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KEEPING UP
MODERN THAI ARCHITECTURE 1967-1987
Preservation of Modern Architecture

The neglected heritage of modern architecture, and why it needs to be preserved

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Introduction

Architects, city planners and other professionals in the design industry are certainly familiar with terms and expressions such as Modernity, Modernism and the Modern Movement. Those in architectural circles specifically will likewise know well the common term Modern architecture.

In late 1980s, academicians in many Western countries began efforts to preserve Modern architecture. Thailand experienced a similar movement, but to a limited extent. General society at the time remained largely unaware of the importance of preserving Modern architecture. This article discusses the many efforts to preserve Modern architecture in Thailand, focusing on the following aspects:
1) definition and characteristics of Modern architecture, 2) Modern architecture as cultural heritage, 3) hindrances to and techniques of preserving Modern architecture, and 4) international protection of Modern architecture. The author hopes that all parties directly involved with Modern architecture and other interested persons will find this article useful as background information towards the formulation and eventual implementation of any rules or regulations to preserve Modern architecture in the future.

Definition and characteristics of Modern architecture

"Modern architecture" is a specialized term that must not be confused with the more general designation "contemporary architecture". Modern architecture is related to modernity. The evolution of Modern architecture involved many factors. Some experts believe that Modern architecture resulted primarily from technological and engineering advances, particularly in iron, steel, reinforced concrete and glass. These advances were part of the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the late 18th century. Meanwhile, others assert that Modern architecture was a reaction against eclecticism and excessively lavish styles. There is also a general belief that Modern architecture was a century's reflection on socialism and democratic development. Whatever the origins and causes, Modern architecture encompasses distinctive features that contrast sharply with preceding styles, from the period beginning in the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. The unique characteristics of Modern architecture emerge and eventually become mainstream in the latter half of the 20th century.

Compared to the prevailing styles that preceded the movement, Modern architecture possesses the following characteristics:
1. Rejection of history-based references
2. Adoption of the principle that forms are determined by functions and materials
3. Adoption of the machine aesthetic
4. Simplification of forms and elimination of unnecessary details
5. Adoption of structural emphasis over ornamental emphasis as had been common in the past
6. Form made to follow function

The application of the then new building materials was based on function. For example, glass might be used to decorate a building, with iron likely serving as the outer structure, while reinforced concrete served as the floor and inner structure. Evidence of this approach can be seen in structures throughout the 1900s in Germany and France. The concept was widespread worldwide thanks to two architecture institutes, namely the Staatliches Bauhaus in Germany and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in France. Leading architects of the early Modern architecture included France’s Le Corbusier and the Germany’s Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, both former directors of the Bauhaus. The evolution was noticeable in England as well. The Crystal Palace - designed by Joseph Paxton - was a world-famous innovation constructed in 1851. In the 20th century, like many other industrial towns Liverpool hosted a large number of buildings in the Modern style (Stratton, 1997, 1).

In 1932 Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock organized an exhibition of Modern architecture in the US, featuring a large collection of works from different countries. The distinctive characteristics of the works came to be denoted by the term “International Style”. During World War II, representatives of the Bauhaus traveled to the US in order to promote Modern architecture. In the years that followed, American architectural styles from 1920 to 1945 were divided into three sub-groups: International Style (1920-1945), Art Deco (1925-1940) and Art Moderne (1930-1945). The categorization was based on differences of building decoration (Blumenson, 1981, 74-79). However, all three styles shared one fact: concrete, iron and glass were major materials for both construction and decoration.

At the international level, by the 1980s Modern architecture had lost much popularity following criticism that the style was dehumanizing. In other words, the approach produced buildings as machines in which human beings could reside. Many people complained they had become bored with boxy, unadorned buildings. And buildings in this style were ubiquitous. Moreover, the style had become universal to the point of lacking unity. The decline of Modern architecture paved the way for the Post-Modern and many other trends.

While Modern architecture gained popularity in Europe and America, Thailand was in the era of Kings Rama V (1868-1910) and Rama VI (1910-1925). Modernization of the country was the main concern of the government then, and this was undertaken partly with an eye to foreign principles as evidenced by the fact that all Western-style buildings constructed during this period were designed by Western architects, although some buildings did reflect a combination of Western and Thai styles. And though there were at the time a number of overseas-educated Thai architects in the kingdom, they did not play a significant role in the country’s architecture throughout this period.

