Postmodern Architecture in Thailand 1982–1997: Key Concepts and Case Studies

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s, Postmodern architecture has been popular in Western societies. It emerged as a response to the Modernism style by rejecting the abstract elements of architecture and included a return to the communication of architectural meaning for the public. This approach led to the representation of architectural elements from the past and re-considered how culture was reflected in design. Postmodern architecture became popular in Thailand during the 1980s, resulting in the creation of numerous Postmodern buildings in all regions of the country. The objective of this article is to characterize Postmodern architecture in Thailand from 1982 to 1997 (2525–2540 B.E.) and demonstrate the value and importance of such architecture, which is deserving of preservation. The research process included a study of Postmodernism in Western societies; an examination of Postmodern architecture in Thailand through various documents; surveys of six case studies and analyzes of their key concepts and significant architectural characteristics. Based on seminal research led by Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, Postmodern architecture in Thailand consists of four sub-styles: Historicism, Contextualism, Pluralism, and Behavioralism. These four sub-styles are used as a framework of analysis to re-evaluate both the classification and projects. The adoption of Historicism in the early stage of Postmodernism in Thailand was consistent with the economic prosperity of the middle class, which created a specific meaning for Thai society. The popularity of Postmodern style, particularly Historicism, declined and paralleled with the economic crisis in 1997. The architecture field thus began to focus more on promoting Thai identity or Thai-ness, with which the other three sub-styles were integrated and continued. After reviewing the six building case studies, it was concluded that Postmodern architecture in Thailand has some outstanding key concepts, including Historic Preservation, Historical Allusion, Contextual Linkage, Placemaking, Double-Coding Composition, Eclectic Composition, Specific Signification, and Lifestyle Pattern as Organization. These key concepts reveal interrelation among the four sub-styles and prove that each architectural project cannot be labelled with one sub-style. They also demonstrate the adaptation to the context and way of life of the pluralistic Thai society.

Keywords: Behavioralism, Contextualism, Historicism, Pluralism, Postmodernism, Thai Postmodern architecture

INTRODUCTION

"Postmodern Architecture" is an architectural style that originated in Western societies in the late 1960s. It began as a reaction to Modern architecture and cities and generated critical reconsideration of Modernism in both architecture and urban planning. The works of several Western architects and scholars, including Jane Jacobs (1961), Robert Venturi (1966), Aldo Rossi (1966), began to reveal failures in various dimensions of society, that had led to the deterioration of historically significant areas and cities (Jencks, 1984, pp. 107–108). Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, one of foundational treatises of Postmodernism, concentrated on Italian architecture from different epochs, including some modern architecture and popular culture. Venturi set up a series of visual preferences: complexity and contradiction vs simplification or picturesqueness; ambiguity and richness rather than straightforwardness; both-and rather than either-or, etc. His manifesto "Less is a bore" was seen as a direct attack to the orthodox Modernism such as Mies van Der Rohe's phrase "Less is more." (Venturi, 1966).

Key issues that were criticized in Modern architecture included the elimination of style, ornamentation, and history from architecture, in favor of abstract geometries and interest in functionalism, which resulted in universal rationalization and standardization of design (Woods, 1999, pp. 89–113). As such, Modernism produced a repetition of architectural shapes and elements which were perceived as banal and lacking creative diversity. In the 1970s, a "Return to History" movement emerged that shifted focus to the study of architecture and urbanism of the past with the significant writings of Robert Venturi (1972), Leon Krier (1978) and Colin Rowe (1978), including architectural exhibitions such as "The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts" (1975–1976) (Jencks, 1984, pp. 95–103). The famous "The Present of the Past," which is an international exhibition curated by Paolo Portoghesi as a part of the Venice Biennale of 1980, consolidated Postmodernism in architecture and planning (Mallgrave & Goodman, 2011, pp. 58–59).

Postmodern architecture is a movement which reacts to the concepts and forms of modern architecture or international style. It reflects a pluralist society characterized by diversity, complexity, and subcultures, by rejecting the abstraction of architectural elements and turning back to architectural communication through multiple signs to the public (Jencks, 1984, pp. 5–8). This approach leads to the representation of architectural elements from different historical periods or styles as well as reflecting codes from contemporary cultures (Figure 1). Postmodern architecture also embraces other characteristics such as creating a spectacle or fantasy, eliminating the differences between high and low cultures, often exploiting the latter for its aesthetic effects as seen in experimental works by artists such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein during the Pop Art movement in the 1960s. It also dissolves modern rational spaces into irrational spaces, and creating ironic/parodic effects (Woods, 1999). In addition, postmodern architects look to the historical urban fabric as a complex phenomenon by stressing the importance of building typology in creating a new urban fabric, especially in the postwar reconstruction of cities in Europe, as well as the fundamental importance of enclosed space and the collective memories that cities have for their inhabitants (Portoghesi, 1983, p. 12).

Postmodern architecture has been popular in Thailand since the 1980s when architectural publications, such as ASA Journal, started discussing it in the late 1980s. It resulted in the creation of numerous Postmodern buildings in all regions of the country including residential buildings, townhouses, small and large public buildings, and high-rise buildings. However, Postmodernism was mainly studied as a part of the overall development of architectural styles in Thailand. The theories and attributes of Postmodern architecture have not been extensively researched. This article aims to study Postmodern architecture in Thailand during the period 1982–1997, which was the time when this style was highly popular. It paralleled to the period of Thailand's fast-growing economy and the expansion of the middle class up until the economic crisis (Tom Yum Kung Crisis) of 1997 (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, pp. 253–255). The crisis ended the popularity of the Postmodern style in Thailand, particularly Postmodern Historicism. The article also intends to highlight

Figure 1

(Left) Robert Venturi, Vanna Venturi House, U.S.A. (1962) and (Right) Michael Graves, The Portland Public Services Building, Louisville, U.S.A. (1982)

Note. (Left) From *The Story of Post-Modernism* (p.42), by C. Jencks, 2011, John Wiley & Sons. Copyright 2011 by Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates. (Right) From *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (front cover), by C. Jencks, 1984, Rizzoli International Publications. Copyright 1984 by Proto Acme Photo.

the value and importance of Postmodern architecture and to create a critical awareness of the need for building preservation. Important Postmodern buildings already have been demolished or altered in design and function due to changing societal factors, which also has been identified as a significant problem in Western societies.

