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MODERN SOUTHEAST ASIA

International committee for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

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On the cover: Front cover: Vann Molyvann, Olympic National Sports Complex, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1960s. © Emily Junker.

Contribute to the next journal

Journal 58 is scheduled for March 2018. Authors who would like to contribute to this issue are kindly invited to contact
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Guideline to contributors

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Form

- All texts must be in English; if translated, the text in the original language must be enclosed as well.
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- Illustrations referred to in the text should be mentioned and abbreviated as follows: (figure 1).
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Books: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1960.
Articles: Julius Posener, "Aspects of the Pre-History of the Bauhaus", *From Schinkel to the Bauhaus*, London, A.A., 1972, 43-48.

Illustrations

We accept 3 to 6 illustrations for short contributions (about 600 words) and up to 10 illustrations for full-length articles (about 1500 words). It is essential that authors provide good quality illustrations either printed on paper or as digital data on disk or CD (size of images: 300 dpi for an A5 format).

For figure captions, the order of information is: designer, name of building or object, location, date, description, source. If a building has been destroyed, include that information.

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Nguyen Van Ninh, Ho Chi Minh's house, Hanoi, Vietnam, 1958. © Ana Tostões, 2017.

ANA TOSTÕES

Chair of **docomomo** International

ZARA FERREIRA

Secretary General of **docomomo** International

Parallel Modernities: Architectural Narratives on Southeast Asia

Following the challenges traced by the **mASEANA** Project (2015-2020), with the collaboration of **docomomo** International, the aim of this DJ is to discuss the Modern Movement in the Southeast Asian countries [Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam], addressing the course of the built environment and architectural development of each country, through its practice and discourse.

Coming from a common goal of preserving and promoting a sustainable future, a platform has been created to discuss documentation, conservation and reuse of modern architecture based on three main concepts: regeneration, equality and openness. Regeneration by, through training and education, involving the younger generations in the process of recognition and conservation. Equality, based on the respect for difference with no imposition of ideas or methodologies. Openness by promoting exchange through thoughtful cooperation.

Although **ASEAN** is coming to be united in terms of politics, economy and culture, the background of its member countries is varied, having experienced diverse European colonization. In an increasingly global world, these nations are facing changes in the significance of their colonial past in relation to the postcolonial present. Between identity and nationalist demand, local knowledge and universal education, modern materials and tropical climate, different architectural discourses have been produced showing that the most interesting way to approach the postcolonial issue is through the idea of exchange².

One of the most central questions in the debate on modernity has been the tension between a pretentious universality of the scientific-technological rationality of a so-called international format and the specific particularities of places and traditions. The homogenizing effects or the threat of the old over the new have informed different discourses on values such as authenticity, regionalism or identity³. In parallel, the history of Modern Movement architecture has been written from a Eurocentric perspective although deeper studies on concepts such as hybrid or the otherness have recently promoted a nuanced analysis on architecture and politics beyond the Eurocentric framework.

In fact, the **MAAN** declaration (2001) stated that “Modern Asia has not developed in a vacuum but has evolved through sustained interactions with the West, which has had a constant presence in our collective consciousness. The history of dealing with the West, with our [their] neighbors and with ourselves [themselves], is manifested in the myriad forms of our [their] architecture. The history of modern architecture in Asia is the history of how Asians have become modern”. Modernity

is envisaged as a process of modernization which stands, as J. Widodo sustains, “when the spirit of freedom, progress and innovation flourishes”⁴. In postcolonial circumstances “the discourse on the tropics reached a pivotal point when it coincided with the success of the modern architecture turning global and adapting to suit all climate and cultures”⁵. The promise of a sustainable world based on urban regeneration future has a lot to do with S. Muramatsu’s theory on using natural and cultural resources to fulfill the “heritage butterfly”⁶. As one of the first efforts to develop a common understanding of the architectural development in the Southeast Asia, this DJ reveals the most up-to-date research on modern heritage in the different countries. The aim is to challenge initiatives as the **mASEANA** Project to keep working towards the preservation of this legacy for future generations, “dealing with issues common to everyone in a way that might transcend national borders in the future”⁷.

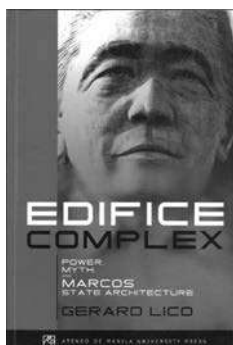
docomomo is grateful to Shin Muramatsu, Setiadi Sopandi, Yoshiyuki Yamana and Johannes Widodo for being guest editors of this issue. Their commitment and energy which was shared by the authors’ who collaborated generously with their knowledge and dedicated work. A special mention must be made as well to Fumihiko Maki who gave us his wise insights through a unique interview.

The Olympic National Sports Complex, Phnom Penh, on the cover, pays homage to Vann Molyvann, who passed away this September at 99 years old. Finally, **docomomo** remembers Ruy Jervis d’Athouguia born in Macau 100 years ago.

Notes

- 1 **mASEANA** stands for modern **ASEAN** architecture. It was created in 2014, by **docomomo** Japan, in collaboration with **docomomo** International and **MAAN** (modern Asian Architecture Network). **ASEAN** is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, set up in 1967, to promote cultural, economic and political development in the region.
- 2 A. Tostões, “How to Love Modern [Post-]Colonial Architecture: Rethinking Memory in Angola and Mozambique Cities”, *Architectural Theory Review*, v. 20, n. 3 – Africa Critical, 2017; Ana Tostões (ed.), *Modern Architecture in Africa: Angola and Mozambique*, Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópico, 2013.
- 3 P. Ricoeur, *Histoire et Vérité*, Paris, Seuil, 1955.
- 4 J. Widodo, “Modernism in Singapore”, *docomomo Journal* n. 29 – Modernism in Asia Pacific, Paris, **docomomo** International, 2003.
- 5 S. Sopandi, A. Armand, *Tropicality: Revisited*, Jakarta, IMAJI, 2015.
- 6 S. Muramatsu, “Why and How We Should Inherit Urban Environmental Cultural Resources: Identifying, Listing, Evaluating, and Making Good Use of Urban Environmental Cultural Resources in Asia”, in Fujino Y., Noguchi T. (ed.), *Stock Management for Sustainable Urban Regeneration*, Tokyo, Springer, 2009.
- 7 Yoshiyuki Yamana, 15 IAE – the Japan Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia, 2016.