During the King Rama VII era (1925-1934) Thailand was hard hit by the world economic
recession resulting from World War I. The government had to cut back on most projects including building construction. About this time, after returning to Thailand, European-educated Thai architects began to play more important roles. As a result, the influence of Modern architecture became more visible in Thailand after the country shifted from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in 1932 (Vimolsit Horayangura, B.E. 2536).

Thus it can be said that Modern architecture in Thailand resulted from economic necessity, from a transmission of European concepts and technology via European-educated Thai architects and from a political change to a more democratic system.

Among Thai architects who graduated from the West during the Rama VII era and contributed to Modern architecture in Thailand was MC Itthithepsan Kidkorn. His designs included Piamsook Residence in Klaikangwon Palace in Hua Hin district, Prachub Kiri Khan province. Another important figure was MC Samaichalem Kidkorn, a Beaux-Arts graduate who designed the headquarter offices of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration on Dinisor Road (some parts of his design, however, were omitted from the completed building). MC Samaichalem also produced a design for Thailand’s National Theatre, although the building that resulted was not based entirely on his design. He also designed many buildings for the Chiang Mai University campus. His masterpiece was a co-design of the Sala Chalermrungr Theater with Nart Bhotiprasart, who graduated with Gold Medal honors from Liverpool University, England and worked at the Civil Engineering Department before assuming a teaching post at the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. Sala Chalermrung R Theater was the first air-conditioned cinema in Asia. Other works of Nart evinced the International Style, including the Bangkok Metropolitan Police building, Royal Thai Air Force headquarters, Central Hospital, among others. Another architect of this era was Jirasen Aphaivongse (Mew Aphaivongse). A Beaux-Arts graduate, Jirasen designed groups of buildings along Rajdamnoen Avenue; the Dome Building on the campus of Thammasat University; the Post, Telegraph and Telegramme Office in Bangrak district; and the Justice Ministry headquarter offices (Choti Kalyanamitr, B.E. 2525, 56 - 57). Some of these buildings still stand while others have since been demolished or altered beyond recognition.

From the period of King Rama VIII to the early reign of King Rama IX, an important figure who contributed to architectural change in Thailand was Dr Vathanu Na Thalang, an architect himself and former director of the National Housing Authority. (He still plays an active role in preserving architectural and cultural heritage.) Among the buildings designed by Dr Vathanu are the Thai Life Insurance Building and a dormitory for Bangkok Technical College. The dormitory was a fine example of an architectural design having to comply with height-limit regulations and functional requirements, with the distinctive feature of sunshade panels. Yet another masterful design by Vathanu was the Teacher Seminar Building in Rajamangala Institute of Technology’s Nakhon Ratchasima campus, an exemplary instance of advancements in engineering technology combined with use of local materials. Another important figure was ML Santhaya Israsena, who designed the Phuphan Palace in Sakon Nakhon province and the Thaksin Rajanivel Palace in Narathiwat province. His works also included the headquarter of Building Materials Company Limited on Phaholyothin Road, a group of buildings for the Siam Cement Group in Bangsu District and the Finance Ministry mint. An important architect from the period was Dr. Somet Jumsai Na Ayudhya, who designed the School for the Blind on Rajavithoe Road, the Science Museum (Bangkok Planetarium), and so forth. Some experts assert it was Dr Vathanu who brought modern technology into Thailand’s architectural circle, and others have lauded Dr Somet for having combined architectural beauty with sound engineering structure. (Choti Kalyanamitr, B.E. 2525, 58 - 59)

Modern architecture and cultural heritage

Modern architecture was also influenced by political matters in Thailand, with evidence seen in a number of buildings in various provinces, for example in Lopburi which had been an important area since the Dvaravati era. During World War II it served as a military centre and thus city planning measures had to suit the needs of military forces, with a large number of weapons and equipment transported to this central province. After the end of World War II, political conflict continued in Thailand. Field Marshal Phibunsonggram, then Prime Minister, ordered a new city to be established in Lopburi. Submitted city plans and building designs were based on Modern architecture, for example the Army Hotel (now Vibulsiri Hotel) and a large number of government and commercial buildings. (Thanakorn Taraka, B.E. 2550, 85 - 86)

Research materials on Modern architecture are quite limited, but they do show that the evolution of Modern architecture in Thailand progressed as quickly as it did in the originating countries. The topic would certainly benefit, however, from more studies revealing local innovations that resulted from the availability of new materials and new construction technologies, specifically those ways in which elements of traditional Thai architecture were made to adapt and conform to new materials and techniques. It is also necessary to develop a register of buildings and their designing architects. Such studies and registration efforts will surely enhance our understanding of Thai architecture and the urban communities where the structures reside.

