hegemony of the West came in different ways, mostly through the influx of global ideologies such as the New Normal, Slow Living (or Slow Movement), and Lightness.⁴ They impacted the thinking that produced both physical and philosophical products, and architects were participants in that kind of thinking. To

³Joti Kalayanamitr, “Naichang Aek Nai Rob Songroi Pi Haeng Krun Rattanakosin [The Prime Master Craftsman of the Rattanakosin Within 200 Years]” [in Thai], *Silpakorn University Journal* 4–5, Special Volume (December 1980 to December 1982), 44–66.

⁴A new normal is known as the state following a crisis that impacts the worldview of particular culture and its change is drastic and prevalent. Slow Living is a cultural transformation towards slowing down life's pace beginning with Carlo Petrini's opposing the opening of a McDonald's restaurant (a fast-food brand) in Piazza di Spagna, Rome in 1986. Lightness is a chapter in Italo Calvino, Geoffrey Brock, trans. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1985–1986) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 1–29.

understand the mood and tone of the development of the issues, one has to scrutinize their history, especially the recent decades from the 1970s onward, and also their distant history to capture a glimpse of the architectural progress during and since the Siamese eras.

In Siam (now Thailand) in the eighteenth century, architecture developed from various factors, such as sociocultural, sociopolitical, and technological factors, into what is now known as contemporary architecture. Today, architecture has a variety of modes that have arisen from the growth of society and economics. From the early Rattanakosin period, which began in 1782, until the present time, the changes were relatively slow.

Siam was established as an independent nation and maintained its independence. According to evidence from the old eras, the kingdom maintained its own tangible traditions. In terms of architectural forms, this meant that despite the various modes and traits of architecture, the country retained its unique tradition that had developed as a consequence of a long amalgamation of various inputs and influences. This included the influences of nearby neighbors such as Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malay, and Annam and also of more remote countries such as India and China. The kingdom had diplomatic relations with the West and the Arab nations starting in the Ayutthaya Period.

The style of the past was also due to a strong influence by Buddhism and the monarchs who had the powerful hegemony of the state. The firm tie with these two influences deeply shaped the spirit of Thai architecture and reflected the impact of class and a hierarchy of style. The country had a unique form of residential architecture, which was what later was idealized as the old identity of Thai, or traditional style, a style that has long been established as the classical basis of Thailand's architecture.

Although Siam was not colonized, it was surrounded by colonies of the West, including Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Myanmar. The imperialism brought to those colonies crossed borders into Thailand. It was a deep-rooted cultural transformation that caused significant changes in architectural culture. However, changes were seen in Thailand during the more open reign of King Rama IV, which brought into the kingdom new ideas, especially the concept of modernity. Thailand had undergone continuous modernization since the 1850s following the Bowring Treaty, which forced the nation to open to commerce and, also, culture. The changes in the style of architecture took place gradually, however.

It was not until the reign of King Rama V that the slow development of architecture was accelerated, partially due to the preferences of the king himself, who favored Western styles. At one point, he visited Europe and brought back with him new ideas of neoclassical architecture. He commanded that several new buildings be built, especially royal houses and palaces, in the style of the West. One example is the Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall (see Figure 28) which was designed by John Clunis, a British architect. Dramatic changes in trends in architecture continued after that.

A debate occurred in the 1960s and 1970s concerning the reaction to the revivalism scheme initiated by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, who had been the prime minister from 1938 to 1944 and 1948 to 1957. The goal of this nationalistic and propagandistic campaign was to instill a Thai-ness among Thai citizens by means of a theme of newly constructed customs.⁵ Quite a few critics attacked the schematic design generated under Plaek Phibunsongkhram and the government buildings constructed around that time; all were built in a similar way, in only three designs, A,

⁵New cultures, such as women had to wear skirt see Arun Wetchasuwan, *Khon Thai Kab Arayatham Tawantok [Thai People and the Western Civilization] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Sophon Karnphim, 1973), 174., and the *pad Thai*, the name of a food dish, were invented to imitate Western patterns of speech, for instance, the Italian word *pasta*; see Prasanee Kesabut, “The Campaign for Noodles Consumption and Vocation in Relation to the Nation-building Policy during Field Marshal Pleak Pibulsonggram’s Regime (1942-1944)” [in Thai], *BU Academic Review* 10, no. 1 (2011): 136-49.

B, and C, by cladding the outer structure of the buildings with traditional Thai ornaments, particularly the roof.

The conservative theorists, in a backlash to Plaek Phibunsongkhram's doctrine, who included Sulak Siwalak, Sang-arun Rattakasikorn, and Anuvit Charernsupkul,⁶ stated that Thailand was in an identity crisis. A series of theoretical papers were published to acknowledge and warn architects about such problems. Sulak was critical of the Plaek Phibunsongkhram style of architecture, especially the campaigns of the government to build state office buildings across the country. In his writing, Sulak criticizes Plaek Phibunsongkhram's schematic plan, saying that it used poorly placed traditional Thai, high-pitched gable roofs with simplified ornamentation and a box-like form in an attempt to make an instant Thai identification. In fact, however, the goal of Plaek Phibunsongkhram was primarily to meet earlier concerns about enhancing the country's identity. The critics believed that his attempt failed to recapture Thai-ness.⁷

Not only did the crisis due to Field Marshal Pleak Phibunsongkhram's scheme stir many intense debates, but it also motivated some criticisms of identity. One criticism was made in an article by Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura,⁸ who, in the 1980s, raised a serious concern about the identity crises caused by the overinfluence of foreign style on Thai architecture. "Architects are getting lost,"⁹ he stated. According

⁶Sulak Siwalak, "Lai Sue Siam [Siamese Letters]," (Bangkok: Phrae Phittaya, 1967), p. 251; Sang-arun Rattakasikorn, *Saeng Arun Haeng Sathapattayakam [Light of Dawn of Architecture] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1999), 46–50; Anuvit Charernsupkul, "Oupasak Lae Patchai Karnneramit Sathapattayakam Laksana Thai [Obstructions of Thai Architectural Form Creation] [in Thai]," *ASA Journal* 1 (1969), 87.

⁷Sulak Siwalak, *ibid.*

⁸Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, "Sathapattayakam Thai Samai Mai (Thai Ror Kao) Ekkalak Sathapattayakam Thai: Khorkhidhen Bang Prakarn Nai Karnkamnot Naew Rupbaeb – Soot Samret Nai Karnsangarn [New Thai Architecture (Thai during Rama IX) Thai Architectural Identity]: Some Concepts in Determining the Creation for Forms-Instant Formula," [in Thai], *ASA Journal* June (1996), 48–65.

⁹*Ibid.*, 48.

to him, Thai architecture that retained Thai-ness should be redeveloped, not by literally adopting Thai traditional characters, but rather by using an adaptive modern Thai identity, which reflected the present context of modern social conditions. This was probably the only way out of the crisis for him. He also researched the status of Thai architecture and came up with a new form of contemporary Thai architecture.

In the same decade, the Association of Siamese Architects (ASA) held a conference and competition to find a solution to the identity situation. During the 1990s, academia was eagerly searching for Thai-ness. The stage for the various interpretations of this characteristic, especially the ones focusing on contemporary style, was populated by intellectuals such as Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn, Chatri Prakitnonthakan, Chatree Ladalalitsakul, and Vira Inpung. For Piyalada, Thai-ness encompassed a “feminine” and “enticing” quality through phenomenological/hermeneutic interpretation.¹⁰

As a result, architects deployed various new design approaches and built buildings that exemplified this quest, but for them, autonomous design was perceived differently. For example, a less acceptable approach was the return to the gabled roof. Although houses adorned with a simplified gable roof ridge replicated the traditional elements, they were viewed as too literal and a pastiche. Another controversial building was the Sukhothai Hotel, which was embellished with a row of stupas mirrored in the reflecting pool (Figure 13). A simplification of the architectural styles

¹⁰Important works on this topic include Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, “Panha Ekkalak Sathapattayakam [Problems of Architectural Identity] [in Thai],” *ASA Journal* 12(1) (April 1986):74–79; M.L. Piyalada’s discussion of the hermeneutic essence of Thai houses in Piyalada Thaveeprungsriporn, “Ruan Thai: An Aesthetic of Femininity?,” in *Phumpanya Sathapattayakam [Architectural Intellectual]* ed. Terdsak Tachakitkachorn (Bangkok: Textbook and Academic Document Center of Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, 2003), 71-75.; Chatri Prakitnonthakan, “How to Design Khwan Pen Thai Nai Sathapattayakam (Baeb Phuchiewcharn) [How to Design Thai-ness in Architecture (Like a Pro)] [in Thai],” *Aan* October–December 2008, 2008.

derived from a variety of choices such as traditionalism, ornamentation, the vernacular, and even eclecticism was another popular theme; it was seen in the work of the Habita Group and Ong-ard Satrabhandhu.¹¹

In recent commissions, such as the new Parliament House, on which building commenced in 2008 and whose designer, Chatree Ladlalitsakul, won a competition for it, the design included a profound concept of Thai-ness. This represented a concern about identity among the cultural consumers in the country. Criticisms about its form, such as “arbitrarily trying to make it Thai,” were aimed at the design principle, which literally employed, in several ways, Thai classical revival grammar. To critics, this ideology was rather anachronistic, that is, it was Thai style but not contemporary Thai style.¹²

A more sophisticated approach applied abstract features such as simplified spatial sequential organization. Those two approaches—i.e., the direct borrowing of the past forms and the abstract translation—have limitations, however, and although they reflected one local architectural feature, it became a trivial feature because one single approach might not serve different situations and building types. This shows that architects during that time paid special attention to the search for a relevant form that would depict Thai-ness from their points of view.

They later discovered that not many of the approaches were publicly accepted, especially among conservative scholars, but rather that they mostly provoked more

¹¹Important works include those by the Habita Group Chat Architects, "Bangkok Bastards: chapter 1," CHAT architects, <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.646650385405112.1073741858.479766448760174&type=3>., such as the Six Senses Yao Noi Resort Hotel, and Ong-ard Satrabhandhu, such as the Rachamankha Hotel and Tamarind Village Hotel, Chiang Mai.

¹²"Karnprakuad Ratthasapha Mai [The Competition for the New House of Parliament] [in Thai]," Nation, accessed January 2, 2020, <http://oknation.nationtv.tv/blog/creativity/2009/11/29/entry-4>.

criticisms.¹³ Thus, finding a standard methodology was not conveniently settled. Later theories highlighted the significance of a context that included sociocultural, socioeconomic, and geographical elements. This design technique to serve the context by a proper archetype, though not new, was taken into account more intensely and seriously and called for a serious bringing into practice. This was the lesson in schools of architecture across Thailand, which emphasized a serious following of the global theory of critical regionalism.¹⁴ Architects in the new millennium have been encouraged to embrace this concept. It could even be said that the general practice of contemporary architects lies in this type of agenda.

We must ask what is *contemporary* and what is the identity of Thai architecture? Also, what should we regard as contemporary architecture? The issue of style or characteristic has always been subject to lively debate in architectural circles, and questions are continually raised about whether or not style has a unified substance and whether one can distinguish a definitive current style or trend. Consequently, as mentioned, this thesis specifically attempts to find the answers of:

1) Have architects after 2000 found their identity. If yes, how and in what form?

¹³See more criticisms by Chatri Prakitnonthakan, "How to Design Khwam Pen Thai Nai Sathapattayakam (Baeb Phuchiewcharn) [How to Design Thai-ness in Architecture (Like a Pro)] [in Thai]," *Aan*, *ibid.*; and the criticism of Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya in his interview with Ekarin Phungpracha, "Sathapat Uchad Sathon 'Khwam Pen Thai' Yang Srithanonchai' Thassanawiphak Khong Doctor Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya [Visually-polluted Architecture Reflecting Cunning 'Thainess' in Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya's View] [in Thai]," " *Silapawattanatham*, September, 2002, 32.

¹⁴Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 324–327; Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefevre, "Why Critical Regionalism Today?" *Architecture and Urbanism* no. 236 (May 1990): 22–23, quoted in Kate Nesbitt, ed., *Theorizing A New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 484–492.

2) What was it about contemporary Thai architecture that caused the sudden explosion of discourses on architectural identity after 1970s, and what was the attribution of these discourses?

3) Why has the debate on identity in Thai architecture become increasingly important even in contemporary practice?

4) Who decides what is a legitimate exemplar of contemporary Thai architecture and why?

5) What is the current consensus of or probable autonomous Thai attribution?

Therefore, to cope with the current state of architectural scholarship, one needs to have adequate insight into the debates on identity and the problems occurring within the circle of Thailand's architects, including the variety of factors in the decades before 2000 that shaped architecture and did not make a broadly accepted as "identity" architecture. They will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 4.

This thesis argues that in the Thai architectural circle at present, as seen in the ASA exhibition of 2016 entitled "Back to Basic,"¹⁵ Thai-ness seemed to be a cliché not directly stated. New discourses have now taken place but only point towards the same goal, which is autonomy, or genuineness. This thesis presupposes that there exists another dimension of design that is more neutral, appears frequently in contemporary projects, and is unique enough to be read as a unity of style.

Several scholars contributed to the styles of the architecture and, especially, the lectures devoted to these issues. One significant work was the series by Li-Zenn

¹⁵This thesis adopted several excerpts from the Back to Basic exhibition, including the opening quotation in this chapter (footnote number 1). The exhibition is organized annually by the Association of Siamese Architects in the Royal Patronage (ASA), the principal society of Thailand's architects. The theme of the 2016 exhibition was "Back to Basic"; architects were invited to share their design ideologies by submitting an epigram and image that reflected the theme of Basic Image: What Is Good Architecture? The ASA acts as the main trend setter of designs that often influence the architectural direction of Thailand.

that was published in several large volumes, many of which featured collections of contemporary Thai architecture. Intellectual works published by the ASA, such as the *ASA Journal* and *ASA CREW*, discuss the important movements of Thai architecture. Among several scholarly works, there are popular publications such as the *Baan Lae Suan* magazine, which features outstanding works, particularly houses. However, although these publications provide basic information about relevant projects, the issues of the contemporary solution of identity representation, especially the theories, have never been discussed academically.



Figure 1 Some magazines that produce discourses

Source: By the author excerpted from *Baan Lae Suan Magazine*, *Elle Decoration*, *Design Décor*, *ASA Journal*

A volume on the contemporary house designs of Li-Zenn, *Houses by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism*, can be used as a basis for discussion. Several articles from several media are sources that this thesis will use. It will also review remarks pamphlet card published during the ASA 2016 conference, in which key contemporary architects such as M.L. Varudh Varavan, Kanika Rattanapredakul, Mathar Bunnag, and Pongpon Yuttharat, to name a few, were asked for their definitions of good architecture and they had to pick one favorite picture to be printed on the reversed side of the card. The oeuvres of certain architects, especially young professionals who have not often been studied, will be reviewed and discussed.



Figure 2 Some books that produce contemporary architectural discourses

Sources: By the author excerpted from ASA Crew, Baan Lae Suan (Speical Issue),

Home and Décor, ASA Journal

To fill in the existing gap in knowledge aforementioned, this thesis delves into the two aspects of a dichotomy by investigating the cases selected and discourse produced and places them in the theoretical context of the West. All in all, the study of the issues will help with a deeper understanding of the architectural theories and polemics of identity in Thailand which will contribute to a more complete picture of the history of contemporary architecture.

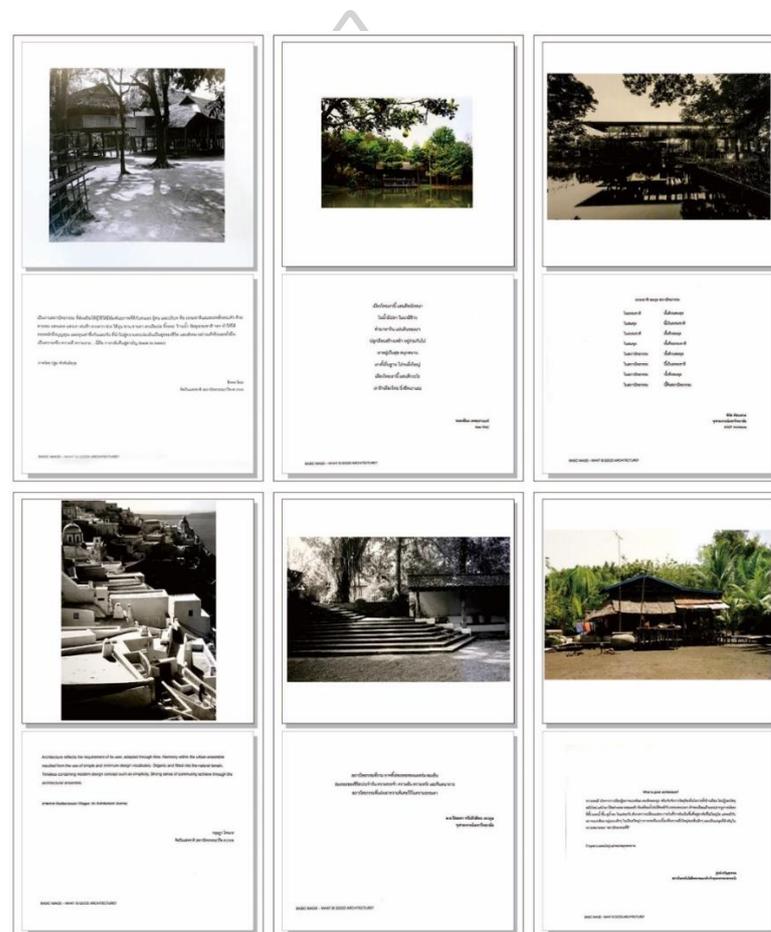
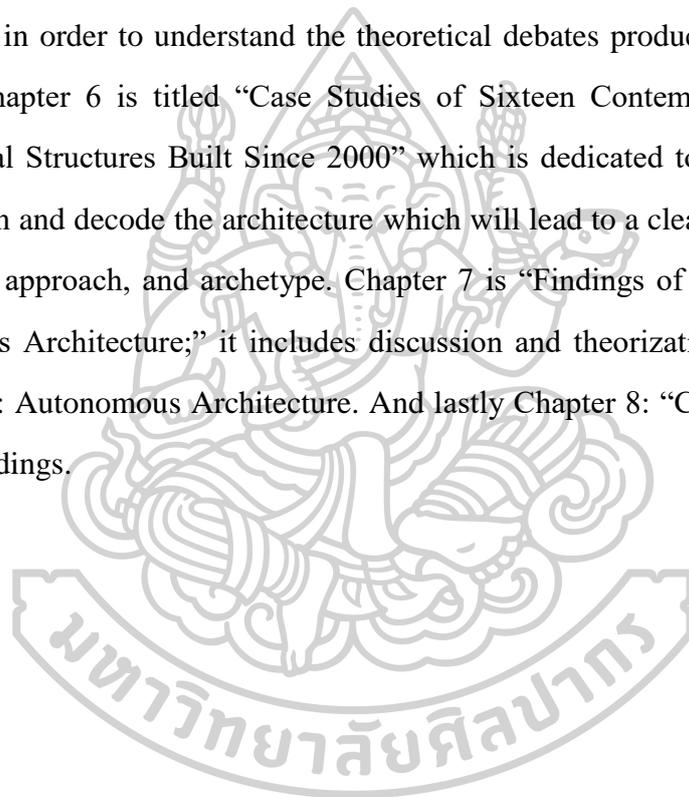


Figure 3 Pamphlet cards (excerpted) published during the ASA 2016 conference
 Source: ASA, *"Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?"*, Pamphlet of "ASA 2016: Back to Basic," (Bangkok: 2016).

This thesis has eight chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background and summary of the problem. Chapter 2, "Global and Local Trends and the Relationship

to Authenticity,” contextualizes the theoretical arena that acted as a seedbed for growth in recent decades. Chapter 3, Current Prominent Discourse, is devoted to comprehensively discussing the production of pivotal debates and architectural discourse. Chapter 4, “Historical Context of the Transformation of Thai Architectural Identity,” will delve into the past to survey the key incident that affected what now is the autonomous architecture. Chapter 5 is titled “Autonomous Architecture: Discourse of Contemporary Practice;” it copes with the analysis and interpretation of current movements in order to understand the theoretical debates produced by the involving parties. Chapter 6 is titled “Case Studies of Sixteen Contemporary Autonomous Architectural Structures Built Since 2000” which is dedicated to the comprehensive investigation and decode the architecture which will lead to a clear view of the design abstraction, approach, and archetype. Chapter 7 is “Findings of the Case Studies on Autonomous Architecture;” it includes discussion and theorization of contemporary architecture: Autonomous Architecture. And lastly Chapter 8: “Conclusion,” presents the final findings.



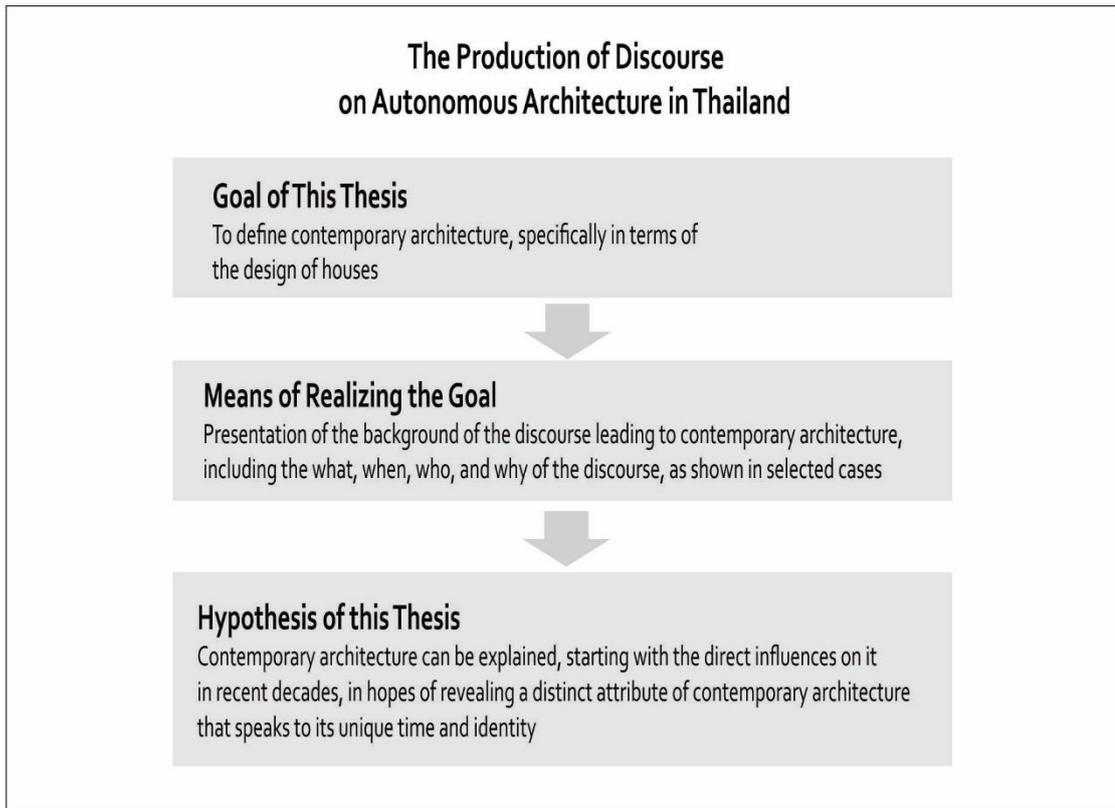


Figure 4 Goal, Means of Realizing the Goal, and Hypothesis

Source: By the author

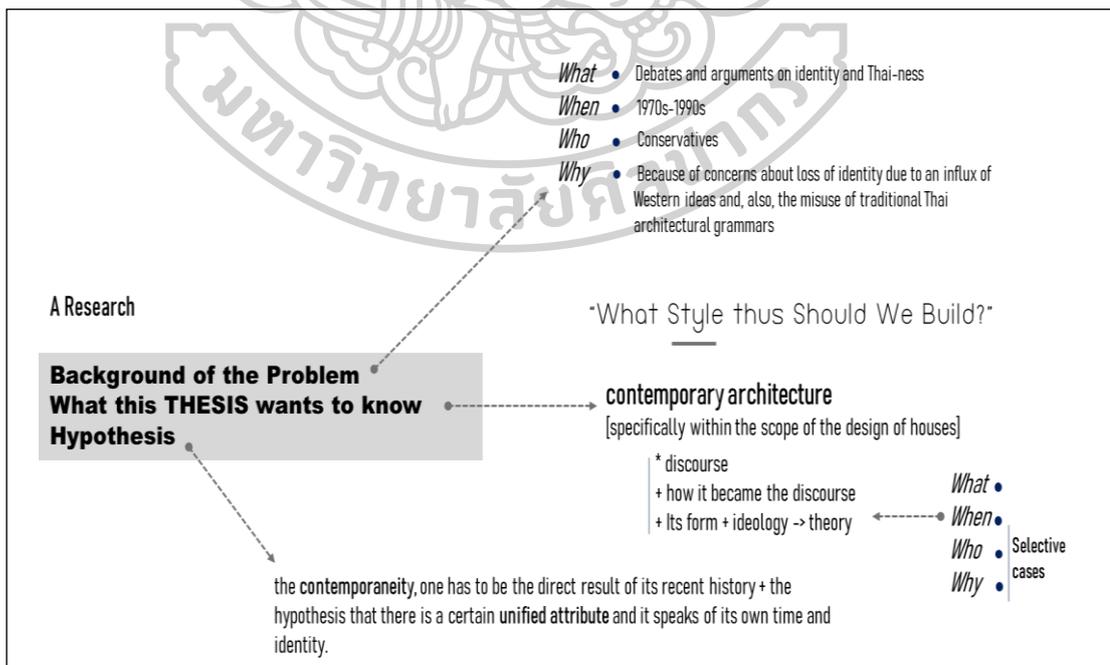


Figure 5 Issue Problematization of this thesis

Source: By the author

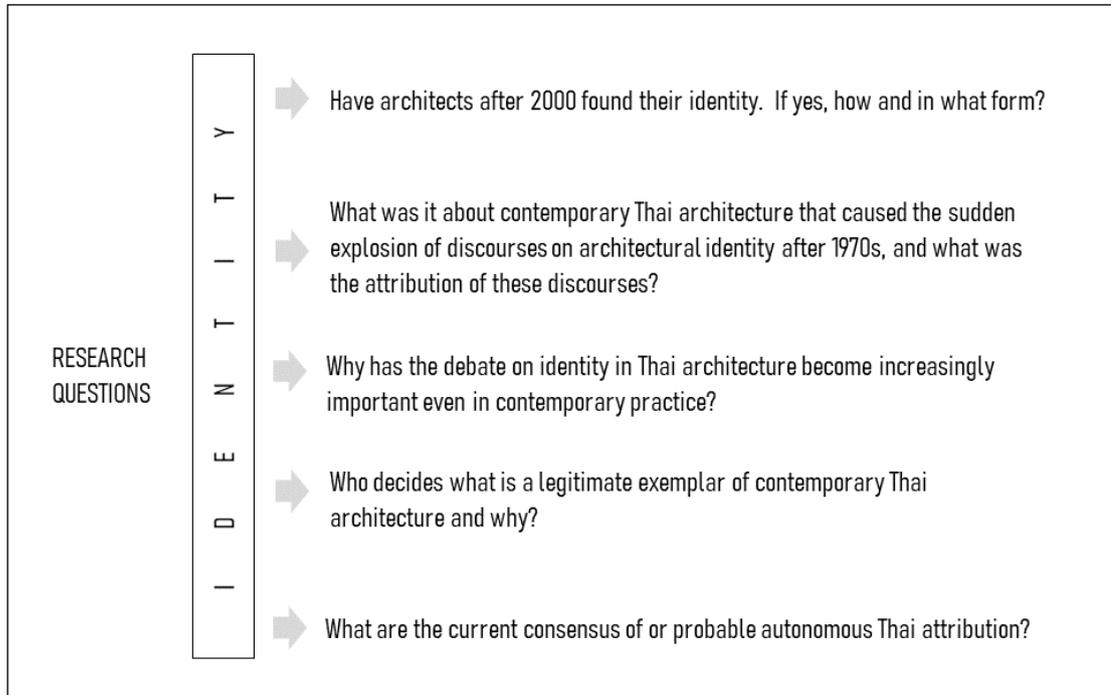
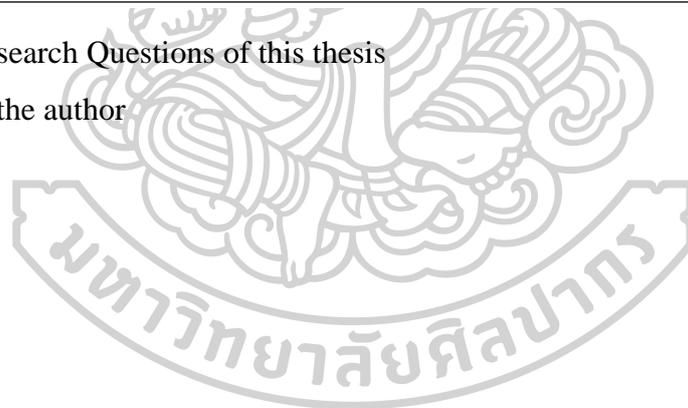


Figure 6 Research Questions of this thesis

Source: By the author



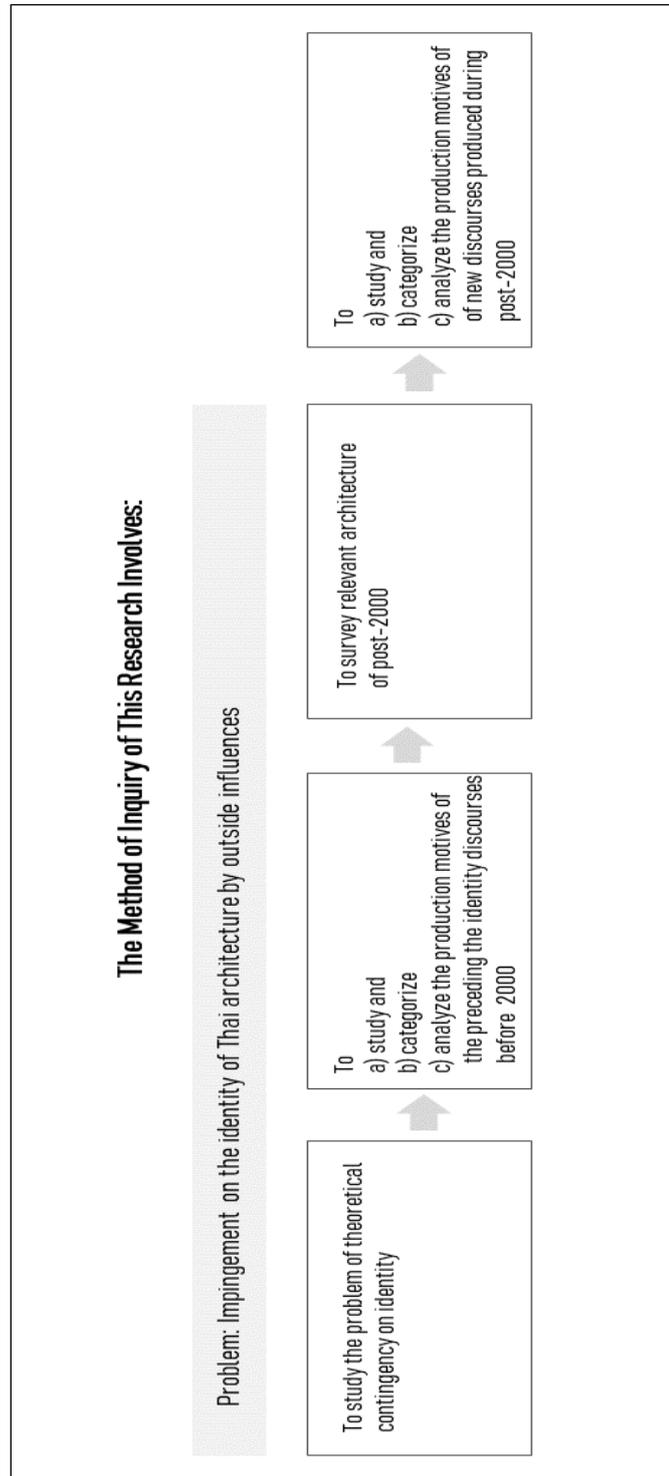


Figure 7 The research methodology of this thesis

Source: By the author

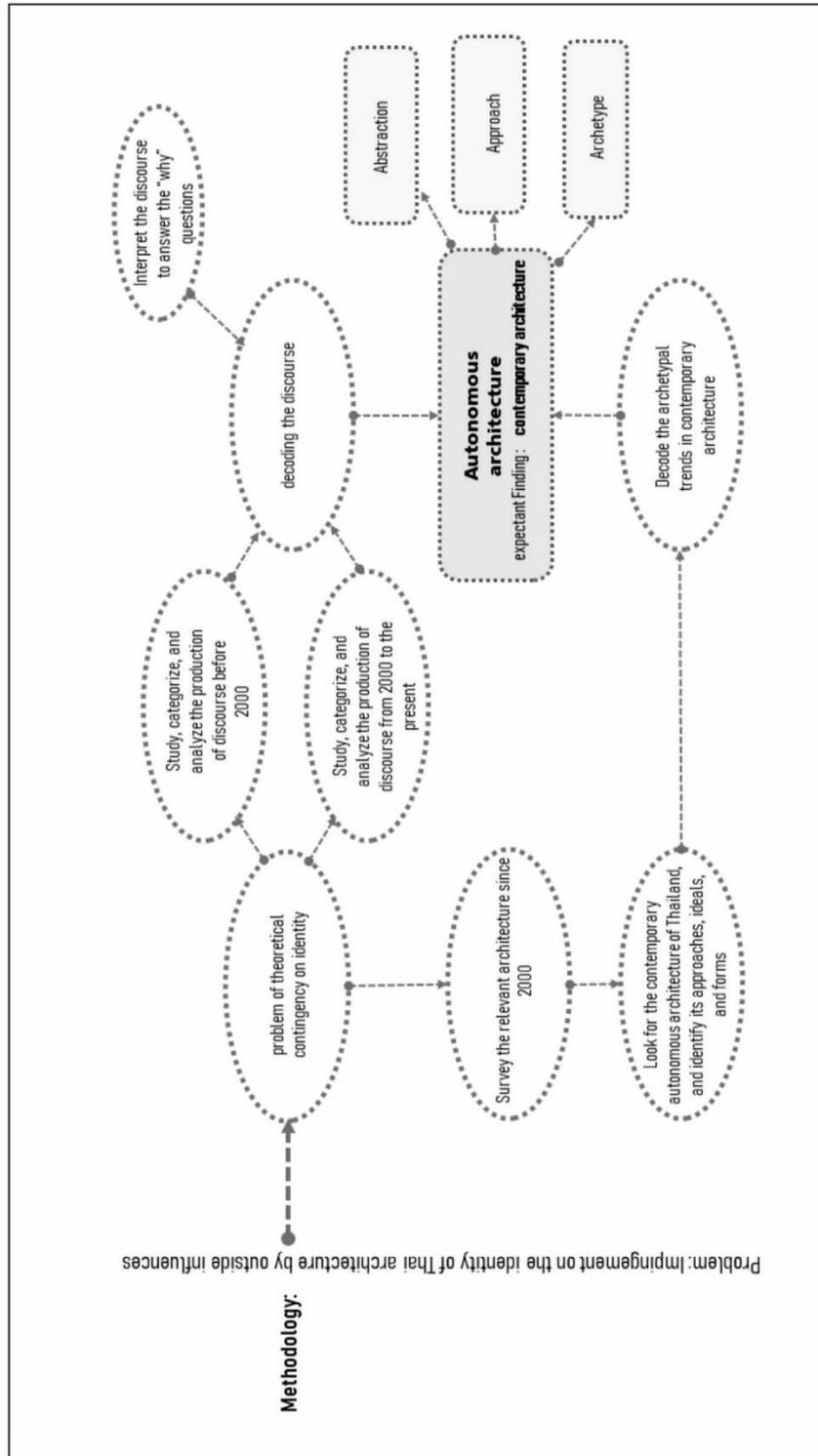


Figure 8 The conceptual framework of this thesis

Source: By the author

CHAPTER 2

Global and Local Trends and Their Relationship to Authenticity

Concerns about identity have continued to be a significant polemic in Thailand's architectural circles. The discourse on the subject can be traced back and reviewed historically to reveal changes in the field and their causes. Delving into these theoretical works provides an understanding of the various issues at the root of the debate, which are not only limited to incidents in Thailand but also to global dimensions and wide-ranging current trends.

The Meaning and Significance of Genuineness

Critical regionalism is the foundational theory upon which this thesis has based its analyses. It is the tool we are using to interpret contemporary Thai architecture, which is here termed autonomous architecture. Autonomous architecture is a global trend, and the cultural "pendulum" has shifted from a focus on universality to a focus on locality and autonomous identity. Only by grasping the definition of critical regionalism is it possible to understand the complexity of the dialogue between culture and nation and the gist of this narrative.

The Significance of Identity to a State

To arrive at an understanding of a country's identity, one has to look at the historical context and the relationship and interplay between culture and nationhood. For too long, nation and culture have been treated as mutually exclusive entities, with *nation* being treated as a purely political construct free of the impact of *cultural* dynamics. It is important to realize that any discussion of either entity will inevitably concern the other.

The conceptual entity of a nation has certain polities, which are grouped as one polity; they are clearly demarcated in both physical and abstract terms and are distinct from foreign polities. A nation is formed by its physical geography, ethnicity, language, institutions, leadership structures, religions, and values. These emblems of nationhood are proudly indicated by the adjective “national” and are often revered over time as inviolable and permanent. Although modern thought decrees that a nation has to demarcate its physical location, history may show that the nation’s boundaries have been somewhat elusive and its center of power has been less well established than once thought. Thus, the essence of a nation is likely to be embodied in the term *nationhood*, which signifies that all factors in a nation’s development are intertwined.

Human interactions form the foundation of a nation. In his book *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha¹⁶ illustrated in depth that a nation is “a system of cultural significance” whose “national traditions” came from the intersection of “acts of affiliation ... establishments ... disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation” among individuals, families, and groups. Unlike geographical boundaries, language, and ethnicity, which inevitably change over time, the need for individuals to interact with each other remains constant. It is an undeniable fact of human society that its interactions result in the “binding [of] socially and regionally disparate groups into imagined communities,” in Benedict Anderson’s¹⁷ famous phrase. Therefore, a nation is, in its most fundamental and enduring aspect, an amalgamation of human interactions, and these interactions are coerced by cultural perceptions.

¹⁶Homi K. Bhabha, "Art and National Identity: A Critics' Symposium," *Art in America* 79.9 (1991): 80.

¹⁷Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

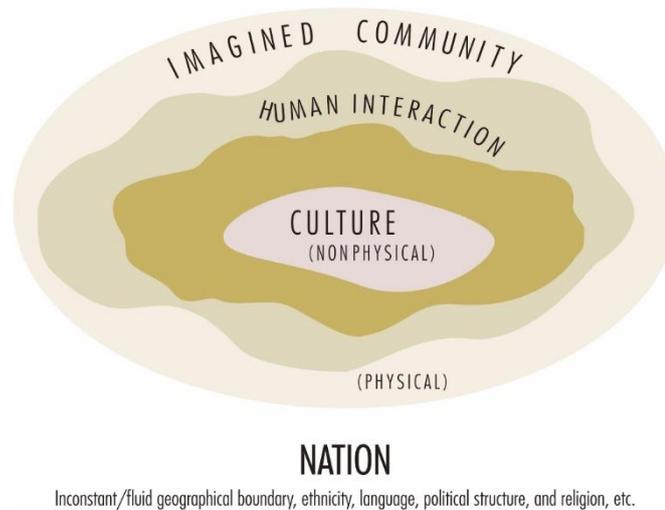


Figure 9 Diagrammatic expression of the transient definition of a nation–state, where culture lies at the very heart of its existence.

Source: By the author

The theorists quoted above make it clear that culture lies at the heart of a nation. Its characteristics are inevitably manifested in the interactions among individuals, thus shaping the imagined community and, likewise, the nation. Hence, it is paramount that the characteristics of culture should be conveyed, and this leads to the next point of investigation.

As culture stimulates the growth of a nation, it also forms the identity of the nation. Like physical boundaries, culture seems to pull the members of a state together so that there is a unity of ideas that conceptually or spiritually tie the citizens together. They often speak of this “group” culture. The culture is not limited to the state but includes groups, such as Thai architects. The word *culture* often suggests linguistics, art, religion, and other humanistic endeavors, whether sanctioned from the top by the state or popularized from the bottom by individuals; a people’s culture reflects their frame of mind, psyche, and sense of self-worth. It upholds the virtues of a civilization and its ethos; it is a tool used to entrench and reaffirm our purpose as a species and the prowess of our respective groups. Culture influences the thoughts, behaviors, and values of its members.

However, because there is such a strong link between a culture and the progress of the people who embrace it, there is an underlying misconception that all cultures are unique and pure, born out of the struggle of their respective peoples. These conjectures provide a staging point to continue discussing the characteristics of culture, and it can be immediately recognized that culture is not a monolithic domain.

Firstly, culture is an ever-fluctuating and progressing entity that evolves throughout time. Cultural elements that become irrelevant are shed; this happens naturally as individuals opt out of certain customs and the remaining customs eventually morph into a collective mass. New cultural elements arise, sometimes as a result of native invention but often at least partially inspired by foreign ideas—or the outright replication of foreign ideas—and are adopted in the same manner. Therefore, in the ebb and flow of culture over the course of many generations, its essence gradually fluctuates and changes.

Secondly, a culture's strength is measured not just by its ability to adopt foreign aspects but how well it can assimilate those aspects into its native form. "We have to regard regional culture not as something given and relatively immutable but rather as something which has ... to be self-consciously cultivated."¹⁸ This self-conscious cultivation is a paradoxical process requiring delicate acts of balancing, for the incorporated elements must retain their impact yet not be overtly foreign. A foreign element must be distilled and curbed, yet still retain enough of its original potency to have an impact when transplanted into the receiving culture. On the other hand, the foreign elements must not be allowed to overpower the original culture and be seen as an overt subversion of the existing culture. This paradoxical process allows new elements to successfully integrate within the existing cultural framework, with the most successful assimilation effortlessly blending old and new, universal and local. Hence, a culture's longevity depends on its adaptability.

¹⁸Kenneth Frampton, *ibid.*, 315.

Lastly, and because of the two previous points, culture predictably contains both native and foreign elements, both universal and local values. Over time, it becomes impossible to distinguish between what was original and what was adopted, what was universal and what was local.

The acculturation takes its form from the psychological necessity of being both genuine and mutable over time as the context of the culture becomes transformed. The formation of a particular culture mostly requires a deeply rooted political hegemony and a leadership that promotes the common values that members accept as normal. The significant issue here is that culture is not solid but is very mutable. Like the aforementioned nature of the state, culture always relies on the exchange of elements; it crosses borders; and it is influenced, especially by a culture that has higher hegemony, and in turn influences other cultures. This process creates a new cross-breed of culture that embraces both native and foreign elements, both universal and local values. It may become impossible to distinguish between what was original and what was adopted, what was universal and what was local. According to Frampton: “Sustaining any kind of authentic culture in the future will depend ultimately on our capacity to generate vital forms of regional culture while appropriating alien influences at the level of both culture and civilization.”¹⁹

Accordingly, the form of culture may be extraordinarily varied within a particular state, and it may be hybrid between different characters in nature in the embodiment of a culture as a culture is usually formed by the embodiment of disparate subcultures. No part of culture can be identified as original, pure, or belonging to the state alone; states that claim the sole ownership of a culture may become self-obsessed. An identity that is transformable at a particular time may not be transformable at another time. What seems alien now can become a new identity over time.

¹⁹Frampton summarized Paul Ricoeur, *Universal Civilization and National Cultures* (1961) in Kenneth Frampton, *ibid.*, 315.

Architecture, as a field of visual culture, has roots but also embraces several foreign influences. When it has to deal with identity it has to also deal with time and space. This is the main premise in interpreting the architecture of identity of the contemporary time. In conclusion, architectural identity can be defined as the collective and conscious recognition of a specific set of architectural expressions, which allows members of a particular community to appreciate and connect with their autonomy. Because both a nation and the nation's architectural identity are nonphysical and mutable, both have culture as their arbitrator: Discovering an architectural identity can be done by exploring the peculiarity of architectural expressions and illuminating how they evoke familiarity, affinity, and recognition amongst people. This process insightfully reveals the Thai architectural *zeitgeist*; indeed, this is the key to unlocking the identity hidden within Thai architecture.

Regionalism and Critical Regionalism: A Paradoxical Proposition

In the recent past, we were hampered by the lack of an identifiable architectural style for the modern era; indeed, we lacked even the necessary discourse to enable us to begin a truly genuine dialogue. Between early attempts to emulate the modernism of the West and desperate attempts to appropriate historical symbols, we have failed. Needless to say, there is not yet a cohesive architectural theory that comprehensively reconciles not only the physical limitations and advantages of our own locality but the intangible aspects of appreciating regional, national, and international identities.

In stark contrast to those early days, there is a growing movement amongst designers to resolve existential questions. This new awareness and hunger for an authentic style suited to each locality is being collectively called critical regionalism; despite being called a movement, by its very definition each regionalist style must develop its own unique technique. When incorporating the values of critical regionalism, it becomes possible not only to reconcile differences between universal

and regional styles but to conceive a more appropriate style to best fit certain circumstances, especially when a culture has significant historical roots. Hence, it is necessary to adopt a regionalist design that satisfies both the present and the past, both local and universal values.

Lewis Mumford's Regionalism

Critical regionalism can be, and has been, described in many ways by many writers, but perhaps the most comprehensive description is by Lewis Mumford in his book *The South in Architecture* (1941). It predates the later works of Kenneth Frampton, Alexander Tzonis, William J. R. Curtis, and Keith L. Eggener. It contains the following passage:

Regionalism is not a matter of using the most available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used, for want of anything better, for a century or two. Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making people feel at home in their environment: they do not merely utilize the soil, but they reflect the current conditions of culture in the region.²⁰ (by Mumford, originally published in 1941)

Perhaps the best way to describe critical regionalism is to start with what it is not. Firstly, it is obvious that critical regionalism is not vernacularism or an updated version of it. Lewis Mumford stalwartly rejects this sentiment in the opening statement “Regionalism is not a matter of using the most available local material.” Secondly, it is not historicism, as he explains by stating “... is not a matter... of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used.” Thirdly, Mumford states that “they do not merely utilize the soil.” Thus, to state that critical regionalism is a context-based design approach with a heavy emphasis on sustainable

²⁰Lewis Mumford, "Excerpts from the South in Architecture," in *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition*, ed. Vincent B. Canizaro (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 97-101.

principles is also inadequate. “Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making people feel at home in their environment,” writes Mumford. He subtly hints that “conditions of life” and “their environment” can be understood in a physical sense in terms of the natural and latent environment, but also in an abstract sense that alluded to social and cultural aspects. It is this cultural dimension that underpins his definition of critical regionalism.

In his passage, Mumford decisively describes “culture” and stresses the need for architecture to reflect its respective culture. Furthermore, he mentions “region” in relation to “culture,” implying that culture must be incorporated not just at a national level but at a local level, as well, and it is this cultural factor that forms his definition of critical regionalism. Because it was already established in an earlier discussion on the character of nation, culture, and architectural identity, it can be inferred that critical regionalism is pluralistic and adaptive in its very essence.

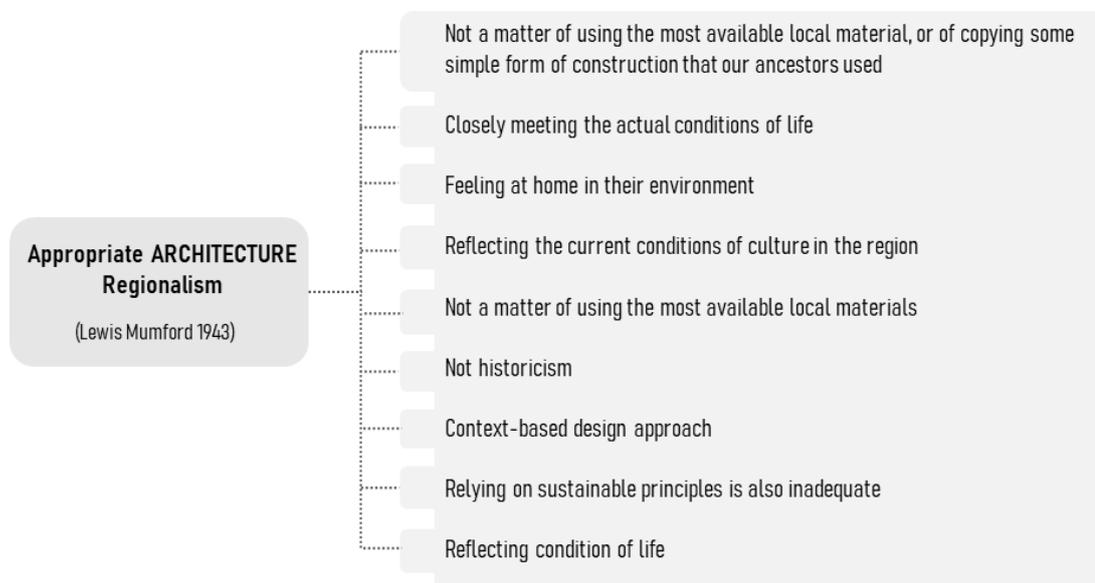


Figure 10 Regionalism Theory of Lewis Mumford

Source: Summarized By the author from the theory of "Excerpts from the South in Architecture," in Lewis Mumford, "Excerpts from the South in Architecture," in *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity,*

Modernity, and Tradition, ed. Vincent B. Canizaro (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 96-101.

Architectural Globalization

A significant contribution regarding identity and its problems for a developing country is by William J. R. Curtis.²¹ His argument contextualizes an emergence of modern architecture that originated in the West and appeared as a new entity that was later disseminated to third-world countries. European countries and the United States were the origins of modern architecture. Because of their higher level of economic affluence and also the role of some as colonizers of other countries, they exported their cultural ideologies to their colonies and the softer-power countries. At times, their influences symbolized the development and modernity of culture. Thailand was indirectly affected by this culture despite being an independent country. Cultural and economic hegemony was inevitable.

The respected architects who formulated the new trend were all in the West, and they had much good will in their theorization of modernist architecture. The most common architectural characteristic formulated at the time was the form modeled by progressive architects, such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and the members of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM); it was known as modern architecture and the international style. Le Corbusier, especially, was regarded as the modernist master who created a thoughtful modern architectural ideology and sensitively responded to the socioeconomic needs of the society of his time. His masterworks, such as Maison Citrohan and Maison Dom-Ino, contributed vitally to the functional yet meaningful creation of architecture.

A superficial variant of this effort, but unfortunately never the original thinking model, arrived in third-world acceptor countries all over the globe. The depth of philosophical meaning and aesthetic ideas posited by modern masters was never

²¹William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 567–587.

reappropriated to fit with particular places, climates, and cultures. The often-shared misinterpretation of the form was rapidly dispersed to second-hand and third-hand acceptors with a drastically reduced quality through economic and societal development and expansive tourism. Something that looked modern was thought to be acceptable. Many countries, including Thailand, dealt with limited options. In some countries under colonial rule, colonists intensively compelled subordinates to adopt models with an image of modernity so that they could deliberately create a ruling symbolism. Modern images were also used by former rulers, in some countries, to brainwash young local elites after independence, because modern constructions were viewed as signs of progress against backwardness and stagnation, and that seemed to be a successful application in some countries.

As each country entered into the Second World War in the 1940s, the attunement of nationalism began to gain force and colonized countries started to form a concept of cultural autonomy; they still faced a struggle at the onset, however. Cultural nationalism caused them to begin to expunge the symbols of the ruling country at the same time that they strove for independence. They discovered that they still retained the cultural tools formerly provided by the colonizer and the symbols of the Western civilization attached to them. India exemplifies this phenomenon well, because it deliberately made use of the Western architectural form as a vital tool to transform its culture.²²

In some areas of the world, the modern form arrived along with international business entities, which had compelling symbolic images of the West and their corporate cultures. Thus, the knowledge of modern architecture at its dawn was given a crude, second-hand meaning. As a result, architects in colonial countries forsook their original architectural and intellectual thought, plus their knowledge of their

²²Shaji K. Panicker, "Indian Architecture and the Production of a Postcolonial Discourse: A Study of Architecture + Design (1984–1992)" (PhD University of Adelaide, 2008).

indigenous arts and crafts, that had been passed on from past generations and that responded to local traditions, values, and climates. Skillful architects disregarded their traditions and turned to the new model because most of the new programs did not fit well with old archetypes. In this sense, Thailand faced similar crises as early as the reign of King Rama V (1868 to 1910) and onward. Therefore, the awareness of being oneself began to dwindle gradually among both architects and patrons.

The transition from old to modern, which was inevitable for many countries, caused a great deal of culture shock. Western countries had less of a problem with this because they had all of the nineteenth century to distill the fallout from the changes. Third-world countries, however, had only a couple of decades to deal with them, and this short time caused incongruity in the changes.

There were groups of reactionaries in the West who were perturbed by the identity problem, feeling that overencroachment of modern architecture had occurred in third-world countries. The third-world countries were supposedly at risk of losing their traditions, values, and local identities. A plea for a return to more traditional styles was unheard. The strong current of modern architecture represented new thought, new life, and new ways of confronting backwardness, but it included problems. On the one hand, those who embraced local and vernacular architecture were viewed as problematic people of the old world who were stagnant or backward. On the other hand, the restoration of buildings that were hundreds of years old was difficult if not impossible, because outfitting them for everyday use was so demanding. They had been adapted well and modified over time to respond to the local climate, but they were no longer appropriate for contemporary use and not worth the cost of preservation. The government of Thailand commissioned many state buildings during the 1950s under the supervision of Field Marshall Plaek Phibunsongkhram. One commission was the restoration of the old archetypical roof of Chulalongkorn University's main auditorium, which could not be applied to the proportions needed and had issues of acoustics and water leakage. This emphasized

the harsh truth that bring back the archaic archetypes to preserve local architecture may be a herculean task.

The new-generation arrivistes felt that they no longer wanted to embrace old traditions of a passing era, but they looked forward to a new model, especially one using exotic new materials. They imported Western culture and admired the freedom associated with it, which was different from their culture and its images and status. The way in which they tended to absorb the new culture was superficial, however.

The quality of modern buildings, which were imitations of Western structures, was inadequate and caused the buildings to be mere superficial clones. They could be duplicated anywhere if insensitive demands were made. This showed that once a country was independent, it was freed from a foreign ruler in many ways but was still a colonial subject of that ruler in terms of culture and architecture.

In the 1960s, some large new cities of the world tried to follow trends in Manhattan and London, attempting to adopt their look and shrug off their local patterns. High-rise, glass-cladded office buildings and city hotels with air-conditioned lobbies with tinted glass windows and whitewashed concrete walls were the result. Not only were these efforts insufficient to produce new versions of the originals, but they trivialized the cities in which they were built. Had these cities again become colonized?

According to Le Corbusier, the machine form does not have any connection with a particular political group or nation. In this way its use guarantees a disconnection from a former colonist. Building structures in this form therefore became a resounding answer to questions of independence. It was because the neutral form without any cultural accent or affiliation to any specific culture would symbolically expunge the bond with its colonist.

It appeared that an increasing number of new buildings were built by combining a plain modern form with a stark local idiom and ornamentation in an

attempt to augment it. This was considered an unfavorable practice and risked the making of a pastiche, or fake regionalist structure. Some architectural structures designed in this way were criticized by conservatives, such as the state-owned buildings constructed under the administration of Plaek Phibunsongkhram and the private buildings that followed this pattern. They were considered damaged in terms of both the purity of the modern and the sacredness of the old.

The reaction from 1930 to 1950 to such criticism was a new modern regionalism (or regionalist modernism) as an attempt to intertwine local tradition with the new form. It was considered an adaptive development that might appropriate the old local form and merge it with the modern lifestyle (program) and respond to the new living culture as well as technology. There were no certain models and definitions for proper design at that time, however. A new problem then emerged, which was the difficulty in creating such disparate combinations and also the risk of creating irrelevant kitsch.

The different ways that building industries operated in different nations was viewed as another obstacle that could cause the withering of regional art and architecture. In a developed country, construction proceeded with a series of steps and was handled by several parties, including architects, engineers, contractors, laborers, and manufacturers of materials. Each party was responsible for a certain job. In developing countries, however, construction was sometimes handled by one person from design to manufacturing to construction. Furthermore, some houses and villages were built by villagers with primitive techniques and no modern tools or technologies. The knowledge of arts and crafts was basic to those native men. If modern construction methods were adopted, the pattern changed and indigenous intellectuals were no longer part of the building scene. Integration of the old and new modes seldom occurred or was impossible. The situation unfortunately sidestepped local knowledge and culture, which risked being forgotten and lost.

Another factor was that social and cultural patterns differed from one county to another. For example, in Egypt the government had a housing development project for the masses. A series of buildings were designed in the Western style, with stacked concrete blocks arranged in a modern form. The project's total cost rose above the cost of buildings built by the native technique. The new model of housing led to an increasing cost of labor, logistics, and wages in comparison with the old models, which were built and managed by local people. Hassan Fathy, an Egyptian architect, proposed a housing project that would be built entirely by native people with local knowledge in New Gourna, near Luxor. They used clay as bricks as the major material and built stacked brick walls, which were covered with vaults and simple domes made of the same materials. The buildings stood the test of time and the cost was considerably lower than the modern constructions. Moreover, the style of the house was developed over time to respond to the local climate and lifestyle of the people. Fathy wrote:

Modernity does not necessarily mean liveliness, and change is not always for the better . . . Tradition is not necessarily old-fashioned and is not synonymous with stagnation . . . Tradition is the social analogy of personal habit, and in art has the same effect of releasing the artist from distracting and inessential decisions so that he can give his whole attention to the vital ones.²³

Furthermore, the rapid development of the building industry brought local laborers to cities. This meant that younger generations in small towns and villages might ignore the local knowledge of arts and crafts and the regional identity that had long been in place might end. Therefore, as recommended by Fathy, one should revert to the true vernacular life and discard the enticements of modernity. This seems to be in line with Jon Jandai, a Thai-wisdom theorist, who prophesized that getting back to nature and living life with local wisdom would occur; this was part of his romantic

²³Curtis, *ibid.*, 569.

architectural theory that pointed to a return to a primitive method, such as making clay houses. Another theorist who is in accord with Fathy and Jon Jandai²⁴ is Z. Placki, who is also quoted by Curtis:

Most architectural styles were the products of their own societies. Its religious values, climate, technology, and social and political structures dictate the need and style of buildings. Shapes, proportions, and decorations were symbolic and had the meaning of often ending up with strict architectural orders. This “internal stimulus” created culture and architecture; expressions that differed greatly from each other . . . Many of the better examples are being preserved, but rarely copied, and when they are, it’s apparent they have no meaning . . . Today, with jet travel, intercontinental news media, cinema, political structures, and cultural exchanges, the world is smaller and the bulk of influences which dictate style are international, based on technology and economics . . . But, even accepting the International Style, technology, and the stimulus from the outside, and not copying the traditional, rules can be formulated within which architects can create architecture and a character that can become the Niuginian style.²⁵

The principle rejected the misuse of vernacular forms to attract tourists because this could cause the devaluation of the country’s legacy.

It was William Curtis who concludes such a crisis and posits that regionalism is not the idea served only for the glass root people but it should be for all classes. *Meaningful architecture must be based on practicality and aesthetic symbolism that respond to the context, and to know the context, architects need to search for the pattern of life of the local people or users.*

²⁴Jon Jandai, *Yu Kab Din Sibhok Pi Karn Pan Din Pen Baan [16 Years with Clay: Molding Clay into A Home][in Thai]* (Bangkok: Phabphim, 2012), 27–39.

²⁵Curtis, *ibid.*, 570.

Critical Regionalism

Curtis is an important proponent of critical regionalism, and another vital theorist, whose contributions coincide with those of Curtis, is Kenneth Frampton. The theory of critical regionalism as a language of architecture is derived from the conditions of architecture as perceived by Frampton.²⁶ He argues that it is an antiglobalization theory. It can be said that his most important contribution is his addition of the word *critical* to the description, meaning that one has to be more in-depth, careful, and sensitive in thinking. It is, therefore, possible to avoid a direct borrowed form design by simply adopting elements of traditionalism. Compared with the regionalist modern theory of Curtis, it can be observed that the addition of *critical* is a well-thought-out and important part of the design process. This additional part is, at the same time, critical to the direct design in modern architecture. Therefore, it is not the simple following of any traditions of plain modern architecture but is rather a combination of seven points from his theories, but only six practical points are excerpted in this thesis.

Various forms of regional architecture disregarded various forms produced by modern masters. They were dispersed around the world through the process of globalization. This type of architecture was a strategy to make architecture more “human.” Modern architecture was a dominant style everywhere in the world and was viewed as an international cliché. According to Frampton, architects should seek a variation in regional sources of architectural design instead of following global uniformity. Additionally, they should not have an appreciation for industrialization and technology. Frampton did not support the revival of any of the romantic historical styles or any of the humble vernacular types of buildings. In essence, he saw the destruction of both modern buildings and postmodernism that use architecture as a mere sign. He proposed the introduction of a new paradigm of the *genius loci*.

²⁶Kenneth Frampton, *ibid.*, 324–327.

In his book, Frampton explains his definition of critical regionalism as a mediation between a spectrum of civilization and the particularity of a place. To maintain a critical age, one needs to be aware of popularism. Critical regionalism sits between two things; on the one hand, architects have to understand the global, and on the other hand, they have to appreciate the local culture. He quotes Paul Ricoeur as saying “How to become modern and return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization.”²⁷

The fundamental strategy of critical regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from peculiarities and a particular place. It is clear from the above paragraph that critical regionalism depends upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness. It is an attempt for the new paradigm to govern inspiration in such things as the range and quality of local light, or a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or the reflection of the topography of a given site. Thus, it has to critically extract ideas from self-consciousness.

He cited relevant projects such as Utzon’s Bagsvaerd Church, Siza’s Beires House, and, very interestingly, Ando’s Koshino House to explain the surprising plane while disregarding the physical direct borrowing forms from the past yet maintains the glimpse of peculiar sense of place embedded within the form. In the article, he listed the criteria:

(1) Critical Regionalism has to be understood as a marginal practice, on which, while it is critical of modernization, nonetheless still refuses to abandon the emancipatory and progressive aspects of the modern architectural legacy. At the same time, Critical Regionalism’s fragmentary and marginal nature serves to distance it both from normative optimization and the naive utopianism of the early Modern

²⁷Frampton, *ibid.*, 314.

Movement. In contrast to the line that runs from Haussmann to Le Corbusier, it favors the small rather than the big plan.

(2) In this regard, Critical Regionalism manifests itself as a consciously bounded architecture, one which rather than emphasizing the building as a free-standing object places the stress on the territory to be established by the structure erected on the site. This “place-form” means that the architect must recognize the physical boundary of his work as a kind of temporal limit—the point at which the present act of building stops.

(3) Critical Regionalism favors the realization of architecture as a tectonic fact rather than the reduction of the built environment to a series of ill-assorted scenographic episodes.

It may be claimed that Critical Regionalism is regional to the degree that it invariably stresses certain site-specific factors, ranging from the topography, considered as a three-dimensional matrix into which the structure is fitted, to the varying play of local light across the structure. Light is invariably understood as the primary agent by which the volume and the tectonic value of the work are revealed. An articulate response to climatic conditions is a necessary corollary to this. Hence Critical Regionalism is opposed to the tendency of “universal civilization” to optimize the use of air-conditioning, etc. It tends to treat all openings as delicate transitional zones with a capacity to respond to the specific conditions imposed by the site, the climate, and the light.

(5) Critical Regionalism emphasizes the tactile as much as the visual. It is aware that the environment can be experienced in terms of a sense of touching other than sight alone. It is sensitive to such complementary perceptions as varying levels of illumination, ambient sensations of heat, cold, humidity and air movement, varying aromas and sounds given off by different materials in different volumes, and even the varying sensations induced by floor finishes, which cause the body to experience

involuntary changes in posture, gait, etc. It is opposed to the tendency in an age dominated by media to the replacement of experience by information.

(6) While opposed to the sentimental simulation words of local vernacular, Critical Regionalism will, on occasion, insert reinterpreted vernacular elements as disjunctive episodes within the whole. It will moreover occasionally derive such elements from foreign sources. In other word, it will endeavor to cultivate a contemporary place-oriented culture without becoming unduly hermetic, either at the level of formal reference or at the level of technology. In this regard, it tends towards the paradoxical creation of a regionally based “world culture,” almost as though this were a precondition of achieving a relevant form of contemporary practice.

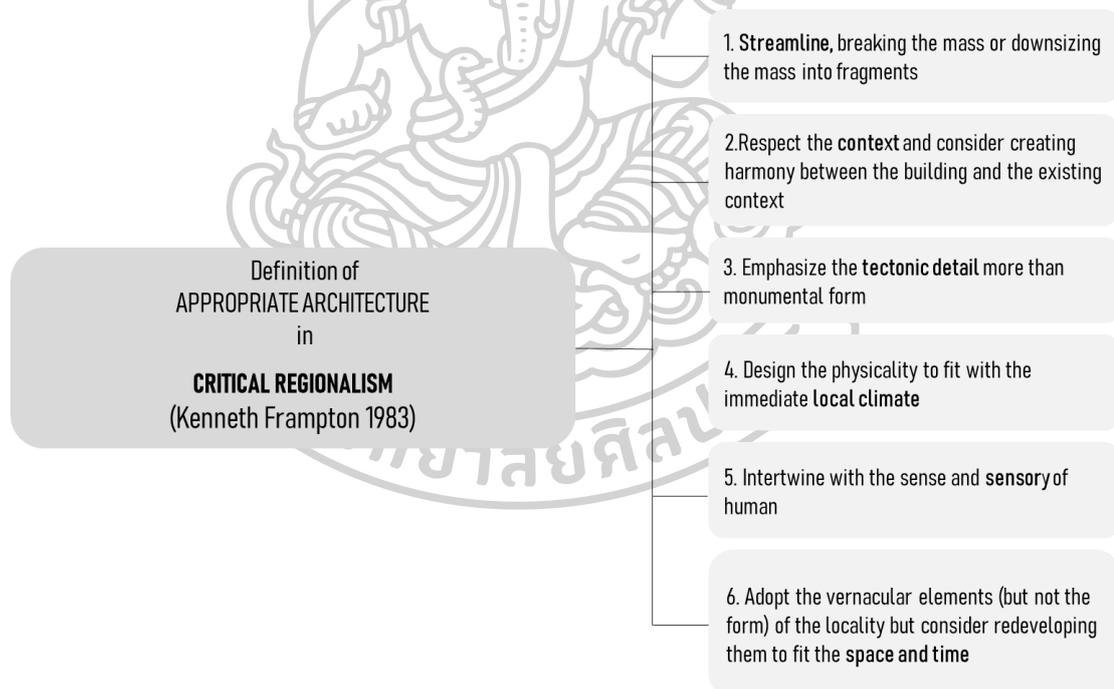


Figure 11 Critical Regionalism Theory of Kenneth Frampton
adopted by this thesis

Source: Summarized from the theory of Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 314-327, graphic by the author

Critical Regionalism tends to flourish in those cultural interstices which are one way or another that can escape the optimizing thrust of universal civilization. Its appearance suggests that the received notion of the dominant cultural center surrounded by dependent, dominated satellites is ultimately an inadequate model by which to assess the present state of modern architecture.

Critical Regionalism is not in fact a new form of architecture; it was once discussed extensively even in the *Ten Books on Architecture* by Marcus Vitruvius Pollio,²⁸ a Roman theorist. Frampton, however, sheds light on how to manage to acquire such qualities while uniquely serving the locale yet it also embodies modern look and functionality in the sense. He also provides clear criteria for the principle of design such as how to maintain the essence of regional by using local materials, embedding a sense of place, and applying discrete shapes and forms.

In conclusion, critical regionalism theory is a sound starting point in this thesis for supplying a set of fundamental criteria for judging architectural cases. However, the ideas of Frampton face limitations in case analysis. This thesis may go further to propose the uniqueness of Thailand's case identity in the debate on critical regionalism, and this would expand the body of knowledge.

In Praise of the Mightiness of Lightness in the Thought of Italo Calvino

The book *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* by Italo Calvino (1988)²⁹ presented a lecture on total metaphysics. He discusses the presence of *lightness* in several cases, all of which contradict the norms of how we look at the world. He

²⁸Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, translated by Morris H. Morgan (New York: Dover, 1960), 17.

²⁹Italo Calvino, Geoffrey Brock, trans. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1985–1986) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 1–29.

praises lightness as a quality normally viewed as weakness or fragility but, in his estimation, it is a quality with latent power. By all means, he convinces us that the next millennium (of his time), which is the present, should move towards lightness. Decent and ethical entities should be attributed to lightness. This thesis argues that architecture can also adopt such a viewpoint. Because the lecture does not directly mention architecture and the narrative is entirely allegorical, reading it requires the adoption of a method of hermeneutic interpretation. The aspect of hermeneutic of lightness according to Calvino in architecture is quoted, made sense and elaborated in the prolegomenal article “Intertwining” by Steven Holl,³⁰ which presented the dialectic of two qualities, i.e., lightness and heaviness. However, he recommended that architecture manifest the dichotomy of them to bring back human experience, and it enhances the value of architecture.

Calvino provides several allegories for lightness. Through Greek mythology, he relates the polemic of lightness to the story of Perseus, who is a son of Zeus. In the story, Perseus wanted to kill Medusa, who has magic eyes; when she stares at someone, that person turns into stone. It is a tough task. Perseus was blessed with winged sandals that allow him to fly. The fight ends when he cuts off Medusa’s head. In the story, Medusa represents heaviness and Perseus’s wings represent lightness. The account depicts the polarity of the two contrasting attributes. The mythology attempts to posit that heroes who embrace lightness are capable of killing a villain such as Medusa.

The story establishes a discourse in favor of lightness. Not only does it undermine the belief that lightness is a weakness but it also highlights the power of lightness. Subsequently, when Perseus kills a sea Monster, he uses the head of Medusa to turn the monster into stone, and when he washes his hands, he places Medusa’s head on a heap of tree leaves. The scene depicts a juxtaposition of the dual

³⁰Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 11-16.

qualities of lightness and heaviness. The story illustrates the contrast in attributes of the almighty hero, whose character was an image of heaviness. He has the capacity to willfully use a lethal weapon and then shows great sensitivity by placing the weapon on a soft bed of leaves. This is written to convince us that heaviness is not always the intrinsic characteristic of a mighty hero, but rather that an intertwining of contrasting attributes may be the most important characteristic.

Calvino's takes excerpts from other books, such as Milan Kundera's *An Unbearable Lightness of Being*. The discussion is about ways of living and the fact that living is not an easy thing to do. In writing about Kundera's novel, Calvino discusses constriction by a massive web of surrounding elements, including public and private constrictions. People have a connection with family and friends and struggle with social classes. Life action is the reflection of the societal condition. We cannot often act as we feel, so we rely on the social condition, and it is, of course, heaviness. Everyone succumbs to real-life hardships, a heaviness of everyday life and the world and humanity as they are. The world is becoming more serious and stressful. People interpret issues in their lives in their own way.

Lightness is a factor in technology, including the computer central processing unit (CPU), as well, according to Calvino. The CPU is the hardware of the computer and is physically heavy. Software helps that computer to function, and it is a light element. Even so, it has the power to control a heavy CPU. It is interesting that objects of lightness can control the physical world. A heavy physical machine operates because of software, which is lightweight and soft. The world consists of the binary attributions of the power and ideology principle. New ideologies, such as communism, modernism, and postmodernism, are in the form of soft power but they can change the world. Likewise, literature is characterized by two types of language, soft and hard, heavy and light. Thus, light language would in the next millennium has its increasing role in as much as the heavy or substantial ones.

In conclusion, reading *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* suggested an idea for this thesis that emerged from the new millennium that Calvino predicted. We should value the significance of lightness and lightweight as qualities that give power a positive rather than a negative connotation. For the sake of contemporary architecture, those in the current realm of the architecture of this millennium would be wise to immerse themselves in and understand the concept of lightness, its quality and interpretation, because it is becoming more relevant to their work.



CHAPTER 3

Current Prominent Discourse

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the problem of defining an identity in Thai architecture became complicated. A survey of the discourse on the topic after the year 2000 by architects, scholars, and critics reveals the following themes:

Current Discourse

1. *Thai-ness* is a problematic and fluid term.
2. Thai-ness is viewed as a stagnant condition (Thai as tradition).
3. There is a hope to reestablish (as is occurring in Japan).
4. There is a sense of hopelessness and wanting to be free (as in the group of the new future).
5. There is a theme of the new generation.

Factors That Formed the Themes

The themes were the result of these factors:

1. There was a growing interest in theory among architects who experimented with disparate approaches. Many publications were produced by scholars and architects. They included influential textbooks, professional journals such as the *ASA Journal* published by the Association of Siamese Architects, and academic journals published by schools of architecture, as well as magazines on design, such as *Baan Lae Suan* [*House and Garden*] and *Baan Lae Tok Tang* [*Home and Décor*].

2. The economy of Thailand grew rapidly, especially during the years before the economic collapse in 1997. Demands for new living units, which were accelerated by the financial surge, expanded the horizons of many big cities such as Bangkok.

The need created new residential types, such as condominiums, and styles, and they proliferated as a consequence of competitive marketing strategies.

3. Modes of education of architects changed, placing new players into the architectural realm. New institutions became another pivotal trigger of change in the practice of architects. New schools such as Rangsit University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), Assumption University, and some regional universities began to graduate architects that seemed to have a different type of DNA.³¹ The change in the theoretical stance of architectural education was due to new groups of practitioners and educators who had recently graduated abroad and were more flexible in styles of practice. These young bloods inspired new ways of thinking among students at the new institutions. The old schools kept their hold on architectural education and continued to impart rigid architectural knowledge without a significant change.³² More varieties of thought appeared in the practice of architectural design in Thailand around the onset of the new millennium.

In the 1990s, architects were enthusiastic about searching for Thai-ness in architecture and tried to design buildings that exemplified Thai themes. Various interpretations were evident in this enterprise. In 1986, Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura had written, in "Problems of Architectural Identity,"³³ about obstacles that architects faced when designing structures that attempted to express Thai-ness.

The concept of "architectural layers," as argued by Nithi Sthapitanonda,³⁴ could be adopted when attempting to explain the architecture of earlier times, especially in the years after Field Marshall Plaek Phibunsongkhram's administration, when some architects veered towards Thai traditional revivalism. As architects faced

³¹Vittawat Charoenpong, "Education of the Architects at Rangsit University," interview by the author, October 10, 2019.

³²Phutsadi Thipphathat, *Sathapok Sathapattayakam [Architects: Architecture] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, 1999), 68.

³³Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, "Panha Ekkalak Sathapattayakam" ["Problems of Architectural Identity"] [in Thai], *ASA Journal* 12, no. 1 (1986): 74-79.

³⁴Nithi Sthapitanonda and Brian Mertens, *Architecture of Thailand: A Guide to Traditional and Contemporary Forms* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 2005), 13.

the dilemma of using architectural styles that would exemplify the ideal identity during the 1990s, some attempted to remake the old style with exact authentic motifs in secular buildings. They had to face criticism for breaching the traditional canon because the preferred styles had limitations. Leading conservatives criticized this type of practice as cultural decadence because it humiliated the dignified classes, namely members of the monarchy and monastery as those architectural grammars were purportedly exclusive for them.³⁵

Problems in Producing Thai-ness

In Thailand, there has been a long history of strong ties with the country's archaic culture and traditions. In the broad sociocultural context, some modernized Thai people still embraced a conservative viewpoint related to their secure connection with the monarchy and Buddhism. These two crucial institutions are still revered by the majority of the people because they represent an ancient ruling regime. The architectural style associated with the monarchy and Buddhism was like a living bank of DNA of the old culture, which regulated the activities, ceremonies, and mandates of the ruling and religious leaders. When people needed visual objects for events associated with these institutions, they selected Thai traditional style for their design. Many new styles of visual objects were also present in Thailand, and Thai people, who tend to be light-hearted, partook of them for the purpose of enjoyment. When they wanted to be part of the dignified institutions, however, they returned to the Thai traditional style, which they viewed as their national heritage. Reactionary discourses to curb rapid change were popular.

Antique art deserves preservation and should be studied in depth for profound understanding. New art, on the other hand, should also be created and should fit well with its place and time. However, the art of the present time has a mandate

³⁵See examples of debates on the violation of the traditional canon in Admiral Somphob Phirom, "Suebsan Sathapattayakam Thai [Continuation of Thai Architecture] [in Thai]," *ASA Journal*, no. January-February (1995): 36–40; Ekarin Phungpracha, *ibid.*, 32.

to continue expressing the original pure culture. The contemporary art of a generation should thrive from its roots. . . . Brand-new art that has no connections with its origins is the choice because shopping for new things wholesale from the outside [world] is less painful. When Thai people sit on the floor eating their local foods and watch Westerners consuming steak on television, they value that scene and want to imitate what they see at the snap of a finger. Some have learned a few English words on the radio and begin to imitate them. Quitting speaking Thai and switching to English is common today. Eventually, they do not want to be themselves but they are not able to be genuine Westerners. This forgetting of the roots of their upbringing and their blindness to their own culture may well be blamed on the artist who is capable of making imported art with no connections to his roots and is still not eloquent in the new art.³⁶

Conservative attempts were not a new phenomenon but could be traced back to the construction campaign for the Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall, when Somdej Chaophraya Borom Maha Sri Suriwongse resisted King Rama V in molding the building in the neoclassical style. Prince Chula Chakrabongse's remarks on the preservation of the national heritage embodied a feeling of longing for the harboring and revival of their court traditions even during the time after the democratic revolution. The works of Prince Dhani Nivat and the volumes contributed by M.R. Kukrit Pramoj exemplify this trend. Their texts at times are sentimentally nationalistic, causing critics to label them both as conservative nationalists or rightist extremists.

The conservatives asked the question "in what architectural style should one build?" and it was answered in two ways, Thai traditional style and Thai vernacular architecture. The former was especially embraced by some scholars and architects who tried to revive an authentic vocabulary. The attempts to revive the Thai

³⁶Pattaya Saihoo, "Silapa Kab Sangkhom [Art and Society] [in Thai]," *Social Science Review* 6, no. 4 (1969): 41.

traditional style, which is Thai classical idiom, and apply it to buildings for modern use were complicated. Opinions on reviving the style for current use were many and varied, and polarities in the associated discourse were prolific during the 1950s and onward.

The first group, who were in favor of Thai traditional style, believed that a quality of Thai-ness and an authentic Thai architecture truly existed, and they tried to retain the originality of tradition. The members included Pinyo Suwankiri, M.C. Mitrarun Kasemsri, Somphob Phrom, and some royal guild craftsmen who wished to preserve and continue to apply archaic art as a national heritage. This group thought that the art of traditional architecture was authentic and associated with the dignified classes. They felt that this architectural style belonged exclusively to the upper-class groups and could not be used for others; this rule could not be violated.

Revivals of this style could be seen in several structures that had been approached with a variety of practices and intensities, ranging from complete duplications of original models to partially adapted applications. Pinyo Suwankiri tried to make use of the style authentically and totally in some buildings, for example, Djittbhawan College. According to Pinyo, he had adopted authentic traditional style as much as possible in this structure. This style of practice, or literal derivation, in this project and others, was subjected to criticism from time to time regarding its appropriateness for place and time:

Revivals of the archaic style in the name of preservation always ended up producing structures that seemed to demean the Thai intellectual heritage. In all aspects, it is unbecoming to remake archaic art without referring to the appropriate place and time; the result is anachronistic. The mistakes made might cause a conflict of decency between class and rank and grammar. What's more,

the result breaches the old canon because it cannot be regarded as a creative masterwork of the time in which it is built.³⁷

A campaign to build architecture in the traditional style or a policy decreeing that this be done by any agent, either client or architect, is always an inappropriate practice.

Any intention to issue a policy or write up a T.O.R. with an attempt to incorporate the Thai character by focusing on the physical form might run a risk of having a superficial design. Instead, the attention should be paid to the definition of Thainess in which the architect should adopt in commencing the project. Thai architecture in the latter approach, as it is forced to create Thai appearance, will end up as superficial impersonation. For example, adaptive Thai style fashioned by Plaek Phibunsongkhram's policy—whose style was intentionally fragmented and crude in the design methodology by literally superimposing Thai elements together—failed as it lacks the essential aspect of Thai space and abstract components.³⁸

A similar quotation drew the attention of some researchers to find a better solution.³⁹ M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn investigated the phenomenological dimension of Thai-ness, believing that the findings would substitute the direct copy of the physical shapes and forms of the archaic grammar of Thai traditional architecture.

However, attempts to re-create the traditional Thai architectural style continued to be seen. This type of building always fails because it misuses the

³⁷Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, "Sathapattayakam Thai Samai Mai (Thai Ror Kao) Ekkalak Sathapattayakam Thai: Khorkhidhen Bang Prakarn Nai Karnkamnot Naew Rupbaeb – Soot Samret Nai Karnsangarn [New Thai Architecture (Thai during Rama IX) Thai Architectural Identity]: Some Concepts in Determining the Creation for Forms-Instant Formula," [in Thai], *ASA Journal* June (1996): 48-65.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 52.

³⁹Piyalada Devakula, "A Tradition Rediscovered: Towards an Understanding of Experiential Characteristics and Meanings of the Thai Traditional House" (PhD University of Michigan, 1999), 6.

authentic grammar and breaches the traditional canon of the prerogative architecture; in Thailand, some groups of conservatives still profess that some traditional architectural style must be used only for the monarchy and monastery classes as they believe that those institutions are sacrosanct and should have their own identity different from people of the ordinary classes.