BOOK REVIEWS



Edifice Complex: Power, Myth and Marcos State Architecture

Author: Gerard Lico
 Publisher: Ateneo de Manila University Press
 ISBN: 971-550-435-3
 Language: English
 Year: 2003

Gerard Lico's contribution to Philippine architectural history and criticism covers the late 20th-century phenomenon of a distinctive, but slightly demented, architectural aesthetic wielded by a "conjugal dictatorship" to legitimize its regime and perpetuate its power. It is this relationship between power and architecture that provides the framework and context for this book.

Lico provides straightforward historical narrative and architectural criticism of the buildings within the prime site of Marcosian architecture that is the CCP Complex, but he situates these within the terrain of tyranny that rerouted foreign aid funds and co-opted the architectural flair of the likes of Loosin, Mañosa, and Hong.

The CCP Complex, Lico states, was architecture as propaganda, a "noncoercive mode of power imposition in stone, concrete, and glass". Lico points out that the modernist, almost inhuman geometries and scale of the complex had a human and social cost. It was a price those in power then were willing to pay.

Lico's is a departure from traditional forms of architectural inquiry. Most previous works have been limited to stylistic influences or confined to Spanish era architecture. Few writers have looked at the larger political and theoretical context of buildings. For those still accustomed to pre-postmodern modes of architectural thought, the theoretical underpinnings may be a tad difficult. The effort, though, is necessary to reframe our understanding of the process and product of the architecture of that phase of our history.

Paulo G. Aleazaren



Building Cambodia: 'New Khmer Architecture' 1953-1970

Authors: Helen Grant Ross
 and Darryl Leon Collins
 Publisher: The Key Publisher
 Company Limited
 ISBN: 978-9749341216
 Language: English
 Year: 2006

After 6 years of research in Cambodia, France and Australia, Helen Grant Ross and Darryl Leon presented, in 2006, the "New Khmer Architecture" as an architectural movement that took place in Cambodia during the 1950s and 1960s, as the combination of Western modernism with traditional Cambodian architecture built in harmony with the tropical climate.

Between 1953 and 1970 Cambodia enjoyed an unprecedented era of economic and social development, associated with a renaissance of the arts and architecture where the national identity was taken into account regarding how to re-imagine new forms of culture in the framework of local traditions. In this publication, the authors explain how the "New Khmer Architecture" engaged diverse international architects, urbanists, and engineers from Japan, Europe, the former Soviet Union and the United States led by the Cambodian architect Vann Molyvann (1926-) who enthusiastically combined Western modern forms, materials and functions with traditional Cambodian designs, practices and local materials.

By analyzing public and private buildings through different perspectives – archives, photography, drawings –, Helen Grant Ross and Darryl Leon present a genealogy of this architectural production, with notes on its current state, crossing different themes: "nation in the making", "the artist and patron", "the builders", "modern traditional", "new khmer", "public investment", "the architect" and "innovative modern".

Through the narration of the country's history through architecture, exemplified with buildings, construction details and information on its architects, engineers and town planners, this publication is the most comprehensive record of Cambodian architecture from the 1950s to the early 1970s, revealing a Golden Age of optimism and experimentation – which is only recently being recognized –, before being led to almost 3 decades of military dictatorship, genocide and civil war.

This book was awarded as one of the top-10 "Best Asian Books 2006" from Time Magazine, immediately in the year of its launching.

Catarina Andrade



Rumah Silaban: Silaban's House

Edited by MAAN Indonesia and the School of Architecture, Tarumanagara University
 Publisher: MAAN Indonesia Publishing
 ISBN: 978-979-17381-0-1
 Language: Indonesian and English
 Year: 2008

This book was created as a record of the workshop held to document the works of Friedrich Silaban (1912-1984). Hosted by modern Asian Architecture Network (MAAN) Indonesia and co-hosted by Tarumanagara University, the Center for Sustainable Urban Regeneration (CSUR) at the University of Tokyo, and MAAN at the site of the architect's home from July 12th to 25th, 2007. This international workshop was a significant opportunity for us not only to record the past but also to sustain and regenerate cities in which we live.

Silaban, who was the focus of the workshop, worked as an apprentice in a Dutch architect's office and learned architectural designs during the colonial period. After Indonesia achieved independence, he designed

many monumental buildings as requested by Sukarno, the nation's first president. Among them are the National Mosque, Gedung Pola, and the Bank of Indonesia Headquarter. However, as time goes by, both Sukarno and Silaban have passed into oblivion. It is unfortunate that the current generation of Indonesian architects is no longer aware the knowledge concerning Sukarno's intentions and Silaban's design talents, so most of them are no longer able to appreciate the modernist legacy of Indonesia's early independence period.

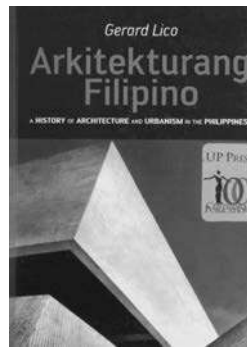
There are various ways to allow cities to sustain their development: reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, controlling unruly urban expansion, and restraining the amount of resource consumption, for example. I myself, would like to contribute to our common goal of urban sustenance and regeneration by taking advantage of my fields of specialty in urban history and architectural history. I believe that to cherish and keep using old buildings from the past could lead to saving of our resources and significantly reducing carbon dioxide emissions. It also allows us to inherit our predecessors' memories.

It is also true, however, that keeping all the buildings built in the past prevents us from building new ones that can constitute a better future environment. Thus, it is important to create standards, based on each society's value system, with which to decide whether a certain building should be preserved or demolished. Given this understanding, CSUR at the University of Tokyo has produced Jakarta Heritage Map in collaboration with MAAN Indonesia, Tarumanagara University and MAAN International, and now we are working to clarify the achievement of Silaban as an Indonesian architect.