Today, it is a sad fact that many buildings in the Modern style designed by Thai architects have already been lost, with more set for demolition soon so as to make way for high-rises and other buildings. Immediate preservation of these buildings in jeopardy is therefore essential, or it will be too late. The buildings could serve, at the very least, as a record of national development history.

Modern architecture and cultural heritage

An initiative to preserve something always sparks a controversy. The preservation of Modern architecture is no exception. Some people believe that the most important criteria that make something worth preserving are value and significance. Each country, though, has its own judgments and makes its own endorsements on the matter. Meanwhile, the analysis and decision-making processes regarding preservation are usually dominated by groups of experts, for many governments work on the assumption that if they were mandatory to seek public consensus on every matter there would be little or nothing preserved. This is a quite common state of af-
fairs in developing countries where it is taken for granted that most people are more concerned with self-preservation, owing to pressing financial realities, than with the preservation of buildings and structures. Quite to the contrary, however, some valuable and significant sites are likely to be lost despite local people’s wish to preserve them, because government authorities have failed to gain a sufficient understanding of local situations.

As discussed earlier, each country has its own criteria to decide if certain cultural heritage sites are worth preserving. At the international level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), once defined cultural heritage beyond just a great legacy surviving for a very long time mainly in the form of major artifacts and prominent objects. But now, the UNESCO definition of cultural heritage covers any signs of noteworthy human endeavor from the past to the present (Feilden, 1997, 10). In other words, an unassuming object or site is entitled to cultural heritage recognition if it has in any way significantly affected a society. Moreover, UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee have come to agreement that various types of urban buildings as well as cultural landscapes can be nominated for recognition as World Heritage sites just as can, for example, major monuments and other prominent sites.

In the USA, the following five criteria are applied when sites are considered for preservation: 1) being the first instance of a style, movement or the like, 2) being historically noteworthy, 3) being exemplary, 4) being typical and 5) being rare. Based on these criteria, an instance of Modern architecture worth preserving would be, for example, the Seagram Building in New York City. Designed by Mies van der Rohe, the building has been praised as the one of the finest examples of the International Style in the form of a high-rise building (Attoe, 1988, 344).

In the UK, the antiquity of a building tends to be the most important criteria, with antiquity being divided into four eras, the latest of which is the Post-World War II. However, relatively few such buildings have been registered as cultural heritage sites in the UK. Aside from antiquity, other criteria applied in the UK include 1) quality when a site is compared with others in the same group (for example the most complete example of all flea markets) 2) application of then innovative technologies 3) relation to important figures or historical incidents and 4) presence or evidence of city planning measures, for instance a square or a unique community feature that serves as a model for later development (Pickard, 1996, 19-20). Meanwhile, Thailand’s Fine Arts Department concentrates on the following criteria: aesthetics, archeology, history, technology, education and society (The Fine Arts Department, mor.por.por., 11). The notion of antiquity is included in both the historical and archeological values.

While sheer antiquity, the actual age of a site, is certainly important when one judges the value of a structure, it is not necessarily of paramount concern. When a site is assessed in contemporary terms – particularly any site still in use, which in fact is the case for the majority of buildings in a Modern architectural style as they are still being used for commercial purposes – the notion of utility may be as or more important in contexts both economic and social (Feilden, 1997, 20-21). Thus a building can be deemed valuable and a worthy candidate for cultural heritage site status based on its present usefulness rather than its past significance.

When subjected to the aforementioned criteria, the finer examples of Modern architecture in any country possess unique features making them worthy of consideration as cultural heritage sites. Such structures are testament to the innovations made possible with the advent of new buildings materials including concrete, iron and glass. Because buildings constructed in the era of Modern architecture are of such radically different form compared to those that preceded them, from the Middle Ages onward to those just before them, the notable examples should be preserved if still in good condition.