The structures in which authentic grammar has been misused, such as the Thai Product Exhibition Center of the Cooperative Shop project in 2002, were controversial. The Cooperative Shop project was a campaign to demolish the old building and replace it with a building in the traditional Thai style. The architect tried to emulate the Thai traditional prototype by designing the entrance porch to look like a temple front with *Ruean Song Kreung Lamyong* architectural grammar, and it was attached to the frontal façade, which was designed in a modern style. His plan was to have the templefront refer to the immediate context of the Wat Benchamabophit Temple, located nearby. This exhibition center came under severe criticism for having an indecent design, and the architect was criticized harshly for his literalness, kitsch, and “malpractice”:

This [Thai Product Exhibition Center of the Cooperative Shop] project, with its adornment of elaborate gilt-work-over-black-lacquered antefixes and finials over the pedimented portico, was even more lavish than the Wat Benchamabophit Temple. This suggests ignorance on the part of the architect about the Thai canon, because he mixed up dignified religious-architectural and royal-court elements with a profane building. Such a practice is immensely offensive. . .⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ekarin Phungpracha, *ibid.*, .33



Figure 12 Billboard advertising the sale of space in the Thai Product Exhibition Center of the Cooperative Shop

Source: Ekarin Phungpracha, "Sathapat Uchad Sathon 'Khwan Pen Thai' Yang Srithanonchai' Thassanawiphak Khon Doctor Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya [Visually-polluted Architecture Reflecting Cunning 'Thainess' in Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya's View] [in Thai]," *Silapawattanatham*, September, 2002, 32.

This situation shows that returning to the remaking of Thai traditional architecture was not easy. Conservatives believed that the use of this style should neither be overdone nor careless.

Another project that faced similar criticism was the Sukhothai Hotel (mentioned earlier in Chapter 1) located in downtown Bangkok. The hotel was a low-rise project undertaken by a foreign investor. Manoon Leewiriyaphan, the architect, adopted the Thai-traditional style and used the scheme as a marketing campaign for the project. The Thai-style form was a magnet for attracting a foreign target group who expected to immerse themselves in an authentic Thai ambience during vacations. As a gimmick, he located a row of miniature Sukhothai-style pagodas in the reflecting pool of the restaurant. Despite harsh criticism for this, the architect insisted that he

was fond of authenticity and that when he designed Thai style, he would push it to its extreme authentic form, using neither a semiadaptation nor a hybrid form. His job was to create a Thai identity. Critics opposed his stance because they viewed his style of design as a direct violation of the canon of the prerogative style that is permitted exclusively for religious and royal architecture. Several comments from conservative scholars indicated that the style for this project was taboo and that the architect must seek a more appropriate style.



Figure 13 Miniature Sukhothai-style pagodas (a and c); Thai traditional style restaurant at Sukhothai Hotel Bangkok (b)

Source: (a and c) <https://pantip.com/topic/34643> accessed March 25, 2020;

(b) <https://mgronline.com/travel/detail/9570000133470>. accessed March 20, 2020.

Another approach some scholars seemed to recommend included the adaptive Thai style, which combines some of the Thai grammar with a form of modernism. Since the King Rama IV, Siamese (Thai) architects adapted available materials to modern Western structures. Due to a lack of technical know-how for original construction, they imitated exotic images through many techniques, such as plastering

layers of stucco on wooden walls to form walls that look like modern masonry. In this way, the adaptations of the new vocabulary created an image of modernity. Furthermore, architects began to enjoy the hybridity. However, current attempts to adapt Thai traditional architecture continue to be opposed by many critics, who reject this type of hybrid style.

In addition to the opposition to prerogative violations, according to Ruangsak Kantabutra, the psychological state of mind also played a role:

A dwindling pride in their cultural ingenuity or an absence of enthusiasm for preserving and sustaining art impede the success of Thai traditionalism in today's architectural practice. Therefore, instead of revisiting the old form, a decent style should be derived intrinsically from the contemporary materials and construction techniques available and should follow today's usage. . . . Any attempt to revive the ancient style, either in form or characteristics, as well as the construction techniques, may be useful only for preservation projects. This type of practice should only be used for educational purposes or for a mockup that can be studied or serve to disseminate knowledge about old intellectual theories of the nation. It would not be for general use. . . . It shows that new buildings of today designed in the Thai traditional style should only serve as aspects of an ancient or archaeological site. For example, the tourist center of Ayutthaya Historical Park and the cultural centers of universities, such as Mahidol University's Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, have been built for purposes of preservation and as mockups of architecture for study. They are meant as ways of disseminating the knowledge of national art.⁴¹

⁴¹Phutsadi Thippathat, *Sathapanik Sayam: Phunthan, Botbat, Phonngan, Lae Naeokhit (Pho. So. 2475-2537), Vol. 1 [Siamese Architects, 1932–1994, Vol.1] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Association of Siamese Architects, 1996), 267.



Figure 14 Thai traditional house in Chulalongkorn University

Source: <https://www.cuartculture.chula.ac.th/service/chula-thai-house/>, accessed February 11, 2020.



Figure 15 The cultural zone at Mahidol University's Salaya Campus

Source: <https://www.music.mahidol.ac.th/grand-opening-cultural-zone-salaya/>, accessed December 2, 2019.

Architects who used the Thai traditional style not only seemed to misuse the prerogative grammar but also seemed to have inadequate artistic skills. These deficiencies affected the construction, and it was usually inferior due to the lack of knowledge that could be passed from one generation to the next.

Although the recommendation by Ruangsak Kantabutra was radical and uncompromising, Thai houses and buildings with what is known as the true Thai style are still constructed throughout the country. One example is Monsreenusorn House, built as a Thai traditional house in Nonthaburi Province in 2016.



Figure 16 Monsreenusorn House, an authentic Thai traditional house.

(1) Approach from the front (2) Porch (*chan* with roof) (3) and *Chan* (5) (Sala) pavilion

Source: Nithi Sathapitanon, *Baan Thai Now: The Book of Traditional Thai House* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2017), 51–53.

Residences and full-blown Thai traditional pavilions were erected, such as the Ruan Yot Borommangalanusarani Pavilion, which was built to celebrate the auspicious occasion of the 70th anniversary of His Majesty the King's accession to the throne on 9 June 2016.



Figure 17 The Ruan Yot Borommangalanusarani Pavilion

Source: <https://www.picuki.com/media/1692585811445590070>, accessed February 10, 2020.

These events were in line with Curtis's hypothesis that many countries around the world faced the problem of the disappearance of knowledge about their traditional arts and crafts as modern contractors turned to modern technology. This situation was not new, of course; it had been a problem during the reign of King Rama V. At that time, the king had to solve the problem by importing Western architects for his royal projects. The problem was also due to the absence of official training schools for architects in either traditional or modern styles; Siam was at the dawn of modernization and lacked almost all educational opportunities. Official schooling was a Western idea, not a Thai norm, and most of the training of architects took place within families or in large guilds that provided tutelage for a limited number of

pupils.⁴² When Thailand founded its first architecture school at the university level, the focus was primarily on modern or Western architecture. This induced tensions surrounding the knowledge of Thai traditional architecture and resulted in a shortage of specialists.

Because of these factors, the subsequent period of Thai traditional architectural practice, especially the rigors of mastery of original forms, declined, and authentic traditional Thai architecture dwindled, as well. The art in the Thai traditional style produced in the ensuing period experienced a dramatic denigration—many of which were stopped from further development, or even became cruder and lackluster. Experts on Thai traditional architecture became fewer and fewer and knowledge about this form became more and more limited. Any knowledge that remained was based in small groups of guilds, but it was not as profound as in the past. The situation of art later, in some views, became bleak.

Thai architecture is divided into two lineages. The first lineage is royal art, which is produced by royal artisans. I am one of them; I regard myself as one of them. Works created by this group of people use the Thai classical grammar, or in other words, the golden rule of royal art. To acquire this knowledge, one has to devote himself earnestly to painstaking training by his teachers. . . . A royal artisan is also regarded as a civil servant who works solely in the royal guild under royal patronage without other side jobs. Most artisans are masters and skillful in their art. In the past, particularly, they worked under the close supervision of the king, where they had the chance to learn much from other peers.⁴³

Outside of the royal guild, there was a large group of artisans working in the nonclassical style; their works were various and had no consolidated format as did the

⁴²Phutsadi Thippathat, *Sathapok Sathapattayakam [Architects: Architecture]*, *ibid*, 3.

⁴³Phutsadi Thippathat, *Sathapanik Sayam: Phunthan, Botbat, Phonngan, Lae Naeokhit (Pho. So. 2475-2537), Vol. 1 [Siamese Architects, 1932–1994, Vol. 1] [in Thai]*, *ibid.*, 259.

royal guild. This group of artisans was also known as the indigenous artisans, and this group and their work were sometimes viewed as somewhat inferior to the first group.

. . . if anyone prefers to build Thai architecture without following the classical grammar, it is his choice. There is no written regulation forbidding anyone from doing such thing. He, however, is merely an indigenous artisan. This shows their ideas . . . I don't mind if they want to build a Buddhist altar shrine in the form of a skyrocket. But as for me, I will never do that. I adhere only to the genuine classical grammar of Thai traditional architecture.⁴⁴

In reading the above quotes, one can see that the rigid mindset of conservatives has a limiting effect on the remaking of the Thai traditional architectural style because it restricts some artisans from using the style and allows its use exclusively for small groups of the dignified classes and by the exclusive guild of artisans.

In 1955, as a consequence, the Faculty of Thai Architecture was formed at Silpakorn University. It was the sole architecture department of the faculty at the time and was under the deanship of Phra Phrombhichitr; it heralded the beginning of the era of official architecture tutelage in Thailand. In 1974, nonetheless, the pedagogy was transformed to follow the Western standard, and the emphasis on Thai-ness and nostalgia declined. After some time, those who valued Thai traditional architecture brought the curriculum back; this was not until 1995, when a Bachelor of Architecture in Thai architecture was offered at Silpakorn University and also at Chulalongkorn University. The teaching of this discipline at the bachelor's degree level began in 1996, and teaching at the master's level began in the following year. The curriculum's rationale at Chulalongkorn University declares:

Thai architecture originated in Thailand based on Thai ingenuity. Over a long period of time, it developed into a concrete form that reflected Thai-ness as the

⁴⁴Ibid., 260.

identity of the nation. The architecture embraces a wide range of traits, from austere vernacular forms to lavish classical structures.⁴⁵

In 1999, the Faculty of Architecture of Silpakorn University was mandated by the government to produce more specialists in the area of Thai architecture, and it thus initiated the project *Sathapat Pariwat* at the master's level.

The return of a Thai architecture curricula at these institutions suggests that the subject regained its strength in the quest for a national identity for architecture. Despite the difficulties in the practice of the Thai traditional style, there were attempts to formulate a possible design application, such as a text by Rutai Jaijongrak, a professor of Silpakorn University:

. . . [One should] study structure, technology, functionality, and construction materials, as well as be aware of the skills of construction workers available in the market nowadays. Take into account the economic, social, and environmental factors. Adopt Thai traditional elements in 60% to 70% of the overall building. For instance, if authentic form is an issue, replacing roof tiles with modern materials in the market should be considered. Attention must be paid to the preservation of the quality of harmony and an effeminate and graceful nature. All in all, the form should allude to Thai traditional style.⁴⁶

In sum, it can be said that the attempt to establish a Thai identity by remaking Thai traditionalism faced many problems, and whenever contemporary architects attempted to overcome them, they had to cope with sensitive issues from the start.

Vernacular Architecture

Vernacular architecture gained interest as another architectural form in the 1980s, mainly in the movements at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL) and Silpakorn University. Vivat Temiyabandha and Pralong

⁴⁵Chulalongkorn University, *Suebsan Sathapattayakam Thai [Prolonging the Thai Architecture] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, 2001), Introduction page.

⁴⁶Rutai Jaijongrak, "Story of Thai Architecture, [in Thai]" *Najua* 15 (1997): 1.

Phirananda's trailblazing book on *Thai Vernacular Architecture*,⁴⁷ in which the author collated analytical works based on field surveys, shed light on the value of local houses, which were generally ignored by scholars in the previous period. When mainstream scholars mentioned Thai-ness, they focused more on classical traditionalism. This movement was in accordance with the seminal exhibition of Bernard Rudofsky in 1964, entitled *Architecture Without Architects*, which attracted global interest. According to Vivat Temiyabandha,

Local architecture is the work that reflects the national identity because it echoes the ingenuity of the ancestors. All should be aware of their merits and work jointly to preserve these remaining old structures and sustain them. Doing this will collaboratively develop cultures and secure peace and sympathy among nations. These are authentic, creative cultural objects.⁴⁸

At Silpakorn University, contributions to vernacular architecture were made by Ornsiri Panin in *Residential Pattern Along Klong Bangkok Noi*⁴⁹ in 1984 and Vira Inpung in *Vernacular houses in the Western region*⁵⁰ in 2001–2002.

Some debates concerning the objectives of vernacular architecture study and research were, at first, uncertain about the benefits of the style and the findings to which studies might lead. This was one reason that Suphat Bunyarittikij⁵¹ suggested that KMITL should limit the course of study to be a complementary course within the Bachelor of Architecture Program. According to Vivat Temiyabandha,

⁴⁷Pralong Phirananda et al., *Sathapattayakam Thai Puenthin [Thai Vernacular Architecture] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Faculty of Architecture, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, 1982).

⁴⁸Vivat Temiyabandha, Khwamsamkhan Khong Sathapattayakam Thongthin [Significance of Vernacular Architecture] [in Thai], 1982, paper delivered at a seminar, Chulalongkorn University, 2.

⁴⁹Ornsiri Panin, *Residential Pattern Along Klong Bangkok Noi* (Bangkok: Department of Architecture, Silpakorn University, 1984).

⁵⁰Vira Inpung et al., *Vernacular Houses in the Western Region* (Bangkok: Faculty of Architecture, Silpakorn University, 2002).

⁵¹Suphat Bunyarittikij (KMITL Professor) in discussion with the author, on "Pedagogy in KMITL Faculty of Architecture," December 9, 2019.

In a developing country, the study of local dwellings is indispensable because the lessons learned from native designs can teach us how workers built structures to suit the climatic, geographical, and economic contexts. Moreover, they suggest how new designs can augment the cultural identity of the local region more profoundly. One significant recommendation was that the top authority instill an awareness in citizens of the value of vernacular architecture as part of their heritage.⁵²

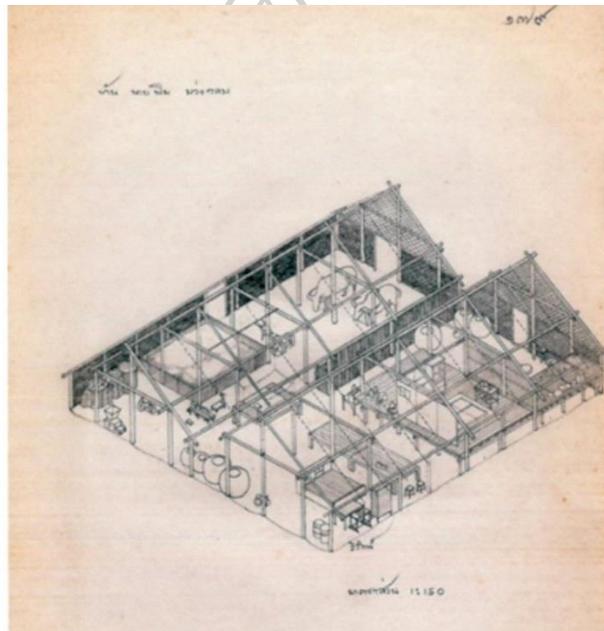


Figure 18 A vernacular house as good architecture defined by Vivat Temiyabandha
 Even in 2016 he was still a fervent advocator of vernacular architecture
 who partook in ASA 2016: Back to Basic event
 Source: Vivat Temiyabandha, "Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?",
 Pamphlet of "ASA 2016: Back to Basic," (Bangkok: 2016).

The practicality of vernacular architecture in design, however, was not shown until 1967 in Virote Srisuro's application of it to the ordination hall of the Wat Sala Loy Temple in Nakhon Ratchasima. His avant-garde architectural work was relatively

⁵²Vivat Temiyabandha, *ibid.*, 8-9.

experimental because it did not conform to the conventions of religious architectural tradition as did many other temples. Thai traditionalism is primarily used for religious structures, but it did not for this monastery. The architect shifted his schema to a vernacular motif by applying regionalism in the design. He used a buckling plinth stylobate, an element popular in temples in the Ayutthaya period that suggests the configuration of a sea junk. Other features were intertwined with some of the vernacular motifs of Nakhon Ratchasima, which originally came from an amalgamation of the Thai and Laos cultures. Anuvit Charensupkul commented

. . . [Wat Sala Loy has] an avant-garde design whose form departs from the precedented norm to become a contemporary religious building. Embedded within its prominent details is an admirable quality of plasticity in which the elements genuinely resonate with the spirit of the local culture.⁵³



Figure 19 The ordination hall of Wat Sala Loy

Source: <https://www.tiewplearn.com/topics/10564>, accessed January 2, 2020.

⁵³Faculty of Applied Arts and Design Ubon Ratchathani University, *Ramluek Wirot Srisuro [In Memory of Wirot Srisuro] [in Thai]* (Ubon Ratchathani: Ubon Ratchathani University Printing House, 2008), 8-9.

Although Virote Srisuro's success in the 1960s marked the unveiling of Thai vernacular architectural adaptation, and despite several attempts to extract and intertwine the vernacular grammar in new buildings that took place in many parts of the country, there was not much noteworthy discourse on the subject, with one exception. Saran Soonthornsook made contributions to architectural discourse that were quite remarkable. He worked mainly with the Habita Group, whose expertise was in the design of resort hotels. The project that exemplified the vernacular adaptive design was Saran's Six Senses Resort and Hotel. A low-slung overhanging roof and small cluster of houses that are modest in form suggests an atmosphere of Thai vernacular architecture. His theory of design is, in his words,

I believe that our Thai vernacular architecture has a unique element of proportion. It is a scale that appears in folk architectural work. The space and form have a petite scale and toy-like size; there is a coziness due to the deep-eave low-slung roof, which suggests a sense of friendliness. This form and space result from the fact that our people often sit on the floor... Our vernacular artifacts encompass a unique form that reflects the character of our people, as well as their culture and the way they live; this is still implanted in their DNA. If new architects never neglect this principle, I believe that we can still find ourselves in the inevitable trend of globalization.⁵⁴

Applying the Theory of Think New, Do New

Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura states that the theory of contemporary Thai architecture should consider these factors:⁵⁵

⁵⁴King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang Faculty of Architecture, *Moradok Kwam-ngam Khong Saphab Waedlom Thongthin Thai [Aesthetic Heritage of the Thai Local Environment] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Faculty of Architecture, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, 2001), 183–184.

⁵⁵Summarized from Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, "Sathapattayakam Thai Samai Mai (Thai Ror Kao) Ekkalak Sathapattayakam Thai: Khorkhidhen Bang

First: Concept of sustaining the Thai spirit or intellectual character

- 1) Identity must not be connected to a past identity.
- 2) Preserving Thai identity in architecture may depend on adopting Thai spirit without Thai form.
- 3) Thai form may be chosen but the space must be reconstructed, as it has been in the Ayutthaya Historical Park tourist service center.
- 4) The interior space and atmosphere should be adapted from Thai space in the past, as in the Royal Thai Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- 5) Thai architecture must be sustained but the hierarchical canon must not be breached.

Second: Concept of sustaining forms, elements, or symbolism

- 1) The redesign of Thai traditionalism is applied to the local culture, as in the Wat Sala Loy Temple.
- 2) Local architectural identity must be used in contemporary buildings, as in the Asian Bank in Namphong.
- 3) New designs of Thai architecture are needed, as in the ordination hall of the Wat Phra Dhammakaya Temple.
- 4) Elements that display Thai identity must be used, as in the Erawan Hotel in Bangkok.
- 5) Building plans and roof shapes should preserve Thai form, as in the Sirikit Convention Center in Bangkok.
- 6) Thai architecture should be developed from the major archetypes of architecture in the past.
- 7) Contemporary architectural forms must be transformed according to the technology and materials of the present day.

Also, Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura proposed Design Guidelines for Creating Thai Identity in Modern Architecture in the following diagram:

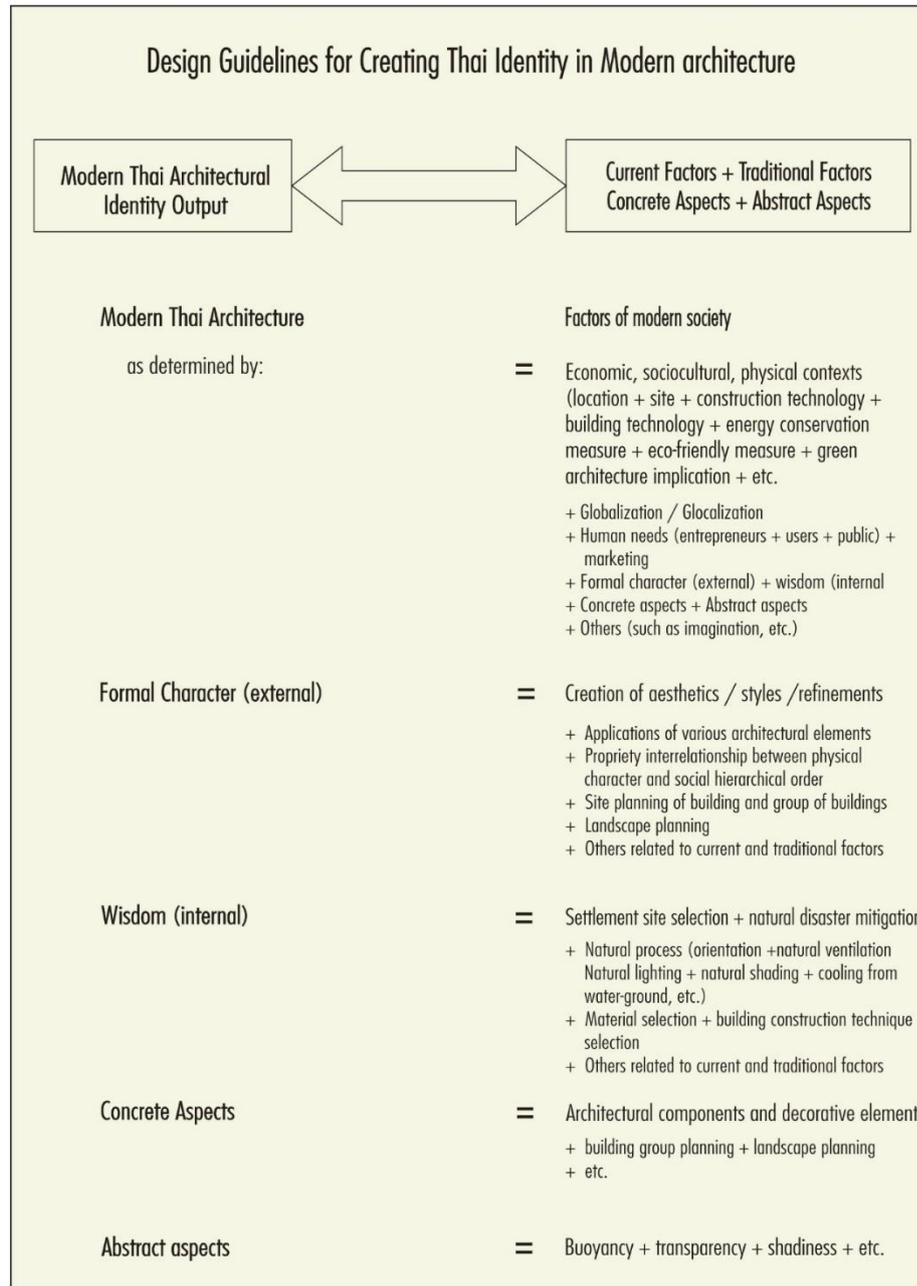


Figure 20 Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura's Design Guidelines for Creating Thai Identity in Modern Architecture posited in 2010, redrawn by the author

Source: Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, "The Creation of Cultural Heritage:

Towards Creating a Modern Thai Architectural Identity," *Manusya: Journal of Humanities Regular* 13, no. 1 (2010), 70.

Austerity versus Luxury

Besides the idea of lightness of Calvino presented in Chapter 2 that argues for the tendency of light, little, and, of course, towards minimalism, this section elaborates the issue of the similar stream. It could be said that any world paradigm is based on a dialectical combination; this is the case with architecture. Architectural design, on the one hand, embodies tension between two features, such as austerity and luxury. *Austere*,⁵⁶ according to the Webster's New World Dictionary, is defined as very plain; lacking ornament or luxury, whereas *luxury*⁵⁷ refers to the use and enjoyment of the best and most costly things that offer the most physical comfort and satisfaction and usually something considered unnecessary to life and health.

The term *austerity* (*samatha สมนะ* in Thai) refers to a less materialistic condition. In the Thai language, there appear to be two different meanings. First, when referring to sacred culture, it means the peace of mind one attains in spiritual practice; its goal is to overcome lust and attain nothingness, or Enlightenment in Buddhism. When referring to profane culture, austerity is an adaptive level of *Samatha* during which one looks forward to arriving at a state of being in which one can refrain from doing or having something, live in simplicity, and experience sufficiency (e.g., "an austere person lives his life simplistically"). In this usage, austerity reflects a sense of having less and less and yet having what is sufficient.

King Rama IX put forth an ideology of austerity in 1997, when economic turmoil struck Thailand, and his dogma became a pillar of the nation from that time forward. He posited that one way to survive economic trouble was to live in a state of sufficiency, saying ". . . 'Sufficiency' means to lead a reasonably comfortable life, without excess, or overindulgence in luxury, but rather being satisfied of having enough . . ."⁵⁸

⁵⁶"austere," in *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1993), 91.

⁵⁷"luxury," in *ibid*, 807.

⁵⁸King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in a speech given to an audience of well-wishers on the occasion of His birthday, December 4, 1998, at Dusidalai Hall, Chitralada

Every architectural project that puts into practice His Majesty's concept has to reflect meaningful usefulness and has to be worthwhile economically. This is the outcome of valuing the principle of Usefulness Creates Happiness as the foundation of life, according to the Sufficiency Economy Ideology.⁵⁹



Figure 21 King Bhumibol Adulyadej (in Watercolor painted by an architect)
Many architects lauded him as their spiritual leader and role model by honoring him with the title “Master Architect of the Nation.” (Also, it is the translation of the Thai text under the picture).

Source: <https://img.yumpu.com/58543233/1/500x640/asa-crew-vol1.jpg>, accessed December 5, 2019

Villa, Dusit Palace, quoted in Worachai Tantisiriwat and Wanida Supaporn, *H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Ingenious Concept of "Sufficiency" through Architecture* (Bangkok: Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage [ASA] and Siam Cement Group [SCG], 2010), 2.

⁵⁹Ibid.

To the King, sufficiency means adequate austerity. His precept was aimed at stifling an impending financial collapse, and his philosophy led his people to soon step out of the abyss. This idea led to a way of life in which everyday living was simplified and consumption was controlled in order to seek a balance that would become a sufficient life. In Thailand's architectural circles, the king is the role model, and his ideology on sufficiency has been heeded and developed in many dimensions.

Austerity can be described as a way of life that is minimal, reductive, simple, serene, crisp, sleek, and streamlined. It also alludes to qualities of being discreet and practical, so that sufficiency is a logical outcome. In contrast, luxury suggests multiplicity, and complexity. In theory, the dialectical features of austerity and luxury as they are associated with architecture tend to change depending upon time and place. The concept of simplicity appeared in the twentieth-century theories posited by architects such as Mies van der Rohe, but its manifestations varied.

Throughout the history of humanity, the dialectic of more and less has continued. As long ago as in the Ancient Greek period, aesthetic ideals provided alternatives for designers who were dealing with complexity and simplicity. If simplicity was the goal, architects could choose Doric style, which not only conveyed architectural simplicity but also masculinity and elegance. The Ionic and Corinthian styles, on the other hand, offered complexity and lavishness plus an effeminate graceful effect.

During the Roman era, many architects chose a lavish and elaborate form, as is found in the Roman *thermae*, or Baths of Caracalla, that served to entertain and offer luxury to people. With the advent of the Early Christian era, the attraction of worldliness dwindled and was replaced by asceticism in the lives of monastics of many basilican churches; the old Saint Peter's Basilica (the first version, built c. 4th Century) in Rome a manifestation of the Early Christian Church archetype.

A luxurious form and details of design are discernible in Gothic architecture. It was derived from its predecessor, Romanesque architecture, but incorporates more

delicate and lavishly adorned elements. Romanesque style was characterized by massiveness and fortress-like structures with limited openings; it embodied the spirit of the Middle Ages. Gothic style is open and incorporates multiple colorful stained-glass windows and a complex system of flying buttresses.

By the fifteenth century, Renaissance architecture emerged. The Basilica de Santo Spirito, designed by Brunelleschi in 1446, stressed simplicity and straightforwardness. Silence dwells within the church. One can suggest that this church embodies the austerity of architectural expression. Renaissance architects fashioned their structures with the greatest simplicity until the new style of the Baroque emerged. Baroque architecture was characterized by complexity, ambiguousness, lavishness, and fluidity and was applied by architects such as Giacomo Della Porta, Bernini, and Borromini. Borromini's church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane especially manifests complexity and ambiguity with its curvatures, convex and concave masses and forms, and elaborate interior adornment. Its purpose was to lure back members from the more energetic religious pull of Protestantism, which rapidly engaged the interest of spiritual seekers.

In the following period, the era of the Enlightenment, designs shifted to a focus on metaphysics and epistemology. Thus, a new paradigm of rationalism shook architecture. The approach involved multiple aesthetic styles. Greek architectural style was revived by some groups of architects, whereas others took up Mannerism, which was developed in the prosperous academies of historicism. The concept of revivalism was continued into the nineteenth century with a greater variety of styles. The turn of the nineteenth century saw the establishment of architecture schools in Europe to train architects to maintain the legacy of classicism. The *École des Beaux-Arts* taught neoclassical architecture, and the most prominent styles, Baroque and Rococo, were characterized by complex and luxurious fashions. The Palais Garnier (Paris Opera House), designed in 1861 by Charles Garnier, represents the mainstream of that school.

The decline of complexity was seen as modernism debuted. This was thanks to Adolf Loos, who theorized about forgoing ornamentation in architecture in his seminal work “Ornament and Crime” in 1913. He conceptualized that “the evolution of culture marches with the elimination of ornament from a useful object.”⁶⁰ Subsequently, Mies van der Rohe, in his manifesto “Less Is More,” established a new aesthetic ideal that valued the art of reduction and purity form pointing towards an austerity. His exceptional designs included the Barcelona Pavilion, Crown Hall of the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, Lake Shore Drive Apartments in Chicago, and Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois. His concept of simplicity tremendously impacted a multitude of architects of his century and spread throughout the world as globalization occurred.

In the twentieth century, the architect Robert Venturi coined the phrase “Less Is a Bore” and wrote his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*,⁶¹ which proposed a new philosophy of design that turned back to complexity and the amalgamation of many qualities through a structure of “both...and...”

For current global trends, there appeared many contributions supporting the post-luxury period, such as Dana Thomas’s “Deluxe: How Luxury Lost its Luster”,⁶² which despite its discussion principally on the marketing of the global brands, asks: where can true luxury go now?; it additionally pinpoints the dark side of the luxury product business and implies consumers cautiously from the pseudo-extravaganza of consumerism's glossy image.

In Thailand, architecture relied on the established canon until the era of King Rama V and modernization. One can observe the duality of simple/austere/*samatha*

⁶⁰Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays* (Riverside, California: Ariadne Press, 1998), 167-176.

⁶¹Robert Venturi, Martino Stierli, and David Bruce Brownlee, *Complexity and contradiction in architecture, vol. 1* (New York, New York: The Museum of modern art, 1977), 1.

⁶²Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster*, trans. Sopaporn Kurz (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007), 15-32.

versus complex/luxury in every period depending on the hierarchy of building type and person for whom the building would serve. Therefore, complex and luxurious designs were exclusively tailored to religious clients and royalty, whereas simple/austere buildings were for common people, though there were nuances within these categories according to a person's social class. For example, slightly luxurious hard-wooden houses belonged to aristocrats, but simple bamboo houses were for the *corvée* class (normal people). No crossing of this boundary was made.

In accordance with the philosophy of sufficiency prophesized by the king there are many architects and theorists who declare their philosophical standpoints in the same direction especially conveyed through the ASA's exhibition that the organizer requested some famous architects to contribute through the publication of the pamphlets on the theme "Back to Basic," such as the work of Pongpon Yuttharat (Hed design studio). According to Pongpon, "architecture must fit, as if it is tailor made, the cost of building and labor must fit [with the project] appropriately, and fits with the individual mind."⁶³ His discourse is also well pointing towards the sufficiency economy as part of the trend of design. Besides the previous example another architect

New Embodiment of Autonomous Spirit: Discourses of Identity

Identity is the main issue: One factor in the identity of Thailand is its architecture, which has to embody Thai-ness. Critics of architecture before 1980 said that architecture in Thailand paid too much attention to importing modern styles and lacked Thai-ness or that Thai architects were lost⁶⁴ (did not reclaim their identity). It was not architecture circles alone that intensified the interest in identity but all fields

⁶³Pongpon Yuttharat, "*Basic Image: What is Good Architecture*", Pamphlet of "A.S.A. 2016: Back to Basic", (Bangkok: 2016).

⁶⁴Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura et al., *Phattanakarn Naewkhwamkhith Lae Roopbaeb Khong Ngan Sathapattayakam Adeet Patchuban Lae Anakhot [Development of Concepts and Designs of Architecture: Past, Present and Future] [in Tha]* (Bangkok: ASA and Amarin Printing, 1993), 1–2.

of culture. The government formed a National Identity Office to handle cultural preservation.

The duty of the National Identity Office was to oversee cultural activities and promote the identity of the nation. There were many campaigns to fulfill this task, but the policy mainly focused on promoting cultural unity with such things as emblems of visual culture. The elephant became the national animal and *Cassia fistula. L.* (drumstick tree flower) became the national flower. The central-region–styled gazebo became the only emblem of national architecture. This discourse seemed to devalue other regional styles and in the view of the postmodernists this was a cultural denigration.

Choosing one single culture as representative or claiming that one particular culture was superior to all others seemed a problematic way to deal with Thai-ness. According to Frampton's concept of critical regionalism, such an approach suggests that local cultures are facing a demise. He states that the crashing of universality—as the mainstream of culture—with locality is a process of diminishing individual cultures of different countries by the encroachment of Westernization. However, if one views a country the size of Thailand, considering one nation as the mainstream, the government's centralization attempt was another similar problem as it valued one subculture more than the rest.



Figure 22 Thai gazebo (Sala Thai) as the emblem of Thai National Architecture
It was designated in this way by the National Identity Office of the
government.

Source: <http://www.dhammathai.org/thailand/thaisign.php>. Accessed February 10, 2020.

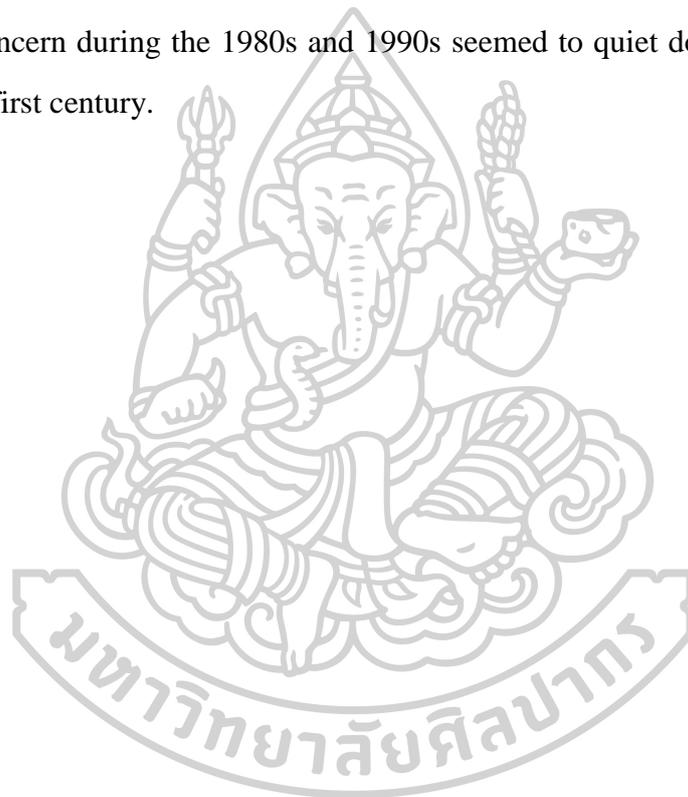
Tensions around identity continued as architects tried to search for a genuine style and asked in what style should we build?" Defining Thai-ness too narrowly may have complicated the problem.

Some discussions focused on a general dislike of modern architecture with such seminal remarks as "Modern architecture does not fit: it is like cancer."⁶⁵ These discussions alarmed many architects and caused them to try to make their designs Thai in every way. Some events held by the ASA involved finding solutions for the problem. Suvarnabhumi Airport was designed by an American group of architects; at the time that they won the open competition, their design met all of the requirements and was highly regarded, but later it was criticized as too foreign" and not look[ing] Thai at all. As the issue blew up, the government responded to the upheaval by forming a team to supervise the design development, but it was too late. The result was to alleviate the absence of identity by adding Thai artifacts to the interior decoration, such as giant statues and miniature pavilions. The structure then became nothing more than a tongue-in-cheek trompe l'oeil.

⁶⁵Anuvit Charernsupkul, "Oupasak Lae Patchai Karnneramit Sathapattayakam Laksana Thai [Obstructions of Thai Architectural Form Creation] [in Thai]," *ASA Journal* 1 (1969): 87.

Such odd practices and cultural movements revealed the agenda among architects and people outside the field particularly the government whose style and design sensitivity seemed to delay and caused the even more chaos.

Whilst some architects were trying to solve the identity problem of Thai architecture during the 1990s, more applications emerged. Some architects, as aforementioned, experimented with ideas in an attempt to avoid the remaking the Thai traditional style, which had been rejected by conservatives. The situation that caused so much concern during the 1980s and 1990s seemed to quiet down after the turn of the twenty-first century.



CHAPTER 4

Historical Context of the Transformation of Thai Architectural Identity

In *Architecture of Thailand: A Guide to Traditional and Contemporary Forms*, Nithi Sthapitanonda and Brian Mertens argue that Thailand's architecture is an architecture of layers, and it has incorporated many ideologies and influences throughout history.⁶⁶ Because of its location, Thailand is a cultural crossroad and has been influenced by ideologies from India, Ceylon, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, China, and the West. The land has yielded the fruits of good agrarian lifestyles. Therefore, in order to comprehend the complexity of Thailand's contemporary architectural development, it is necessary to delve into the historical context. First, one may focus on the early Rattanakosin period, when Siam (or Thailand) began to modernize itself, to decode what has been inherited as the substance of Thai architecture. Although some believed that Thai architecture has a rigid and stable character, it has in fact been subject to dynamic external and internal influences, depending on the time and place.

Olden Siam, the alternate name of the Thai state,⁶⁷ was a kingdom that wove several cultures together. As the Kingdom of Siam became an integrated social unit, it adopted Buddhism as its religion, and this immensely shaped the way Thai people saw the world. The world was seen as a transcendental place with a mandala of concentric mountains called Mount Meru and seas surrounding a sacred hub, the mythical Himalayan abode of the gods.

⁶⁶Nithi Sthapitanonda and Brian Mertens, *Architecture of Thailand: A Guide to Traditional and Contemporary Forms* (Bangkok: Asia Books, 2005), 13.

⁶⁷In 1945, the government of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram renamed Siam as Thailand.

The sacred summit was symbolized by the multitiered conical forms used in royal regalia, such as crowns and parasols, and throughout temples and palaces in their bases, tops of wall columns, stupas, and roof spires.⁶⁸



Figure 23 The Diagram of Thai worldview

It was shaped by the influence of a Hindu–Buddhist treatise known as the Traiphum, or Three Lands. This illustration appears in a 1776 version of the manuscript commissioned by King Taksin.

Source: <https://readthecloud.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/work-notenation-dust-2.jpg>, accessed February 1, 2020.

The architecture of the olden days of Siam gradually developed from the time of Sukhothai to Rattanakosin. However, the pivotal time of change was when Siam began to become modernized and it informed the definition of what architecture is today. The modernization of the kingdom occurred during the reign of King Rama IV (also known as King Mongkut).

⁶⁸Nithi Sthapitanonda and Brian Mertens, *ibid.*

During King Mongkut's reign, Western arts and crafts became available. A new exposure to the West brought about a number of incoming architectural styles and they became infused with local styles. This influx occurred via many channels and a sweeping connection with the West, which was mainly due to the Bowring Treaty (1846). This diplomatic agreement caused a drastic change in Bangkok's urban fabric, with new laws that allowed the British to build vast settlements in the Kingdom. The government granted the rights and freedom to trade and own land to people and subjects of Britain. This transformed Siam physically and culturally. In terms of built forms, many new demands emerged to create new projects of various types, including new roads and row houses, and the buildings were stylized in some respects to serve them. The government allocated new town zones for different groups of foreigners, particularly around Bangrak.

The influence of Western arts was not limited to the sources of British but included wider groups of Europeans. Siam began to learn and absorb architectural knowledge, both in art and technology, from these connections with foreigners.

As the head of state and an influential figure, Kings played a prominent role in this establishment of the arts, especially Rama IV and Rama V, who were interested in Western knowledge. By the time King Rama IV was Prince Mongkut during the reign of King Rama III, as a Buddhist monk, his interests included various disciplines of knowledge, philosophy, science, and languages; he learned Pali, Latin, and English from foreign teachers. This shows his profound determination to open up his horizons to the wider world outside the Siamese sphere. Later, when he became king, he hired Westerners such as Anna Leonowens to teach his children. He had connections with expat scholars, and his French friend Pallegoix, a Roman Catholic Bishop, visited him from time to time and taught him Latin and the Western ideology.

During the reign of King Rama IV, some projects were built in the Thai traditional style, such as Wat Samphanthawong, Wat Srisuriyawong in Ratchaburi,

and Wat Khok Moo. Although they were in the traditional style, on the surface, they exemplified Western architecture's influence; this was evident in the porticos, as additions to building fronts were a new fashion of the time. Many buildings that exemplify this style are, for example, Karanyasabha, and Sala Leuk Khun.

Modern construction techniques were adapted to accommodate Western styles, but doing so was difficult. The primary workforces consisted of Thai and Chinese artisans and laborers. There was a strong interest in building Western forms, with which became familiar by seeing pictures and postcards, but Siamese artisans did not have the technical knowhow in concrete or steel construction as built in Europe and America. These artisans and workers had to make do with vernacular techniques in order to build Western-style facades. The builders adapted whatever they could, such as building walls by attaching brickwork onto timber structures to simulate masonry. This practice created a hybrid style and contributed to a new fashion in Siam by the end of Rama IV's reign.

There were several royal houses built in this hybrid style, such as the Issaresrajanusorn Throne Hall; it had a front staircase that provided access to its entrance hall. This feature was derived from a foreign style, probably American, and it became a new standard archetype of that period. With the new mainstream of Western style, the practice of the traditional style started to decline; training in the old arts from generation to generation became less common and eventually led to the discontinuation of artistic practice.



Figure 24 Issaresrajanusorn Throne Hall and its portico showing a new element in architecture

Source: <http://www.reurnthai.com/index.php?topic=3700.0>, accessed January 31, 2020.

Modernization and Westernization in arts such as painting was another significant development that affected the long-established identity of Siam. Mural painting was a task dedicated mostly to religious buildings. In Wat Bawon Sathan Sutthawat Wang Na, a palatial monastery, the painters adopted Western ideas in two aspects. First, they used the technique of perspective, which originated in the Italian Renaissance period, but did not use it in a technically accurate way. It was the first Western trait adopted by the artists of Siam. Before that time, traditional Thai paintings used a unique style of (inaccurate) pseudo-bird's-eye-view perspective, which depicted religious and mythological content. The overall appearance was usually surrealistic. Second, painters included depictions of the classical architecture of the West. It was believed that they learned about them from postcards and prints that were becoming common media at the time among Westerners. Therefore, it could be said that in Wat Bawon Sathan Sutthawat, Siamese artists of that time were eager to change from the traditional way to a new way and new identity by incorporating exotic ideas as a new means of generating for pastoral artwork.



Figure 25 A mural painting in Wat Bawon Sathan Sutthawat depicting eclectic transgression inclination in architectural styles in the worldview of Thai artists

Source: <https://readthecloud.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/activities-walk-hidden-palace-scoop-26.jpg>, accessed January 15, 2020.

The time of King Rama V has been regarded extensively as the period of modernization of Siam.⁶⁹ During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, reigned 1868 to 1910), the son of Ram IV, Siam experienced a relatively challenging influx of new ideologies. The King, in his childhood, was educated both in Thai (conservative) and Western (modern) styles. The Western teaching was offered by imported Westerners such as Anna Leonowens, as was mentioned earlier. The King grew up with an awareness that the Kingdom needed to have standards that would compete

⁶⁹David Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 2nd ed. (Chiang Mai: Silk Worm Books, 2004), 209-210.

with the Western world. In his view, importing Western things would serve the nation, but the choices had to be made carefully. He modernized a series of royal conventions, such as the etiquette of the royal audience in terms of dress and hairstyles in an attempt to make the kingdom seen as being a civilized nation. This practice began in his court. Furthermore, the changes he made in the governing system of the Kingdom were to centralize the power and govern the country through twelve ministries; this idea was derived from the West. These are the signs of deeply rooted modernization.

By the time of the reign of Rama V, however, the Victorian colonial ecumene had increased its impact on Siamese architecture in more significant ways. Firstly, the architecture of the Siamese aristocrats became increasingly Westernized, inspired by travels to and print images of the colonial world. Secondly, the Siamese elites began to employ the services and expertise of European builder-contractors, whose presence in Siam significantly changed local architectural practices. Finally, the Siamese elites undertook simultaneous reforms in many institutions, with a tendency to centralize and modernize in the name of civilization. Accordingly, the so-called Chakri Reformation drastically changed local architectural practices; the royal master builders lost their shares of architectural commissions to the newly established Public Works Department.⁷⁰

Throughout this process, the King imported foreign experts to Bangkok to work as his consultants. The new traditions were gradually internalized among the people. To be a modern man, one must know English, and it was generally perceived to be a new value of aristocratic society. Also, elite groups founded multiple clubs, such as ballroom dance clubs, adopted certain table manners, went bicycling and driving, and sent their children to study abroad, especially to Britain, France, and

⁷⁰Pirasri Povatong, "Building Siwilai: Transformation of Architecture and Architectural Practice in Siam during the Reign of Rama V, 1868-1910" (PhD University of Michigan, 2011), 2.

Germany. Only nobility could have access to this kind of opportunity. When travelers returned home, they became the exemplars new fashions and took the leading role in the modernization of the country.

One new concept of the time was that "the person who studies overseas is superior to those who study at home"; students who had been abroad had a better chance for a better job and more rapid promotions. The predominating conception that Westerners were smarter and superior in other ways to native people seemed embedded in the minds of the Thais.

King Rama V traveled to Singapore, India, and Europe, where he experienced new horizons. It impacted his perspective on the development of the new architectural scheme. During the development campaign known as *Siwilai*,⁷¹ literally derived from "civilize," he changed the physical appearance of the nation by constructing new buildings. There were difficulties because of a shortage of skilled laborers and architects and the accelerating demands of new construction. He imported architects from Europe, especially Italy, Germany, and Britain, to build his modern Siam. New projects included palaces and princely residences mostly in neoclassical variants. Some critics viewed this *Siwilai* campaign as a risk for merely putting on a mask, a sort of superficial cladding of a vacuum.⁷² It had become important to show the West and the rest of the world that Thai architecture was architecture par excellence. It also served as a reaction to the risk of encroaching colonialism.

The campaign to modernize Siam, despite its aim of merely ornamenting Siam, became a new tendency to use European styles of architecture among elite groups. They learned about neoclassical, neo-Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque architecture. Knowledge of and skill and craftsmanship in Thai traditional architecture diminished and was replaced by foreign techniques. The body of knowledge

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

concerning architecture became divided into the science of engineering, for construction, and the art of architectural aesthetics reflecting a Western format.

King Rama V, when viewing several European-style buildings, expressed his concern about the styles: ". . . in the future, people will view this reign as decadence and insult King Rama V for the over-favor of European buildings."⁷³ Because of this troubling realization, he decided to build a summer house, Phra Tamnak Ruen Ton, in an original traditional Thai style for so that he and his commoner friends could use it for recreational purposes.



Figure 26 Phra Tamnak Ruen Ton
located in the Dusit Palace

Source: Somphob Phirom, *Baan Thai Phak Klang* (Bangkok: Kungsiam Karnphim, 1972), 133.

⁷³Piriya Kraireuk, *History of Art in Thailand*, students' ed. (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 1982), 334.

During his reign, a number of palaces were built in Western styles. In the first half of his reign, Buraphabhiromya Villa, Thaphra Villa, and Waropatvimarn Villa were built, and in the second half, Vimarnmek Villa, Niwetdharmapravaddi Temple, Saranromya Cadet School, and Anandasamakhom Throne Hall. There were two reasons for the fact that the majority of his projects were in the European style: (1) they were emblems of *Siwilai* (modernity) and (2) they could be built more easily in that time of labor shortage, especially the shortage of skilled laborers. It was more convenient, in the view of the King, to hire project architects and contractors from Europe because they could handle and do the job more extensively, especially with their higher engineering capability.



Figure 27 Niwetdharmapravaddi Temple

Source: <https://asaconservationaward.com/index.php/2016-06-13-15-22->

21/temple2532/187-wat-niwetthammaprawat-ordination-hall., accessed February 1, 2020.

Niwetdharmapravaddi Temple has been in the midst of a debate on identity for some time because it was dedicated to Buddhism and temples were usually constructed in the traditional style. The exterior configuration is characterized by the simplified Gothic Revival style and designed by the Italian architect Joachim Grassi. The construction of the temple commenced in 1876 and was completed in 1881. The interior has a European appearance although it is well-adapted to Buddhist functions and traditional characteristics. For instance, its overall decoration is with stuccos and stained glass; the principle Buddha image, Phra Phutthanaruemonthammopat, is enthroned on a high pedestal under a Gothic arch; King Rama V's image is depicted in a French stained glass window on the arch above the entrance; and a spired bell tower is located at the rear, similar to a Christian church. It shows how Western culture affected a highly conserved architectural type used for a temple.

One controversial construction campaign of King Rama V involved the Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall. It epitomizes the amalgamation of several issues, including the ideology of form and the process of work. Initially, the proposal was to use a Renaissance Revival style and the plan and form alluded to the classicism of Europe. The King summoned John Clunis, a British architect whose base was in Singapore, to handle the job. The form that Clunis sketched was the neoclassical *parti* following the technique of the Ecole des Beaux-Art and capped with a dome.

The final design, as it is seen today, was the consequence of an alteration as construction proceeded. The roof was remade in the traditional Thai style following the suggestion of Somdej Chaophraya Borom Maha Srisuriyawong, the chancellor to the King, who with conservative common sense advised the King on the appropriateness of style to be used for a ceremonial building within the palace compound. He further emphasized that Siam had a self-identity and that most significant buildings of the country must hierarchically conform to the canonical norm

dating back to the Ayutthaya era. No one should breach this sacred convention.⁷⁴ As a result, the first roof was replaced by one in the traditional style.

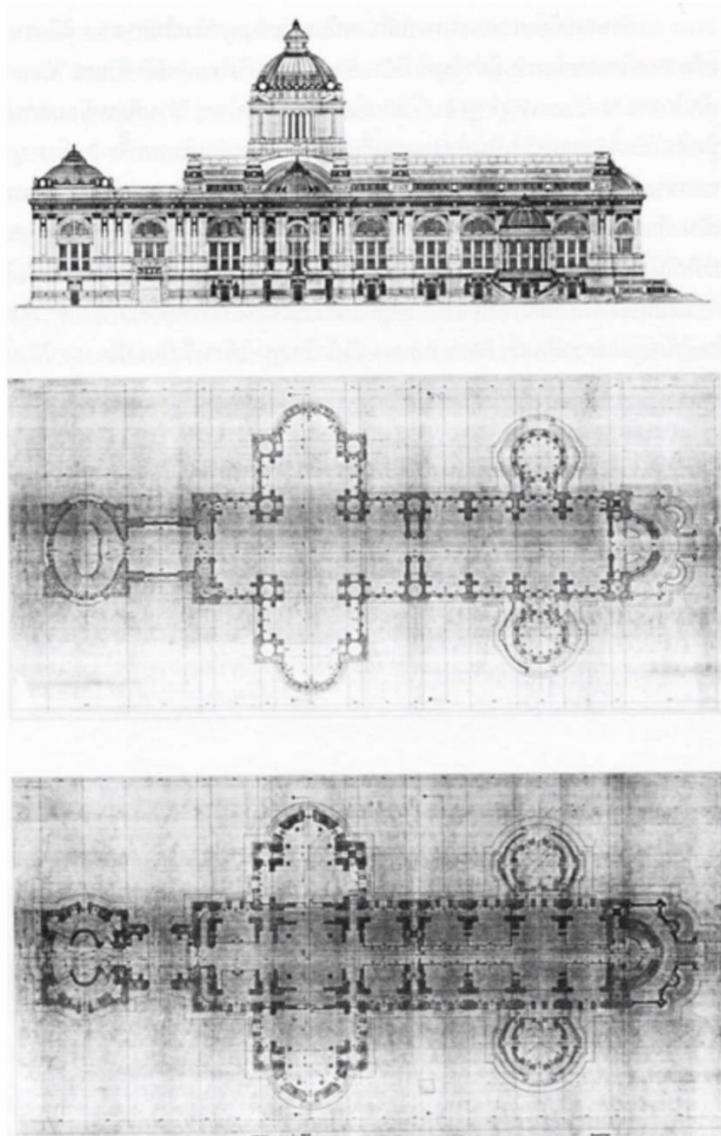


Figure 28 Anandasamakhom Throne Hall

Source: Somchart Chungsiriarak, *Sathapattayakam Baeb Tawantok Nai Siam During King Rama IV - Por Sor 2480 [Western Style Architecture in Siam during Rama IV to B.E. 2480] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2010), 127.

⁷⁴Pirasri Povatong, *ibid.*, 8.



Figure 29 Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall

Source: <https://www.royalgrandpalace.th/th/discover/architecture>, accessed April 20, 2020.

The style became Thai neoclassical, a hybrid design. This reaction by Somdej Chaophraya Borom Maha Srisuriyawong was a benchmark in the self-identity discourse about Siamese architecture; what's more, it provided a fine example of a dramatic hybrid architecture.

The reign of King Rama V was followed by the decline of Thai traditional architecture, and new styles appeared, as mentioned earlier, as well as problems of labor scarcity. Prince Naris, who was regarded as the royal master architect of the reign, experimented with another mode of hybrid architecture. He mixed Thai traditional style with a Khmer vocabulary to form a new prototype for the National Library (The Old Library). He employed a different design method compared with other contemporaries of his. Firstly, he generated a new formal composition technique derived from Western aesthetics, a classical language. He borrowed the art of composition and proportion, a basic method that belonged to the West, and synergized them with traditional architectural elements and made them unique for different places and times. In this way he re-created the language of architecture. Secondly, by

juxtaposing the old (traditional Thai) and the new (Khmer), regulated by classical (Western) proportions, he formed a new language of (new) Thai architecture. This methodology helped him develop a new hybrid style that was uniquely his own. It is now considered a novelty in Thai architecture, not a bona fide traditional style.

Prince Naris designed many buildings, but the one publicly recognized as his best was the Benchama Bopit Temple, built to the royal command. It has a Greek-cross centralized archetype and is faced with a pristine aesthetic. Although it did not comply with the canonical ancient rule, to all, it is a paragon of Thai architecture, at least of the Rama V period.



Figure 30 Benchama Bopit Temple

Source: <http://www.trueplookpanya.com/blog/content/75945/-blo-tratha-tra-his->
accessed October 1, 2020.

Prince Naris's vast ingenuity included various fields of Thai arts. While he practiced the arts, he did not bind himself within a narrow scope domestically but instead opened up his eyes and mind to a more extensive world outside the boundaries of the country, crossing the traditions of Thailand with Western technology to adapt

whatever he found valid to the known arts that he practiced. Thereby he coined a new definition of the Thai architectural identity.

... By adopting Western civilization, it meant the society selectively infused various fields of arts into their traditional practices. The arts included semi-realistic genre, such as paintings and sculptures, all of which were imported to Thailand, plus other arts that could serve the elitists. These activities helped promote art literacy and art appreciation among the people. More artists and architects were imported. Furthermore, this shook the status quo of traditional art.⁷⁵

A discourse on identity and conservatism was beginning to be established as a reaction to the flux of modernization and Westernization in Siam, as seen in the case of Somdej Chaophraya Borom Maha Srisuriyawong. The conservative discourse was lively and lasted until the late twentieth century. The point here is that although the discourse of "foreign" can be positive in some circumstances, but when an architecture requires to be "courteous," for official use it was instead viewed as inappropriate and the authentic traditionalism is mandatory.

The reign of Rama VI (King Vajiravudh) was another time when more people faced a greater impact of Westernization. A second group went to Europe and America and then returned to Thailand. They became the bureaucratic elites who would become leaders after the political transformation to democracy.

Leading members steadily advanced up the social ladder by the end of the reign. All the other elements of society were far below them. In the later reign of King Rama VI, Siam went through a series of nationalistic campaigns. Despite continual political turmoil, the King replied to the challenge which were problems and one that was to maintain over in his reign, as the state ideology, played for public relations and

⁷⁵Silpa Pirasri, *Silapa Ruam Samai Nai Prathet Thai [Contemporary Arts in Thailand] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Silpakorn University Press, 1968), 2.

propaganda to preserve the national status quo through the nationalism campaign. By that he needed to make use arts as part of his ideology. He had literary gifts and habits and a fondness for the theater. To some extent, King Chulalongkorn had indulged similar talents, but only privately for his own and his family's enjoyment. King Rama VI, however, viewed art as a life-giving effort, an instrument that might help people gather together to share a vision of a better world and to bring that world into being. When he was the Crown Prince, he organized his courtiers and retainers into an established club, where they enjoyed art activities together, and he also published a magazine and valued theatrical productions and modern patterns of behavior. On becoming King, he continued his efforts with more resources and prestige from which to draw.

Several construction projects were initiated as King Rama V completed King Rama VI's reign, and of course, the significant works were in the European fashion. The King spent nine years in England as a student. Despite his claim that he preferred Thai-ness to Western-ness, he had absorbed many aspects of Western culture and had a modernized character that reflected a combination of both worlds. When he ordered builders to build some new European style palaces, such as the new villas in Sanam Chan Palace, Nakhon Pathom Province, he was pondering:

When "New Siam" was heavily influenced by the idea that "one has to sacrifice anything for the sake of progress," did it mean that they had to jettison some old traditions and values to make "progress," or even reject everything for that purpose?⁷⁶

It was true that King Rama VI lived his life lavishly, following the trend for Westerners. Sanam Chan was a combination of Thai and Western styles, such as the

⁷⁶Asvabhahu [pseud.], "Siamese Art," *Siam Observer* (n.d.), quoted in Piriya Kraireuk and Paothong Thongchua, *Silapakam Lang Por. Sor. 2475 [Art beyond 1932]* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1982), In Thai, 332.

picturesque Charlie Mongkol Aat in the Victorian style and Mary Raja Banlang in a Swiss chateau style. There is a fantasy-land of exotic images in Sanam Chan.



Figure 31 Charlie Monkol Aat Mansion, Sanam Chan Palace
Nakhon Pathom Province

Source: https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-eY_S5-tqVDA/UQ6Erf1bvXI/AAAAAAAAAFA/IzwtBNX_ZA/s1600/IMG_3814.JPG, accessed March 1, 2020.



Figure 32 Vachari Romaya Throne Hall, Sanam Chan Palace
Nakhon Pathom Province

Source: <https://www.thai-tour.com/place/328>, accessed February 10, 2020.

King Rama VI had many ideas about art and thought often about them. Although he sometimes favored Western style, he had firm convictions about

promoting local and authentic Thai arts. He did this in his campaign for serious Thai traditional style for Sanam Chan. He also had structures built in the classical Thai style, such as Vachar Romaya Throne Hall and Ruean Thap Khwan (1911) in Ruen Thai (Thai traditional house) style. They exemplify the sense of imagery and romanticism of the King.

King Rama VI also promoted Thai arts and crafts through a campaign that relied on the English arts and crafts movement (which flourished in Europe and America from 1880 to 1920, led by William Morris). The king wrote: “Art and craft in Siam had paralyzed for several years ... what arts are in need is the appreciation and support from the people, but unfortunately both of which are scarce.”⁷⁷

He employed the Thai arts and crafts campaign as part of his nationalistic scheme throughout his reign. Moreover, in 1912 he founded the Department of Fine Arts, a bureaucratic agency that oversaw art activities and promoted the art of Siam. In 1923, he founded the Pohchang Academy of Arts (*Pohchang* means “planting artisans”), a new academy of art, to educate young artists. He also planned to hold a National Art Exposition annually, starting in 1923, but it never happened because the King passed away in 1925.

The colonialism that was so prominent in Southeast Asia before the Rama VI period declined around the 1920s. The King began to focus on the idea of identity when the First World War broke out during his reign. A critical crisis that had stirred Siam’s nationalism was its entry into the war on the side of the Allied Powers. Even though Siam's territory did not have a direct impact on the war, the King believed that its participation in the war effort built up a feeling of nationalism, and questions of identity then inevitably followed.

Besides the Pohchang, two other institutions were constructed during the reign of Rama VI, the Mahadlek Luang (Chamberlain) School and Chulalongkorn

⁷⁷Piriya Kraireuk, *ibid.*, 336.

University. The architect Phraya Chinda Rangsan (Plub) obtained a commission for both projects. Traditional classical style was intertwined with rational planning, which was a very modern approach. The overall appearance reflects a system of classical Beaux-Arts architecture in which its *parti* serves as the integral functional part of the design, but the façade follows the rule of classicism, in this case, yet is enveloped within Thai classical jackets. The roof conforms to the grammar of *song kreung lamyong*, the sacred motifs. These examples suggest that the new sensibility of the binary “new and old” was similar to the Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall, which has neoclassical (new foreign) and Thai traditional roofs (old local).

During the reigns of Rama VII (King Prajadhipok) and Rama VIII (King Ananda) there were further and radical transformations of the traditional form into the modern form; they took place after the Siamese Revolution in 1932. Looking back at trends of architecture in Europe in the 1930s, the genealogy of architectural styles was varied and depended upon the schools in which the subject was taught and the traditions with which it was anchored. However, the outlook of the architecture of the time could be defined (not covering all individual groups or persons) as modern architecture. It was characterized by rational planning according to function, reduction, abstract form, and simplicity, while employing modern technology in both construction methods and materials. The construction tended to adopt ferroconcrete frames, which allowed wider spans and free-wall planning which allows openings on the walls to be maximized to whatever limit.

The transformation in the form of architecture in Siam in the 1930s involved the adoption of modern architecture, which, as earlier mentioned, was functional, simple, used modern technology, and used concrete with an emphasis on volume and space and an absence of ornamentation. The roof forms were mostly flat without an overhanging eave like the traditional style of Siam. The cluster buildings that flanked the Rachadamnoen Avenue exemplified this new practice. This comment was

interpreted by several historians⁷⁸ as a revisionist ethos, which used architecture as a symbolic tool to convey new political meaning.



Figure 33 Buildings at the Rachadamnoen Avenue

Source: <https://storylog.co/story/5b0186b2d01ab1af494a18d1>, accessed January 5, 2020.

From 1925 to 1934, during the global Great Depression that struck Europe and America, Siam was also affected significantly, and the result was a series of changes. The Siamese Revolution in 1932 was the event that turned the ancient absolute monarchy of Siam into a democratic kingdom, or constitutional monarchy. The spirit of art and architecture evolved following the mainstream of state politics, which encouraged freedom in building. The social and class structure of the country was transformed substantially. The old cultured class faced a new challenge from the new bourgeois and moneyed classes. The new classes had new roles in social activities, including the arts. With freedom and economic affluence, it was the first time that a formal architect profession was established in the society of the Kingdom of Siam; this was the result of the establishment of tertiary education similarly to that

⁷⁸See the discussion on political issues in Chatri Prakitnonthakan, *Karnmoeng lae sangkohm nai silapa sathapattayakam Siam samai Thai prayuk chatniyom [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Matichon Press, 2004), 321–326; Koompong Noobanjong, “Power, Identity, and the Rise of Modern Architecture: From Siam to Thailand” (Ph.D. dissertation, College of Architecture and Planning, University of Colorado at Denver, 2003), 11, 67.

of Europe and America with the support of the government. The state certified the profession of architect and established a course of study leading to a degree in 1939 which was equivalent to other disciplines; an educated artist produced art. The Bachelor of Architecture degree was a standard for entering the architect profession. In the past, society had denigrated building makers as mere artisans or builders.⁷⁹

During the reign of King Rama VI and afterward, many artists and artisans (and later, architects) were predisposed towards a new trend of intertwining new or modern styles with old fashions. Phra Phrom Phichit, a royal artisan and also a pupil of Prince Naris, exemplified this practice. His work includes the main conference hall of Chulalongkorn University and the Wat Phra Sri Mahathat Bangkok. Architect Luang Wisal Silapakam designed the clock tower of the Vajiravudh Wittayalai School and Mannaruemit Hall of the Dhebsirin School. Both architects were pioneers in casting concrete in Thai traditional forms.



Figure 34 Clock tower of Vajiravudh Wittayalai School.

⁷⁹Phutsadi Thipphathat, *Sathapok Sathapattayakam [Architects: Architecture] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, 1999), 27–33.

Concrete became an important material used for molding roof elements to emulate what was once made of timber or plaster.

Source: https://www.vajiravudh.ac.th/VC_Annals/vc_annal119.htm, Accessed January 1, 2020.

Not long before the advent of the Siamese Revolution, King Rama VII commanded that the Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Rattanakosin be organized. Preparations included many preservation projects, national heritage buildings, and artifacts. So much had to deal with painting besides architecture. What was so evident around that time was the new painting tradition supported by the Department of Fine Arts; artists were open to new techniques, which involved realism in oil painting. Artists included Phra Soraraksalikhit, who painted portraits of the royal family, and Oswald Bireley, a British artist who painted several realistic portraits.

Realism seemed to echo the sentiment of the time; people had to face economic depression and it was not a time in which one could dwell on the old romanticism. Daydreams and imagination had to be avoided and rice-and-fish (bread-and-butter) had to be the priority. Construction, even for the old cultured class, pointed towards something relatively economized, streamlined, and functional-rational. Instead of fantasizing about building for spiritual purposes, such as temples in every reign, they rather invested in the Phra Phuttha Yodfa Memorial Bridge, the new and second bridge arching over the Chao Phraya River (after the Rama VI bridge) but with a statue of King Phra Phuttha Yodfa (Rama I) seated at its gate on the downtown Bangkok bank. Another pivotal project was the Sala Chalermkrung Cinema, which addressed the new social-entertainment activities of the time.

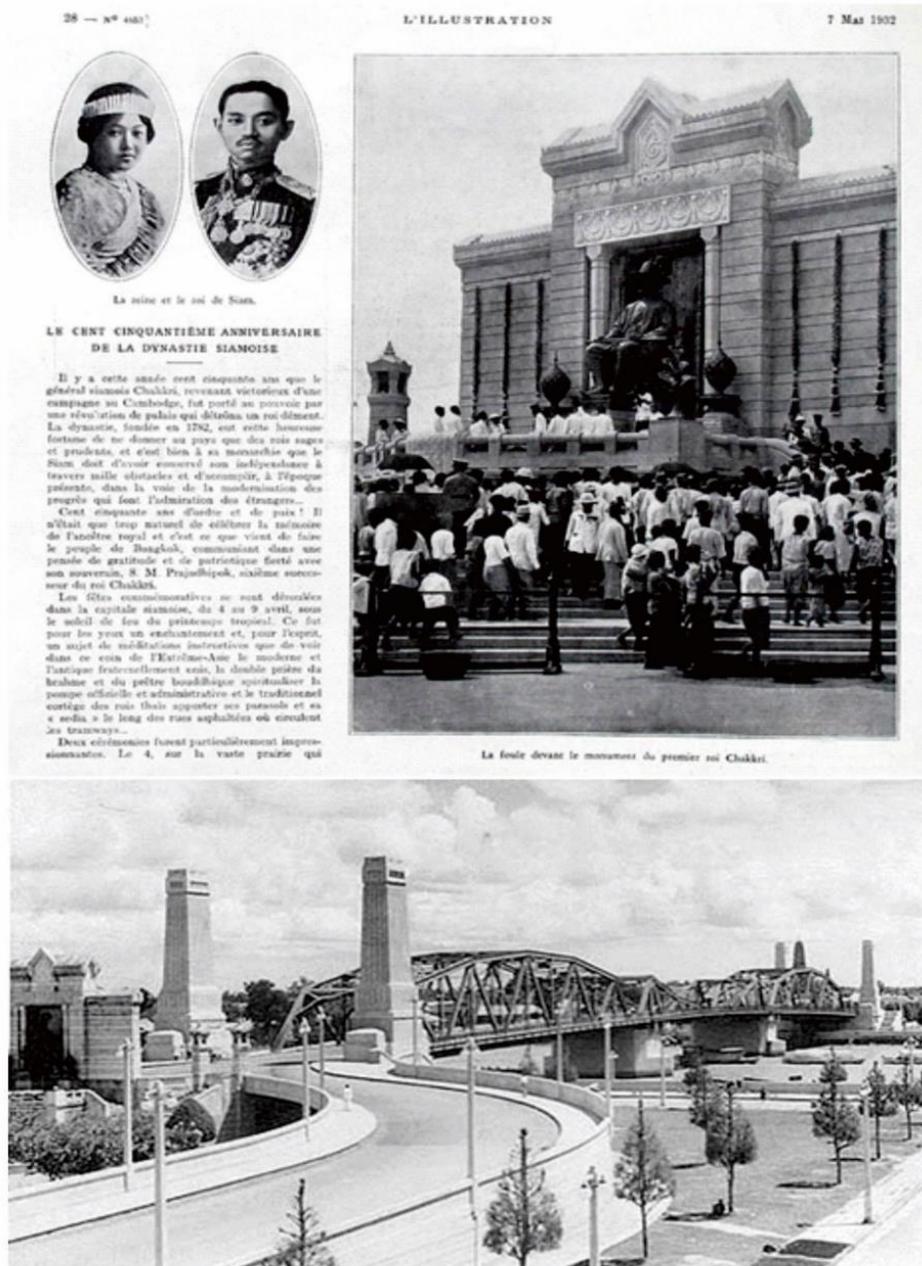


Figure 35 Phra Phuttha Yodfa Memorial Bridge

Source: [https://www.matichon.co.th/wp-](https://www.matichon.co.th/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/news_bkk150years_p07.jpg)

[content/uploads/2016/04/news_bkk150years_p07.jpg](https://www.matichon.co.th/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/news_bkk150years_p07.jpg), accessed April 6, 2020;

http://sihawatchara.blogspot.com/2015/01/blog-post_18.html, accessed

February 18, 2020.

Sala Chalerkrung reflected the vision of King Rama VII and quenched his thirst as he was an avid film aficionado. M.C. Samaichalerm Kridagara, the architect who was educated in the *École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts-Paris*, adopted a modern form and could be said that it was one of the very first buildings in Siam that was entirely realized in the modern vocabulary. In this project, he collaborated with Nart Potiprasart (educated in the University of Liverpool), who took charge of the design of the structural engineering. The novelty of this building was its modern grammar stripped off any ornament and built out of ferroconcrete, relatively new material and a technique known by Siamese builders. It truly represented a new disposition of Siam at the moment. Not only did it portray a new image by its form and as it served general people of all classes practically for the first time, but it also spoke of the spirit of modern Siam in many aspects.



Figure 36 Sala Chalerkrung Cinema

Source: <https://m.museumsiam.org/detail2.php?MID=3&CID=16&CONID=1247&SCID=100>,

accessed March 11, 2020.

Getting back to Phra Phuttha Yodfa Memorial Bridge, M.C. Samaichalerm Kridagara, also conceived this project mainly for the bridge part. The design of the bridge was a colossal scale with a stark modern vocabulary structure. The architect employed a modern technology which was unknown by Siamese at that time. With the profile of steel trusses that spanned over the piers, it conveyed an image of industrial and modern similar to any metropolises in Europe and America.

Again, for the monument part, Prince Naris taking the role as a monument designer, molded the throne and backdrop to complement the statue in an abstract language with relatively lessened ornamentation yet embraced the grammar of massiveness that echoed the Khmer influence as his impressive repertoire. However, the statue of King Rama I was in a realistic style sculpted by Silpa Bhirasri (formerly Corrado Feroci) a Florence artist immigrant and the founder of Silpakorn University.

It was realistic and enormous in scale. The attempt Silpa Bhirasri made in this statute marks the transition of Siam into a new artistic sentiment phase. Although the statue was well-conceived and the sculptor brought his talent into full play, the power of the King of Siam was virtually in oblivion and being challenged by the new authority. The old absolute-monarchy kingdom, which was ruled by the power of King and the arts, which were by the patronage of the King when the authority was handed over to the new group, arts as well later, was transferred to the new patron. Taste, value, aesthetics turned around.

The Siamese Revolution granted power and duty to the new government consisting of commoners governed by progressivists. Politics impacted the style of arts, including architecture. The tendency shifted to modern art and some subdivisions of modern art such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco as common in Europe at the moment.

Almost entirely, the period of King Ananda (Rama VIII, reigned 1935-1946), Siam was in the time of World War II. Buildings built in that period were all in

modern style. Supachalasai Stadium (1937) by Phra Sarotnimman, and New Central Postal Office (1940) by Chitrasen (Mew) Abhayavongsa and Phra Sarotnimman, designed in Art Deco style exemplify a change in the intention and ideology. The construction program was to remove Windsor palace of Prince Maha Vajirunhis and replaced by a new stadium. Besides, that it exemplified the arrival of Art Deco in Thailand, it symbolizes, according to several new interpretation by scholars at the 1980s; it put an end to the ancient regime and gave way to “the new”. In terms of the issue of identity in architecture and art transformed formalistically, and then used as symbols to express political ideology, this kind of interpretation reappears over the course of postmodern Thai historiography.



Figure 37 Windsor Villa

Source: <https://i.imgur.com/ay3csPS.jpg>, accessed March 12, 2020.



Figure 38 Supachalasai Stadium

Source: <https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/detail/717328>, accessed March 13, 2020.

Regarding the movement in education, when Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram visited the Fine Art School and was contented with the curriculum and faculty profiles, he then upgraded it to a university level. Moreover, that was when Silpakorn University was founded with the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts as the first faculty. Furthermore, Chulalongkorn founded the Faculty of Architecture under the dean Nart Potiprasart and the faculty members, many of whom had education abroad.

In terms of art movement, the transformation of arts in Siam during the 1930s, although the change could be seen in the forms, the change was not substantial in its content. The patrons of these arts were still limited to the groups of bureaucracies rather than commoners—particularly in the fine arts with content to depict the lives of general people was still rare. The change in arts took place

relatively gradual, not like some countries, such as Russia when Bolshevik toppled the monarch Russian art turned around from neoclassic to avant-garde almost abruptly and practically at all segments. By contrast, the trend of art in Siam in the onset originated from the top classes and progressed slowly.

However, the change became more apparent when the specific patrons of arts was by the royals in the *the ancien régime*, and then after democratization, it was the government of commoners. The Ministry of Education particularly the Department of Fine Arts, around 1933, became the most avid supporter and patronage of art in the country. Hence, they were in need of educated artists.

By the graduation of the first batch of Silpakorn University, a score of artists began to work for different departments of the government. They replaced the job that previously needed to be handled by foreigners. In the field of fine arts, the contribution by this group was the new expression of the hybrid of the new discipline learned with the Western teachers mixed with the local spirit for the first time.

In 1939, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram re-named Siam to Thailand and implemented a nationalism campaign. Simultaneously, he established the National Council of Culture to oversee the conduct of the citizens. Many of the schemes were specifically as rudimentary as all matters about everyday-life norm; for example, people received a suggestion to visit cultural performances from time to time; this aimed to erudite the citizens culturally.

An outstanding architectural campaign during Field Marshal Plaek's administration was an Exposition building for the Celebration of the Constitution event. Chitrasen (Mew) Abhayavongsa conceived it in Art Deco style. Educated in the *École des Beaux-Arts* in France and as an enthusiast of Art Deco style, he was a prolific architect. With several significant projects, his subsequent works included the Rachadamnoen Strip buildings, Central Post Office, Thammasat University "Dome" building. Most of his works were praised by the contemporary scholars as the icon of

that period. Another master-work by him was his residence, also in Art Deco, which was critiqued as "ultra-modern" with the use of glass and chromium as materials to decorate the house.

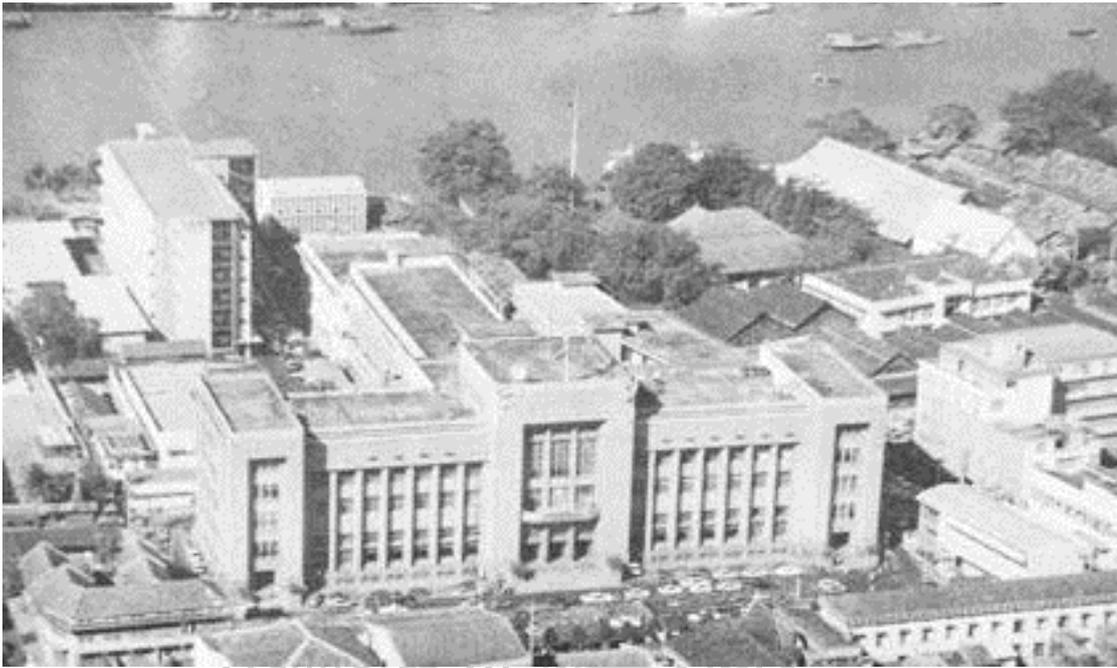
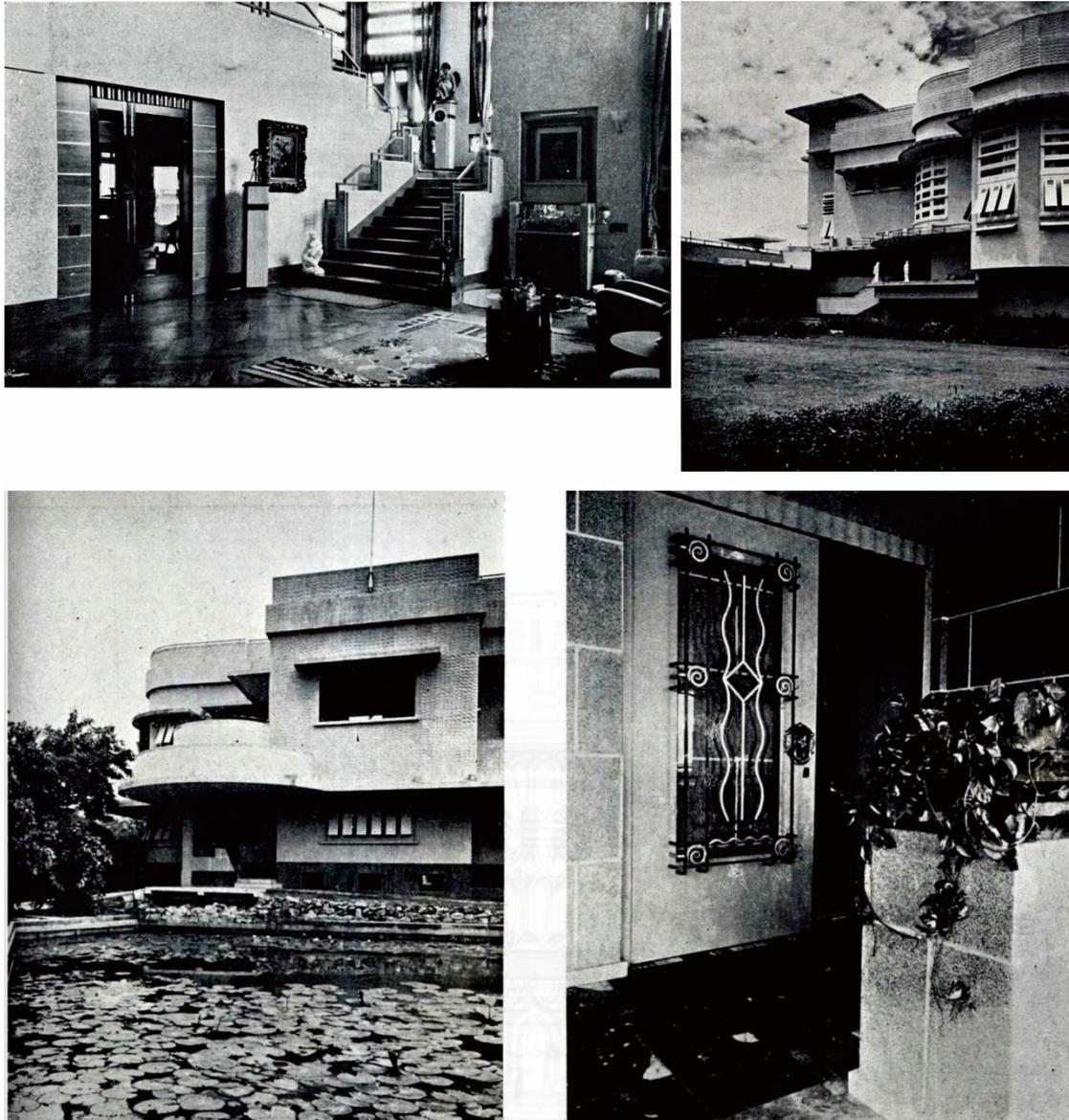


Figure 39 Central Post Office

Source: www.thairath.co.th, accessed March 13, 2020.