The research methodology for the paper consists of studying and reviewing the historical background and fundamental concepts of Postmodernism in Western societies; studying and collecting data on Postmodern architecture in Thailand between 1982–1997 from various sources such as the Journal of the Association of Siamese Architects, books, research papers, etc.; conducting physical surveys of selected Postmodern buildings; and analyzing and summarizing the key concepts and significant characteristics of six case studies of Postmodern architecture in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development of Architecture in Thailand: 1932–1997

From the Siamese Revolution in 1932 to the expansion of Postmodernism around 1982, Thailand has been transformed from a traditional to a modern society. Architecture of various styles has been created, reflecting the rapid development that could be divided into three periods: 1932–1957 (2475–2500 B.E.), 1958–1972 (2501–2515 B.E.), and 1973–1982 (2516–2525 B.E.) (Horayangkura et al., 1993). In the early period following the change of political system from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in 1932, public buildings were constructed to support various activities, and the Modern architecture that had emerged earlier was further supported, serving as a symbol of the new government. Additionally, there was the development of Applied-Thai-style architecture based on nationalism in the later stages of this early period.

In the second period, there was a high degree of social and economic volatility. The expansion of cities and the economy through trade, tourism,

and industry led to the "First Golden Age of Architecture," in which various types of buildings were constructed, and modern architecture became more diverse, including Brutalism and Brazilian styles, adapted to a tropical climate. The growth of the real estate sector led to the emergence of new types of projects–such as shopping malls, townhouses, and high-rise residential buildings, which reflected the wide variety of late-modern architectural styles. Towards the end of this period, the influence of Postmodernism began to emerge, particularly in residences, which blended various Western architectural elements of the past with new contemporary ones.

In the third period, Thailand faced frequent political problems due to the instability of the government, which produced a short-lived economic downturn in the mid-1980's. However, the economy subsequently boomed and altered Thai society, including political governance that aimed for democracy, and a middle class, especially in urban areas, which gained more social power. Real estate businesses, such as housing projects, became very successful (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005, pp. 199–212). According to Fredric Jameson, this economic prosperity which was happening around the world in the same period, was thought of as a new economic order–Late Capitalism–a multinational stage of capitalism when people are removed from the economic system of production. Jameson also argued that Postmodernism was a cultural dominance when there is no single style but a coexistence of variety of styles (Jameson, 1991).

In Thailand the trend of investing in urban housing projects caused land prices to increase and land speculation grew accordingly. While the business districts of the city were popular for building high-rise offices, condominiums, and large shopping malls, this economic prosperity produced new trends. The first trend was an increase in consumerism among rural people, who turned their interest to new consumer goods, and who sought new professional opportunities in the city. Another trend was the increasing taste for Western-style architecture, luxury goods, and lavish lifestyles from newly successful businesspeople (Horayangkura et al., 1993). These trends occurred concurrently with the increasing popularity of Postmodern architecture in Western societies during a similar period.

Architecture in Thailand since the 1980s has not only continued the trend of the Modern style, but also the Postmodern style. The Postmodern style was considered as directly imported or "adopted" from the West, rather than being developed within the context of Thailand. The Postmodern style that Thai architects have adopted consists of four sub-styles: Historicism, Contextualism, Pluralism, and Behaviouralism (Horayangkura et al., 1993, pp. 253–254). It can be read that Horayangkura's classification was adapted from Charles Jencks' analysis of Postmodernism, presented in the form of an Evolution Tree. Starting in 1960, the tree consists of six approaches (Figure 2): Historicism, Straightforward Revivalism, Neo-Vernacular, Ad Hoc Urbanist, Methaphor Metaphysical and Post-Modern Space (Jencks, 1984, pp. 112–117). The diagram illustrated the first four categories to be merged in the 1980s while the other two categories joined around 1990 before all of them started to diverge again after 2000 (Jencks, 2011, pp. 40–49). Such a dynamic suggests overlaps as well as variances of styles and concepts in Postmodernism. The four sub-styles as proposed by Horayangkura redefined Jencks' categories as Historicism, Contextualism and Pluralism, while Behavioralism can be seen as an additional one. This established the four sub-styles of Thai Postmodern architecture used as a framework of analysis in this article to re-evaluate both Horayangkura's classification and architectural case studies.

Historicism is a popular style in the early adaptation of Postmodernism by Thai architects, especially in the use of historical elements from Western architecture to decorate buildings, such as Classical elements (Figure 3).

Contextualism is a style that attempts to create a relationship and harmony with the environment or neighboring buildings, or it may involve the renovation of historic buildings. This style differs from the Modern style which emphasizes universalization and monumentality in designs (Figure 4).

Pluralism is a style that involves manipulations of diverse and complex elements (overlapping, connecting, and twisting architectural forms to create new meaning and uniqueness), the play of outer wall layers of the building to expose the

inside, and a collage of different materials and colors, or a specific design for symbolic meanings. This Pluralist style corresponds to the increasingly pluralist society of Thailand, where signification is diverse and not limited to architectural languages of the past (Figure 5).

Behavioralism is a model that mainly emerged as a research and teaching methodology in the field of architecture. It has become increasingly prevalent and has been integrated into the previous three sub-styles over time (Figure 6).
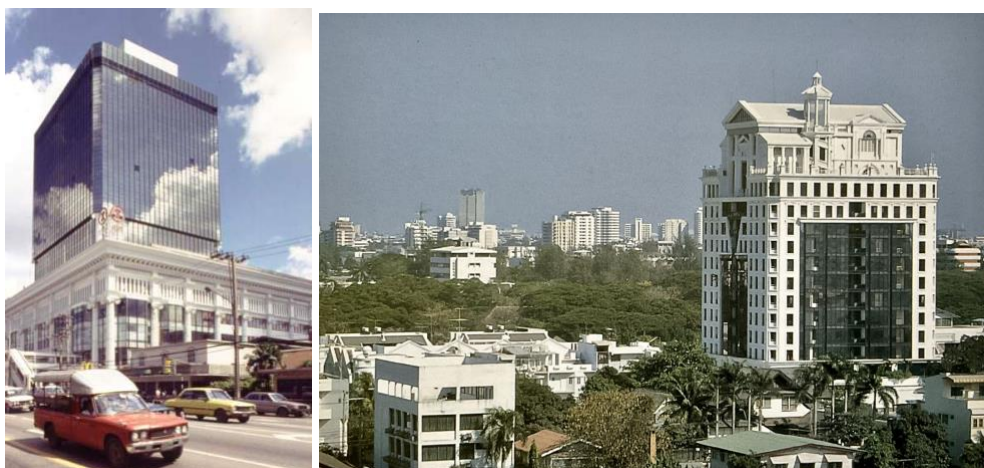
Figure 2

Charles Jencks' Evolutionary Tree Diagram
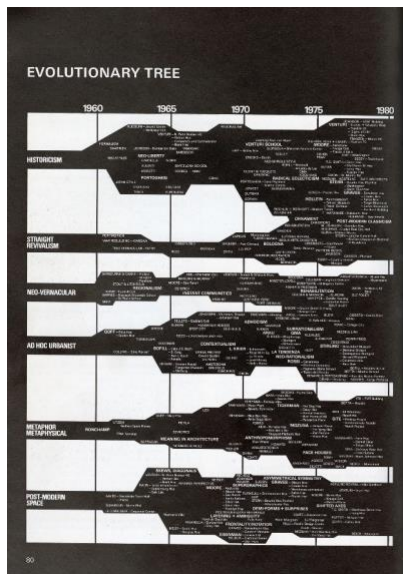
Note. From *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (p.80), by C. Jencks, 1984, Rizzoli International Publications. Copyright 1984 by Charles Jencks*.*