Once a building has been designated a preserved site, it becomes subject to an important related process: registration. In Thailand the process is referred to as “Registration of Antique Sites”. In many other countries, registration is categorized into different levels. For example, in England there are four levels: Grade I, Grade II, Grade II* and Grade III; since 1989 this categorization has been determined by the Department of the Environment. Sites in the first three groups (Grade I, Grade II and Grade II*) are protected by law while those in the final group (Grade III) are recognized by law but not entitled to any legal protection. In fact, they no longer appear in the list of English cultural heritage sites (Delafons, 1997, 202-203). Among other countries with similar categorization methods is Georgia (formally a part of Soviet Union) where there are three levels: World Heritage, National Heritage and Local Heritage (Simonishvili, 2001, 116). Many countries have two levels: National and Local Heritage (such as Malaysia and Taiwan). In the case of Local Heritage, the appropriate local government attends to registration. In Thailand, the Fine Arts Department initiated a method of categorizing historical sites in line with the administrative decentralization of local bodies and agencies. A committee was set up to address categorization in 2001, and it divided historical sites into four groups: 1) national assets, 2) important cultural heritage sites, 3) general cultural heritage sites and 4) preserved buildings, with the order of importance established as national, regional, provincial and local (The Fine Arts Department, mor.por.por., 2-5). The first three groups are registered and then protected by national law. The last group falls under the protection of local government bodies; experts agree this allows local bodies to better administer their own register of important sites. Further, the list of sites within each group is at all times subject to amendment. Any site can be moved to another group if additional information affects its perceived importance.

This categorization system can help reduce controversies surrounding the registration of historical sites, for example the seeming incoherence of an archeological site dating back thousands of years, such as the prehistoric Ban Chiang site in Udon Thani, Thailand, and commercial buildings (such as those on Phra Arthit Road in Bangkok) or perhaps concrete row houses constructed less than a century ago being subjected to the same terms of registration and thus preservation.
Threats to and techniques for preserving Modern Architecture

Despite their having possessed cultural heritage value, many Modern buildings were destroyed worldwide in the 1980s. The fate of existing Modern architectural structures currently hinges on three major threats.

First, the threat from experts in cultural preservation holding different opinions on cultural values. Those who are in charge of preserving ancient sites—"ancient" defined as at least one century old—tend to find Modern architecture not worth preserving. The most important reason cited by this group of preservationists is that Modern architecture does not possess "aesthetic and architectural values". Nevertheless, based on the wider definition of cultural heritage, Modern architecture undeniably provides testament to the advance of human ingenuity and progress from the Middle Ages through succeeding eras. When a Modern architectural building is lost, invaluable evidence of humankind becomes irretrievable.

Second, because many Modern buildings are still in use they remain subject to occasional disfigurements. Alterations sometimes obscure or eliminate distinctive features identifying a building as an example of Modern architecture. Such alterations, even though well intentioned, amount to a destruction of important cultural heritage. Therefore alterations of Modern architecture should be carried out with substantial care, especially those buildings deemed to possess important cultural value.

Third, urban planning initiatives decree that many Modern buildings constructed between 1930 and 1960 be demolished because of decaying structure. Such demolition is also meant to serve fast-growing businesses that require higher buildings. In earlier eras, buildings were made of stone, brick and laterite—although visually unassuming—they were nonetheless expected to last a long time. Structures built during the era of Modern architecture, on the other hand, often were produced with a focus on style and innovative features at the expense of durability. That is, they were not built to last. As a result, many Modern buildings face the problem of structural decay (Feilden, 2003, 327).

Preservation of Modern architecture should start with a focus on structure and materials, in particular a thorough understanding of material characteristics, including the durability of reinforced concrete, glass, aluminum, resin and plastic. Buildings constructed using ancient methods can be disassembled and their component parts scrutinized; restoration work then can be performed on one part after another. However, owing to the nature of Modern architectural building techniques, often if one fundamental supporting element is removed, the whole structure will collapse. As for internal utility, a Modern building relies on an elaborate electricity system and assorted machinery including air conditioning units. These components do not last long, perhaps 20 to 25 years on average, and thus pose additional challenges in the preservation of Modern architecture. Indeed methods and techniques for preserving ancient sites cannot be applied to a Modern building. Yet, the preservation of Modern architecture is based on the very same principles of preservation applied to ancient architecture, namely, value preservation, maintaining authenticity of environment, and the use of relevant techniques and materials by skilled technicians. (Macdonald, 1997, 209; Feilden, 2003, 328)