Our project, which can be called the "F. Silaban Inventory Research Project", is now proceeding beyond just documenting history. In the near future, we are planning to build a database of Silaban's complete works as well as publishing his memoir and autobiography. To know what Silaban, one of Indonesia's most influential architects, thought and designed should allow the Indonesian people to acquire their own viewpoints for evaluating architecture in general. And, as I expect with strong hope, this will encourage the establishment of the study of sustainable urban regeneration in Jakarta and other parts of Indonesia.

I wish this pioneering book will be widely read and inspired many people, not only in Indonesia but also across Asia and the rest of the world, to think about the significance of documenting works of one's own nation's architects.

Shin Muramatsu



Arkitekturang Filipino: A History of Architecture and Urbanism in the Philippines

Author: Gerard Lico
 Publisher: The University of the Philippines Press
 ISBN: 978-9715425797
 Language: English
 Year: 2010

There is at the outset an unease caused by the title. The main phrase speaks of "Arkitekturang Filipino" an expansive territory that is rescaled as "Architecture and Urbanism in the Philippines". First, the scene of the vernacular, an instance of an irreducible particular; then, the translation into English, an attempt to reckon architecture cross-culturally. A tension stirs between an identity of architecture that is named Filipino and the focus of practice that is the Philippines, wavering between gestures of nomination and emplacement. It is a strain that is productive, and in fact may shape the very travail of writing about art and its locale, its universe.

This is intended to be a textbook for students of architecture who must learn to appreciate the lineage of their vocation. But it is more than just a catalogue of facts and figures; it is a compelling scheme that charts the direction of the study of architecture in the Philippines. With copious photographs and archival materials sorted out and analyzed in relation to ideas and propositions, this book turns out to be a vital contribution to our understanding of the abode of a most inhabited art. Indeed, with a sense of breadth and attention to the details of terrain, a horizon has been decidedly set.

Patrick D. Flores



Shapers of Modern Malaysia: The Lives and Works of the PAM Gold Medallists

Editor: Lim Teng Ngiom
 Publisher: Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (Malaysian Institute of Architects)
 ISBN: 978-967-5264-03-0
 Language: English
 Year: 2010

The PAM Gold Medal is the highest award that can be given to a Malaysian architect by their peers. In the period 1988-2009 only five such awards were made: to Dato' Kington Loo (1988), Dato' Hisham Albakri (1992), Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat (1997), Hijjas Kasturi (2001), and Dato' Baharuddin Abu Kassim (2009). This book provides an overview of their work.

The PAM Gold Medalists are considered the most important pioneers of Malaysian architecture in the post-independence years. They are collectively responsible for such icons as the now-demolished Subang International Airport, the National Library, National Mosque, Shah Alah Stadium and Selangor State Secretariat, as well as private residences and commercial towers such as KOMTAR and the Dayabumi building. *Shapers of Modern Malaysia* offers a full-color tour through their work, as well as an insight into the Malaysian struggle for national identity since 1957.

Laura Phelps



**Ketukangan: Kesadaran Material/
Craftsmanship:
Material Consciousness**

Editors: Avianti Armand, Setiadi Sopandi,
David Hutama, Robin Hartanto,
Achmad D. Tardiyana.
Publisher: Ikatan Arsitek Indonesia
ISBN: 978-602-12410-2-4
Languages: Indonesian; English
Year: 2014

June 2014, Venice. The 14th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale 2014 was launched by Rem Koolhaas with the statement “Architecture, not architects”. After years of biennales dedicated to the celebration of the most acclaimed contemporary architectural practices, this time the president of the Venice Biennale, Paolo Baratta, envisaged a research-centered architectural exhibition. Consisting of three exhibitions – *Elements of Architecture*, *Monditalia* and *Absorbing Modernity: 1914–2014* –, the main theme of the exhibition was *Fundamentals*, as a call for going back to basics and centering the attention of the participants on the past and present of the architectural discipline, as a ground for speculating on its future.

In the national pavilion representations, the participating countries were asked to address the single subject of *Absorbing Modernity: 1914–2014*, as an invitation to reflect and develop territorial narratives on the way that the local and the global, the national and the “universal”, have met in architecture’s evolution of the last 100 years. Rem Koolhaas went further, provocatively asking each country “to show, each in their own way, the process of the erasure of national characteristics in architecture in favor of the almost universal adoption of a single modern language and a single repertoire of typologies – a more complex process than we typically recognize, involving significant encounters between cultures, technical inventions, and hidden ways of remaining ‘national.’” There were 66 national contributions. Indonesia participated for the first time, under the theme “Craftsmanship: Material Consciousness”.

Entering the Indonesian pavilion, one was gradually transported to somewhere else far from the space before us, from Venice, from Europe. The eyes being slowly prepared to the clarity of the image in the dark and the ears to the precision of different layers of crystalline sound, allowing a sensorial travel into what I guessed, back then, to be the Indonesian materiality or its art of building. In the space, moving images projected into 7 floating glass screens were revealing 100 years of architecture in Indonesia, within the journey of 6 materials: timber [*kayu*], stone [*batu*], brick [*bata*], steel [*baja*], concrete [*beton*] and bamboo [*bambu*]. Glass, intentionally excluded from the story for not being a suitable material for the tropical climate, was paradoxically present as the perfect technology to project the story in Venice. The 7th screen was dedicated to the concept that entitled the exhibition: “Craftsmanship: Material Consciousness” [*Ketukangan: Kesadaran Material*].