A pivotal time was when the Second World War ended in 1945, Thailand saw more progress in the making of new architecture as a consequence of the administration of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram as the new prime minister for the second time. It was Plaek Phibunsongkhram's doctrines that came out to enforce new building design. In his views following his nationalism scheme, Thailand must have, first, identity in all cultural elements and, for architecture, it needed to be re-assigned. Second, modernization for the country was necessary since modernity, for him, was tantamount to civilization. The idea was to make use of Thai elements to clad onto the new buildings. His idea was enforced in government buildings built around his time during his administration.



บ้านนายหมิว อภยวงศ์ สถาปนิกมีชื่อ
เจ้าของบ้านเป็นผู้ออกแบบและตกแต่งภายในเอง

หน้าบ้าน ประติมากรรมได้เป็นกะจกมีกรอบโลหะกัน

บ้าน ไทเนลวิธ

Figure 40 Chitrasen (Mew) Abhayavongsa's house, c. 1933, Bangkok

Source: [https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3483793591684690&set=pcb.](https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=3483793591684690&set=pcb.1341978666145243)

1341978666145243, accessed October 19, 2020.

The Phibunsongkhram scheme was characterized by adaptive Thai. The form combined customary planning with Thai façade and roofs whose materials intertwined masonry with ferroconcrete structure and brickworks. By so doing, it expressed modern appearance, yet the roof, as the major active ingredient, was still maintained the Thai traditional profile but only in a simplified version. What was the breakthrough of the style was the use of cement molding to cast the roof antefixes, the expression of which was non-standard according to the Thai architectural grammar. The form then as a new invention faced constant criticisms by the conservative scholars. The binary was between old and new: if it is new, it has to detach wholly from the origin, not hybrid, but in This case was more about ad-hoc hybrid, which is, in the view of many, breaching the norm and could be viewed as thoughtlessness. Furthermore, this doctrine became a controversial polemic that lasted more than two decades.



Figure 41 Example of the Phibunsongkhram scheme c. 1960s-1970s

Source: <http://www.reurnthai.com/index.php?topic=3477.60>, accessed March 14, 2020.

Subsequently in the 1950s, what was apparent as the individual ingredients making up into the substance seen less apparent, such as in the case of Prince Naris. Many that used to be foreign architecture had become Thai through the process of familiarity or embraces the favorable quality later, especially the case of modern architecture by Chitrasen (Mew) Abhayavongsa, so the definition of this is likely the matter of time.

In the period from 1980s to 1990s, a number of postmodern buildings have been constructed. The concept of postmodern partially entails deliberate borrowing of older forms of architecture in decorating the new buildings being constructed. This embodies a neo-classic style derived from amalgamating western architecture and traditional Thai architecture. Around that time, nonetheless, the practice evoked criticizing discourse of both the works and the architects who imbibed such practice. This stormy polemics of that period partially pushed the professional realm in a new direction of authentic, or true-self, architecture after a turn towards the disorder of eclecticism, as is seen in works by Rangsan Torsuwan (such as Amarin Plaza built in 1985-1986). His works in this style were branded as culturally invasive and alien to Thailand's national identity. A negative criticism of this approach involved the notion that it was inappropriate and disregarded Thainess, especially when it came to the neo-classical style. However, despite the criticism, Rangsan's works were successful in business and many of his large-scale projects have made an epoch-making impression. It infers that both architects and owners played a crucial role in the movement's progression.



Figure 42 Amarin Plaza

By Rangsak Torsuwan, 1985-1986

Source: https://www.facebook.com/ptorsuwan/media_set?set=a.1444838974156.56322.1628585980&type=3, accessed March 14, 2020;

<http://www.amarinplaza.com/th/about/our-story>, accessed June, 5, 2020.

After 2000, many postmodernism “seeds” were planted everywhere, and new megaprojects were built in this form, such as many resorts and vacation projects in Khao Yai, a popular vocational town. New real estate and commercial projects adopted European styles, mostly with kitsch and pastiches. Several projects, however,

were economically successful in their provision of a fanciful image that appealed to the tastes of a certain clientele. It was a niche market that fulfilled a demand for an exotic product that was distinctive among existing projects, similar to the style of Las Vegas in the United States. Such a marketing strategy was incongruent with Rangsan's thinking as he maintained that the style was due to the continuing search by clients for a new fashion and a result of the tremendous growth of the tourism industry. Trips abroad by middle class travelers expanded their architectural horizons and spurred a need to have similar picturesque imagery everywhere.



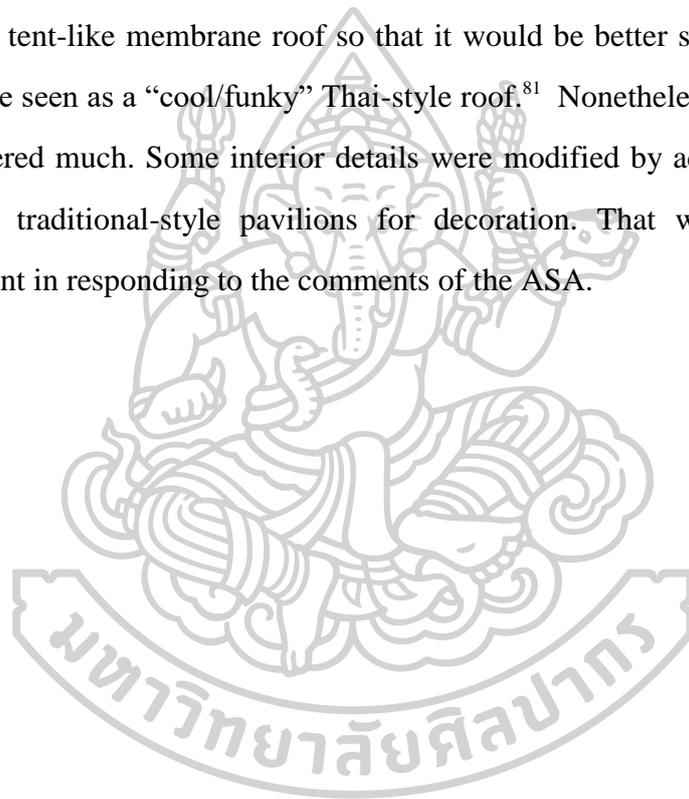
Figure 43 Mövenpick Resort, Khao Yai

Source: [https://www.movenpick.com/en/asia/thailand/khao-yai/resort-khao-yai/overview/.](https://www.movenpick.com/en/asia/thailand/khao-yai/resort-khao-yai/overview/), accessed June 1, 2020.

The Predicament of Thai-ness in the last Decade of the Twentieth Century

When looking back on the 1990s, one is struck by the failure to incorporate Thai-ness into the construction of the Suvarnabhumi International Airport. This was troubling to many critics, and they made a plea to the government, as owner of the project, to review its design. The many comments made to Helmut Jahn, the architect of the airport, included “What if there is no Thai identity [in the airport]? Will this cause any damage? It is the international gateway to Thailand, but if it does not function as a symbolic representation of Thailand’s identity, it contributes to a loss of national

dignity, though not a total devastation of it.”⁸⁰ Its lack was, to some, its unfavorable archetype, which was a stark modern architectural form without any association with what many thought of as Thai identity. The critics were also concerned about future climatic problems because it was not designed to function well in a tropical climate with heavy rain and extreme heat year-round; the air-conditioning costs might be unreasonably high. The ASA recommended to the government that a redesign of the terminal was of utmost importance. Some suggestions were to use a typical gable roof instead of a tent-like membrane roof so that it would be better suited for the climate and might be seen as a “cool/funky” Thai-style roof.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the airport design was not altered much. Some interior details were modified by adding giant demonic statues and traditional-style pavilions for decoration. That was the farthest the architect went in responding to the comments of the ASA.



⁸⁰ASA, "Kam Tuan Khong Samakhom Sathapanik Siam Rueng Rub Baeb Arkarn Tha Arkadsayan Sakol Krungthep Haeng Thi Song (Sanambin Nong Nguhao) [Warning from ASA on the Character of the Bangkok International Airport No. 2 (Nong Nguhao Airport)," *ASA Journal*, no. July (1997): 48-63.

⁸¹Translation from “[แบบของ Helmut Jahn] ตัวทางเดินผู้โดยสาร ยิ่งง่ายเข้าไปใหญ่ ที่จะใส่หลังคาแบบธรรมดา ๆ โดยเปลี่ยนรูปทรงหลอดคาเฟ่เจ้าปัญหาออกไป ตรงนี้ทำดี ๆ จะได้เอกลักษณ์ไทยแท้ ๆ เป็นของแถม” in M.L. Chainimit Navarat, "Plean Aekkalak Helmut Jahn Hai Pen Aekkalak Thai Tham Dai Rue Mai? [Is It Possible to Replace the Helmut Jahn Identity with a Thai Identity?]," *ASA Journal*, no. July (1997): 144.

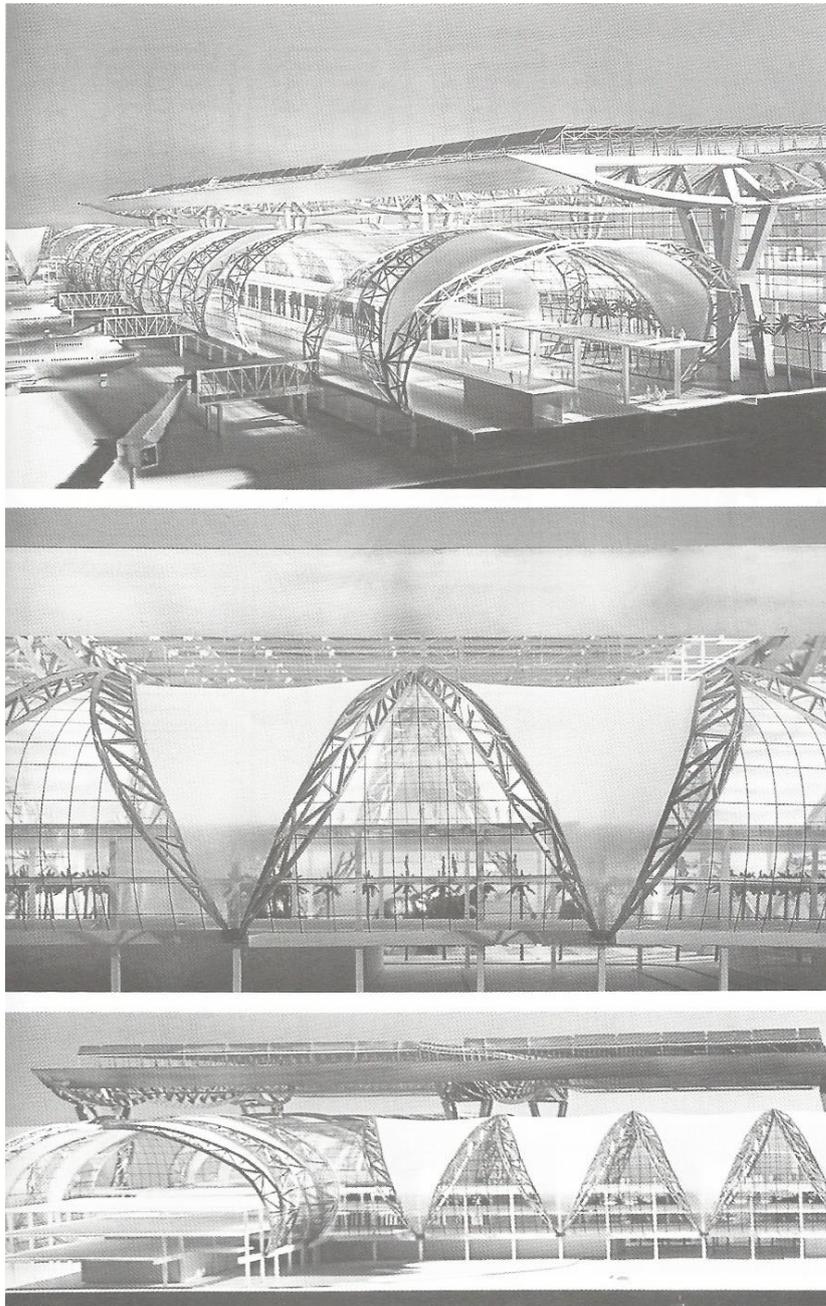


Figure 44 The model of design proposal by Helmut Jahn of the new airport (Later named Suvarnabhumi International Airport) These images appeared in the *ASA Journal*, no. July (1997) in the article that criticized the design appearance.

Source: *ASA Journal*, no. July (1997): 73.

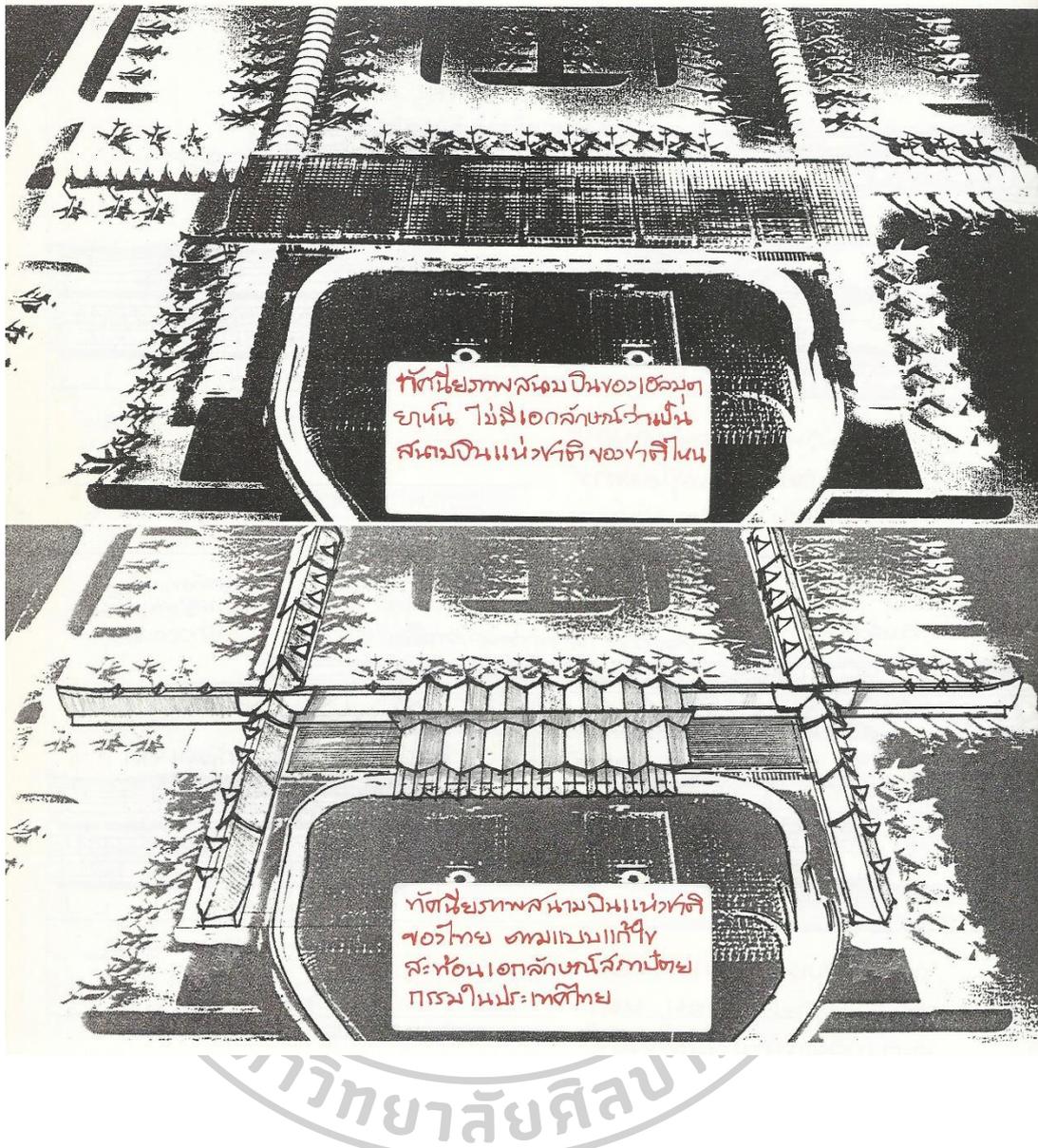


Figure 46 Comparative schemes of the new airport

Above: The Scheme by Helmut Jahn; Below: The Scheme by M.L. Chainimit Navarat suggesting a probable way to fix the design of Jahn. In the M.L. Chainimit arguing that the roof be converted to a series of gable roofs in a belief that they would bring up the Thai identity.

Source: M.L. Chainimit Navarat, "Plean Aekkalak Helmut Jahn Hai Pen Aekkalak Thai Tham Dai Rue Mai? [Is It Possible to Replace the Helmut Jahn Identity with a Thai Identity?]," *ASA Journal*, no. July (1997): 146.

“Thai-ness is not merely nostalgic” but dwells in the ordinary built environment. A view that opinionated nostalgia is irrelevant has been increasingly popularized. It argued that Thai-ness was an intrinsic component of a Thai citizen. Architecture that embraced Thai-ness was whatever types and styles of designs had been built and lived in by Thai people. Such buildings must always be classified as being Thai architecture. Arthit Limman,⁸² an architect who had been working for the Department of Fine Arts of the government, proposed that the meaning of the term Thai architecture had been mutable and never affixed solely to a particular style or frozen in historical designs; rather, it had been constantly transformed following people’s preferences and ways of life. Ways of living always forged new forms of architecture. Today, any built form that fits a person’s lifestyle is deemed a true Thai architecture that, of course, encompasses Thai-ness. For instance, the condominium is a prevalent building type that has been popularized by a number of Thai people, and it therefore now has a Thai architectural identity.

Arthit Limman represented the central tenets of Thai orthodoxy responsible for traditional civic structures for state and royal ceremonial functions; his title suggests that he embraced Thai-ness in relatively conservative terms, but he actually was liberal. His liberalism regarding Thai-style architecture did not focus on any particular historical style.

To the question “In what style should we build?” an answer could be that the design of contemporary houses was an effort to create Thai-ness but a “latent Thai-ness” that is somewhat understated. It seemed to be a way of condoning an effort that had aided and sharpened the designer’s control. In this way, it described the designer’s architecture but was not an ordinary Thai-style form; it had a new way of approaching abstraction and archetype.

⁸²Chetawan Tuaparakone, "'Arthit Limman' Sathapanik-Sathapattayakam Thai Mue Chamang Sit Aek Arwut Ngerchuklin" [Arthit Limman: Architect of Thai Architecture, the Master Architect, the Disciple of Arwut Ngerchuklin] [in Thai]," *Matichon Daily*, February 24 2013: 13.

It is unnecessary to identify a certain cultural artifact as Thai-ness if the style seems to be associated with an arguable nomenclature. It is, however, appropriate to use accurate terms such as *autonomous architecture*. Architects and other persons who played a role in the design realm often were pleased to label a design as having Thai-ness but did not really give it an appropriate name, so as some have argued, the label autonomous architecture can be used.

The next chapter will provide a view of the architectural debates around the time of modern architecture in Thailand B.E. 2500 (1957) after Thailand celebrated the year B.E. 2500. Thailand faced more rapid transformation, especially by the stronger and more active group of architects and the founding of the professional organizations.

In sum, it can be seen as the development of the theme of Thai debates on identity problems that commenced from the point of Somdej Chaophraya Borom Maha Srisuriyawong versus King Rama V over the construction of Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall and then the rise of democratic-regime conservatives. This is a summary of the timeline:



Table 1 Timeline of important events and discourse on the problems of identity

Year	Event
1876	Somdej Chaophraya Borom Maha Srisuriyawong versus King Rama V over the construction of Chakri Maha Prasat Throne Hall
1934	Phraphromphichit designed Concrete Thai-traditional architecture
1934	Founding of ASA
1937 -1957	Emergence of demovratic-regime Conservatives, e.g. : Prince Thani Niwat--Books on Coronation Ceremony Prince Chula Chakrabongse Phraya Auman Rachathon--Royalist literatures M.R. Kukrit Pramoj--Si Phandin (Four Reigns)
1948	Field Marshall Plaek Phibunsongkhram's architectural schemes A, B., C.
1957	Thai Cultural Conservatives' articles on Identity crisis, i.e. Phattaya Saihu Sanit Samakakam Arun Wejsuwan
1967	Social Science Review Journal: Conservative Arcticles: Phattaya Saihu, T hepsiri Suksopha
1967	Sang-arun Rattakasikom's discourse: Mastodon in Architecture
1969	Anuvit Charemsupkul's discourse: Cancer of Architecture
1969	Sumet Jumsai Na Ayuttaya criticism on Plaek Phibulsongkhram's social campaign
1971	Founding of Society for the Conservation of National Treasure and Environment-SCONTE
1983	Government organized Seminar on National Identity and National Development: Issue of Identity Crisis emerged
1984	Seminar at Silpakom University on Identity of Architecture in Thailand: Westernization as Hostility
1987	Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura's recommended using "an/the" i(l)nternational style Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura's discourse: Like AIDS architectural identity crisis declaration
1987	Pinyo Suwankiri's discourse: Royal Craftsmen
1992	Sompob Phirom's: Draft of Conservative Architectural Practice Acts
1993	Suwat Phalangsak's non-Thai-at-all form house won ASA's design competition on Conitnuing the Spirit Sustain the Time
1993	Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura's criticism against Postmodern architerture "Thai architects were lost and ignorant"
1996	Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura's criticism against Postmodern architerture "Just the skin--thoughtless"
2000	Decline of Thainess as the Problem
2002	Sumet Jumsai Na Atutthaya's discourse: Hierachy Breaching
2006	Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura's article on New Thai Architecture (Thai during Rama IX) Thai Architectural Identity: Some Concepts in Determining of the Creation for Forms-Instant Formula
2017	Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura et al.'s book on "In Revealing Modern Thai Architectural Identity"

CHAPTER 5

Autonomous Architecture Discourse on Contemporary Practice

After 1990, the circle of architects in Thailand were apparently enthusiastic about searching for a more rightful Thai-ness form in architecture. The evidence can be found in the production of discourses in numerous researches and theses, for instance researches and publications by Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura,⁸³ “The modern Thai character for residential architecture” (1997) by Pravit Prateep,⁸⁴ “Modern Thai architecture: form & space” (1998) by Chotchuang Srihiranrat,⁸⁵ and “A Tradition Rediscovered: Towards an Understanding of Experiential Characteristics and Meanings of the Thai Traditional House” (1999) by M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn. All of the efforts were mostly in a parallel attitude, which was to discover a “salvation of Thai identity” for the contemporary Thai architecture. Their contributions have paved ways to new formation of what has now been the contemporary design. Notwithstanding, the late 1990s the circle experienced new scholarly works that shed the light on a new tendency of abstract notions for embracing identity, particularly in the work of M.L. Piyalada. The new inclination

⁸³For exemplified works by Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, such as Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, "Karnsangsarn Moradok Watthanatham: Soo Karn Sangsarn Ekkalak Sathapattayakam Thai Samai Mai [Creation of Cultural Heritage: Towards a Creation of Modern Thai Architectural Identity]," *Journal of Architectural/Planning Research and Studies* 8, no. 1 (2011): 1-20; Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, “Sathapattayakam Thai Samai Mai (Thai Ror Kao) Ekkalak Sathapattayakam Thai: Khorkhidhen Bang Prakarn Nai Karnkamnot Naew Rupbaeb – Sout Samret Nai Karnsangsarn [Modern Thai architecture (Thai Rama 9): Thai architectural identity: Some conceptual approaches in formulating design guidelines -- An instant creation formula?]" *ASA Journal* (June 1996): 48-65; Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, “Oubpasak 12 Prakarn Nai Karnsangsarn Sathapattayakam Thai [12 constraints in the creation of Thai architecture],” *ASA Journal*, September – October: 52-57.

⁸⁴Pravit Prateep, "The Modern Thai Character for Residential Architecture" (M.Arch. Chulalongkorn University, 1997), 1-11.

⁸⁵Chotchuang Srihiranrat, "Modern Thai Architecture: Form & Space" (M.Arch. Chulalongkorn University, 1998), 1-14.

suggests that there is an attempt to serve the society a brand-new approach that would end the dilemma of the former Historicism and Traditionalism revivals by finding a more decent form.

From the analysis the architecture of autonomy, this thesis developed a framework as three facets as the gist of the issue in the constructing of an autonomous architecture that are: 1) Abstraction, 2) Approach, and 3) Archetype.

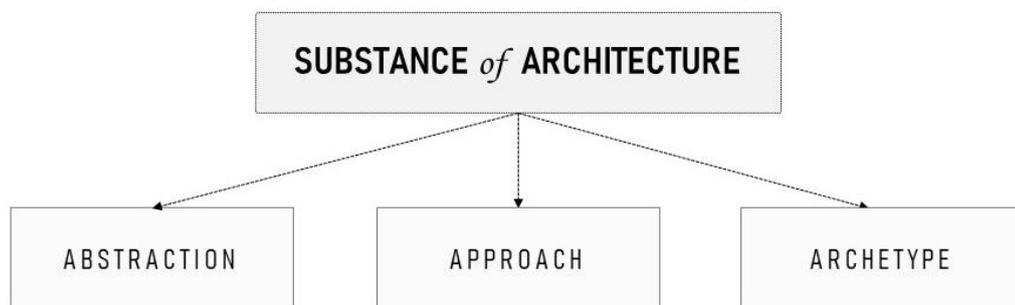


Figure 47 Substance of architecture as a formation of a meaningful design

Sources: By the author

The Substance of Architecture

1. Abstraction

Abstraction deals with a reflection of spirituality that belongs to a particular nation or ethnic group.

(a) Lightness: (in spirit)

This involves the principle “Lessening or Reductionary” This could be achieved either by the whole embodiment or partiality.

1. Reflection of austerity: Void, Silence, Emptiness
2. Sufficiency: proportionality: Spartan, Simplicity, Modesty
3. Reflection of intrinsic value or DNA (of the people or at least owner)

(b) Transgressionism: Deconstruct the old and create memes in an attempt to break the (art) tradition. Of course, this practice is shaking the art status quo and giving rise to the postmodern reactionaries.

2. Approach (Epistemology)

The coercive process of national identity that had been under the norm that Thai architecture had to received what descended from the past. Thus, traditionalism should be more or less deployed. One could learn much from the current contributions of many architects who paved a new way to execute the design.

It is to define new meaning of architecture some may have to deconstruct the truth and grant a new paradigm to inquire the rightful architecture, such as approach of Chatpong Chuenrudeemol (Bangkok Bastards) and Kanika Ratanapridakul's new interpretation of Thai house.

There has been an interest in the succinct characteristic of contemporary architecture, if exists, about what should well define the term. And that followed by several discursive definitions such as "New Thai", "Tropical Modern", and Neo-contextual architecture, etc. But the answer still had not been concluded.

3. Archetype (Tectonic)

To arrive at the physical form, space, and order in a new broader possible language. This owes significantly Frampton's Critical Regionalism.

1. Form
2. Planning
3. Element
4. Gesture
5. Materials

This thesis argues for possibility of a better explanation of contemporary time which tracks the projection of autonomous architecture. The term autonomous means having freedom to govern itself or control its own affairs and being independent and

having power to make your own decision. For architecture, it refers to architecture that does not rely on a particular style or tendency but itself, place and time. The construction of this discourse stemmed from the collective and continual development of architectural manifestation contributed by uncountable architects, designers, as well as theoreticians who consciously or unconsciously partook in the relentless process. This thesis reviewed a number of theories and discourses of before 2000 and post 2000 for development a framework of analysis. The discussions on Thai-ness of architecture and architecture that encompasses Thai identity are, though various, found some commonality in the definitions. Their interpretations are often divided into two aspects, i.e. abstract and physical.

As reference to the foundation of theory Critical Regionalism developed by Kenneth Frampton, mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, that stipulated:⁸⁶

1. **Streamline**, breaking the mass or downsizing the mass into fragments.
2. Respect the **context** and consider harmonize the building as part of the existing context.
3. Emphasize the **tectonic detail** more than monumental form
4. Design the physicality to fit with the immediate **local climate**
5. Intertwine with the sense and **sensory of human**
6. Adopt the vernacular elements (but not the form) from its locality but consider re-develop to **place architecture appropriately into space and time**.

⁸⁶Kenneth Frampton, *ibid*, 324-327.

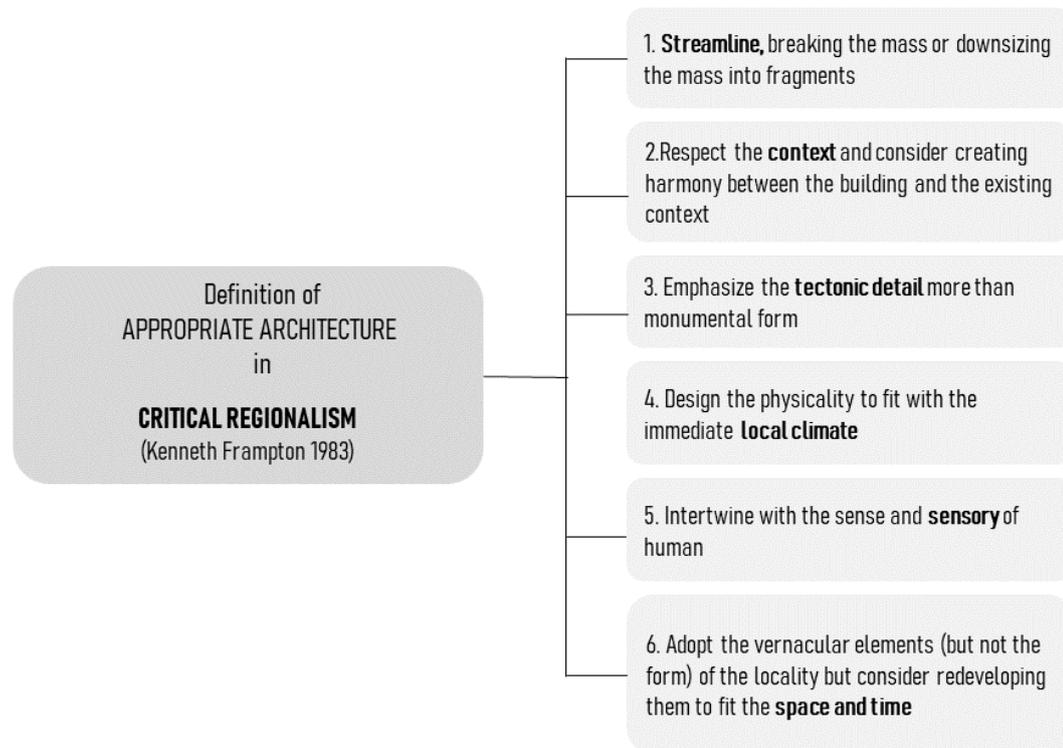


Figure 48 Critical Regionalism Theory of Kenneth Frampton

Source: Developed from Frampton's theory, by the author

Ideology of M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn

These theories on the area of abstraction this thesis adopted because of that they are significance and originality included some works by M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn, Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, and Ross King. And for the physical analysis guidepost derived from Nithi Sthapitanonda.

M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn proposed an approach to investigate Thai architecture especially her focus was on houses by using phenomenology to decode abstract language embedded within these physical forms. She took on an assumption that there must be some core essence that contributed to the embodiment of "Thai-ness". Her finding informs that Thai houses encompass "Five essential patterns" that characterize Thai traditional house:⁸⁷

⁸⁷Piyalada Thaveeprungsriporn, "Ruan Thai: An Aesthetic of Fertility?," *ibid.*, 71-75.

1. *Rom Ruen* (shady and pleasant) quality (shady and pleasant)
2. Verticality and hierarchical nature
3. Enclosedness, compartmentality, drawing-in and enticing effect
4. Graceful and refined nature
5. Memory and root

Besides, she categorized the structure of the houses that embodied an abstract quality that associates with memory and external physicality that interrelates with tactile sensory, social, area, perception, and existential aesthetics. This epistemology is somewhat subjective but one can perceive and shared experience. For example, when ones see a cultural object they would automatically associate with their past experience and can make a reference of similarity or difference.

M.L. Piyalada, furthermore, argues that Thai-ness is an art that encompasses feminism that it is “enticing”,

Femininity is graceful and refined nature constitutes a salient characteristic of our culture. She believes that femininity is a cultural characteristic that has existed in Thai society for a long time. In the Thai language there appeared many expressions, for example Mae Nam (Mother water river) and Mae Tup (The army commander). Thai paintings or murals, one hardly finds muscle lines. There are two explanations. First, it is a feminine characteristic, the other is the Asian art style which is idealistic rather than realistic anatomy. Another supporting information she studied from a number of papers is that in an agricultural society, women play a powerful role in labor management while men’s role is to maintain the dignity of the family by working in the public sector. This means that the man is the public figure backed up by the woman.⁸⁸

⁸⁸“The Feminine Factor,” 2019, accessed February 16, 2020, <http://art4d.com/2019/05/the-feminine-factor>.

If one looks at the issue through the western frame, it reveals why Thais believe that women are treated badly in Thai society. To her there are many conflicts between old and new thinking.

In the past, the living and working place are close because we are farmers. But today women have lost their power in labor management. When they leave their home to work outside, it is a man's world. But I don't have such an attitude. I used to debate with my peers in the feminism class that eastern women understand their roles and do not want the same role as men. Both have to go together hand in hand.⁸⁹

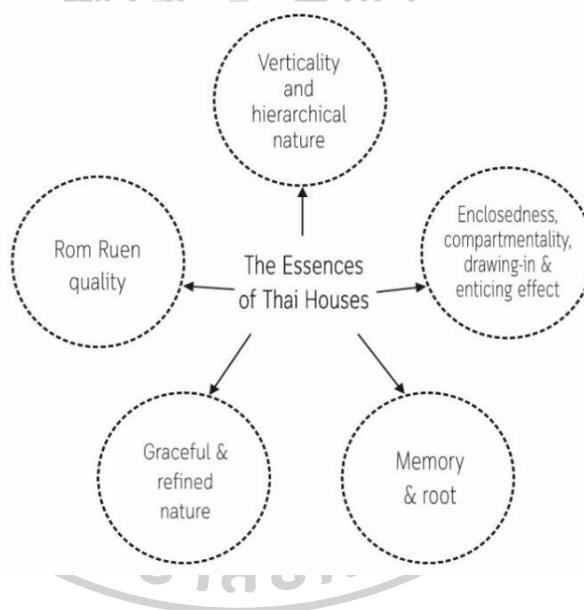


Figure 49 Hermeneutic interpretation of Thai houses by M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn

Source: By the author

⁸⁹Ibid.

Ideology of Ross King on Memory

Ross King, an architectural professor has argued that the current practice of Thai architects went wrong as they valued the old memory and traditionalism. The main emphasis is placed on the mainstream of classical culture and look over the very culture of ordinary populace.

Memory is always socially framed; that is to say, there are always “conditions of possibility” that enable certain memories while inhibiting others. So, the idea of heritage is typically invoked by hegemonic groups to trigger the desired memory (imagining) of what might have constituted the community, the nation, or some supra-national idea or identity. Heritage accordingly is swept into the project of forging a unified (national) identity, against any idea of a pluralistic nationhood, and into the idealized sense of origin that can supplant any desire to get back to the real genealogy of the spaces of everyday life.⁹⁰

It is, to him, a dilemma of nostalgia and the dilemma of Thai space which mean those detrimental to the urban space should be avoided. The recommendation pointed out that a more relevant is to forego “high culture” and any court tradition on the merit of delving into the real life of real men. Thai architects should reconsider Thai way of living or Thai DNA such as the sense of politeness, the practice of *kreng chai* (*kreng chai* means being caring, considerate and do not want to bother others), kindness, and helpfulness, politeness should supplant the high traditions which are disconnect from real ordinary people.

The counter to this highly coercive agenda would seem to be a search for a sense of a “transgressive heritage” that can (1) deconstruct the assumptions underlying “the National Heritage” and “World Heritage”, and (2) insert the quest for narratives of everyday life of both past and present. Equally controversially, we need to find an architecture that is authentically respectful towards heritage, which in a

⁹⁰Ross King, "Nation, Anti-Nation, and the Hazards of Heritage" (paper presented at the Silpakorn University, Sathapat Patha: Architecture in Suvarnabhumi 2007), 281-288.

Thai context will mean an architecture and urban design that is modern but also embracing of sense of venuity and environmental vandalism.

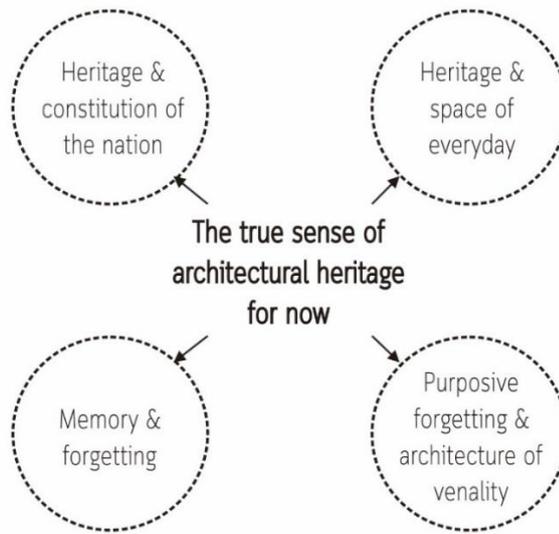


Figure 50 The true memory theory of Ross King

Source: By the author

The Discourse of Thai Spirit Within a Universal Body Lightness and Porosity as New Identity

To apprehend the various approaches and theories of identity after 2000 when the scheme of literal Thai-classicism declined, and architects avoid reemployment of the archaic language, one might investigate some reigning architects and thinkers whose contribution in the area of abstract translation, in this thesis it will delve into the theoretical discourses of Chatree Ladalalitsakul, M.L. Varudh “Vin” Varavarn, Kanika Ratanapridakul, and Chatpong Chuenrudeemol.

Gray Space as a Universal Body

One recommendation that transformed the approach was by Chatree Ladlalitsakul in “The Eastern Spirit Within a Universal Body.”

The Eastern spirit within a universal body” is a part of our mission in searching for ways of architectural creation that our team adopted as a common vision. Besides, we are at a stage of learning by doing and are still searching for and trying to uphold Thai identity. With our discontent and boredom with Western architectures, in either the authentic and adaptive styles popular in this country we questioned why such fashions became a trend in our society.⁹¹

The idea came from his experience investigating the aesthetic of Thai arts in museums where he discovered a continuity in art of Thailand that little change in style among the new generation and the old. New generations seemed to continue the legacy without a radical change in style. He sought possibility that architectural legacy sustained through time—the same spirit passing from generation to generation as if it is a cultural commitment.

Architecture is, by nature, dynamic that forces kept pushing forward the style, according to him. He viewed that modern architecture that predicated the concept of “Less Is More” as a driving force after the Industrial Revolution. Yet, to him, this philosophy is rooted in the East. However, it could not sustain after a few decades. The hectic complex world-view had later replaced the simplicity world-view and proved more relevant for the Western society. This concept derailed Thai architects who usually rode the Western bandwagon. Consequently, some stayed with the old (Modern) fashion while some hastily shifted to a new stronghold. Many began to feel bored about tagging on what Americans inform the world to do. He insisted that if modern architecture did not fall short, Thai architects probably have not realized that there exists their viable identity. He pointed out that architects of Sri Lanka, Japan, Indonesia, who conceived this great idea should be a good guideline for Thais.

⁹¹Chatree Ladlalitsakul, "Chit Tawan Ok Nai Rang Sakol" ["The Eastern Spirit Within a Universal Body"] [in Thai]," *ASA Journal* 12, no. 45 (1995): 58-60.

Those Asian architects discovered their national identity, which embraces Eastern essences derived from Buddhism—their common religion similar to Thailand's. Architecture that emerged from Buddhism has the potential to excel since Buddhism constitutes philosophical richness, and it transcends the worldly logic of the West to some extent.

Since spirituality is vital to architecture. It is a strength of the East, which is, in his view, superior to those of the West. This issue does not mean the mind power but instead the inside of oneself that reflects humanism, which leads people back to nature. By this, it spurs an awakening and enlightenment as well as ushering towards a decent way of living. Within this Buddhist essence, there constitutes an abstract language of the Eastern spirit. According to him, “excellent architecture is only a result of the ultimate abstraction.”⁹²

The East, the land of the rising sun, intended to be the root of solid culture emphasizing in the gist of Buddhism is influential to our multiple cultures and the fact of lives, to balance, the middle way, and morality, which are beneficial to other people. Also, the East was the origin of multiple discourses that became driving forces of creativity of the West and the world. It includes “less is more,” another prominent discourse, which, as earlier mentioned, borrowed from Asians, according to him. This manifesto impacted the world.

However, with no fundamental knowledge about the true “less,” the architects who came later had less ingenuity compared to their masters; this caused the decline of this concept and later demised. Nevertheless, the Easterners understand this concept intrinsically, knowing what the authentic value imbues. Moreover, the common morality inherent within the Easterners informs the true cycle—the nature of things.

Which body is thus agreeable as the choice and not mixed up with Greek and Italian? Furthermore, it can be regarded as the Easterners' body? He considered the

⁹²Ibid.

universal body is a fine mediation that does not belong to a particular culture such as a sphere, triangle, square, line, curve, red, green, nor new technology. Both Westerners and Easterners are obliged to use these basic architectural elements as a tool to create architecture.

However, adopting different approaches i.e., sources of idea and interpretation might yield different results, and he was interested in delving into these differences. The difference could be seen in Western art. When the Westerners draw a bird, they draw each part meticulously—every single feather, colors, details of each element—and they teach people to admire the beauty of the thing that way. He also illustrated in a somewhat nationalistic quote, and of course it has to be read with a pinch of salt in mind:

But when a Chinese, according to Chatree,
 . . . draws a little bird perching on a bamboo branch, he makes the branch bend downward, showing the weight of the bird, and pays attention to the moment when the bird flutters its wings. It counterbalances itself over the branch while the wind is sweeping through the bamboo and across the bird. A Chinese artist would delineate this scene by stroking his brush a few times to capture the spontaneous moment. It is a simple yet powerful way of breathing life into the bird. It could be said that the Western artist draws a bird to be like a bird, whereas the Chinese artist makes a bird a bird. In this sense, the Chinese are far more ingenious.⁹³

As he compared the nature of working habit between the Westerners and Easterners, he could point out that it suggests the ingenuity of the Easterners, which far more profound than the counterparts. Some Eastern things are superior to the Western's, and some are inferior in many aspects. If one can extract the difference, they would be able to discover the identity out of these differences. However, in his view, the prominent characteristic of the East, much of Buddhism, is that the

⁹³Ibid.

Easterners are keener at thinking conceptually. Asians look at things abstractly—by this, looking at things as overall picture—but not an exact fine detail. It is a picture that is clear yet, simultaneously, blurring. Thus, this saves Thai architects from not being lost within the overflowed detail information.

While Westerners are known as people inherited with analytical thinking by nature, who tend to dissect information and cope well with complexity and equipped with a logical methodological skill for solving complex problems. The Westerners' worldview and value significantly differ from the Easterners'.

Fundamentally, as the Westerners approach truth through a logical process, whereas the Easterners perceive things as an overall picture, paradigmatically, the Westerners approach truth through observation and analysis whereas Easterners through contemplation. Paying more attention to the Eastern culture, architects are capable to create their arts distinctly at ease. The answers of the East, moreover, need no much explanation for individual parts. According to him, if Thai architects reach such extent, the answer will be distinctive and encompass adequate abstract essence. The abstraction conveyed through the physical form embraces sophisticated wisdom par excellence. However, if it turns out to be a poor, meaningless work, it shall extinct naturally, as obvious in many works in history.

The Western approach in architectural design: a complex process to tackle fundamental problem requiring a scientific approach to solve step by step has been broadly accepted among Thais. It needs a custom-made designer equipped with well-round knowledge in order to handle projects efficiently.

In my view, the design pedagogy in any architecture school has been following the tradition of the West. To overcome the complexity of problems, we still need logical steps to cope with the complex information. All architects are aware of this. However, when they step out to be free—that is, they have no constraints on their designs, have broader horizons, and have blank sheets of paper in front of them—the swords are in the grip of the Easterners; they aim to

use them for a single slash and want to create meaningful work on the canvas. If we consider the roots of our culture, we should develop our approach so we can become the leaders in our light. We should build up our design philosophy rather than follow ideas from the West as always. If we invest enough effort in this, the world might one day value our Buddhist philosophy, the philosophy par excellence.⁹⁴

His proposition is a discourse aiming to raise an awareness among Thai architects concerning another viable architectural design approach. It is a unique challenging avenue, parallel to the old tradition using a logical approach professed by the West and is the known tradition to deal with all problems and limitations. Within this new realm, Thai architects may find themselves and the most promising ““sword” of their own.”⁹⁵ They use this sword to tackle the no-constraint-at-all design problem which, despite the difficulty that can be harder than with a constraint, they will find another brighter way out.

I believe this new standpoint is the only thing that is our true forte—we are more competent in this area than in the logical approach borrowed from the West. If we stop tagging unreasonably behind them and look back to ourselves and our identity, there might, tomorrow, be good things and good new ideas for us and for our country.⁹⁶

Chatree designed a number of projects that reflect his ideology, and it contributed to the different approaches of identity and importantly in most of his works did not directly borrow the elements of Thai architecture as to attain Thai-ness. However, his “universal body” is more in-grain with the theory of Frampton in solving the problems of in indecency of place and time if the authentic intricacy of the archaic elements to be put into assemblage again. His approach also solved the problems of discourses produced i.e., “The Modern Mastodons Should Extinct” of

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

Sang-Aron Rattakasigorn⁹⁷ and ““Cancer” of Architecture” by Anuvit Charernsupkul.⁹⁸ For the case of the mastodon, Sang-Aron argues that any archaic styles should not be reused. Any attempts to revive those motifs run a risk of making architecture that is mismatched with space and time. Moreover, in practice, new programs might not fit well with the old form. Anuvit, in the same fashion, rejected the practice of borrowing the old arts as it is not an intellectual method, and he suggested architects create new work afresh for their time.

As an inspirational and incubating phase, Chatree⁹⁹ revealed that his ideas of autonomous architecture owed greatly to a workshop in 2000 on “Thai architecture: Essence of Thainess” organized by Wonchai Mongkolpradit, a professor in Architecture Faculty of Chulalongkorn University who, as commended by Chatree, a genuine guru on “Thai-ness.” Theerapol Niyom and some young architects attended that workshop, which many questions were raised about what, if not the “literal-borrowing traditional style,” essence and abstraction were hoped find a way they could materialize one from the culture. Texts were read, prayers were prayed as a step closer to a spiritual ritual that was an effort to extract the hidden meaning. This workshop sparked an interest in how Thai essence was extract more abstractly. The result though not in a print or report but it instilled inside the participants the spirit and inspiration which were the philosophy of Thai architecture.

To Wonchai Mongkolpradit,¹⁰⁰ it can be said that more epistemological approaches of Thai-ness or identity were developed with different groups and parts of the architect circle. Drawn from Buddhism, his interpretation of Thai-ness was comprehensive yet abstract that the essence of the culture transcended the mere

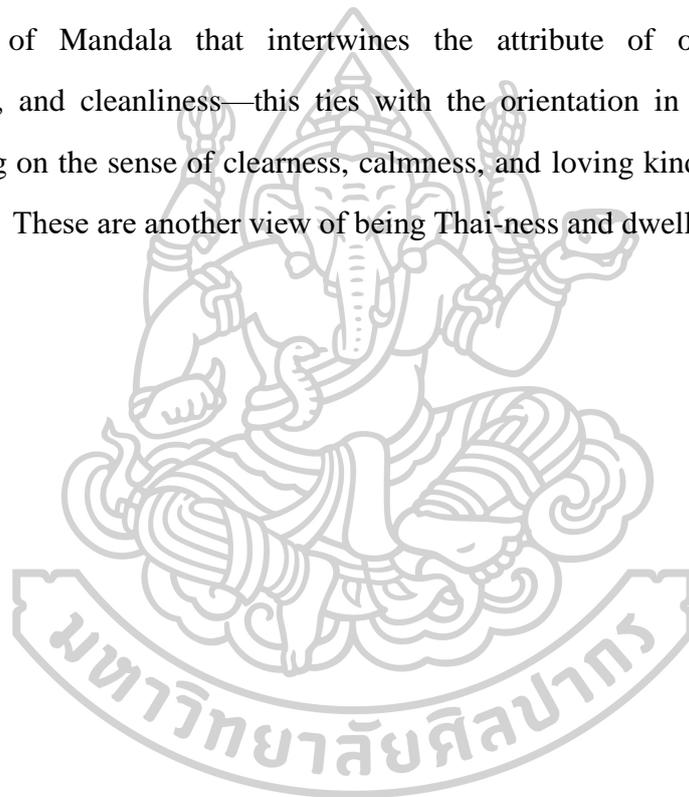
⁹⁷Sang-Aron Rattakasigorn, *ibid.*

⁹⁸Anuvit Charernsupkul, *ibid.*

⁹⁹Chatree Ladalalitsakul, "Chatree Ladalalitsakul's Architectural Ideology," interview by the author, January 13, 2020.

¹⁰⁰Wonchai Mongkolpradit, "Path of the Awakeness" (paper presented at the The 3rd International Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Symposium on Innovation and Creativity “Cultivating Innovation and Creativity Culture” iMIT SIC 2019, Prince of Naradhiwas University, Naradhiwas Province Thailand, 2019), 434-450.

physical form of the now Thai-ness in practice. His Buddhist view dwells significantly in the path to an awakening which means an architecture embracing such essence proposed would lead the dwellers to a more rightful state of mind. An example of his concept of spiritual-realm representation of Thai-ness can be found in his text that offers an explanation of Thai aesthetic which imbues some keywords, i.e. art that encouraging mental development, calmness, delight, and refreshing; it is via meditation and inner looking; detachment of self for the sake of freedom; the abstraction of Mandala that intertwines the attribute of order, tidiness, and rightfulness, and cleanliness—this ties with the orientation in relation to the sun; emphasizing on the sense of clearness, calmness, and loving kindness of the inner of one's mind. These are another view of being Thai-ness and dwell in the Thai culture.



สุนทรีย ทัศนศิลป์ สถาปัตยกรรม : วิถีพลัง แห่งการตื่นรู้
THE AESTHETIC, POET ARCHITECTURE : THE ENERGY PATH OF AWAKENESS

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Abstract

The architecture art to encourage mental development that allows the mind to calm, delighted, reawakening, having a consciousness, sensible in the present moment. When the mind to be stillness, mentality kindness then the virtue will be completed. It causes of meditation on the inner condition of themselves. The mind will concentrate on the present state and understand in factors of the awakening of the circumstances. Then the mind will disengage themselves to be freedom with an ungrudging, detachment and effective that is the way of Bodhisattva. Regarding the conformation of the Mandala, where is the center of spiritual become to the propogation. It's also clean, clear, peace. The design consisting of orderly, steady and the right, clearness that follows the sun, the star and the geographic of the land, that understand the sense of the presently circumstance of life. There is a message of clear, clean, exquisite and calm of the inner mind. It will create the beauty of life, that's kindly and calmness.

Keywords: Mandala, virtue, concentration, wisdom

Objective

Studied the content of the mandala (sacred place) to be the place of recognition in Buddhism that has developed from ritual of the sacred place (mandala) namely:

1. The Cosmology in the Tri-Bhumi and the Vastu-Purusha-Mandala that was the sacred place (mandala) of god, deity principle, to become the sacred place of awaking within themselves.
2. I Ching and Feng-Sui that was the sacred land (mandala) of natural balance and harmony for better living of themselves, heaven principle, to become the compassion and selfless.
3. The principle of the sacred place of awakening, as Buddhist cosmology, that is Sarvasya or the voidness. It escapes from any recognition that calm (Loka) or equanimity awareness of constantly changing factors. This is the power path of life of awakening.

Results and Discussions

Due to the principles of Buddhism found that the truth of nature is not any methodology. It is Sarvasya or emptiness consist of three characteristics: impermanence (Vesica), suffering (Dukkha) and not self (Anatta). The cause of all human suffering is the lack of insight in mind and clinging in the five-aggregates or Skandhas that are form or matter (rupa), feeling or sensation (vedana), perception (sanna), mental formation (sankhara) and consciousness (vinnana), lost to hold.

So, the sacred place in Buddhism, Mandala, is the style of place follow the original scripture but have emphasized the understanding insight of people mind. There is the balance of mind or equanimity (siddhi) in every recognition state of its, able to be aware with joyful, happiness, cool and calm. Then, before state about the sacred place (mandala) of awakening in Buddhism, will be present the concept of the sacred place (mandala) that is the ritual before Buddhism.

The place of awakening in Tri-Bhumi

The Buddha presented the form and language of the Brahmin but did not the bhumi universe of the god creator. It was the sacred place (mandala) of it of a person which each has a complete universe of life in themselves. It was a minor cosmic universe in the Great Universe. The four continents were the component of the elements: earth, water, fire and wind. For the seven circular ranges of mountains was the state of mind which was composed in Buddhism more explained that the element of mind was the important part which the three stage of bhumi: kama bhumi was the suffering stage from outside factors, Rupa bhumi and Arupa bhumi were not related the factors from outside but inside. The spirit that has a strong concentration and up to the next stage of the state or plane from Rupa bhumi to the Arupa bhumi. All the three bhumi were in the lokya bhumi that needed to release from adhering then the life will be without suffering and do not rebirth, being Lokuttara bhumi. The universe of birth and death was all from the mind that was composed, adhered and without anything. The Sattarudra Ocean as the breath or the air element that dove by the development of life had consisted of morality, meditation and wisdom then the life will be completely happy.

Summary of the way power of awakening

The form of the sacred place (mandala) is an aesthetic, poetry, architecture, by creating a place that is steady, peaceful, cool, a place that is conducive to the peace of mind. It is the exquisite beauty that gives the mind to be full of visions, means of communicating the original Buddha that the spirit that is ripe. Space is cool, calm and open to the changing environment. For the mind to recognize wisdom with equanimity and consciousness that is a happy, bright, clean, peaceful life that can return to the nature with independence, joyful, calm, cool inside each person's mind. That is one with the dynamics of the appearance of the external environment that cause a beautiful life, a sense of peace and tranquility and a life that is humble and supportive of all things.

Introduction

The architecture language has continuously evolved in each era to accordance with the social-cultural context in each era and region which to accommodate the quality of being and conducive to the development of spiritual freedom. The Eastern has developed that affect the evolution consist of the Cosmology, the Vastu-Purusha-Mandala, I Ching and Feng-Sui, etc. In each period, nationally and local have specifically developed that moving to the development of the sacred place (mandala) of completely awakening in the Buddhist path. In this paper will be only focused on the development of the Mandala of completely awakening in the Buddhist path.

Methodology

1. Considered individual scripture concept consisting the cosmology of Brahmin, the Vastu-Purusha-Mandala, I Ching, Feng Sui and the Five Canon of Buddhism.
2. Considered academic evidence that describes and interpret basic principles of each concept by teachers (gurus) from national, and international levels.
3. Visited and observed the important holy place in each religion.
4. Combined to augment the last analysis by analyzed the style of the holy place in Buddhism that developed from Buddhist principles which intertwined from the difference of the original concept.
5. The gathered information was used as a significant concept in the design of the Mandala of awakening.

The sacred place (mandala) in Buddhism

Buddhism described the nature of reasoning as a factor of formation and everything was experiential and not inwardness. The principle of the nature was the three characteristics and impermanence in every aspect, Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (suffering) or unsatisfactoriness and Anatta (not self). Then Lord Buddha suggested in the cosmology in the dimension of a hierarchy of development to a pure life, above the three bhumi over the natural life, complete, smoothly, happily. The Lord Buddha also presented the four noble truths that was the way to the cessation of suffering. There were Dukkha, Samudaya, Tanhava, and Magga. Can mention that the principle of (Dharma) of Buddha was called Tri-Sikha (morality, meditation, and wisdom).

The Buddhist principle presented related to the maturation of the natural dynamic that was the initial ideas into the principles of the development of nature without adhering from being. Thus, allowed the spiritual to true freedom and creates the complete, humble, and supporting life and completely settle in the mind. It was the world, Lokuttara, that proceed without stuck to the state and presented the point of view of the learning from outside learn to inside. It created the sacred place (mandala) of mind that allows the mind to be calm, cooled with freshness, consciousness, and assisted the present moment. They realized in death, body, and mind namely when the mind was calm down, the virtue will be complete. It created the path of awakening, joy, peace, right, conflict, and freedom of spirituality, wisdom. Able to deal with the factors of objective temperance, equanimity, and compassion. It was wisdom in the way of Bodhisattva Dharma.

Buddhist Cosmology in the Vastu-Purusha and Feng-Sui

The life of the Buddha consists of wisdom (Aniatta Buddha) and compassion (Bodhisattva Ananda-ketopasa). In the way of life same as the life of Buddha consisted of two things that appear from the Vastu-Purusha and Feng-Sui into Buddhist. There were Akasa (eastern) : firmity and concentrate, Patana (south) : persistence and not wavered, Ambha (western) : wisdom, support and gift, Amokakh (northern) : prosperity and without suffering, Pravinaya Buddha (middle) : brightness and freedom. Thus, the landscape for the way of life of Buddha was setting the space to be the sacred place (mandala) where has a vision which means being a center of mind that communicated the mind that was blessed within the hearts of each person. And there was an enclosed space that was clean, peace, exquisite and has a shape that communicated with the inner mind which supported the mind to calm and cool down into a gradually completely morality, meditation and wisdom until reached the awakening from the inner mind. The same as living in the place, that has the main element for fortune direction and the place calm for concentration in present moment and be awareness the environment by external state to be very different, as knowing sky, human and earth or knowing the elements and the time and mostly being plainly, humble and compassion for life.

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Figure 51 The Aesthetic Poet, Architecture by Wonchai Mongkolpradit
 The Energy Path of the Awakening
 Source: Wonchai Mongkolpradit, "Path of the Awakening" (paper presented at the
 The 3rd International Indonesia -Malaysia-Thailand Symposium on
 Innovation and Creativity "Cultivating Innovation and Creativity Culture"
 iMIT SIC 2019, Prince of Naradhiwas University, Naradhiwas Province
 Thailand, 2019), 434-450.

In contrast to Wonchai's discourse of space and time, Mathar Bunnag reminded us that the issue of "time" has to be taken into account but to "jump" across. He argues in his ASA "Back to Basic" pamphlet:

We have to free ourselves from the gigantic wall in which we built around us from society, religion, and family to open up for new creativity.

However, we must study the past well needed for supporting our creativity.

The past is not adverse to anyone, but it will impede our creativity immediately in the thought or feeling if one is trapped within it.

Our architecture and aesthetic would more or less become a copy of the past.

The past is not for a copy but as an inspiration, pride, gratitude, and a great supporter for us when we need it.

The past is not our master.

The world is waiting for our creativity. It waits for young new fresh architecture to emerge.

We have to be brave to create new things and brave to jump to the unknown where no one has been.

That is the aesthetic of architecture.

"JUMP"

Mathar Bunnag¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹Mathar Bunnag, "Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?", Pamphlet of "ASA 2016: Back to Basic" (Bangkok: 2016).



Figure 52 Mathar Bunnag’s definition of good architecture
 Source: Mathar Bunnag, "Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?“, Pamphlet of
 “ASA 2016: Back to Basic,” (Bangkok: 2016).

Another architect who contributed in the ASA Back to Basic and argued for a simpler and reductivism was Chalae Kunawong (of Ongsa Architects). According to his pamphlet, he wrote:

Being spontaneous, unornamented response to the current state from deep inside of consciousness without ornament, nor any refinement without paying no attention to any form.

Deserting self so that it gives birth to a new identity.

Chalae Kunawong¹⁰²

¹⁰²Chalae Kunawong, "Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?“, Pamphlet of “ASA 2016: Back to Basic” (Bangkok: 2016).

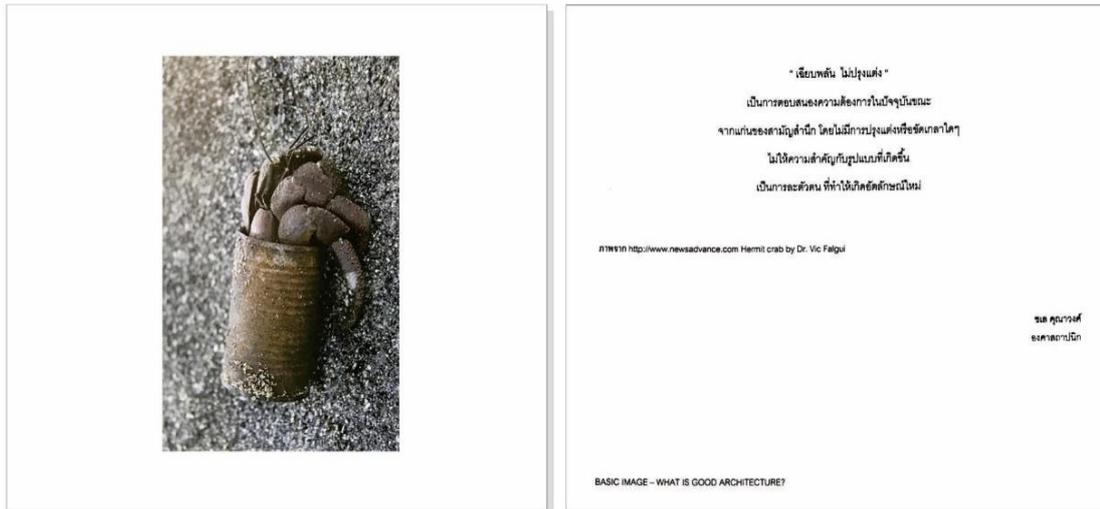


Figure 53 Chalae Kunawong’s definition of good architecture

Source: Chalae Kunawong, *“Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?”*, Pamphlet of *“ASA 2016: Back to Basic,”* (Bangkok: 2016).

From Theory to Field

Getting back to Chatree Ladalalitsakul’s design, he introduced the “gray space,” his *coup de grâce*. It is the transition space that allows psychological change from out to the inside and *vice versa*. He treated the skins of the buildings as layering envelopes, similar to the layers of onion peels.

It is my style to have the skins of my buildings encompass a lot of layers and sequences so that they deceive the eyes of users and cause the users to become disoriented in terms of their feelings. The boundary between inside and outside is elusive—this awareness is intentionally disorienting as users move from outside in and inside out.¹⁰³

This treatment yields a sense of lightness and porosity that obliquely alludes to the physical spirit of tropical architecture. In his own Tonsilp House, he intertwined the gray space to manifest the Eastern spirit.

¹⁰³Chatree Ladalalitsakul, "Chatree Ladalalitsakul's Architectural Ideology," interview by the author, January 13, 2020.

The theoretical viewpoint of Chatree departed from the popular molding of Thai-ness apparently. He neither adopted the physical appliqué of Thai elements as seen in examples such as the doctrine of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram during the 1950s-1960s, nor the literal remade “authentic” Thai architecture as did in the “royal craftsmen” such as Pinyo Suwankiri and M.C. Mitarun Kasemsri but instead to reinterpret the spirit of the East as created intrinsically as in his theory of “Gray Space” as his interpretation of the “universal body.”

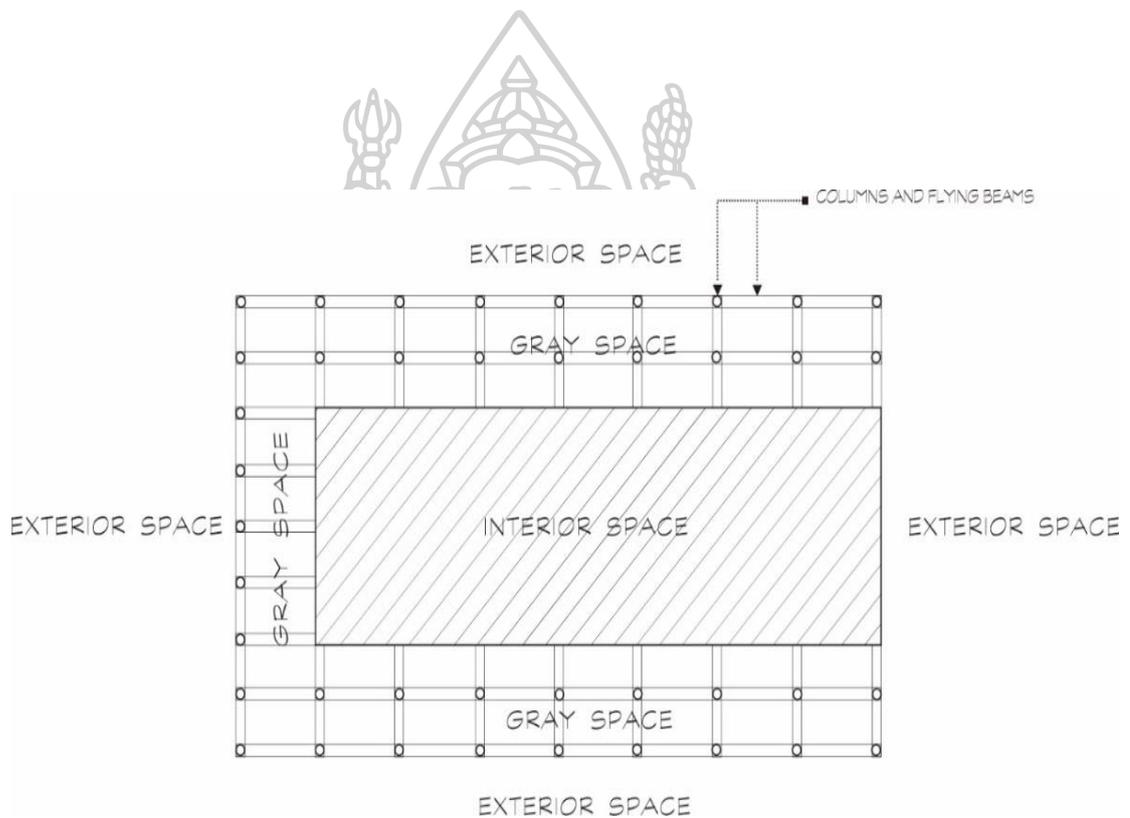


Figure 54 Diagram of gray space archetype depicted in a plan view

Source: By the author



Figure 55 Gray space archetype in College of Music of Mahidol University

Designed by Chatree Ladalalitsakul in 1996

Source: http://gotarch.com/archive/projects/2012/Mahidol_University_Architecture.html, accessed March 14, 2020.

Chatree looked into the poetics of space meaningfully without any images of classical elements. In Tonsilp House, he blurred the boundary of the house by juxtaposing the open volume, which serves for a living room. However, usually, the treatment of this kind of space in residential houses would be made clear either interior or exterior, which provides for different purposes, but in this house, he places the semi-exterior or semi-interior living space in the middle of the house. Thus, the effect is that it creates light-weight and porous sensibility, which is while it does not directly borrow any ornaments of Thai architecture, it embraces the more profound sense of space of this region. In sum Chatree's proposition was influential and led the movement of the circle the was one part of the contemporary architecture trajectory.

The new Parliament House, Kiakkai, Bangkok, a fine example of how to reflect upon Thai architecture when it turned to be a significant building the approach

turned around that Chatree chose to work with the symbolic representation in the apex of the project. Besides, he returned to the old myth of Thai's way of city formation as he referred to as "The civic morality – the prosperity"¹⁰⁴ as the guidepost of his design concept.

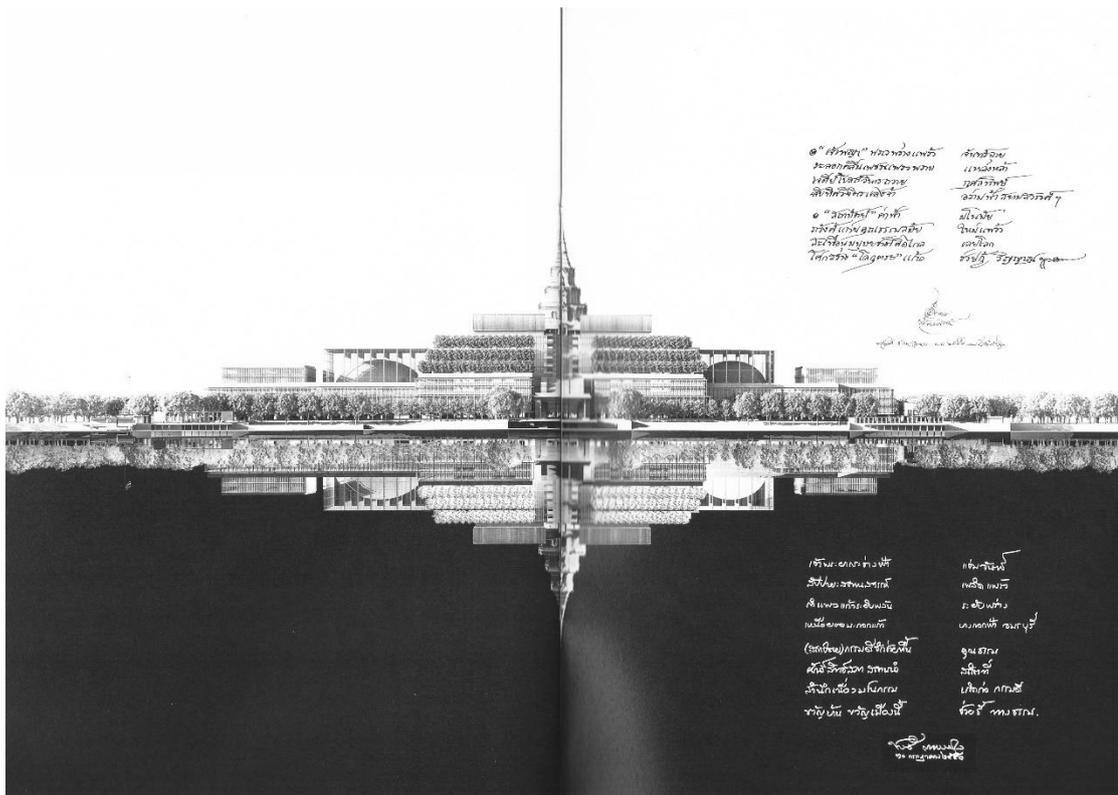


Figure 56 Sketch for New Parliament House at Kiakkai, Bangkok

Source: Sappaya Sabha Sathan, a pamphlet (n.p.: n.d.).

His parliament House is symbolic and turned back the clock to the tradition postmodernistically as he invited Pinyo Suwankiri to collaborate in the crescendo of the building. Pinyo who was mentioned in the previous chapter for his resolution to

¹⁰⁴In the interview he referred to a poem accounted for the rise and fall of Ayutthaya Kingdom (pre-Bangkok period) that he adopted as allegory for the morale for the making of the parliament house. His intention was to instill morality for the politicians. This approach is analogous to the concept of British parliament house John Ruskin used to formulate his schematic.

work up to a bona fide traditional architecture as he is a “royal craftsman” and will never breach the cannon. This architecture is thus an exception that still combines his features of contemporary identity and the radical Thai style.

The Architecture from the Owner’s DNA: Autonomous Architecture: New Austerity

M.L. Varudh Varavarn, a young generation architect, and his architecture is anchored on the issue of identity especially in making of peculiar architecture. Compare to Chatree Ladalalitsakul, his ideology of identity has been far more intrinsic to the humanistic reflection; and it manifests through the building form, space as well as detail. His predilection for making the DNA of the house is the DNA of the owner or users and this is the approach of his design. According to him:

Good architecture relies on several factors and is shaped uniquely because of various issues; in other words, there is no single formula. Hence, most architecture is created with a unique rationale. Therefore, I believe that architecture has no single description or answer. It encompasses space upon which users can further imagine and ponder. It is like a void that exists so that one can immerse oneself in one’s own imagination...the self’s thoughts...endlessly.¹⁰⁵

In M.L. Varudh’s view, architecture responds to nothing but programmatic requirements, including uses, habits, behaviors, living styles, and contexts. These factors determine the design outcome and create peculiarity of architecture, specifically to a project, place, and time. Building characteristics is unprecedented. It is not an attempt to make a style, nor a form making. The design should allow it to emerge from within.

¹⁰⁵M.L. Varudh Varavarn, *“Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?”*, Pamphlet of *“ASA 2016: Back to Basic,”* (Bangkok: 2016).

Concerning identity, when I design a house, the house must express the owner's characteristics. If I design a house in Thailand for Thai owners, the house must spontaneously intertwine with the users and the location, and that creates styles. It is not that I have a style to be used for this or that house. It is instead a natural process that brings out the specificity of a design. Identity arises from the design process and culminates in a responsive identity of space and time.¹⁰⁶

Recently, he designed a house for a family that demonstrates well about theoretical stance. The owner of the house, though they seemed Westernized from the first glance, parts of their lifestyles were not typically Western. Therefore, this specific patterning shaped the house; and it took form from the users and the site. It shows the identity of people that could not literally be taken from a precedented style but instead has to be tailor-made. When it arises from the people and the context, the design is peculiar. The Pasicharoen House project well exemplifies how the lifestyles of the owners informed the design. The family was an extended family consisting of a couple of micro-families of brothers and sisters.

I made this house into a cluster of small houses within the compound, linked by a terrace. It, by far, unintentionally corresponds to the traditional Thai house (*ruen Thai*) style. It was neither my intention to draw forms from the style nor did I use it as a formal reference. It was the most workable scheme that serves the way they live.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶M.L. Varudh Varavarn, "M.L. Varudh Varavarn's Architectural Ideology," interview by the author, February, 3, 2020.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.



Figure 57 Pasicharoen House, Bangkok, M.L. Varudh Varavarn

Source: By M.L. Varudh Varavarn

The situation happening in the interior is his primary concern. It needed to be as a wholistic design, and the interior space must serve the use; design should be from within. Thus, the form is the result, a bottom-up design process.

So, identity is a responsive enterprise. Architecture informs the current use, and the use informs the architecture. It has a reciprocal nature. I take the idea of sufficiency as a tenet of good design. Furthermore, an ideal design should be modest and economical. Nevertheless, I don't agree with the common belief that sufficient buildings must be made of bamboo. There must be other options.

In my Agricultural Center project at Khao Yai, I experimented with brick, an ordinary material. Instead of traditional brickwork, I redesigned the technique and used bricks to make three-dimensional curved walls buttressed by steel posts.

The result was a new image intertwined with an old sense of bricks, a synergetic result.¹⁰⁸

Bricks requires less maintenance compared to bamboo. Moreover, it is the definition of the sufficiency as it costs less in the long run.



Figure 58 Brick Wall Experimentation for Agricultural Center project at Khao Yai, by M.L. Varudh Varavarn

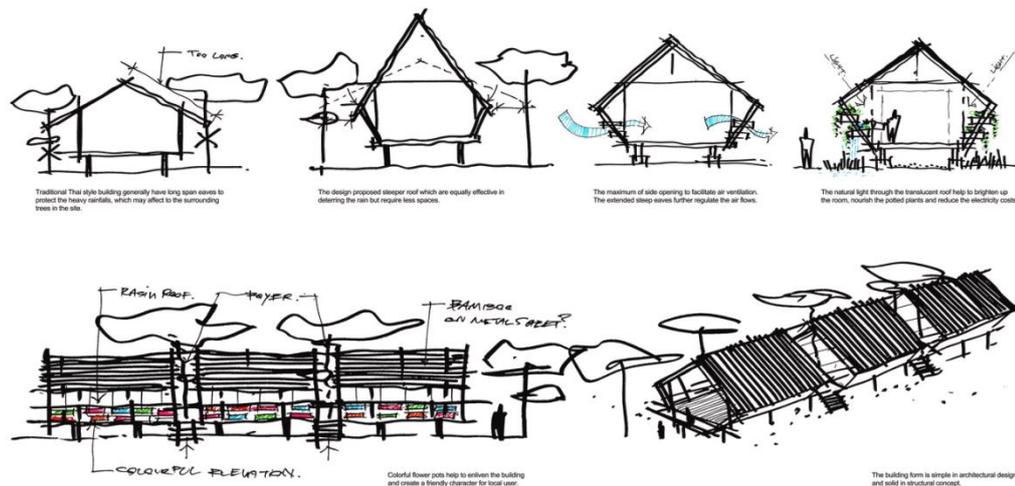
Source: <https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn%3AANd9GcTf2vjaF5TnWkArNIN6ywfiC9AvGAGCczegKO6RER0dGM6o8dd-&usqp=CAU>, accessed March 10, 2020.

Baan Huai San Yao School in Chiang Rai, a contribution-to-community project, is another project he was proud of. He intended to create a *podee-podee* classroom (*podee-podee* means moderately/austerely fit), meaning not too much, nor too little but sufficient; this echoes his philosophy of sufficiency architecture. When the old school collapsed by the earthquake, his team were called upon to re-build it. Due to the constraints, especially budgets, he designed the new building by making to this limit and used the concept of sufficiency. His idea was to make only a skeleton

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

frame or core and minimize unnecessary enclosures. Steel structures were used. The walls were enclosed as sparingly as possible so that pupils are exposed to the scenic natural surroundings. To maximize efficiency in material costs, he chose to control all material dimensions following the modular system. This process could cut any possible material scraps.

Keeping all elements minimal, he chose to leave the building to the users and let the architecture evolve by them through time. Upon they move in, they might add any features as they wish. According to him, “[t]his is my [his] sufficiency in another aspect. Sufficiency is a broad term, and, in my [his] view, it should evolve with us.”¹⁰⁹



IDEAS & SKETCHES OF DESIGN CONCEPT

Figure 59 Baan Huai San Yao School, M.L. Varudh Varavarn sketches

Source: https://www.archdaily.com/776325/bann-huay-san-yaw-post-disaster-school-vin-varavarn-architects/56339648e58ecea3d300000e-bann-huay-san-yaw-post-disaster-school-vin-varavarn-architects-photo?next_project=no, accessed March 10, 2020.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

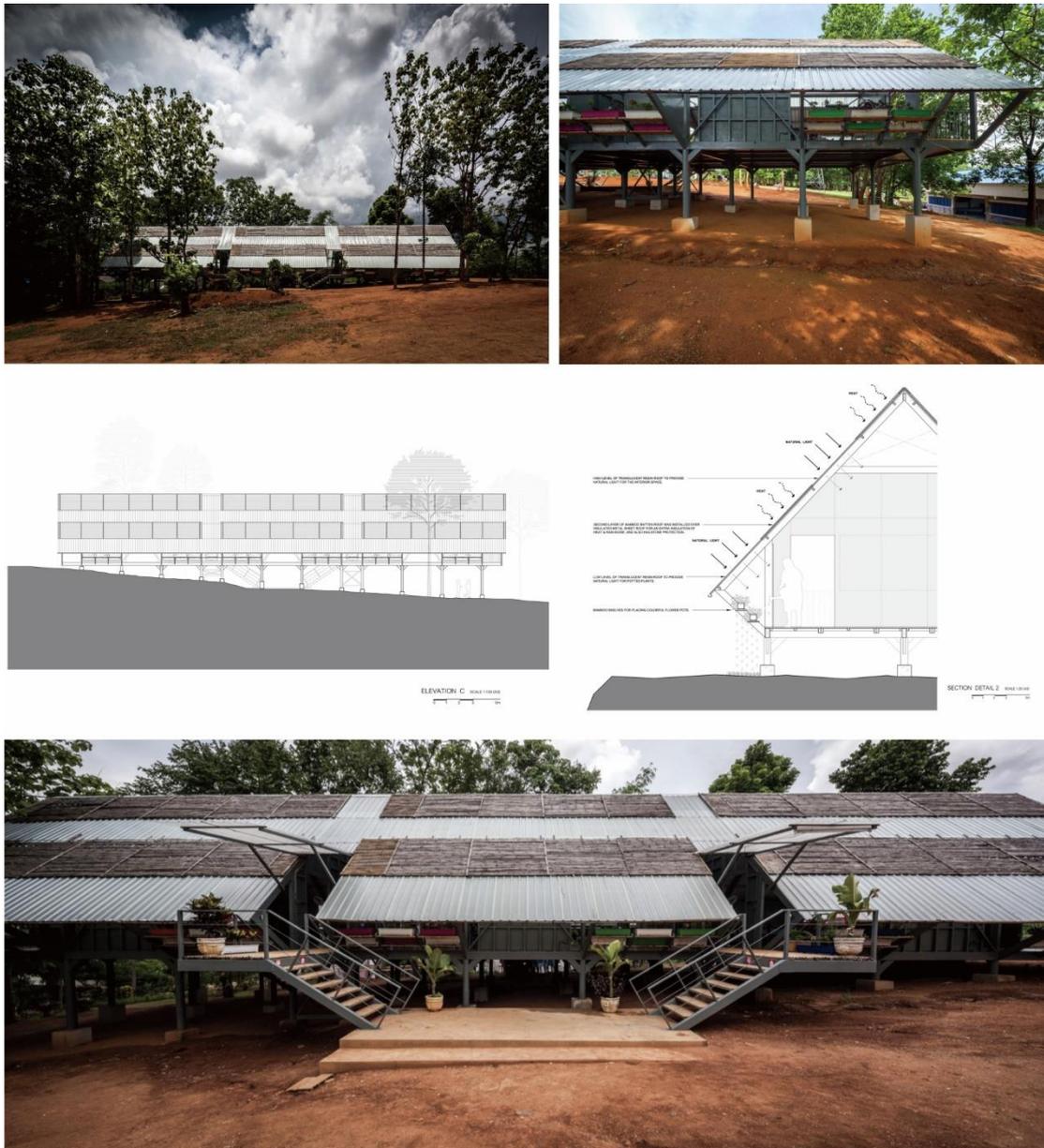


Figure 60 Baan Huai San Yao School, Chiang Rai, M.L. Varudh Varavarn

Source: https://www.archdaily.com/776325/bann-huay-san-yaw-post-disaster-school-vin-varavarn-architects/56339648e58ecea3d300000e-bann-huay-san-yaw-post-disaster-school-vin-varavarn-architects-photo?next_project=no, accessed March 10, 2020.