Figure 3

(Left) Rangsan Architecture Co., Ltd., Amarin Plaza, Bangkok (1985) and (Right) Ongard Architect, Jareemart Condominium, Bangkok (1986)

Note. (Left) From *Arun Chaiseri Consulting Engineers,* by Arun Chaiseri Consulting Engineers, 2012, Arunchaiseri (www.arunchaiseri.co.th/consultant/sd/past-experiences.php?page=*7*). Copyright 2012 by Arun Chaiseri Consulting Engineers. (Right) From *Siamese Architects: Fundamentals, Roles, Works and Concepts (1932−1994)* (p. 313), by P. Tiptus, 1996, The Association of Siamese Architects. Copyright 1996 by Tiptus.

Figure 4

(Left) Bandit Julasai, Sofitel Hua Hin Hotel, Prachuap Khiri Khan (1988) and (Right) Vira Inpuntang, Pridi Banomyong Memorial, Thammasat University, Bangkok (1986)
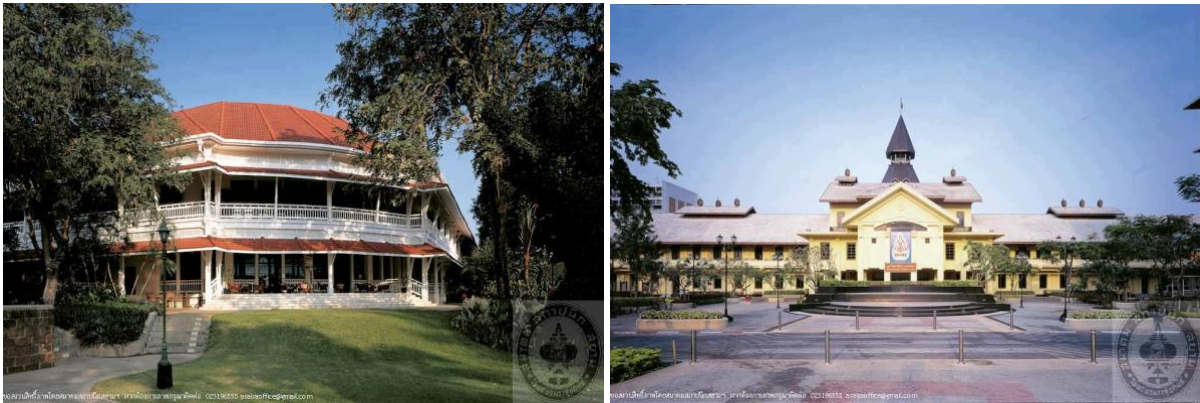
Note. (Left) From *Hotel Sofitel Central Hua Hin,* by The Association of Siamese Architects, 2016 (https://asaconservationaward.com/index.php/2016-06-13-15-23-31/commercial2537/338-hotel-sofitel-central-hua-hin). Copyright 2016 by The Association of Siamese Architects. (Right) From *Dome Building Thammasat University,* by The Association of Siamese Architects, 2016 (https://asaconservationaward.com/index.php/2016-06-13-15-21-44/building-2548/63-dome-thammasat-university). Copyright 2016 by The Association of Siamese Architects.

Figure 5

(Left) Sumet Jumsai Assocates, Bank of Asia Head Office, Bangkok (1986) and (Right) Plan Architects Co., Ltd., Rakluke Kindergarten, Bangkok (1988)

Note. (Left) From *Sumet Jumsai.* (p.72), by C. Wangrungarun (Ed.), 1996, The Key Publisher. Copyright 1996 by Profile. (Right) From *Rakluke Kindergarten,* by Plan Motif, 2019 (https://goo.gl/maps/Qwf4BQYSZMzvci6s9). Copyright 2019 by Plan Motif.

Figure 6

Plan Architects, Co., LTD., Plan House, Bangkok (1985)

Note. From *Siamese Architects: Fundamentals, Roles, Works and Concepts (1932–1994)* (p.553), by P. Tiptus, 1996, The Association of Siamese Architects. Copyright 1996 by Tiptus.

Based on the emergence of significant Postmodern buildings in Thailand, the development of the four sub-styles began with Postmodern Historicist projects and followed shortly by Pluralist, Contextualist, and Behavioralist cases. The popularity of Postmodern Historicism has led to the construction of Neoclassical-style buildings throughout the country, including residences, row houses, and low-cost housing. This has resulted in criticism of Postmodern architecture in Thailand, as being stylistically confusing, directionless or "lost" (Horayangkura et al., 1993, pp. 282–313). Other criticisms were that Postmodern architecture was a form of decoration that did not arise from structural problem solutions, nor did it truly integrate with Thai society. It was merely cosmetic, seeking to differentiate itself from the previous style, and the form was only a shell, demonstrating intellectual snobbery and unlikely to remain popular for long (Tiptus, 1996, pp. 317–326). It can be concluded that importing Western architectural Postmodern styles directly into the context of Thailand was criticized as merely copying Western architecture without applying the underlying principles or reasoning (Wasiksiri, 2016, pp. 87–91).

Some Thai architects and academics saw that there was a crisis in the national or Thai identity, so they tried to find a way out of this situation by reverting to the study of Thai architectural identity. This was paralleled with the decline in values towards Postmodern architecture, especially Postmodern Historicism when Thailand was engulfed by the Asian economic crisis of 1997. The crisis had an impact on the thoughts, beliefs, social conditions, and culture, resulting in the favor of "Civic Nationalism," and localization over globalization (Klampaiboon, 2011, pp. 30–35). This shift in the social fabric was followed by creative works in various fields that promoted Thai-ness, both in the form of nostalgia for the past and the popularity of local and regional identities. The architectural field thus began to focus more on promoting Thai identity or Thai-ness. Some large residential projects that employed the Postmodern Historicist style ultimately faced an identity and business crisis and were terminated. This resulted in abandoned buildings that remain today, such as Sathorn Unique Tower (AKA the Ghost Tower), Bangkok, in which construction for a luxury condominium complex in the

Postmodern Historicist style started in 1990 (Coconuts Bangkok, 2016).