Going deep into the meaning of this title, one can confirm the very clear message of the exhibition, effectively transmitted by only 3 elements: outspoken images, outright sounds and essential text. Craftsmanship [ˈkraːf(t)smənʃɪp], noun, in the Oxford Dictionary is explained as 1) skill in a particular craft, 2) the quality of design and work shown in something made by hand; artistry. Richard Sennett defined it, in *The Craftsman*, as “the basic human impulse to do a job well for its own sake” and that “good craftsmanship involves developing skills and focusing on the work rather than ourselves”, through the development of connections between material consciousness and ethical values. This consideration approaches us to the Indonesian meaning of *Tukang* [craftsman]: “anyone who has ability for manual labor”, “people whose job is to do something naturally” or “regularly”, “anyone who is involved in the act of building”, “somebody who is committed to their work”. In a country composed by more than 17,000 islands and with a surprising abundance of natural resources and cultural diversity, one can easily understand how craftsmanship, and its attached “material consciousness”, “is not merely a matter of practicality and technicality; it is also a value, an ethos, and a commitment, (...) practiced and internalized (...) diverse traditions as a driving factor to achieve excellence”.

The catalog of the exhibition, maintaining the same structure as the exhibition (with a chapter on each material, complementary texts and an epilog on the history of architecture in Indonesia between 1914 and 2014), reveals how craftsmanship, through the conscious labor of each material, is the identifying backbone of architecture in

Indonesia. Envisaged as an ethical answer to materiality, craftsmanship is exposed as the conscious way to work with the available tools, including human resources, materials – which also implies how to cultivate them, to know how to select and work with them –, the natural environment and every other changing element involved in the process. It is precisely in this knowledge of how to deal with change that the “absorption” of modernity is encountered: “Within the span of a hundred years, attitudes, values, and viewpoints on craftsmanship have developed and responded to change. Modernity arrived to introduce new building technologies and new building materials. However, the wave of modernity did not diminish or extinguish craftsmanship values. Instead, it has fostered a dialog that continues to open new opportunities in architecture”. Reading this publication, or watching the exhibition videos, one can recognize, in several architectural works, modernization, as defined by Johannes Widodo, as “a socio-cultural process that happens continuously in forms of transplantation, adjustment, adaptation, accommodation, assimilation, hybridization and materialization”.

In face of the challenges encountered by the curators – lack of archives and consistent discourses on Indonesian architectural history, slowly emerging from small groups of researchers; the common way to look at history as a frozen entity only reflected in retained objects that are emulated as proof of a glorious past, together with some difficulty in looking beyond the repression of the New Order regime (1966-1998), not allowing integrated interpretations on social, economic and cultural exchanges; the fact of modern architecture being often seen as a “foreign and dangerous idea”, as “an agent of infinite standardization, destroyer of anything local and particular”; and of course the vastness of the Indonesian territory and cultural diversity – *Craftsmanship: Material Consciousness* is extraordinarily notable in providing such a consistent (what they call) “glimpse” of a one-century dynamic of architecture in Indonesia.

Not having the presumption of yet have the possibility to give precise answers to some intrinsic questions of the Koolhaas challenge – “who are ‘we’ in the history (of architecture)? How did the ‘encounter’ with modernity happen? If modernity did erode our ‘national (architectural characteristics)’, is it true that ‘we’ have ‘national (architectural characteristics)’?” – the team of curators opted to try to answer the main question: “what is considered fundamental in the 100-year journey of architecture in Indonesia which related to modernity”.

The publication neither follows the common discourses looking at history as a battle between the East and the West, or between different times, nor reveals the need for pursuing nationalist dissertations, but precisely the opposite – architecture is perceived as a common language of Indonesian society, through a continuous movement over time, neither being excluded from interactions with the outside nor neglecting its local features. Architecture is exposed, in a very unprejudiced way, as a common ground for exchanges cutting across social, economic and cultural boundaries by being faithful to means and modus operandi as the essence uniting times.

At the same time, the choice of craftsmanship as the theme of the exhibition is a smart call for “design” and “construction” not to be separated from one another, in these capitalist and technological times, leading to the death of local consciousness in favor of the mere fulfilment of production lines. It reveals how craftsmanship, throughout the past and, hopefully, into the future was, and is, able to establish relationships between people and matter in the process of construction; promoting interdisciplinary teamwork and awareness of all the work processes; endorsing humanized work leading to local appreciation, recognition and people’s understanding of the role of architecture; potentially contributing to avoiding natural disasters such as deforestation, global warming, floods; finally, how it can be a sustainable answer, in social, economic and environmental terms. “Craftsmanship is a conscious decision that enjoys a close relationship with the quality of life in Indonesia”. And so it was the Indonesian curatorial decision to choose “Craftsmanship: Material Consciousness” as the reality to represent its country in the 14th International Architecture Exhibition.

The videos projected at the Indonesia exhibition are available at the YouTube Channel of *arsitektur indonesia*, the first ever (online) repository dedicated to architecture in Indonesia, funded by Avianti Armand and Setiadi Sopandi, curators of the Indonesia exhibition, together with Nadia Purwestri and Febriyanti Suryaningsih: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfpXbsxsAJMTYJUieZwH0lQ>.

Zara Ferreira



Our Modern Past: A Visual Survey of Singapore Architecture 1920s-1970s

Authors: Ho Weng Hin, Dinesh Naidu and Tan Kar Lin
 Publisher: Singapore Heritage Society and SIA Press Pte Ltd
 ISBN: 978-981-09-2495-9
 Language: English
 Year: 2015

It is not obvious to many that Singapore boasts an exemplary modernist architectural legacy. Built during the mid-20th century, these structures were the result of progressive, even utopian, impulses to shape a new society – a vision of the future, built to last. But that future turned out to be startlingly short-lived. Relentless development is rapidly depleting the built heritage of the nation-building period in particular, which is relatively less well studied or protected.

The Singapore Heritage Society’s decade-long project, *Our Modern Past*, constitutes a sustained effort to document the city-state’s modern heritage, promote appreciation of this architecture, and present a case for its selective conservation. The first of two volumes, *Our Modern Past: A Visual Survey of Singapore Architecture 1920s-1970s* provides a photographic guide organized into three parts: “Interwar Period (1919-1942)”, “Post-War Years (1945-1965)”, and “Post-Independence (1966-1980)”. Each part begins with a survey of that period’s architectural elements, illustrating how locally typical modern expressions of form, type, materiality, and detail have been shaped by their contexts. “Feature buildings” then complete each part, providing a closer look at definitive works that capture the times. The book contains a total of 649 photographs, 34 elements, and 44 feature buildings, including several that have since been demolished.