The major problem inherent to reinforced concrete buildings is structural deterioration and loss of integrity as a result of chemical processes, primarily carbon-chloride and alkali-silica reactions. The most important threats to steel-reinforced concrete are carbon dioxide and chlorides including sodium chloride, whereby air-borne carbon dioxide reacts with alkalis present in cement, resulting in lowered pH. The steel bars inside gradually corrode. The more carbon dioxide present in the air, the more serious the corrosion. Sodium chloride, which is prevalent in coastal areas and in cold climates where salt is used for thawing on roadways, can accelerate both the deterioration of concrete and the corrosion of steel. To alleviate this problem a new technique known as "re-alkalization" has been put to use. This entails filling corroded areas with a substance meant to restore the alkali status of concrete. The surface is then re-covered with new applications of cement, ceramics, etc. Another method is called "cathodic protection", which addresses steel corrosion resulting from chlorides. After a preparation of the surface, low-voltage, direct electrical current is applied to the steel reinforcement bars (rebar) inside the concrete. The electricity affects the electrical attributes of the rebars to the extent that chlorides cannot cause oxidation of the steel (Feilden, 2003, 330 -332). In addition to internal difficulties, the preservation of Modern architectural exterior elements poses similar challenges. The availability of many new materials at the time of construction resulted in multiform exteriors. Some are bolstered by cement with final decoration, making use of ceramic, glass and metal. Each material calls for specific establishment techniques and thus requires different restoration methods and preservation techniques.

All told, the restoration techniques applied to Modern buildings are quite inadequate. Further study must be undertaken on the issue for the benefit of structural engineers, architects as well as preservation experts.

International protection of Modern architecture

While in general Thais remain unaware of the importance of Modern architectural preservation, many relevant agencies—especially the Fine Arts Department—have registered certain examples of Modern architecture in a list of important buildings. Among them is Wat Sangvet Printing School, Phra Arthit Road (as announced in the Royal Gazette in 2001). The registration initiative sparked criticism from some agencies and professional associations including The Association of Siamese Architects Under Royal Patronage. In cooperation with many networks, a committee formed to address the preservation of artistically meritorious architectural sites failed to convince the owner of Modern buildings at Wanglee Lane, Wat Yannawa, to cease pulling them down. As part of organizing a contest to register buildings worth preserving, some members of The Association of Siamese Architects suggested that the Supreme Court building of the Justice Ministry should be preserved—this just as efforts were underway to demolish it and make way for a new building in a different form. Also to be preserved are research materials at Chatri Praklrunthakam of Silpakorn University that concentrated on architectural works during the transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy.
Preservation of Modern architecture in Thailand at the international level began two decades ago. However, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) - an independent body providing academic consultancy to UNESCO - has yet to issue regulations in regard to Modern architecture buildings. (More on ICOMOS, which maintains an office in Bangkok, can be found at www.icomosthailand.org). Additional organizations closely connected with ICOMOS include DOCOMOMO International (Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement) and the World Monuments Fund.

DOCOMOMO is an independent organization focusing on preserving buildings, sites and communities constructed during the Modern Movement. The non-profit organization was established by Professor Hubert Jan Henket and architect/researcher Wessel de Jonge of the Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Eindhoven, in the Netherlands. The headquarters was moved to Paris in 2002. The organization is now under the administration of the Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine in the Palais de Chaillot. The DOCOMOMO Secretary-General is Maristella Casciato. Its mission is to:

- Act as watchdog when important Modern Movement buildings anywhere are under threat
- Exchange ideas relating to conservation technology, history and education
- Foster interest in the ideas and heritage of the Modern Movement
- Encourage responsible actions towards this recent architectural inheritance

Since its creation, DOCOMOMO International has enjoyed rapid growth while establishing itself as a center of cooperation among historians, architects, town planners, landscape architects, conservationists, teachers, students and public officials. At present, DOCOMOMO International includes 52 working parties (countries) and more than 2,000 members, from Europe to Australia and across North and South America. Only two Asian countries have joined DOCOMOMO International, Japan and Korea.