Case Studies of Postmodern Architecture in Thailand

From 1982, the creation of Postmodern architecture in Thailand began to reflect clearer distinctions in key concepts and design. This section focuses on an analysis of six Postmodern buildings in Thailand. They are analyzed to find key concepts and characteristics, as well as social, economic, and cultural factors that are related to and affect their styles. The selection criteria for the case studies include:

Being renowned representatives of Postmodern architecture in Thailand with links to the four sub-styles noted above: Historicism, Contextualism, Pluralism, and Behavioralism (published in architectural magazines or awarded from architectural organizations)

Different building types that cover various uses, and being built between 1982–1997

Designed by renowned Thai architects or firms that are well-respected in the architectural field (projects published in architectural magazines or received international/national recognitions)

The six case study buildings are shown in Figure 7 and listed in chronological order as follows:

1. Amarin Plaza (Commercial Building; Retail Shopping Center and Office), 1985, designed by Rangsan Architecture Co., Ltd.
2. Plan House (Office and Residential Building), 1985, designed by Plan Architects, Co., LTD.
3. Bank of Asia Head Office (Office Building), 1986, designed by Sumet Jumsai Assocates.
4. Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex, Panabhandhu Wittaya School (Educational Building; Gymnasium), 1986, designed by Ong-ard Architects.
5. Sanguan Pho Phra House (Residence), 1986, designed by Vira Inpuntang.
6. Pridi Banomyong Library (Educational Building; Library), Thammasat University, 1997, designed by SJA + 3D Co., Ltd.

A summary description and analysis of each case study are as follows:

1.   Amarin Plaza

Owner: Amarin Development

Building Type: Commercial Building (Retail Shopping Center and Office)

Location: Ploenchit Road, Lumpini, Pathumwan, Bangkok, Thailand

Architects: Rangsan Architecture Co., Ltd.

Year Opened: 1985

Amarin Plaza is a five-story shopping complex and a 22-story rental office tower (Figure 8). Unlike other contemporary shopping malls, where the majority of customers are middle-class, and the buildings are in a simple Modern style, the architect's concept was to create a high-end and valuable atmosphere by combining a Postmodern Historicist style with Modern architecture to convey a specific meaning to high-income customers. Because of this combination, it is also perceived as a Postmodern Pluralist style.

Historical Allusion

The Amarin Plaza building consists of two parts: the podium, which is a shopping center, and the tower, containing rental office spaces. The two parts manifest different meanings in terms of their concepts, components, and building materials. The podium signifies Historicism by using Classical architecture styles, such as ionic columns and decorative elements like classical motifs for both the exterior and interior. The tower has a contrasting design. Although ionic columns decorate the lower corners of the tower, the overall design is a modern geometric shape of a rectangular box. The exterior wall material is a reflective-glass curtain wall, which is a popular material for contemporary office buildings.

Figure 7

(Upper Left) Amarin Plaza, (Upper Middle) Plan House, (Upper Right) Bank of Asia Head Office (Lower Left) Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex, (Lower Middle) Sanguan Pho Phra House and (Lower Right) Pridi Banomyong Library

Note. (Upper Left) From *Siamese Architects: Fundamentals, Roles, Works and Concepts (1932−1994)* (p. 342), by P. Tiptus, 1996, The Association of Siamese Architects. Copyright 1996 by Tiptus, P. (Upper Middle) From *Plan House,* by Plan Motif, 2019 (https://goo.gl/maps/Qwf4BQYSZMzvci6s9). Copyright 2019 by Plan Motif. (Upper Right) From *Sumet Jumsai.* (p. 79), by C. Wangrungarun (Ed.), 1996, The Key Publisher. Copyright 1996 by Profile. (Lower Left) From *Ong-ard Architects.* (p.40), by C. Wangrungarun (Ed.), 1992, The Key Publisher. Copyright 1992 by Ong Ard Architects. (Lower Middle) From "Merchant House in Countryside," by The Association of Siamese Architects, 1987a, *ASA Journal of Architecture, April 1987*, p. 42. Copyright 1987 by The Association of Siamese Architects. and (Lower Right) From "Library and Multi-Purpose Building 2, Thammasat University Tha Phrachan," by The Association of Siamese Architects, 1997, *ASA Journal of Architecture, August 1997*, p. 76. Copyright 1997 by The Association of Siamese Architects.

Figure 8

(Left) Axonometric View and (Right) Exploded Axonometric View
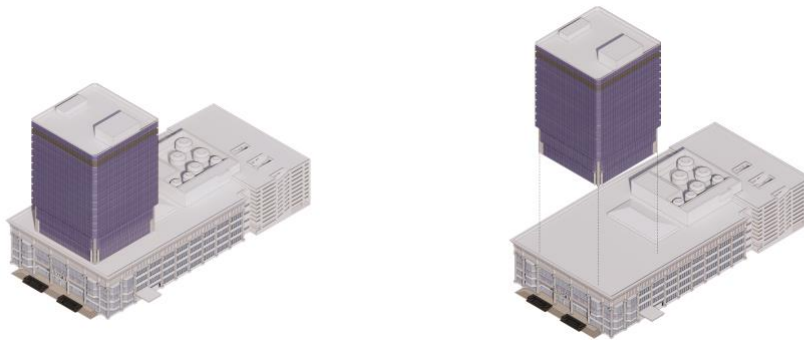
Double-Coding Composition

According to Charles Jencks' Postmodern theory, the difference in meaning between podium and tower elements expresses the concept of "double-coding or dual-coding" communication. This refers to the dualities or contradictory meanings in contemporary society that are expressed simultaneously, such as elitism/populism, high /low taste, old/new, etc. through the building's surface patterns and materials, structures, etc. (Jencks, 1984, pp. 5–8). Unlike other Historicist Postmodern buildings that have overall architectural appearances derived from history, the Amarin Plaza building has a pluralist meaning, a contradictory juxtaposition of both Modern and Historicist styles in the same building.

Economic and Social Signification

The Amarin Plaza building, moreover, creates symbolically Classical architecture, signifying the newly luxurious and high tastes that corresponded to the economic prosperity of the 1980s (the mid-1980's short-lived economic downturn notwithstanding). Based on the business research conducted for the project, this shopping mall was intentionally designed to be a tourist destination and a relaxing place that looks beautiful and is richly appointed. The high-valued, European-style architectural design has been familiar to Thais, as reflected, for example, by the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall and many other important national buildings. The architect in this case, however, avoided using traditional Thai architectural styles due to many restrictions and prohibitions, and because there were

unsuccessful commercial examples (Torsuwan, 1989).

The Historicist Postmodern style became a successful model for real estate developments throughout Thailand from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s and was reflected in hotel, condominium, housing estate, and commercial building developments throughout the country. The Postmodern Historicist architecture was so successful to the point where housing projects that did not follow this style could not be sold (Torsuwan, 1989). The architectural sign from the Classical style created a unique meaning for Thai society, particularly for the middle class, which valued beauty, luxury, and high taste. This differs from the same style in the West, which merely uses historical elements to create a nostalgic effect without creating any new meanings.