From the Publisher.



The Living Machines: Malaysia’s Modern Architectural Heritage

Edited by Ar Azaiddi Abdullah; Tony Liew Voon Fun
 Publisher: Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia; Taylor’s University
 ISBN: 9789675264122
 Language: English
 Year: 2015

The Living Machines: Malaysia’s Modern Architectural Heritage is a documentation effort to perpetuate the legacy of modern architecture designed and constructed in Malaysia, from the 1940s to the 1980s.

The publication reveals a collection of 30 Malaysian modern buildings that Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) Heritage and Conservation Committee believes should be classified as national heritage.

The information on the buildings is organized in 4 chapters, corresponding to the 4 stages that the author considers defines the history of Malaysian modern architectural heritage, classified as: a) Early Modern or “International Style”, b) Regional Modern, c) Brutalist Modern and d) Mid-century Modern.

“We now wish that this book had been published earlier to create an awareness of the value and significance of those buildings. Sadly, some of these buildings have been destroyed or had major renovations that have changed their character”.

The publication is written to the general public and profusely illustrated with photographs of different architectural elements, being hopefully able to interest different stakeholders in the public and private sectors towards the acknowledgment of the merit and historical significance of the expressive modern built landscape of Malaysia.

¹ Ar Steven Thang Boon Ann (Chairman of the Heritage and Conservation Committee, Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia).

Zara Ferreira



Tropicality: Revisited

Authors: Setiadi Sopandi and Avianti Armand
 Publisher: IMAJI Publishing
 ISBN: 978-602-9260-27-4
 Language: English
 Year: 2015

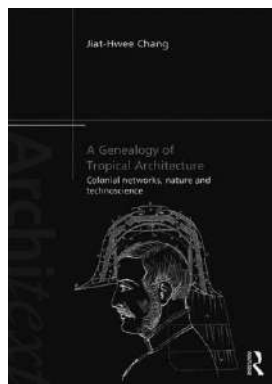
The publication *Tropicality: Revisited* documents the exhibition under the same name that took place at Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt, within the framework of the *Frankfurt Book Fair 2015*, with the curatorship of Avianti Armand, Setiadi Sopandi and Peter Cachola Schmal.

The catalog explores modern Indonesian architecture as being a great contribution to the architectural discourse in Indonesia itself and its dissemination in Europe.

The research starting point is based in the explanation of the current understanding of “tropicality” analyzing the following topics: “the tropics”; “climate, hygiene and building”; “climatology”; “Dutch East Indies architectural discourse”; “the history of tropical architecture”; “towards an Indonesian architecture” and “the reinvention of tropical discourse”. These subjects are exemplified with 12 case studies — both private and public — responding to these issues through imaginative approaches to tropical architecture and the changing human ecology.

It is complemented with an extended 20th century timeline revealing the tropical studies and technological devices developed through time.

Catarina Andrade



A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature and Technoscience

Author: Jiat-Hwee Chang
 Publisher: Routledge
 ISBN: 978-0-415-84078-1
 Language: English
 Year: 2016

Fish don't know they're in water, says David Foster Wallace. But fish surely know best about breathing using gills. I find the parable comfortably fitting to a theme on so-called “tropical living” and its derivative “tropical architecture”. Too often we come across the two-word phrases – separately or together – to make up preconceived ideas illustrating a building or a complex of buildings dominated by the presence of the roof, frequently lacking walls, and surrounded by lush tropical gardens and water bodies. Images from resorts in Bali or Phuket proliferate in countless coffee table books, design monographs, and travel magazines.

For the ones living along the equatorial belt, the tropical climate seems to be naturally taken for granted. Despite there being problems, its heat and torrential rain seem to be part of casual daily life. Cultures learn to live surrounded by foliage and creatures. Throughout the year, the pattern monotonously provides the tropical living organism a safe haven of abundance far from extremes. In most cases, apart from steamy afternoons, human settlements are rarely prepared for cold winds and excessive heat waves. Shade, provided by the lush greenery, was one of the essential features of living the tropical life. All of those conditions make the tropics hospitable to survival. Vernacular houses of the tropics are commonly dominated by extensive roofs made out of organic materials. Apart from their function to symbolize certain social and spiritual values, house forms often reflect immediate practical purposes to effortlessly adapt to the rain and the sun. However, we are now living in a world that has become so different from our ancestors’.

What we are facing now are crowded tropical cities with tarmac streets and air-conditioned shopping malls. We are distanced from the natural world as our cities and architecture are becoming more and more dependent on mechanical apparatuses that enables us to build everywhere on earth in whatever styles we want. This is how the tropical resorts slip into our mind when we plan our holidays.

But it was not the case with the European settlers when they first built colonial outposts. The tropics were depicted as a place filled with miasma, which brought illness and death among the whites. When it was not lethal, the unpleasant heat caused by the sun and the humidity was believed to be conducive to idleness and to be capable of dispiriting the white man. As military and industrial activities began to increase in the tropical colonies along with the growing population, climate was becoming an important subject in developing cities, settlements, and other infrastructure. Densely occupied cantonments and city centers in the second half of the 20th century were alarmingly hazardous to public health and were considered as unfavorable.

This story begins the newly-published monograph by Chang Jiat-Hwee, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture*. The book tells us about an unusually ordinary story of so-called tropical architecture. It is “unusual” because it is a rarity to be able to tell an interesting story for something as mundane as tropical buildings. When I first heard his idea to research “the tropics” in the Department of Architecture at National University of Singapore (NUS), I immediately felt that it would only lead to yet more technical learning, such as how to handle excessive sun light, how to invite breezes into interior spaces, or how to handle downpours, as it always was. Apparently, it did not. In fact, if we are meticulous and determined enough to trace back far and wide, we can find how the term “tropical” could expose us to cultural, social, political, and – of course – technical realms. In that sense, our image-laden understanding of tropical architecture would no longer be simple and limited. The idea stems from a trail of research in the Department of Architecture at NUS, while this particular topic had been developed by Chang since as early as 2002 and would eventually become his doctoral thesis at the University of California, Berkeley. The breadth and depth of the long-nurtured knowledge is exactly what the book provides us.