Philosophy of Understanding of Nature Discourse of Lightness, Streamline, and Autonomy

Kanika Ratanapridakul's attempt in creating unique architecture to capture a sense of place by respecting the context. Architectural elements that she uses in many of her projects were by reinventing architectural language of her own that does not follow any precedence especially Thai traditional style. Kanika Ratanapridakul attempted to seek the decent equilibrium within the realm of architecture. Similar educational background to M.L. Varudh Varavarn, her first degree in interior design from Southern Illinois University and later architecture from Sci-Arc, with her background of diverse disciplinary granted her a deep and wide view of perception of the built environment. Leading her firm "Spacetime", Kanika proposes interdisciplinary ways of thinking and practicing and tries to narrow the space of enquiry between architecture and other related fields. And her philosophy of design stemmed from the open-ended direction learned in Sci-arc that any issues of architecture must be from a critical deconstructive approach—believe or not believe in such a thing is equally bias, according to her.¹¹⁰

Serving for humanity and identity, architecture resides in the patterns of society and context not form. Moreover, it transcends a perceived physical form and styles but rather abstract quintessence that inherits within people and the context of one space and time and always changing. According to Kanika, it is true that the trend of the world is driven by a dialectic of tendencies, that, in the past people were fascinated by the advancement of the Industrial Revolution and coincided with the global-centrism. The momentum of that phase began to wane and will finally stop. Then the pendulum will shift to the other side. For architecture, she pointed out that it is about local-centrism. In the world this such trend has flourished for some time but, in Thailand, it had been around 3-10 years that localism has gained more strength and it galvanized the cultural movement of all disciplines. She took on a premise that the

¹¹⁰Kanika Ratanapridakul, "Kanika Ratanapridakul's Architectural Ideology," interview by the author, November 12, 2019.

viable point is at the equilibrium at which point it will make a meaningful architecture.

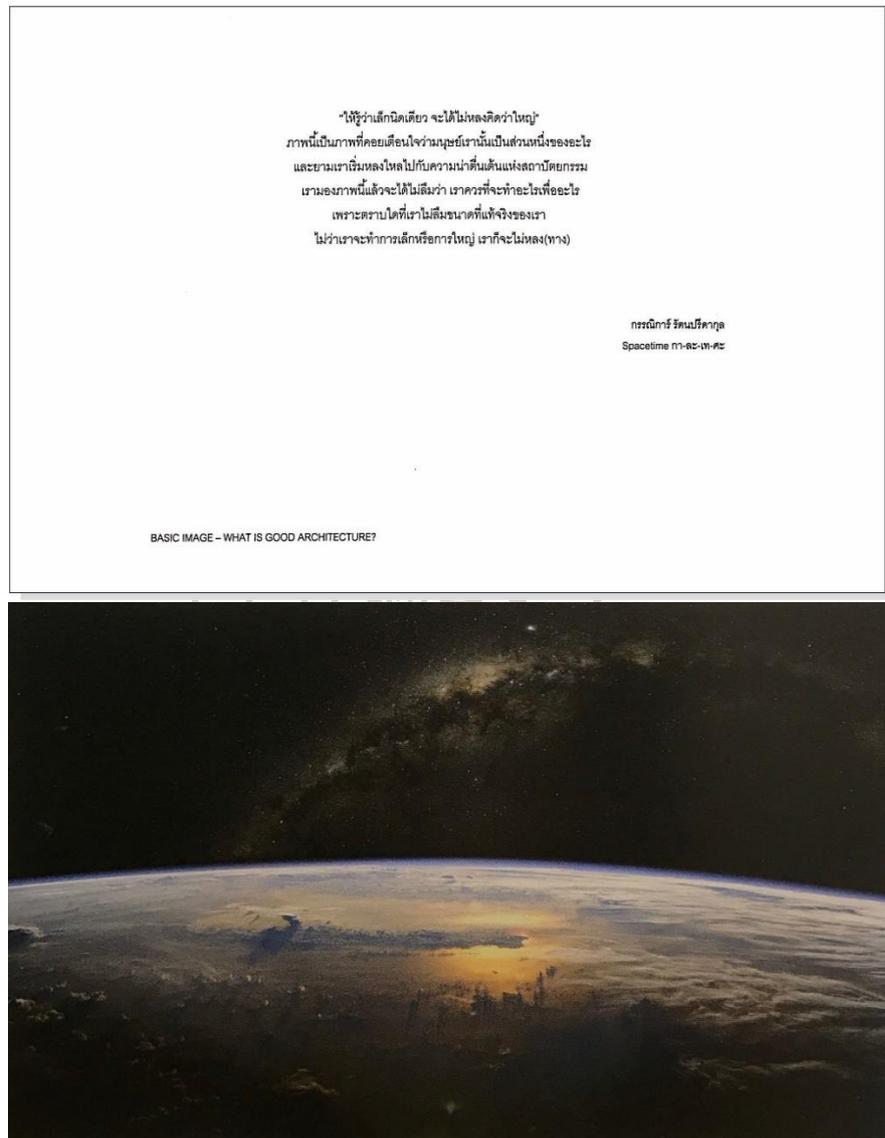


Figure 61 Definition of good architecture by Kanika Ratanapridakul

Source: Kanika Ratanapridakul, *"Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?"*, Pamphlet of *"ASA 2016: Back to Basic,"* (Bangkok: 2016).

We are aware that we are so minute. This image keeps reminding us what we, as humans, are part of. Whenever we become fascinated with the wonder of architecture, we look at this image again to remind ourselves about what we do

and for what reason. As long as we do not neglect the true scale of ourselves, to whatever scale we work, small or large, we will not be lost . . .¹¹¹

She is really poetic when she tries to theorize beyond architecture. Using architecture as a discursive allegory to predicate ethics and reminding people not to be arrogant since humanity is relatively small as a reference to the world, the universe. Thus, it is pointing to a rhetoric meaning of being humble, and reductivism.

The above quote is taken from Kanika's Basic Image—What is Good Architecture? Pamphlet published for the ASA Exhibition 2016 that famous architects participated in this activity. Her words point to a philosophy that respects the modesty as she refers to minuteness. The term is critical and in-grain with the concept of austerity in that it is pointing towards lessening or reducing and humbleness. This is a fine example of new way of Thai architecture that the architect tried to insist a new definition of identity by placing the architecture into the context and let it shape the architecture form. The gist of her idea is about the sociocultural context intertwined with climatic context. By sociocultural factors that engendered architectural configuration can clearly be observed in the U3 house at Ekamai, Bangkok.

Kanika Ratanapridakul's ideology embraces a reflection of context and it is well informed by her firm's name: Spacetime. It is the place that architecture has to establish a relationship between space and time and the people, and it makes up an identity. Architecture intertwines with site and context, and by this it determines the form for its particular time. From an interview, she was expressing her theory of architecture focusing on the issue of identity and autonomous architecture, she states:

Identity? What is identity? We may need to define first the aspect of which it speaks. To me, it is not about style or physical appearance, but rather when one has to deal with design, one has "to know one's self." To make something one

¹¹¹Kanika Ratanapridakul, *"Basic Image: What is Good Architecture?"*, Pamphlet of "ASA 2016: Back to Basic," (Bangkok: 2016).

must know one's self, and this knowing means learning what one's forefathers have done in the past in order to engage with them. Creating something brand-new from scratch is possible, but such a process does not have a profound association with one's roots. Furthermore, design has to be placed in relation to context. This does not mean architects have to deeply study everything in history, but they at least need to understand their roots in order to comprehend themselves.¹¹²

It is obvious enough in Kanika's design that they are unique in the characterization. It can be said that many of her works represented the contemporary of Thai architecture. A review on Kanika has a note that:

For the past fifty years, Thai architects have been pressed with questions regarding the definition and identity of contemporary Thai architecture. Are they to simulate the traditional, or should they borrow foreign forms? While these questions address mostly formal and stylistic issues, Ratanapridakul's vision has been different. Over the years, Ratanapridakul's opus of work has grown to include projects of various types and scales. Less concerned with stylistic appearance, Ratanapridakul's architecture is distinguished by the notion of relationship. Architecture is never an autonomous object created to please the eye, but stands in relation to our lives and environment, both manmade and natural. . .

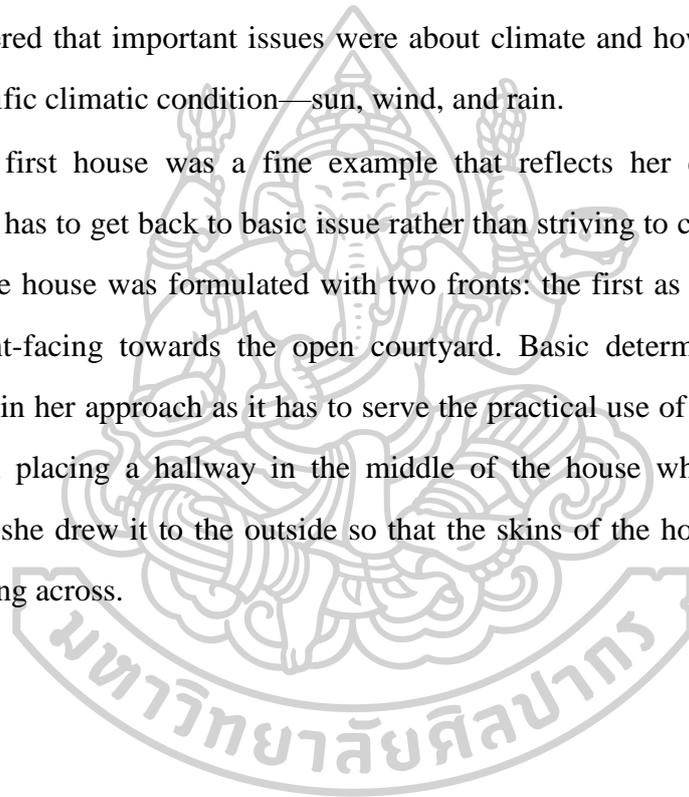
It is a practice that seeks not a world of architecture, but an architecture of the world where the natural environment provides a framework for architectural thought. Context, topography and the natural landscape are not only expressive or indicative, but also relational—an integration of the setting that gives life its texture, richness and spontaneity.¹¹³

¹¹²Kanika Ratanapridakul, "Kanika Ratanapridakul's Architectural Ideology," interview by the author, November 12, 2019.

¹¹³Tonkao Panin, "Kanika Ratanapridakul: House," 2010, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.habitusliving.com/architecture/kanika-ratanapridakul>.

When Kanika designed her very first house, her primary concern was the possibility in making a peculiarity. A survey study of local houses in various places was vital that she undertook at the first stage—not for precedented adaptation but in order to deconstruct the fundamental logic of architectural creation within the tradition. Diving into it as “to know one’s self,” she thus formulated her new architectural form as the new interpretation of architecture for the place and time which seamlessly engaged with the context—i.e. sociocultural, climatic, and material. She discovered that important issues were about climate and how to design to serve for the specific climatic condition—sun, wind, and rain.

Her first house was a fine example that reflects her design premise that architecture has to get back to basic issue rather than striving to create an architecture of style. The house was formulated with two fronts: the first as a public and second private front-facing towards the open courtyard. Basic determination became the golden rule in her approach as it has to serve the practical use of the house members. Rather than placing a hallway in the middle of the house which precludes cross ventilation, she drew it to the outside so that the skins of the house can be open for wind breezing across.



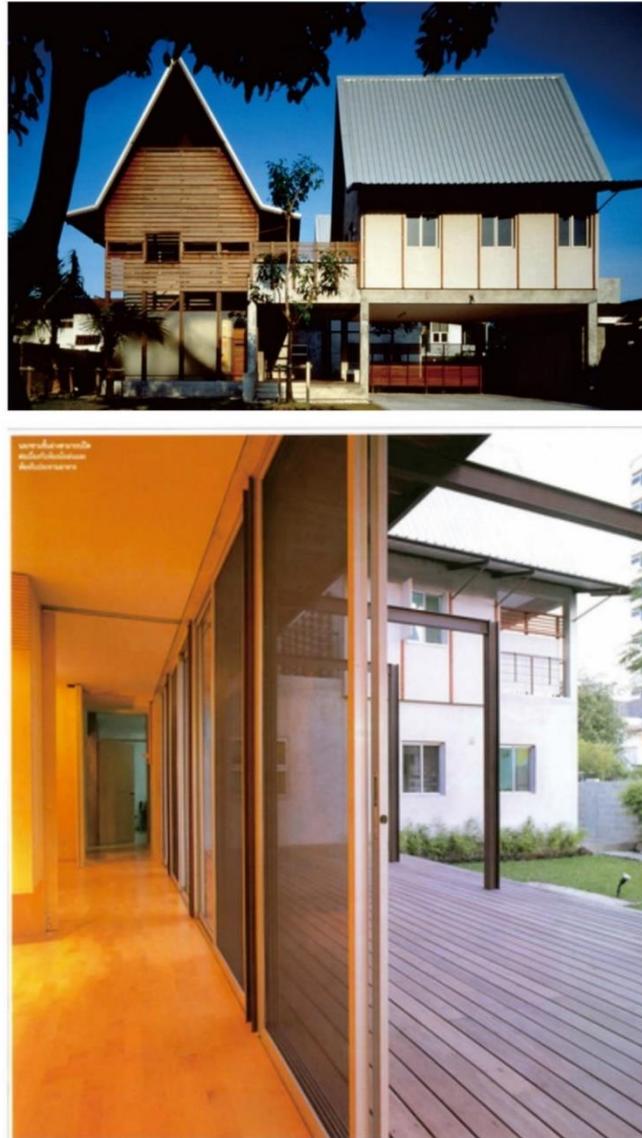


Figure 62 Façade of the U3 House and the inner courtyard

Source: <https://www.spacetimearchitects.com/art4d-04-1998-house-u3>, accessed January 1, 2020.

In U3, her own house, the detail of elements was elaborate as she opted vertical louver windows as the major opening features of the house particularly on the west to let the prevailing wind vent through. The specialty was with customary integration with air conditioners.

The result of this issues culminated in the final configuration informs its profound engagement with the context and particularly the place, which is the context

of space—in Thailand and specifically Bangkok urban area, and time—this is contemporary time. The configuration, that is as a deconstruction in logic of design, rising from the response to context granted Kanika new breed of Thai architecture as the architecture being rightful for contemporary time.

It was troublesome to adjust the familiarity of clients to accept new materials especially if they are not conventional in the architectural market, according to her. But for it was an experiment in her own house, that as she had in her mind to not simply follow the mainstream. Her major cross-grained contribution that has marked a clear distinction in contemporary design was the turnaround of roof material usage that she opted for metal sheet. Known as an unconventional material for residential houses, metal sheet was not popular since the market of that time had an impression that it was generally produced for factories or any building types that was more distant from anything sentimental like houses.



Figure 63 Planning scheme of U3 House

the shifting the corridor outside to be more open and streamlining the thickness of the house

Source: <https://www.spacetimearchitects.com/art4d-04-1998-house-u3>, accessed January 1, 2020.

Because of her primary commitment to challenge the norm and the precedented form of Thai house, she took an approach of design experimentation by dissecting the norm itself for an in-depth analysis. Through the process, she discovered that there were many reasons behind the traditional design. By understanding the reasons, her new different abstraction emerged as she realized that there could be a number of solutions for such circumstance. As an example, she experimented on a number of form but as she admitted that the Thai ancestors were right that they made pitched roof for protecting the house from rain at the highest degree possible and concerning the passive cooling treatment. Notwithstanding, she returned to pitched roofs but with slight adjustment to suit her requirement in order to attain more protection from the rain. But the unique feature was due to the “more streamline, lighter, and simpler” in the over-all appearance. Thanks to the lightness of metal sheet that allows a great length of cantilevered eave with minimal support. Her new design has given birth to a new form which served a new way of living with new appearance and material. “Without attachment to the conventional form or traditional style this house was from [my] interpretation of how to immerse in the context appropriately,” according to Kanika.¹¹⁴ And the result of post-occupancy revealed that it functions efficiently in coping with climate.

¹¹⁴Kanika Ratanapridakul, *ibid.*



Figure 64 The lightweighthness of metal sheet

It allows the longer overhanging yet maintaining lightness and streamline look.

Source: <https://www.pinterest.at/pin/404620347766544036/>, accessed January 1, 2020.



Figure 65 Plan of U3 House

Source: <https://www.pinterest.at/pin/404620347766544036/>, accessed January 1, 2020.

Other materials she used in this house included concrete, steel, and glass that work as the functional materials and as they are affordable and it can be said that they do not seem to differ from any modern houses in Bangkok. But what has been brought into the merit of autonomous design was at the treatment of planning and form that created the sense of place and engaged practically with the context that uniqueness in this house was created.

Context, to Kanika, plays the most significant role in design. It is the mode of basic and practicality in making an architecture. However, according to her for her earlier practice the political concern about the practice may play also a vital role but as she grew up and gained her mental strength, she gained more strength that her design could express from her confidence that can establish new things without any worry that it would alienate from the forerunners or opposite a need in making idiosyncratic works from the others' expectation as any starchitects might find it a marketing strategy one should do.

Context, materials, value of society, and so forth have been the prime factors architects have to take into account the suitability in adaptation of new materials available in the market, as they are increasingly important, and the course of this transformed the physical form of the buildings. Placing into the context, she claimed that her architecture represented contemporary design and by the buzz from media in Thailand (and international) it pushed the clientele new perception of Thai image of today's or modern dwelling. The old "identity" especially the physical form as it could no longer serve the new situation. Regardless of the existing conventions of what Thai architectural identity meant to the society of lay people and architects Kanika did not strive to work up to that public expectation despite many of her works that are closed to the stereotype of this genre because they are suitable for that way. But, in fact, they are the result of critical deconstruction of the context.

However, issues that society now shaped the way she treated the house such as the planning for the maid cluster instead of detaching the cluster to another

separate house—she considered this viewpoint was outmoded for the current social stance—they are annexed into one part of the house but privacy could be served by a proper planning for the well-being of the employees.

In sum, the discourse that identity must not attach to a fix style but abstraction, not relying upon any solid form nor style is the theory Kanika Ratanapridakul professed in all of her practice. It yielded a distinct trait of architecture, despite any claims that her practice depended not on any particular style. Thus, it allows incessant searches, for any architects and design to discover more relevant approach/form, as a never-ending story. It of course another idiosyncratic design that speaks about the space and time and represents a probable quality of autonomous architecture.

Unmask and Break the Shield of Old Stature

Another phenomenon that struck the society in the recent years was the practice of young architects whose transgressive works soared to its height with a provocative design of architectural parodies and incident suggested the paradigmatic transformation of art perception within the society. The work of Kotchawat Buranapinyo, an architect who while exercising in the area of Thai traditionalism explored the possibility to interpret and broke the wall of traditionalism. His transgressive work included the re-design and re-assigned the Thai motifs.



Figure 66 Cropped part of Thai motifs by Kotchawat Buranapinyo

Source: <https://adaymagazine.com/timeline-thai-kotchbu/>, accessed December 16, 2019.

Thai tradition as discussed earlier in many parts of previous chapters that there has been a rule that curbs the ungrammatical usage of patterns including the usage for irrelevant groups or persons. As usual norm and cannon of Thai arts, it is an atrocity to distort, maltreat, or ridicule the old “sacred” pattern. However, his work transcended the normative practices of other architects by fantasy detail superimposition in the overall Thai motif forms, for instance using animal figures on the place of graphic yet overall form still depicts the Thai pattern. This has been viewed as a controversial practice in the Thai society, according to him.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵Silpakorn University, Faculty of Architecture, "Seminar on Beyond Thai-ness," (January 17 2020).

His first exhibition entitled Time-Line Millennial's Perspective of Thai Art or "Tham-Lai (Thai)" in Thai¹¹⁶ which can be read "Making A Thai Motif" or also "Destroying Thai" depending on how to place space between the words. Very personal, the name was certainly intended to sound ambiguous. Media referred to this exhibition with this blurb: Tham-Lai (Thai)/Destroying Thai: Thai Motifs of Millennial-Epoch that Proofing Thai Motifs Can Be Fun.¹¹⁷ Playful in the manner like a parody, the content displayed in the exhibition brought to public some transgressive works that usually hilarious in the way. For instance, employing Thai motif structure but inserted in the fine detail were fantasized by the employment of various animals drawn in the fashion of cute cartoons en-framed within the like-a-Thai-motif patterns. It calls a sense of humor well enough to catch the eyes of modern-mind audience while provokes worrisome among those conservatives.



Figure 67 Poster of Exhibition Time-Line by Kotchawat Buranapinyo

Source: <https://adaymagazine.com/timeline-thai-kotchbu/>, accessed February 20, 2020.

¹¹⁶January-February 2019.

¹¹⁷"Tham-Lai (Thai)/Destroying Thai: Thai Motifs of Millennial-Epoch that Proofing Thai Motifs Can Be Fun," accessed 16 December, 2019, <https://adaymagazine.com/timeline-thai-kotchbu/>.

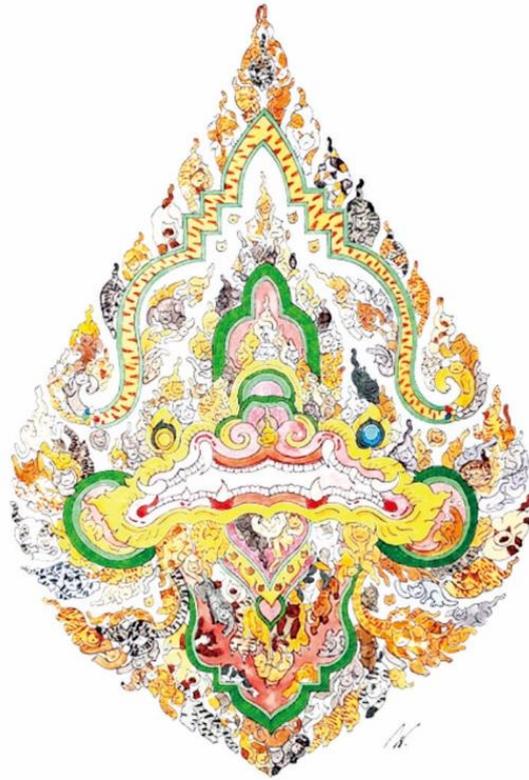


Figure 68 Thai motifs by Kotchawat Buranapinyo

looking from a distance, the overall form reveals its Thai motive structure

Source: <https://adaymagazine.com/timeline-thai-kotchbu/>, accessed December 16, 2019.

His exit to a new area included the deployment of Thai motif in the use for commercial and re-assigned the mode of use in a different approach. In commercial space setting for the Emporium Mall, he molded the cartoon-like animals into three-dimensional to adorn the capital with the column patterned also in the distorted style of *Thaiesque* motif.



Figure 69 Column adorn with new Thai motif by Kotchawat Buranapinyo
 Source: Seminar on Beyond Thai-ness January 17, 2020, Faculty of Architecture,
 Silpakorn University



Figure 70 Tua Kanok composed of many kittens Detail by Kotchawat Buranapinyo
 Source: <https://adaymagazine.com/timeline-thai-kotchbu/>, accessed December 16,
 2019.



Figure 71 Detail of Tua Kanok composed of many kittens Detail by Kotchawat Buranapinyo

Source: <https://adaymagazine.com/timeline-thai-kotchbu/>, accessed December 16, 2019.

Kotchawat's works were provocative as much as his ideology that delivered at the seminar held by Silpakorn University Faculty of Architecture on Beyond Thai-ness which a debate on how to transcend the border of Thai-ness and in the event two more artist/architects joined. The artist Nakrob Moonmanas whose conviction was of the similar soul. Nakrob's works from time to time were provocative as it "pushed the envelope" as for testing a new ground and new emotion of the audience. As in this figure:

Not so many Thais know our roots and what our society consists of. We don't know what happened 100 or 1,000 years ago or even what happened in the most recent decade," said Nakrob. Furthermore, according to him, "That's why we don't learn anything from the past, for it precludes us from moving on now. This affects the art circle, as well, as there are so few sources of inspiration that we can accumulate."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸"Thai Literature Meets Classic Paintings at Friday Expo," 2017, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://mgronline.com/onlinesection/photo-gallery/9600000075281>.



Figure 72 Last Supper of Buddha version collage by Nakrob Moonmanas

Source: <https://mgonline.com/onlinesection/photo-gallery/9600000075281>, accessed February 20, 2020.



Figure 73 Collage of Thai style mural painting onto a modern background by Nakrob Moonmanas

Source: <https://mgonline.com/onlinesection/detail/9600000075281>, accessed February 20, 2020.

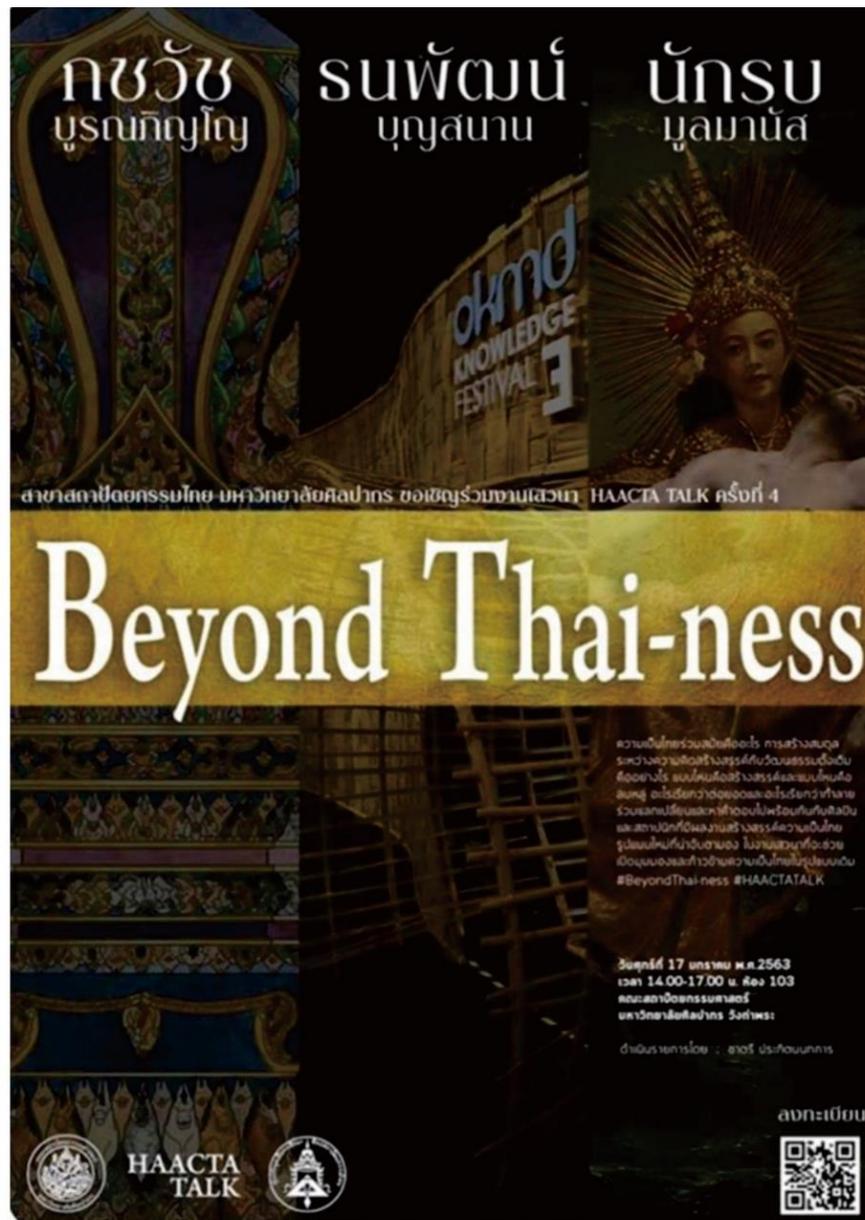


Figure 74 Poster the Seminar “Beyond Thai-ness”

It was organized by the Department of Thai Architecture, Silpakorn University on January 17, 2020

Source: Department of Thai Architecture, Silpakorn University

Transgression is always challenging and could create controversies and sometimes helps push the progress of art to another step of possibility and his comments on art shows his motive in liberalizing the society from the age-old art

canon that had long been dictating the practice of Thai classical art.¹¹⁹ It happened several moments in the history such as during King Rama IV when artist began to experiment perspectives and add Renaissance architecture in the mural painting of a temple.



Figure 75 A mural painting in Wat Bawon Sathan Sutthawat, c. 1832

Source: <https://readthecloud.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/activities-walk-hidden-palace-scoop-26.jpg>, accessed January 15, 2020.

For this designer the issue this thesis will point out is that the term Thai-ness or identity for Thailand architecture and design seems to be broader in various aspects. It does not adhere to, for the case of practice, a definite form of practice any more. For the approach it points out that the stiffness of form has now been loosened and form has been turned around to no-form but abstraction. But if form became no-form, what can one associate back to what was/has been Thai? An answer may

¹¹⁹ Silpakorn University, Faculty of Architecture, "Seminar on Beyond Thai-ness," *ibid.*

possibly dwell in a new young architect and artist who explored into the abstract milieu of societal context.

Contemporary Thai: Discourse of Deciphering of Societal Milieu: Another Context Matters

The pattern of Thai motif is a physical pattern anyone can read the form. But when it comes to the abstract pattern subsisting within the lives of people which, if displays, it does merely in a crude and unruly form. It needs an authentic interest to read into it to find the hidden dimension to be blown up for new design. Architecture that intertwines with another disposition.

Chatpong Chuenrudeemol of Chat Architects Co., Ltd. has experimented on several architectural aspects. In the project Bangkok Bastards, he delved deeper into the reading of Bangkok city in a different dimension which had been looked over before.

Bangkok Bastards is an investigation excavating into the banal dwelling of urban people who built their homes from their indigenous intellectual. Although those people did not possess architectural knowledge, their designs taught us to pay attention to simplicity and modesty in how people live quality of life in their places.

According to Chatpong, the term “Bangkok Bastards” as the title of the project literally means “awful” that it fits well with his studied building type since people usually forsook this type of architecture—even not included in a category of architecture—e.g. construction camp shelters, slums, kiosk which are entirely cheap, foul. And these communities sometimes dangerous to go in. That should be avoided.¹²⁰ With this same premise, Leland M. Roth also contends the significance of the study of these humble architectures (without architects). As the researchers’

¹²⁰“Sathapattayakam Saralew Kub Mummong Thi Taektang Khong Khun Chatpong Chuenrudeemol Haeng CHAT Architects [Bastard Architecture and the Unique View of Chatpong Chuenrudeemol of CHAT Architects] [in Thai],” accessed December 22, 2019, <https://dsignsomething.com>.

erroneous concept of the position that generally ignored them “we must examine both the cathedral and the ordinary houses surrounding it”¹²¹

Architecture embraces wider aspects of contents so that banal built forms should also be the point of study such as vernacular architecture. According to him, it should also mean any built space that real people in Bangkok really built for themselves—does not need to be a sophisticated one—such as architecture without architects built by native people. Native people live in the place that they built from their availability both knowhow and materials. He referred to Thai traditional houses built by people back a century ago as they still quarried timbers as basic materials available in that period of time. Thus, what people now built their home still reflected what available at hand. Those materials are, for instance, cement, fiberboard, zinc-coated corrugate steel sheet, and scraps from a construction site. These are sufficient architecture lessons we can learn from these architecture type. The merit is as much as we learn from any historic architecture of Thailand.

The project took its origin from a rationale that Bangkok had plenty of interesting contents but to what extents and how one could integrate each together meaningfully. To Chatpong, he was intrigued by the lessons possible learnable of vernacular architecture as to fill in his primary lack of architecture of indigenous people, as he was educated in the US. He felt that there were inadequate sources of vernacular architectural knowledge, he could learn particularly to learn its current knowledge. Most of the lessons are contents filled with formal architecture such as traditional Thai architecture and Buddhist temples, most of which did not fit well with the case of normal dwelling facilities for present urban dwellers. Therefore, the truthful answers were believed hidden within the grains of these banal dwellings.

The Case of the Community by the Samsen Canal: His first case study was a construction camp site in which he drove pass every day. The peculiarity of space of

¹²¹Leland M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture: its Elements, History, and Meaning*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 2.

those camp, as he saw one by chance was full of architectural value where he began to further explore in a belief that dwelling would be a lesson, he could learn to fulfill his knowledge on vernacular architecture. The units were composed of an array of large scaffolding continuously arranged. Within these scaffolding there appeared all living programs, such as laundry, dining, mingling, and so forth were packed in a condense fashion. The space incorporates any real everyday life inside of it.



Figure 76 Space Utilization Diagram of the Laborers' Space

an existing case from Bangkok Bastards research project

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.646650385405112.1073741858.479766448760174&type=3.>, accessed December 22, 2019.

The field survey was done by both documentation of physical forms, space, and dimensional details and interview for social data with which method the study could acquire the comprehensive information. All dimensions were measured to

collect the exact proportion. Different users were interviewed as to learn about the intention behind the design and usage. Another important issue was how and from where the scraps were collected and also the process of constructions. These are significant information that informs the rationale behind the formation of such forms and space. Because in many histories one learned that, at times, sizes of materials dictated the proportion of building parts particularly when they dealt with very constraint budget.



Figure 77 Construction camp site dwellings in Bangkok Bastards Project

Existing cases from Bangkok Bastards research project

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.646650385405112.107374>

1858.479766448760174&type=3., accessed December 22, 2019.

The significant information that the research gained was about lives of people and how they dealt with limitation of budget and materials that principally quarried from construction site scraps. And it could be said that they were garbage architecture. Furthermore, it can teach architects a lesson about the aesthetic dimension that was rooted from the fundamental lives. Generated from the basic functionality, the characteristic was plain yet sufficient. It was straightforward in how the people reflected through the architecture that was still humble and simplistic—plain simple lives. Most of the living units was small and thus it was not very comfortable to stay the whole day for everyday living. Therefore, as to augment the main unit they extended the space with light structure serving as a balcony space or public hallway for relaxing time particularly when the temperature was rising. This space is semi-private/semi-public as they shared with their neighbors as social space. It teaches architects architectural lessons how people built for living to cope with the environment and organized and shared with community while endured in heat and humidity of tropic.

The research result, according to him, revealed the hidden beautiful spaces in which not many had seen before, for instance, the way people used the space which pocket spaces were often adhered to the main unit as an extension. They were semi-public space that were always cross-ventilated and reached by natural light, despite how small the spaces were. The spaces served for any amenities of the families and community including laundry, cooking, party. These aspects could educate us architects how the dimension of space can hold a flexibility and serve broader purposes.

For the issue of Thai architecture and Thai-ness, in the view of Chatpong, is more focused to the specific locality. It is too broad to say that Thai or Thailand as a nation to have a single representative for the rest of its members. He, however, defines it without really defining it that:

I think, in fact, that there is neither an exact definition of Thai architecture nor a broad characterization of it. It is rather a vernacular architecture of the limited local area. For example, the focus of my study was on a specific area of Bangkok. It has a vernacular architecture that rises intrinsically from the actual, normal living conditions of the people [of the area], who are unsophisticated. The architecture is plain and straightforward and is fundamental to the way people live. But what was so interesting was how creative wonders are hidden inside of it. It is intriguing and makes me want to discover more about this genre of architecture, and I believe that it carries a fascinating identity.¹²²

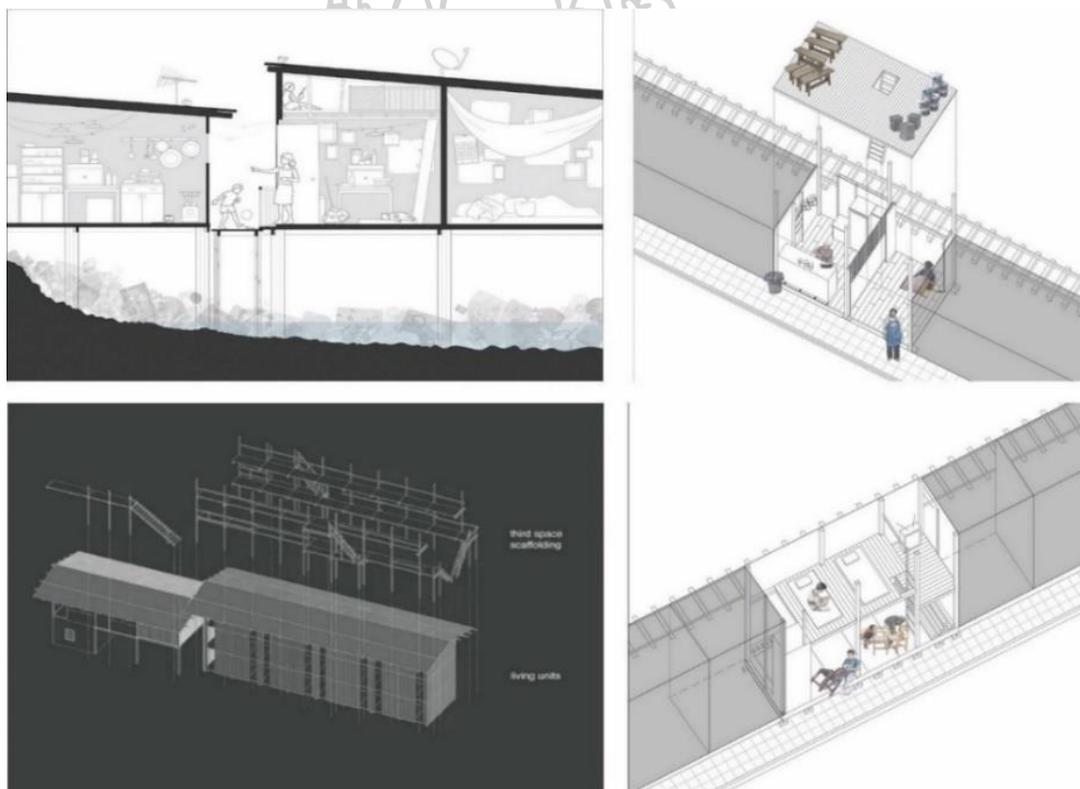


Figure 78 Space Sequential Diagram of Laborers' Space in Bangkok Bastards research project

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.646650385405112.1073741858.479766448760174&type=3>, accessed December 22, 2019.

¹²²Ibid.

According to his research architects can learn from it that the way of living of the people had meaningful lesson about the built environments, i.e. design thinking, construction knowhows. They show the special thought on how to create a semi-public space which are lively and serve for real usages and conducive for interaction among the dwellers. Their architecture is the real DNA of them—simple, humble, intrinsic, and practical. The need formulated a small practical space and form that fundamentally emerged from the users. Architects of nowadays should learn from this, not from textbooks nor theories. For identity aspect, it is the identity of the people and that we can cull the true identity from this approach—not “a formulaic definition”—it is the bastard identity that is real.

I learned much from this project about how people re-used the scraps from construction sites and areas nearby and how they turned them into interesting architecture that responded to their needs. I began with the appealing pictures of these dwellings, and later this gave rise to a profound knowledge culled from these bastard architectures. Another interesting issue is the relationship between the dwellings and their surrounding context. As a case in point, my home in Ekamai, Bangkok, made use of a fence. It usually is used for guarding the house from intruders, but in this house, I have integrated it into the spatial design of the house. If a fence is designed carelessly without concern about the urban space, we are destroying the city. The street becomes a sore spot, the views are unpleasant, and the area becomes unsafe for passersby. I designed the house and its fence to be foldable. When it is open, it connects the outside and the inside to foster interactions with the community.¹²³

Despite the fact that the identity issue of Chatpong is unique in some senses, it also leads to a point that it needs to be more abstract which is about the essence of the architecture that grants the definition. More importantly, it also is diverse. Its only

¹²³Ibid.

way to acquire the identity is to go there and extract from the site—genius loci—as his claim: “I believe that architecture is not to be perfect but it is the life of the inhabitant in relationship with its context and the neighborhood.”¹²⁴

Vernacular architecture is more significant as it is packed with knowledge and as a corpus of identity in line with the idea of Paul Oliver who argued that vernacular architecture took form as people “built to meet needs”¹²⁵ as he furthered:

More profound, however, are the connotations of the spaces created. For the various cultures concerned they frequently have a symbolic meaning, which may be spiritual, cosmic, anthropomorphic, animist, or of another significance, reflecting their customs and beliefs. In some instances, such connotations are further expressed in carvings, paintings, or other decorations. Elusive though their meanings may be, vernacular buildings are never unnecessary. They are not erected on a whim and are not intended to impress, but they help satisfy the psycho-social, as well as physical, needs of those that use them.¹²⁶

Chatpong informed the circle that architecture of contemporaneity could be distilled from the site elements in terms of cultural and visual cultures. And since it anchors on some commonality especially the ideas of minimal, austerity, sufficiency, and *yu dai ching* practically in line with M.L. Varudh Varavan and Kanika Ratanapridakul. However, similarity to Chatree Ladalalitsakul is the point of the abstract notion hidden within the epistemology of the knowledge/identity. And his work has contributed to the new guidepost of what Thai contemporary architecture should be. This thesis considers this as a new paradigm of architecture of autonomy.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Paul Oliver, *Built to Meet Needs Cultural Issues in Vernacular Architecture* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), xxviii.

¹²⁶Ibid.



Figure 79 Chatpong's home in Ekamai

the fence is foldable allowing interaction with the outside

Source: <https://static.bangkokpost.com/media/content/20160122/1507916.jpg>,
accessed December 22, 2019,

Tectonic Savvy Yet Sufficient

In contemporary architectural design in the genre of contextualism, austerity, and sufficiency, there is a new trend that looks into new possibility of the ordinary material such as bamboo and clay. There has been a growing interest and favors in these materials after the former, the bamboo, was looked over for using as a major material for centuries. It was due to the advent of modern materials after the industrialization of construction market. Concrete, steel, and timber replaced the old use of local materials. As the new material gained more areas in the market, the knowledge and craftsmanship necessary for crafting or weaving the old materials had died out following the shrinking of the trend.

New coming back of the clay a construction material and being tuned into a level of art, as in the practice of Jon Jandai, mentioned once in chapter 2. Not only did the physical presence of work gain compliments for fine architecture but also the philosophy of design that regulated the formation of the form, space, and order.

Towards Sustainability: Jon Jandai and His Contributions for a New Sufficiency and Modesty

“Life can be so simple, why bother?”¹²⁷ Said Jon Jandai.

Jon Jandai is foremost a farmer but also a widely known earthen builder in Thailand. His website states that he is from Yasothon Province in the northeastern region and has been farming all of his life except for a stint in Bangkok. He began building earthen or adobe homes on his family farm in 1997. He began doing workshops on earthen building in 2002, initially traveling the country and voluntarily teaching his techniques to farmer/villager groups and members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); in the process, he created what is now a widespread earthen building movement in Thailand. He co-founded a community called Pun Pun in July 2003 and is interested in preserving the “seeds” of the Thai heritage.

Ever since Jon was young, he had been taught that the only way to be successful was to go to Bangkok to work. Because success is often measured in terms of money, he felt there was no other option for him. He wanted to get rich and have a bright future, so he made his way to the capital when he was 18, even though he did not have any higher education or a degree from an elite university. After living in Bangkok for 7 years, where he was working and taking college courses, Jon started to question the definition of success based on money. He had to reconsider how to survive. When he realized that Bangkok did not provide him with the kind of success he expected, he decided to leave his job and drop out of college. He made his way back to his hometown in Yasothon. He thought becoming a farmer would be a better basis for the happy life he craved. He might not earn as much as he had in Bangkok, but he would at least be surrounded by his family.

He expected to have an easier, more hassle-free life than in the city. For one thing, he would no longer have to report to anyone else; he could be his own boss and control his working hours. He found, however, that the home he had known was not

¹²⁷Jon Jandai, *Yu Kab Din Sibhok Pi Karn Pan Din Pen Baan [16 Years with Clay: Crafting Clay into Home] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Phabphim, 2012), rear cover.

the same as when he left as modern reached and materiality talked. That's when his search for true happiness and success began. The only career that made sense to him at this point was rice farming, and he had a plot of land and the basic knowhow to make it happen. When he started his new life, however, he began seeing similarities between working in Bangkok and working back home. His fellow farmers all worked at least 8 hours a day. They spent all year making other people richer, but they became poorer, and some sank into a huge amount of debt. "Farmers don't get to eat good food because they have to save money to invest in rice farming. Although rice millers eat chicken meat, these farmers can only afford chicken feet. What kind of life is that?"¹²⁸ He realized that even rice farmers had a poor quality of life. They had no time to enjoy life and seemed to be working all the time. Some poor people were unhappy because they were worried about their financial situation.

Jon began to understand why rice farming was not a smart choice for him and his happiness. He came up with a new idea of growing vegetables at his home for consumption. He planted different plants as an experiment in organic farming. When his first vegetables were ready to harvest, he had enough to feed his whole family of six people. After 3 months, he was able to sell vegetables at a market not too far from his house and earn at least 200 to 500 baht per day. He also raised his own fish to eat. Jon claimed that, "I basically worked 1 hour per day, and the rest of the day I got to enjoy my life. It was due to his thoughtful approach of farming as well as his view towards sufficient way of living. I told my wife this was the ideal life and I would live this way as it brought me the true happiness that I had been searching for a long time."¹²⁹

¹²⁸"The Simple Life," Bangkok Post Online 2016, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/special-reports/1162453/the-simple-life>.

¹²⁹Ibid.

Earthen House of Sufficiency

Between 1993 and 1997, Jon Jandai saved enough money to achieve his next goal, which was to have his own house to live in and more land on which he could grow vegetables. In 1997, he was invited by a friend to visit New Mexico in the United States, where he was inspired by the simplicity of adobe houses.

He asked people how to build them, and from that point on, he knew that was what he wanted to do. He learned more about the technique before returning to Thailand. He then went to Chiang Mai, where he found a 20-rai plot of land in the Mae Taeng district, about 60 km from the main city. The land was situated in the middle of the jungle on a small hill. He knew right away that it was the perfect location on which to build an adobe house and that its cooler climate would be an asset for growing vegetables.

Jon bought the land and moved his whole family there. He started building an adobe house as he had learned in the United States. He dug up the soil and used it to slowly form the walls of his house. It took him 6 months to complete the construction of a small but very strong house. The house that he built with his own hands cost 7000 baht, a small amount.

His house has a door and a window, but the only thing that divides the living area is a piece of fabric. He started living on his land with no supplies of water or electricity. He does not have any savings but does have plenty of plants, vegetables, and fruits. Although money is unstable and can lose its value at any time, plants and trees usually continue to grow.

After 4 years of living his sustainable lifestyle, people came to ask him about earthen houses. He saw this as an opportunity to educate people about how easy it is to have a house without relying on sophisticated engineering techniques or expensive materials. He searched for books to study different building techniques.

He learned that for an adobe house, the walls can be built in free form using only clay or they can be built with clay bricks that are “glued” together with wet clay

as a kind of cement. He was invited to many places as a guest speaker to talk about sustainable living and adobe houses. With the sustainability and simplicity of adobe houses, both in the ideology on which they are based and the practicality of their construction and low cost, they can be seen by architects as an exemplary form for a new way of living and an addition to the architectural discourse on contemporary living. The model Jon used was passed along and contributed to the philosophy of sufficiency.

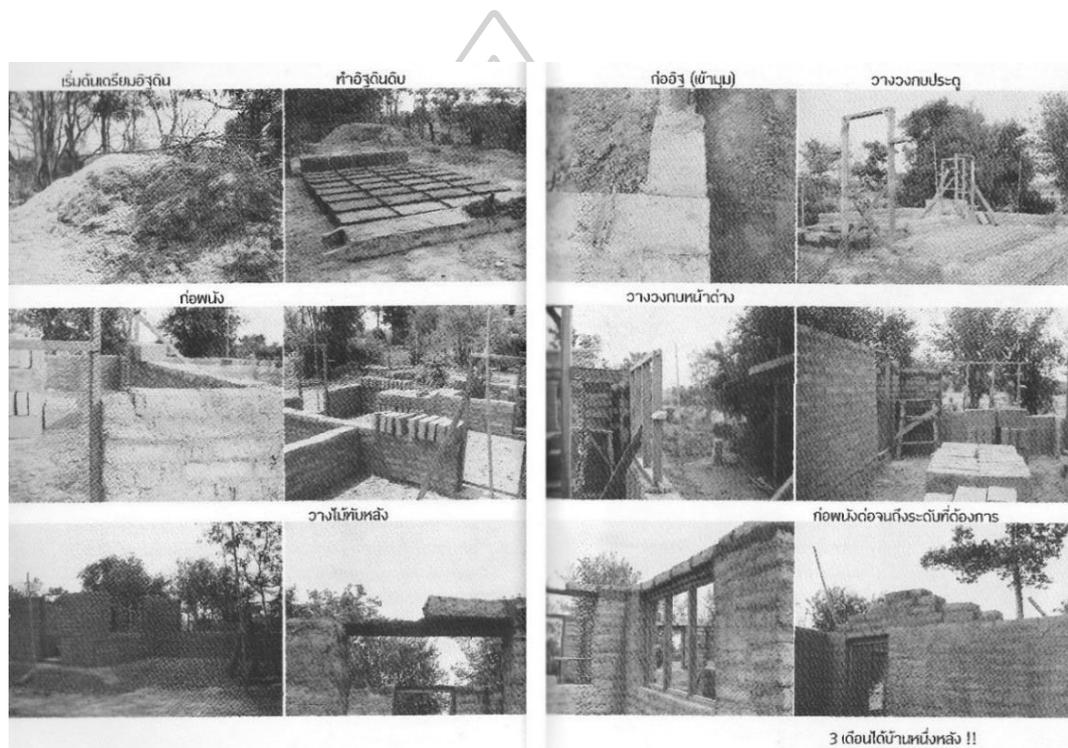


Figure 80 Jon Jandai's own adobe house under construction

Source: Jon Jandai, *Yu Kab Din Sibhok Pi Karn Pan Din Pen Baan [16 Years with Clay: Crafting Clay into Home] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Phabphim, 2012), 32-33.

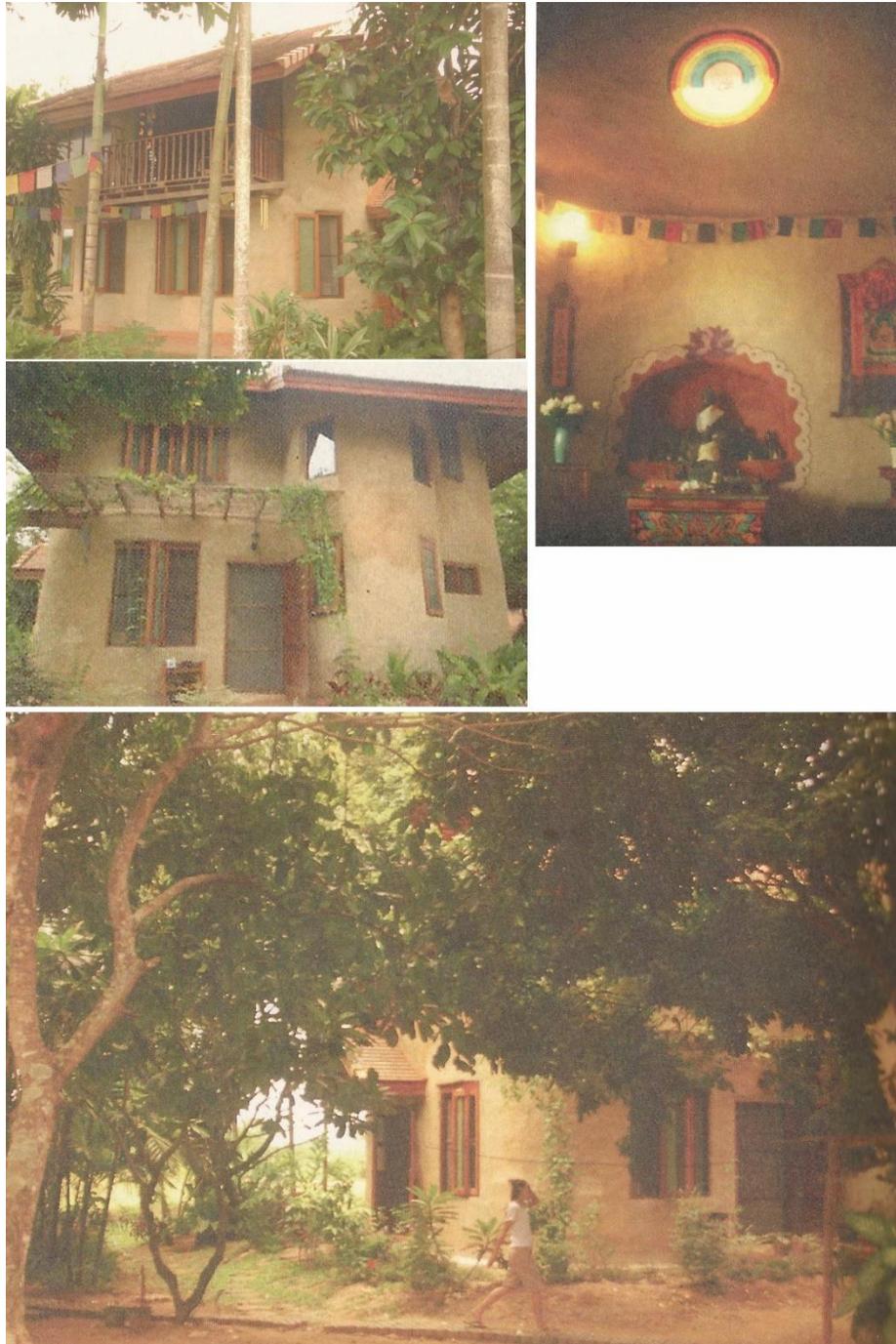


Figure 81 Two-story house built in clay, Amphor Maerim, Chiang Mai

Source: Jon Jandai, *Yu Kab Din Sibhok Pi Karn Pan Din Pen Baan [16 Years with Clay: Crafting Clay into Home] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Phabphim, 2012), 208-209.



Figure 82 Jon Jandai's own adobe house, costing 7000 baht, under construction

Source: Jon Jandai, *Yu Kab Din Sibhok Pi Karn Pan Din Pen Baan [16 Years with Clay: Crafting Clay into Home] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Phabphim, 2012), 35.

Surveying the sustainability of structures built with materials such as earth, as in the case of Jon's house, causes one to reflect on a new aesthetic and practice that are both contemporary and a basis for autonomy. It is a form of sufficiency and, especially, austerity, which are two aspects of the core concept of autonomy.

Conclusion of Chapter 5

This chapter has presented a contextualization of the critical theories of identity and the meaning of the culture of Thai-ness in architecture. Its emphasis was on the thinkers who had contributed to these areas and fueled the making of an appropriate architecture that represents, or resonates with, the people, places, and times of Thailand. The next chapter will present case studies and analyses of houses that exemplify the practice of architectural design at the current time.

Table 2 Summary of significant theories and manifestos

Theorists	Theories and Manifestos
Frampton	Streamline, breaking, downsizing the mass Adaptive to geographical contextual factors Emphasize the tectonic detail more than monumental form Design the physicality to fit with the immediate local climate Intertwine with the sense and sensory of human Obliquely adaptive vernacular elements
Mumford	Not available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used Closely meeting the actual conditions of life Feeling at home in their environment Reflecting the current conditions of culture in the region Not a matter of using the most available local materials Not historicism Context-based design approach Relying on sustainable principles is also inadequate Reflecting condition of life
Calvino	Lightweightness
M.L. Piyalada	Rom Ruen quality Verticality and hierarchical nature Enclosedness, compartmentality, drawing -in, enticing effect Graceful and refined nature Memory and root
Chatree	Space: Gray space, delayed transition Less is for the (spirit Of) Easterners
Ross King	forgoing old memory and traditionalism--supra-national idea or identity pluralistic nationhood narration of the spaces of everyday life reconsider Thai way of living or Thai D.N.A.: krengrjai, polite making new transgressive heritage
Vimolsiddhi	Use of Thai elements that display Thai identity re-design of Thai traditionalism by applying it to local culture Utilizing local architectural identity in contemporary building New design (form) but keepig some flavors of Thai architecture
Kanika	Critical Deconstructive Contextual design: Planning: Adaptive local elements Cross Ventilation Humbleness Lightwieght lengthened overhang eave
M.L. Varudh	Reflection on Users' D.N.A. Sufficiency Old material -new application Inside-out: design growing from interiority
Chatpong	Neo-vernacularism Re-enacting micro-Contextualism
Jon Jandai	Austerity; Sufficiency in materials: Clay

CHAPTER 6

Case Studies of Sixteen Contemporary Autonomous Architectural Structures Built Since 2000

The analysis of autonomous discourse in Chapter 5 provides a context for the production of the contemporary scholarship, practices, and significant ideologies of some architects, theorists, and artists. It elucidates the body of contemporary knowledge and can be summarized in a timeline of contemporary theories. Such a diagram is useful in interpreting the cases explored in this chapter, which are concerned with architectural structures designed and constructed after the year 2000. Some are very recent. For this analysis, this thesis focuses on the body of each house and critically investigates the physical construct, intentions, and discourse surrounding its construction. It also focuses on the theoretical discourse produced by people studied in Chapter 5. It uses “principle frameworks,” that is, *abstraction, approach, and archetype*, or the **Three A’s**, to analyze and interpret the cases. The study attempts to find the distinctive principles used by the architects in their designs and also presents excerpts of the discourse in the public relations realm that was generated to disseminate knowledge about the houses designed.

Framework of Analysis

The criteria used to select the cases were as follows: (1) The structure could not be an old, traditional Thai house (e.g., one like the traditional Thai house of Mahidol University, mentioned in Chapter 3), because a majority of theorists had opposed this style during the twentieth century, especially in the 1990s. (2) The structure could not be “modern” or specific to a certain place and time, because this could result in a unique architectural discourse. (3) The structure had to be the subject of architects’ discourse that had the goal of informing, discussing, explaining,

rationalizing, and ultimately justifying its design (archetype). The social response to or perception of the structure had to be available in the media (which was the only source of such information used in this thesis).

Although the rationale for a design can be more objective than the rationale for aesthetic of style, all of the explanations originate mostly from rationale. Most of the cases involve taste and value, as well as bias. In this thesis, the view is that the effort to inform and explain produces discourse. Furthermore, the discourse is important enough to be a focus in itself.

1. Abstraction

Abstraction has always been indispensable to the creative process. An abstract idea is a fluid, theoretical one, and even an incompletely formed and elusive one, which a creator has in mind before commencing to design something. In architecture, an abstraction is used as a guidepost to help the architect pull the essential information from a totality of information. This helps the architect to choose a path but still have the freedom to move back and forth along it and come up with as many approaches as he or she wishes to have. The abstraction can be a group of images (in the designer's mind) or a group of words. This thesis wishes to deconstruct the conceptual idea within each architect's design process; this is the abstraction that he or she has autonomously used for crafting a house. The association of the idea with other elements is also a goal for this thesis.

Regarding abstraction, this thesis will delve into the idea the architect used in forming the completed design for a work of autonomous architecture, which is the fundamental subject of this thesis. One goal is to find a new set of descriptions for this type of architecture. The study of abstraction is a study of the metaphysics and aesthetics of things and is the basis for the crafting of a structure. The thesis will explore the way in which an architect describes a design, such as "My goal for this design is to make it "Thai.""

Architecture is a field in which a multitude of dimensions, including function, structure, and meaning, are intertwined. Functionality is a far more objective dimension than meaning, but it also suggests that there are several alternatives for solving a design problem and it is associated to a greater extent than meaning with approach. Meaning, on the other hand, is an esoteric dimension of ideas; some examples of this are the *venustas* (delight) of Vitruvius¹³⁰ and the *rhetoric* of Tonkao Panin,¹³¹ as well as the symbolism of Alfredo De Vido.¹³² The choice of dimension by an architect is made while a process and an interpretation are being formed. It depends on the architect's preference, inclination, and even bias. Thus, the chosen archetype reveals the architect's ideas, and through it, we can decode the discourse the architect produces.

2. Approach

An approach is the way in which an architect designs a house and the criteria used for shaping the design. Interestingly, an approach for one project can differ significantly from that for another project, and an approach for one architect can differ significantly from the approaches of other architects. Once an approach has been decided upon, it will dictate the design.

According to Chatree Ladalalitsakul, an architect mentioned in Chapter 5, Eastern architects are better at solving a given problem than creating a design problem. Abstraction is epistemological by nature, and its development depends on the architect producing the work, who has a high degree of freedom in playing with it. Abstraction is the area that is likely more subjective, whereas approach is more objective. However, this dichotomy is crucial in the determination of a good

¹³⁰Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris H. Morgan (New York: Dover, 1960), 17; Leland M. Roth, *ibid.*, 57-89.

¹³¹Tonkao Panin, *Pathom Bot Thrirtsadi Sathapattayakam [Prolegomena to Architectural Theory] [in Thai]* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2018), 22-29, 77, 79.

¹³²Alfredo DeVido, *House Design: Art and Practice* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 3.

architecture of contemporary time: “Today architecture has the power to be both artistic and humanistic. This humanism fuses subjective and objective lives, intertwining inner and outer feelings, inner and out thought, into a phenomena-inspired reformation of vision.”¹³³ In the next section, this thesis will study the issue of archetype and look into design results.

3. Archetype

An archetype is a physical pattern, form, or element in an architectural work, and its intention is to translate ideas and thoughts, bringing them into a visible and tactile form. An archetype is an interweaving of form, space, order, element, style, and materials to achieve a level of physicality and articulate a vocabulary, syntax, language, and grammar of architecture. According to Thomas Thiis-Evenson, archetype involves

Archetypes and Their Classification: These basic forms can be referred to as the archetypes of architecture. The original Greek meaning of the word archetype is 'first form or 'original model' as it exists as a basis for all later variations and combinations. In other words, behind the plurality of the many forms in history lies a simple set of archetypes which we can call the grammar of architecture. These archetypes may be understood as images which can be identified in relation to both architectural form, function and technology.¹³⁴

By this architecture can be expressed through different manifestation as the detail expresses:

These qualities can be described as the existential expressions of architecture. Existential expressions are characteristics of a form which are at the base of symbolic meanings with their stylistic and regional variations. As an example,

¹³³Steven Holl, *Intertwining: Selected Projects 1989-1995* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 11.

¹³⁴Thomas Thiis-Evenson, *Archetypes in Architecture*, 4th ed. (London: Norwegian University Press, 1994), 17.

the existential expression of the Gothic style is its verticality and tightness. All of its other cultural characteristics such as symbols and regional articulations are governed by this general quality. The opposite quality is typical of Greek temples, in which massiveness and heaviness are the primary characteristics. On the other hand, one Gothic building can seem heavier than another, albeit relative to the general quality of the style. Similarly, the Parthenon seems 'lighter' than the Temple of Hero at Paestum. But here within the realm of massivity.¹³⁵

The archetype serves as a concrete foundation for its “cousins,” abstraction and approach. According to Thiis-Evenson as a mechanism to interpret Greek and Gothic architectural vocabularies, this thesis adopted this as a tool to interpret the 16 houses in the case studies as a vehicle for learning their functionality, performance, and meaning.

Introduction to the Case Study

This section contains case studies of 16 houses. The selection criteria mentioned earlier in this study were used to choose buildings that could be analyzed in terms of their local identity. Some of the houses were described by their architects as Thai houses encompassing Thai-ness, whereas others were described as being associated with a local style. This thesis delved into the constructs of these cases, attempted to read their forms, and tried to read between the lines to discern their defining characteristics in terms of abstraction plus approach plus archetype. It adopted the theories presented in Chapter 5 as a basis for the discussion of the results.

¹³⁵Ibid. 22-23.

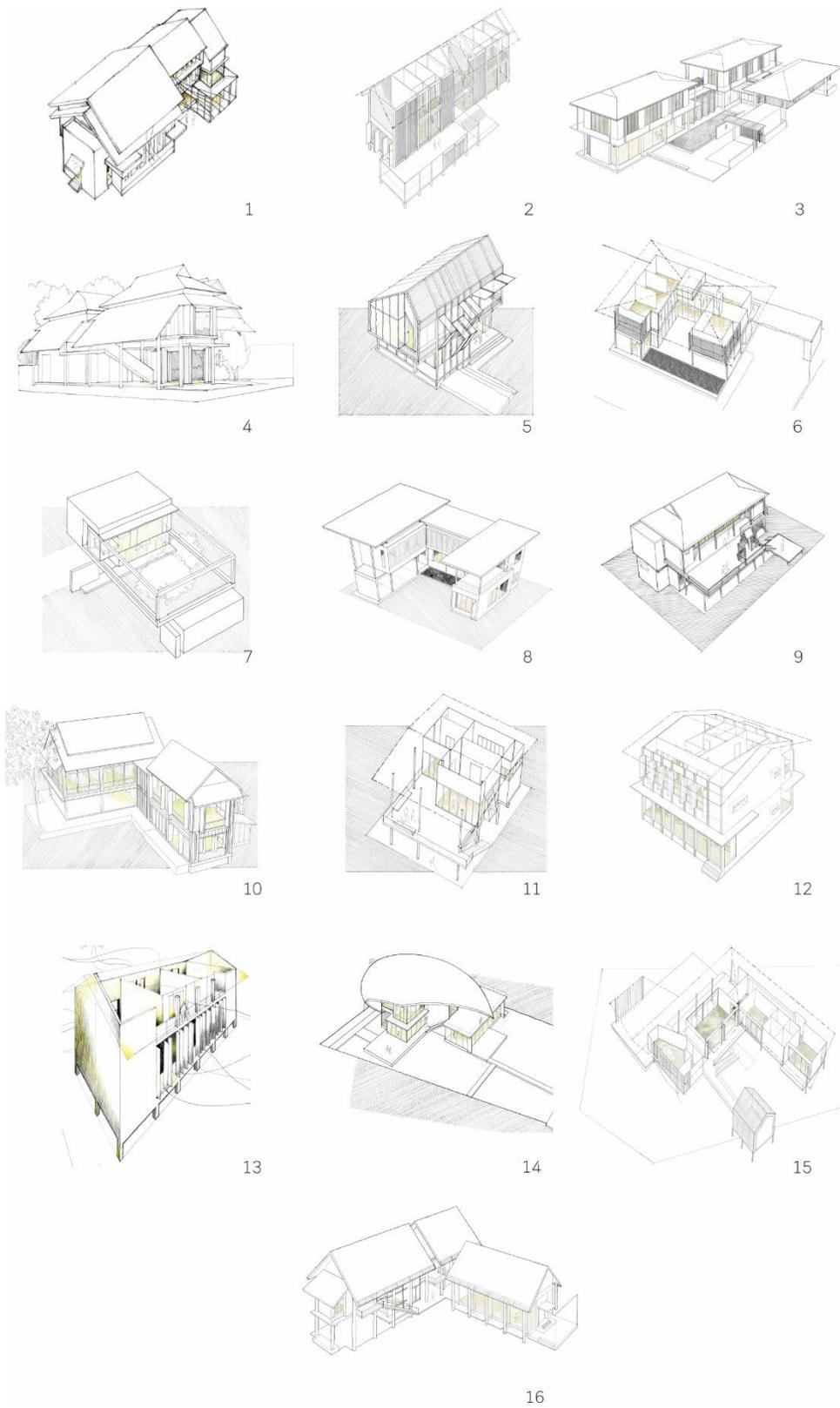


Figure 83 Sixteen cases

Source: By the author

Table: Legend and the list of the sixteen cases

No.	House	Architects	Place	Date
1	Tonsilp House	Chatree Ladalalitsakul (Tonsilp Studio)	Bangkok	2008-2015
2	Damnoen House	Metas Srisuchat (N7A Architects)	Ratchaburi	c.2008-2010
3	2+4 House	Theerapol Niyom (ArSom Silp)	Bangkok	2008-2011
4	Baan Huen Tham	Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweessap	Chiang Mai	2005-2008
5	Tew Son House	Polar Architect	Samut Sakhon	2019
6	713 House	Jun Sekino	Nonthaburi	2019
7	Parn House	Por Architects	Bangkok	2018
8	Oum & Pol's Home	Raksak Sukontatarm	Bangkok	2016
9	Pongsakorn's Own Home	Pongsakorn Tumpruksa	Bangkok	2015
10	Baan Tathata	Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweessap	Nan	2016
11	Little Hideaway	Kanika Ratanapridakul (Spacetime Architects)	Nakhon Ratchasima	2015
12	Flowable House	Research Studio Panin	Bangkok	2015 - 2016
13	The Harirak Family's House	Bundit Kanisthakhon (Tadpole Studio)	Bangkok	2010
14	Chiang Mai Residence	Kulapat Yantrasast (wHY Architects)	Chiang Mai	2015
15	Baan Loy Lom	Phahonchai Premjai (PO-D Architects)	Nakhon Ratchasima	2018
16	Eastern House	Pirast Pacharaswate (East Architects)	Bangkok	2001

Case Study No. 1: Tonsilp House

Architect: Chatree Ladalalitsakul (ASA Gold Medal Award [Residential Type] 2014) (Tonsilp Studio)

“A contemporary Thai Wooden House Masterpiece.” . . . “[It was] created by a master architect; this wooden house bespeaks the timeless elegance of Contemporary Thai residential architecture . . . unmistakably brilliant.”¹³⁶

“[The] Spirit of the house is my family’s spirit.” . . . “Balancing the life of the old and the new (modern architecture)” . . . “*Tai thun*¹³⁷ is a gray space serving as

¹³⁶“Contemporary Thai Wooden House Masterpiece,” Livingasean, 2017, accessed January 18, 2020, <https://livingasean.com/house/thai-wooden-house-masterpiece/>.

¹³⁷*Tai thun* [Thai word] means a breezeway or a type of basement space commonly found in old Thai-style houses. These houses are usually poised on stilts to prevent seasonal flooding in the living areas that serve the main functions of the residents. Typically, the *tai thun* is used as a multipurpose space. Most people spend

the multipurpose space of the family and [has] re-assigned the meaning [of] contemporary architecture.” . . . “Built by real vernacular artisans, it [will] be left with these people’s signatures.” . . . “Architecture must be more splendid as it ages.” . . . “To me, Architecture is solely dedicated to aesthetics.”¹³⁸

Nestled in an estate project at Bangkok’s outskirts, the Tonsilp House is constructed principally of timber and concrete with a béton brut finish. According to the architect, Chatree Ladlalitsakul (who is also the owner), “A prominent element of Thailand is timber architecture: I crafted my house using wood as a material. Timber arts still remind us [of] our indigenous intellectual and design autonomy.”¹³⁹ Because he wanted his home to be perfect in every way, he gave the carpenters all the time it took to do it once and do it right. The resulting unsurpassed craftsmanship was 3 years in the making.

Chatree Ladlalitsakul is usually attuned to the tropical landscape of Thailand and its layers of architectural tradition. However, he also depends on the regional sensibility influenced by Buddhism while reflecting the vernacular architecture. The local climate is hot and humid; thus, the pertinent archetype he chose was a house on stilts, with wide eaves protecting it against sun and rain and open edges permitting airflow. The architect revitalized the vernacular house’s old language with a unique poetic statement that includes a series of voids and open spaces protected by overhanging roofs. The undulating layers and porous walls creating an ambiguous psychological transition at the building’s envelope are central to the theory of gray space (see Chapter 5 for a comprehensive discussion).

the sultry, hot daytime hours in the *tai thun* because it is cooler there than on upper floors.

¹³⁸ASA, "Baan Tonsilp," January 8, 2018,

<https://www.facebook.com/asafanpage/posts/1313256458778753/>.

¹³⁹Rarin Pancharungrot, *Baan Lae Suan Chabub Piset: Baan Somboon Baeb Cheewit Somboon Suk [Home and Garden Special Edition: Perfect House]* (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2014). 61-73.

Likewise, the adoption of the vernacular house grammar, a culture of wood construction that for centuries has benefited from the wisdom of “our predecessors,” is on the decline; the architect has said, “If it has gone, our next generations will lose it for good.”¹⁴⁰ There are merits to the house as it stands. The ideas behind the construction bespeak the owner’s passion for inspiring young architects to do their parts in preserving Thai wood house design and architecture for years to come.

“The house emerged as a magnum opus in Contemporary Thai residential architecture as he intended.”¹⁴¹ Dividing the space into two zones meshes with the activities of the users. There is a 10-meter-wide open space that separates the living zone from the office area. It provides visitors with a place to relax in cool breezes and look out over a pool. The hollow space suggests the *tai thun* (underneath space) of the traditional Thai house.

The first-floor living area has plenty of room for dining, a Thai-style kitchen, and a piano room. The bedroom and private workspace are on the second floor. A multiuse space on the third floor is reserved for recreational activities and the owner’s favorite hobby, painting.

The house’s uncluttered interior has a minimalist style in which aesthetics and functionality are intertwined in ways that allow materials to reveal their unique characteristics, so that the architecture can express its identity to the full.

Vernacular grammars and tectonics are apparent in this house. It incorporates elements such as wooden walls made with horizontal bands of clinker-built timber walling and the *tai thun* space. Moreover, the theory of gray space is manifested by treating the house’s skins with lightweight elements such as colonnades and wooden slats, which provide an openness and voids. This treatment results in the multilayering of walls and denotes the sense of gray space.

¹⁴⁰“Contemporary Thai Wooden House Masterpiece,” *ibid.*

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

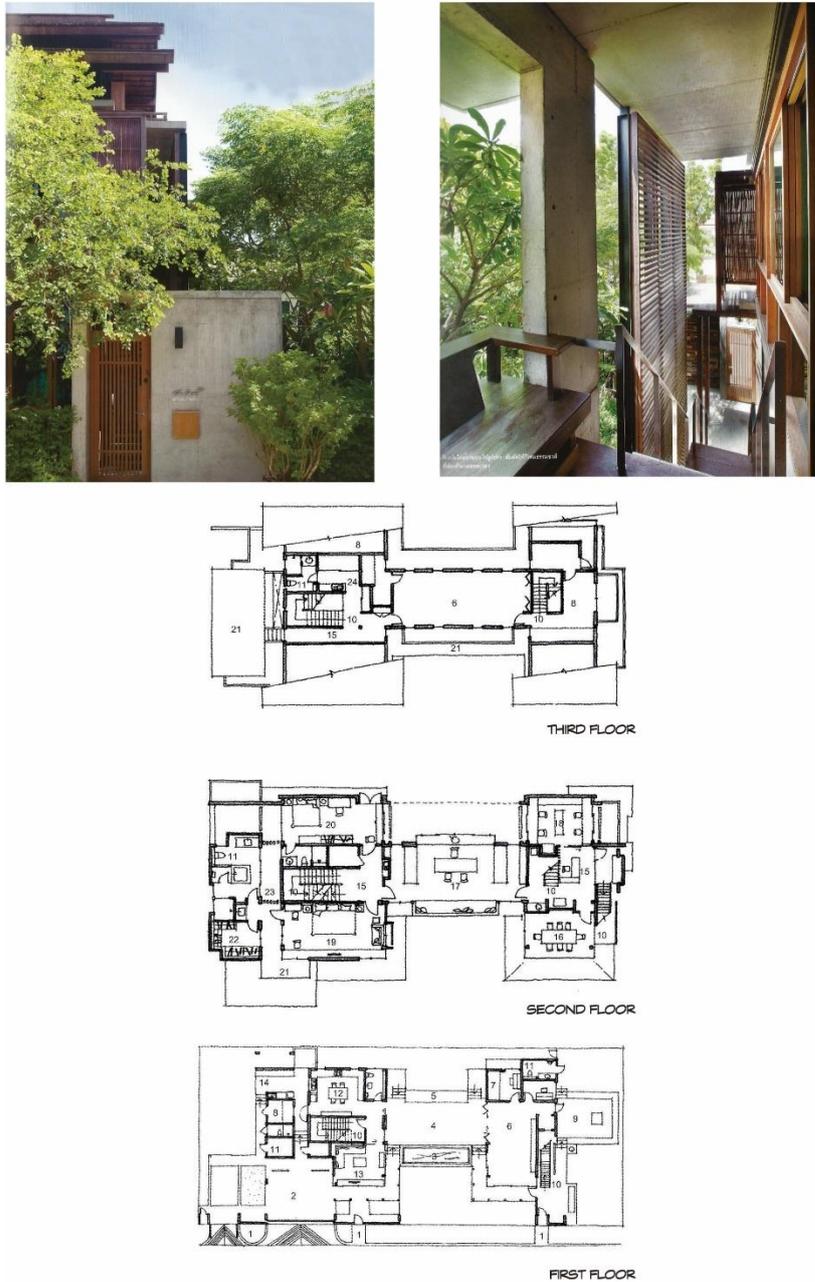


Figure 84 Tonsilp House

Source: Suphachart Buntaeng, "Spirit of Wood," in Baan Lae Suan Special Issue: Baan Sombun Baeb Chiwit Sombun Suk [Baan Lae Suan Special Issue: Perfect Houses, Happy Life] [in Thai] (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2014), 61, 66, 72.

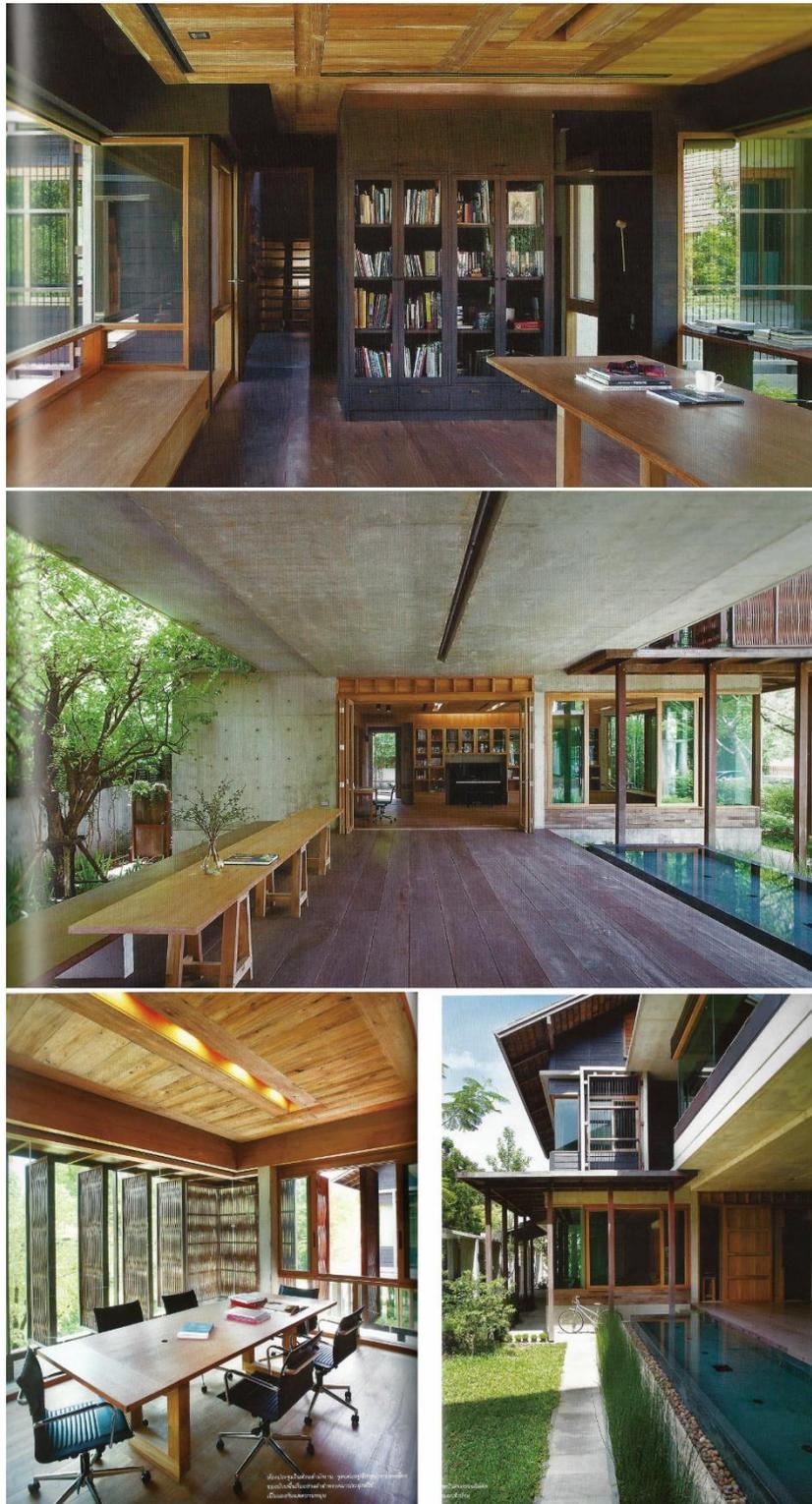


Figure 85 Tonsilp House

Source: Suphachart Buntaeng, *ibid.*, 65-69.