2.   Plan House

Owner: Plan Group

Building Type: Office and Residential Building

Location: Soi Sathorn 10, Silom, Bangrak, Bangkok, Thailand

Architects: Plan Architects Co., Ltd.

Year Opened: 1985 (Planned for demolition in 2023)

Recognition: Gold Medal, ASA Architectural Design Award 1987

Plan House Building uses both Postmodern Pluralist and Behavioralist architecture that combines the concept of creating an environment

suitable for use with distinctive architectural features and enhancing the public spaces where people meet and work together (Figure 9). The building houses the offices of four companies, an art-cultural library, a photo studio, a multipurpose hall, a car park, and five residential units for executives. The design concept is to create a building that differs from adjacent buildings while maintaining a relationship with and respect for the surrounding environment. The design emphasizes the mass and space of the building from the exterior to the interior, creating a working space that connects with the external environment as much as possible, using building elements to create a clear identity, incorporating social spaces, expressing the "total image" of the building as a "human institution," and using colors to promote meaning, emotions, and imagination (The Association of Siamese Architects, 1987b, pp. 34–39).

Eclectic Composition

The Plan House building has an exterior with a clear division into four distinct parts. The first, lower part, which is an office space, has large glass walls. The second, middle part, is a residential area with five units, each having small windows. The third, topmost part including a curved roof, is made of wood and is used for various events such as exhibitions, film screenings, etc. The fourth part is a large external staircase that connects the lower and middle parts of the building and also functions as a traffic route connecting different levels of the internal office spaces. Each of these parts has different materials and colors.

The Plan House building represents a meaning that mixes various elements, without being derived mainly from historical architectures. It creates its identities from pluralistic elements, such as the planning with complex spaces and geometries, the use of rectangular or square-shaped windows, and the employment of bright colors, curved arches, and alternating color stripes on walls throughout the building, etc. Furthermore, the architect designed some components to convey specific meanings. The office part and the main staircase, for example, connote the strong foundation for all offices under the Plan Group. The residential part signifies the new construction technology by having a solid mass sitting on the transparent office volume (Tiptus, 1996, pp. 888–891).

Placemaking

The context surrounding the Plan House building is the lane on which the structure is situated that connects to a main road. Originally, there were buildings and houses located along this long, tree-lined lane. Not all of these buildings align to create a uniform street façade. The architect wanted to create a unique urban and

Figure 9

(Left) Axonometric View and (Right) Exploded Axonometric View
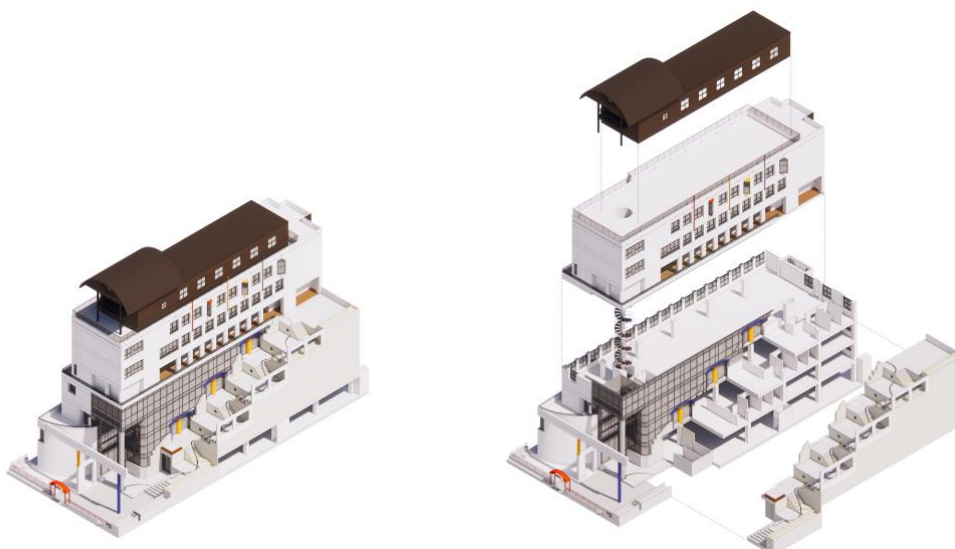
architectural characteristic, coherent with yet differing from the neighboring context. To achieve this, the building was set back from the front lane to create a public space in front. The entrance was installed with a low fence and a light-frame canopy, and a public library was added with an entrance from the front courtyard that is separate from the office entrance. Therefore, the building was conceived with the surrounding context in mind, connecting the front lane and public walkways to the open space on the lower level of the building (The Association of Siamese Architects, 1987b).

Creating such public space in the front of the building for various activities also provides a visual connection to the large exterior staircase. This staircase serves not only as a vertical circulation but also as a social space for events such as music performances, academic lectures, etc. Different office departments on each floor are able to directly access the exterior staircase. As a result, the staircase, together with the public space on the first and the topmost floors of the building, promotes social interactions among building's users, which is consistent with the company's goal of creating a "human institution."

3. Bank of Asia Head Office

Owner: Bank of Asia (Now the Headquarters of United Overseas Bank (UOB), Thailand)

Building Type: Office and Residential Building

Location: South Sathorn Road, Bangrak, Bangkok, Thailand

Architects: Sumet Jumsai Assocates

Year Opened: 1986 (Planned for modification in 2023)

Recognition: One of 50 Seminal Buildings of the 20th Century, MOCA, LA, U.S.A.

The 20-story head office of the Asia Bank is called the "Robot Building" due to its distinctive appearance inspired by the shape and components of robots (Figure 10). The Robot Building is a Postmodern Pluralist architecture following the bank management's requirement that the architecture should reflect the new generation and the new era, including computerized banking services. The architect, Sumet Jumsai na Ayudhya, a Thai National Artist in Contemporary Architecture in 1998, employed the popular symbolism approach to create a Postmodern architecture style called "Post High-Tech" (Jumsai, 1991, pp. 138–141).