The narrative of the book offers lengthy and meticulously arranged stories – classified under several general themes – passing through almost 200 years from the genesis and the development of this loosely-defined breed of architecture. The thesis is centered

on how the idea of “tropical architecture” was generated initially as part of the colonial solution – in this book, the British Empire – for health and survival reasons particularly during the second half of the 19th century. Interestingly, as history progressed, the idea of tropical architecture grew into a norm as practices were standardized and spread out around the colonies. The stories that Chang includes – well researched and backed up by impressive records – are mainly centered on events in Singapore: from the establishment of the military barracks, the building of Singapore General Hospital, the development of swampy areas, and the urban improvement attempts by the colonial government. But the stories progress far and wide from technical feats into interesting encounters with sanitation issues as well as urban political conflicts imbued with racial tensions.

This is not all. Chang reveals an interesting escalation in the way climatology progressed in the 20th century and influenced the way the British colonial government deployed weather stations and established numerous “Building Research Stations” to conduct research into building performance in given climatic and local conditions. This activity was also simultaneously followed by developments conducted by scientists and engineers in other countries – such as the United States and Germany – establishing a global network of science and technology.

The second part of the book tells how the development of modern (international) architecture coincided with the new world order. After WWII, postcolonial countries – many are coincidentally located along the tropical belt – were trying to catch up with their former metropolises by building modern infrastructure and facilities. Assisted by the expertise and newly developed sciences and technologies, professionals from tropical countries learned the know-how and the climatic nature of their countries from a new point of view. The technoscience learned in research powerhouses like the University College in London and the Architectural Association in London enabled young engineers and architects to approach architectural design more as a rational and scientific pursuit rather than as an aesthetic and cultural treat. The spread of the “architectural sciences” was also helped by the United Nations’ development program in the 1960s, which was aimed at helping new developing countries to provide low-cost housing programs.

The stories raised and framed by Chang help us to understand how the development of science and technology during the mid-20th century shaped many technical aspects of our education and professional conduct nowadays. Design principles and procedures had been built around scientific development

and taught in technical schools around the world, planting seeds of knowledge which became common to us. The book also helps us realize how much of that knowledge had been forgotten, rendered as irrelevant and unimportant. Accordingly, our idea of tropical architecture has been changing over several decades. To some architects in Southeast Asian countries, the idea of tropical architecture had been associated not only with the climate-control performance of buildings but also with national architectural identity. It also suited the growing tourism industry and real-estate booms in countries like Indonesia, especially during the 1980s. We grew accustomed to the stylistic consequences of the tropics and we may be no longer be developing awareness of what “tropical” or “climatic” might have entailed.

Nowadays, with the alarming global environmental crisis, architects all over the world have been grappling with old ideas and inspirations in order to minimize energy consumption and to come to better terms with nature. From the dusty old archives and not-so-distant past, the mid-century architectural scientific novelty seems to linger and promise us a way forward we have forgotten. By the end of the trail, the book subtly exposes us to a question about how far we have gone and how we can possibly provide a better responsible architecture. Being a fish who knows well about water is maybe a good idea after all.

Setiadi Sopandi



Friedrich Silaban

Authors: Setiadi Sopandi
 Publisher: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama
 ISBN: 9786020339597
 Language: Indonesian
 Year: 2017

“I am an architect, but not an ordinary one” is what Frederich Silaban (1912-1984) wrote in his letter to a job application letter for the United Nations in New York in the mid-

1960s. This extraordinary self-confidence came from an autodidact Indonesian architect, coming from a newly born nation that had just freed itself from Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation just a few years before. Silaban is the best representation of the new soul of modernity in Indonesia, in line with the raging spirit of nationalism and self-esteem among newly independent countries in post-WWII Asia. His architecture faithfully responds to the tropical climate, is economically efficient, elegantly functional, and rationally embraces cultural traditions”. JW

“While his contribution to the Indonesian capital is significant, little is known about the architect, his architecture and his time. Setiadi Sopandi’s study is by far the most comprehensive account of Silaban’s works. It situates the architect in the context of Indonesian nation-building and the geo-cultural formation of postcolonial internationalism. A grand guided tour of a crucial period in the history of Indonesian architecture, revealing the innards of the political-artistic life of a nation and providing a rare glimpse into the work of a unique character of a most important Indonesian architect”. AK

“Silaban was aware of his own history but clearly projected the future as well. A future that represented an idea of Indonesian architecture within an international context. It is fantastic to see the works of Silaban concentrated together in this publication in a way you would never be able to see in reality. The publication not only provides an insight into the work of Silaban and the era he worked in, but allows readers to look forward and to enables us to contextualize our present time”. MV

“This book is a result of a long journey of self-discovery through the discourse of modern Asian architecture that began with the formation of mAAAN (modern Asian Architecture Network) in 2001 with specific aims to push the critical discourse and theorization from Asian perspectives based on the comprehensive inventory and study of the pioneers of Asian architects. After more than a decade, the movement has produced a new generation of young architects, academics, and writers, who have been actively pursuing this objective.

The writer is one of the most prolific young Indonesian scholars and a key member of mAAAN who has been working with the original Silaban archives, under special arrangement given by Silaban’s family to mAAAN. This is one of the first fruits of the long pursuit of knowledge of Indonesian architectural modernism based on local first-hand sources. Hopefully this excellent seminal work will trigger snowballing effects on the sustained studies, debates, and publications on the

works of other pioneers of Indonesian and Asian architecture and modernism". JW

"This publication is one of the top documentation and research efforts by Setiadi Sopandi to perpetuate the legacy of the journey of architects and architecture in Indonesia. This achievement is not only a valuable vehicle documenting contemporary heritage, allowing it to be known, understood, appreciated and remembered, but also a call for the need for its respectful preservation". AT

The English version of this publication will be available soon.