Figure 86 Tonsilp House

Source: https://www.behance.net/gallery/17852861/_, accessed January 14, 2020.



Figure 87 Tonsilp House

Source: <https://art4d.com/2020/02/a-modern-day-gentleman>, accessed March 30, 2020.

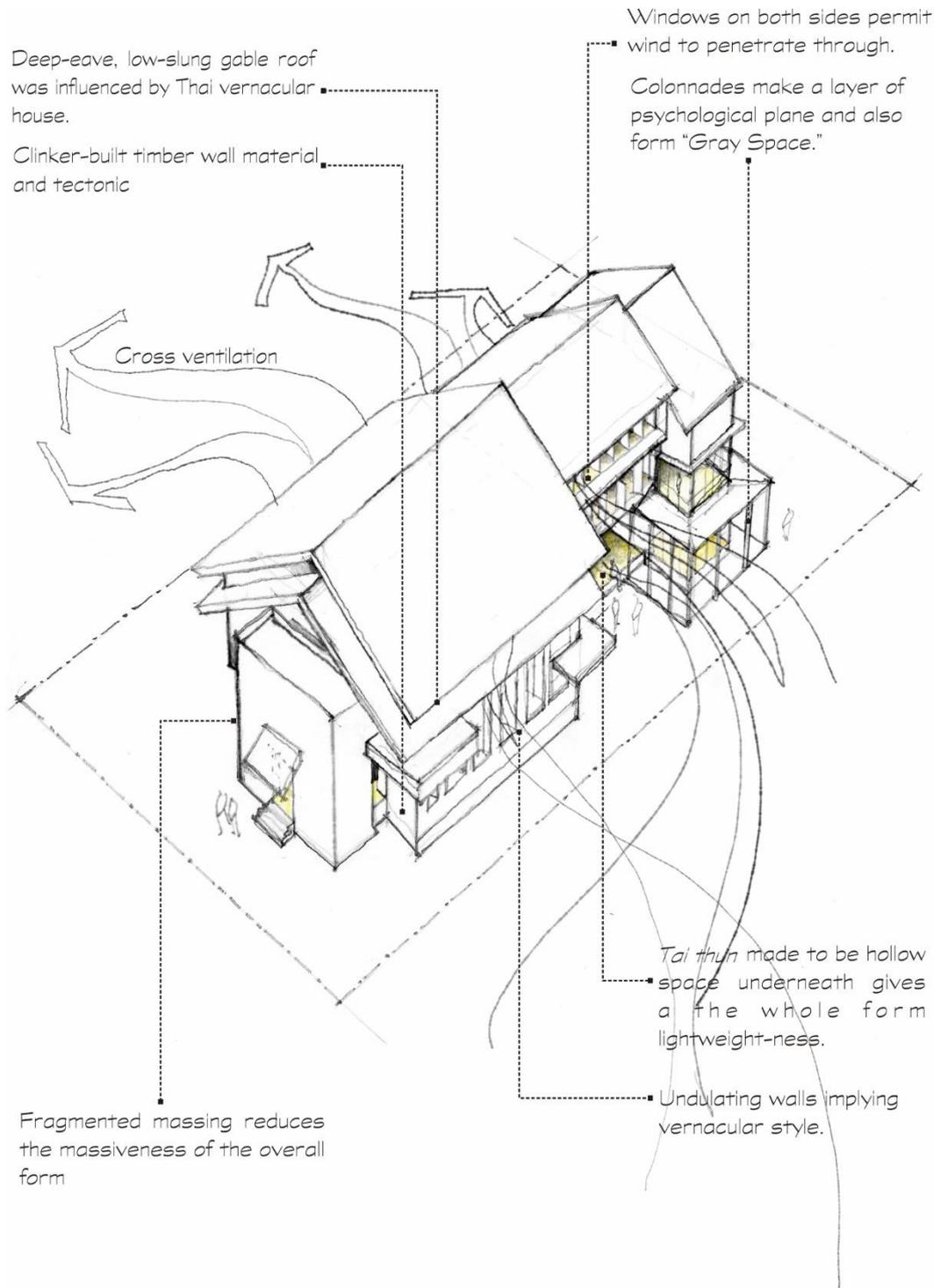


Figure 88 Analysis of Tonsilp House

Source: By the author

Table 3 Analysis of Tonsilp House

1 Chatree Ladalalitsakul: Tonsilp House				
No.	Element	Abstrac tion	Approac h	Archety p
1	Oriental spirit	X		
2	Gray space			X
3	Concept of northern-region vernacular style	X		
4	Cross ventilation		X	
5	Bare-finish and timber applique			X
6	Truth in materials	X		
7	<i>Tai thun</i>			X
8	Porosity	X		
9	Clinker-built timber walling			X

Discussion of Case Study No. 1

Architect Chatree Ladalalitsakul has an affiliation with the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts; they have worked jointly on several projects, such as the new House of Parliament, and the group is one of the leaders of the discipline of vernacular revivalism. An analysis shows that in the area of abstraction, the architect designed the Tonsilp House with a subtle allusion to the Thai history of vernacular architecture. This house is a fine example of his earlier theoretical discourse on the “Eastern spirit within a universal body”¹⁴² (in 1995) and the “gray space,” his coup de grâce, that was crystallized when he designed the Salaya Campus of Mahidol University. Its many buildings designed by him had intertwined layers of skins, and this created an effect of lightness and porosity of the buildings’ envelopes.¹⁴³ In terms

¹⁴²Chatree Ladalalitsakul, “Chit Tawan Ok Nai Rang Sakol” [“The Eastern Spirit Within a Universal Body”],” *ibid.*

¹⁴³Chatree Ladalalitsakul, “Chatree Ladalalitsakul's Architectural Ideology,” interview by the author, January 13, 2020.

of his archetype, the skins turned into a deep layering of elements and spaces. The transition into the house involves working through several layers (actual or perceptual), and in the process one understands how the walls are fused to form internal and external “rooms.” This structure can be read as a house for testing the architect’s actual ideology of scale, which he played with confidently. The house is a reinterpretation of the vernacular house; it is a perfect culmination of contemporary style that has been based on a unique design. The architect’s manipulation of the *tai thun* space, use of timber, and treatment of the skins are effective even though the building does not have the real physical room used for guests or public.

Regarding the contemporary theory of Thai-ness discussed in Chapter 5, it can be said that this house is relevant to it in many ways. For instance, according to the rules of critical regionalism, this house reinterpreted the regional architectural language and discreetly employed the details of local architecture with a reduced scale and expression but did not directly reproduce the old form. With its unique imagery and embedded intention of referring to the local or regional identity, this house embraces the value of a practical attribution of autonomous design in its own right.

Case Study No. 2: Damnoen House

Architect: Metas Srisuchat (N7A Architects)

“The concept of this house is to be a vacation house with the idea of ‘Make Yourself at Home.’”¹⁴⁴

“Thai contemporary house”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴“Make Yourself at Home” is a translation by this thesis of “ภาวะตามสบาย” (*phawa tam sabai*) [in Thai], which can also mean a “comfort zone.”

¹⁴⁵“Baan Lae Suan Ton Baan Damnoen Cheewit Khon Khlong Song Run” [“Home and Garden on Baan Damnoen: Lives by the Canal of the Two Generations”], Amarin 2015, accessed January 1, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjbOBZJBey4&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0G-5zfX_O-dzF8NGADZIE5gM2VAvbcbHDjD2ryegsH08gXMjzeZ_5F_Qg.

“This firm’s philosophy of design is an architectural ‘interval,’ meaning to reveal the hidden phenomena of things through architectural space and form, and it is the central concept of [the] design strategies.”¹⁴⁶

In Metas Srisuchat’s view, architects of today should take into account the availability and limitations of resources. “If the situation allows, we should explore a new frontier, which makes us step closer to an aspired design. In the past, building in Siam was limited by the availability of wood almost exclusively.” However, in terms of aesthetics, in the architect’s opinion, everyone has it. Therefore, what makes a house unique is the attention given to function by the architect and the effect the architect aspires to make.

For the Damnoen House, which is located in *Ratchaburi Province*, the architect intended that it have a contemporary Thai style but also elements of traditional vernacular Thai style. He achieved this by lifting the entire ground floor, as was traditionally done in Thai vernacular houses by building them on stilts; this split the mass of the form into two parts so that the house was more streamlined. *Chans*, or balconies, were also used; the *chan* is another critical feature that not only functions as a space for “hanging out” but is also used to buffer the inside from the outside and, at the same time, help lengthen the walking journey through the transitional space. The deep-eaved roof protects the house from rain and overexposure to sunlight and adds a sense of a vernacular home (but with a very modernistic appearance). The house’s undulating masses and forms create shade and shadows, and with the vertical wooden lattices, they add accents to the house. These treatments also minimize the plainness of the overall form, and this can be read as a strategy based on the theory of Frampton, which is to localize the purely modern form. The vertical lattice walls bring ample indirect light into the interior. The windows spanning entire walls provide vistas of the landscape.

¹⁴⁶“N7A,” 2020, accessed February 28, 2020, <http://www.n7a.co.th/>.



Figure 89 Typical chan of Thai vernacular house

Source: Colonel Jira Silpakanok et al., *Ruen Thai [Thai House]* [in Thai] (Bangkok: Post Engineer Department, Royal Thai Army, 1971), n. pag.

Another aspect of the architect's design detail is that he attempted to reveal the hidden phenomena of things through architectural space and form. In terms of envelopment, the outside denotes the inside; like Thai houses in the past, the *fa pakon* (wooden coffer partition) is a unique type of wall finishing that looks identical on both sides; this reveals the skill of the workers who constructed the wall. The horizontal cladding of the clinker-built timber walls reflects Thai house tectonics, and its warm color alludes to a nostalgic sense of the past. A 3-meter-tall walled terrace is a unique adaptive feature used by the architect to transcend the normative version of Thai vernacular houses and provide protection and privacy. This idea uses a sort of cross-breeding of modern and vernacular designs to achieve *yu dai ching* [realistic function and practicality].

Some aspects of vernacular design can also be seen in the porosity of the walls and the use of the floor-to-ceiling windows, which allows a great deal of cross ventilation.

Designed to protrude from the house's edge, the *chan* at the main entrance was elevated approximately 1 meter above the ground. Because it is not supported by columns, it creates a sense of flight and lightness, alluding to Thai vernacular design.

In grappling with climatic conditions, the architect included features appropriate for tropical regions, such as a deep-eaved overhanging roof whose width of projection is determined by the height of the room it edges (in this case, 2 meters) and a wooden wall that helps insulate the house against the heat. This house can be interpreted as an attempt to adapt the modern form.



Figure 90 Damnoen House

Source: Ekkarach Laksanasamrith, "Touch of Nature [in Thai]," in *Baan Lae Suan Special Issue: Baan Sombun Baeb Chiwit Sombun Suk [Baan Lae Suan Special Issue: Perfect Houses, Happy Life]* [in Thai], ed. Suphachart Buntaeng (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2014), 93.



Figure 91 Damnoen House

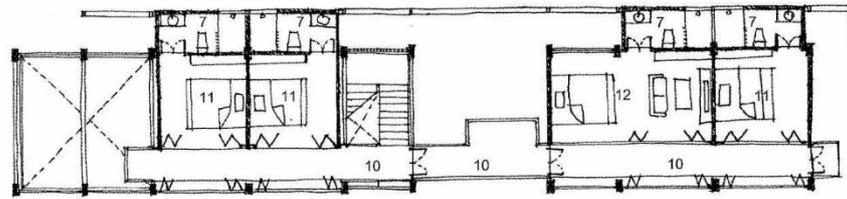
Source: Ekkarach Laksanasamrith, "Touch of Nature [in Thai]," *ibid.*, 94-103.



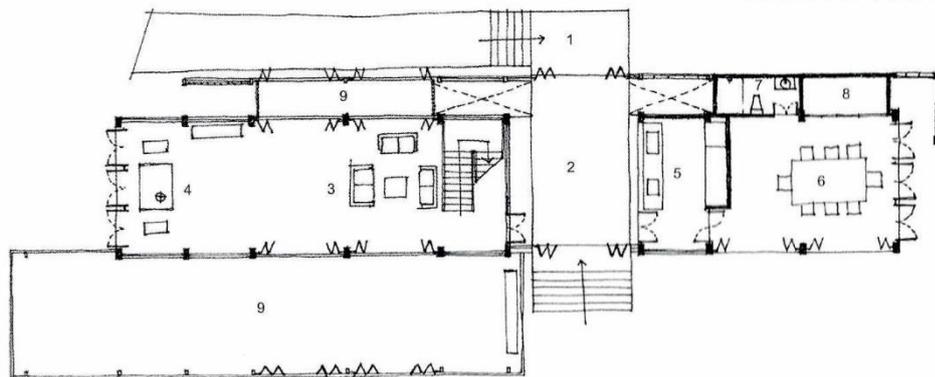
Figure 92 Damnoen House

Source: [https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.176146059099104.36917.](https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.176146059099104.36917.168748183172225&type=3)

168748183172225&type=3, accessed March 3, 2020.



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

Figure 93 Damnoen House

Source: Ekkarach Laksanasamrith, *ibid.*;

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.176146059099104.36917.168748183172225&type=3>, accessed March 3, 2020.

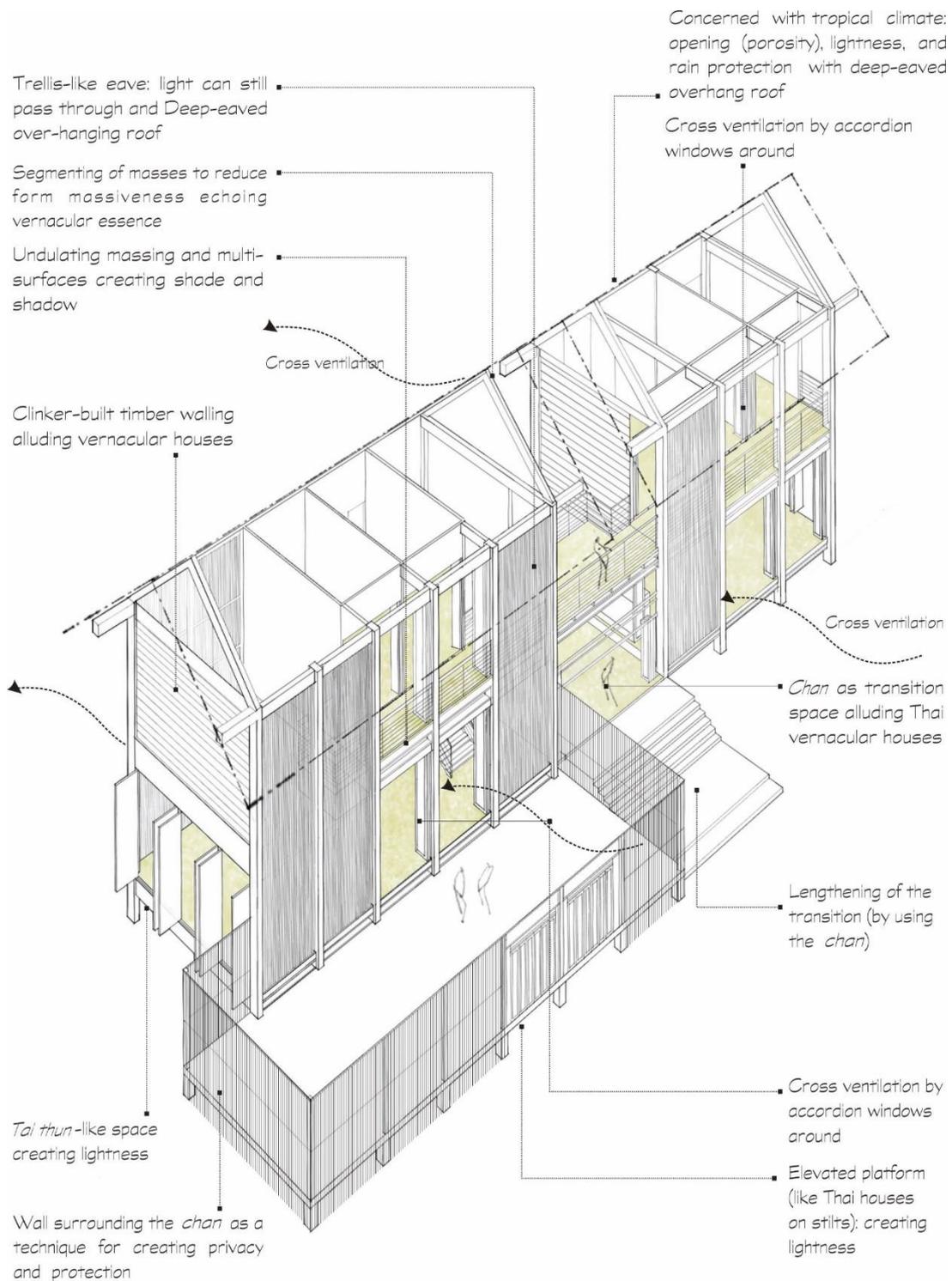


Figure 94 Analysis of Damnoen House

Source: By the author

Table 4 Analysis of Damnoen House

2		Metas Srisuchat: Damnoen House (House of Comfort Zone)		
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	Contemporary Thai house	X		
2	Interval	X		
3	Revealing the hidden phenomena of things	X		
4	Proposed unique functions and effects		X	
5	Tropical climate concerns		X	
6	Lengthening of the transition (by using the <i>chan</i>)			X
7	Wood as main material		X	
8	Cross ventilation		X	
9	<i>Chan</i>			X
10	Segmenting of masses			X
11	Elevated platform (like Thai houses on stilts)			X
12	Deep-eaved overhanging roof			X
13	Undulating massing			X
14	Playing with shade and shadow			X
15	Lattice wall			X
16	<i>Fa pakon</i>			X
17	Clinker-built timber walling			X
18	Porosity	X		
19	Lightness by elevating the mass above the ground	X		
20	Nostalgic mood	X		
21	Implication of Thai vernacular house	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 2

Like the house in Case Study No. 1, this house was designed by its owner. He seemed to make it with deliberation and clear planning. According to his philosophy, it is an “interval” design and can be interpreted as a manifestation of his view of the

abstraction he acquired. If one asks for a definition of *interval*, the architect says that it is the exploration of space and form. This thesis agrees and sees that this attempt to explore is serious because it is clear that the house's final appearance depicts the architectural archetype's new language. Although the house has a modern physical shape and space, a subtle sense of the vernacular house is intertwined with the modern aspects.

What makes this house distinctive is the approach used to address the climatic context. In his reaction to this issue, the architect used segmentation of massing to allow for a slenderness of form and more ventilation. Second, the high pitch of the roof increases the volume of the hot air pocket overhead; vernacular houses have used this tactic for ages, but what differs in this house is its scale, which is quite a bit more dramatic than in most original vernacular houses and makes this house unique.

Another distinctive feature is the use of many doors, windows, and lattice walls made of wood to allow adequate ventilation. They create a sense of porosity and translucence, as if the house is a birdcage through which air can pass and visibility is clear. If we take a look back at Thai vernacular houses of old, we see that in many, the interior spaces or rooms, such as bedrooms, were enclosed and had small windows and that the open space would also be the common space. In Meta Srisuchat's design, however, the rooms and spaces are all wide open everywhere. This difference can be interpreted as the wish of the architect to embrace Thai-ness with modern interpretation while also serving the current lifestyle rather than directly borrowing from the past; therefore, it is a response to the new demand for the sentimental in "Thai architecture."

Space and height are the foundations of the modern international style. The architect's use of the *chan* may at first seem ambiguous because it is not precisely the original archetype used in the original form; however, one who is familiar with the Thai vernacular house can recognize it without difficulty. If autonomous architecture requires a liberal expression of design, this house has it.

Case Study No. 3: 2+4 House (Living Within the Same House)

Architect: Theerapol Niyom

“Embraced by nature in the present day.” . . . “Tropical Design . . . implicating houses of extended family culture.”¹⁴⁷

Theerapol Niyom, laureated a National Artist of Visual Arts, who has been recognized for his significant contributions to innovative design. He was a co-founder and is leader and mentor of the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts. His works have always been crisp, modern, and elegant while embracing a discreet flavor of Orientalism. He is the architect who partnered with Chatree Ladlalitsakul on the new Parliament House project and followed the core philosophy of the Arsom Silp. Generally, he is committed to creating architecture that transcends the banal formalistic language of modern aesthetics, and most of his masterpieces embrace a lucid critical regionalism.

The architect’s goal for this idyllic house was to serve an extended family together in a structure of the co-housing type. It was intended to foster relationships of empathy, caring, sharing, and trust among family members.¹⁴⁸ It offers a sense of serenity, pleasure, and relaxation for body and mind and is a healthy living space for elderly family members. It has an implication of the vernacular (of Myanmar) from the past because it reflects and revitalizes the value of a community. In olden days, people lived peacefully together in community and fused with the natural surroundings around them. The vernacular house of Chiang Tung, a city in Myanmar, is the basis of this house, and the architect deconstructed its essence and translated it into the design.

¹⁴⁷"2+4 Same House," Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts, 2018, accessed January 20, 2020, <https://www.arsomsilp.ac.th/2plus4-co-living-co-housing/>.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

The essence of the Chiang Tung house gave the house a series of features, such as a deep-eaved overhanging roof and the balcony that wraps around the second floor of the house. This balcony also serves as a roof that protects the lower level, and the shady space that it creates functions as a *tai thun*.

The house adopted a clustering of vernacular design as its archetype. The main feature of its design is its two identical masses for the living spaces. A common space underneath the two houses provides dining and kitchen areas, and they symbolically reflect the bonds between the household's members.

The living room of each house has a view of the living room of the other house. The architect arranged the spaces in both units to maximize the vistas of the garden. Service facilities such as the maids' units, storage units, and garage are shared.

To allow for an awareness of cars and pedestrians arriving on the property, natural materials such as rammed earth were used as it provides a contrastive texture from the concrete-paved road and the house's interior. Other parts of the house also incorporated natural materials, such as stones for pavement, pebbles for walkways, and wood for the walls of the body of the house and for a deck.

In terms of the environment, this house addresses the climatic context by having plenty of large sliding doors, which allow air to flow through. This wall treatment can reduce the use of air-conditioners.



Figure 95 2+4 House

Source: <https://www.arsomsilp.ac.th/2plus4-co-living-co-housing/>, accessed January 20, 2020.



Figure 96 2+4 House

Source: <https://www.arsomsilp.ac.th/2plus4-co-living-co-housing/>, accessed January 20, 2020.

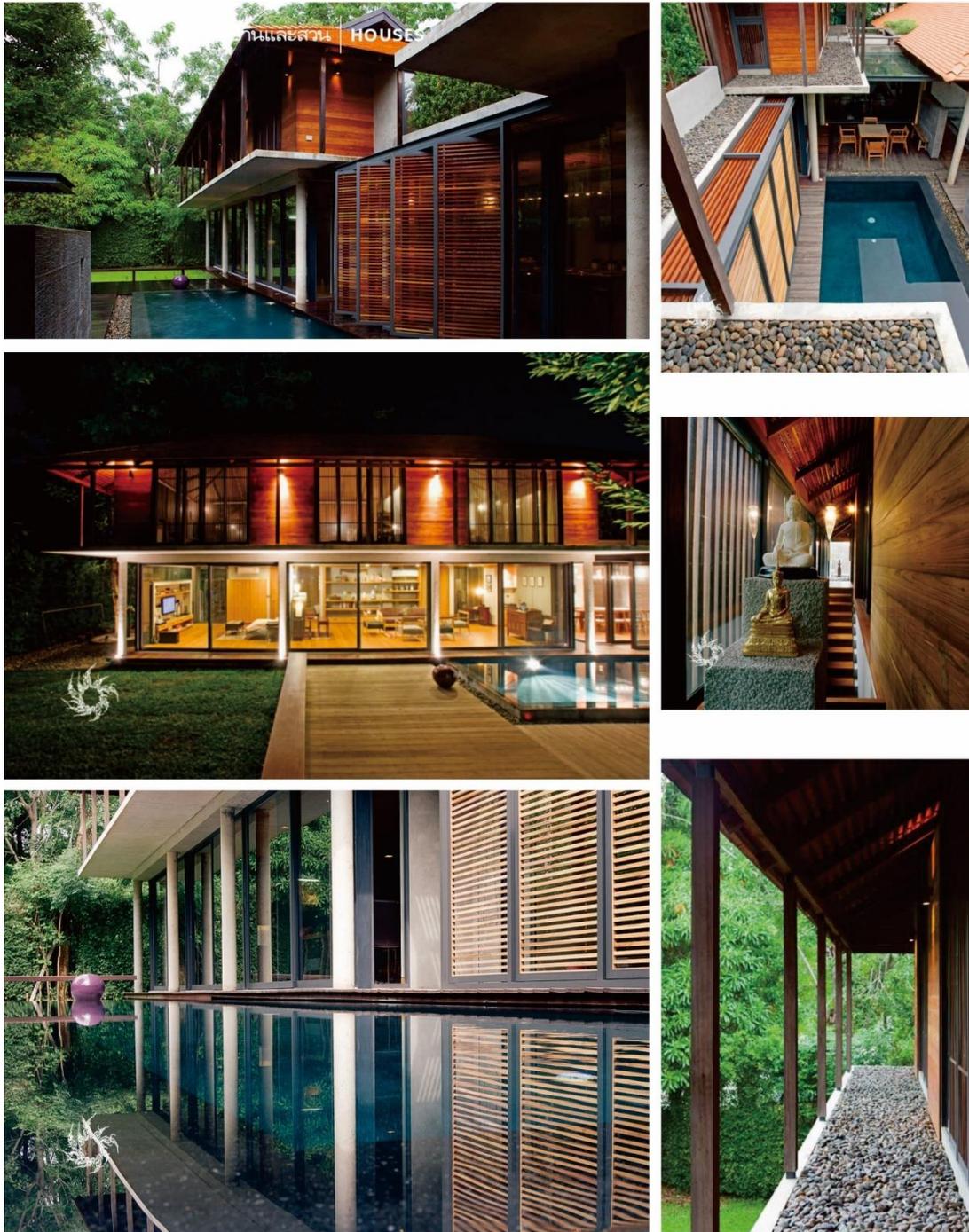


Figure 97 2+4 House

Source: <https://www.arsomsilp.ac.th/2plus4-co-living-co-housing/>, accessed January 20, 2020; <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/27031/houses/big-family>, accessed March 6, 2020.

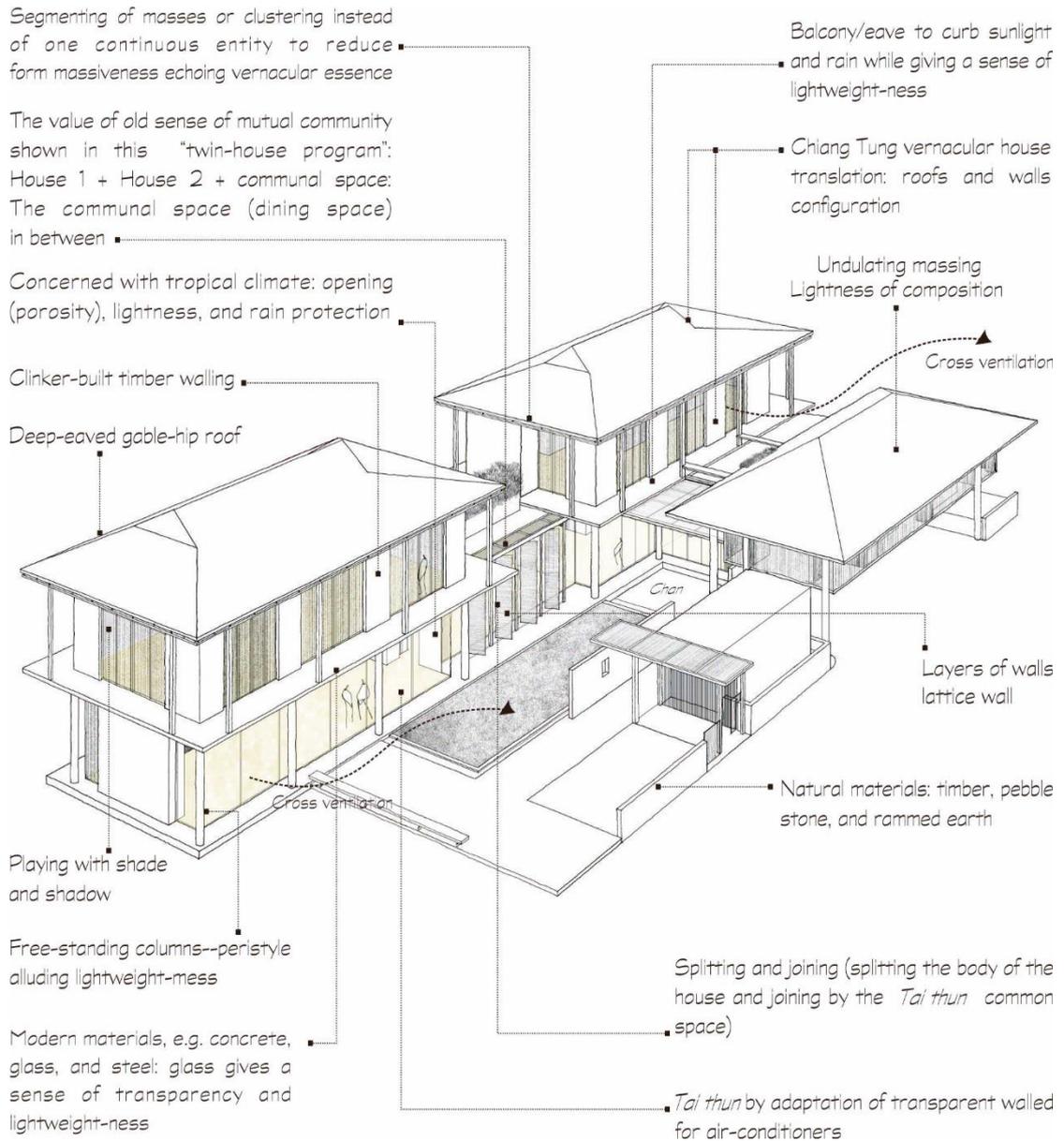


Figure 98 Analysis of 2+4 House

Source: By the author

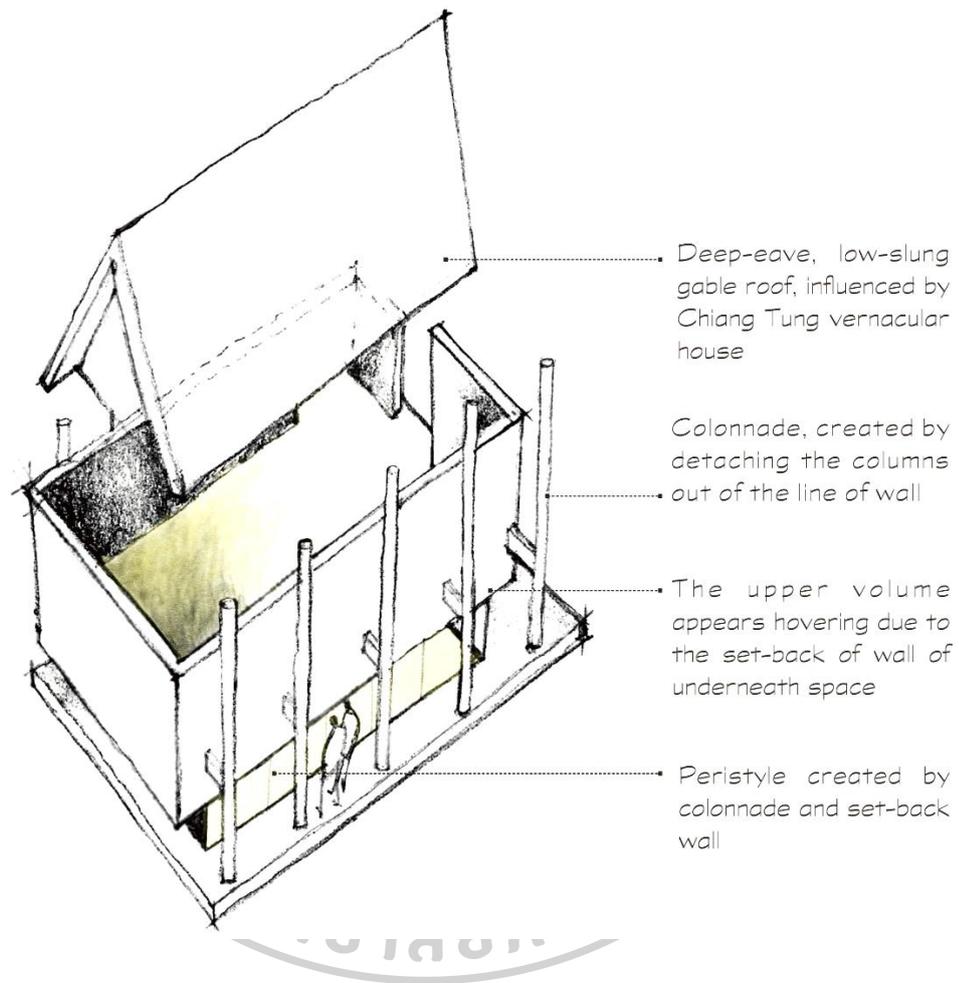


Figure 99 Analysis of 2+4 House: peristyle archetype

Source: By the author

Table 5 Analysis of 2+4 House

3		Theerapol Niyom: 2+4 House		
No.	Element	Abstrac tion	Approach	Archetype
1	“Embraced by nature in the present day.”	X		
2	Chiang Tung vernacular house translation	X		
3	Value of old mutual community	X		
4	Clustering instead of massiveness			X
5	Splitting and joining (splitting the body of the house and joining by the <i>tai thun</i> common space)			X
6	Natural materials		X	
7	Cross ventilation		X	
8	Balcony			X
9	Colonnade--peristyle			X
10	Deep-eaved roof			X
11	Undulating massing			X
12	Playing with shade and shadow		X	
13	Lattice wall			X
14	Layers of walls		X	
15	Clinker-built timber walling			X
16	Porosity	X		
17	Lightness of composition	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 3

This house is a reinterpretation of the northern vernacular style, which is seen even beyond Thailand’s borders. The architect has decoded the style to a very modern form. The predominant feature is the detaching of walls by the use of columns. Such a treatment creates colonnades that surround the house’s walls; this causes an appearance of the peristyle space typical of Greek temples or the verandah space surrounding the Thai Buddhist ordination hall. Another example of this archetype is the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe, in which columns are detached from the grid alignment of the walls. This design gives an overall sense of floating and

lightness and gives the whole house the appearance of being poised on stilts. The vocabulary of lightness of this house uses different methods than the houses in our other case studies.

With its humble, humanistic scale, this architectural archetype embraces a sense of intimacy. The architect manifested it through the height of each floor of the house. The result exudes a sense of intimacy, coziness, and warmth and displays, especially, a sense of modesty in its form and expression.



Figure 100 Monk's residence of Wat Kongkharam, Ratchaburi Province
a clear example of colonnade archetype created by detaching the column
grid out of the wall

Source: By the author



Figure 101 Vernacular houses in Kentung (a.k.a. Chiang Tung), Myanmar

Source: <https://bit.ly/3pxcS15>, accessed 15 June, 2020.

Case Study No. 4: Baan Huen Tham

Architect: Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweesap

“Live well with ... Contemporary vernacular architecture.”¹⁴⁹

According to Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweesap, vernacular architecture is timeless as it is generally known. Architects continue to create it in a contemporary form by adopting its principles, and they do it autonomously. One has to understand the fact that vernacular houses originally belonged to farming people. However, nowadays, such a house has to serve people in various walks of life, so the architecture has to be adapted to suit particular uses. Designing a house that serves its users helps the users to endure and function well in the house as long as they live and the house stands. According to Nanthapong, his background of hands-on experience during his childhood helped him in building his own home in a vernacular style; the body of knowledge he gained early in life had stayed in his mind. He is a profound protégé of the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts.

¹⁴⁹“Huen Tham” Baan Puen Thin Thai Nai Khanob Baeb Yipun [“Huen Tham” Thai Vernacular House in Japanese Tradition] [in Thai], Accessed January 21, 2020, https://www.baanlaesuan.com/113635/houses/thai_traditional_home.

Baan Lae Suan magazine argued for the emergence of a Thai form in this way: The people of Southeast Asia are accustomed to a warm and humid climate with bright sunlight and occasionally heavy rains. Since ancient times, they have built and made design changes to make their homes fit for their lifestyle needs or a particular time and place, in other words, *yu dai ching* or functionally livable. In turn, this tactic gave rise to traditional knowledge that has taken centuries to evolve into the form and function that we see today. It was not long before modern design ideas and technology arrived from the West, which led to experimentation to determine the practicality of new methods, materials, and activities. It came at a time of economic development throughout the region. From the start, it begged the question of the impact architecture might have on people's lives and cultures. As it happens, ongoing interactions between East and West have brought about an exciting combination of modern ideas and traditional vernacular values.¹⁵⁰

In the past, many indigenous people in the countryside built their houses themselves. The architect's family background lent him extraordinary knowledge in this regard. Vernacular aesthetics dwelt in his mind, and he had a thirst to build something in this form and apply and make structures based on his knowledge in the actual practice of today's architecture. As he became an architect, he had a chance to experiment. After visiting several authentic vernacular houses, he became engrossed with the indigenous intellect of people in the countryside. These exposures ignited his craving to design a house based on this art.¹⁵¹

This project is a community of many houses in Hang Dong District, Chiang Mai Province, built with the mutual help of the community members. The main goals for the houses were that (1) they must blend into nature; (2) they must embrace Buddhist philosophy and remind users to live and die in peace; (3) they must be

¹⁵⁰*Baan Lae Suan: Modern Vernacular Homes, Special Issue, ed. Patsiri Chotipongsun and Samutcha Viraporn (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2019), 3.*

¹⁵¹"Huen Tham" *Baan Puen Thin Thai Nai Khanob Baeb Yipun* ["Huen Tham" *Thai Vernacular House in Japanese Tradition*] [*in Thai*]," *ibid.*

conducive to community living; and they must embrace the vernacular architecture and adopt the indigenous way of thinking that urges participation among people in the community. This integration shows how the architect's ideas went far beyond the normative service of architects.

The architecture was attuned to the tropical climate with a passive cooling design. It takes on a humble form 'under the sky' and in the shade of trees. Open walls and open space are the main characteristics of the houses, and they have minimal enclosures. Because they are open, they draw the landscape and nature inside, and space spills outside from the inside of the houses.

Focusing on the selected house for analysis, the architect worked closely for an extended period with clients during the design development to research their lifestyle. The site involved a *khuang*, or open courtyard; this alludes to the old patterns of Thai village planning and it is a feature used in houses surrounding the village.

The materials the architects used were not entirely local or vernacular materials but also included concrete, steel, and ceramic tiles. The house is lifted on stilts, a feature that replicates vernacular houses, creating a shady space and comfort zone for living. The balcony serves as another living space. It is covered with a low-slung, deep-eaved, overhanging roof to protect the interior from rain and sun. The walls are uniquely made of hidden windows in the style of *fa lai*, or slidable wooden frames.

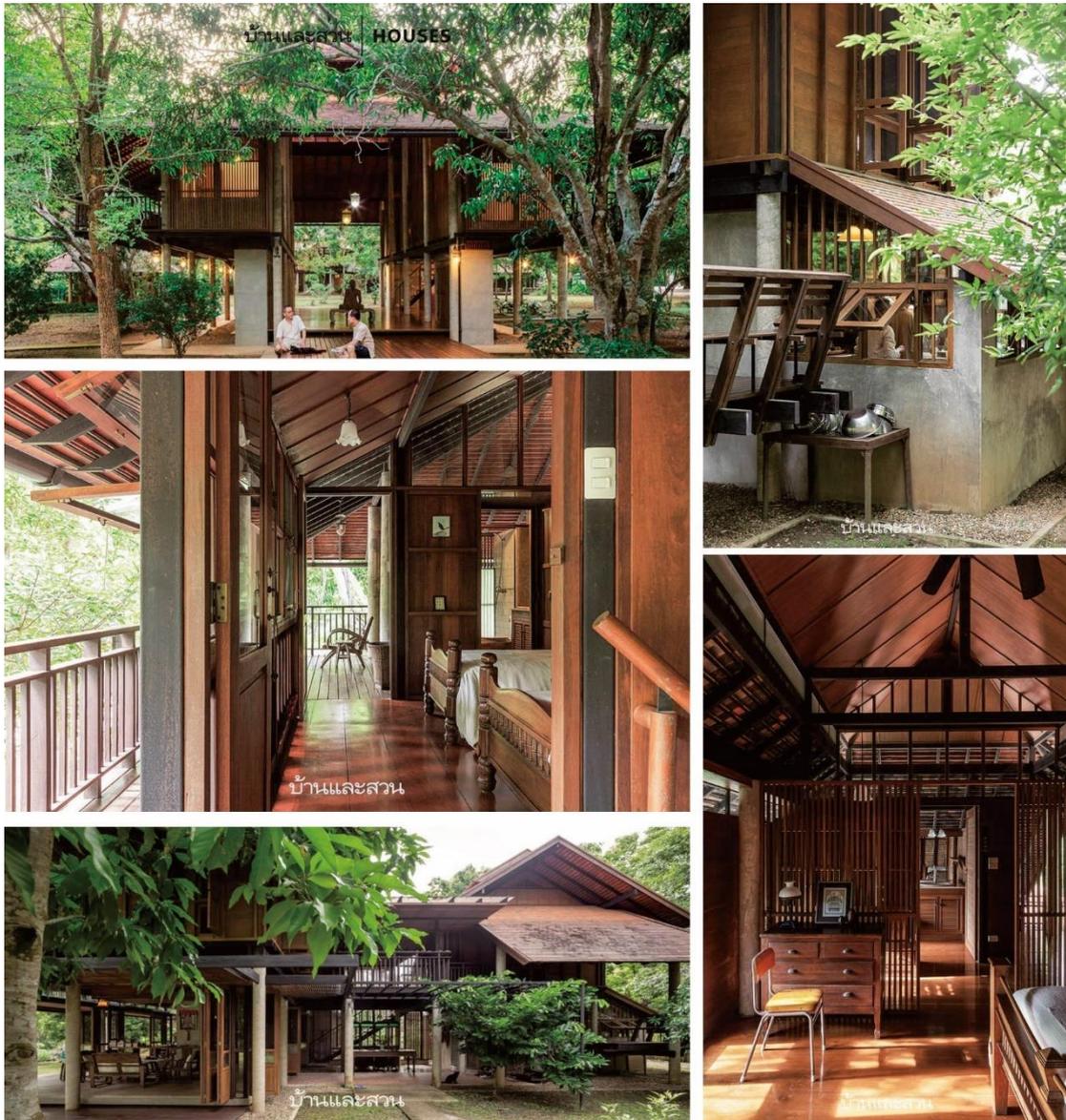


Figure 102 Baan Huen Tham

Source: https://www.baanlaesuan.com/113635/houses/thai_traditional_home,
 accessed January 21, 2020.

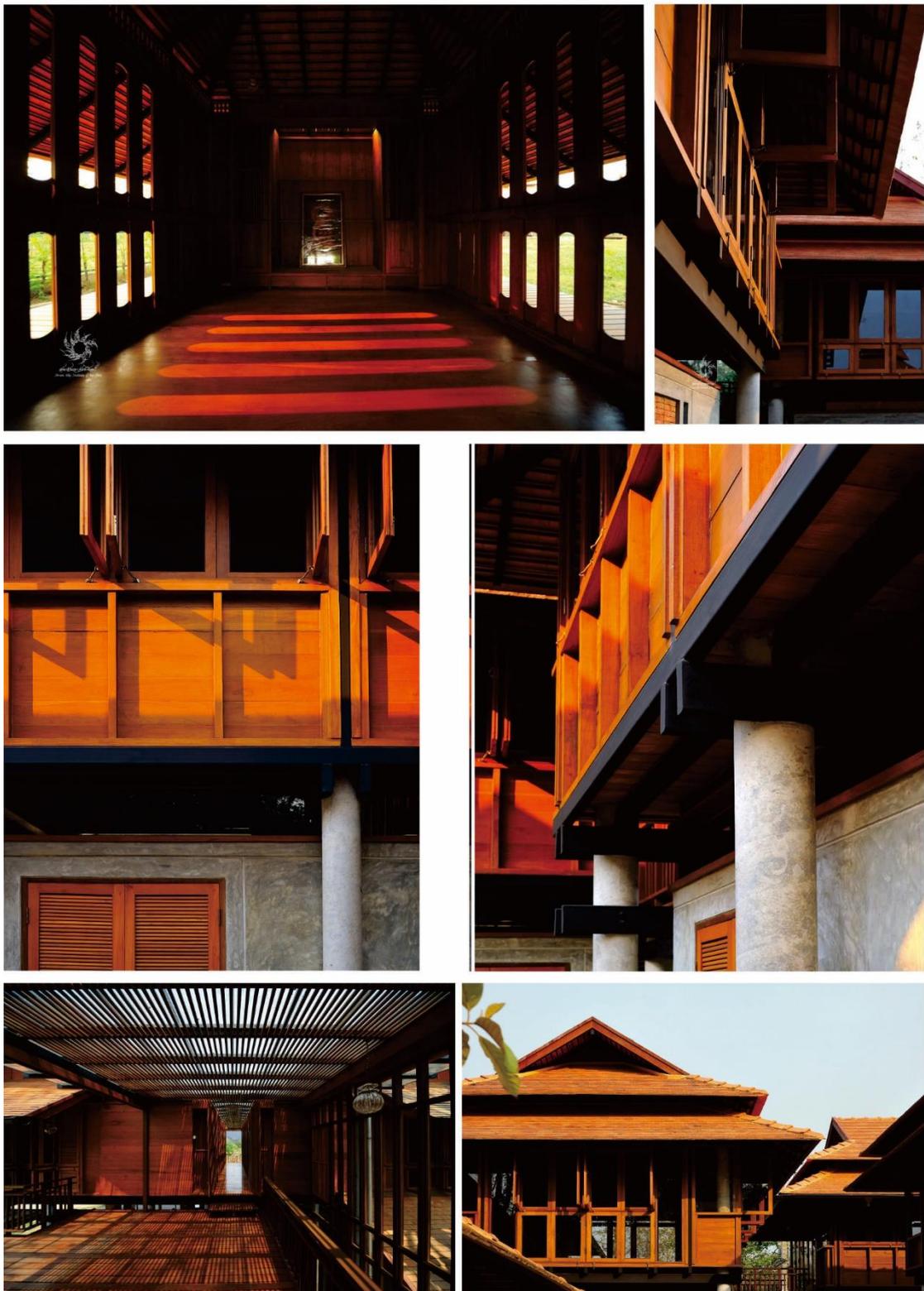


Figure 103 Baan Huen Tham

Source: <https://www.arsomsilp.ac.th/baanhuendhamma/>, accessed January 21, 2020.

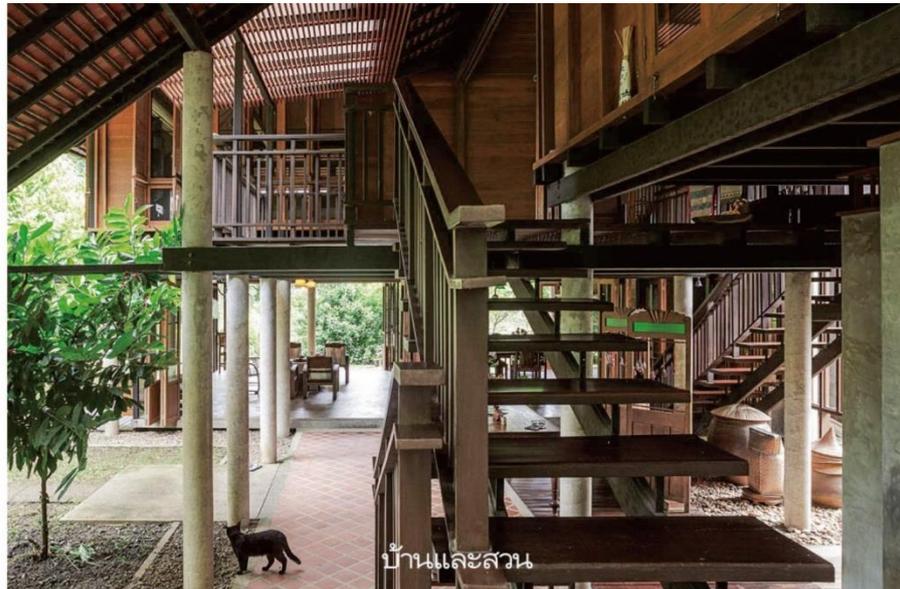


Figure 104 Baan Huen Tham

Source: https://www.baanlaesuan.com/113635/houses/thai_traditional_home,
accessed January 21, 2020.



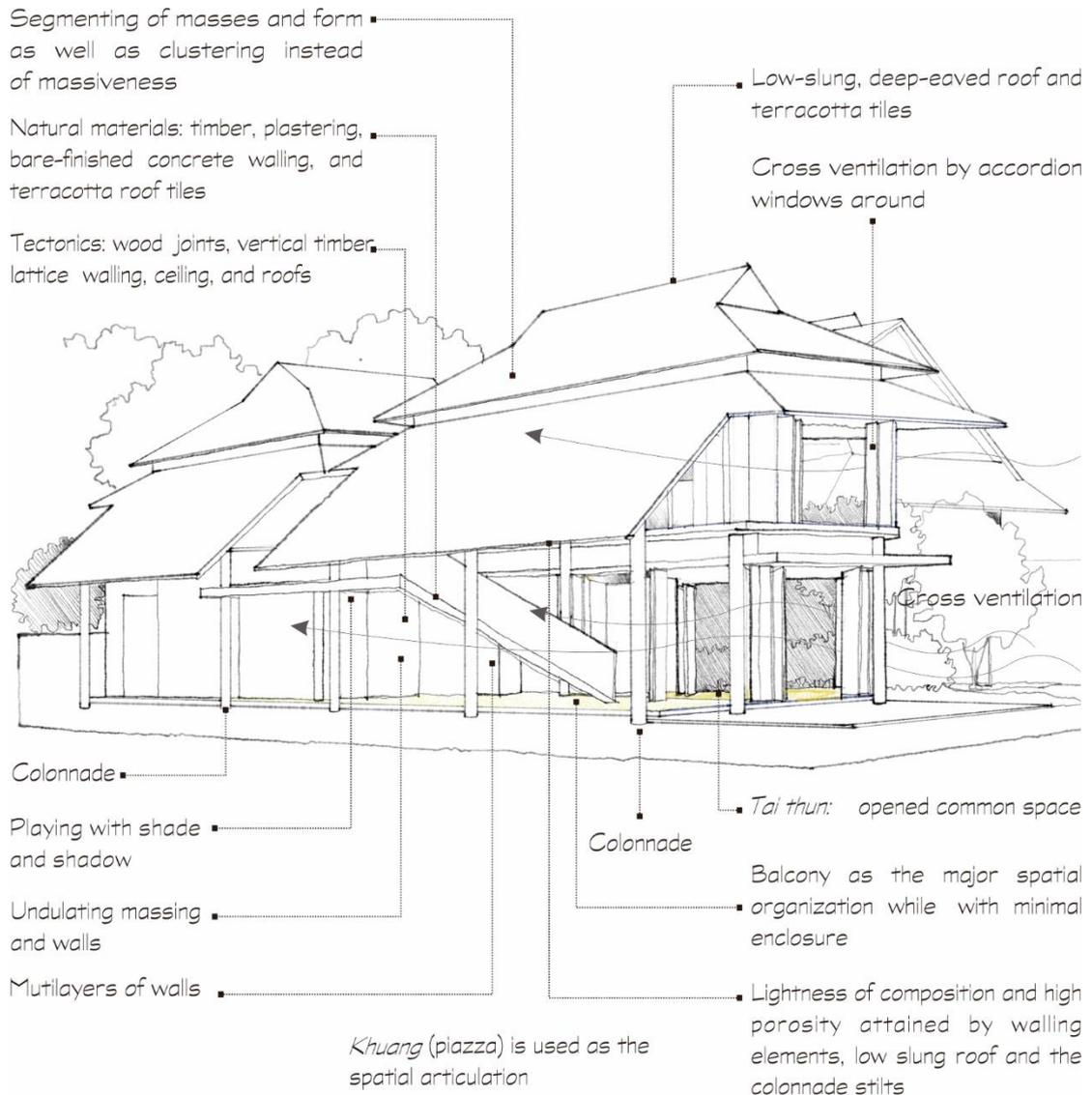


Figure 105 Analysis of Baan Huen Tham

Source: By the author

Table 6 Analysis of Baan Huen Tham

4 Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweessap: Baan Huen Tham				
No.	Element	In	Approach	Archetype
1	“Embraced by vernacular house style”	X		
2	Chiang Tung vernacular house translation	X		
3	Value of old mutual community	X		
4	Clustering instead of massiveness			X
5	<i>Tai thun</i> common space			X
6	Natural materials		X	
7	Cross ventilation		X	
8	Balcony			X
9	Colonnade			X
10	<i>Khuang</i> (piazza)			X
11	Low-slung, deep-eaved roof and terracotta tiles			X
12	Undulating massing			X
13	Playing with shade and shadow		X	
14	Lattice wall and roof			X
15	Layers of walls		X	
16	Vertical timber walling			X
17	High porosity	X		
18	Lightness of composition	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 4

In this house, the architect decoded the core of the Thai vernacular style and applied it skillfully with modern materials. This effort culminated in a new abstraction of form using a cross-breeding of the Thai and modern techniques. Its another abstraction is to cull the Buddhist precept of *samatha* as the core notion of the religion. It is reflected through his idiosyncratic dissemination of the application to another practical level. His designs were the result of a long incubation of knowledge and are executed in a subtle vernacular yet practical form.

The physical shapes and forms are important, and none of the elements of the design have been made without judicious consideration. The approach addresses the

solution to heat and humidity, and the form is an amalgamation of old ways of reacting to such conditions and new interpretations of these ways; the result is a unique contemporary form.

The house seems to merge with its natural surroundings because few enclosures or massive walls are present. Kengo Kuma, a Japanese architect, has coined the theory of the anti-object, or the uniting or immersing of buildings with nature and their blending or even seen vanishing into thin air and into the landscape. This house of Nanthapong merges with its background in almost the same way and is in line with Frampton's theory of critical regionalism. Architecture, according to Frampton, neither stands out nor has a monumental form and scale but rather becomes submerged in its environment. The segmenting of its forms and dissolution of its skins result from the subtle usage of timber and color tones of wood; these techniques situate the house within its surroundings in a very gentle fashion. They also make this house unique and present a modest image of something neither true authentic Thai vernacularity nor modernity but rather something in the novel amalgamation of today's numerous requirements and vocabularies.

Case Study No. 5: Tew Son House

Architect: Polar Architect

“The Charm of Applied Thai-ness.”

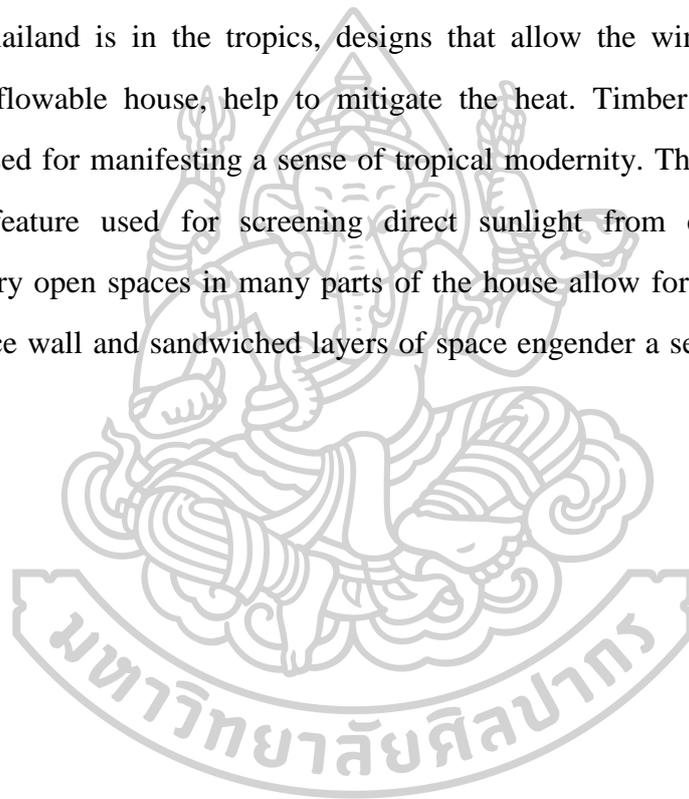
“Tropical modern amidst the pine garden.”

“Sun-breaker fins that open for wind flow.”¹⁵²

¹⁵²"Baan Thew Son: Baan Modern Tropical Style Thamklang Suan Suai Lae Tonson [Thew Son House: Modern Tropical Style House in A Beautiful Garden and Iron Wood Horsetail Trees] [in Thai]," Dsign Something 2018, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://dsignsomething.com/2018/02/07/%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%99-%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AA%E0%B9%84%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%82%E0%B8%A1%E0%B9%80/>.

“The concept of embracing nature originated from the owner’s favorite hobby of planting the garden. Therefore, the approach was to associate the house with nature as much as it could be. Light and wind must be able to reach every part of the house, and this allows the users to enjoy themselves and stay in every area of the house.”

The house is located in Samut Sakhon Province. The asymmetrical gable roof was the feature specially designed for this house. At the rear of the house, the roof is under pine trees, so its pitch has been steepened to let fallen pine needles slide off. Because Thailand is in the tropics, designs that allow the wind to blow through, creating a flowable house, help to mitigate the heat. Timber and bricks are the materials used for manifesting a sense of tropical modernity. The deep-eaved roof is the main feature used for screening direct sunlight from entering the house. Extraordinary open spaces in many parts of the house allow for cross ventilation. A timber lattice wall and sandwiched layers of space engender a sense of lightness and porosity.



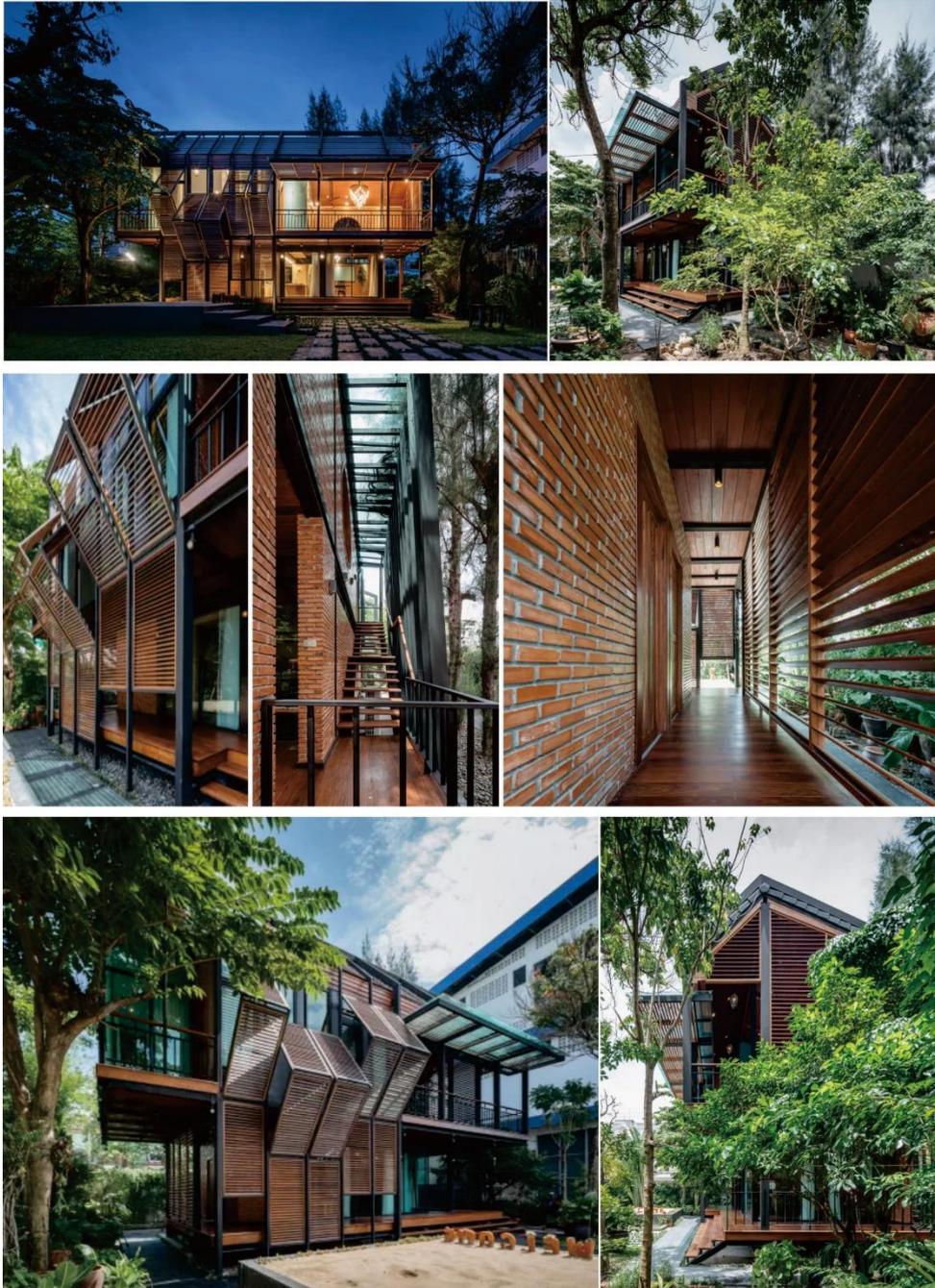


Figure 106 Taw Son House

Source: <https://dsignsomething.com/2018/02/07/%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AA%E0%B9%84%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%82%E0%B8%A1%E0%B9%80/>, accessed March 1, 2020.

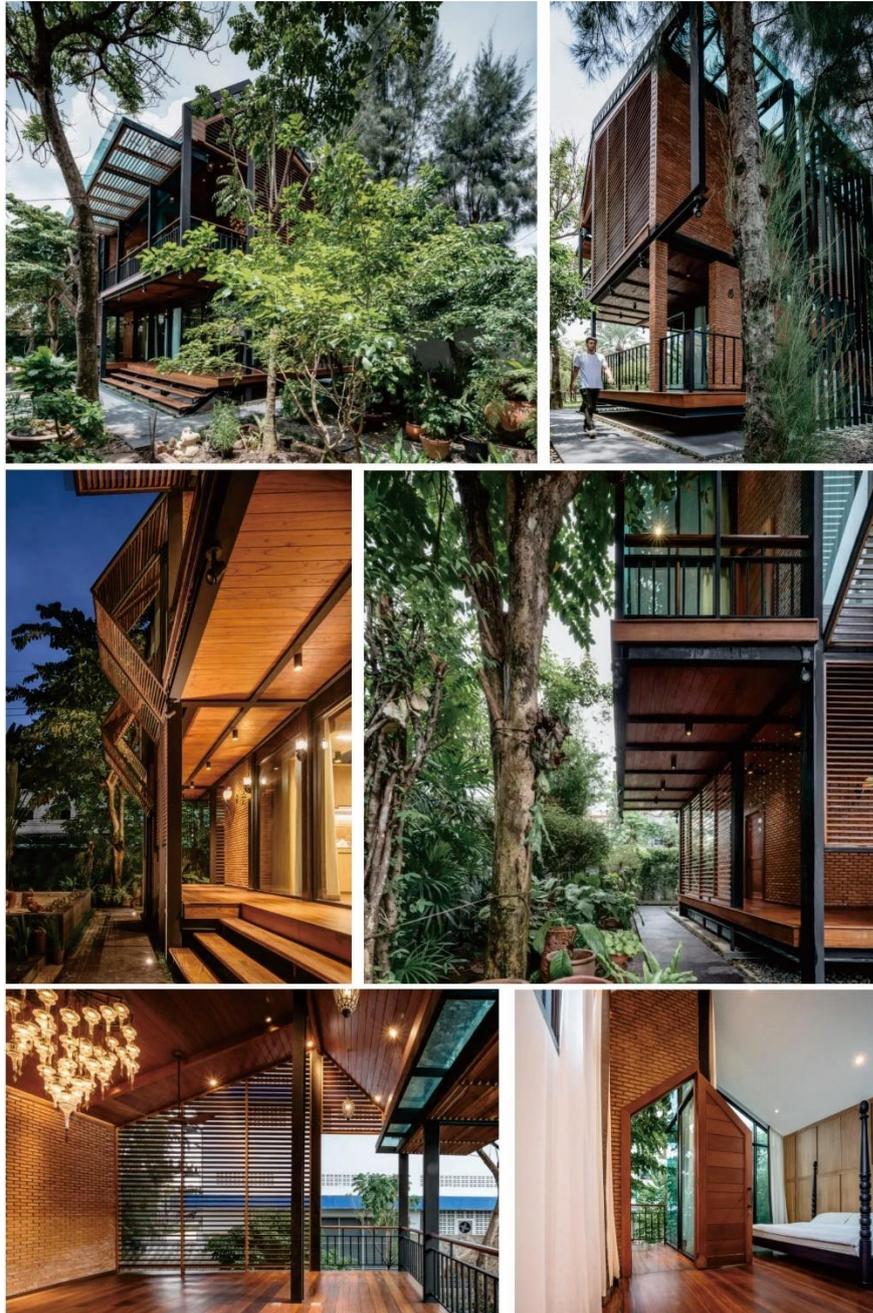


Figure 107 Tew Son House

Source: <https://dsignsomething.com/2018/02/07/%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%9A%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%AA%E0%B9%84%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%82%E0%B8%A1%E0%B9%80/>, accessed March 1, 2020.

<https://homedeedee.com/Tewson+House/Architect>, accessed March 1 2020.

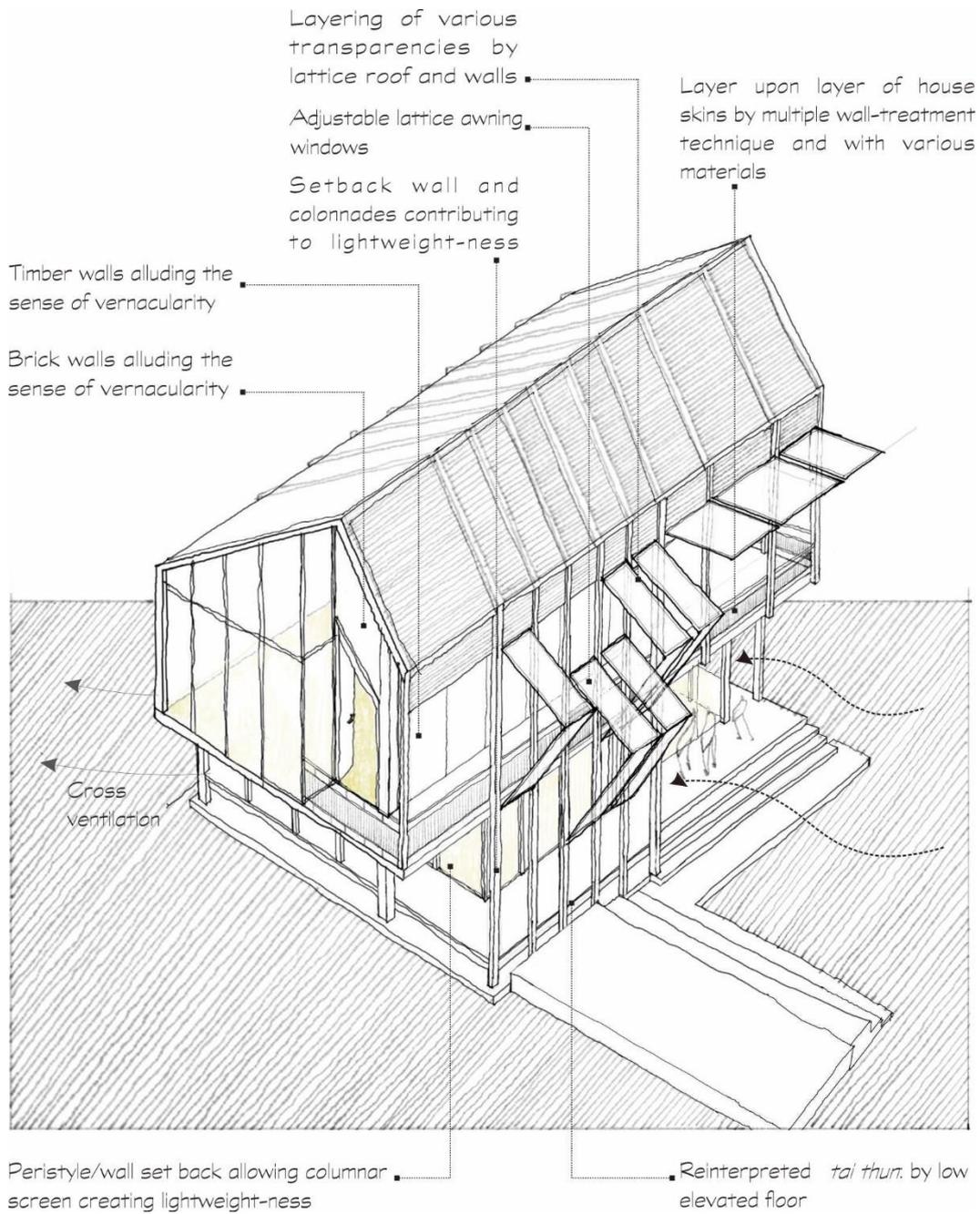


Figure 108 Analysis of Tew Son House

Source: By the author

Table 7 Analysis of Tew Son House

5		Polar Architect: Tew Son House		
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	Nature	X		
2	Context			X
3	Window feature/sun-breaker fins/awning	X		
4	Cross ventilation		X	
5	Irregular roof detail			X
6	Layer upon layer of house skins	X		
7	Reinterpreted <i>tai thun</i> : low elevated floor			X
8	Brick walls	X		
9	Timber walls			X
10	Porosity: very flowable skins			X

Discussion of Case Study No. 5

The abstraction of this house was its association with nature. The architect had a strong commitment to an organic ideology because of the tropical climate in which the house is situated. The design solved the primary concerns about heat and humidity by using porous skins, an overhanging roof, and playfully undulating walls.

In order for the house to be part of nature, its skins had to be thin and allow nature inside; this is part of the discourse of this house. The orientation towards nature has become common in Thailand and is seen in health efforts and the promotion of tourism. It is interesting that in the discipline of architecture the architect had to investigate how to respond to such a trend. The architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed prairie-style houses from 1900 to 1915, and his style became an epoch-making part of an organic architecture, that is, the houses nestle into nature without interruption. This house has an ideology very similar to that of Wright. In fact, the term organic, nature, or green has been gaining more interests among laypeople and architects. It also was seen in the scholarly works by Kenneth Yeang whose ideology

fuses both realms: regionalism and green (technical and technological issues).¹⁵³ Therefore, the elements and archetypes are shaped by both the styles of local as well as the concerns about the local climate in order to deal with energy concerns.

In this house in the mind of such ideologies, louvered awning windows add drama to the entire architectural grammar; the windows and the undulating walls, which create an animated appearance, are the skins. They served for reducing light and heat gain to enter into the house which ensure the less air-conditioning. Elements that jut out or are set back affect the volume. The windows permit dimmed light to enter the building at all points and allow for visibility of the house's unique setting. The media, and the architect, have said in their discourse that it is an applied Thai style and embraces Thai-ness; it has contributed a new adaptive style of local identity to the field of architecture; the style has not directly borrowed forms or elements but has distilled known forms through abstraction.

This house's effect is porous, light, and sleek and tangentially recalls a sense of Thai-ness. In summary, this house has an autonomous design because of the approach used for it, and it is evident in the attention paid to the owner's concerns about the climate and sensibility towards nature plus the language of the adaptive modernism.

Case Study No. 6: 713 House

Architect: Jun Sekino Architect & Design

“A new residence that would more fully respond to the needs of the family as well as the hot and humid climate.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³*Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, ed. Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf (West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1997), 146-148.

¹⁵⁴The Images Publishing Group, *New Houses in Asia: Inspired Architecture and Interiors for the Modern World* (Melbourne: Images Publishing Group, 2020), 199.

“House of Idea” “Thai Concept House: The Answer for the Life of New Generation”

“House That Can Be Opened and Closed Proportionally”

“This is our sentimental house’ that intertwines the Thai flavor in our dream.”

“Modern Thai-breed house”

“A Thai style of life was the first impression the architect had of this family. [The house] had to be capped with a pitched roof according to the design briefing from the owner. What I [the architect] offered from the beginning was that it also had to reflect my philosophy.”¹⁵⁵

The 713 House was designed for a medical doctor’s family living in Nonthaburi (the outskirts of Bangkok.) As breezes blow, a mobile hung in the dining room chimes. One can look through a glass wall to the large terrace beyond. This feeling alludes to an atmosphere of *tai thun*.

The wall is clad with a large glass windowpane, and the architect used translucency so that residents can see each other wherever they are. The design aimed to encourage contact and interactions among the users. In the middle of the house is an open courtyard with flowable space, which mimics the vernacular style. This feature agrees with the owner’s design process in its Thai-ness.

Louvered walls allow cross ventilation. The aspect of flowability became the main criterion for determining the shape and form of the house. The wind can reach all of the rooms in this house with no limits. The architects were much concerned with context and environment because they significantly impact the form and planning.

¹⁵⁵“713 House [in Thai],” Amarin TVHD, 2018, accessed February 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQ6UWG6zg5c>.

A common interstitial in-between space replicates a *tai thun* as a multipurpose area. According to the architect, this feature alludes to the sense of a vernacular house but in a new architectural language.

The concept of dissolving the edges between inside and outside is based on Chatree Ladalalitsakul's theory of gray space.

This house was built with a unique usage of materials. Reclaimed wood was the primary material, which was removed from the owner's old house; the owner had discovered that the old house had plenty of wood that could be utilized for some parts of the new house. Moreover, many of the floors have a terrazzo finish because this was done in the owner's old home. Truth in materials and no use of synthetic materials is part of the philosophy of the architect: This genuineness yields a sense of place—in this case, a human sense.

The exposed ceilings and walls inform the truth of the materiality of this house. There is no decoration and only a few pieces of built-in furniture: This gives the house a feeling of lightness. The slope of the ceiling follows the pitch of the roof. In some parts of the house, the architect integrated steel bars into the structure, and this generates a contrast between the traditional idiom and the modern textures.

This style of architecture can be compared with the architectural language of Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, who is critical of regionalism while applying steel cladding almost everywhere.

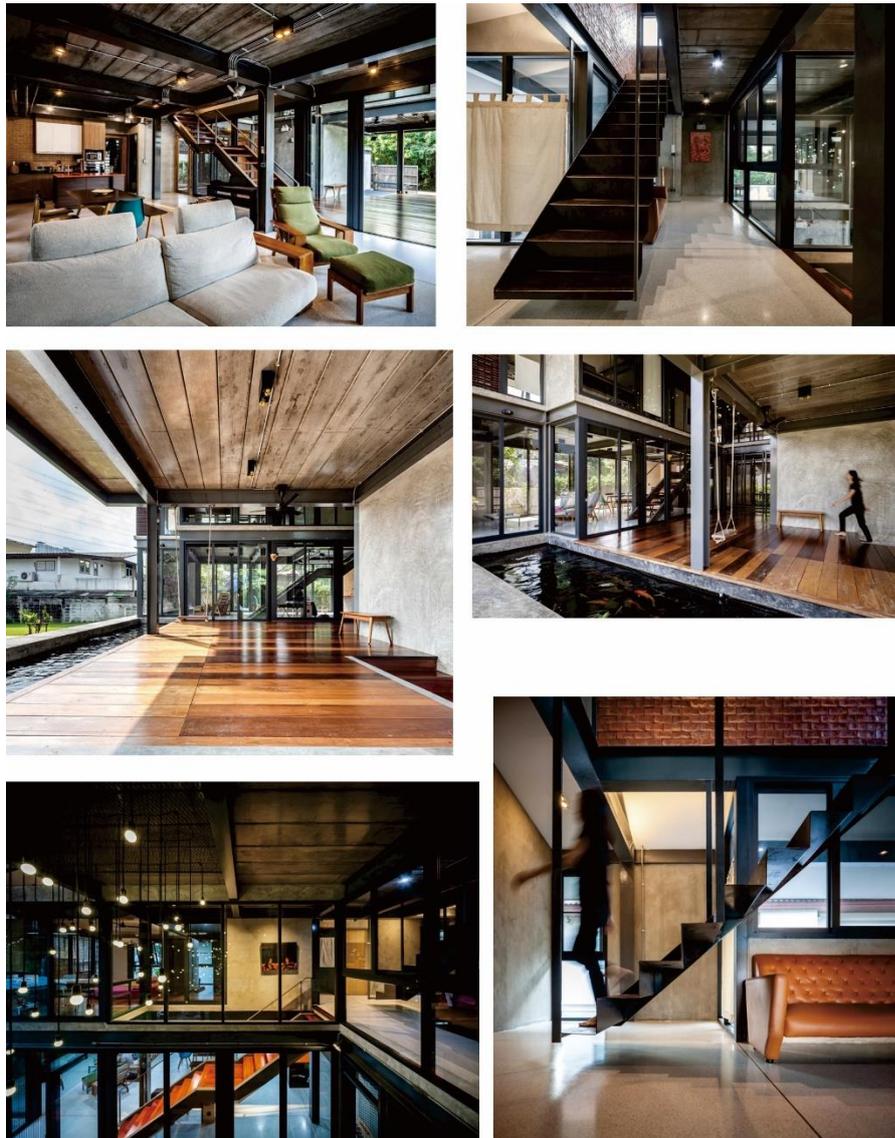
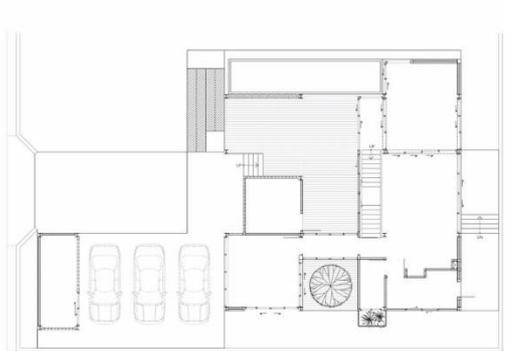
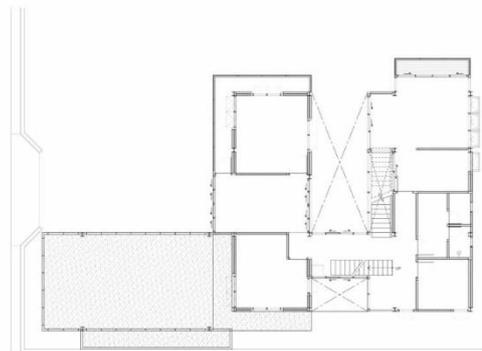


Figure 109 713 House, interior

Source: <https://www.wurkon.com/blog/153-713-house>, accessed February, 16, 2020.



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

Figure 110 713 House

Source: <https://www.archdaily.com/910009/713-junsekino-architect-and-design/5c47cd83284dd1b3ec00005d-713-junsekino-architect-and-design-photo>, accessed February, 16, 2020.