Figure 10

(Left) Axonometric View and (Right) Exploded Axonometric View
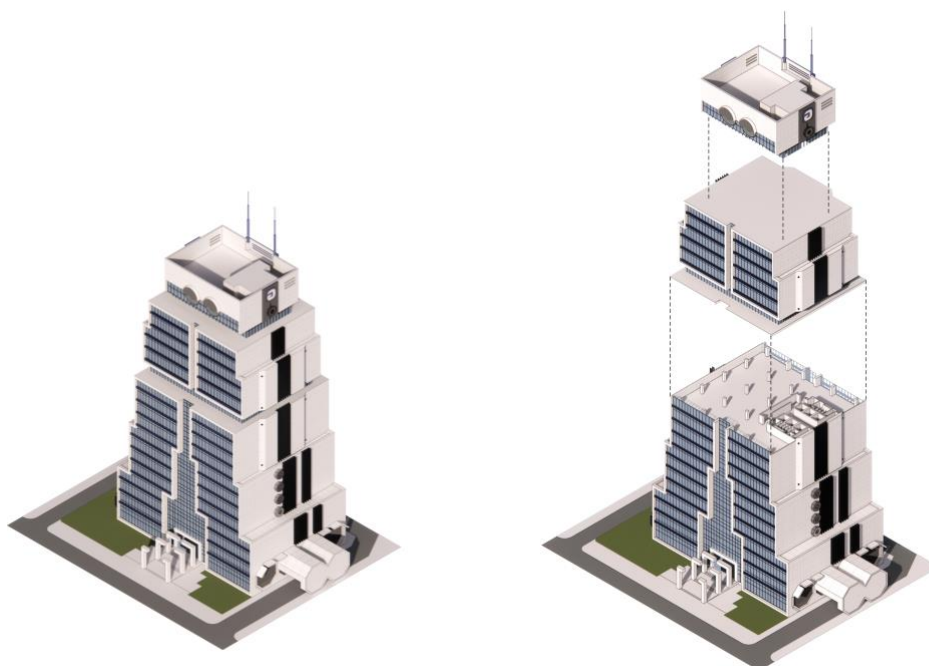
Technological Signification

The analogical use of robot as architecture reflects a Postmodern symbolic approach that references anthropomorphism. This reference is not a significant topic in Modernist thought, which studies humans in terms of proportion, use of space, or perception, without necessarily creating an image of architecture based on the human body. This concept is often found in the tripartite principles of traditional architecture. Therefore, the robot building is characterized by enclosing the interior space with a modern-looking shell, which helps to demonstrate friendliness instead of industrialized mechanical systems that do not need to be exposed. The lighting design of the robot's eye section to make it blink like a human eye helps to confirm the idea and to make the building appear more "alive". All of these design features express the attempt to incorporate new technology into everyday life in modern cities.

Functional Signification

In designing a robot building, the functional use plays a secondary role, but nonetheless is integrated in communication. This manifests the independence from the Modernist concept of connecting internal function to external form. In this case, the appearance of the robot wraps around various components. The architect uses a transparent projection to show the interior spaces of the outer shape. This serves to prove and confirm that the building is not just a symbol, but can also be used effectively. Some important building components have symbolic connections that link the external form to internal function, such as the head of the robot, which is a meeting room for the management team. This area is then conceived as the brain that drives the robot and the organization, with a view of the city through the eye-like windows. The two antennae at the back of the head serve as the tower's lightning rods. The middle floor connecting the body to the base or legs is the dining area, while the large wheel shaped structure on the side of the building is used for a car drop-off area (Wangrungarun, 1996, pp. 13–21).

When considered alongside the classification of Thai Postmodern architecture, the metaphorical choice in using the appearance of a humanoid machine is closely related to the category of Pluralism. In this regard, the robotic building is

thus an architecture that embeds both irony and a theoretical standpoint towards technology in stepping towards the 21st century by creating new meanings for machines through reducing their peculiar features and increasing familiarity.

4.   Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex, Panabhandhu Wittaya School (Public Building)

Owner: Panabhandhu Wittaya School

Building Type: Educational Building (Gymnasium)

Location: Lad Prao, Bangkok, Thailand

Architects: Ong-ard Architects

Year Opened: 1986 (Demolished in 2002)

The Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex of Panabhandhu School (Figure 11) is part of the Postmodern architectural projects by Ong-ard Satrabhandhu, awarded the Thai National Artist in Contemporary Architecture in 2009 and Driehaus Architecture Prize in 2020. It differs from the Ong-ard Architects' other works by employing a clustered building layout linked with existing buildings and increasing semi-public spaces within the school. Although the design is primarily based on Postmodern Historicism, there has been a blending of Pluralism and Contextualism at the overall level. These buildings were demolished when the school closed down.

Placemaking

This Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex was designed to fit into a relatively small area surrounded by old buildings. This is contrary to the typical approach of architects who often choose large open spaces for a project. Placing this multi-purpose building on a roughly 0.4 ha plot surrounded on all sides creates a new atmosphere for the site and promotes efficient, walkable connections to other buildings such as classroom buildings, canteen and dining halls, and library (subsequent project). Additionally, this design creates intimate open spaces between buildings, arranged in a pleasant sequence around the new complex, while the gymnasium area becomes a large internal shaded square. All of these features make the central area of the school a center of a small town.

Figure 11

(Left) Axonometric View and (Right) Exploded Axonometric View
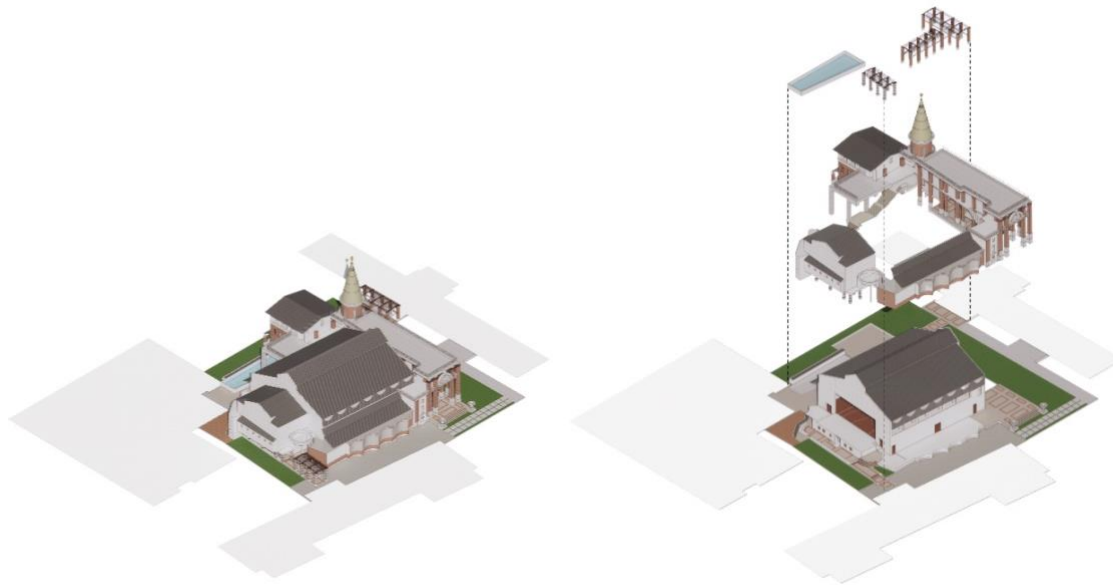
Historical Allusion

The new building group created at Panabhandhu School has a distinctive appearance that is influenced by references to Western architecture of the past. The complex's center, which is large in size, has a shape similar to the Basilica architecture, while the surrounding structures have been modified in terms of proportions and details from Classical architectural features. The highlight and highest point of this building group appears on the southeast side, where the building has curved brick arches for the entrance, and a row of brick columns leading to a cone-shaped spiral staircase. In this corner, there is also a three-story building that has a squared plan and is characterized by Classical proportion and elements. All of these designs serve as symbolic references to Western architecture but are not direct copies.