DOCOMOMO's main goals are elucidated in the Eindhoven statement, which was issued at the conclusion of the founding conference in 1990:

- Bring the significance of the Modern Movement to the attention of the public, the authorities, the professionals and the educational community concerned with the built environment.
- Identify and promote the recording of Modern Movement works by means of a register, drawings, photographs, archives and other materials.
- Foster the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation and disseminate this knowledge throughout the professions.
- Oppose destruction and disfigurement of significant works of the Modern Movement. Identify and attract funding for documentation and conservation.
- Explore and develop knowledge pertaining to the modern movement.

For working parties to register Modern buildings with DOCOMOMO, the buildings must be recognized as exceptional in terms of design, structure, utility, detail and innovative use of materials. In sum, three major criteria apply: the technical, the social and the aesthetic.

Compared to other buildings constructed either before or during the same period, Modern buildings should possess certain distinctive features. In its Third International Conference in Barcelona, Spain in 1994, a DOCOMOMO committee was put in charge of assessing registration requests. Fifteen working parties submitted fiches recording a total of more than 500 buildings and sites for register. The committee distinguished among three levels when selecting buildings, sites and neighborhoods as instances of significant Modern architecture: local, international and global (World Heritage list).

The DOCOMOMO register makes plain the relation between international awareness and official recognition, particularly when internationally accepted academic criteria are applied to the process of site recognition. Thailand, which certainly has important Modern architecture worthy of official recognition, can make a stronger case for each site by conducting more research and study into the topics of history, utility, form, evidence collection, structure analysis and material use. Furthermore, if we wish to bring the country's Modern architecture to international attention, it might be useful to conduct a study comparing the evolution of Modern architecture in Thailand with that in other countries.

Another international organization dedicated to highlighting the importance of Modern architecture is the World Monuments Fund (WMF), a non-profit organization established by American Express and some philanthropic American companies and individuals in 1965. Its main objective remains to preserve endangered architectural and cultural sites around the world. From its headquarters in New York City and offices and affiliates in Paris, London, Madrid and Lisbon, WMF works with local partners and communities to identify and save important heritage through various activities such as project planning, field work, advocacy, grant making, education and on-site training. Since its creation, WMF has worked tirelessly to stem the loss of historic structures at more than 500 sites in 91 countries (some of them not included in the list of World Heritage Sites). Its affiliate, World Monuments Watch (WMW), is entrusted as a watchdog of cultural heritage worldwide. Every two years, WMF issues its World Monuments Watch list of 100 Most Endangered Sites, a global call to action on behalf of sites in need of immediate intervention. Thailand's own Ayutthaya World Heritage Site was once included in this list. Should readers encounter what may be deemed an endangered site, please notify ICOMOS Thailand.

In 2006, the WMF began its program Modernism at Risk to support preservation of endangered Modern architecture worldwide. In 2008, seven Modern buildings were included in the WMW list, including Modern Shanghai in Shanghai, China and St. Peter's Seminary in Scotland.

Epilogue
Thailand's preservation of Modern architecture has evolved to some degree, as the country's city planning measures have been influenced partly by the Modern Movement itself. In fact, Thailand's evolution is on par with that of the originating countries. Unfortunately, however, we have not conducted sufficient studies on the matter and therefore have failed to bring the relevant information to international attention. Aside from architecture, the Modern
Movement or simply Modernity can be detected in a wide range of local creative endeavors in everything from cinema to various consumer goods, for example household items, children's toys, etc.

Regardless of what form Modernism appears, further studies should be conducted to gather details on these wide-ranging creative activities undertaken during the period in Thailand. As an example, for buildings, a possible starting point may be to gather the works of architects who were active during the earliest stage of Modern architecture in Thailand. The information obtained would then serve as a database—certainly a pre-requisite for better understanding of the importance and the value of Modern architecture as well as the threats to existing sites. Moreover, with solid background information to hand, the preservation-minded would be better able to produce a register of Modern architectural buildings worth preserving. This likewise will benefit the concomitant efforts of identifying appropriate restoration techniques and determining sponsorship availability for Modern architectural preservation work. If the relevant agencies and decisions makers remain reluctant or unaware of the importance of preservation work, it would then be necessary to seek further assistance from international organizations with a wider perspective and higher awareness of cultural heritage importance. Indeed, Thailand's fine examples of Modern architecture fully deserve such urgent attention, for they are true cultural assets to be passed on to succeeding generations.

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