Publication endorsements by
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Building Memories: People, Architecture, Independence

Authors: Lai Chee Kien, Koh Hong Teng, Chuan Yeo
 Publisher: Achates 360
 ISBN: 978-981-09-8935-4
 Language: English
 Year: 2017

Having won no less than 10 book and design awards, *Building Memories* is a fine blend of many features. It is a serious and meticulously-prepared monograph on Singapore's national architectural heritage as well as an informative popular pictorial book. It is also, partly, a graphic novel and a heartwarming collective account on the history of a thriving nation.

Nice old photos or personal documents set within thorough historical narratives are usually doing more than enough for most readers, but here, the collaboration between

the author with the illustrator, and the graphic designer goes far to deliver intended messages for readers. The lavish design features are far from gimmicky and does not suggest the book as overtly celebrative and luxurious. Instead, the features help taking us beyond what can be explained by the architecture of the building.

Above all, this book is a reminiscence, dedicated to the loving memory of four seminal buildings built between 1960 and 1970: the National Library, the National Theatre, Singapore Conference Hall and Trade Union House, and the National Stadium. These buildings are depicted as the icons of the two decades from 1955 to the mid-1970s which is an important phase for Singapore as an independent nation. The era marked a piece of history of the nation when Singapore – despite being a small island-nation – started becoming a major economic powerhouse in the world. For Singaporeans, the era marked the advancement of the society moving beyond just bread and butter, embracing modern lifestyles. The selection of the four buildings is not only because their architectural merits but moreover about their roles in the society – in bringing Singaporeans knowledge, cultures, a sense of nationalism, entertainment, and a place among the emerging Southeast Asian nations.

As Singapore incessantly develops her urban infrastructures, these monuments were facing their obsolesce. The collection of the National Library had multiplied. Tunnels were built underneath the National Theatre to cope with growing traffic. The National Trade Union Congress grew much larger and demanded new premises, as Singapore needs more conference halls. The National Stadium needs to host more spectators and state-of-the-art sporting facilities. The old National Library was eventually demolished in 2004, while the National Theatre was gone even much earlier in 1986. The National Stadium was finally torn down in 2010 to give way for a new bigger stadium. The Singapore Conference Hall and Trade Union House has a better fate being refurbished as the home for Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 2001.

The author and editor Lai Chee Kien meticulously provides detail accounts on what happened before, during, and after the buildings were built. Using his own collection of mementos – and also relics from the National Archive of Singapore – along with personal accounts from seminal individuals, he brings us to details that matter to us and moreover to Singaporeans. *Building Memories* remembers the buildings like older family members that went before us, that left us beautiful memories and warm fuzzy feeling long after they were gone.

Setiadi Sopandi

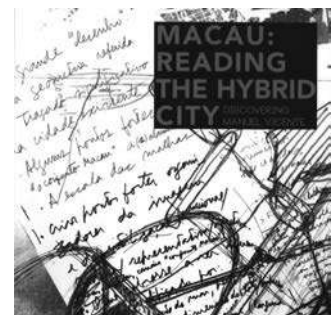


MASEANA Project International Round Table and Colloquium – Conservation Action Priorities for 20th Century Heritage: Sharing Experience of ASEAN Countries and Japan

Editors: MASEANA Project
 Publisher: **docomomo** Japan
 Language: English, Japanese
 Year: 2015

This report summarizes the *MASEANA Project International Round Table and Colloquium* that took place in Tokyo between 31 October and 2 November 2015. Delegations from Japan and every ASEAN member country (except Brunei) attended the event, whose sessions included an introduction to organizational objectives, opportunities and actions in ASEAN, and an overview of current issues in modern architectural preservation within the region.

Laura Phelps



Macau: Reading the Hybrid City. Discovering Manuel Vicente

Edited by Rui Leão
 Publisher: **docomomo** Macau
 ISBN: 978-99965-672-0-9
 Language: English
 Year: 2016

Discovering Manuel Vicente is a result of three international conferences held in 2014 and the homonymous exhibition, in 2015, organised by **docomomo** Macau. It is a dense catalogue presenting a broad collection of diverse and divergent points of views from

the man, the thinker, and the architect Manuel Vicente was, as a basis for understanding his complexity.

By revealing Manuel Vicente through the lens of those who crossed his path and debated with him the marvellous experience of architecture; by working, learning or exchanging ideas and, more than presenting his built legacy, the importance of this book lies in the revelation of the legacy that Manuel Vicente has left as a way of thinking on architecture and the city. The reflection about its repercussion in the built production of Macau until the present day remind us of his intense and unique role in the creation of a Macau school. Following some arguments carried by Pedro Vieira de Almeida (“Uma História do Futuro”, *Colóquio Artes*, nº 89, 1991), exposing the idea already identified among some of us of a *Macau school* based on the intense action of Manuel Vicente operated in the space of Macau since the 60’s.

As a meeting point between East and West, Manuel Vicente found in Macau an available territory for the exploration of crossed influences between Europe and Asia, bringing together the American culture – pop, critical, cinematic – which he realises quite well due to his studies at the University of Pennsylvania following his master Louis Kahn, and Macau’s local culture – dense, informal, somehow secret which he codifies through the richness of the Asian world, sophistication and fantasy. Macau enabled his migration of ideas and allowed it to be contaminated by the development of a school of thought based on his method of approaching the city and architectural practice.

Believing that the chaos was an order yet to be understood, for Manuel Vicente architecture had to be magnificent to everyone, at every scale, on every place. With a sense of intense magic and happy grandiosity he created the spaces where people could live with glory!

Serving the city and its people, transcending the banality of the real, Manuel Vicente became the actor of the whole script, always finding the time, the place or the argument to tell new stories as the result of looking for new meanings and paths, of exploring the imagination and the memory.

The legacy of Manuel Vicente is above all the remarkable body of knowledge he built through his teachings and professional debate based on confrontation, posing wide open questions instead of giving answers. Through revealing the value of interrogation, Manuel Vicente built in people around him the capacity of critical thinking.