Double-Coding Composition

The architect designed this new complex to have a dialogue with or to complement the old buildings. The older structures consist of two modernist buildings, a nine-story classroom and a two-story cafeteria, as well as two typical local school buildings, which includes a long, pitched-roof architecture, a two-story wooden building, and a four-story concrete building. The architect placed medium-sized and small-shaped structures around the large central area of the

gymnasium-auditorium. They appear with orders and references from Western traditional architecture, while correlating with certain characteristics of the local school building such as the proportion and the roof form. Additionally, there is a blending of Modernist geometries, such as exposed concrete structures and translucent curved walls, both linkable to the two modern buildings. The differences between Modern and Postmodern design include the variety of materials used in the complex. Overall, it is a coexistence of old and new architectural features, which is a double-coding composition that results from designing sensitively with the surrounding context.

The design of the Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex in Panabhandhu Wittaya School is an exemplary creative fusion of three sub-styles, influenced by Historicism, Contextualism, and Pluralism. The project's emphasis on adapting historical references and creating architectural-urban connection strongly associates to propositions in the book "*Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*" (Venturi, 1966) and the book "*Collage City*" (Rowe & Koetter, 1978).

5. Sagnuan Pho Phra House

Owner: Charas and Sanguan Inpuntang

Building Type: Residence

Location: Pho Phra, Amphur Mueang, Phetchaburi, Thailand

Architects: Vira Inpuntang

Year Opened: 1986

Recognition: Gold Medal, ASA Architectural Design Award 1987

The Sagnuan Pho Phra House, designed by Vira Inpuntang, receipient of several design honors and national research awards, is a three-story residential building that includes a small commercial space (Figure 12). The architectural style is Postmodern Contextualism in line with traditional Thai houses in the surrounding context, but also with contemporary designs. The architect incorporates familiar visual elements from the local community and repurposes common materials in new ways. The ground floor houses shops and living space for the parents, while the second floor features an open courtyard surrounded by guest bedrooms and a relaxation pavilion. The third floor contains bedrooms and a lounge area (The Association of Siamese Architects, 1987a, p. 42). This overall design expresses the Contextualist approach to architecture, which respects the rural community and traditional way of life.

Contextual Linkage

The main idea of the Sagnuan Pho Phra House is to create an architectural design that is related to the community's existing architecture. This includes traditional houses, local vernacular houses, and temple architecture. The architect attempted to create a well-proportioned building that is not too large and does not stand out from the surrounding buildings. The high-pitched roof was chosen as a distinctive feature of Thai houses. Based on this approach, there are other design features such as the setting in the ground-floor's wall to allow the pillars and the building to appear floating, and the use of colors commonly found in the area to apply to the façade and the interior. All of these design considerations portray the use of local symbolic elements to communicate the local identity for the project.

Lifestyle Pattern as Organization

The building consists of private living areas, kitchen, and store areas. To promote and be consistent with traditional uses of spaces as well as to deal with functional variety, the architect employed a cluster layout that groups together large and small pavilions in the style of local architecture. The commercial functions are

Figure 12

(Left) Axonometric View and)Right) Exploded Axonometric View

located on the ground floor. A bakery and a kitchen are housed in a separate unit at the back, while the main house has a shop under a protruding awning located adjacent to the street. The upper level consists of a large house and a small house for various uses, such as bedrooms, shared bedrooms, and a resting pavilion. The open space in the middle contains a spacious staircase hall and a walkway balcony, as well as a courtyard connecting various elements together. On the upper floor, the design of the Buddha room extends outward allowing the statue to face east.

Eclectic Composition

In expressing the Thai characteristics to create conformity with the environment, the architect has reduced the traditional formality and designed a more playful arrangement. This results in a combination of old and new features in the overall appearance of the building which is loosely based on the tripartite concept. The white walls that enclose the balcony and exterior hall have been either pulled down, opened up, or extended outward. The diagonal lines of the roof are applied to the floor plan, walkway, and the angle of the staircase to add a dimension of spatial connectivity. The traditional building's projecting eaves display various characteristics, while different types of openings can also be seen. Additionally, the relationship between new and traditional materials such as steel and concrete, clay tiles, and wood enhances the integration of the overall design.

Although the Sagnuan Pho Phra House is a small residential building, it is an important example of the attempt to blend Modern architectural language and local identity. This is an approach of creating new vernacular architecture which promotes townscape harmony as well as eclectic imagery, correlated with the categories of Contextualism, Behavioralism and Pluralism. The creation of this new local architecture involved exploring spatial and formal organizations, and the process still continues to the present day.

6. Pridi Banomyong Library

Owner: Thammasat University

Building Type: Educational Building (Library)

Location: Prachan Road, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok, Thailand

Architects: SJA + 3D Co., Ltd.

Year Opened: 1997

In 1994, Thammasat University undertook a plan to construct a 4-story building and a 3-story underground building for the Pridi Banomyong Library, designed by Sumet Jumsai na Ayudhya, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the university (Figure 13). The building is located along the Chao Phraya River. It has a sunken garden in the center that extends down to the lowest floor to allow natural light into the building. The garden also creates a shaded area in which students can relax (The Association of Siamese Architects under the Royal Patronage, 1997). During the construction, parts of an ancient wall and many antiquities were found underground, which required adjustments to the architectural design to accommodate archaeological conservation.

Historical Allusion

The Pridi Banomyong Library building is an example of Postmodern Historicist and Pluralist architecture. It references the history of the early Rattanakosin period by using the architectural style that was unique during the reign of King Rama V, in particular, a hip roof, which was a popular roof style during that time, is used as a decorative element on the front side of the building facing the Chao Phraya River (The Association of Siamese Architects under the Royal Patronage, 1997). However, it does not appear as a complete roof form, but rather, creates a "decorative symbol" along a portion of the rectangular wall of the building. The building also features rounded arch windows and openings, which were a popular feature in important buildings during the King Rama V period and were influenced by the Western Neoclassical architectural style.

Figure 13

(Left) Axonometric View and (Right) Exploded Axonometric View

Eclectic Composition

As the architect felt that the view of the university from the Chao Phraya River was too diverse, he attempted to create a cohesive appearance of buildings along the river by designing an "architectural backdrop" in the form of a city wall along the river. The result is a large, symbolic wall similar to the ancient city walls in the early Rattanakosin era. The wall was intended to create a new perception from the Chao Phraya River, so that the overall group of buildings of the university, including both old and new buildings, appear more cohesive and fit with the atmosphere of Bangkok's historical center (The Association of Siamese Architects under the Royal Patronage, 1997, pp. 74–86).