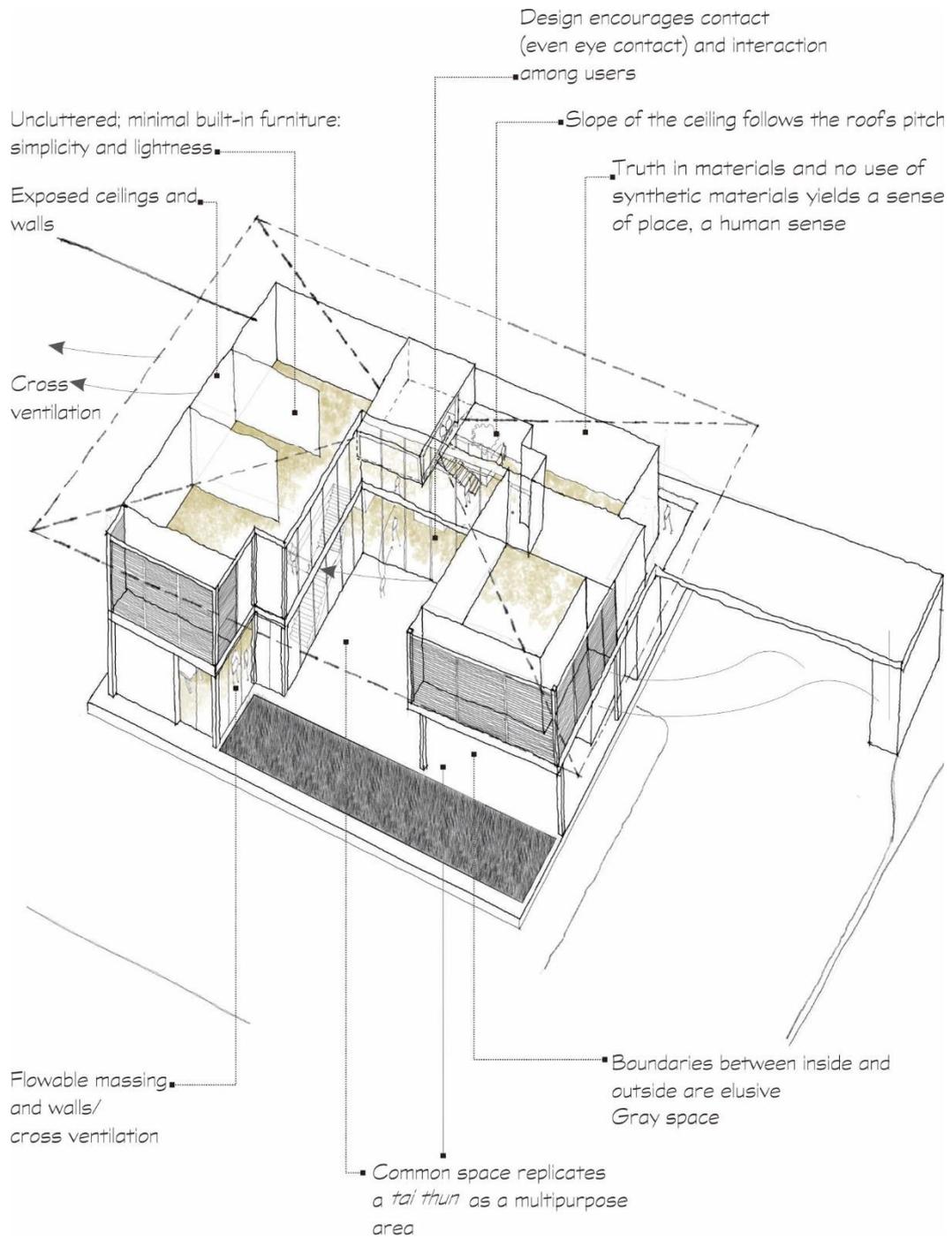


Figure 111 Analysis of Tew Son House

Source: By the author

Table 8 Analysis of Tew Son House

6 Jun Sekino: 713 House				
No.	Element	Material	Approach	Archetype
1	Modern yet alluding to Thai vernacular house	X		
2	Contextualism			
3	Common space replicates a <i>tai thun</i> as a multipurpose area			X
4	Boundaries between inside and outside are elusive	X		
5	Design encourages contact (even eye contact) and interaction among users		X	
6	Flowable massing and walls		X	
7	Truth in materials and no use of synthetic materials yields a sense of place, a human sense	X		
8	Reclaimed wood			X
9	Exposed ceilings and walls			X
10	Uncluttered; minimal built-in furniture: simplicity and lightness			X
11	Slope of the ceiling follows the roof's pitch			X
12	Gray space	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 6

What is distinctive about this house is how the architect intertwined several design problems with the imagery of the Thai vernacular house. Both the architect and the owner realized that an original or purely vernacular house would perhaps not be functional for the way people live today. As Ruangsak Kantabutra, a scholar and critic, argued (discussed in Chapter 4), if a vernacular house were to be built, it should be a mock-up model and only be shown in a historical park for educational demonstration. He made this argument because he was aware of the problems of this style.

Therefore, when this house was being planned, an adaptive approach was attempted to deliberately adjust the archetype so that the house would be realistically

yu dai ching, that is, functional and livable. This step of distilling the vernacular into a practical adaptation of a past idiom exemplifies another model of autonomous architecture.

Case Study No. 7: Parn House

Por Architects

“Form follows function”

“[It] fits with the condition” and “sufficient house”¹⁵⁶

“This house celebrates an interplay between openness and privacy through a juxtaposition of architectural and landscape elements.”¹⁵⁷

“It gives the inhabitants a sense of connection, of being one with the surrounding landscape, yet at the same time provides a sense of security and comfort. Aiming for both openness and privacy, the residents are protected by the different types of architectural enclosures that envelope the spaces, giving each and every area a sense of functional particularity while lending the whole configuration a sense of localised uniformity.”¹⁵⁸

Parn House (Sometimes Known as Por House): The Thai word *por* means “sufficient.” and “satisfying in the present state.” The architectural company uses it in its name to indicate its philosophy of design.¹⁵⁹ The word suggests appropriateness plus sufficiency in many aspects of architectural manifestation, especially planning and form. In Thai, *por piang* (variant spelling: *phor phiang*) means “to have enough and *por dee* means “to fit or having a right size or amount.” A philosophy of

¹⁵⁶“Baan Por [Sufficient House] [in Thai],” Amarin TVHD, accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16RqUjY4Ltc>.

¹⁵⁷“Kaset Nawamin,” *Habitus*, 2018, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.habitusliving.com/house-of-the-year-2018/kaset-nawamin-poar>.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹“The Next Gen: “‘Por Sathapat’ Kab Kwam Pen Tuaton” [“Por Architects and Its Autonomy”] [in Thai],” 2018, accessed February 18, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6CK_tFaBU4.

“sufficiency of living” became prominent in Thailand after the year 2000 because King Bhumibol promoted it as a philosophy of life. This word *por* also implies modesty, humbleness, and austerity.

This house was based on the architects’ view of *por*, which was that simplicity results from prodigious abstraction. A highly idealistic view of the architect’s dogmatic mission is manifested by massing and a form of simplicity. One of the house’s architects stated clearly, “We approached the design by perception and shared experience rather than form.”

Tai thun spaces inside and outside merged psychologically because they were derived from an old Thai prototype. Regarding the abstraction of sufficiency, the house’s outdoor rooms are its main feature and are created by an open courtyard. The main rooms (living room and dining room) are adjacent to the courtyard, and a wide-open door allows the space inside to spill out into the garden, which is an outdoor room. This triggers a dynamic between the spaces. The bedroom on the second floor is treated in the same manner, so that the user can see and feel the landscape outside in the morning. The psychological effect of extending the room outward is achieved by eliminating the window frame. The trees in the landscape seem to be brought inside, and viewers may feel as if they are being brought outside. It makes sense to invest significantly in openings, outdoor rooms, and courtyards to meet such special requirements. This technique for the playful treatment of the architectural edge suggests a translation of Chatree Ladalalitsakul’s gray space theory

When one is inside looking out, there is a feeling of moving outward because the floor appears to be hovering in the air and there is an illusion that the floor is dropping. All in all, this house exemplifies an architectural design of sufficiency in the areas of abstraction and approach but not in form.

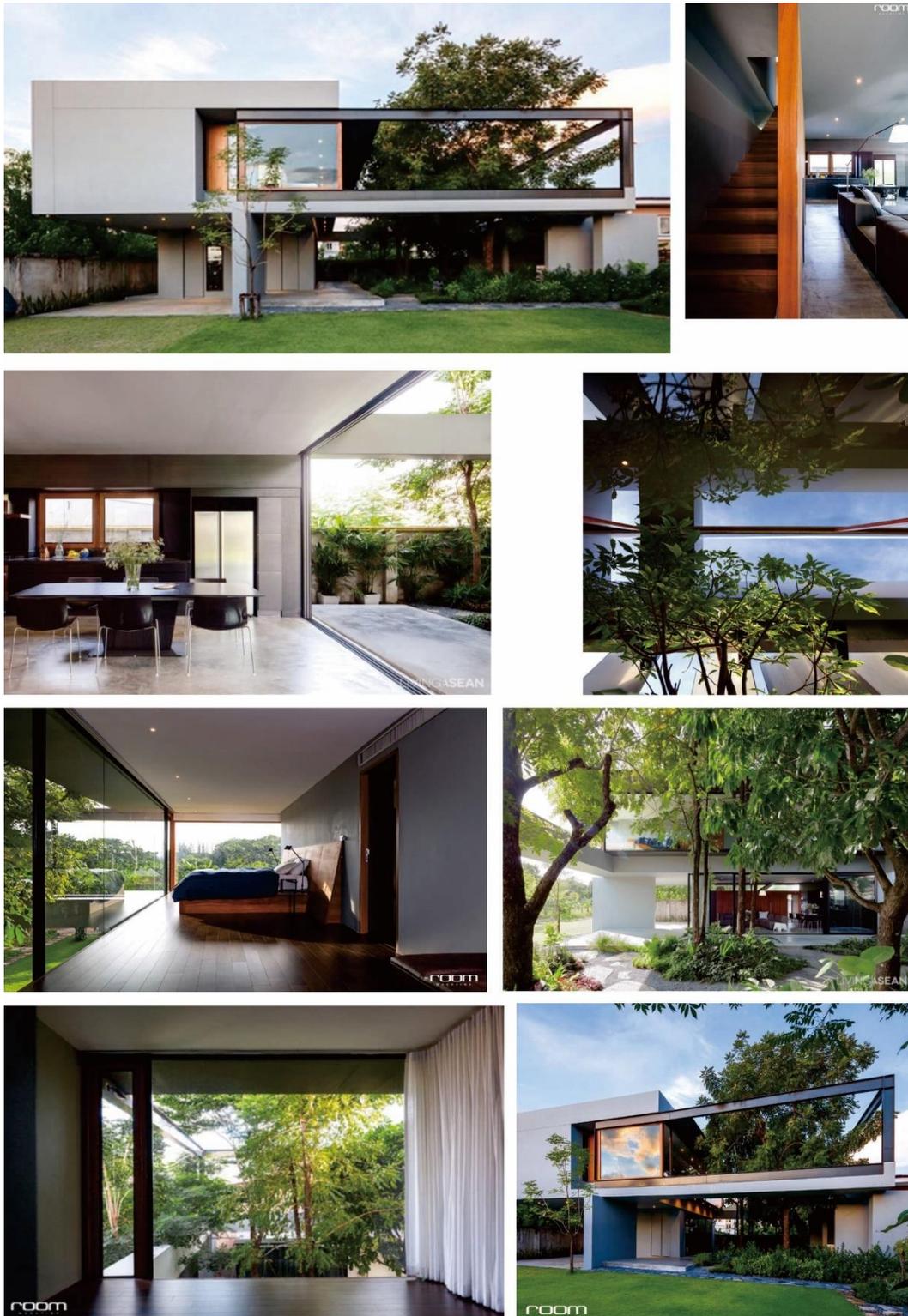


Figure 112 Parn House

Source: <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/48519/houses/form-follows-function>, accessed April 1, 2020.

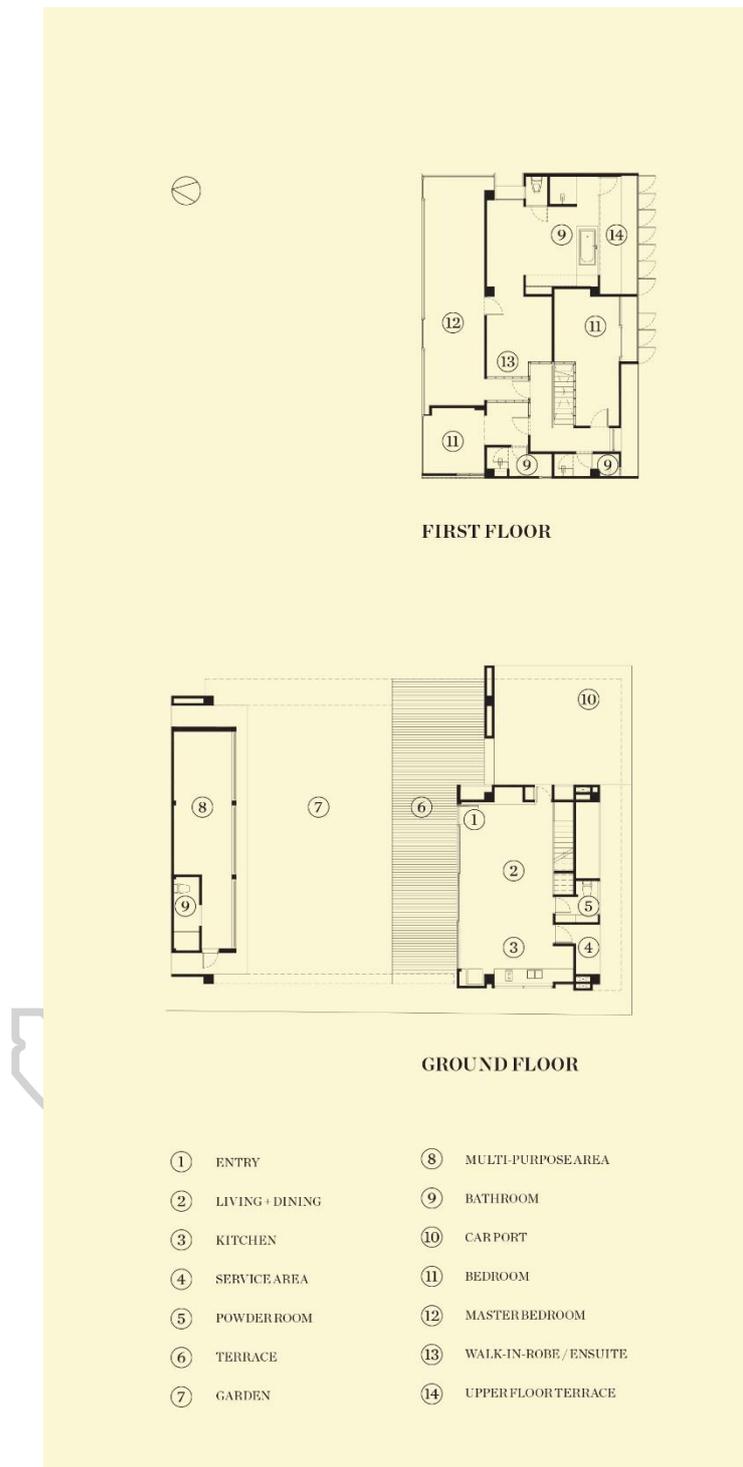


Figure 113 Parn House: Plan

Source: <https://www.habitusliving.com/house-of-the-year-2018/kaset-nawamin-poar>, accessed March 30, 2020.

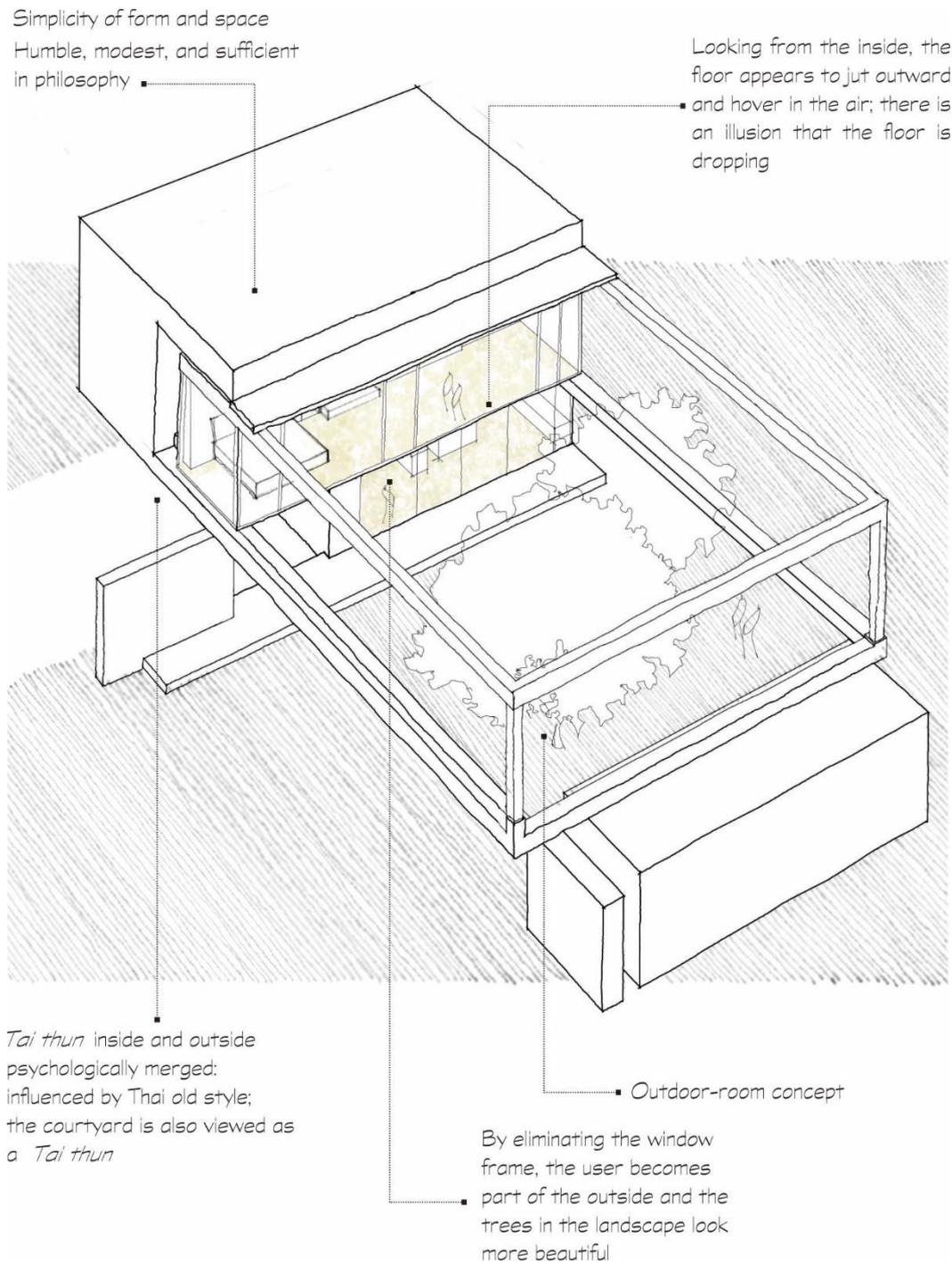


Figure 114 Analysis of Parn House

Source: By the author

Table 9 Analysis of Parn House

No.	Element	In	Approach	Archetype
7	Por Architects: Por House			
1	Sufficient in concept	X		
2	Approach from experience translated into the way we live		X	
3	Approaching the design by experience rather than form	X		
4	<i>Tai thun</i> inside and outside psychologically merged: influenced by Thai old style		X	
5	Outdoor room		X	
6	Simplicity of form and space	X		
7	Open courtyard			X
8	Looking from the inside, the floor appears to jut outward and hover in the air; there is an illusion that the floor is dropping			X
9	By eliminating the window frame, the user becomes part of the outside and the trees in the landscape look more beautiful			X
10	Humble, modest, and sufficient in philosophy	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 7

The architect designed this house to have a neutral, almost banal look, but it is still intriguing because of the discourse used by its architects to define it. They based it on the concept of sufficiency, a term used in the name of their company.

King Bhumibol's sufficient economic philosophy radically influenced Thai citizens and molded a new consciousness. Its impact on architecture is evident in many new designs that embrace modesty and austerity. The philosophy was adopted by more and more architects and was considered just as important as extravagant designs after the 1990s, when many architects began to use this philosophy as a rationale for design (see the example of Jon Jandai in Chapter 5).

This trend was minimalistic and suggested that less could have a high value (i.e., less is more). This view had been held for a century in the West, but it lost its momentum in the late twentieth century. It followed a global trend that was anticipated by Italo Calvino (see discussion in Chapter 2). There were also other theories of this period, such as the slow life philosophy, which lauded simplicity and austerity. All of these theories affirmed that those who practice less are actually practicing more.

Although the architects of the Por House claimed that it encompassed sufficiency, this thesis found that it was not clear exactly which part of the house met the tenets of such a philosophy.

Case Study No. 8: Oum & Pol's Home

Architect: Raksak Sukontatarm

“House designed as a dialogue with the context”¹⁶⁰

Located in an estate in the Ramkhamhaeng area, this house is a result of a judicious thinking process that ensures the users' well-being. More importantly, this house took form from the combination of the “dream and need” of the owner and the “inspiration” of the architect.

Comfortable living is the first priority in home design, according to the architect, ahead of stylistic alternatives. To him, style pleases the eye but is not the essential determining factor in an architectural formation. The context-oriented design involves studying the effects of the directions of sun, wind, and rain; these dictate the

¹⁶⁰“Think for Better Living: Sathapat yu sabai baeb tropical modern [Think for Better Living: Comfortable Architecture in Tropical Modern Style] [in Thai],” Dsign Something, 2017, accessed February 23, <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/02/09/think-for-better-living->.

overall embodiments of form and planning and inform the locations and positioning of openings.

The architect made a meticulous record of the paths and directions of the sun for a year to design a livable house and locate it in the best place, with efficient protection. According to him, a house does not stand without an association with its context and it needs to be correlated with its environment. It is the best it can be when it is properly designed in response to climatic conditions.

The architect feels that a house design must incorporate appropriate materials. A wrong choice would ruin its quality completely and result in problems in the long run. The architect employed concrete integrated with steel for the structure. The width of the column spans determined the types and materials of the beams. This house has a relatively short span, so he chose concrete beams but used steel for the roof structure and other parts that needed a sense of lightness and levitation, including the colonnades and flying beams. Steel can work for small structures that need to be strong and it provides a pleasing appearance.

“... our goal was to create tropical modern architecture.”¹⁶¹ This style is the one that is most efficient for the Thai climatic conditions of heat, humidity, and rainfall practically all year. According to the architect, moisture needs to be evaporated quickly from a structure, and the structure must be durable in its environment.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

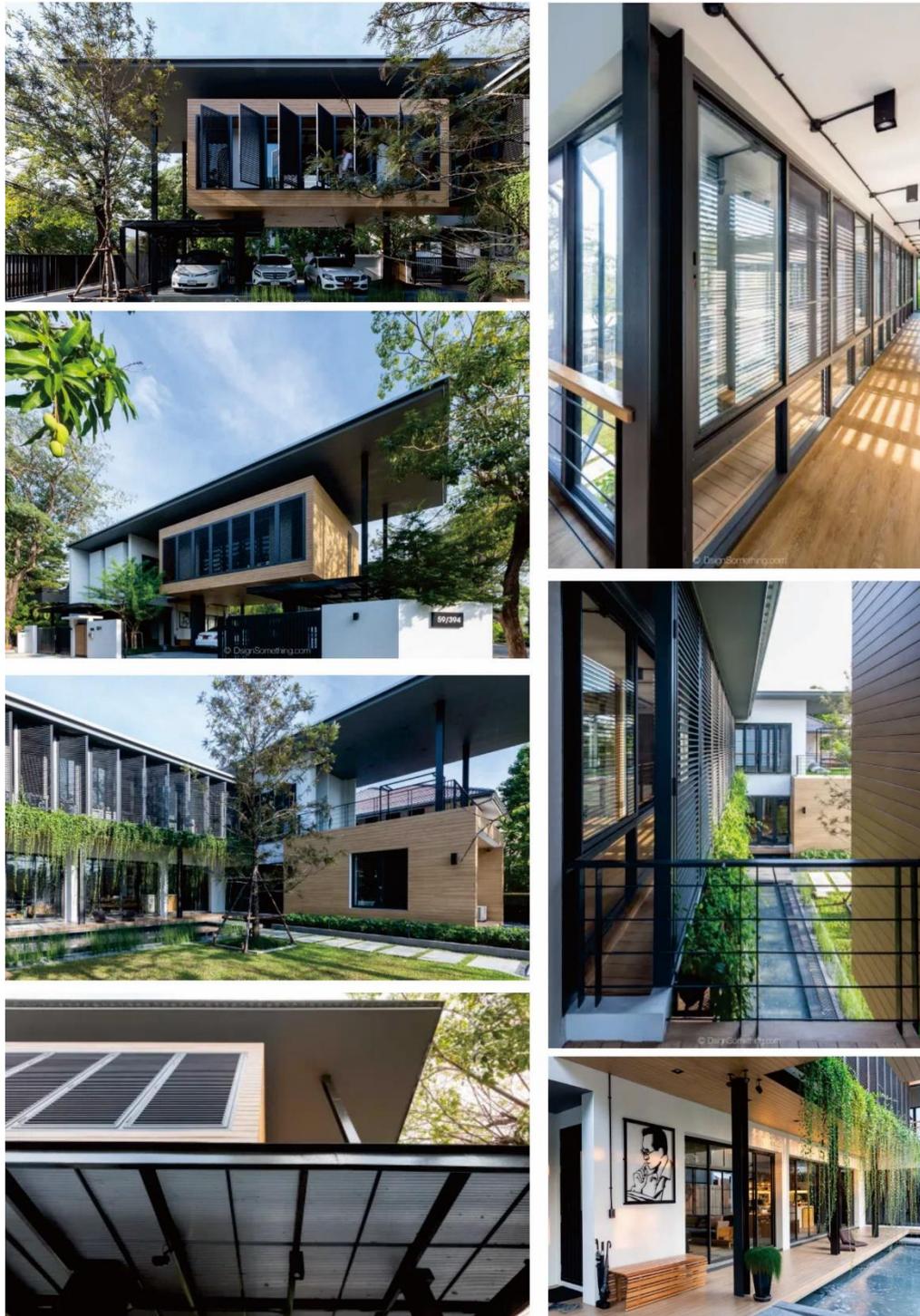
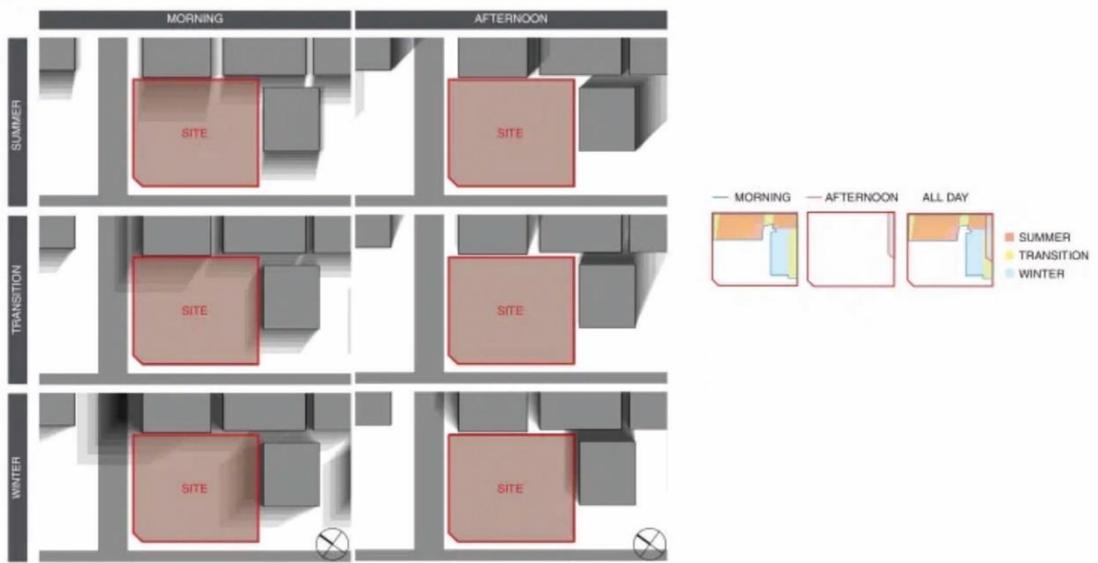
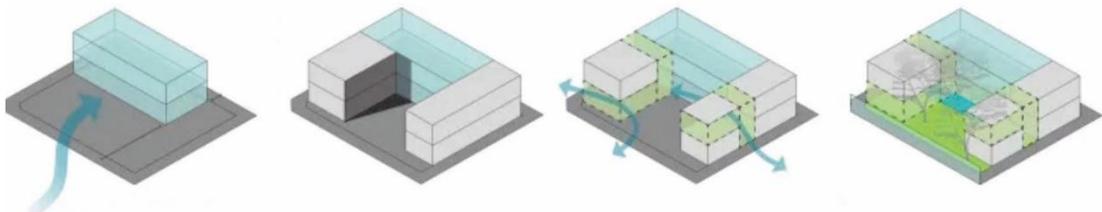


Figure 115 Oum & Pol's Home

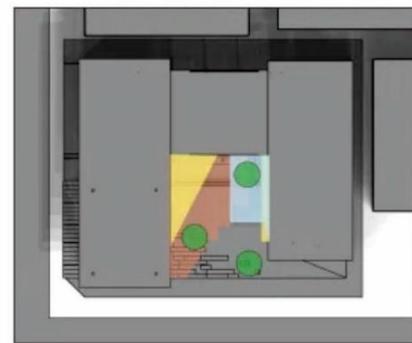
Source: <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/02/09/think-for-better-living->, accessed February 23, 2020.



Shade and shadow cast by neighbors
the analysis per sunlight year round by the architect



Shade and shadow cast by the house
the analysis per sunlight year round by the architect



● TREES

Figure 116 Design approach of Oum & Pol's Home

Source: <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/02/09/think-for-better-living->, accessed February 23, 2020.

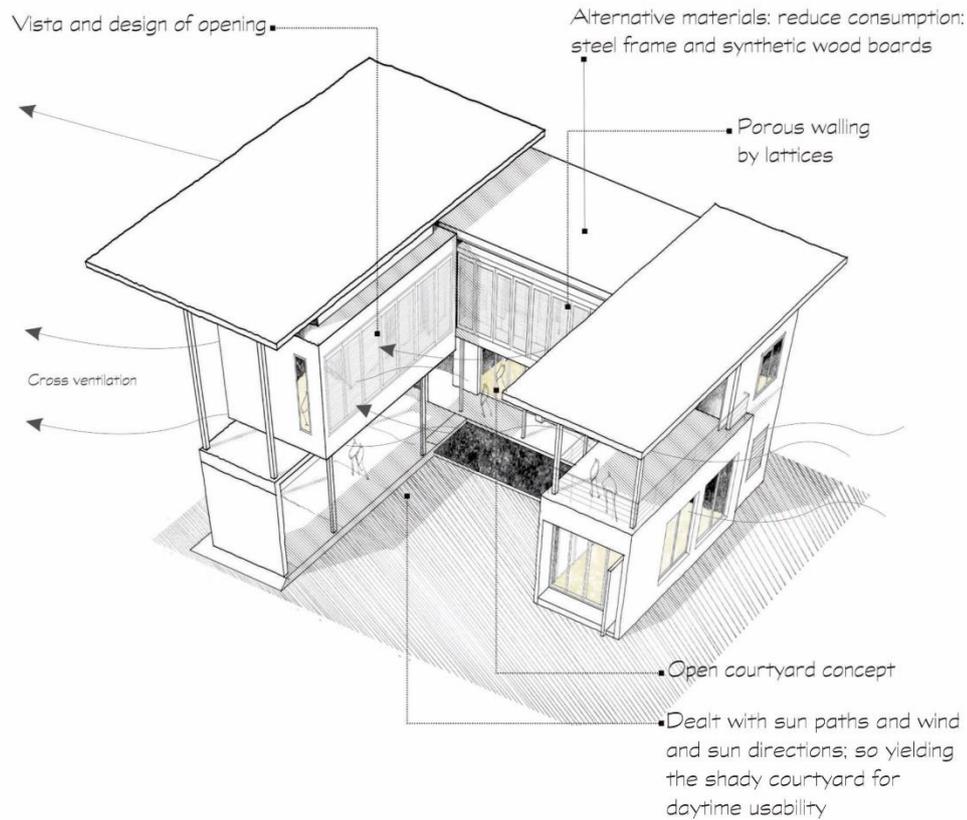


Figure 117 Analysis of Oum & Pol's Home

Source: By the author

Table 10 Analysis of Oum & Pol's Home

8 Raksak Sukontatarm: Oum & Pol's Home				
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	Context-oriented criteria		X	
2	Research in depth on sun paths and wind and sun directions		X	
3	Alternative materials: reduce consumption		X	
4	Vista and design of opening		X	
5	Lightness	X		
6	Efficient energy consumption		X	
7	Open courtyard			X

Discussion of Case Study No. 8

Using context-oriented criteria (“design a dialogue with the context”) was the primary approach, and the design response is the form of the house. The architect paid attention to sustainable and alternative materials. The priority was to choose materials that could replace natural materials to reduce resource consumption so that the environment could be preserved. He opted for synthetic wood and stone instead of authentic materials, but only when they were durable and had a look similar to the natural materials. The context plus the architect’s ideation jointly yielded a form that had a lightweight, airy feeling and suggested a vernacular style. It is an autonomous radical contextual design and a newly responsive design to the climatic context.

Case Study No. 9: Pongsakorn Tumpruksa’s Own Home

Architect: Pongsakorn Tumpruksa

“Poetic of space”¹⁶²

“Poetic of the story”¹⁶³

This house is the architect’s own house, and it is another typical example of how delving into the conditions of a site can become the central discourse for establishing the design approach. The architect did in-depth, hands-on research on the site in order to learn the real context: “I spent 4 months at the site to listen to the whisper of the context,” said Pongsakorn Tumpruksa.¹⁶⁴

The architect was much preoccupied with vernacular architecture as he studied the site and worked for his master’s degree. He admired native people who had discovered ways to live with nature and used designs that were the result of a long-

¹⁶²“Baan Thai Phuenthin 2017 [Vernacular House 2017] [in Thai],” Vernacular House Amarin TV34, 2017, accessed May 31, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvNRqYIZZoI>.

¹⁶³*Baan Lae Suan: Modern Vernacular Homes, Special Issue*, *ibid.*, 74-87.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

term grappling with nature to find solutions to climatic and geographical problems. Moreover, over the years they had developed an indigenous intellect and refined their dwellings to suit the context of the tropics, heat and humidity.

The intention was to build the first phase of the house and then possibly add an extension later. The *chan* would be the core of this house and connect any additional cluster of sections. Adding onto a house is a standard practice in vernacular style; it reflects the nature of the extended families of Thai people in the past and is still practiced by some in the present.

The architect chose to elevate the house on stilts and provided a *tai thun* space, which allows for cross ventilation. As the wind blows through the house, the entire house is cooled down. The archetype of the *tai thun* could also be used as a shared living space and for other purposes during the day because it is cooler to be underneath the building than inside it, according to Pongsakorn. Having the house on stilts is a way to cope with possible floods.

The architect researches the lifestyle of the owner in depth before a design is commenced; he knew that his house would be for his extended family, including his parents and brothers and sisters, so it had to provide enough space for everyone and include family space where they could enjoy activities together. He designed a large common space on the main floor that would accommodate everyone, and it reflects well the sociocultural aspect of the family. He feels that a house should not be a stereotype but should be tailor-made for the specific requirements of its owners; in this case, he was the owner.



Figure 118 Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's Own Home

Source: https://www.baanlaesuan.com/128744/houses/canal_thai_house, accessed June 1, 2020.

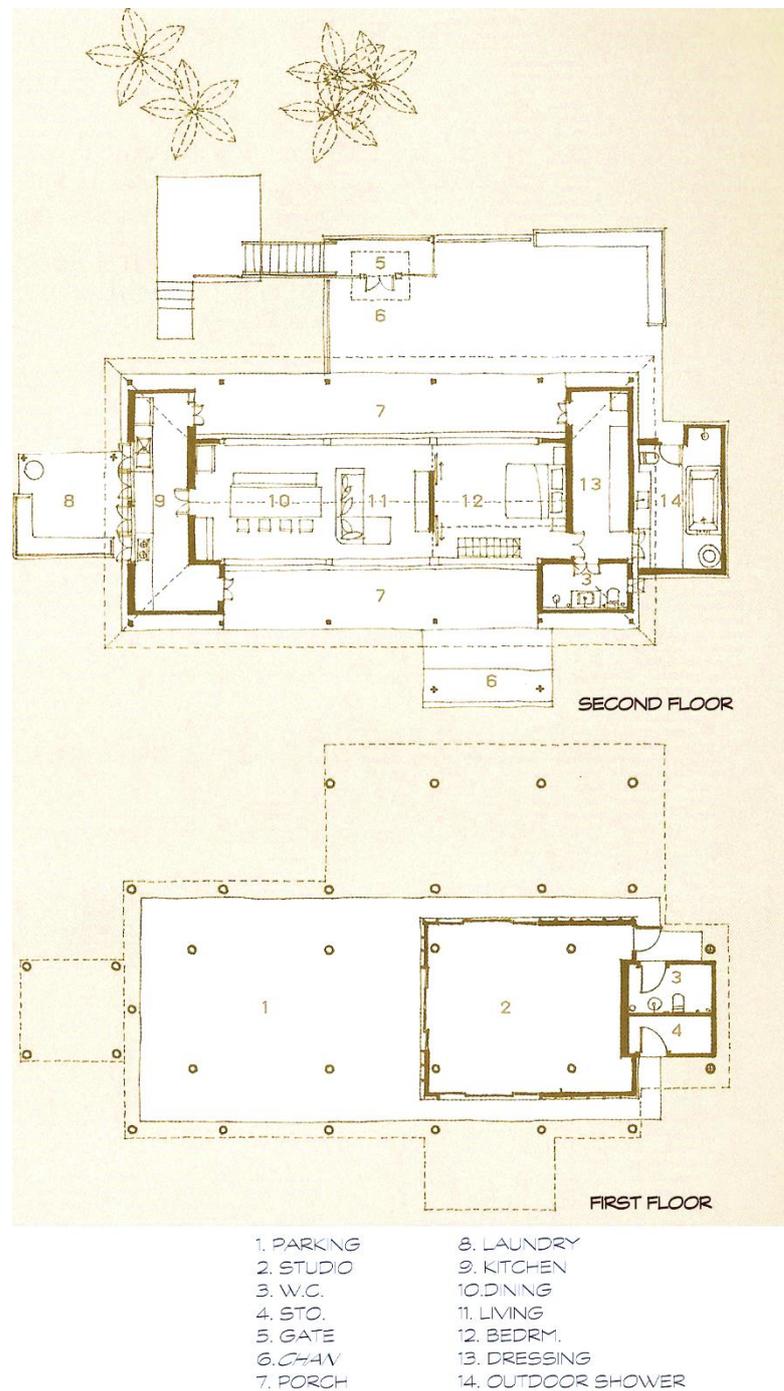


Figure 119 Plan of Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's Own Home

Source: Sarayut Srithipart, "Enduring Allure of a Canal-Side Home " in *Baan Lae Suan: Modern Vernacular Homes, Special Issue*, ed. Patsiri Chotipongsun and Samutcha Viraporn (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 2019), 87.

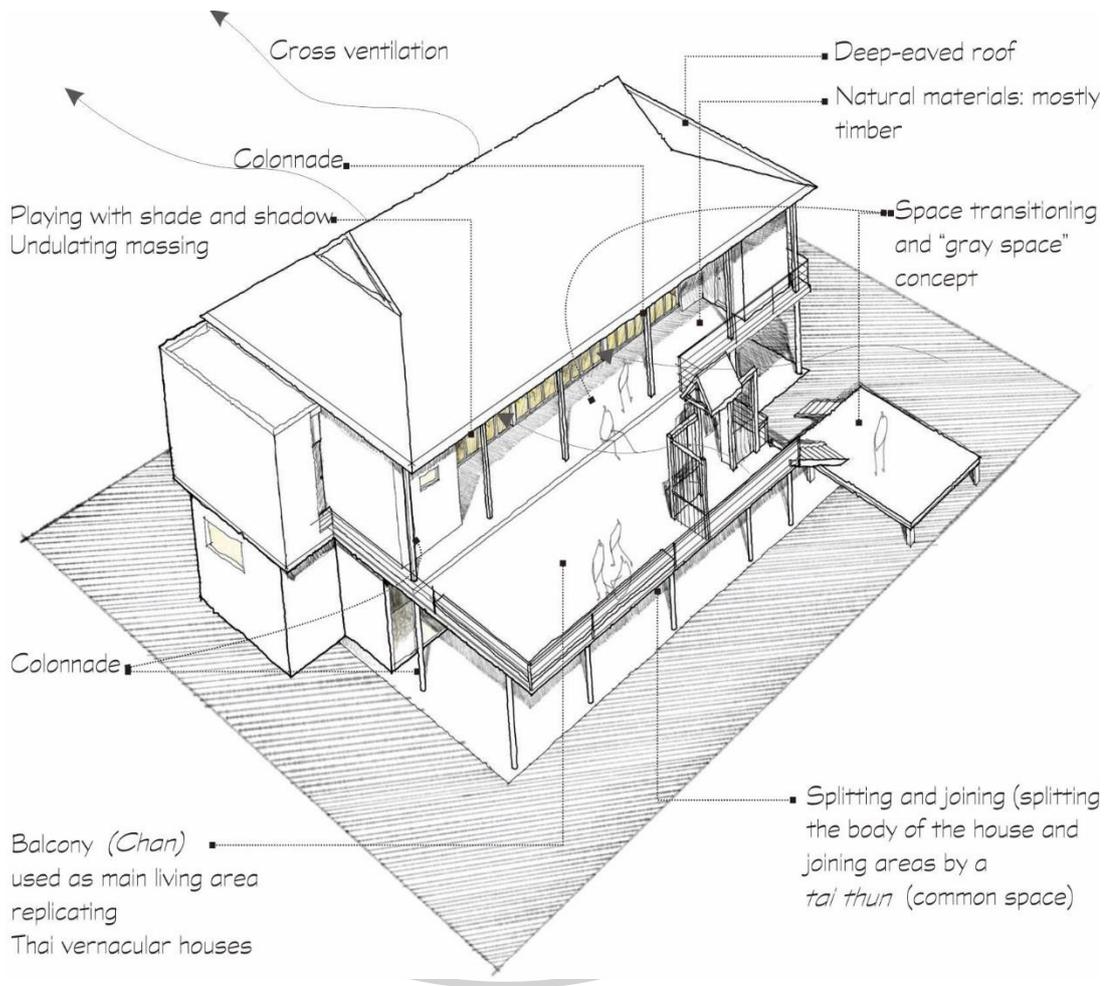


Figure 120 Analysis of Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's Own Home

Source: By the author

Table 11 Analysis of Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's Own Home

9	Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's Own Home			
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	Vernacular house translation	X		
2	Value of old mutual community	X		
3	Clustering instead of massiveness			X
4	Splitting and joining (splitting the body of the house and joining areas by a <i>tai thun</i> (common space))			X
5	Natural materials		X	
6	Cross ventilation		X	
7	Balcony			X
8	Colonnade			X
9	Deep-eaved roof			X
10	Undulating massing			X
11	Playing with shade and shadow		X	
12	Slant ceiling following the roof			X
13	Space transitioning and "gray space" concept			X
14	Lightness			X
15	Porosity	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 9

The architect designed this house as a folk-style dwelling. Pongsakorn, another protégé of the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts, was trained at and works there, and that affiliation seems to influence his philosophy of design. The owner and his family, who seem to live their lives conservatively, fancied a house reminiscent of primitive style, so he looked to ways of the past in designing it. The house echoes much of original vernacular style (i.e., the abstraction of this house) in its form, details, and values. The design exemplifies a formal archetype of the autonomous architecture of the contemporary time.

Case Study No. 10: Baan Tathata (House of Natthorn Darapongsathaporn, MD)

Architect: Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweessap

“Tathata House Wooden House on the Step of Lanna People” . . . “Thai vernacular house yet *yu dai ching* in the present time. . . Contemporary Thai vernacular style.”¹⁶⁵

Located in Nan Province, the overall form of Baan Tathata (ตึกต๋า) is divided into two masses, the main house and a bedroom. They are connected by a corridor designed to imitate a *chan*, the common space in Thai vernacular houses. Adjustments to the design were needed to have the *chan* because the original archetype design was an open space without walls or roofs.

Flowable massing is a primary approach that allows wind to blow through the whole house so that air-conditioning is not needed even in the summertime. In this house, the architect added a translucent roof and wall that were porous enough to allow an extraordinary flow of wind and much cross ventilation. Its design is based on the directions of the sun, shade, and shadows; it accents the façade while also reducing the heat of the house.

In planning the layout, the architect heeded the natural setting but did not disturb it in any way by cutting down trees or leveling the site’s contours. The building seems to “rhyme” with the terrain.

The architect used reclaimed wood for most of the house. In a unique construction process, the main contractor collaborated with the *salah* [สล่า],¹⁶⁶ who are

¹⁶⁵"Baan Tathata Baan Mai Bon Roi Thao Khong Khong Chao Na [Baan Tathata: A Wooden House Following the Footsteps of of Lanna Ancestors] [in Thai]," Baan Lae Suan, 2020, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/50093/houses/baantodta>.

¹⁶⁶*Salah* [สล่า] is an esoteric term for a group of local craftsmen found only in the northern part of Thailand.

local artisans who do state-of-the-art, quality timber construction. This house has meticulous tectonics, which make it a unique and outstanding building.

In the details of the wood joints an old technique of vernacular architecture was used, in which fewer nails were needed to affix the joints. Some joints needed a more robust form of carpentry, however, so for them, nuts and bolts were used. This shows that the architect was skillful at adapting techniques from the past for today's technical requirements.

Small details are used in the house that allude to vernacular design, such as providing a terracotta jar next to the entry stairs for washing hands and feet after returning from the garden. This is an ancient furnishing that would have been used by people in the olden days.

The *tai thun* space is the house's archetype, and it reflects vernacular design. Some adjustments had to be worked out regarding the accessibility of the *tai thun*; in ordinary vernacular houses, it would be left open, but in this case, similar to Jun Sekino's design in case study no. 6, it needed protection from trespassers at night, so the architect designed a set of accordion doors to enclose it at night. In an authentic vernacular house, a gap is usually left between the boards of a wooden floor, but in this house no gaps were left for reasons of security. The architect placed an altar and prayer area, acting as the crescendo of the entire space, in the hallway at the center of the house so it could be accessed visually and physically and, in this way, serve the wishes of the owner for a spiritual ambience in the house.

A playful splitting of levels helps divide the interior space and minimize the mass when looked at from outside. Modern furniture has been used to ensure livability and make a harmonious association with the body of the house. An exposed ceiling elaborates on the aesthetics of the vernacular tectonics and also allows for convenience of maintenance.

The architect developed a sandwiching technique for installing the terracotta roof tiles in which a metal sheet is inserted between the two side layers to prevent

rainwater from leaking into the house. The porous walls (*fa Lai*) are made of slidable windows, as in the vernacular style, but the architect adopted modern fitting techniques such as sliding tracks, which are more user friendly for everyday usage.



Figure 121 Baan Tathata

Source: <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/50093/houses/baantodta/2>, accessed March 2, 2020.



Figure 122 Baan Tathata

Source: <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/50093/houses/baantodta/2>, accessed March 2, 2020.

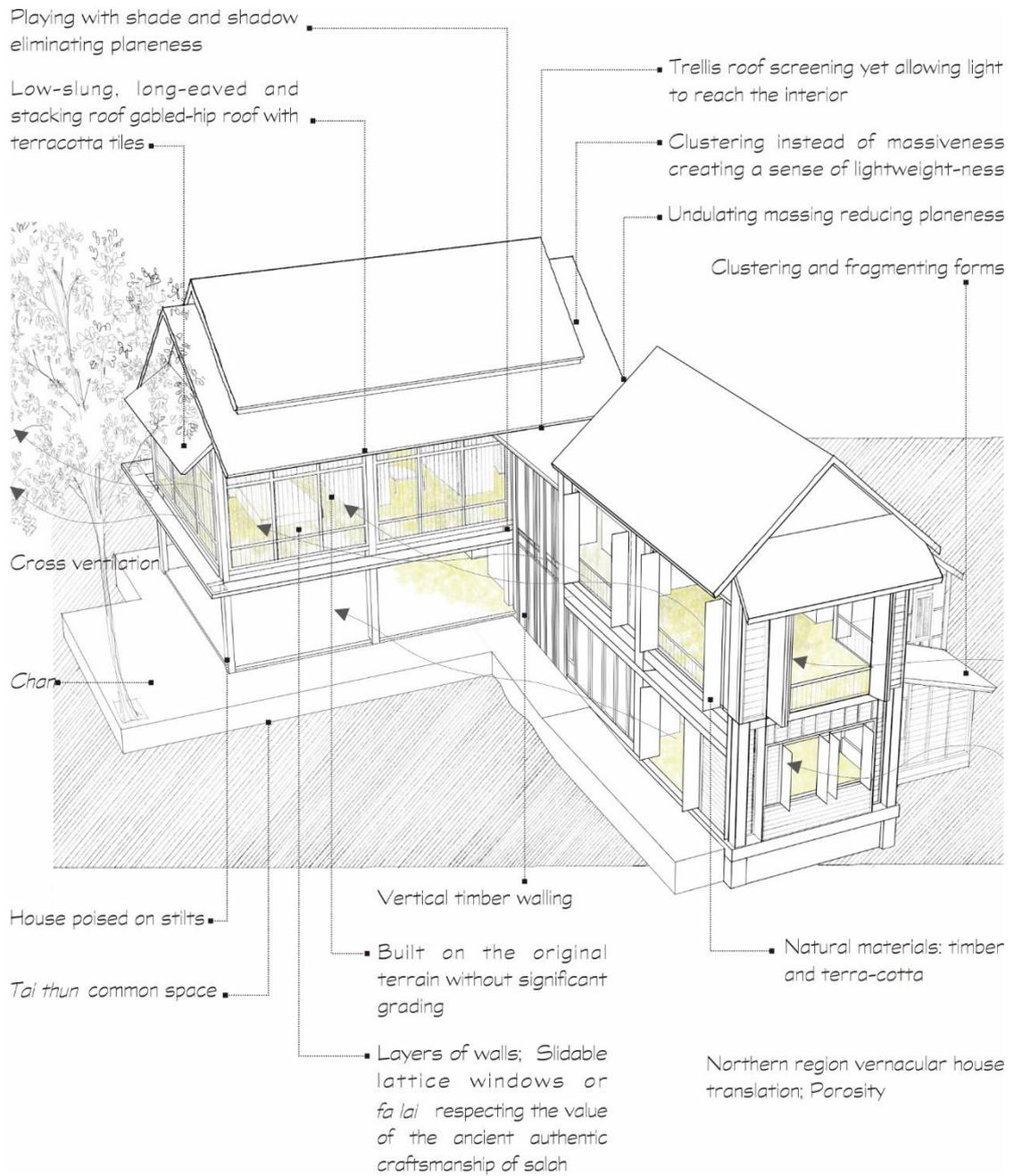


Figure 123 Analysis of Baan Tathata

Source: By the author

Table 12 Analysis of Baan Tathata

10 Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweessap: Baan Tathata				
No.	Element	In	Approach	Archetype
1	Embraced by vernacular house style	X		
2	Northern region vernacular house translation	X		
3	Value of old authentic craftsmanship	X		
4	Clustering instead of massiveness			X
5	<i>Tai thun</i> common space			X
6	Natural materials		X	
7	Cross ventilation		X	
8	<i>Chan</i>			X
9	Stilts			X
10	Low-slung, deep-eaved and stacking roof made of terracotta tiles			X
11	Undulating massing			X
12	Playing with shade and shadow		X	
13	Trellis roof			X
14	Layers of walls		X	
15	Vertical timber walling			X
16	High porosity	X		
17	Lightness of composition	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 10

Using an abstraction that was a reinterpretation of the Thai vernacular style while maintaining its vernacular feel, the architect also had to cope with a new lifestyle because people do not live as they did in the past. Despite the literal adoption of old elements, the old language has to be reinterpreted for a new usage. All of the Thai vernacular designs he had already done had to be reinterpreted in depth and fine-tuned to generate a relatively new grammar that nonetheless resembled the original. Many new features had to be redesigned and redefined with a new functionality or using new materials that would better serve daily living, so it was a *yu dai ching* approach.

This house is a celebration of the northern suburban landscape and this is echoed in the house's appearance. It has a coherence with the landscape and a uniqueness of style that arise from the artistic craftsmanship based on past Thai vernacular-style houses. The architect tried to incorporate a multitude of tectonic ideals with assistance from the *salahs*. It is a tour de force. The architect used natural materials, which require the skills of local artisans for building in the old style. In turn, these features provide a solemn, austere, and almost sacred sense of autonomous architecture.

Case Study No. 11: Little Hideaway, Khao Yai House

Architect: Kanika Ratanapridakul (Spacetime Architects Co., Ltd.)

“Modern tropical house.”¹⁶⁷

Like traditional Thai houses of former times, this house is nestled in idyllic surroundings. The design is by Spacetime Architects Co. The house rises above its stilts and the void space of its *tai thun* below, so cooling breezes can blow through. From the main floor one can see magnificent vistas of Nakhon Ratchasima's Khao Yai mountain range.

“A tropical house in the forest was laid to suit wintertime living when cold air breezes through it. In an estate of Khao Loi, Khao Yai with a concept of “Little Home in the Forest.” With the floor elevated above the *tai thun*, it helps the house look light and porous. Small in scale, it houses 210 sq.m. of living interior space with two bedrooms. As the primary function is lifted, the vista to the outside is superb. The unique elements include round columns on the first floor, which in harmony with

¹⁶⁷“Modern Tropical Design” Kue Karnorkbaeb Hai Thuk “Kala Thesa” [Modern Tropical Design is the Design to Suit Space and Time] [in Thai], Baan Lae Suan, 2019, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/63704/baanlaesuan-fair/kannika-ratanapridakul>.

trees that bear the load of the upper volume. The columns of the second floor, by contrast, are lightweight steel, which is good to receive the load of the metal sheet roof. The feature that makes this house embrace tropical character is the balcony, which takes up half of the upper floor space. The ceiling of this house is extraordinarily made higher than traditional houses at 3.30 m.”¹⁶⁸ The balcony reaches all around the house for a 360-degree view.

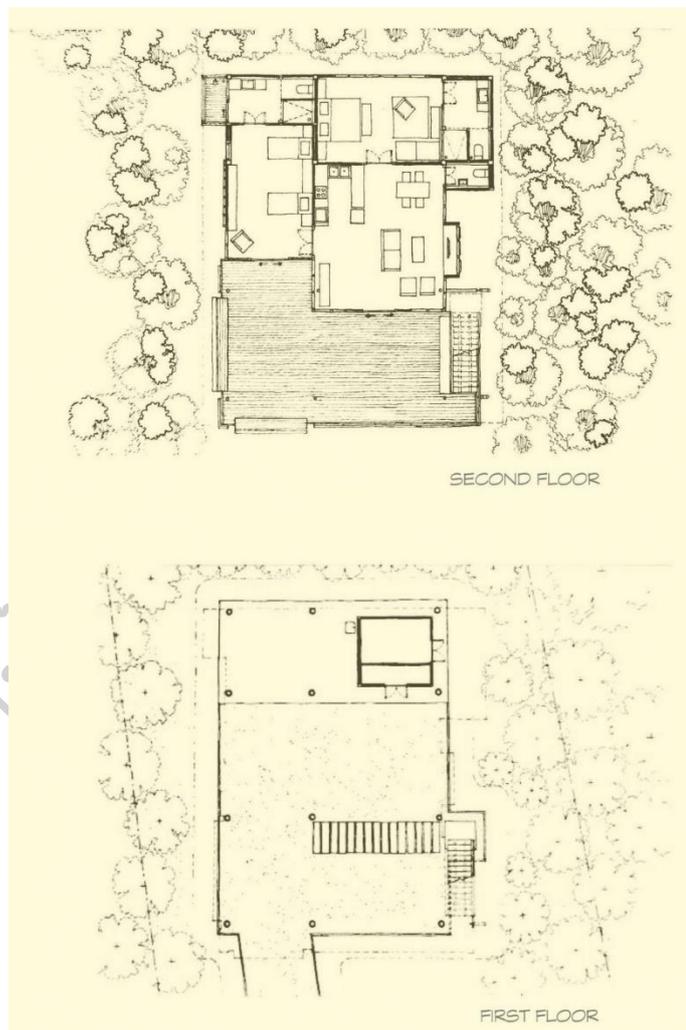


Figure 124 Plan: Little Hideaway, Khao Yai House

Source: <https://baiplu-httpwwwbloggercom.blogspot.com/2018/03/house-forest.html>, accessed July 4, 2020.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.



Figure 125 Little Hideaway, Khao Yai House

Source: <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/63704/baanlaesuan-fair/kannika-ratanapridakul> accessed March 15, 2020; <https://livingasean.com/house/modern-house-forest-setting/>, March 15, 2020.

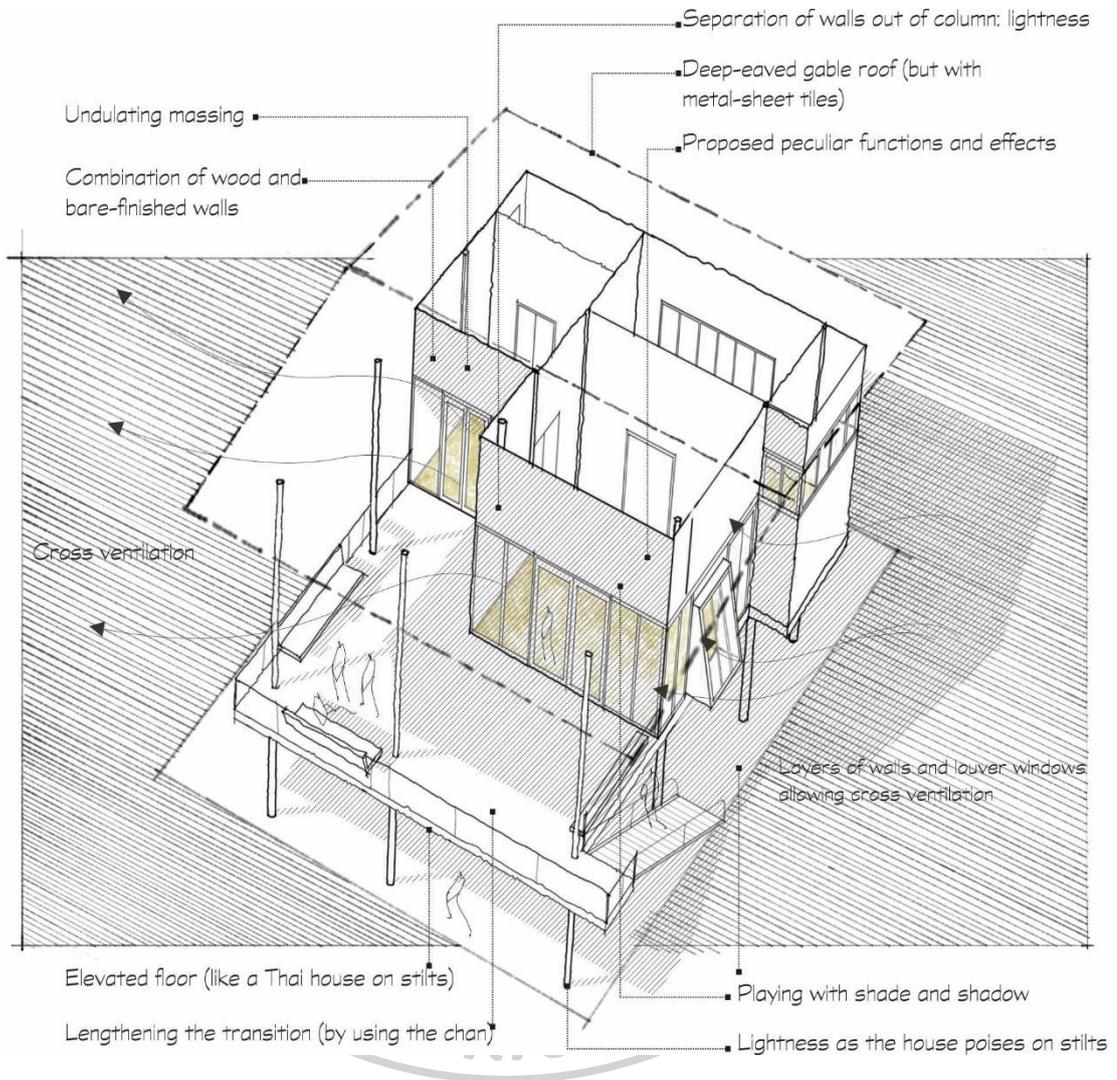


Figure 126 Analysis of Little Hideaway, Khao Yai House

Source: By the author

Table 13 Analysis of Little Hideaway, Khao Yai House

11 Kanika Ratanapridakul: Little Hideaway, Khao Yai House				
No.	Element	In	Approach	Archetype
1	Contemporary Thai house	X		
2	Separation of walls out of column: lightness	X		
3	Revealing the hidden phenomena of things	X		
4	Proposed peculiar functions and effects		X	
5	Tropical climate concerns		X	
6	Lengthening the transition (by using the <i>chan</i>)			X
7	Cross ventilation		X	
8	<i>Chan</i>			X
9	Split massing			X
10	Elevated floor (like a Thai house on stilts)			X
11	Deep-eaved roof			X
12	Undulating massing			X
13	Playing with shade and shadow			X
14	Combination of wood and bare-finished walls			X
15	Porosity by louver windows	X		
16	Lightness by elevating the mass above ground	X		
17	Nostalgic in mood	X		
18	Implication of Thai vernacular house	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 11

Kanika Ratanapridakul created a unique, individual, customarily made home for her family. It is a second home and was built recently, nearly 16 years after her first home (mentioned in Chapter 5). With its location in the countryside, the house expresses itself even more modestly and rustically than the first house, which is in urban Bangkok. This house portrays the architect's sensitivity in design in her response to the surrounding context.

The house's form transcends her urban-style repertoire. In this house with a semiopen envelope, she pushed the opening to the extreme. The body or main volume of the upper floor is poised on stilts, a way in the vernacular style of addressing the

area's vulnerability to flooding. In this house the use of stilts has a certain degree of peculiarity compared with the other contemporary houses studied in this thesis. For instance, gravel was used for the surface of the *tai thun*, creating a sense of the primitive. People in past times used this type of space for multipurpose activities during the day and as a pen for cattle at night. The house has lightweight wall "membranes" made of sliced timber planks and openable, glazed, louvered windows almost all the way around it.

The rustic stucco walls create a mood and tone of vernacular modesty and sentiment. The mixture of modern and vernacular architecture evokes a casual, suburban way of life and intensifies the views of the trees and mountain range. Therefore, it can be said that the house has an autonomous architectural design that combines modern architecture with a translated vernacular idiom.

Case Study No. 12: Flowable House: House by the Canal

Architect: Tonkao Panin, Tanakarn Mokkhasmita, and Metawaj Chajirapaisarn (Research Studio Panin)

"Thai-way Modern House" . . .

"Tropical modern style"¹⁶⁹

The Flowable House, built in 2018, is situated on a canal in the Samsen District of Bangkok. It has a cuboid volume under a gable roof. As seen in the media, this house has an uncompromisingly modern design based on the Corbusian structural principle of *pilotis* and a Dom-ino skeleton. *Baan Lae Suan* magazine branded it a

¹⁶⁹"Changwa Thai Thai Khong Baan Rim Khlong Samsen [Thai Rhythm of House by the Samsen Canal [in Thai]," *Baan Lae Suan*, 2020, accessed March 5, 2020, <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/55992/houses/thai-rhythm>.

“Thai-way modern house”¹⁷⁰ employing a concept of “tropical modern style” (or modern tropical) with a sleek, crisp fusion of a lucid space, form, style, and proportion, reflecting the owner’s requirements.

The architect’s crystalline concrete box was merged with the classical idiom. The overall form and detail based on the idea of “simplicity” were distilled into a mechanistic, transparent form exuding a sense of lightness, airiness, and clarity, which somewhat recall the abstract form of Mies van der Rohe yet is much infused with the “flavor” of tropical architecture.

The need for a spacious room in the interior dictated the structural grid, which was transformed into a small division in the façade. The façade worked for the language of the architecture with an effect of severity and nobility, qualities that were understandably embraced by neo-modern architects. Its essence is a repetitive motif of white planes of openings on the house’s front and rear sides. Translucency is created by the opening of a series of windows that stretch from corner to corner, taking up the whole plane of the front and rear façades. The aperture in both the front and rear allows unlimited cross ventilation, which is another essential reason for this design approach.

Proportions and scales of elements were taken into account, mainly in the interval of the window’s grid, which was meticulously humanized to a scale appropriate for a residential building. To deal with the climate, the house fully adopts the tropical approach. The owner required the house to be livable without air-conditioning, and this could happen only with a proper design. As was mentioned earlier, the cross ventilation created by the façade’s windows occurs by making the second layer as open as possible so that it can accommodate all of the airflow, and this practice is extraordinarily unique. Such an arrangement is used on both floors. The resultant effect is rhetorical lightness, porosity, and translucency.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.; "House Flow Baan Rim Khlong [House Flow: A House by the Canal] [in Thai]," Dsign Something, 2020, accessed March 6, 2020, <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/01/31/house-flow->.

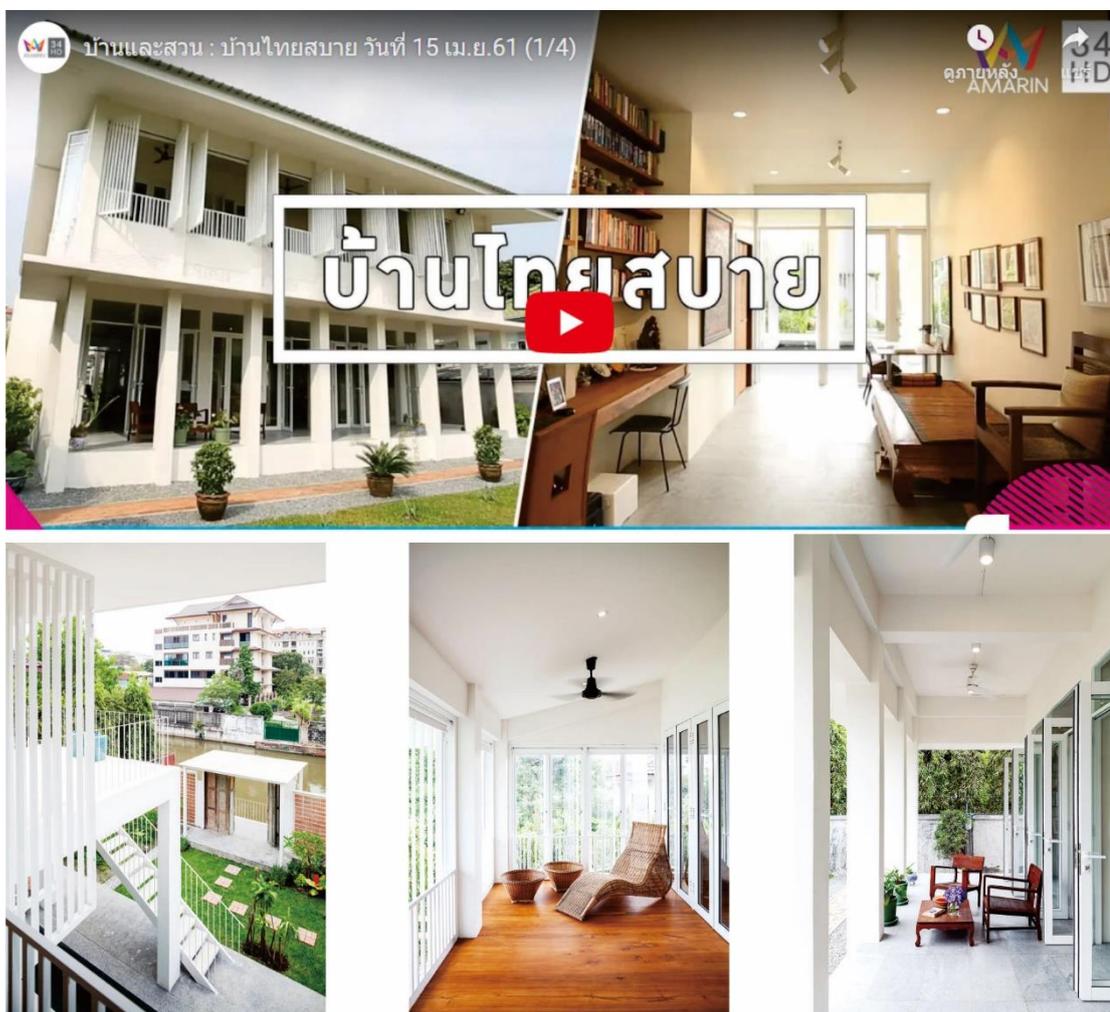


Figure 127 Flowable House: House by the Canal

Source: <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/55992/houses/thai-rhythm>, accessed March 5, 2020.



Figure 128 Flowable House: House by the Canal

Source: <http://www.elledecorationthailand.com/Live/white-space/>, accessed January 1, 2020; <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/01/31/house-flow->, accessed March 6, 2020; <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/55992/houses/thai-rhythm>, accessed March 5, 2020.

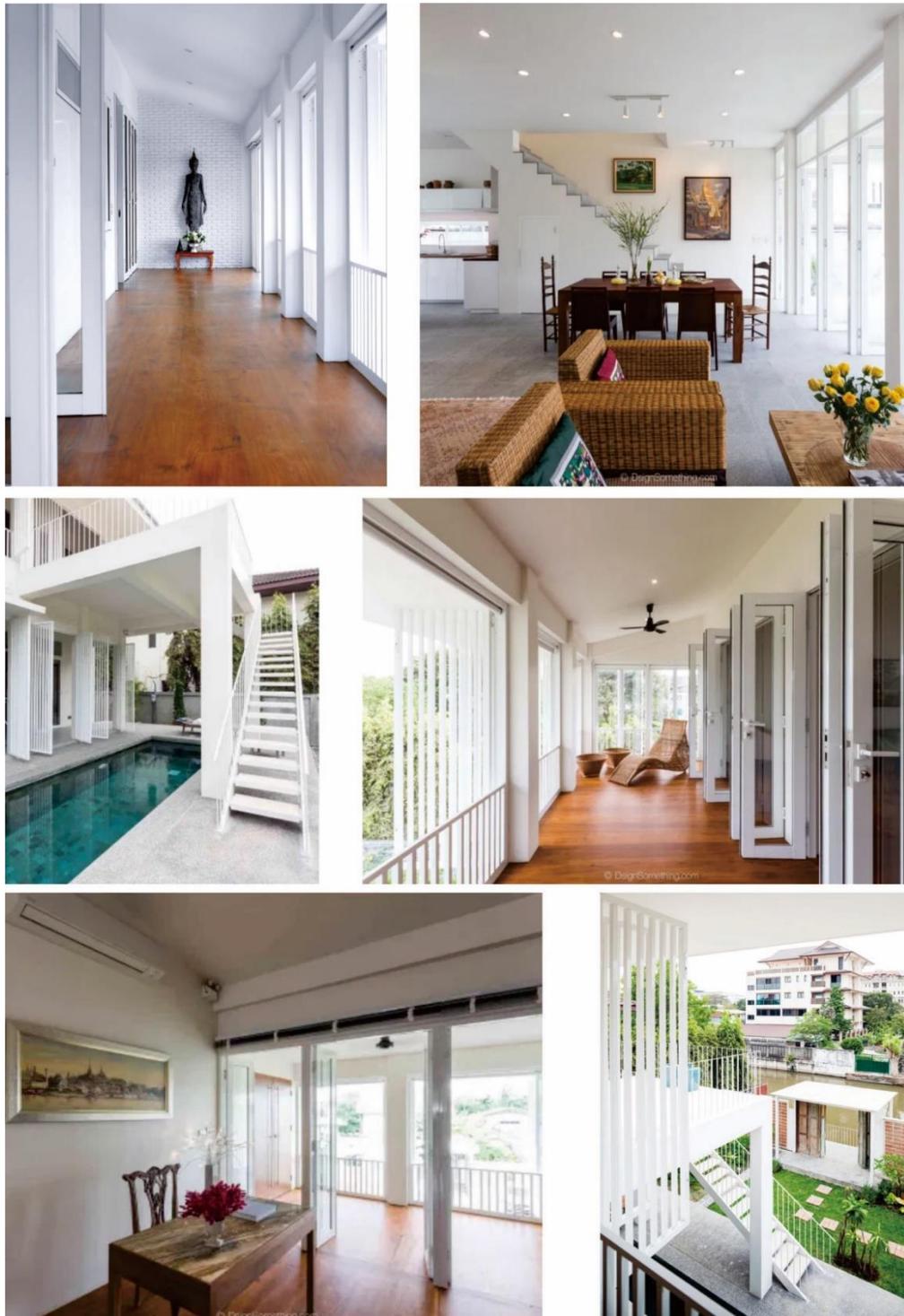
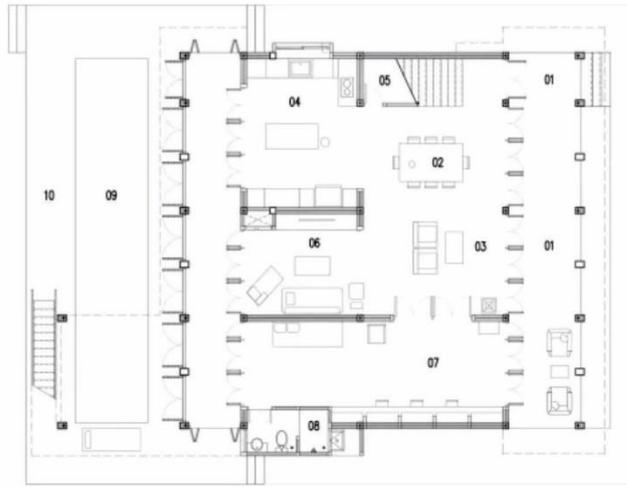


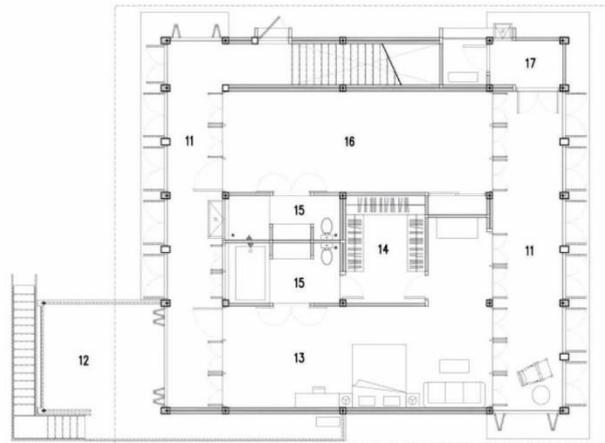
Figure 129 Flowable House: House by the Canal

Source: <http://www.elledecorationthailand.com/Live/white-space/>, accessed January 1, 2020; <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/01/31/house-flow->, accessed March 6, 2020; <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/55992/houses/thai-rhythm>, accessed March 5, 2020.

- 
- 01 FRONT PORCH
 - 02 DINING
 - 03 LIVING
 - 04 KITCHEN
 - 05 STO.
 - 06 FAMILY RM.
 - 07 STUDIO
 - 08 W.C.
 - 09 POOL
 - 10 POOL DECK

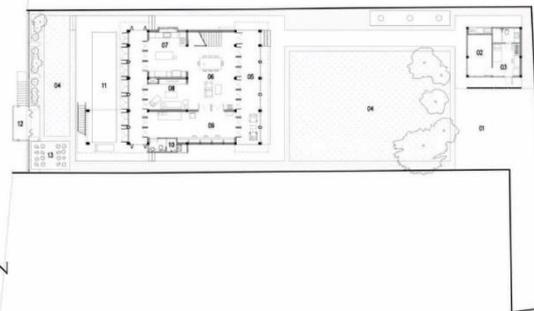


FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

- 01 PARKING
- 02 STO.
- 03 MAID
- 04 LAWN
- 05 FRONT PORCH
- 06 FOYER
- 07 KITCHEN
- 08 FAMILY RM.
- 09 STUDIO
- 10 W.C.
- 11 POOL
- 12 GAZEBO
- 13 VEGETABLE GARDEN



LAYOUT

Figure 130 Plans of Flowable House: House by the Canal

Source: <https://dsignsomething.com/2017/01/31/house-flow->, accessed March 6, 2020.

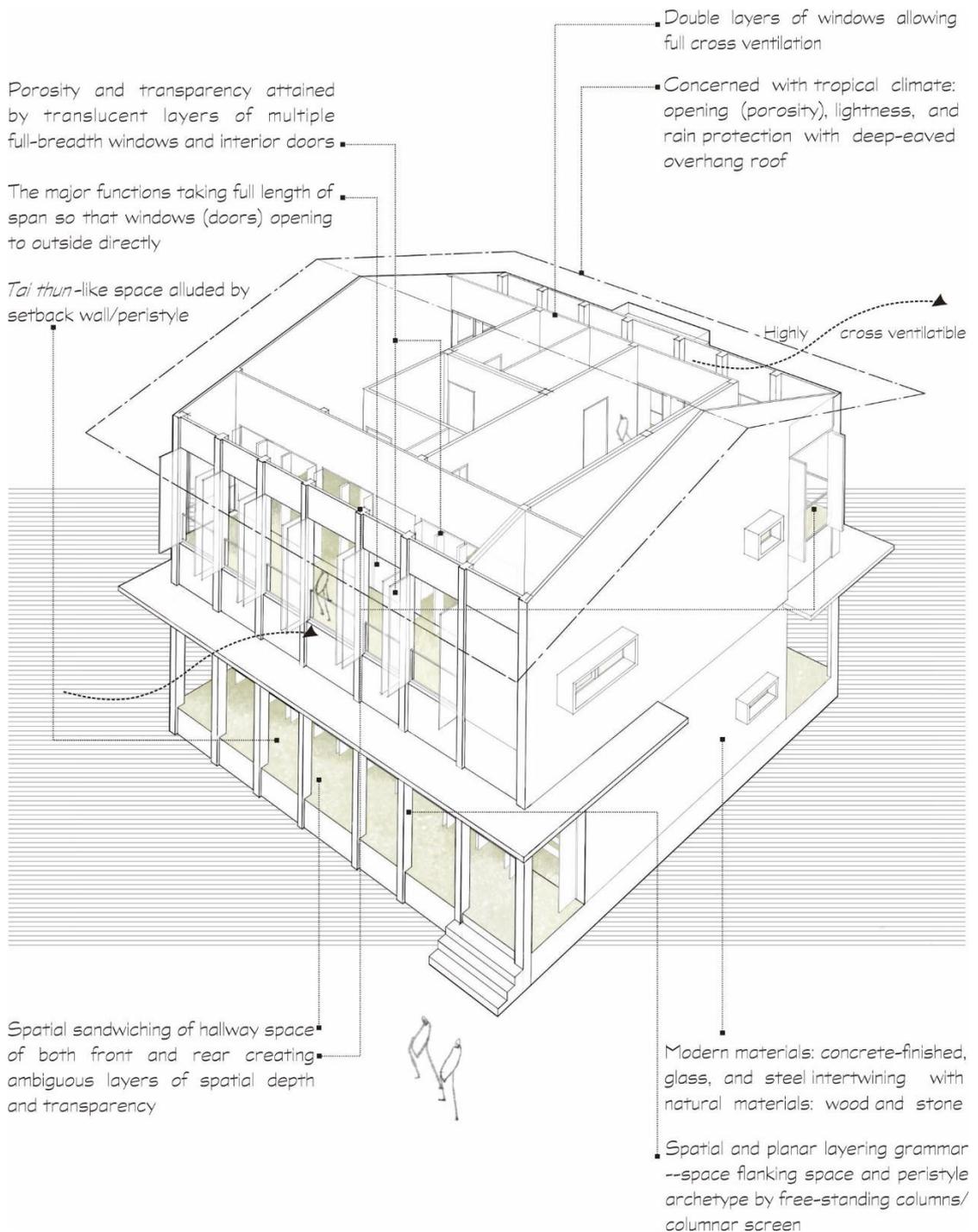


Figure 131 Analysis of the Flowable House

Source: By the author

Table 14 Analysis of the Flowable House

12 Tonkao Panin: Flowable House		Abstrac tion	Approach	Archetype
No.	Element			
1	Context-oriented criteria		X	
2	Concerning sun path, wind and sun directions: deep-eave overhang roof		X	
3	Skins: window			X
4	Vistas and design of opening			X
5	Spatial and planar layering	X		
6	Lightness	X		
7	Porosity	X		
8	Very plain but substantial	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 12

This house ostensibly introduces a new way of living, with its open floor plans, clean, modular layout, and avoidance of unnecessary frills. Its spatial sequence is smooth, with a gradual progression from the brightness of the outdoors to the dimmest part of the house inside. This is done through the juxtaposition of planar and spatial layering of the exterior window planes and the corridor, which is the core of the house.

It can be said that the House of Wind Flow has several significant peculiarities, including a porosity that one can nearly see through, a phenomenal transparency, a modesty, and a lightness like that of a birdcage. The façade treatment, with whole-wall windows, is the archetype that primarily contributes to the porosity and juxtaposition of the outer-layer corridor and its hollowness. This articulation draws one in and generates a feeling of breathing without effort.

The phenomenal transparency is created by the playful layering and the juxtaposition of spaces. The modesty is apparent in the Platonic formalism, which adopts simple massing. The porosity and transparency act as the primary archetype and create lightness. The homogeneity of the materials and the harmony of color and

tone give the skins a lightweight feeling that lightens up the form. Therefore, this house differs tactically from other houses designed to have a lightweight feeling. In other designs, the *tai thun*-like space at the peristyle setback gives a sense of floating, but in this house that sense is given merely by the porosity of the skins.

The language of the architecture of this house is a tropical design vocabulary despite its stark modern appearance. The substantial yet streamlined attribution of it demonstrates a subtle discourse of climatic design factor and it also embraces the ideology of sufficiency. Porosity is an attribute that allows the flow of liquid or air. Furthermore, in terms of the visual language, porous objects by nature speak of lightness and an inclination towards reduction. It is generally accepted that reductionism is synonymous with modesty. The house epitomizes the simplest expression of tropical modernity in its approach to design, and the architect took into account the issue of context; for this reason, it can be said that the house has relevance to Frampton's theory of critical regionalism. This house shows clearly how an architect can distill the essence of a place or region without adopting an overly regionalist position or making recourse to a theoretical posture. In this way, it is an example of autonomous architecture that is modern but also breaks the box.