That’s why this book is so important, because it reveals how the work of Manuel Vicente, always controversial and even sometimes unloved, has been, in the end,

a critical reflection of Macau in physical and cultural terms, that has left decisive questions to continue to be explored.

Ana Tostões



Sanriku Tsunami and the Reorganization of Villages Beyond Modern Disaster Reconstruction

Author: Kentaro Okamura
 Publisher: Kajima Publishing
 ISBN: 978-4-306-04647-4
 Languages: Japanese
 Year: 2017

The Sanriku area, located in the northeastern part of Japan, was hit by four tsunami disasters including the East Japan great earthquake (2011) since the Meiji Restoration (1867). However, the area has undergone a miraculous reconstruction every time. Among them, the reconstruction method of Kirikiri Village as “the ideal village” after the Showa Sanriku Tsunami (1933) is still worthy of reference as the “Merckumar of Modern Disaster Reconstruction”. This book clarifies the process of the reconstruction of villages, from the change of the governance mechanism, the transition of institutions and operations, and the dynamics of the people. A contemporary reconstruction model is also discussed. This book contains many pictures of disaster areas photographed after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Kentaro Okamura



mASEANa Project 2016: Pioneers of Modern Architecture — The Report of mASEANa Project 2016 2nd and 3rd International Conference

Editors: mASEANa Project
 Publisher: **docomomo** Japan
 Language: English
 Year: 2017

This report summarizes the second and third international conferences of the mASEANa Project which were held in 2017 in Hanoi and Tokyo respectively.

The Hanoi conference, *Pioneers of Modern Architecture*, took place between 12 and 14 January with contributions from Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia. The report includes inventories of modern buildings in the cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, complemented with texts on the history of its modern architecture, as on policies and strategies of building conservation and reuse.

The Toyko conference, *Modern Architectural Heritage in ASEAN and Japan*, took place on 12 and 13 March. The first day was dedicated to sessions on the pioneers of modern architecture in ASEAN and Japan and to the value and possibility of its modern architectural heritage. The second day worked as a workshop with the goal of overcoming issues in conservation of modern heritage in ASEAN and Japan, organized around 3 main sessions dedicated to philosophy, method and documentation.

Laura Phelps

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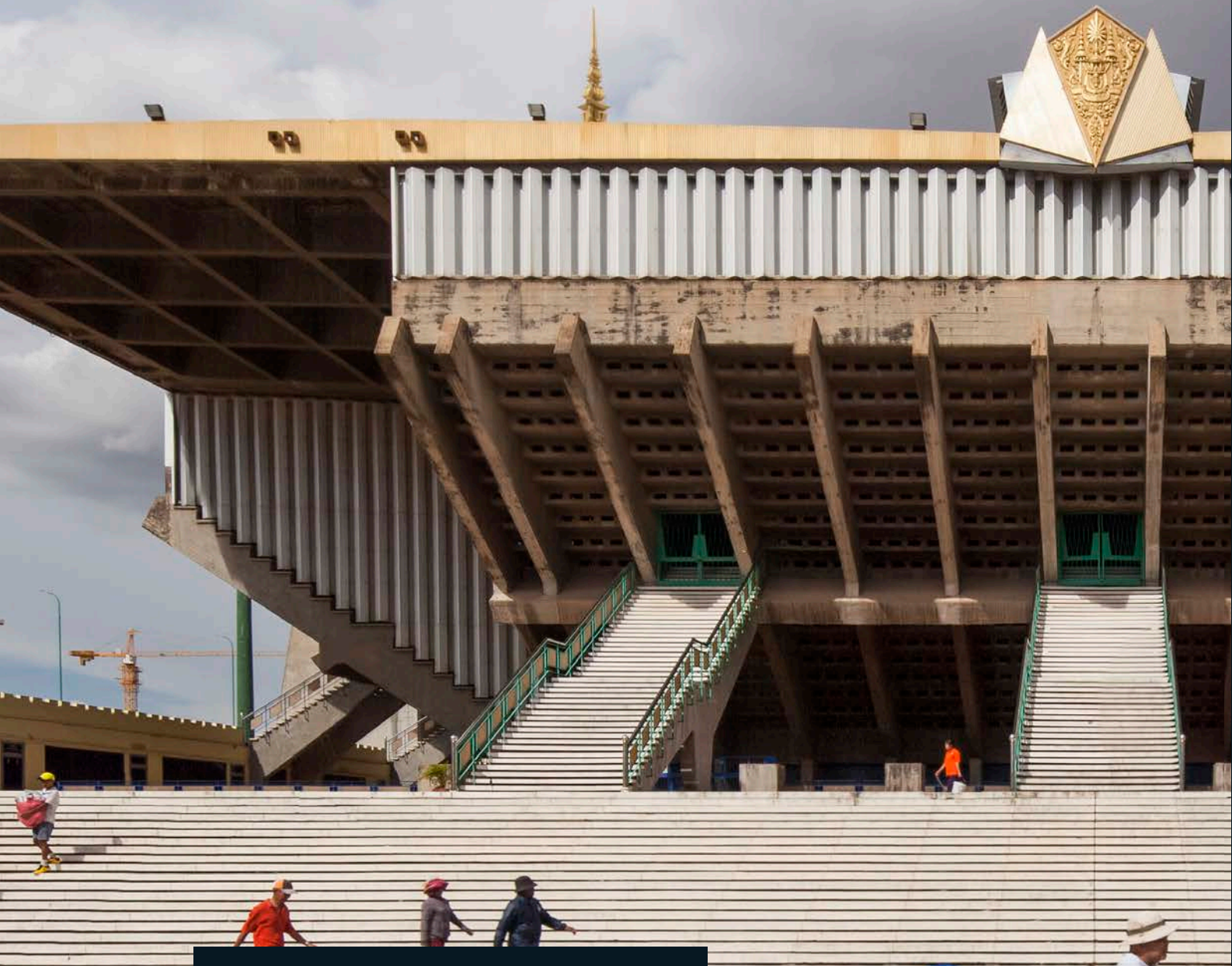
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