

Creative Research Project

Architecture of Chiang Mai: Changes in Natural Environment by Human Invasion

Assistant Professor Dr. Atsada Porananon

Photographic Art Unit, Art Media and Media Design Department,

Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University

Abstract

This research report entitled 'Architecture of Chiang Mai: Changes in Natural Environment by Human Invasion' is made as the supplementary document for the creative project on cultural landscapes of Chiang Mai Province and other adjacent provinces. The objectives of this research report are to describe the thinking method, creation process and presentation of works, which will benefit anyone interested in studying on the rationale and background of the project and lead to of the concepts behind the created works; and to be used as reference to improve and change the concepts of the creation of works in other topics that other researchers are interested in.

In the research on 'Architecture of Chiang Mai: Changes in Natural Environment by Human Invasion', it is apparent that there are changes to architectures of Chiang Mai. Many traditional architectures and constructions have been replaced by modern ones. In addition, some architectural styles from other areas have been mismatched with the local styles in Chiang Mai and nearby areas. All the aforementioned problems lead to the desire to create photographic works of cultural landscapes that reflect the changes to environment in Chiang Mai and nearby areas.

Results from the Analysis on Concepts

The photographic works of cultural landscapes in this project reflect the phenomena of changes to environment, society and culture, which are caused from human activities and uncontrolled development, which are factors that affect the landscapes and architectural styles of Chiang Mai nowadays.

The title of this creative research project manifests the architecture in Chiang Mai. Concerning this matter, I, the researcher, deem that the architecture or landscapes of Chiang Mai has been greatly changed from the past. Even though the government and some agents from the private sector are trying to conserve traditional styles to the fullest extent, they cannot resist the flow of development that overwhelms Chiang Mai. Therefore, the idea of this project is to take photographs of contemporary landscapes and architectural styles of Chiang Mai by not taking photographs of temples or Thai style building with northern style gables that most photographers and audiences imagine when they mention architectural styles of Chiang Mai. However, looking around, one can see that such traditional architectural styles of Chiang Mai have been replaced with contemporary architectural styles such as commercial buildings and skyscrapers. However, most people try to overlook these contemporary styles and attempt to present images of local architecture that is gradually gone from Chiang Mai.

The presentations of works that overlook the facts, avoid conflicts and focus only on positive things are nostalgia. If we observe contest for photographs of landscapes or architecture, we can frequently see such attempts. On the contrary, this project aims at presenting issues or problems in the straightforward and honest manner without the attempt to criticize or make such issues exaggeratedly hideous. The main goal is to reflect the problems in the moderate fashion, which is thought to be a way to manifest the facts through photographs that are interesting.

Results from the Analysis on the Creation of Works

The process to create the works in this project results from the analysis on the concepts because photographs are created in accordance with the predetermined concepts for selecting the places to be taken photographs. Selecting the places, I make a list of places, constructions or landscapes that I desire to take photographs. Afterwards, I take photographs of paces or constructions by following the order in the list. Before making the list, I have carried out the initiative survey before sketching the drafts and arranging the photographs in the actual order as a photo essay.

In addition, as for the process of the creation of works in this project, I have changed the work scheme from the works in the former project. The major change is the photographic tool, which directly affects the work scheme. This change leads to the attainment of works that look different from the works from the previous project. The large format camera used in this project can adjust the visual dimension of the photographs taken. A camera of this type can adjust the horizontal and vertical grids which enable all the lines in the photographs look like the actual dimension without being distorted like the photographs taken with a small format or medium format camera. This capability makes the achieved photographs stable' and 'neutral' as I have planned for.

Results from the Selection and Presentation of Photographs

With the large format camera used for creating the works in this project, the encountered limitations are the heavy weight and the big size of the camera, which delay the work process. In addition, films used with cameras of this type are expensive and scarce in the market. Therefore, I have to consider well before taking a photograph. Sometimes, I feel reluctant to take photographs because I am not certain whether the photograph I am going to take is the one I really want or not. On the contrary, a medium or small format camera, either film or digital system, uses cheaper films that can be easily found in camera shops in general, which enables the photographers to take photographs without any hesitation, which increases the opportunities for taking photographs.

However, if we look at things on the contrary, we can see that the aforementioned limitations can also benefit the work because they force me to consider well before taking a photograph. Consequently, the work is far more thorough than the work that uses a digital or medium format camera. This advantage is clearly manifested in the step of photography selection because the limitations have led to the screening of the photographs to a certain extent. Consequently, the actual photograph selection is easier and less time-consuming, compared with the selection of photographs taken with a small format camera, which are in a greater number.

Examples of Works