Case Study No. 13: The Harirak Family's House
Architect: Bundit Kanisthakhon (Tadpole Studio)

“Thai-ness under Modern”

“Thai Thai (moderate Thai style/kind of Thai style) suits Thai people the most” (claimed a TV anchor)

“[This house] can be a prototype of a modern Thai house that shows concern for the climatic context and nature and brings about comfort.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹“Baan Thi Pen Puen Kab Sang Daed [The Friend of Sunlight's House] ", Dsign Something, accessed January, 20, 2020, <https://rb.gy/j9hv8i>.; “Chung Baan

The Harirak Family's House is located in the Charansanitwong district. It was described on a television show as having modern-style Thai-ness. This house was chosen for the cover of a magazine issue with the theme "Thai [House] Today." It is interesting to see how the media perceived the style of Thai and Thai-ness for current times.

Bundit Kanisthakhon is the architect who learned that the owner was enthralled by nostalgic sentiment and needed a new dwelling in an incredibly unique house with an atmosphere of regionalism. The two of them looked at designs and decided to base the house on the style of Geoffrey Bawa, who has been acclaimed as the father of the modern tropical style.

Rather than style or a photogenic appearance, comfort came first as the goal for realistic living, or *yu dai ching*. Considering a design approach to the climatic context as the primary issue, the architect explored how to minimize heat by maximizing cross ventilation to create comfortable conditions without using much air-conditioning. The result was a flowable house with porous skins. He used a very "breathable" archetype of 4-meter-tall windows enclosing the whole façade of the long walls, and this is the major feature defining the character of this house. The rear façade is wrapped with hollow blocks, which enhance the wind flow from both directions. Because both sides of the interior space are flanked by hallways and a balcony, it can be said that a buffering space sandwiches the body of the house at both rims.

The gabled roof allows the drainage of rainwater and buffers the heat; it is a typical tropical roof archetype. Because the house is located in a flood-prone area, it was elevated over stilts approximately 1.20 meters high and has a low-ceilinged space underneath that allows access to the plumbing maintenance.

The house looks both modern and nostalgic because of the use of modern and traditional materials, that is, bare-finish stucco and hollow blocks combined with wood and, especially, frontal windows in the terracotta roof.

Because the owner required a large living room as the main common area, the architect designed a vast space that was double the volume of the front side of the house. In it, family members can enjoy a garden view through the wall of windows.

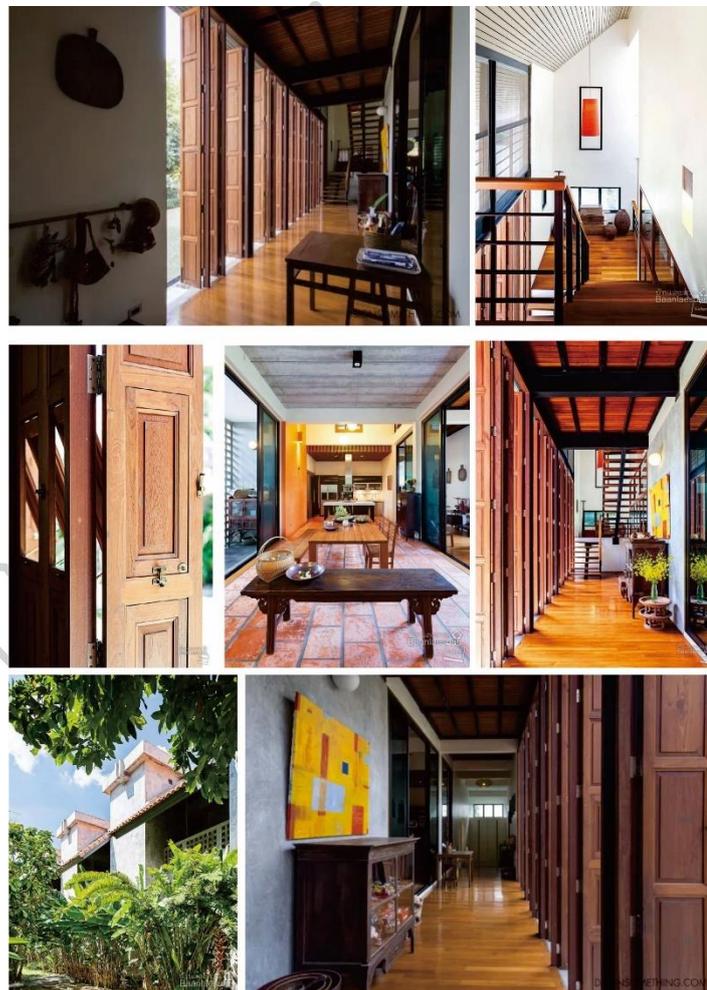


Figure 132 The Harirak Family's House

Source: <https://www.amarintv.com/video/detail/7037>, accessed May 31, 2020;

<https://bit.ly/3lJr0ll>, accessed May 31, 2020; <https://rb.gy/j9hv8i>, accessed January, 20, 2020.

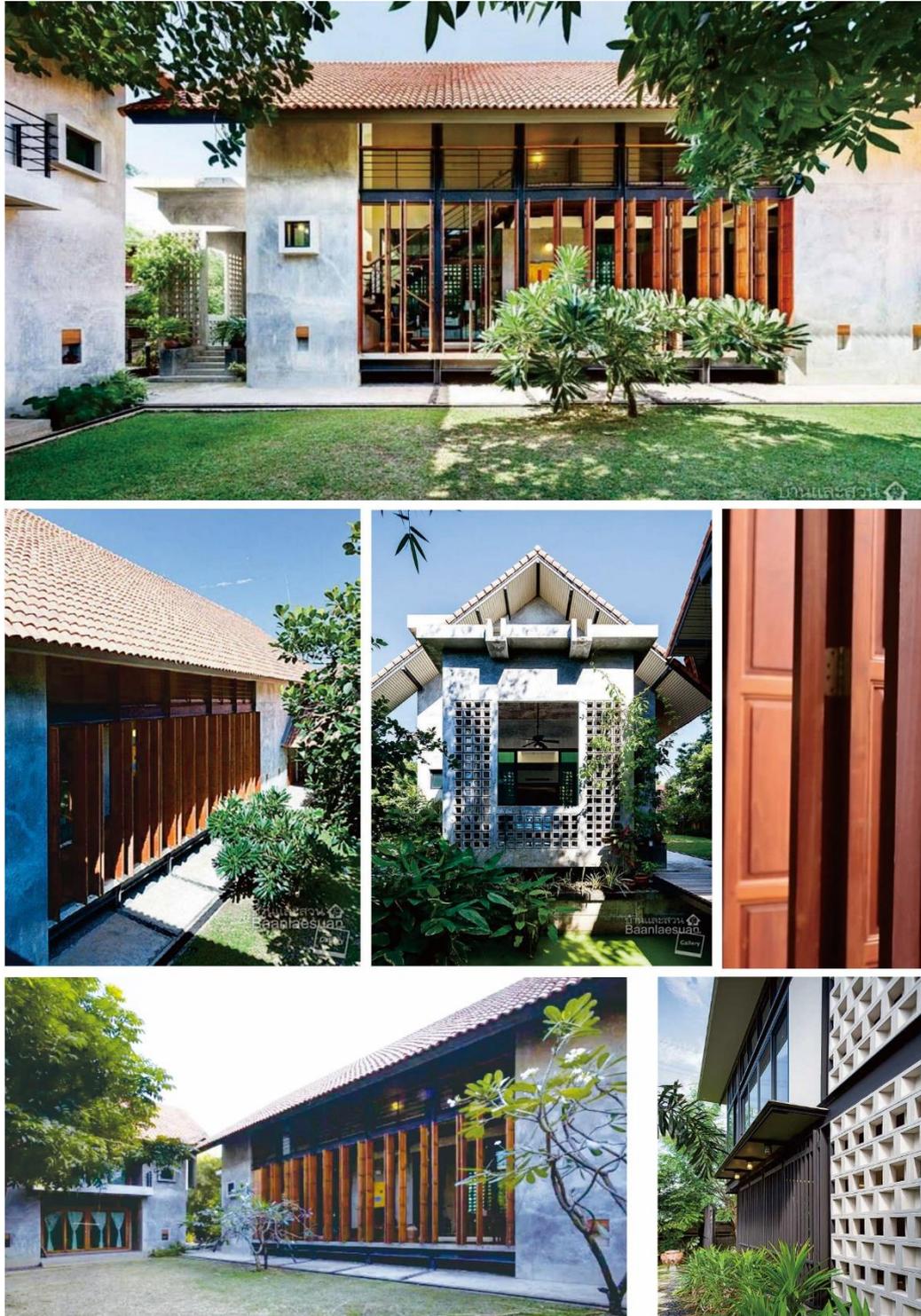


Figure 133 The Harirak Family's House

Source: <https://bit.ly/3lJr0ll>, accessed May 31, 2020.

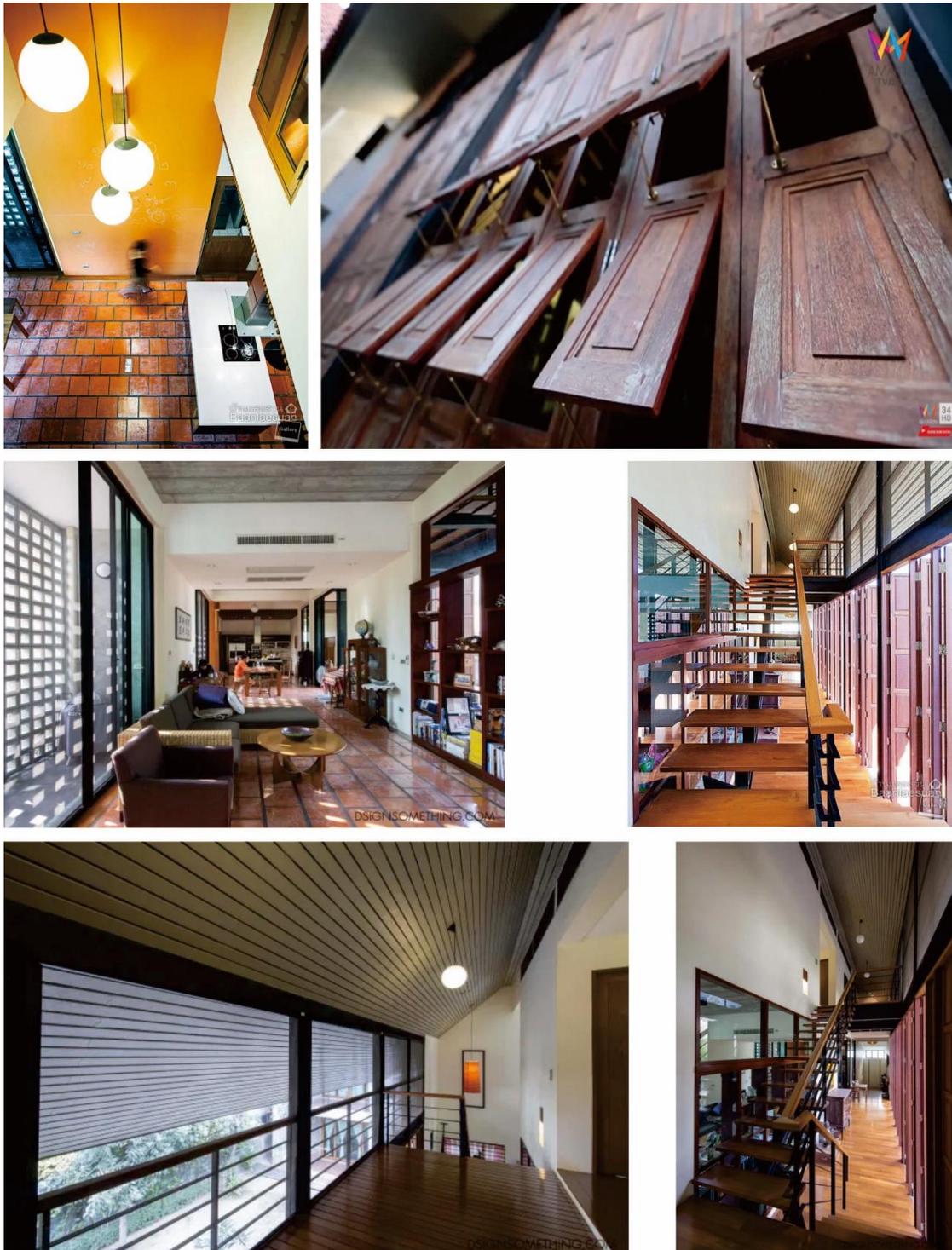


Figure 134 The Harirak Family's House

Source: <https://www.amarintv.com/video/detail/7037>, accessed May 31, 2020;

<https://bit.ly/3lJr0ll>, accessed May 31, 2020; <https://rb.gy/j9hv8i>, accessed January, 20, 2020.

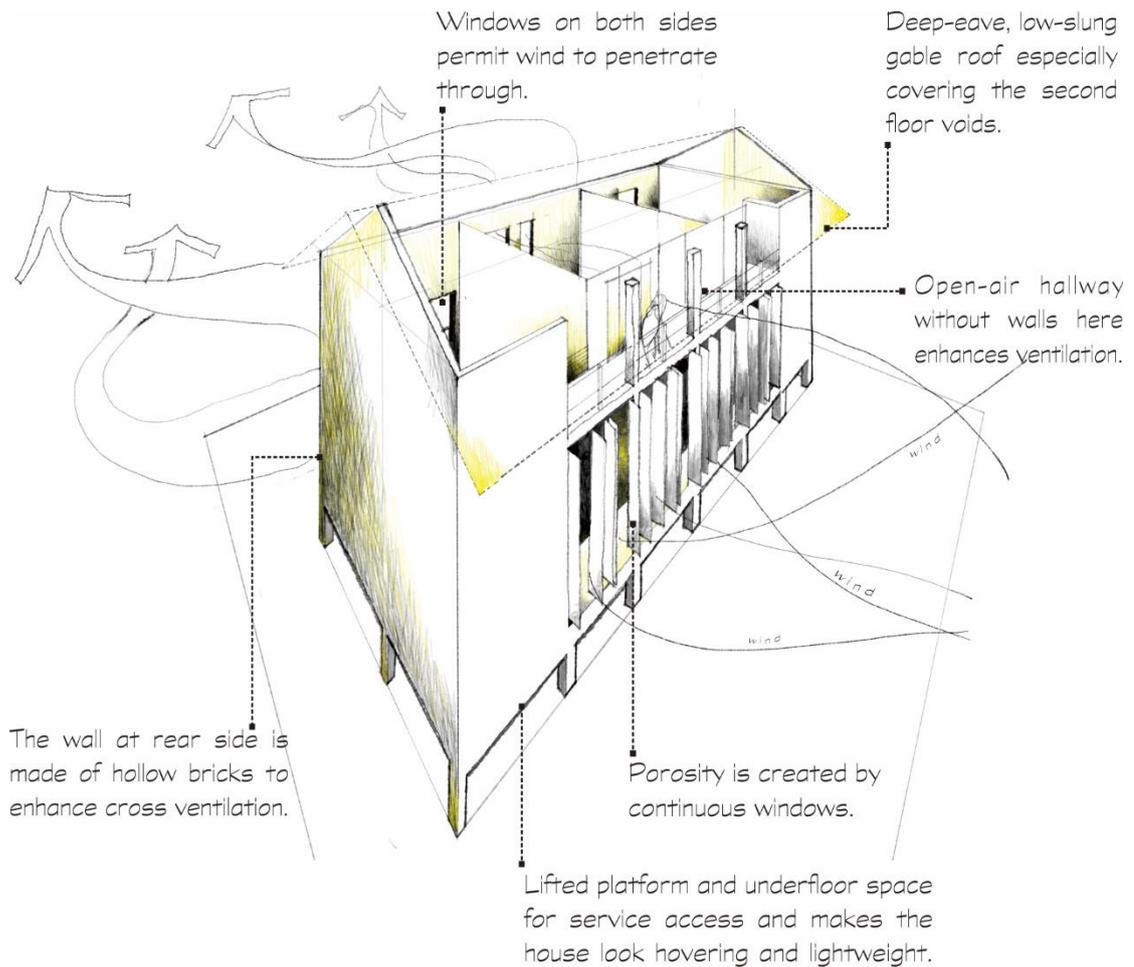


Figure 135 Analysis of the Harirak Family's House

Source: By the author

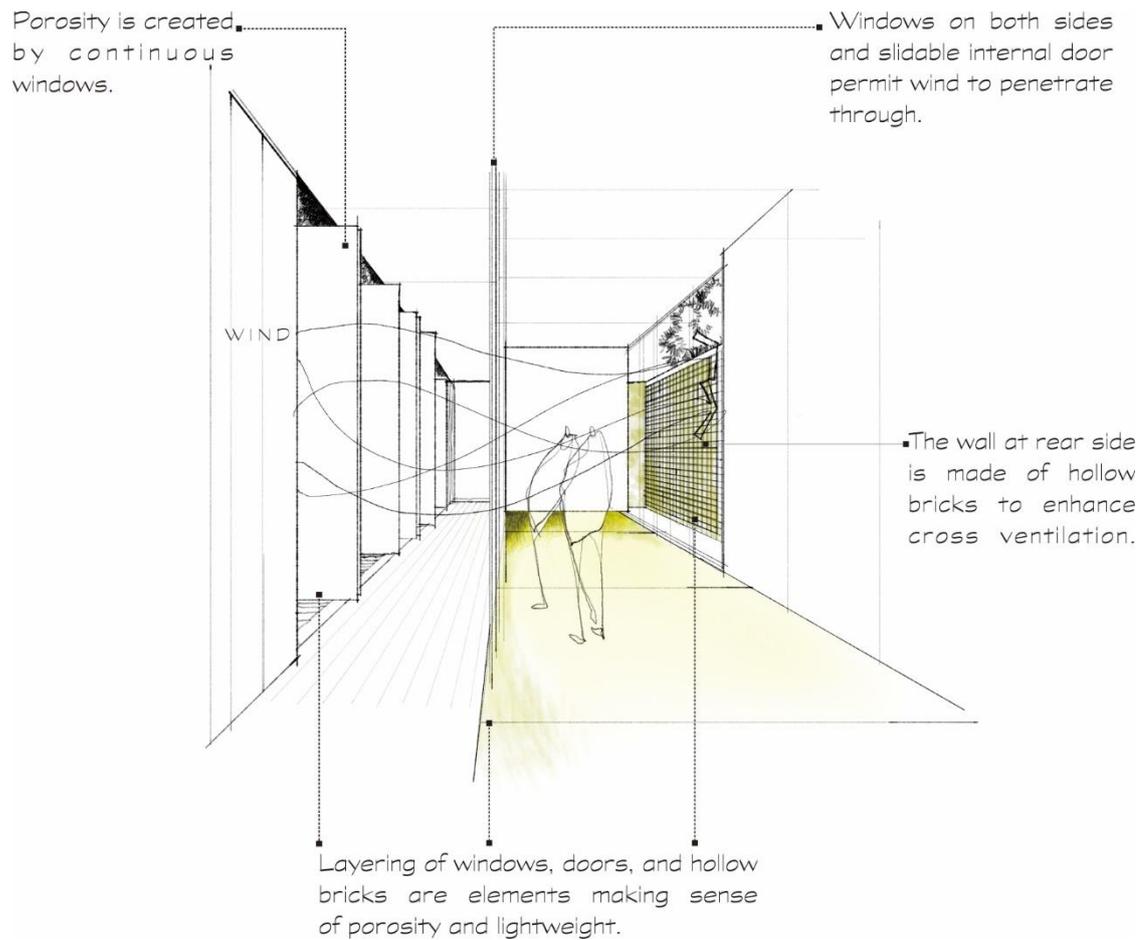


Figure: Analysis of the Harirak Family's House; this view cuts through the living space

Source: By the author

Table 15 Analysis of the Harirak Family's House

13 Bundit Kanisthakhon (Tadpole Studio): The Harirak Family's House				
No.	Element	In	Approach	Archetype
1	Reference to regional Asian houses, e.g., Geoffrey Bawa	X		
2	Modern-style Thai-ness	X		
3	Interior design in nostalgic tones: colors and furniture			X
4	Design approach with practical-realistic functionality		X	
5	Concern for the climatic context		X	
6	Cross ventilation: wind flow		X	
7	Cross ventilation: no air-conditioning		X	
8	Flooring with gaps between its timber planks			X
9	Hollow wall of concrete blocks			X
10	Lifting up of the floor and placement of service area underneath			X
11	Common space includes semioutdoor hallway and balcony			X
12	Series of 4-meter-tall windows along entire wall this little awning window (in the window)			X
13	Flanking by corridor/hallway on both sides buffering heat			X
14	Steep gabled roof; tropical feature			X
15	Design addresses flooding		X	
16	Steel and concrete			X
17	Wood			X
18	Terracotta			X
19	Vegetation is native fruits, trees, and garden plants			X
20	Lightness and porosity	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 13

This house offers the sense of a nostalgic wooden house yet is modernistic when observed from the outside. The uncluttered form evokes a sense of modesty and also a sense of modern architecture. To reduce blandness, the architect filled in the broad plane of wooden windows on the frontal façade to make an impact on the overall appearance and style of the house. It is a hybrid of modern style and Thai reminiscent style without any direct borrowing from the vernacular. The design focuses on protection from sunlight and heat and allows winds to be drawn in through porous skins on both sides of the house and flow through the house. Thus, it can be convincingly said that this house is another fine example of autonomous architecture.

Case Study No. 14: Chiang Mai Residence

Architect: Kulapat Yantrasast (wHY Architects)

"The traditional roof is right-angled and symmetrical while this roof is all gently curved and asymmetrical," Yantrasast said. "I think it respects the traditional roof in spirit but relates to nature in its form and space."¹⁷²

The Chiang Mai Residence¹⁷³ was commissioned by an international couple who share a strong passion for Thailand's quality of life. The residence will eventually serve as their fulltime home and is designed with universal modern design qualities but also keeps a strong fidelity to Chiang Mai's scale, sense of space, and materiality. The design process examined local house forms, distilled their essential elements, and reimagined a contemporary Thai house based on key fundamental principles.

Located on the Ping River, the residence is organized into two pavilions, a main pavilion and a guest pavilion, sited perpendicularly to one another and

¹⁷²"Inspired by Nature and Traditional Regional Architecture, wHY Designs a Bold Exterior for This House in Thailand," 2018, accessed April 14, 2020, <https://www.metropolismag.com/architecture/why-modern-thai-house/>.

¹⁷³Nithi Sthapitanonda, *House by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2016), 184-201.

connected by a series of indoor-outdoor floating terraces. The roof, the most visible element of a traditional Thai residence, has been reimagined as not merely a “hat” over the house but as the house itself; the roof and walls have been fashioned as a single formal gesture. The roof has an organic form enveloped in traditional shingle tiles common to the Chiang Mai area; it becomes a permeable skin for the residence, creating enclosed outdoor spaces and open indoor spaces. Under the roof, the interior spaces and rooms are shifted to maximize connections to the outdoors and optimize the river views. As in traditional houses, the floors float 1 meter above the ground plane to safeguard the house against floods.

Inside the central pavilion, the ground-floor living room and dining room spill out onto exterior terraces connected by a pool. The living room terrace connects to a sizeable second-floor terrace adjacent to the master bedroom, offering exceptional river and mountain views. The teak covering the floating terraces flows throughout both pavilions and creates a seamless connection between the indoors and the outdoors. At the center of the main pavilion is a double-height library space from which the roof drops down to shield books and prints from Thailand's fierce sunlight. The brick walls that enclose the residence are reminiscent of temple sites in the area, and they separate the main living spaces from the service spaces, such as the indoor and outdoor kitchens and a caretaker's suite. The surrounding gardens and courtyards, while providing ample terraces and outdoor space, offer an additional accommodation for the lifestyle typical in Thailand's climate.



Figure 136 Chiang Mai Residence

Source: Nithi Sthapitanonda, *House by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2016), 184-201.



Figure 137 Chiang Mai Residence

Source: Nithi Sthapitanonda, *House by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2016); <http://why-site.com/portfolio/chaing-mai-residence/>, accessed March 11, 2020.



Figure 138 Plans, Chiang Mai Residence

Source: Nithi Sthapitanonda, *House by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2016), 196.

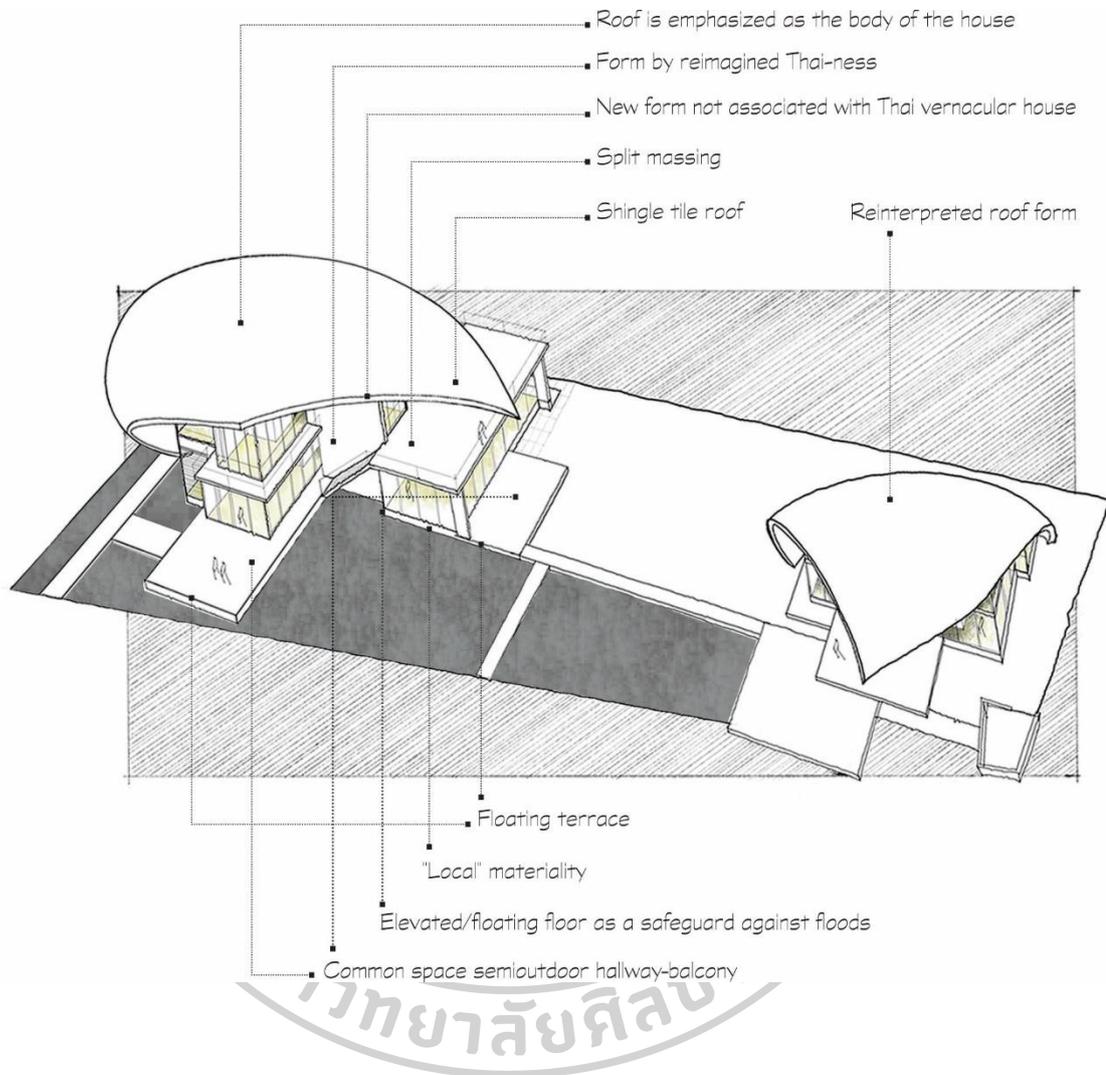


Figure 139 Analysis of Chiang Mai Residence

Source: By the author

Table 16 Analysis of Chiang Mai Residence

14 Kulapat Yantrasast (wHY Architects): Chiang Mai Residence				
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	Modern with "local" sense of place	X		
2	"Local" scale	X		
3	"Local" materiality			X
4	Form by reimagined Thai-ness		X	
5	Thai-ness by principles		X	
6	Split massing		X	
7	Floating terrace		X	
8	Roof is emphasized as the body of the house			X
9	Shingle tile roof			X
10	Elevated/Floating floor as a safeguard against floods			X
11	Common space semioutdoor hallway-balcony			X
12	New form not associated with Thai vernacular house			X
13	Lightness			X

Discussion of Case Study No. 14

In terms of the tradition of Thai architecture, this house does not "speak" the common language of Thai physical forms. Its roof, for instance, has a mannerist form of organic biomimicry. However, the house does speak to a translation of Thai-ness, which no longer requires direct quotations from the old archetype. The result of the design is thus unique and transgressive yet contextual, because the form breaks the tradition of the cliché. To conclude, the distilled idiom of the house illustrates another model of autonomous architecture that moves towards a contextualized form of modern architecture with details customized to suit the house's context.

Case Study No. 15: Baan Loy Lom

Architect: Phahonchai Premjai (PO-D Architects)

“A Seemingly Hovering House: it is a Thai house”¹⁷⁴

“Overall, the house's modern construction belies its true impression of the traditional Thai-style home.”¹⁷⁵

Baan Loy Lom¹⁷⁶ is a house that seems to hover in the air. It is nestled inside the Baan Rai Torsi property development project in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The building looks out over the village street in front of it. From a distance, it is the picture of a calm and peaceful single-story home. Views from different angles reveal the charm of a house on stilts covered by massive roofing.

According to Phahonchai Premjai of PO-D Architects, the house design gets its inspiration from traditional Thai-style architecture, which the homeowner loves. To keep the ground contours in a natural state, the development project enforces a set of rules that ban earth filling and activity that could result in the leveling out of the original landscape. The house is built on sloping ground that lies lower than the village road in front of it. To give it stability and open it up to vistas, the Thai-style house-on-stilts design came in handy.

The homeowner uses it as a holiday retreat. He often secludes himself in the house for a life of meditation and study; this explains the design choice, which is symbolic of a building devoted to the worship of the Buddha. To enhance the house's curb appeal, the architect added twists and turns to the courtyard walkway that goes to all doors of the home. Viewed from the outside, the house boasts a comfortable, light

¹⁷⁴Samatcha Wirapond, “A Seemingly Hovering House,” *Baan Lae Suan: Modern Vernacular House, Special Volume* 2019(2), 124.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 124-135.

and airy living room. Up close, the first thing that catches the eye is an ample space typical of a Buddhist temple. It is an elegant, clean image with reduced design details and focuses on the essential functions necessary for simple living. At one end of the walkway, a spacious sitting room affords a beautiful view of the center courtyard. A raised passageway continues on to connect with the area that contains the bathroom and bedroom. Along the way, strips of wood form a lattice that complements the brownish-orange of the nearby brick walls. It is a language that the architect relied on to showcase essential design elements in a natural setting. A section of the interior space is explicitly designed for the 22-pace walking meditation that the homeowner practices regularly. Nearby, a Buddha pavilion visible from every room provides a focal point for family life, and lush greenery planted at intervals adds a new dimension to the light, airy courtyard.

The house frame is built mainly of steel because it could be formed fast. As one would expect, brick walls and decorative wood constructions take longer to achieve. Even wood that has gone through a treatment process can be quite a challenge for experienced builders. The architect resolved the problem by tying the pieces securely in place with ropes to prevent them from bending or twisting out of shape. After they had become fully adjusted to the weather, the rope fasteners were removed. To enhance the natural appeal of the house, the architect did not use paint on the wood surfaces but instead used clear preservative oils, a measure that ensures long life and easy care.



Figure 140 Baan Loy Lom

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/myhomefc/photos/pcb.3158970934150029/3158931640820625/>, accessed April 13, 2020.



Figure 141 Baan Loy Lom

Source: https://www.baanlaesuan.com/128775/houses/thai_house-3, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/myhomefc/photos/pcb.3158970934150029/3158931640820625/>, accessed April 13, 2020.

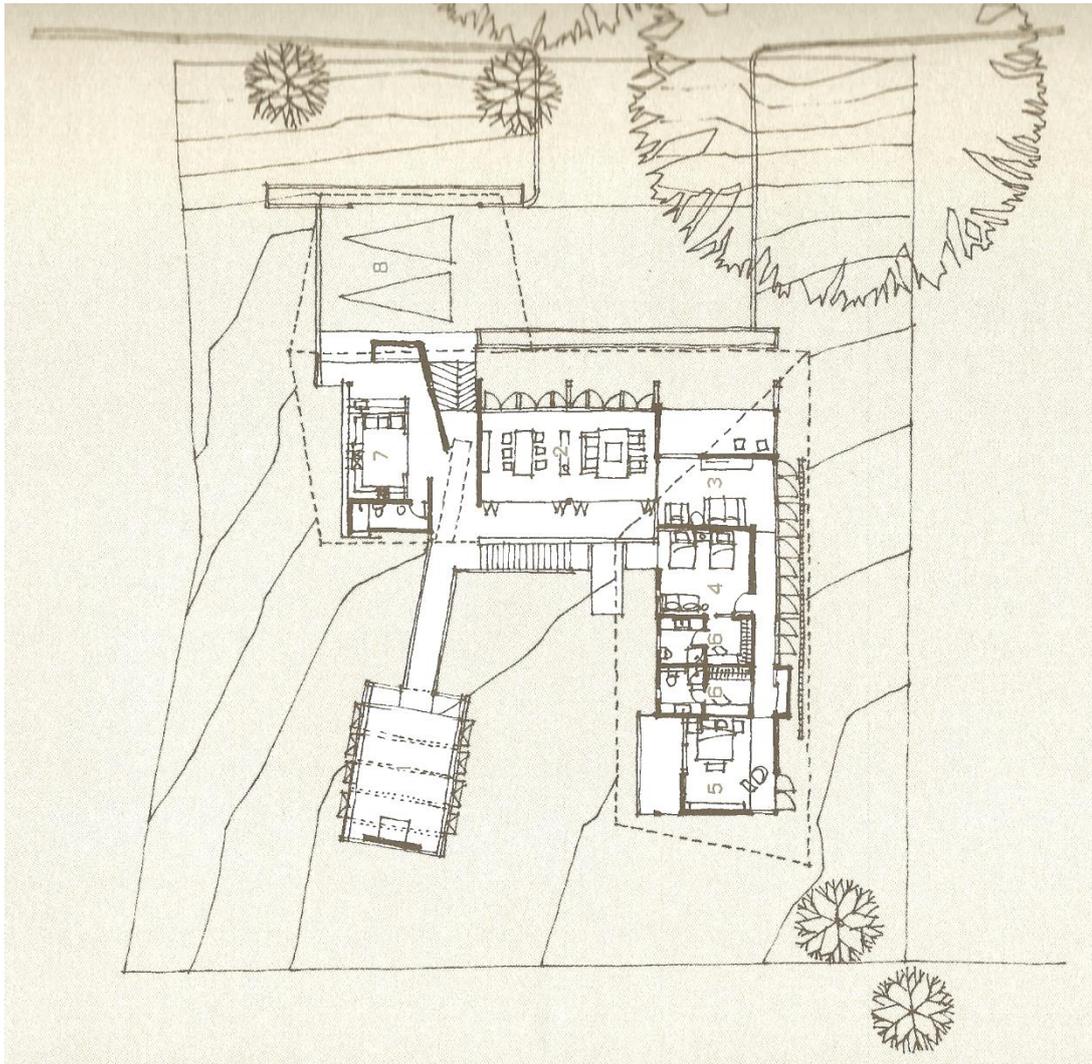


Figure 142 Plan of Baan Loy Lom

Source: Samatcha Wirapond, "A Seemingly Hovering House," *Baan Lae Suan: Modern Vernacular House, Special Volume 2019(2)*, 135.

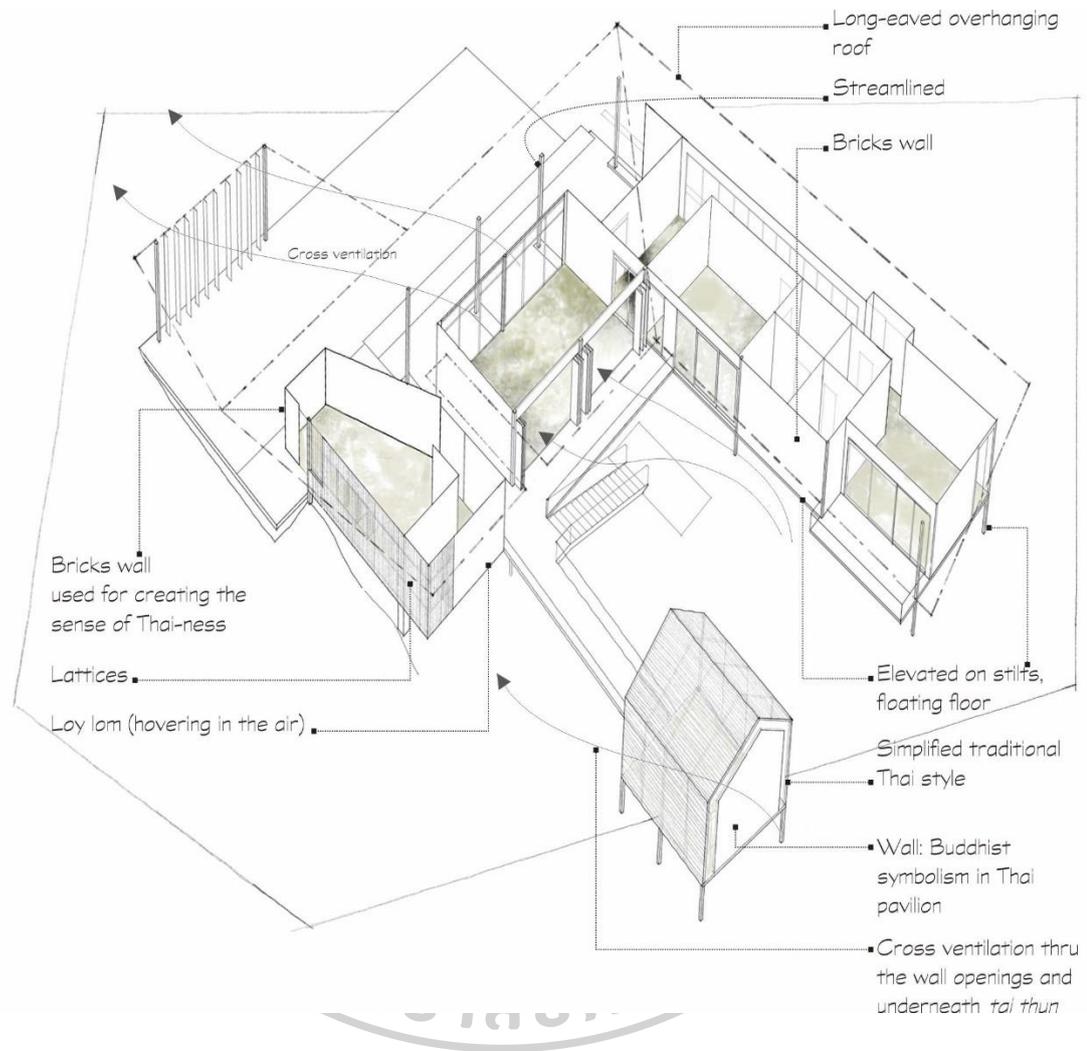


Figure 143 Analysis of Baan Loy Lom

Source: By the author

Table 17 Analysis of Baan Loy Lom

15 Phahonchai Premjai (PO-D Architects): Baan Loy Lom				
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	<i>Loy lom</i> (hovering in the air)			X
2	Simplified traditional Thai style	X		
3	Elevated on stilts, floating floor			X
4	Buddhist symbolism in Thai pavilion	X		
5	Lattices			X
6	Bricks			X
7	Deep-eaved overhanging roof			X
8	Streamlined	X		
9	Cross ventilation	X		
10	Modesty	X		
11	Porosity	X		
12	Lightweightness	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 15

Overall, the house's modern construction belies its real impression of the traditional Thai-style home. Although the owner preferred the Thai traditional style, the architect chose to manifest its essence abstractly by using a vocabulary of implication rather than a direct mimicry of the old form.

Everything about it, from the roof overhangs that protect it from sun and rain to its house-on-stilts design, bespeaks architecture that focuses on what is necessary for simple living. The eaves that overhang the walls are streamlined to make the home look lightweight. All the rooms and functions are conveniently accessible via elevated walkways and terraces, and the ample underfloor space serves as an “engine” that drives natural air circulation. That is not all. Window shutters and the clean lines of the design meld to associate vernacular characteristics with modernism. To sum up, autonomy in this case is manifested by a combination of the vernacular idiom with modern materials.

Case Study No. 16: Eastern House

Architect: Pirast Pacharaswate

“Visit Thai Post-modern home ... a mix of Thai and modern architecture which the owner believes boasts diversity”¹⁷⁷

“Eastern House”¹⁷⁸

“Post-Modern style, a mix of Thai and modern architecture”¹⁷⁹

According to the architect (and also the owner), Pirast Pacharaswate,¹⁸⁰ his idea for building his own house varied from modernization and had to be adapted to the functional practicality of a house in the Thai tropical climate, with its sunlight and humidity. He breathed new life to his house with age-old ideas through a serious experimentation in order to splice the vocabulary of Thai DNA with modern vocabulary.¹⁸¹ At the same time, the old Thai order and the folkloric beliefs attached to it had to be implemented. These were features such as stacking floors, leaving a gap between floor slabs so the wind could blow through, and exposing the tectonics of the floors and stairways outside of the house with the use of modern materials such as cement, glass, and prefabricated concrete. According to him, this was a “postmodern style.” This house also uses wood craftsmanship in such the style. The architect further defines postmodern architecture in this way:

Postmodern architecture is highly diversified. Modern architecture is based on socialism, which emphasized cubes and simplicity, [whereas] postmodern [architecture] is a mixture of diversity with the implementation of Thai

¹⁷⁷“Thai Post-Modern Home Number 9,” *DD Design and Décor*, May 17, 2011, 57.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 56-69.

¹⁸¹“East Architect,” accessed 2020, February, 2
<https://issuu.com/eiabtsunatasnavites/docs/eastarchitects>.

architecture, such as a 1.70-meter space under the house and an opening space in the corridor to allow wind to [flow] throughout the house, which helps minimize the humidity.¹⁸²

The house has a gabled roof with a water gutter at the end of its slope to break the speed of rainfall. Thus, postmodern architecture is a style that combines modernization with rustic materials and geometrical design with a touch of Thai architecture.

The owner named his house Eastern House to achieve such a concept. It is a combination of Thai and modern styles from its bare-finish cement fence and wooden gate to its cement parking area next to the house (which is made of cement and wood). Its small bedroom is located opposite the study room and is decorated with glass set into a wooden floor. There is a spiral staircase leading to the upstairs bedroom, which is an open, spacious room divided into several areas. They are a sleeping area, which has been raised 1 foot above the rest of the room, a sink on the right side next to the bathroom, and a corner living space on the left side.

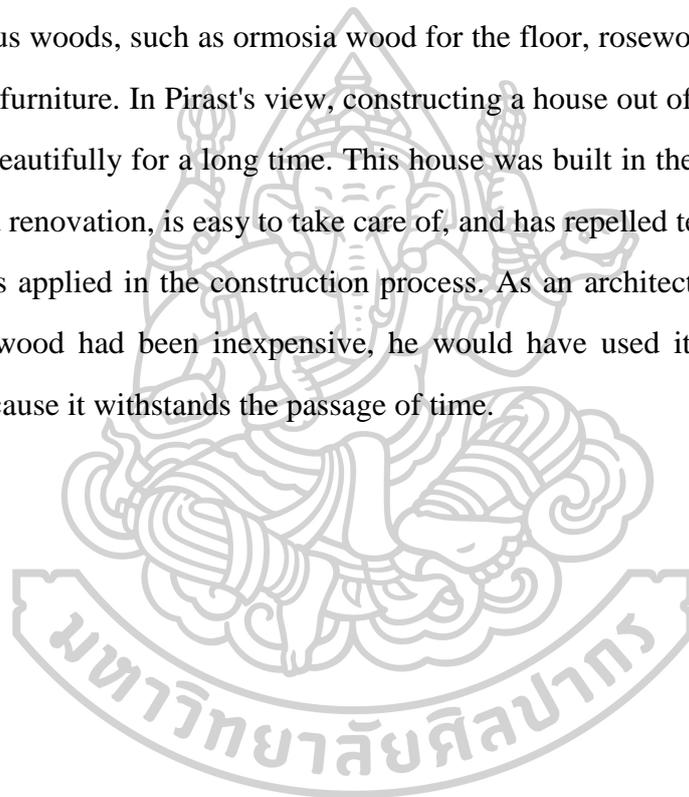
On the outside of the house, on the left side of the corridor that overlooks a large garden, there is a wooden staircase; it connects the terrace with the bedroom. The owner says that this is part of the Thai architectural grammar.

The bedroom has a walkway made of a bare-finish concrete that goes to a walk-in closet and bathroom with a shower designed in an open-space style. Pirast says that an open-space bathroom is the most hygienic type because it receives direct sunlight, which helps to avoid germs. The architect has stressed that a bathroom should be a “sanctuary” where one can spend a long, relaxing time, so it should not be small and dark. The owner chose a contemporary style with a mixture of old wooden furniture and fabric for the interior design. The door to the study room is an antique Chinese door that the owner bought to fit his lifestyle, and most of the furniture is

¹⁸²“Thai Post-Modern Home Number 9,” *DD Design and Décor*, *ibid.*, 61.

freestanding rather than built-in. These features suggest his nostalgic idea of detailed treatment.

The reason that Pirast chose mainly wooden material for both the architecture and interior design was because it needs minimum care and is timeless. When used in architecture and interior design, it gives more of a sense of warmth, liveliness, and tenderness than other materials. Wood is one of a few materials that become more beautiful over time, so the older the house, the more beautiful it is, says Pirast. He chose various woods, such as ormosia wood for the floor, rosewood for the walls, and teak for the furniture. In Pirast's view, constructing a house out of wood will make the house last beautifully for a long time. This house was built in the early 2000s but has not required renovation, is easy to take care of, and has repelled termites because Thai wisdom was applied in the construction process. As an architect himself, Pirast said that if the wood had been inexpensive, he would have used it as the construction material because it withstands the passage of time.



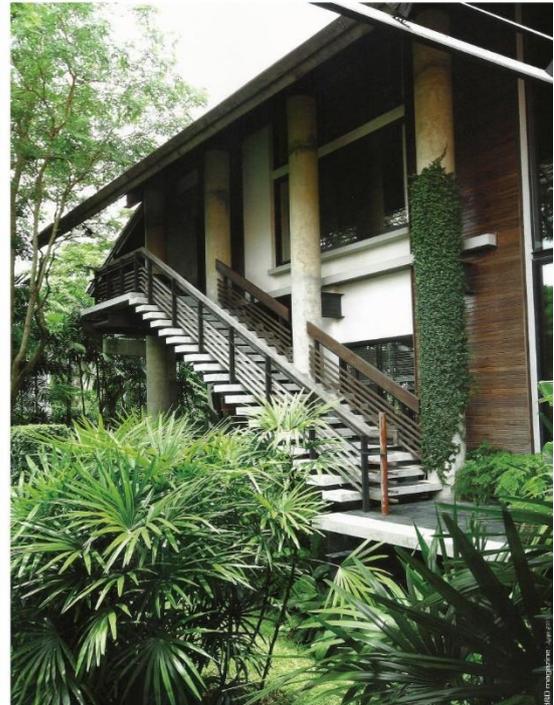


Figure 144 Eastern House

Source: "Thai Post-Modern Home Number 9," *DD Design and Décor*, May 17, 2011, 56-69.



Figure 145 Eastern House

Source: "Thai Post-Modern Home Number 9," *DD Design and Décor*, May 17, 2011, 56-69.

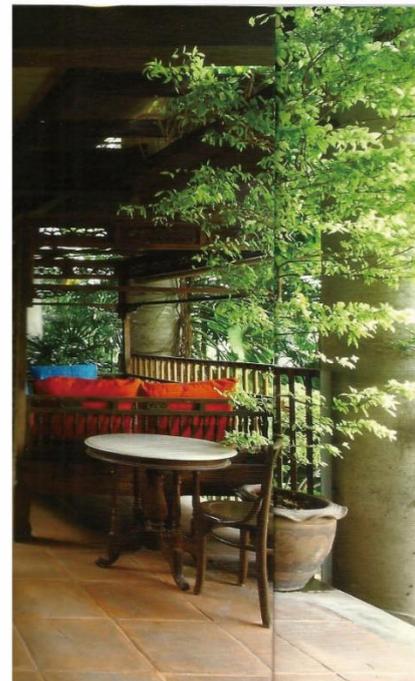
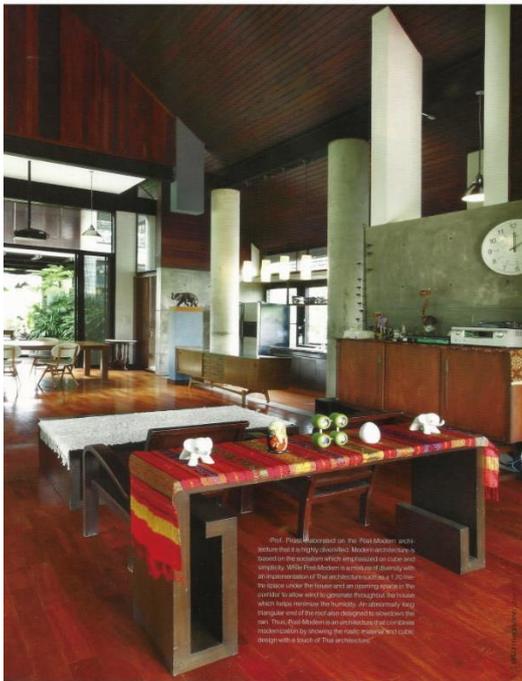


Figure 146 Eastern House

Source: “Thai Post-Modern Home Number 9,” *ibid.*

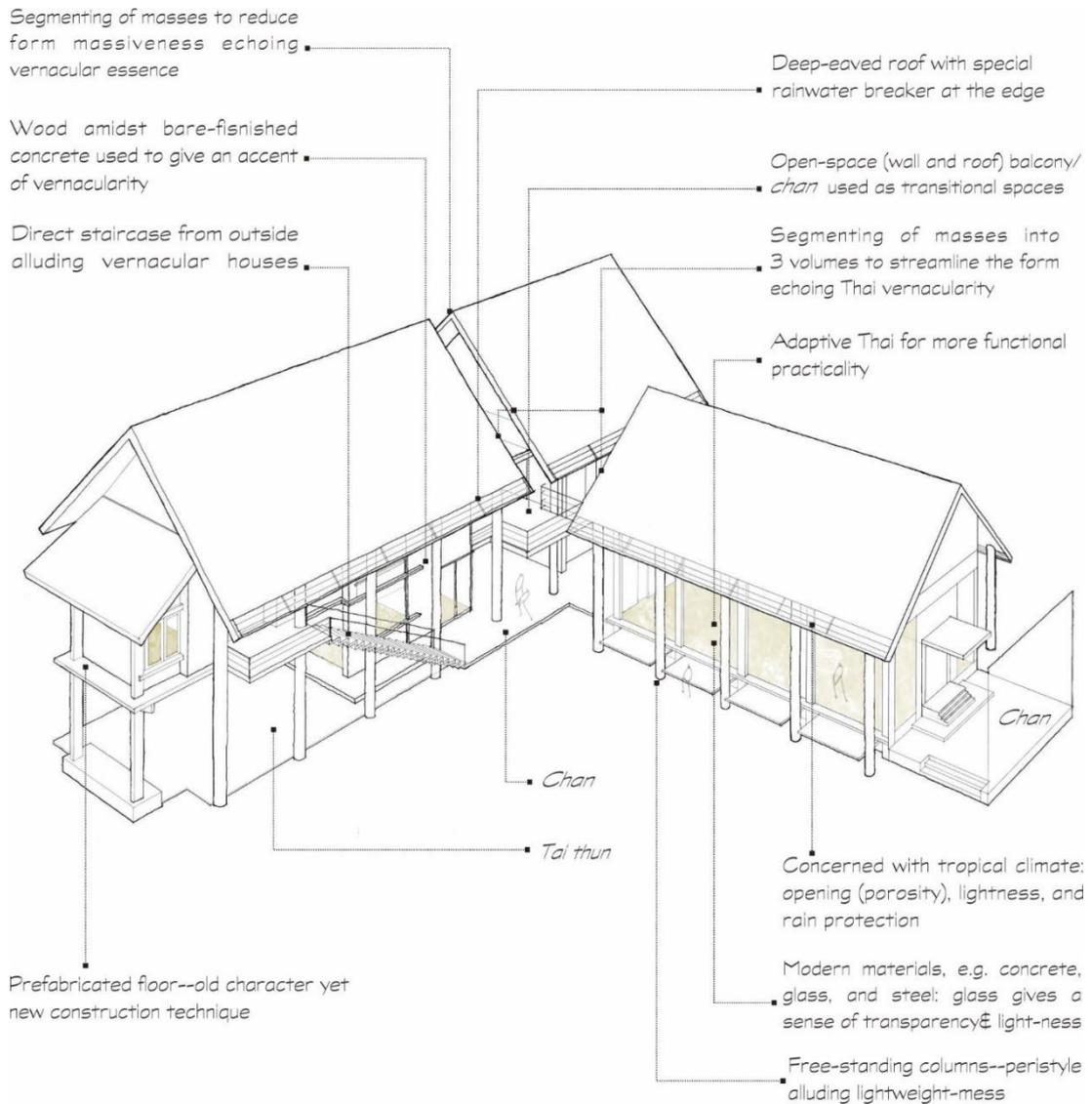


Figure 147 Analysis of Eastern House

Source: By the author

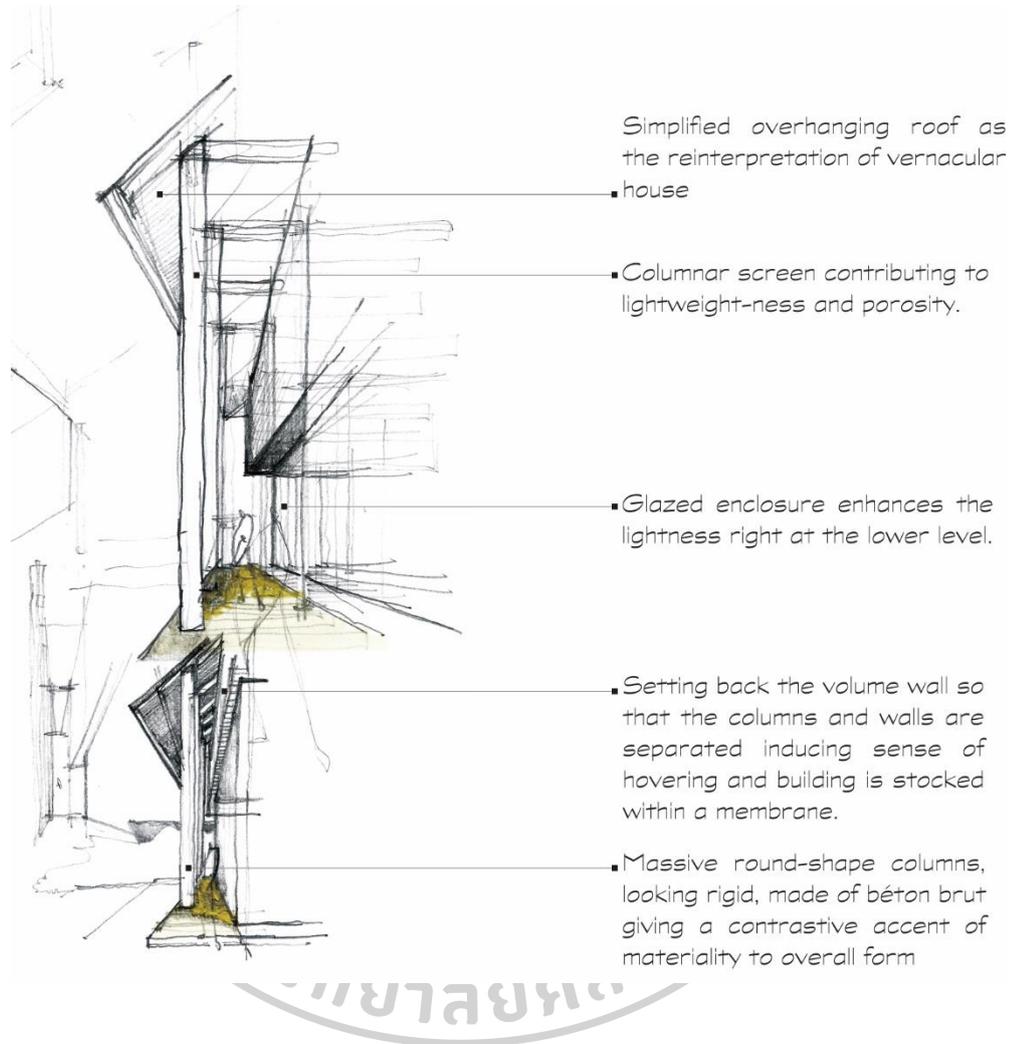


Figure 148 Peristyle grammar: Analysis of Eastern House

Source: By the author

Table 18 Analysis of Eastern House

16 Pirast Pacharaswate: Eastern House				
No.	Element	Abstraction	Approach	Archetype
1	Postmodern Thai house style	X		
2	Adaptive Thai for more functional practicality		X	
3	Concerned with tropical climate		X	
4	Exposed tectonics of floor structure			X
5	Direct staircase from outside			X
6	Modern materials			X
7	Wood			X
8	Bare-finish concrete			X
9	Prefabricated floor			X
10	Open (wall and roof) balcony			X
11	Gabled roof			X
12	Free-standing columns			X
13	Lightness	X		

Discussion of Case Study No. 16

The Eastern House is another project that exemplifies how Thai vernacular architecture can be reinterpreted as a modern form but still maintain a glimpse of the old language. In this house, the architect invented unique details to solve the climatic problems. His primary approach was to make the built-on-the-roof gutter sluice rain to alleviate the impact of water on the ground below; this is the peculiar feature newly designed as an addition to the house.

The house was split into two areas and laid out in an L-shape to streamline the overall form. The lightness and sense of floating not only resulted because the house

was poised on stilts (its columns are relatively massive in comparison with those of other houses we have studied). They are also the result of the playful setback of the exterior walls beyond the line of the columnar grid. This effort enhances the sense of lightness and the integrity of the form.

The use of the solid, heavy bare-finished concrete for the front staircase and columns offsets the house's slenderness and creates a unique language of an equivocal dialectic of lightness and heaviness. If one perceives the architect's intention to be the creation of a postmodern structure and if postmodern means ambiguous, complex, and contradictory, this house seems to exemplify the discourse of his intention.

Summary of Case Studies

This chapter has analyzed 16 contemporary houses in an effort to look at the various practices and designs of architects that can answer this critical question: What is the contemporary architecture in Thailand that focuses on identity, and is there a unified style and ideology for its practice? The study revealed that architects' designs in this area were unique and that the tactics of architects were disparate as they pursued the making of identity. The next chapter is an analysis of the context of cultures and theories, issues that opened the discussion in this chapter. It also reveals new research findings on the main topic of this thesis: autonomous architecture.

CHAPTER 7

Findings from the Case Studies on Autonomous Architecture

Chapter 6 presented 16 cases of autonomous architecture based on the criteria of the three As. Many of the houses were unique and addressed the issue of identity in their own ways. Many of the findings added to the existing body of knowledge on autonomous architecture. In this chapter, an integrative analysis will be presented to enhance the understanding of current designs that attempt to embody identity in autonomous architecture. It will begin with another critical issue, nonautonomous architecture. This subject was not discussed in the previous chapter, but it is worthwhile to acknowledge it because it encompasses works that are still of concern from the era before 2000, as well as the more recent one.

A Word about Nonautonomous Architecture

Despite the intense debate on objectionable revivalism, which some critics see as a representation of the vulgar versions of the architectural dress, this thesis found new contemporary, antithetical examples of autonomous architecture. The Busaba Ayutthaya and TNK House by Jiraji Dasananjali and the House of Parliament are the epitome of such examples. The unfavorable application of past forms has not diminished with time but is still an integral part of the field. The past gnaws relentlessly at the present and the future. It deserves comment here because it delineates the concurrent trends of today's architects and the society in which they live. To some, the past is regarded as an encyclopedia of resources from which architects can select archetypes, whereas to others, it is a pernicious entity that changes according to the latest fashions. Therefore, in the decades before 2000, past ideas were a means of escaping from an uncertain time and were sometimes used as a mask composed of the trappings of bygone periods.

In the Thai context, regionalism is sometimes associated with a rather blatant imitation of gable and gable roofs, which becomes a kind of instant populism. Despite the common elements used, the new polemical discourse after 2000 served the realm of architecture relatively differently.

Some features frequently employed now, such as modern materials, once belonged to the Thai traditional style or idiom in different ways. The case studies show opposing standpoints in which some architects used timber and brick to denote an old feeling but in a new form. Those architects repeated and revisited the old forms. They attempted to construct a series of identities that could be described as the Thai identity and was instantly recognizable and distinctly apparent to consumers. They felt that the essential aspect of identity was a visual language that could be perceived with comfort by a literal illustration. It was thought that this issue, which had become a significant problem in the past, was being solved by many architects and scholars with recent solutions. Those choices were not agreeable to many, however.

A discourse of ignorance existed and reignited debates from time to time. It was a form of *déjà vu* because history continued to repeat itself, as when Anuvit Charoensuppakul criticized the architecture of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram and Chatri Prakitnonthakan presented his discourse on instant Thai-ness for Thai architects.

The tone and rigor of this practice had lost its strength by the late twentieth century. This thesis surveyed a sampling of Thai traditional revival structures and discovered that if architects and owners still yearned for it, their clichés were being justified by new rounds of discourse. This suggests that the structures were open to more risks of criticism by architectural circles. Viewers of the arts were better educated and more knowledgeable than in the past and had a broader view of what architecture could achieve. They looked for reasons for creating a piece of art and for explanations of its essence. This was true of the Parliament House, which appeared to

be crowned by a stupa on top and needed a poem to elaborate on its traditional style.¹⁸³ They needed to discuss proper forms and rationales, which placed more significance on the contextual basis for a structure. The form must intertwine climatic, geographical, sociocultural, and sociopolitical reasoning. Abstraction, as it is meant in architecture, was found to have shifted its orientation from visual style to context-based style, and in this thesis, it is seen as the zeitgeist of the period. A rationale that works had to embrace more scientific and behavioral meanings, not just the aesthetics of style alone.

This does not mean that the direct borrowing of Thai traditional elements had been absent from contemporary practice. Some traditionalists still used vestiges of historical forms on many occasions; this thesis assumes that they were taking the “fast track” and “the dish that was easy to digest” to capture Thai form, similar to architects who practiced in the 1960s to 1990s. Examples of this architectural genre can be seen in the Busaba Ayutthaya (by Tidtang Studio) and the TNK House (by Jiraji Dasananjali), an adaptive Thai contemporary house whose form has strong Thai accents, especially the roof gable wall. There was also a significant move forward from borrowing explicit forms to transforming Thai-ness and not merely relapsing into decorative formalism. It is revealing that some clients continue to be enchanted by historicism and want no compromises with abstraction. Reproductions are still being made even now, but they need a better discursive rationale.

¹⁸³One part of the concept that the group of architects used to justify the design of the new Parliament House included this poem [in Thai]:

อยุธยาขล่มแล้ว	ลอยสวรรค์ ลงอา
สิงหาสน์ปรางค์รัตนบรร	เจ็ดหล้า
บุญพร่งพระหาคสรรค์	ศาสน์รุ่ง เรืองแ
บังอบายเบิกฟ้า	ฝึกพินใจเมือง. . . (นิราศนรินทร์)

It means “the old Thai empire was sacked but later was rebuilt magnificently. It was owing to the merit and contribution of the kings and Buddhism. It now becomes the new utopia.” From: Chatree Ladalalitsakul, "Chatree Ladalalitsakul's Architectural Ideology," interview by the author, January 13, 2020.



Figure 149 Busaba Ayutthaya, Ayutthaya Province by Tidtang Studio

Source: <https://www.baanlaesuan.com/103120/design/lifestyle/hotels/busaba-ayutthaya>, accessed June 1, 2020,



Figure 150 TNK House, Bangkok, by Jiraji Dasananjali

Source: By Jiraji Dasananjali

To be fair to the architects, these houses, despite their overly direct borrowings from the traditional past, can be categorized as another way of realizing a Thai identity, but with less autonomy. Therefore, it is interesting that the strand of focusing on identity has had various shifts and produced different results and interpretations.

The House of Parliament is one example. If one believes that the use of traditional symbolism is an age-old dilemma that was resolved after the turn of the century, this is not true. In the 2000s, this is evident in the new House of Parliament, a controversial project that is expected to be completed soon. The direct influence of revivalism is seen in this magnificent building. As Thai society became more aware of

the significance of architecture and art, there was an increased desire to understand the symbolism and history behind certain pieces, such as the stupa on the top of the House of Parliament.



Figure 151 New Parliament House
Left, under construction, and at right, in an image of how it will look when completed

Source: (Left) <https://www.thaipost.net/main/detail/52365>, accessed January 25, 2020. (Right) <https://themomentum.co/form-of-parliament-and-democracy/>, accessed June 24, 2020.

A poem¹⁸⁴ that was itself a piece of art helped place this work into a context and improve the general appreciation and acceptance of its design. Numerous negative criticisms were not beyond expectation for this structure.

Another compelling element that had been an issue of debate throughout the history of modern architecture in Thailand was the direct adoption of the Thai-style gable end wall and roof; this was popular and commonly seen in the 1950s to 1970s, later declined, and still later became popular again. To understand this issue, one has to consider the problem in two dimensions. First, the gable-and- gable-end-wall style, which has been used generally in Thailand, is publicly called *langkha song Thai* (Thai-style roof). This roof is characterized by a low-slung steep gable (of any variety) and a distinctive gable wall, commonly adorned with long overhanging eaves. Contemporary autonomous architecture seemed to avoid the curvilinear pitch that

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

belonged to old traditional Thai roofs. Second, the general pitch of the roof can be found in many world cultures that use gables and hipped roofs.

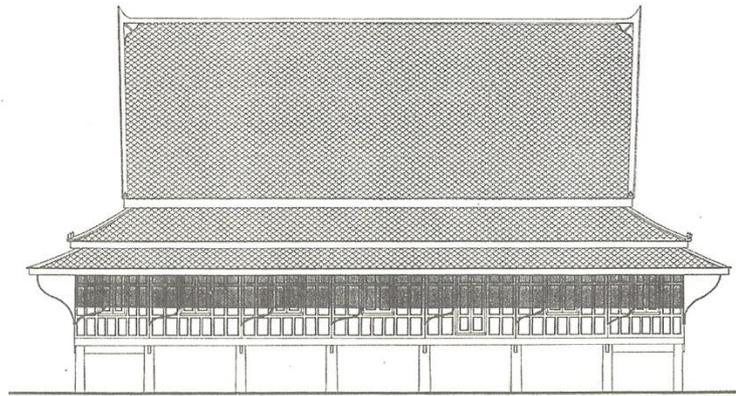


Figure 152 Typical roof prototype

Source: Somkid Jirathutsanakul, *Rurueng Wat Wiharn Bot Chedi Buddhasathapattayakam Thai [Knowing Temples, Viharas, Ordination Halls, Chedis: Thai Buddhist Architecture]* [in Thai] (Bangkok: Museum Press, 2015), 189.



Figure 153 A House in Koh Kaew Temple

in Petchaburi Province, with a typical roof prototype used in Thai architecture

Source: Somkid Jirathutsanakul, *Rurueng Wat Wiharn Bot Chedi Buddhasathapattayakam Thai [Knowing Temples, Viharas, Ordination Halls, Chedis: Thai Buddhist Architecture]* [in Thai] (Bangkok: Museum Press, 2015), 189.

In summary, this thesis needs to clarify that if a design uses a gable-and-gable end wall-style that is a direct reproduction of Thai traditionalism, it would be regarded as nonautonomous architecture. In contrast, a design that transcends the style of the past through a process of abstraction and translates the essence of Thai-ness is regarded as autonomous architecture (e.g., for a roof, this could mean that an architect has simplified and adapted some elements such as the deep-eaved overhang).

Unique Elements That Identified the Case Study Houses as Autonomous Architectural Structures

The study of contemporary houses was conducted on a selected group of 16 houses that were considered as having an identity and individuality by architects, clients, and media commentators. Different qualities, shapes, materials, and identities were spliced together in them. The study delved into various sources, including observations of the buildings, interviews, television programs, and reviews in the print media. The examination was undertaken by a deconstruction of each house's physicality and the descriptions and rationales attached to discussions of the house. The analysis was done, as aforementioned, through the conceptual framework of abstraction, approach, and archetype. This thesis discovered a substantial body of knowledge that could answer questions on the uniqueness of the structures and the way in which they delineate identity in architecture. It was found that all had certain unifiable attributions that could be summed up by the term *contemporary*:

1. All of the houses had features that were intertwined with a nostalgic abstraction; this could be described as abstract associationism or a revisiting of low-key style.
2. All of the houses succeeded in breaking the box; they had a uniqueness of nostalgic escapism or a style that was modern yet –fit with their location or context.

1. Abstraction

1.1 Contemporary Vernacular or Modern Vernacular¹⁸⁵

The vernacular style has a dimmed profile, and its character has adopted various forms ranging from extremely vernacular to extremely modern. The architects, especially those affiliated with the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts (i.e., Chatree Ladalalitsakul, Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweesap, Theerapol Niyom, and Pongsakorn Tumpruksa), brought back vernacular archetypes by reinventing techniques of layering the old vocabularies but embedding them with a new functionality. They sloughed off the old vision of the Thai vernacular and donned a new shell of sleek modern architectural language. The formal discipline of Thai traditional architecture, the philosophy and forms of modern architecture, and the perennial lessons of a regional vernacular contributed to the synthesis.

A special issue of *Baan Lae Suan* showed the results of a survey that discovered that vernacular architecture has become of interest to clients and Thai architects. The new design took valuable ideas from remote past sources as inspiration and turned them into a new language. Values embedded in the vernacular include simplicity, practicality, and harmony with the environment. Design with this style is believed to be beneficial to today's way of life.¹⁸⁶

After the year 2000, Thailand witnessed the resurgence of vernacular characters from early sources, as is exemplified in several houses in the study. This was done by adopting and adapting learned vocabularies. The process to be discussed here is pertinent to this thesis's objective, which was to find architecture resulting from autonomous translation without a reliance on directly copying the canons of the past.

However, if it was not a direct copy, then what was it? It was evident that many of the case study houses were designed through abstraction. Abstract

¹⁸⁵Translation of “contemporary vernacular” from “พื้นที่ร่วมสมัย” or “modern vernacular” from “พื้นที่สมัยใหม่”.

¹⁸⁶*Baan Lae Suan: Modern Vernacular Homes, Special Issue, ibid., 15.*

interpretation is essential to cull the quintessence of the 'Thai character' and fabricate it into a new imagery distant from its sources besides the grammar of the vernacular.

The architects' argumentations found by this thesis likely were attempts to attain an architecture that embraces 'simplicity, practicality, and harmony with the environment.' However, the reasoning of each architect revolved around particular conditions of space and time. It can convincingly be said that many old vocabularies were formed in the past for past usage and under different circumstances than in the present. The situation at present has drastically changed from the situation in the past. It is reasonable to see that architects needed an innovative grammar, and if it is based on the vernacular style, it must also be re-formed in that style, becoming the modern vernacular style. The houses that fit this description in this study were Tonsilp House, Damnoen House, 2+4 House, Baan Huen Tham, Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's House, Baan Tathata, Little Hideaway Khao Yai House, and Eastern House.

1.2 New Thai Style

The new Thai style is an utterly new vision that evolved as a way of constructing an architectural vocabulary that was uniquely crafted for its own time without a direct or physical reference to the old vocabulary. This tendency disregarded the stylistic ethos (of the vernacular) but became a new individualistic approach to design problems. This practice is relevant to Kenneth Frampton's critical regionalism and Lewis Mumford's regionalism.

The style unfolded as a reaction to the disdain for 'formerly practiced Thai architecture' (substantially discussed in Chapters 3 and 4); it is characterized by modern architecture enriched by architectural details of judicial choice based on wishes of the owners and a goal of the architects to avoid the sterility of modern architecture. The practices were narrow and limited in their interpretation of Thai traditional style, which mostly dwelt in the past; hence, they were based on the "DNA of the users," according to M. L. Varudh Varavarn.

Before the year 2000, the focus was more on a direct interpretation of Thai-ness, and a project without decipherable form but associated with a particular local style would hardly have convincingly argued for having a Thai identity. That is why discourses on identity of that time had fewer references to the issue of identity even though the issue existed. Architects who employed a modern character for important buildings without a reference to the past might be accused of failing to convince the public and clients to uphold *the* identity of the nation, and the discourse claimed that Thailand was faced with an ‘architectural identity crisis.’ After 2000, however, the situation seems to have changed. According to the analysis, houses for which this discourse is appropriate include Tonsilp House, 713 House, Parn House, Oum & Pol’s House, and the Harirak Family’s House.

1.3 Modern Tropical Style

The modern tropical style and contextual modernism have made tenuous attempts to connect to a specific formal reference to the past. Despite the schematics of the modern style, it was to a great extent a response to new issues. Several books and magazines have endorsed the term *modern tropical* for this genre of architecture, especially houses that have a modern appearance but simultaneously incorporate features that address the tropical climate.

Contextual modernism is very close to the modern tropical style. It was used in the book *Houses by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism* by Thomas Lozada.¹⁸⁷ It includes the Chiang Mai Residence designed by architect Kulapat Yantrasast (wHY Architects) as noted in his introduction to the book. He argues that modernism’s influence is currently ubiquitous in contemporary architecture in Thailand. Houses are designed to attune with traditional aesthetics, material assemblies, and construction techniques of local structures with simpler, more straightforward forms, functional

¹⁸⁷Nithi Sthapitanonda, *Houses by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism* (Bangkok: Li-Zenn, 2016), 183-205.

layouts, and minimal ornamentation. Moreover, these are the typical characters of modern architecture '[the houses in his book] scrutinize nostalgic, vernacular forms and conventions.'¹⁸⁸ Besides the formal treatment, they are carefully intertwined with their contexts; this is a standard approach of their architects. Context, according to Thomas Lozada in the book's preface, includes a physical, social, or disciplinary perspective. By physical context he means buildings' immediate surroundings, such as landscapes, materials, neighboring buildings, or climate.

Lozada also mentioned the significance of wide ranges of spatial and contextual strategies, including the orientation of a building's mass to maximize air ventilation and minimize solar heat gain, the use of locally sourced materials to reduce the environmental impact, the elevation of structures to prevent flooding during the annual monsoon season, and the integration of the natural landscape to create more appealing views. Furthermore, he claimed that the houses included in his book, such as the Chiang Mai Residence, had a harmonious relationship with their sites and were positioned along a spectrum that balances the local and the global, the natural and the human-made. He also elaborated on the social context and volume encompassed by contextual modernism. This means that a cultural background shapes the house, including the backgrounds of architects and clients, their customs, and their rituals, and it defines the users' lives by its multifaceted design choices.

First, deep-eaved, overhanging, pitched roofs, of any style, are the key to transposing a boxy modern house into a tropical architecture structure. In other words, it is an effort that is breaking the box. Second, windows are made so they can be opened very wide and on every wall, so that the walls almost seem to be absent. Presently, many houses avoid using traditional windows (with *traditional* in this case meaning the generic windows used in a generic, mass-built house). The current trend is to maximize the window size to fit the whole span between the armature from floor to ceiling. The result is that the opening takes over the whole wall and permits

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 9.

maximum wind flow, allowing the house to “breathe.” These archetypes respond to the climatic conditions of heat and humidity in that the prevailing winds are the most effective way of venting heat, and the long, cantilevered roof ensures that the house is protected from the sun. Another viable element that serves the convenience of dwellers is the walls, for which natural materials such as wood are used to give them warm color tones. This helps to break the box by diminishing the plainness and blandness of an overly modern Platonic form. According to the analysis, the houses that fit this discourse include the Tew Son House, 713 House, Parn House, Flowable House, Chiang Mai Residence, and Baan Loy Lom.

1.4 Postmodern Thai

Postmodern Thai is the most awkward label for the examples of contemporary architecture studied in this thesis. Typical scholarly works on postmodern architecture have been dull; they were based on a social delusion perpetuated by critics during the 1990s. Obvious cases mentioned in Chapter 1 included buildings in the Greco-Roman style by Rangsan Torsuwan, such as the Amarin Plaza and Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel, which many critics treated with disdain. Architects were not happy to have their architecture categorized as postmodern because it was tagged as a merely decorative formalism of past style and an unfavorable design technique.¹⁸⁹ It did not include the philosophical content of postmodernism, in which the body of knowledge seemed broader, active, and having more channels to debate. The only house conveyed by this discourse is the Eastern House.

¹⁸⁹The meaning of *postmodern* varied in different contexts, especially when used in the field of critical philosophy. For such a philosophy, according to Jean-François Lyotard, it embraces a paradigm of incredulity towards meta-narratives; what he means by *meta-narrative* is something like a unified, complete, universal, and epistemically specific story about everything that exists. Postmodernism appeared to be an antagonistic response to modernism’s utopian faith in technology and planning with an ironic, self-mocking, and somewhat detached attitude towards culture and progress. See more in Herbert Kohl, *From Archetype to Zeitgeist: Powerful Ideas for Powerful Thinking* (Boston: Little Brown, 1992), 119-120.

1.5 Sufficiency

One cannot pin a particular date on the emergence of a general state of mind, but it was around the year 1997 that some segments of the Thai citizenry seemed to have made a subtle shift in the grounds for their social preoccupations. Underlying ideas about luxury and opulence had declined because of the growth of a new ethos of reductivity. It arose from the views of the late King Bhumibol, whose philosophy of a sufficiency economy was first postulated when the country was mired in a recession. Part of what he expounded concerned sustainability and was a backlash against extreme capitalism. His poignant dogmas opened up a new social value. The sufficiency philosophy was Buddhist in nature, encompassing an ideology of austerity (elaborated in Chapter 5). It had a profound impact on the country in terms of socioeconomic and, later, sociocultural sentiments. The ethos of the new ideology underpinned every element of society, including art and architecture. The sufficiency economy philosophy became another value of imagery that minimalism would become another mode of design for many consumers.

Over time, in the fields of art and architecture, proponents took on the goal of producing works that were 'less or simple' in terms of their financial cost to offset an extreme consumerism. This goal had been innovatively energized, and it gained a positive cultural value. The faith in opulence, which had long been entrenched, still existed but had to compete with a new alternative preoccupation that had taken on a comparative value.

The nature of sufficiency is expressed by austerity. In the design discipline, architects could not compromise by building structures of inferior quality; one solution to this issue dealt with symbolic or stylistic solutions. The most powerful tool was to employ the language of vernacular architecture because it is seen as an aspect of the peasant or ordinary way of life. Can one say that the adaptive vernacular is sufficient because of its psychological effect and that making new 'vernacular' designs for wealthy clients is only a fad of austerity?

Several theories of architecture embraced a message congruent with the sufficiency economy state of mind. Chatree Ladalalitsakul's well-known maxim "the eastern spirit in the universal body" was one; Kanika Ratanapridakul's ideas of "so minute as us" was another; and Jon Jandai's ideas of earthen building was still another. All such preoccupations buttressed the tendency towards *samatha* and simplicity and austerity in architectural design.

Interestingly, the case studies found that some projects derived their forms from the idea of austerity but that the form could not attest to such a concept. The word *por* was used in an architectural company's name to indicate that sufficiency was part of its design philosophy. It displayed a new ethos of sufficiency among architects in Thailand.

Sufficiency was an aspect of the Baan Loy Lom designed by Phahonchai Premjai (PO-D Architects), and the PO-D in his firm's name denotes sufficiency. The Parn House (sometimes known as the Por House) by Por Architects is also an example of a philosophy of sufficiency.

2. Approach

2.1 Nature as an Abstraction of Architecture or an Organic Architecture: "I Love Nature"

At present, many architects and scholars are paying attention to integrating nature issues into their designs by using terms such as *green design*, *biophilic design*, and *biotechnical design*.¹⁹⁰ According to William McDonough, a new design for contemporary architecture ought to be in 'harmony with the exquisite intelligence of nature.' He is an architect who intertwines the aspects of greenness and the vernacular, and he argues that it is important for any architect to delve into a region's

¹⁹⁰This thesis owes a debt to William J.R. Curtis, who defined the late works of Alvar Aalto with "organic design"; it can convincingly refer the Chiang Mai Residence to Aalto's work. See William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 349.

natural and cultural history; study local energy sources; research the cycles of sunlight, shade, and water; study the vernacular architecture of the particular place for which they are designing; and learn about the local fauna, flowers, and grasses.¹⁹¹

The state of mind of people at a particular time always plays a significant role in architecture in that architects attempt to create conditions that embrace their built environment. It is a concept used in the building industry to increase occupant connectivity to the natural environment through direct and indirect attachments and the space and conditions of the place. Frank Lloyd Wright asserted that organic architecture is based on the notion that houses should open towards and conform to the lines of the landscape. He said, “Nature is the only body of God that we shall ever see.”¹⁹² He also wrote,

Architecture already favors the reflex, the natural, easy attitude, the occult symmetry of grace and rhythm affirming the ease, grace, and naturalness of natural life. Modern architecture—let us now say organic architecture—is a natural architecture—the architecture of nature, for nature.¹⁹³

The above quote is from a master architect who was a trailblazer in incorporating nature into architectural design in the first half of the twentieth century. In its examination of cases, this thesis found a fundamental similarity among contemporary architecture and Wright’s ideology, particularly in the ways in which nature could be embraced in a very experiential manner. Wright played with geometries that rhymed with nature and drew the natural landscape into the interior of his architectural structures. It was a point of departure from using direct and physical-

¹⁹¹“Buildings Like Trees, Cities Like Forests,” 2002, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://mcdonough.com/writings/buildings-like-trees-cities-like-forests/>; *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, ibid., 160.