Historic Preservation

The ground and underground levels of the Pridi Banomyong Library feature a representation of "history" in terms of conservation and symbolism by reconstructing the ancient city walls and palace walls. The pattern of terrazzo on the ground floor is shaped as the old wall's trace, while preserved old bricks from the ancient walls

were inlaid on the first basement floor building to imbue the Pridi Banomyong Library building with a sense of history in the form of archaeological signs. This differs from the conservation approach practiced by government agencies in Thailand, which typically involves preserving the whole historical area by surrounding it with fences. To conserve and present history through symbolism in this way allows the overall use of the space to accommodate university activities, which is closer to the original purpose, and serves as an example of promoting the "Living Museum" concept, incorporating historical storytelling with modern ways of life.

DISCUSSION

Based on the six case studies examined above, it can be concluded that there are relationships to the frameworks of four Postmodern architectural styles in Thailand (Horayangkura et al., 1993). Eight key concepts in design are summarized in Table 1 and elucidated in further detail through the following discussion.

Table 1

Thai Postmodern Architectural Characteristics Identified Through the Six Case Studies

Building name	Historicism		Contextualism		Pluralism		Behavioralism	
	Historic preservation	Historical allusion	Contextual linkage	Placemaking	Double-coding composition	Eclectic composition	Specific signification	Lifestyle pattern as organization
Amarin Plaza		●			●		● (Economic and Social)	
Plan House			O	●		●		●
Bank of Asia Head Office							● (Technological and Functional)	
Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex, Panabhandhu Wittaya School		●	O	●	●			
Sanguan Pho Phra House		O	●			●		●
Pridi Banomyong Library	●	●	O			●	● (Symbolic)	

Note.　　● Key Concept　　　O Associated Concept

Historicism

Historic Preservation: The emphasis on the importance of the history of a place that has been conserved in its original form or adapted for new uses, including the restoration of traces or components from the past, and the creation of new ones based on evidence. An example of this concept is the Pridi Banomyong Library.

Historical Allusion: The design that references architectural characteristics directly or modified from historical context appears in the use of basic grammar, proportion control, composition arrangement, or material selection. Examples of this concept include Amarin Plaza, Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex, and Pridi Banomyong Library. In the Sanguan Pho Phra House project, this approach functions as an associated concept.

Contextualism

Contextual Linkage: The solution that pays respect to the context, which is shown by creating a connecting layout structure, specifying building type and size that harmonize with the urban fabric, or creating a unified and coherent image. An example of this key concept can be seen in the Sanguan Pho Phra House, while at Plan House, the Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex, and the Pridi Banomyong Library, it becomes an associated concept.

Placemaking: The layout and design which aim to enhance the perception and atmosphere of the place, as well as to create a unique identity for the project, both in terms of architectural style and the creation of community spaces in various forms. Examples are Plan House and Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex.

Pluralism

Double-Coding Composition: The arrangement of architectural elements that communicate contrasting characteristics, such as traditional-modern, old-new, through the use of form, structure, and materials. Examples include Amarin Plaza and Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex.

Eclectic Composition: The integration of architectural components and orders that originate from various cultures, eras, or styles, to appear together and create new associations through various fusion methods. Examples consist of Plan House, Sanguan Pho Phra House, and Pridi Banomyong Library.

Specific Signification: The representation of symbolism through architecture that connects or reflects various specific issues such as economic and social aspects, technological aspects, functional aspects, and symbolic aspects, with both direct and ambiguous meanings. Examples include Amarin Plaza, Bank of Asia and Pridi Banomyong Library.

Behavioralism

Lifestyle Pattern as Organization: The transformation of traditional architectural organizations that reflect continuing local ways of life within new architectural designs and layouts that retain familiar and heritage characteristics. Examples of this are Plan House and Sanguan Pho Phra House.

Postmodern architecture in Thailand is often criticized for its use of superficial decoration and a lack of critical meaning, leading to the conclusion that it is a historical period of regression. However, studying outstanding examples of Postmodern design in terms of their specific key concepts can reveal progressive thoughts and solutions, as well as cross-category connections between the development of ideas and identities in the past. Furthermore, the analysis sheds light on the ways in which local contexts and problems are specifically addressed.

The broader range of key concepts found in different case studies also reveals both interrelation and limitation of the original sub-styles presented by Horayangkura in 1993. It can be argued that Postmodern architecture cannot be confined to represent one category. This finding thus opens up possibilities for critical analysis of fusions of design approaches and solutions of other architectural projects developed in Thailand.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Postmodern architecture in Thailand is a style that was considered "imported" from Western societies in the 1980s. The initial popular sub-style was Historicism followed by other sub-styles, namely Contextualism, Pluralism, and Behavioralism. This architectural experimentation was in line with the nation's economic prosperity and the growth of the middle class. This was felt especially in the real estate business in which it created a specific meaning for Thai society, referring to beauty, luxury, and high taste as with the case of Amarin Plaza and some Postmodern Historicist buildings. This differs from Postmodernism in Western societies, which mainly employs historical components or themes without alluding to conventional values or creating new meanings. However, the popularity of Western historical styles reached a saturation point as Thailand faced an economic crisis in 1997, resulting in significant changes in Thai society. Social, economic, and cultural characteristics evolved in the post-economic crisis period, which led to a decline in the popularity of the historical style and a promotion of Thai-ness in architectural design.

After studying six important examples of Postmodern architecture in Thailand, it was found that the characteristics of Postmodernism in Western society are also present in Thai Postmodern architecture. Nevertheless, each building employs and combines specific key concepts, including Historic Preservation, Historical Allusion, Contextual Linkage, Placemaking, Double-Coding Composition, Eclectic Composition, Specific Signification, and Lifestyle Pattern as Organization. These demonstrate an attempt to adapt to the context and way of life of Thai society, such as creating connections with the surrounding community

both physically and culturally, and incorporating traditional Thai symbols and motifs into the building design. It reflects a unique spectrum of "Thai Postmodern architecture."

The analysis of case studies in this article helps to confirm that Postmodernism gave rise to a significant period of architectural development in Thailand. Many architectural projects produced during the late 20th century reflect the social and economic upheavals of the time and various creative designs and underlying ideas remain important foundations that continue to develop to this day. However, as it was a relatively recent historical period, the significance of Postmodern architecture is often overlooked. Panabhandhu's Gymnasium and Auditorium Complex no longer exists while Plan House will soon be demolished. The appearance of the Bank of Asia Head Office is currently being entirely altered. Therefore, in terms of conservation, important Postmodern architecture should be registered and preserved, and development plans should be carried out with an understanding of their concrete and abstract values. In the academic field, critical comparative studies between Thai and international case studies should be promoted, and key concepts in design implementation should be further analyzed as a lesson for the development of contemporary architecture in Thailand.

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