¹⁹²“FLLW Quotes, Usonia,” accessed January 1, 2020, <http://www.usonia.com/fllw.html>.

¹⁹³Edgar Kaufmann and Ben Raeburn, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings*, 4th ed. (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1963), 280.

form techniques and transposing them to the architectural approach of experience, abstraction, and metaphor. It illustrates his term *organic architecture*, which, according to Wright, means site-specific.¹⁹⁴ Most of the cases examined in this thesis were chosen for their use of this mode—experience, abstraction, metaphor, and site specification.

Some scholars, such as Atch Sreshthaputra, viewed that green architecture has a broader scope in that not limit the ideology of energy-saving solely, but it fuses with the more philosophical standpoint. The philosophy of sufficiency in architecture considers the economy and reasoning of green design while ensuring the safeguard; it embraces the knowledge and ethics in design methods aiming at the nation's sustainability.¹⁹⁵

The public now tends to indulge in nature in lifestyle, travel, food, and even architecture. This does not mean that people in the past did not fancy nature. The point is to construct a comparison. It has become a trend in architectural design to strive to include organic and natural elements, and this has caused houses to be built that are more open to natural winds, do not need air-conditioning, and allow users to view the landscape. Boundaries of the house are almost nonexistent. They have only a thin shell that encourages a dialog between inside and outside.

Environmental concerns are the megatrend of which the “nature approach” is part. A house portraying this approach can be seen as very open; the inside is drawn out to the landscape and the landscape is pulled inward. It is a new tradition that embraces a different sensibility about nature than in the recent past. Humans now appear to be aware of nature, want to live with it, and do not wish to reject it. They are striving to govern it and intermingle with it because they believe it is beneficial to

¹⁹⁴Carol Strickland, *The Annotated Arch: A Crash Course in the History of Architecture* (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel, 2001), 127.

¹⁹⁵Atch Sreshthaputra, "Human Being Should Live in Harmony with Nature," in *Living Green*, ed. Acharawan Chutarat et al. (Bangkok: ASA, 2019). 19-33.

their bodies and minds. They are inclined towards the establishment of a connection to nature.

Architects have invested themselves in building designs that enhance this connectivity with a current global trend. For example, “green architecture,” “environmental concerns,” and state-of-the-art designs for new green façades have been seen in the Vertical Forest Project by the Boeri Studio (by architects Stefano Boeri, Gianandrea Barreca, and Giovanni La Varra).¹⁹⁶ Their theories are conveyed through perennial trees planted along building façades.

Regarding the transformation of the trend, Steven Holl has written in his seminal theoretical work *Intertwining* that the chaos and uncertainty of fluctuating economies in combination with the information overload due to the ever-increasing supply of new technologies has contributed to a detachment from natural phenomena, giving rise to schizophrenia and nihilistic attitudes.¹⁹⁷ He has, accordingly, encouraged architects to find a more decent way to embrace nature in design.

Another aspect of the design was not addressing nature alone. Still, it should merge with the sense of place, *genius loci*, as the source of architectural abstraction as contended by Kenneth Yeang,¹⁹⁸ and it should follow the current technology.

In the case studies, it was revealed that recent houses were more organic in design, meaning that their designs were responsive to the logic of nature. Houses that incorporated nature in the approach to design included Baan Huen Tham (by Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweasap), 2+4 [Live Within the] Same House (by Theerapol Niyom), Tew Son House (by Polar Architect), and Pongsakorn Tumpruksa's Home (by Pongsakorn Tumpruksa). All of them adopted nature to design something in a similar manner to the theory of Kenneth Yeang.

¹⁹⁶“Vertical Forest|Stefano Boeri Architetti,” accessed April 17, 2020, <https://www.stefano-boeri-architetti.net/en/project/vertical-forest/>.

¹⁹⁷Steven Holl, *ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹⁸*Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, ed. Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf, *ibid.*, 147-148.

2.2 Climatic Context: Living Without Air Conditioners

The effect of weather and sunlight on activities in a house should be measured and provided for so ill effects can be avoided. The temperature, purity, and circulation of the air within a house can all be tempered. Air temperature, humidity, movement, and freshness are essential to occupants' comfort. Thailand is located in the tropics and heat is the primary cause of discomfort. Another issue is the rainfall in the rainy season, which can sometimes cause problems. House designs originating in this region have adapted to the climate.

As aforementioned, climatic concerns in architectural design led to a well-established name of tropical design or tropical modern design. It originated with Geoffrey Bawa, a Sri Lankan architect (1919-2003), as noted by Bundit Kanisthakhon. Bawa was one of the foremost architects who advocated the combination of modern and tropical design and coined the term *tropical modern architecture*.¹⁹⁹ The criteria for the genre are concerns about how architecture serves users and benefits them in tropical climatic conditions. Passive cooling techniques are the ones mostly used in this discipline. Concerns of the design focus on the setting or characters in tropical conditions or having a proper tropical form. Its principles and techniques have been developed to mitigate the severity of the weather by using a system of sun protection, air circulation, ventilation, openings that allow views of the outdoors, and the orientation of buildings.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹“Exploring Geoffrey Bawa’s Tropical Modernism in Sri Lanka,” BK@Home, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://bk.asia-city.com/travel/news/architect-geoffrey-bawa-sri-lanka-tropical-modernism>.

²⁰⁰Somsit Nitaya, *Karn Okbaeb Arkharn Samrab Phumi-akard Khet Ron Cheun [Building Design for Tropical Climate] [in Thai]* (Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University, 1998). 55-175.

3. Archetype

3.1 Adaptive Regional Element Formalism

The adaptive Thai vernacular form is characterized by a reinterpretation of the Thai vernacular and a novel remaking of it. In designing new houses, contemporary architects did not make an arbitrary copy of a historical model; they instead made a convincing illusion of a historical model that was reborn, not merely replicated. They instinctively grasped this way as the only possible one. What they advocated was a state-of-the-art design, and what was widely accepted was a form of radical functionalism. It solved the architectural dilemma of identity that existed before 2000; on the one hand, architects rebuked the direct copying and pasting of historical styles, and on the other hand, they did not want to design buildings that had lost their identity. The new proposition advocated for a compromise in solving the problem. This solution was based on the physical work that architects employed in building houses. The new grammar had several details:

3.1.1 Organic simplicity: This describes the special treatment of the simple form, which either reshapes and adds details to the skins or deals with issues such as nature and views of the landscape. Although the houses were designed with a variety of elements, they were still relatively simple in all aspects, including form, space, and color tones, with no frills.

3.1.2 Lightness: The term describes an open, porous volume. It is the attribution adopted by most of the case study architects to embrace the phenomenological quality in the overall form. It was attained by a large number of open areas, such as a whole wall, or large part of it, made of windows or having a pergola-like form (with an open wall and an open roof) and by the use of a colonnade and peristyle treatment of the exterior walls.

3.1.3 Customary porosity (with transparency attained by minimizing wall enclosure and increasing the voids)

3.1.4 Planning: This can produce a positive fragmentation or breaking apart of volumes rather than having one massive chunky volume. A complex structure might

be fragmented to react to variable topographical conditions. Fragmenting the mass, using a linear layout, and streamlining the room layout are critical for allowing cross ventilation.

3.1.5 Space and spatiality: In the Baan Huen Tham, a merely “abstract” vision of space was replaced with the combination of Thai and foreign flavors (since one of the owners is Japanese) encouraging a sense of belonging. The incidents and rituals of daily life were celebrated in a sequence of places and stopping points. Many are done solemnly.

3.1.6 Modernism with a flavor of the local seems like values of black to white with many shades of gray and intensities of local elements. By fusing a chaste modernist abstraction with individualism and a passion for organic contextualism, the architects produce unique, powerful contemporary idioms.

3.1.7 Hovering or floating form poised on stilts: This feature is often used for Thai houses built in flood-prone areas. Over time, it has become an expression of the essence of a Thai traditional and vernacular house.

3.1.8 *Tai thun*: This is a space underneath a raised house and is referred to frequently in the cases studied in this thesis. It can be viewed as an instrumental binding feature that expresses a nostalgic character.

3.1.9 Reinterpreted pitched roof with deep-eaved overhang.

3.1.10 Undulation of walls: These are walls that jut out and are set back to create shade and shadow to reduce a blandness and pureness of form.

3.1.11 Natural or local materials, such as wood, gravel, tiles, shingles, terracotta, bricks, and clay contrast with modern materials such as unpainted stucco, Béton brut, steel, terrazzo, and glass. The designers studied used various materials, but they mostly preferred timber or bricks and plaster and insisted on their textural expression. Many believe that architects should design according to the nature of their materials and that their patterns should reflect past intellectual views.

3.1.12 The *chan* (elevated terrace or verandah) is used as a multipurpose outdoor space for hanging out, but in some houses, the *chan* has been redesigned to be more protective (mainly to prevent burglary with an enclosure of walls and doors). Some houses, such as the Damnoen House, have innovative walls and doors that hinder trespassers from entering.

3.1.13 Colonnades or columns outside of the walls may recall a peristyle. This feature reinforces the sense of hovering and lightness of the volume of space above them in the same manner as Greek temples surrounded by a verandah space on all sides and Thai Buddhist ordinary halls. However, for some houses, such as the 2+4 House, the grid line of the colonnades was shifted off the wall line a few centimeters to create a sense of lightness. A similar change was made in the Eastern House but with a greater distance in the shift.

3.1.14 Windows were designed in completely new ways or as new interpretations of the vernacular. They serve functions of ventilation and visibility. Variations in the fenestration and details ensure that the entire house receives light. In the Harirak Family's House, the windows were designed with large planes, and their extra height give the house a porous feeling. The Flowable House has an even more open feeling owing to its white swing window, which encloses the entire planes of the front and rear sides of the house. This gives a sense of porosity and lightness to an extreme degree. The entire house looks almost like a pergola or pavilion without walls.

3.1.15 Split levels of floors allow for better ventilation and are a manifestation of an old mythological belief (many beliefs that seemed associated with superstition such as providing a gap between the stacking floors was believed to be of fortune but in fact it logically allows cross ventilation). They are used in the Eastern House (of Pirast Pacharaswate).

3.1.16 The finishing of the interior skins can include a ceiling that follows the roof's slope. Thai houses of the past were built without a ceiling; this meant that the

slant of the bottom of the roof was visible from the inside. Some modern houses have a ceiling that is slanted like a roof from the past, and this makes it seem as if the house does not have a ceiling.

3.1.17 Emphasis on tectonic details: Some houses such as Baan Tathata have timber wood joints throughout, and the details are meticulously exposed to reveal the authenticity of the carpenter's art in tectonics. With the use of the excellent skills of local artisans, this house transcended the usual modern vernacular house and came closer to the ideals of the arts and crafts movement, which valued craftsmanship in architecture and flourished in the nineteenth century.

3.1.18 Lattice walls and trellises: These skin treatments were popular because of their porosity. They allow wind and light to penetrate them, and even though they are incomplete openings, they also provide some protection.

3.1.19 Furniture and miscellaneous decorative items that refer to old Thai houses imbue nostalgia. In the Eastern House and the Harirak Family's House, the owners used their antique furniture and other paraphernalia collections to provide a flavor of nostalgia. This was not an aspect of architectural design but it affirmed the schematization of the overall atmosphere.

3.2 Radical Contextualism

The imperatives of contextualism were radically reconsidered in light of the several visions and interpretations of the solutions, which involved form, planning, and materials. Tonkao Panin's work was austere formal, reducing everything to a uniform abstraction with tight control, sharpening of materials, and contrasting of planes. The contemporary houses were practically inclined towards simplicity and a straightforward appearance. The uncluttered form was relatively modern but not as much so as the modernity that originated in the twentieth century. If a 'pure box characterizes modern architecture,' the form and massing of contemporary houses is

something close to the ‘broken box’ and is appended with the idiosyncrasy of individual meanings.

3.2.1 Destruction of the BOX: Modern yet Radically Local

A tendency of contemporary architecture seen in the cases studied is that there was a distinctive individual consciousness in response to Thailand’s context. Architects considered climatic, sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical contexts as they approached architecture.

Modern architecture has its origin in the West, with the ultimate goal of producing “one building for all nations and all climates.” This universalism attempted to create a “sterile” form of architecture with no specific meanings. The architects who especially professed that ideology had faith in the provocative discourse of international style, the very radical subdivision of modernist style.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the discourse on the encroachment of modern architecture into Thailand caused a surge in critical regionalism because the modern form was perceived to be the main “villain” in the deterioration of culture. Because the elemental realm of modern architecture is anchored in pure Platonic formalism, its original designs do not serve all situations, especially various climatic conditions and cultures.

Thailand’s new architecture used international style in combination with a regional flavor in its designs. The process of localization was the intertwining of the contextual aforementioned to break the box. The results can suggest the cross-breeding of foreign and local contextual influences, as seen in the Flowable House, which has gabled roofs and an extremely porous envelope.

3.2.2 Lightness/ lightweightness

The issue of lightness is a contemporary tendency that coincides with a state of lightness (following Italo Calvino’s theory), austerity, simplicity, and reductivism (following the sufficiency theory of King Bhumibol). This motif can be found in works by Tonkao Panin and the wHY Architects firm.

3.2.3 Porosity

Porosity may be found in congruence with lightness, but it is more the operative tactic of providing openings everywhere possible to allow for the most wind flow and the widest views of the outdoor landscape. The case studies showed that many dwellers preferred open-air dwellings some, if not all, of the time; they wanted open, airy, breezy spaces, not stuffy enclosed rooms. That is why many houses were designed so that the walls could be completely opened up (and sometimes the roof and ceiling, as well) to give the overall appearance of a pergola or pavilion. Examples are the Flowable House, Hatirak Family's House, and Baan Loy Lom.

3.2.4 Abstraction of historical elements or attributes

The process that architects used to create an autonomous design was the reinterpretation, translation, distillation, and implication of the historical architectural language. The translation was readjusted to suit the new use. Of course, houses built long ago did not have spaces for what are now considered standard amenities, such as a garage. The Little Hideaway, or Khao Yai House, used the *tai thun* space for parking. The openness of the *chan* as the external layers of a house, but in the Flowable House the *chan* is practically flipped inward. It wraps around the interior core space like a hallway and then becomes part of the exterior wall. The exterior walls have many windows. The colonnade was not originally an archetype of the vernacular house, but in the 2+4 House, this feature has been articulated to create shade with its deeply recessed and set-back walls. These are examples of what this thesis views as an abstract language that advocates for the creation of autonomous radical contextualism.

3.2.5 Materials: Variety and Contrast

Several new materials of the new designs with an emphasis on context were used for making modern forms with reference to climatic conditions and the genius loci. In the 713 House, Jun Sekino used discrete materials, including steel and terrazzo, to contrast with reclaimed wood; this culminated in a sense of modern yet

radically local style. Raksak Sukontatarm, by contrast, used synthetic materials based on his faith in environmental concerns. This thesis, however, found that when architects worked with a modern form, they seemed to realize that they had to play down the starkness of modern purity—whose materials commonly are concrete, steel, glass, and aluminum—by using some soft and natural materials to complement them, for example, wood, terracotta tiles—for floor and roof—and rammed earth. Wood was used in all of the houses and terracotta tiles in the Eastern House. These archetypes contributed a distinct form and illustrated a category of autonomous architecture.

3.3 Architects, Clients, and Media: Individualism, Owner's Identity, and Uniqueness

Theoretically, despite certain standard features of stylistic architecture, sometimes called the syntax of design, it is desirable to imbue each dwelling with individuality—the uniqueness of the individuals that occupy it. Failure to do so will inevitably spoil the design because the occupants will change the design as soon as their budget permits. As explained by Alfredo De Vido,²⁰¹ architecture is a social act because it is people oriented. It is not a mirror of an ideal or some mythical or egotistical force, but rather life. Le Corbusier argued that an architect is not an easel artist but instead should organize to merge the client's needs and ideals in the design of a house. In so doing, the architect imbues spaces and forms with his or her artistic and functional convictions. It is accomplished as part of the give-and-take of a good relationship with a client.

According to the cases studied, clients have more confidence and a better understanding of architecture in contemporary times. Because of social transformations and more knowledge about art, many clients do research on architecture; this can be done more conveniently now through the internet and many

²⁰¹ Alfredo De Vido, *ibid.*, 88.

other sources. Many clients are professionals in many fields, such as medicine; this guarantees that they have much education. One can see from television shows and magazine articles that publish word-for-word interviews of many house owners that they refer to architectural concepts and show an understanding of the abstract translations used in the process of architectural work. Architects serve more knowledgeable clients now, as occurs in many instances other than this thesis. This new status quo has advanced architectural services to another level, so that architects can no longer create a generic design without a close association with the identity and uniqueness of the owner.

Architects now have both an easier time of working with clients and a more difficult time. They have an easier time because clients seem to have more artistic literacy and comprehension than in the past. They have a more difficult time because clients who are more knowledgeable may be more difficult to please. However, the issue here is that architects' commissions in the last decade of the twentieth century had certain limitations, let alone architectural abstractions. The abstraction of Thai-ness was not as boundless as now despite designers' efforts.

The issue of clients' artistic literacy was thus vital at this point of departure because the collaboration with clients was close and insightful and also because both parties had "better" taste and could move together towards a progressive design. This issue must be compared with the symptomatic architecture of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram as he attempted to literally translate Thai-ness into buildings, and its aftermath was dramatic as was discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4.

Another pivotal issue was the trend in which clients had clearly individualistic ideas when they approached architects. They wished to have a peculiar design tailor-made for them. Wealthy house owners hired architects to design a dream home with high expectations that the architects would address their aspirations and lifestyle in a unique way, as in the Flowable House and the Chiang Mai Residence. This leap of architects' competency could be assumed that many young architects had better

perspective and broader horizon from more extensive education both from home and abroad (such as,

Wealthy clients and many houses examined in this thesis were the architects' own homes, which provided substantial designs that followed the architects' idiosyncrasies. Houses are always designed a la carte, not at the whim of architects.

New prolific designs using the abstraction of Thai-ness found in the case studies are evident in the Tonsilp House, 713 House, Parn House, Oum & Pol's House, and Harirak Family's House. Some are very modern but also have a climatic response, such as the Tew Son House, 713 House, Parn House, Flowable House, Chiang Mai Residence, and Baan Loy Lom.

The visual and print media and the internet have increasingly pushed forward the discipline of architecture in academic and professional circles. The surveys in this thesis have revealed the impact that several magazines made in generating excitement and names for some styles and some forms and causing society to follow them and consider them fashionable. Although some of the media information was valuable, some was faulty and irrelevant. It was the media that produced the bulk of the discourse on these houses. It also served as the resource by which architects and clients could contemplate the rationales and justifications for the structures.

Conclusion of Chapter 7: Research Finding of the Thesis

Per the research questions, from the thorough study on the account of historical contexts, texts involving the development of the debates on identity and cases, this thesis attempted to analyze and they can now be answered as followed:

1) Have architects after 2000 found their identity. If yes, how and in what form?

Yes, they have. Architects worked towards an architecture that reflected the union of their self-realization. Some designs reverberated the past but with a new translation of forms shaped by current sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts. They also were formed under the new requirement for more urban conditions. These

can be seen in several manifestations. The physicality of forms is heterogeneous and without unity. They depended upon the factors of architects, clients, and sites.

2) What was it about contemporary Thai architecture that caused the sudden explosion of discourses on architectural identity after 1970s, and what was the attribution of these discourses?

Predicament: Spurred by the influx of foreign culture, some conservatives adamantly reacted by producing discourses especially the discourse of that Thailand was at the margin of losing its identity. Political in the sense, it urged the society at large to re-ponder how they would bring back the good old days. In architecture some attempts seen in the revivalism, such as F.M. Plaek Phibunsongkhram's scheme and the revivalism of other types. Some sought out the ways such as vernacularism and regionalism. The discourse around this time was intense and attacked the architects personally: "Cancer and Mastodon", AIDS, and Intellectual Imperialism.

3) Why has the debate on identity in Thai architecture become increasingly important even in contemporary practice?

Pre-2000: Pungent criticisms—modern thought--Homogeneity; Now: they strove to fit themselves individually (postmodern-heterogeneous) in the so-called rightful/decent positioning (according to some cases such as the works of Kanika Ratanapridakul). Second, the influence of global and domestic philosophical stance that lent the current mainstream. Third partly due to the incessant movements of conservatism by all societal segments, including the revere institutions.

4) Who decides what is a legitimate exemplar of contemporary Thai architecture and why?

Collective forces of partially by scholars, media, architects, and the Professional association (ASA).

5) What is the current consensus of or probable autonomous Thai attribution?

Houses that reveal a new consciousness of identity with their grammar can be summarized as

1. *Intertwining with nostalgic abstraction: abstract associationism*
2. *Breaking the box: peculiarity with nostalgic escapism*

However, the houses examined show that the architects were not trying to make a “meaningless form” or “get back to the past” but were instead searching for new forms, forms that would transcend modern architecture but have a radical content. The form embodied their autonomy in a balance of objectivity and subjectivity.

The houses were built with the objective of placement in a specific context, which was not the physical context alone but also the human context. The dilemma of identity that consumed Thailand in the last decade of the twentieth century and limited the direction of styles has declined and been replaced by a new acceptance, thanks to the recent contributions of autonomous works in various interpretations. Thai-ness and the Thai traditional house, which were the central schemes of the past, are no longer crucial issues, because a structure can now be anything that represents contemporary space and time. It can have a mutable “identity” even though there is an absence of Thai-ness. On the one hand, the new scheme of the adaptive Thai vernacular house of whatever form has done well in establishing its grammar and acceptance and has been readjusted to be realistically functional. On the other hand, the modern “broken box” is another critical type of autonomous design that coexists with its “cousin” to provide identity without a historical form.

As one seeks a proper definition of the new architecture of the contemporary, it is necessary to compare the styles and concepts found in these cases with the old styles and contexts. Although the new design also focuses on the identity issue, this thesis has found that it offers a unique paradigm as a new zeitgeist that was not comparable with those of the years before 2000. Its ingrained nature embraces a self-reflexive consciousness and contextualism. It constructs a new definition of the

architecture of now and safeguards architects from former criticisms. It intertwines human factors, such as users, designers, and critics, with changing philosophies and social, economic, and political contexts. This chapter analyzed cases of contemporary houses and constructed an architectural narrative through the issues of abstraction, approach, and archetype. It arrived at a clear view of the transformations and trends of what is now the practice of architects. The next chapter will discuss the production of the discourse of autonomous architecture and present a conclusion.



CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, extensive efforts have been made to answer a primary question: What is the contemporary architecture in Thailand that addresses Thai identity, and does it have a unifiable style and ideology in its practice? Based on a thorough study of theories and cases, this thesis argued that “autonomous architecture” has been the current endeavor of architects who want to interpret identity in a new way and produce a new architecture with an emphasis on identity. Their designs address a current demand, which is the manifestation of an identity in the unique characterization of a structure. The reflection of the architects themselves in their designs has been an indispensable commitment of increasing concern among Thai architects and elements of Thai society.

Creating Thai-ness by merely translating an archaic form or directly reviving a traditional style was no longer adequate for architecture. Architects tended to supplant such efforts by using an in-depth escapism to search for meaningful and poetic forms and spaces. There was a new consciousness used to revise designs so that they focused on the identity of a particular person, place, and time. It can be said that the emergence of autonomous architecture is not a rootless phenomenon but is an outgrowth of a dilemma of cultural and architectural identity that has overwhelmed Thai people since the 1960s. Exaggerations by the media and intense regional interests, combined with the failure of several large-scale projects of national consequence, such as the Suvarnabhumi Airport and the new House of Parliament, led to ambiguity in the architectural profession.

This thesis contextualized global theories, such as those of Kenneth Frampton, Alexander Tzonis, William J. R. Curtis, and Keith L. Eggener, which shed light on the trend of regionalism and identity, and also those of some domestic theorists, such as

Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn, and Ross King. These thinkers made sense of multifaceted approaches in remaking and developing the architecture of regionalism. This thesis also found that several issues were addressed by Thai architects, although the degree of deliberation varied from one to the other.

Polemical Context and Discourses of the Recent Past

The cases and texts investigated in all chapters in this thesis revealed that there have been many works that inclined towards such a tendency of direct stylistic duplication. During the 1980s and 1990s, the identity of Thai-ness was frequently debated. The pursuit of an identity and a style was embodied by the question “In what style should we build?” A search was made for a style that would express the essence of Thai-ness. One would expect that the quest would have been completed because many architects tried to answer the question, but results are unclear because their efforts were, surprisingly, met overwhelmingly with negative criticisms.

Numerous works using a translation of traditional forms during the 1980s and 1990s were purported to be inappropriate and even detrimental to Thai culture. The discourse on these structures was produced by architects and scholars whose bodies of knowledge about identity were various and mutable. This ambiguity resulted in different interpretations of what Thailand’s architectural identity should be.

The concern that Thailand was on the verge of losing its identity led to the problems studied in this thesis. There was an influx of modern architecture, which caused the demise of Thai authentic architecture. It brought about several national forms of discourse. For instance, “The outgrowth of modern architecture was as uncontrollable as AIDS,” according to Vimolsiddhi Horayangura. “We are now colonized culturally by the Westerners,” according to Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya. Such discourses blanketed the circle of Thai architects, whether they were relevant or not to an architect’s work, and caused many individual architects to feel that they must respond to them to find a way out of the impasse.

It is essential to clarify first the critical question of “What (actually) is Thai-ness?” Some architects during the late twentieth century turned to the past as the most authentic standard of Thai ideals, and others discussed and even squabbled about how Thai-ness is shown in a design. Another quandary was how to integrate the best elements of the past with the principles of modernism. This thesis has comprehensively discussed such (claimed) definitions and trends of the society of architects and theorists in Chapters 3 and 4. The most acceptable definition, and the one embraced by this thesis as its core theory, was a broad one that did not limit Thai-ness in terms of archaic physical forms. This has been presented here as “autonomous architecture.”

The traditionalism of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram was one design package for the production of a nationalistic discourse, and it led to an emergence of pastiches. Thai architecture from 1950 to 1970 was underpinned by his doctrine for civic buildings across the country. It followed his scheme of re-appreciating and reconstructing Thai-ness by digging out traditional architectural elements and reemploying them directly in buildings with modern functions. This practice eventually became relatively popular, at least in some small circles, because it was easy to implement and the results were visually comprehensible to the public. However, many critics attacked the scheme as a pernicious one, especially Sang-arun Rattakasikorn and Anuvit Charoensuppakul. Their writings criticized designs that advocated for a Thai-ness that was immediately visually recognizable and was based on efforts to reproduce Thai architecture of the past. Despite being much less contentious than the philosophical debates of the twentieth century, these deliberations and their modern justifications are critical to this thesis, which surveyed traditional revivalist Thai architects. They became increasingly concerned about censure of their ideologies within their own profession. The debate influenced the designs of architects of the next decades.

As Thailand's economic, social, and political spheres underwent rapid development, the changes speeded up the influx of architectural styles from other parts of the world and relegated the ancient Thai forms to the past. The trend of the arena shifted towards modern and Western architecture. The skyrocketing Thai economy of the 1980s was the main force that led to numerous disparate architectural traits and galvanized new concerns. This expedited the views of some groups of scholars, whose predominant discourse was that "architects were lost and derailed." More agitated polemical discourses on Thai-ness emerged. The contention brought about a series of efforts to foster the discovery and renovation of the Thai identity.

New movements and consciousnesses appeared in architecture schools and the Association of Siamese Architects (ASA), which stated three issues:

(1) "Thailand was purportedly on the verge of losing its identity" and did not have an appropriate characterization for the contemporary time, despite several attempts at creating a new personality. The failure was due to several reasons. The solution still seemed unsettled even though it was addressed by newly proposed theories, such as those expressed in the works of Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura.

(2) As the polemical agenda on the repression of identity because of "too much modern architecture" was surfacing in the country, some architects switched to new realms such as postmodernism in the 1980s and 1990s in an attempt to untangle the problem. This caused even greater censure of postmodern fantasies in subsequent decades. "Postmodern is the icon of unintellectual practice," according to Sumet Jumsai Na Ayutthaya. It was a discourse that offended some architects' ideals during the 1980s. It was evident that when buildings of the Western historicism style were being built enthusiastically in the country (e.g., Amarin Plaza (Figure 42), built in a fractional Roman revival style), they received wide disapproval, especially in architectural circles. By contrast, laypeople seemed to accept the designs with pleasure. However, Thailand (and probably every other country in the world) had encountered the practice of postmodernism from 1980 to 2000. After 2000, many

postmodernism “seeds” were planted everywhere, and new megaprojects were built in this form, such as many resorts and vacation projects in Khao Yai. New real estate and commercial projects adopted European styles, mostly with pastiches. Several projects were economically successful in their provision of a fanciful image that appealed to the tastes of a certain clientele. It was a niche market that fulfilled a demand for an exotic product that was distinctive among existing projects, similar to the style of Las Vegas in the United States. Such a marketing strategy was incongruent with Rangsan Torsuwan’s thinking; he maintained that the style was due to the continuing search by clients for a new fashion and a result of the tremendous growth of the tourism industry. Trips abroad by middle class travelers expanded their architectural horizons and spurred a need to have similar picturesque imagery everywhere.

(3) Suppressive rules and a lack of an appropriate answer to the question about identity were evident in the discourse and caveats of the 1980s. For instance, “postmodern style does not espouse Thai-ness” was a comment on structures that borrowed forms from Western historicism. A similar comment was, “Thailand was not a colony of Rome,” made about architectural styles of the 1990s that embodied the postmodern style.

Consequently, several attempts were made in subsequent years to define a national identity. A series of seminars was held by the government, Silpakorn University, and the ASA to find a Thai national identity. Many architects were seeking a proper definition of the term for the contemporary time and for an architecture that expressed Thai-ness but did not borrow straightforwardly from the archaic form. One comment was that “modern architecture was the selected option because it was neutral.” Some comments illustrated discursive clichés from the twentieth century and impacted architectural practice in the following century.

Although there are no rules engraved in stone that control architects, there have always been many tacit guideposts for maintaining etiquette and not getting off

the ‘track.’ Discursive works were sometimes disseminated in ASA journals during the 1990s (this has already been discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3) and impacted practitioners. Any problematic practices that went against the “cultural taboo”, that is, breached the cultural canon, were intolerable. Erratic practices were seen, for instance, in the Sukhothai Hotel, Thai Product Exhibition Center of the Cooperative Shop project (which employed Ruan Song Kreung Lamyong architectural styles), and the use of the *phra prang* (a type of Buddhist stupa) for the smoke shaft of a crematorium, as censured in an article by Somphop Pirom.²⁰² Many styles and vocabularies were worthy only of scorn, according to him.

One dramatic debate in the society of architects in Thailand concerned the construction of a new airport, and it led to later concerns about the need of architecture to embody Thai-ness. The airport was designed by Helmut Jahn, an American architect, in a starkly modern style and was rebuked for lacking Thai attributes. Had the project been more scrupulously considered ahead of time,²⁰³ the pervasive question of “In what style should we build?” might have been avoided and fewer resources might have been dedicated to debating just what it means to imbue one’s architectural work with Thai-ness. This cultural identity was turned into a gauge of moral principles in architectural design. It was decided that all architects should take this issue into account when designing structures, especially when they were dealing with iconic national projects.

The cultural sentiment then shifted to a growing contemplation of identity or regionalism (according to Frampton and Tzoniz) in all cultural disciplines. This new consciousness led to several research efforts to discover an identity in the architecture of the country. Some seminal works on identity theories were presented by

²⁰²Admiral Somphob Pirom, "Suebsan Sathapattayakam Thai [Continuation of Thai Architecture]," *ASA Journal*, no. January-February (1995).

²⁰³ASA, "Kam Tuan Khong Samakhom Sathapanik Siam Rueng Rub Baeb Arkarn Tha Arkadsayan Sakol Krungthep Haeng Thi Song (Sanambin Nong Nguhao) [Warning from ASA on the Character of the Bangkok International Airport No. 2 (Nong Nguhao Airport), [in Thai]" *ASA Journal*, no. July (1997). 64-67.

Vimolsiddhi Horayangura, M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn, Ross King, and Chatri Prakitnonthakan; all were searching for and discussing a more genuine and relevant embodiment of Thai-ness in architecture. The persistence of this trend in scholarship could be seen in several subsequent seminars and publications from around 2000 and beyond. These critical works became the topics of discussions after 2000 among Thai architects. Many works discussed in Chapter 5 highlighted the distinctive nature of narratives that marked the point of departure for Thai-ness in architectural design. The new approaches in the interpretation of what Thai-ness is included a phenomenological view, as argued by M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn, that the fundamental essence of Thai architecture was a “feminine character.”

To a comparable extent, Ross King offered an approach to Thai-ness and identity in design. His recommendation was to “read” the habitual aspects of Thai citizens to arrive at a sense of everyday life rather than recapture memories of olden times. One of his suggestions was *kreng chai* (being gentle and avoiding bothering others) to generate a sense of Thai-ness. Unfortunately, not many architects had used Ross King’s ideas to make concrete forms. In actual design practice, it is uncommon for architects to declare that they have adopted or referred to a particular theory or theorist. This thesis did not have much access to such concepts.

Criticisms made by Chatri Prakitnonthakan also were related to the meaning of Thai-ness. He reacted to the malady of contemporary practices used for several structures, especially the House of Parliament. These works advocated for a new approach in understanding Thai-ness in architecture and directly impacted later practices that did not rely on old definitions of identity that might be limiting and suppressive.

“No need to toe the line; we have a new way: Some of the cases reviewed by this thesis showed continual progress towards a way of breaking open the purported identity deadlock. One way was by pursuing an anchoring to place through different

approaches. One possible practical approach to identity that would not cause further problems, as the cases prior to 2000 had, was to work outside the boundaries of the known faux pas that had already occurred. One critical point to be avoided was the (sacred) canon of traditional style. Instead, the safe zone would be switched to modern architecture but with customization to eliminate blandness. However, the aspect of localized modern form that lies deep in any architect's consciousness is the espousal of the genius loci.

The solution was clear that if traditionalism was not to be followed, styles that were more of a compromise with conservatives should be. Hence, there appeared to be two alternatives. (1) The first was to break the box by including peculiarity with nostalgic escapism (modern yet fits the style) (with the place or context). (2) The second was the intertwining with nostalgic abstraction, including abstract associationism (or revisiting a low-key style) in a modernistic way. The latter involves a tendency to use the vernacular. To sum up, those approaches were voluntary or subconscious endeavors to work cautiously to craft a meaningful work.

The ASA event "Back to Basic 2016" incorporated lectures, exhibitions, and pamphlets on forming a new definition of architecture in relation to contemporary architecture. It could be said that the event certified and promoted the ideology of reductivism and its ideas justified simplicity, austerity, and the view that less is more—simplicity (rather than luxury). It was not only this event that had an impact on the sentiment of the architectural realm but also several publications, such as the issue titled "Humble Living" published by Baan Lae Suan magazine in 2010.²⁰⁴ The magazine emphasized the idea of splendid simplicity by continually focusing on the virtue of the style in numerous volumes. Austerity was an ideal of the dogma of sufficiency consciousness that impacted the thoughts of numerous member architects.

²⁰⁴“*Humble Living*, ed. Sarayut Sreetip-ard (Bangkok: Baan Lae Suan, 2010).
12.

The Question of the New Thai: Which Thai Style Truly Has a New Thai-ness?

Many magazines besides Baan Lae Suan, such as Design and Décor and those published by the Li-Zenn Company, as well as books and websites, disseminated information on and advocated for (and sometimes advertised) the nobility of the new vernacular narration from 2011 to 2019.

Baan Lae Suan, especially, seemed to latch onto the idea as its grand agenda for the decade. It is seen in the issues on “Thai-ness in Modern Living” (2011), “Tropical Modular” (2012), and “Modern Vernacular Home” (2019) and also in Design and Décor in its “The Wood House Series” (2011).

Vernacular houses that were the subjects of publications in modern society in the previous period were perceived as having a design that was dysfunctional for modern lifestyles. Publications directly boosted the popularity of the style (and tried to verify the practical side of it) and the consciousness of it, and at the same time, substantiated the outlook that these old valuable concepts still embodied practicality (*yu dai ching*). They helped foster public acceptance of this style of house.

What could be considered Thai-ness at this time if not the direct borrowing of feature and form? Baan Lae Suan argued that Thai-ness was not merely nostalgic but dwelt in the ordinary built environment. So, what was Thai-ness? A nostalgia for the past was increasingly popularized. It was also argued that Thai-ness was embodied in the intrinsic nature of Thai citizens. Architecture that embraced Thai-ness involved the types and styles of designs that had been built and lived in by Thai people. Those buildings must always be classified as Thai architecture. This definition of Thai architecture and Thai-ness was propounded especially by Arthit Limman, an architect of the government’s Department of Fine Arts, who was considered the proponent of the benchmark of Thai traditional architecture. His definition of Thai-style architecture was more extensive than a particular historical style, however.

Heterogeneity

It was found that many architects claimed that a *genius loci* or sense of place was vital for a regionalism of architecture. One then had to ask in what sense this was true for Thailand. What was an appropriate representation of place? Architects of the new generation who were concerned with the *genius loci* embraced varied approaches in anchoring their structures with a context in various aspects. An architecture with this attribution transcends a recognizable form of historicism, and architects switched to modern forms but used a language that responded to local conditions. They included an archetype that resonated with topographical and climatic contexts to formulate a novel Thai-ness and Thai architecture autonomously.

The Ideology of Contemporary Architecture: Autonomous Architecture Discourse on Abstraction Contemporary Vernacular, Modern Vernacular, and Postmodern Thai

Romanticism with a vernacular reinterpretation thrived in contemporary house designs by Wirot Srisuro (though his prominent work in this style was a temple) during the 1970s and the Habita Group (such as Sixth Sense Yao Noi Hotel) during the 1990s and blossomed further in the 2010s. The abstract notion of the trend is a fusion of new and old: Even though architects adopted the old essence of the vernacular, they chose to reevaluate the old sources meticulously in terms of function and used them only when they were still applicable for users of the current time. A trend of using features of peasant structures included openness and much wind flow, with many windows, the tectonics of timber carpentry, and several models of space. It was the most popular, favorable archetype, according to the literature survey and case studies of this thesis. The terms contemporary vernacular, modern vernacular, and postmodern Thai were used interchangeably, and this thesis found that they pointed towards the same attribution.

A lightweight feeling, simplicity, and modesty are coherent with such a trend of a high degree of openness. These features correspond with those of the global philosophical tendency, which was theorized by Italo Calvino. This trend towards

simplicity or the less is more ethos was familiar to Thai citizens long ago but ebbed following modernization and an economic boom, so that “more” became increasingly valued. However, in the contemporary time, with its sociocultural and socioeconomic concerns, it can be said that a trend of discreet, subtle, but classy architecture has embodied a new romanticism. This trend was evident in the modern vernacular houses studied for this thesis.

Notes on Abstraction in the Cases Studied

Some of the houses studied in this thesis had a radical modern imagery, such as the Flowable House by Tonkao Panin. Such a building has an appearance of modernity and is its greatest contender of the new and old school, but it responds to the local climate and it draws together the positions that were often opposed. It distills qualities of context without adopting an overly regionalist position and without recourse to historical postures.

A joyous and utterly straightforward building, the 2+4 House (Living Within the Same House by Theerapon Niyom), has a marvelous expression of a playful spirit. It celebrates the freshness of folk forms and the surrealism of Chiang Tung motifs. These preoccupations are filtered through a robust vocabulary that owes a debt to the vernacular style of a northern house. The issue in this house is its association with a style that is vernacular but is not Thai vernacular. So, is it appropriate? It is still debatable. This thesis found that architects who wanted to generate a regionalistic identity ended up by making a unique construct along a spectrum of abstraction. Normally, when architects search for ideas, they find one in the context of the site. Theerapol Niyom, however, turned to a model of a vernacular house of Chiang Tung, a town in Shan State, Myanmar, even though he situated the house in Bangkok.

New Thai Style

Regarding the fabrication of a new consciousness, this thesis found that there has been a paradigm shift since 2000. The poetics of the new architects served current lifestyles by anchoring structures with a particular personality but did not associate

them with the straightforward formality of revivalism. The Thai house was not the original, age-old Thai house anymore; the term had become a polemical one. The current trend characterized identity as a latent Thai-ness (a DNA of users, according to M.L. Varudh Varavarn). The term identity had a more extensive, broader definition in how it was used to describe architects' intentions to fabricate an architecture of identity.

The connections of the new architecture with the theories of the 1990s were distinctive. For instance, the transformation of traditionalist forms towards a more abstract essence, or adaptive Thai-ness, was theorized by Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, and some architects adopted phenomenology, according to M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn. However, the contemporary designs transcended earlier theories to use a form with a deeper architectural meaning.

After the year 2000, there was a waning of the discourse on being exactly Thai as the sole identity and the use of the term Thai-ness, although intermittent use of these terms did occur. This was partly due to the influx of an enormous amount of information on globalization in publications and on the Internet. Consequently, the boundaries between the terms Thai-ness versus global versus local versus oneself became elusive and vague. The fabrication of a new abstract narrative on the architecture of peculiarity or self-denotation was anchored in relevant spaces, places, and people, but it was no longer necessary to have only Thai style. Designs were based on social habits, spatial patterns, and landscapes of the architects' own country and were interwoven into a fabric of imaginative abstraction as a vanguard of their own autonomous architecture.

Autonomous architecture as an architecture of the radical manifestation of being oneself had some adherents, and its underlying principles were expressed through an array of forms. The new form, which was not limited to a packaging of, or cosmetic application of, the popular Thai traditional style, was likely an expression of profound meanings or the disciplined result of attention to the functional aspects

suggested by the architecture of rationalism. Its uniqueness is the result, in a number of projects studied in this thesis; it is deeply related to weathered materials and lyrical spaces, forms, and details that produce a lasting primal poetry that is far beyond mere “modern” concerns. It is, thus, a specialized, or localized, version of modern architecture.

Although some houses embodied much of the old idiom, contemporary architects mostly did not make direct copies of historical models. They presented convincing illusions reborn of historical models. Transcending old forms with new ideas, they translated and transformed them and made them into a novel idiom. Even though a reminiscence of historical grammar is seen in some houses, it can be read as a new amalgamation; the reference to the old idiom varies among different structures.

The architecture of autonomy, hence, involves a cross-breeding and compromise between factors of locality and modern architecture. Abstraction was the primary key to the transformation of style; heterogeneity of form and detail gave way to a uniform vocabulary of pure lines, surfaces, and volumes, which permitted configurations that were dynamic and open yet closely unified because of their basis in abstract design. What the architects advocated, and what was widely accepted, was a rationalizable form arrived at through radical functionalism. This abstraction affected the planning, spacing, and massing of the structural shapes, so that a viewer does not see a box on one side and a picturesque fragmentation on the other, but instead sees a whole house conceived within its regional context in both architectural vocabulary and phenomenological abstraction.

Modern Tropical Style

The modern tropical style and contextual modernism are the concepts that embrace the forms, spaces, and grammars that are conducive to the climatic context. One building that epitomizes this idea is the Chiang Mai Residence designed by architect Kulapat Yantrasast (wHY Architects), discussed in the publication *House by*

*Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism.*²⁰⁵ It suits and refers to its immediate surroundings of landscape, materials available, neighboring buildings, and climate in its physical appearance. It also takes on the issue of social context, as did houses in the style of contextual modernism; this is the cultural background that shaped the houses. The backgrounds of the architects and the clients, their customs, and their rituals define the lives of the users in multifaceted design determinations.

Furthermore, the mood and tone of this style are related to modern architecture but were modified to be in harmony with the tropical environment or to “break the box” by diminishing the plainness and blandness of a form that was overly modern Platonic. According to the analysis of this thesis, houses that fall into this category include the Tew Son House, 713 House, Parn House, Flowable House, Chiang Mai Residence, and Baan Loy Lom. The Flowable House is unique in that it adopts a diaphanous skin that addresses the hot and humid setting in which it is located.

Postmodern Thai Style

In the work of Pirast Pacharaswate and his definition of architectural style he created was referred to as Postmodern Thai style. It, in fact, was his intention to discuss the adaptive Thai vernacular for modern design. This thesis views that it is synonymous with the term New Thai style.

Sufficiency in Thai Style

In Thai the terms *por*, *por piang*, and *por dee* share the word *por*, meaning sufficient, and encompasses as sense of *samatha* and satisfying in the current state.²⁰⁶ A tendency to produce sufficiency occurred during the years after 2000. Examples are the Por Dee Por Dee building at the Baan Huay Sarn Yaw School by M. L. Vin

²⁰⁵Nithi Sthapitanonda, *House by Thai Architects: Contextual Modernism*, *ibid.*, 184-205.

²⁰⁶In some contexts, the word *por* can also mean “I have enough” or “I am done.” Synonyms for the word are acceptable, ample, plentiful, satisfactory, and tolerable.

Varavarn, PO-D, and Por Architects and their Por House, as well as the abstract concept that many architects seized on as a rationale for house design. The focus had a sentimental value for the mind and soul rather than a materialistic essence. These are discourses of the current design trend, which rely significantly on King Bhumibol's philosophy of sufficiency.

Discourse on Approach:

Nature as an Abstraction of Architecture or Organic Architecture: I Love Nature”

Climatic context: “I know it’s hot and dank but I wish I could turn off the air-con.”

This thesis contextualized the situation in the years before 2000 and discovered that an array of former discourses focusing on the reflection of Thai identity tended to use binary approaches. That is, they borrowed exterior features directly to embody modern functions on the inside and directly revisited the past with its national romantic imagery and vernacular folklores (distinctively exemplified by the Sukhothai Hotel.) Those practices had limitations in the interpretation and manifestation of Thai-ness (or identity). Debates on traditional features in formal transfers were already presented in several parts of this thesis. The polemical impact was that architects held atypical mindsets and approaches to the idea that physical forms alone might not be the only answer to maintaining identity because places, people, and times had been mutable throughout the course of history. This means that making an architecture that suits current users might be a viable approach to the reflection of individuality.

In various projects that this thesis investigated, architects modified their designs to fit particular climatic and natural conditions. They also used local principles and traditional devices such as roofs, terraces, peristyles, screens, and awnings. A wide variety of modern adaptations was used to make them practical for contemporary living. These features were employed as the *raison d'être* of assuring an identity and avoiding a generic design. In contemporary practice, the elements were still useful and relevant, just as they were in earlier times, but the architects avoided the national romantic and vernacular folkloric imagery that some architects had used in the twentieth century.

Architects in the studied cases explained their style in terms of Thai characteristics and had a conceptual rationale for their decisions, which was to design houses that suited their sociocultural conditions. Architects who used this approach may have needed a logical discourse to justify the style. This concept concerns how architecture in contemporary times has maintained a very traditional vocabulary. In terms of the abstract translation of a genre, the direct adoption of its form is a fine example of coping with Thailand's climatic and sociocultural conditions more efficiently than in the past. Furthermore, the tropical design approach suited Thailand's context and people, as has been proved through time.

If one explores the design of the houses in depth, one finds that the major concerns were about heat and rainfall. They influenced the roof forms (gable forms) and gable end walls. Other parts of the houses were designed with a simple modern treatment. The roof profile seemed to offer the opportunity to generate a current design. Chatri Prakitnonthakan claimed that one absurdity of creating Thai-ness was thinking that the only way to do so effortlessly was to revisit the gable roof and gable end wall.

Because of the stylistic predicament of the very last decades of the twentieth century (i.e., a revulsion against traditional styles and concerns about the absence of identity in other styles), such a polemical attempt was not surprising. It became the

point of departure that prompted the ever-more-challenging goal of retaining an identity of Thai-ness but not doing so by directly imitating the past. How was this to be done?

Nature in Thai Style

Nature was perceived as an abstraction of architecture or an organic architecture: “I love nature.” A connection to nature was another popular abstraction that many architects used for shaping a design. This involved intertwining the planning, the use of specialized elements, the materials, and the design of the open spaces and entries into them.

The discourse of impracticality, or not having *yu dai ching*, in the 1980s and 1990s was about how a Thai-style house, either traditional or vernacular, might be difficult to actually live in. Such houses were initially designed and built for premodern lifestyles and in some respects would no longer be livable or convenient for current urban lifestyles. After 2000, however, these problems were solved by the adaptive designs analyzed in this thesis.

Impracticality has been a problem in past forms of architecture as well as present forms. One structure that was designed impractically was La Cité de Refuge by Le Corbusier, which had a glazed façade that trapped heat and was “an environmental disaster.”²⁰⁷ Mies van der Rohe’s design for Farnsworth House was described by Edith Farnsworth, its owner, as “a prototype of ruin.”²⁰⁸ The problems were due to the impracticality of the structures’ purely sterile forms and the lack of humanization for real living. Are such deficits aspects of architects’ idiosyncrasies?

²⁰⁷William J. R. Curtis, *ibid.*, 320, 326.

²⁰⁸Carol Strickland, *The Annotated Arch: A Crash Course in the History of Architecture* (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel, 2001), 135; “Five Examples of Iconic Modern Architecture with Serious Flaws,” AD Magazine.com, 2019, accessed April 9, 2020, https://www.admagazine.com/arquitectura/los-defectos-de-las-casas-iconicas-de-la-arquitectura-moderna-20191024-6066-articulos.html?fbclid=IwAR1v6-Q63nm7ylfE4eyVRDW5tmiBHQyef-RheV0Vj58_9UkpF5nx--WUQ.

Climatic context: “I know it’s hot and dank but I wish I could turn off the air-con.” Design that adapted modern architectural design to fit contextually with the conditions of Thailand was implemented, and it emerged as a unique form of radical contextualism. That concept also was shaped by the contemporary requirement of some owners for less air-conditioning but more exposure to natural winds. A unique design was needed for such a house. The style of modern vernacularity, with porous skins and no air-conditioning, was in some ways the opposite of the style of ordinary modern houses (especially for urban living), which were sealed as if to form an airlock inside.

Discourse on Archetype

“Being both meaningful and *yu dai ching*.”

After the year 2000, numerous archetypal novelties were developed for coexistence with old revival elements. Some new approaches were deployed, many of which involved a judicious adjustment of the generic features of modernism to the climates, cultures, memories, and aspirations of their respective societies and were crafted into new forms. An expression of contemporary architects in an effort to cultivate identity within houses was attained by revitalizing the old archetypes obliquely. The reuse of the old idioms could be a way of embodying a similar attempt at matching a new ideal with tradition.

Neither the concept of the international style nor the myth of indigenous purity could do justice to this complex intermingling of elements, combining new visions of the future and new versions of the past. An architectural rhetoric used an intertwining of disparate ingredients as well as an apt description for this art and culminated in a series of discursive works of the time beyond 2000.

Although the sufficiency or simplicity of architecture in many cases sounded poetic and convincingly romantic, in practice it was as far from the scrap pile as the pandemonium of the burn yard. Minimalistic architecture for a new identity—with an emphasis on “less is more”—could be attained by porosity and translucence. For instance, the design of the Flowable House by Tonkao Panin gives the overall form a look like a birdcage. Its physical features not only allow the breezes to blow through but also give it a diaphragmatic visibility through which users can see the outside vista clearly.

Some houses distilled the schematic of a pavilion on a podium but also had a sensation of weightless liberation, so that their spaces were enlivened in new ways that subverted their solidity in their lattice skins and colonnades. They show that modern architectural simplifications can blend the imagery of the contemporary ideal with a reminiscence of architecture’s most enduring values.

Localized Modern or Autonomously Modern Style

Some contemporary structures with an emphasis on identity were created as new interpretations of the modern architectural grammar. Despite their overall tonality, which was somewhat in the sleek modern style, they intertwined some layers of peculiar elements that were regionalized to serve their contexts.

A distinctive element that commonly appeared was a pitched roof with deep-eaved overhangs. For the modern architectural structures of the West, roofs with an up-pitched ridge and overhang are unnecessary. Plain, sleek, flat roofs are more appropriate for their climates and the spirit of their style. This was not, however, a popular fashion for roofs expressing a sense of a Thai locality, according to the cases this thesis studied. Pitched roofs offer protection in Thailand and have a significant purpose. Individuality is provided by the roof’s scale or the type of construction used beneath it. The roof, form, materials, and proportions are the most decipherable elements. These were the elements given the most attention to create a sense of

association. The works by all of the architects studied in this thesis show the emphasis on this archetype.

The Chiang Mai Residence, with its peculiar hat for a roof covering, probably was the most unique attempt to create an alien roof form, but the roof still has a pitched-up form. It could be inferred that the pitched roof form, in spite of Chatri Prakitnonthakan's claim, is still relevant because it responds well to the climatic conditions. In the Chiang Mai Residence, it looks neither vernacular nor modern but like something in between, and it serves well the particular context of Chiang Mai.

New Vernacular Amalgamation: Adaptive Regional Elements and Formalism

The forms of modern architecture were more likely to marry with some local traditions than others in an adaptation to radical contextualism, as argued by this thesis. Some unique new adaptive regional elements are as follows:

1. Organic simplicity
2. Lightness (openness and porosity made by subdividing volumes, adding multitudinous windows, or using a pergola-like form, colonnade, and peristyle)
3. Customary porosity (with transparency attained by minimizing wall enclosure and increasing the voids)
4. Planning (fragmentation or breaking apart of volumes)
5. Space and spatiality (encouraging a sense of belonging)
6. Modernity that fits the local context
7. A hovering or floating form (poising the structure on stilts)
8. *Tai thun*
10. Reinterpreting the pitched roof with a deep-eaved overhang with certain simplicity
11. Undulation of walls (jutting out, setting back, protruding)

12. Natural or local materials (wood, gravel, tiles, shingles, terracotta, bricks, clay) or a combination of natural and modern materials (unpainted stucco, béton brut, steel, terrazzo, glass)

13. *Chan*

14. Colonnade or columns detached from walls

15. Windows (an all-new design or new interpretive design from the vernacular: serving functional purposes of ventilation and visibility)

16. Old features such as split levels

17. Interior skin finishing

18. Emphasis on tectonic detail

19. Lattice walls and trellises

20. Furniture and miscellaneous decorative items. In the case studies it was found that the architects of the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts and its affiliations were resolute contributors who shone light on the reinterpretation of vernacular archetypes by bringing back idioms yet layering them to accommodate new functions. The evolutionary concept of architecture using modern materials while maintaining the arts-and-crafts philosophy of indigenous intellectuals led to the innovation of form and spatial enclosures and yielded original works with a distinct form of architecture that captured well a new identity.

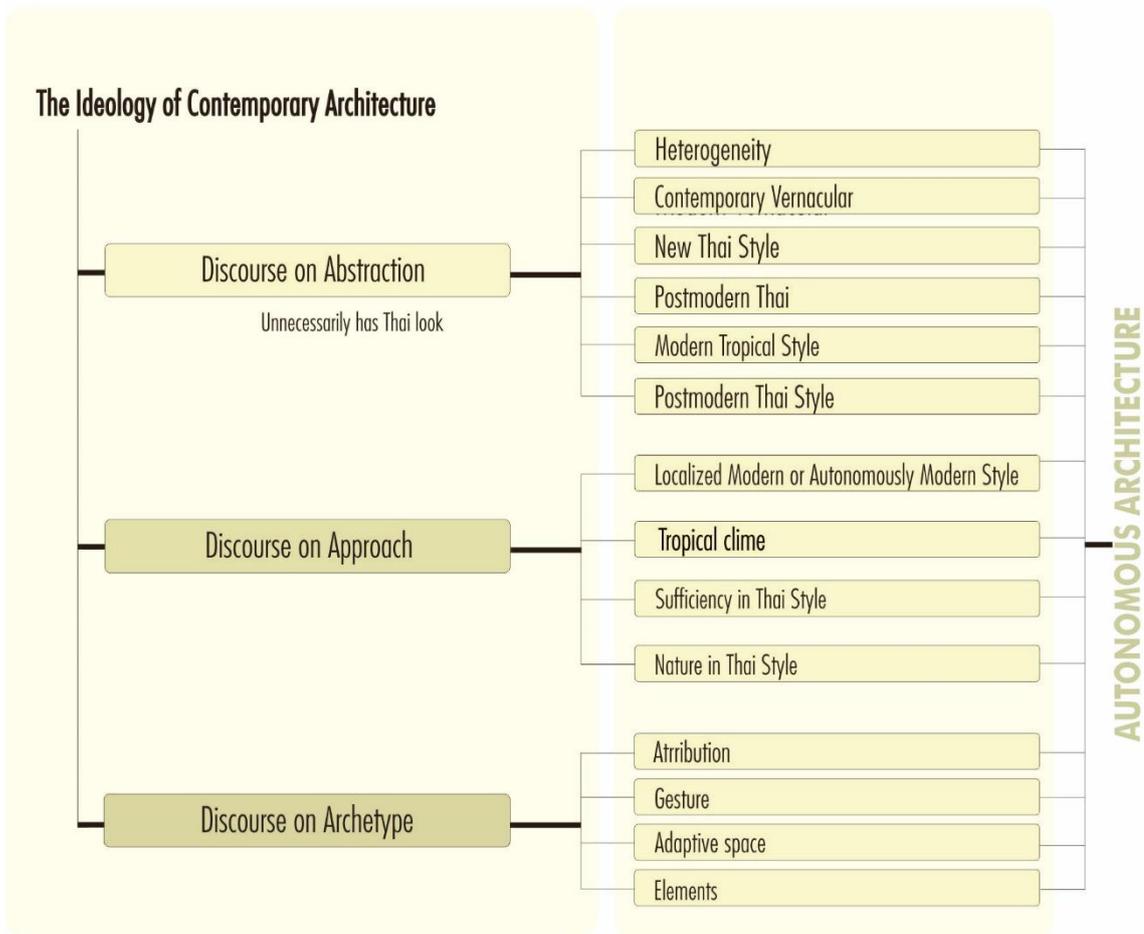


Figure 154 Diagram of finding: Contemporary Architecture

Source: By the author



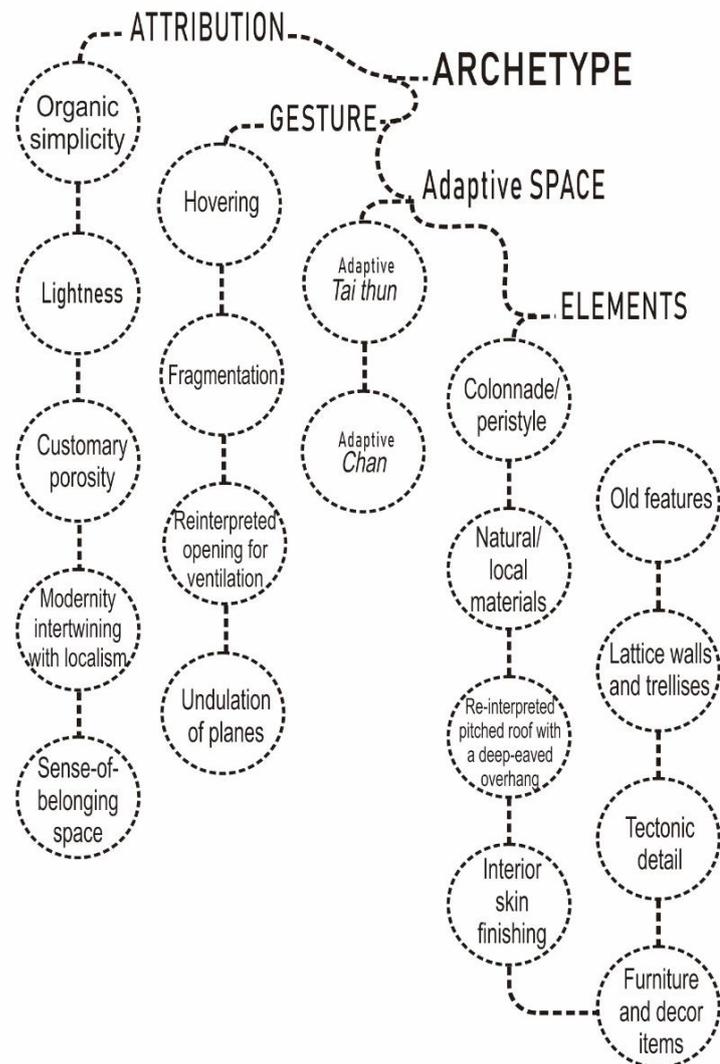


Figure 155 Diagram of finding: Archetype of autonomous architecture

Source: By the author

Notes on the Vocabulary of Archetype Levitation and Peristyle

In old Thai houses, levitation or a sense of defying gravity is commonly characterized by poising the massing delicately above the voided space underneath. However, in the design of autonomous architecture, this could be achieved by using stilts to support the mass, by a setback of walls or elements of the lower mass, or by a protrusion of the upper mass outward. This creates an effect of a flying mass. Analogies between the lightweight heft of wood in the hovering form of vernacular

architecture and the pure Platonic form of modern architecture were not challenging to generate.

The peristyle is another architectural feature that provides a sense of lightness and porosity to the building enclosure. It is characterized by substituting a row of columns (columnar screen) for the outer shells.

In many houses, architects eliminated the degree of enclosure by not placing the outer walls right at the parameter but instead layering the elements, starting with the very lightweight ones, with an array of columnar screens that created the peristyle archetype. In effect, such a technique created a sense of porosity and an elusive edge, also known as the gray space, according to Chatree Ladalalitsakul. The 2+4 House by Theerapol Niyom and the Eastern House by Pirast Pacharaswate epitomized this archetype distinctly. Their contemporary use of stilts built with concrete and steel emerged as an enmeshing of the ages old and the newly reborn.

Chan

Regarding innovative spatial elements, one that was pervasively employed was the *chan*, or specialized terrace. Several houses adopted a *chan* derived from the vernacular-style house. This element had a quite impractical aspect (in some circumstance) because the typical *chan* had no walls, and this is not a useful form for today. Adapting an element for realistic use (*yu dai ching*) means that it must protect the house from trespassers for security reasons. By distilling the essence of the space, some architects attached walls and a roof to the *chan*. It was a contemporary means of enclosing the space while preserving a sense of outdoor room.

Although the details changed, the architects tried to preserve the sense of this archetype as much as they could. In discussing this practice, this thesis argues that it is a sign of progress in architectural development that suits contemporary life more efficiently. The language of form newly transformed is an autonomous approach of evolution based on practical use for today.

In fact, the *chan* is now used for different purposes and differs drastically from the past, when it was first created. Today it is a space for recreation rather than heavy chores, such as cooking, dining, and other activities, as in the past. The *chan* currently serves also as an outdoor living room and party space, as well as an interstitial space between two or more architectural compartments, as is exemplified in the work of Metas Srisuchat. His house by the canal is composed of two small fragmented compartments of approximately 400 square meters each; in streamlining the massiveness of the form he used the *chan* to conjoin each wing together.

Tai Thun

The contemporary archetype can be recognized by the elements in the composition that go beyond the fragmented whole. For example, in many of the houses studied, a *tai thun* was used in a house on stilts. It was not the *tai thun* alone that constituted this architectural vocabulary, and the house on stilts could not be implemented individually. The archetype was adapted from the vernacular, but a design modification was made to it. The *tai thun* was sealed to fit the new urban lifestyle. Privacy is another issue that must increasingly be addressed.

In the adaptive design, the *tai thun* can be partially enclosed or can be closed when needed with features such as accordion doors. This is seen in the 713 House by Jun Sekino and is a necessary integral way of making the house usable for the present.

Pluralistic Materials

1. Wood

The minimal attention paid to the tectonics of timber work was increased, as seen in the works of Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweasap. In the autonomous form, it is intertwined with modern architecture but customized to avoid blandness. A cross-breeding was sought between the principles of modern design and indigenous features drawn from the vernacular informality. Theerapol Niyom's work exemplifies this

style of practice. Moreover, some houses were made to embed a specific *genius loci*, and wood works well for this feeling.

Chatree Ladlalitsakul studied indigenous timber buildings with their disparate types, characteristic forms, and patterns for living. He also sought out relevant parallels in modern architecture. Another architect of the same mind, Nanthapong Lertmaneethaweasap, designed two houses to embody an impeccable and delicate detailing of the wood joints. With a synthesis of a concrete frame, a grammar drawn from the precedence of timber, and the use of certain long-time local traditions, a language was forged that can be used for new houses with a distinctive Thai character and sobriety.

2. Juxtaposition of Whitewashed Plaster and Wood

Some new houses adopted whitewashed plaster made of modern Portland cement, which was the ubiquitous material available in Thailand that could be substituted for old timbers and the old technique of plaster on brickwork. The use of concrete and cement mixtures and brick and mortar for masonry walls had been becoming common because they are low in cost but effective and durable. In addition, the construction technique had been quite familiar to local craftsmen since the emergence of modern architecture in Thailand. As a contrast to the modernistic style, Chatree Ladlalitsakul's Tonsilp House is a good case in point. It exemplifies the architect's own organic ideal and emphasizes his inner vitality of expression in its fusion of structure, function, and idea and the inspiration of the fusion form.

When architects wished to build a house to reflect regionalism, they frequently made some parts of it in whitewashed plaster; for instance, a wooden house would not be made of only wood but of wood combined with whitewashed plaster in some places. This composition made it unique and is a novelty of autonomous architecture.

Besides, natural local materials such as stone and gravel have also been used to refer to a sense of place. They are used as paving and decorative materials, and

their coarse textures bring back a local flavor. The intricate use of these materials in the 2+4 House is a good example of this.

Architects' Attempts to Balance the Old and the New

A specific design method of combining the new and the old in order to establish an identity and individuality was deployed after 2000. This was sometimes seen as a tool that could render direction to uncertain designers, because imagination was replaced by questions of customization versus conformity and modern versus traditional. Eventually, a small number of architects began to better implement the socially required merger of modern design and local tradition, and some of them even managed to achieve a very individualistic, symbolic richness of design while balancing these competing needs.

Contemporary architects searched the vernacular in order to appreciate the value of local arts. After the turn of the millennium, the great bulk of discussions and ideals that permeated the circle of architects had synchronized and become a new architectural movement in Thailand. It had more apparent objectives and more achievable goals.

Young architects seemed to be uniquely adept at navigating these changing waters, and many achieved great individual success. Although traditional Thai style elements persisted, the old forms were revisited but in a new way that allowed them to become more of a visual language, communicating the local history and values, rather than a benchmark against which all architectural designs must be measured. The goal was for Thailand's identity, Thai-ness, to be intentional or not, instantly recognizable in architectural form, and thus easily communicated to all who saw it.

The manner and etiquette of style had been indispensable in Thai society. The rationale of the reaction to the postmillennial style pushed architects to come to terms with the issue of morality in the selection of style. In like manner, this polemic has become a discourse in the discipline of architecture in Thailand in that there have

been criticisms of appropriateness. In a general sense, it seems that architects should have freedom in choosing whatever style and design they fancy, but in actuality, they have to comply with design ethics as a code of conduct for which the society of architects had actively and passively been constructing the rules (discussed comprehensively in Chapter 3).

With the middle class's emphasis on individuality and its penchant for self-declaration, this requires novelty and uniqueness in design to narrate a status and its characteristics. Thus, architecture has become a distinguishing mark of the owner and, in some cases, the architect.

The goal of incorporating a sense of place and a sense of the user (design for whom) had increasingly become a new professional code of conduct. It served the needs and wishes of each particular owner, not the requirements of a generic design or purely modern design that disregarded users. In the sociocultural context of Thailand during the time after 2000, quite a few architects came to terms with their prodigious capacity to absorb diverse sources and precedents and translate them into their work. They served a new generation of wealthy, well-educated clients by offering them simple, discreet modern forms that were also embedded with a depth of abstraction. This resulted in substantial houses designed with the sentiment that regional identity was meaningful for clients' lives and statuses. Underneath the surface of those modern houses were the identities and idiosyncrasies of their architects.

Interestingly, this recalls the nineteenth century morality paradigm of Pugin, Ruskin, and Morris, whose names appear in Western architecture's historiography in association with an intense debate on styles. Such matters lent a moral aspect to architectural works. Victorian Gothic was considered the sole national style of England. It was thought to be the authentic central criterion of aesthetic value, that is, the "truth," and everything else was "falsehood." For English style, the political agenda of propaganda was appended to such terms.

If an owner wished for a Thai-style house, the architect had to comply by finding a balanced solution for form and functionality (and practicality or *yu dai ching*). The discourse on *yu dai ching* thus has now become a critical issue brought up by an owner during the first meetings with the architect. Architects who wish to dwell on the rhetoric of style—any style—must have this concern in mind. The deeper they dive stylistically, the more the detailed approach needs to be tailor-made and coherent with today's real world. This means that the design must be a completely novel one for each client and must be intertwined with space and time.

The old problem of abstract form was likely solved in contemporary time. It is not effortless to approach design along the path of traditionalism; if it exists, notwithstanding, may not deserve the blame but should be regarded as a phase of exploration of proper forms of identity. The feeling of disrespect that was perpetuated during the 1960s to 1990s could be understood as a matter of choice, taste, preference, and theoretical standpoint by all parties, architects, owners, and critics. We learned from the historiography of that period, which revealed that the significant barrier to progress was a limited body of knowledge and a lack of examples. This was especially true of the abstraction of architectural critical regionalism and Thai-ness by architects such as Kenneth Frampton, Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, M.L. Piyalada Devakula Thaveeprungsriporn, and Ross King and the ideology of the sufficiency economy. Vimolsiddhi was an especially avid commentator and much admired in the field of architectural identity theory. What was known to the clientele of the premillennium was Thai-ness as a direct reproduction of Thai traditional style, a literal and direct “shopping” of elements from the past.

The overly abstract form of identity representation had no place in the previous period. A dilemma in the translation of Thai-ness was “How abstract should it be?” If a form is too abstract, no one can understand it, particularly when it comes to the design of the past. However, in discussing what architects in the premillennium contributed to the forming of an architecture concerning identity, it is not true that

none of them tried to work on the approach of abstraction translation. In fact, the survey in this thesis found that a small number of them did despite a limitation in boundary and scope. Their innovations were ignored because this path was not recognized yet among the circle of architects and the clientele, media, and critics. The breakthrough in the present time has been the thorough understanding of this art of autonomous architecture, which is conveyed through the individualistic design of abstract forms or a response to pressing climatic contexts and new sociocultural design questions. The result is the emergence of a new Thai architecture.

Many clients now have more years of education and more sophisticated tastes, and this has opened them to a greater optimism about abstraction. In the 1960s to 1990s, it was difficult to convince them to accept the abstract “breed” of Thai-ness translation; they were not ready for it.

The heterogeneous architectural ideal was the nature of the contemporary. Architects now are better trained and more idiosyncratic; many experiments with designs that go far beyond the known frontiers. They have a greater variety of schools of thought gleaned from many new schools of architecture at home and abroad. Architects’ imaginations have been liberated. Uniqueness in their design signatures contributes to a differentiation in approach. The architectural profession owes much to the scholars mentioned previously.

Architecture in the Media

Frequently, the media play active roles in transforming society, and this has been true in the design realm. They make the public aware of an issue and raise public consciousness about it. In the case of the acceptance of the modern vernacular style, the media made a striking contribution. They have even coined new terms and definitions. Daybeds magazine, for instance, described a house as having “contemporary glamour” and “the charm of adaptive Thai(-ness) (เสน่ห์ไทยประยุกต์).” One can ask how something is adaptive Thai if the form has no relationship to the original Thai style. One must consult the historical discourse on it. The description did not

sound academic, nor did it attempt to be accurate in a scholarly way, but it impacted consumers. Moreover, the branding words reveal a liberal mind and diversity and are a whimsical coinage of an architectural classification. Many TV shows have boosted the trend of contemporary vernacular style, especially from 2011 to 2019. This shows that the emergence of this style was not a natural occurrence but was likely the production of discourse.

Business hype about particular subjects occurred in all industries, including architecture. This thesis found information on prevalent practices in house design described in the publications of companies that produce material products and in other magazines.

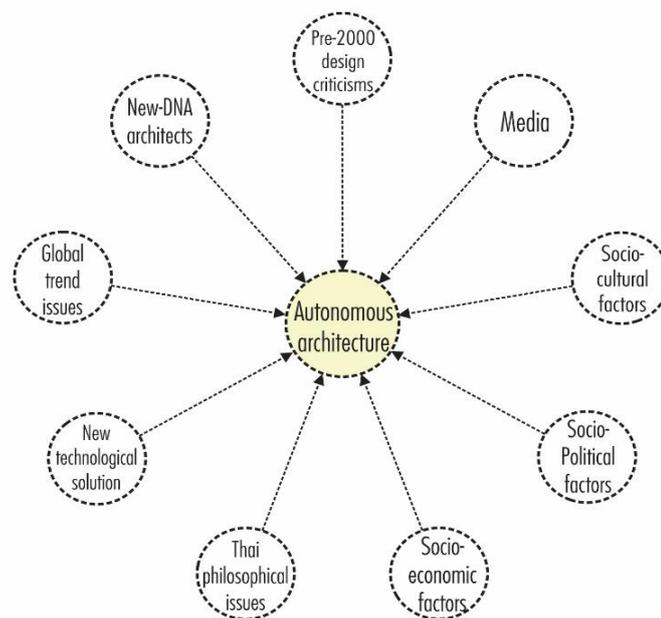


Figure 156 Diagram of Finding: Factors that contribute to Autonomous Architecture

Source: By the author

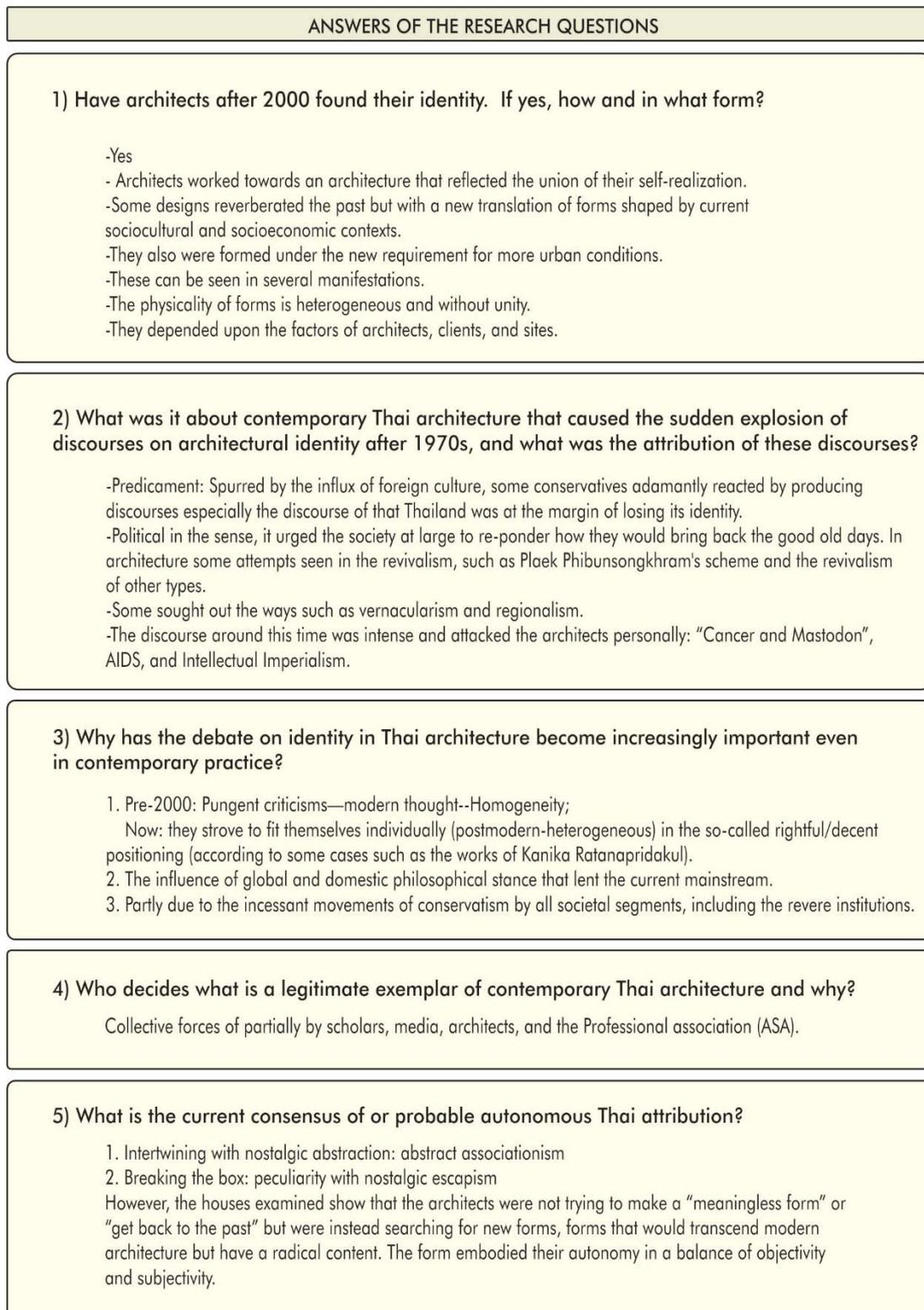


Figure 157 Diagram of Findings: Answers of the research questions

Source: By the author

Where Does Discourse Go from Here?

Empathy can be used as a tool for acknowledging and addressing the differences between a designer and user; the more empathy there is between both sides, the better the design will be. Architects obviously play a significant role in the design, and owners play a distinct role in shaping the house as a prototype. According to the surveys in this thesis, a dream home may not only be the result of exchanges among owners, architects, and the media; sometimes a dream home is not merely the owner's dream but it is also the dream of the architect. For instance, the 713 House was built for the Ruengsawat family in Nonthaburi. In a TV program on which the owner and the architect, Jun Sekino, were interviewed, the architect said he was quite delighted by the patience, understanding, and (probably similar) taste of the owner, who engaged in the design process smoothly, so that it had a favorable outcome. It is autonomous architecture that reflects the architect's idiosyncrasies; a house is a personification of its architect. That was particularly true in this case.

In conclusion, the cultural reactionaries of the 1970s were part of a conservative anti-Western movement that gave rise to a dramatic debate on identity in the late 1980s and provoked a persistent review of the theoretical issue of style. They struggled to define different viewpoints of contemporary identity. This thesis has argued that it was a myth that Thailand had a specific style that perfectly embodied its identity. Furthermore, the clash between the new and the old and the tension it generated became a dilemma of unsettled attribution.

Throughout this thesis the studies revealed that the kernels of the identity crisis of the past came to fruition in 2000 with varying degrees of engagement in social discourse and different ideological flags. It has pointed out that despite the concerns about identity loss before 2000, the issue has currently been solved in light of what is seen as the strand of autonomous architecture and it is a tour de force. Despite the intense debate on objectionable revivalism, it was used in works such as the Bussaba Ayutthaya (by Tidtang Studio), the TNK House (by Jiraji Dasananjali), and the House of Parliament (by Chatree Ladalalitsakul and Theerapol Niyom and

their team). The issue of the unfavorable application of past forms did not simply decline with time but relentlessly continues to be an integral part of architecture. The past gnaws relentlessly at the present and the future. To some architects and some clients, the past is regarded as a resourceful encyclopedia from which they can select archetypes. A recognizable past form is a comfortable foundation on which to build.

Thai architecture at present has shifted from a visual translation of old forms towards a more abstract association with contexts. It could be said that it has now artfully incorporated climatic and geographical contexts, sociocultural standards, and sociopolitical reasonings. Aesthetic form alone is no longer sufficient to grant meaning to Thai architectural works; contextual, scientific, and human behavioral elements must also be woven into increasingly complex creations.

The reflections of Vivat Temiyabandha in his *Indigenous Houses*²⁰⁹ has informed the society of architects about the aesthetics of peasant dwellings, although he does not provide clear guidelines as to how practicing architects should deal with such knowledge. It seems that when one has to make use of this sort of information, one has to work through a distillation process in order to acquire some usable archetypes; hence, it is difficult to import them literally because the houses may have fit well for peasants but might be a problem for wealthy residents today; the problems are a result of different people, places, and times. It is then difficult for many practitioners to play this game.

In what style should we build? The answer lies in the wish to make architecture that encompasses Thai-ness—a new breed of Thai-ness—that does not directly revive the old forms. It should reflect Thai-ness in a way that differs from its predecessors. However, what is Thai identity in need of now? Can it be something transcending its normative fashion or directly borrowed from the past but alluding to the old sentiment? Can it also be regarded as Thai style? It is still the main question to

²⁰⁹Vivat Temiyabandha, Khwamsamkhan Khong Sathapattayakam Thongthin [Significance of Vernacular Architecture], *ibid.*

be answered. The effort to define Thai style has the support of the media and publishing sphere, and its manifestations are at present more open-ended and autonomously designed in many styles. The sky is the limit!

It is significant here to question again whether or not Thailand has been losing its identity or whether the various views of the meaning and definition of identity form a Thai identity. If one can accept that Thai identity can be defined in a broader sense and not necessarily an explicit form, one might find it in today's practices of numerous architects and their new autonomous architecture, which is the zeitgeist that embraces numerous old and new abstractions, approaches, and archetypes.

Contemporary architecture stemmed from the polemical discourse of the twentieth century and was the endeavor of numerous architects who responded to issues and created state-of-the-art results that intertwined unique abstractions, approaches, and archetypes. It is an autonomous architecture that embraces a binary nature: the body is constructed as the consequence of discourse, and the entity functions as another discourse in itself that is produced from the ongoing progression of culture with the aim of attaining an exemplary architecture.



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