

## Current State of Modern Asian Architecture Discourse and Networking

Out of a deep concern over the fact that students of Architecture in Asia are still heavily dependent to non-Asian textbooks written by non-Asian scholars looking from non-Asian perspectives, also on the lack of knowledge, lack of appreciation, and the denial of the colonial heritage in Asia, in addition to the need of a cooperative body linking concerned parties in various Asian countries on the issue of modernity and modernism in Architecture, a diverse group of scholars and architects gathered in Guangzhou (China) in 2000. As a result, a loose network of people with similar concerns and dreams came into being. This loosely-knitted organism was named “mAAN”. “modern Asian Architecture Network” with small “m”—because of their recognition of conflicting perspectives on the issue of modernity and modernism in Asia, and our willingness to keep the discourse open.

The organization was set up with the spirit of equality, friendship, freedom, and openness—modeled after a Chinese dining table or an Asian food court, where people with similar intentions come together to exchange ideas and to enjoy a wide range of offers and possibilities, free to come and go. This open model is the best way to ensure the sustainability and versatility of mAAN operation in the complex and diverse Asian context.

In the first mAAN international conference in Macau in 2001, a Declaration was proclaimed to set up the direction of mAAN discourse and mission into the future.

### **mAAN Macau Declaration (July 26, 2001)**

Today, in Macau at the heart of the Mediterranean of Asia, we affirm Asia as a dynamic source of our identities and recognize the numerous experiences that we share with the rest of the world. Industrialization, urbanization, westernization, colonization, decolonization and nation-building—these phenomena have variously defined Asian

modernism. 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. This shared experience of the world unites us as Asians. The history of dealing with the West, with our neighbors and with ourselves, is manifested in the myriad forms of our architecture. The history of modern architecture in Asia is the history of how Asians have become modern.

Modern architecture in Asia testifies to the creativity of our past generations and is the vital foundation of our future. Conserving these irreplaceable modern buildings and landscapes will ensure that they continue to have a meaningful presence in our everyday lives. mAAN will document and evaluate the innovative ideas, techniques and forms of modern architecture in Asia. We will select the cases suitable for conservation according to guidelines and standards that will be sensitive to the constraints and potentials of each locality and culture.

mAAN will maintain a pro-active presence in the public sphere. We wish to be in tune with and to inform public opinion, by reaching out to local policy-makers, NGOs and international agencies. We will address the urgent need to sensitize architectural students and professionals to conservation issues, by involving them in our efforts. mAAN is committed to preserving the richness and complexity of modern Asian architecture, and to thus contributing to the diversity of global culture.

The second mAAN conference was organized in Singapore in 2002, followed by the third mAAN conference in Surabaya (Indonesia) in 2003, not long after a strategic meeting of mAAN, UNESCO,

and DoCoMoMo in Chandigarh in the same year. After Surabaya, mAAN organized a special seminar in Tokyo for consolidation, called “mAAN 3.5,” before launching various initiatives and organizing the fourth mAAN conference in Shanghai (2004), then the fifth mAAN conference in Istanbul (2005). In Istanbul, after five years of journey across the extremities of Asia, mAAN announced the Istanbul Declaration.

### **mAAN ISTANBUL DECLARATION (June 30, 2005)**

Today, in Istanbul, at the western end of the ancient silk route, we look east once again and see a vast continent with a wealth of architectures and a wondrous mélange of cultures and lifestyles, where the ancient and the modern, the Asian and the non-Asian, have mingled and merged for centuries.

At the end of our fifth international conference, we affirm and expand the spirit of the Macau Declaration 2001. mAAN is committed to the evaluation, preservation and revitalization of modern architecture in Asia. For the last five years we have explored the extremities of our continent and documented myriad varieties of modernity and architecture. Faced with a vast, living, archive of Asia’s modern architecture, which in many cases represents the sole connection with our past, we recognize the need for rigorous research, careful analysis and resolute action to protect our heritage and to replace it at the centre of our daily life.

mAAN has maintained a public presence—with newsletters, exhibitions, workshops and conferences—while occasionally withdrawing into spaces of reflection, to write books, to make films, and to design interventions. With the emerging technologies brought into the

service of humanity, the network has dematerialized, thus distributing power to regional and local initiatives. Our communications are speeding up, boundaries are dissolving, and we are embracing cooperation with other organizations worldwide that are interested and invested in modern architecture in Asia.

Memory is a prerequisite for all thinking. Knowing our pasts gives us confidence and momentum, and the stability to engage with the challenges of the future. Revitalization of the modern built environment demands the resurrection of lost crafts and techniques and the preservation of an irrecoverable native knowledge that passes away with every generation. The fulfillment of mAAN's objectives presents the real possibility that modern architecture can be the genesis of a modern lifestyle and ethos for the people of Asia. Through our revitalization efforts, we can enhance the wealth of our societies.

We are creating a decentralized and distributed repository of local knowledge. Sharing this instantly and globally has become vital to our future and direction. We are advocating changes in policy and revisions in process in order to make modern architecture a concern, an issue and a debate for every individual, every community and every government. We are nurturing new generations of architects, planners and administrators and cultivating new and sustainable approaches to heritage management. We are empowering our students today so they may become leaders tomorrow. Committed engagement with the fertile field of modern Asian architecture addresses the vital needs of shelter, identity and beauty for the growing populations of Asia. In an urban century, contemplating a metropolitan future, we promote and practice the revitalization of

aging heritages through the infusion of creative capital.

mAAN will bridge the divide between research and practice by creating partnerships with local communities, academics, design professionals, administrators and developers. We dedicate ourselves to improving the lives of millions of Asians who have faith in modernity, by restoring the vital presence of modern architecture. mAAN pledges that modern architectural heritage will become the manifest wealth of our people.

The sixth mAAN conference was organized in Tokyo (2006), and the seventh in New Delhi (2009). In the most recent conference in New Delhi, the discussions were focused on Asian cities as legacies of modernity by specifically looking into economy, polity, regulation, knowledge, and education. It has been decided that mAAN will organize two types of conference: the bi-annual international conference, and the bi-annual youth conference, organized alternately in even and odd years. In 2010, the eighth mAAN International Youth Conference: "worKonference@SG2010: Asia Diversified | Modernity Modified | Possibilities Multiplied," will be organized in Singapore in partnership with a youth organization "re:ACT" (really Architecture). In 2011, the ninth mAAN international conference will be organized in Seoul, Korea, and will be focused on issues related to Industrial Heritages in Asia, in partnership with Seoul University and TICCIH.

It is almost one decade since the mAAN movement began, but several crucial issues on the discourse of Asian modernity are still waiting for our attention. Some of them are:

1. Challenges on the relevance and on preserving the post-war and national heritages in Asian countries through revitalization of the modern built environment, resurrection of lost crafts and techniques, and the preservation of an

irrecoverable native knowledge that passes away with every generation.

2. The opportunities arising from the economic crisis, climate change, and paradigm shifts in relation to appropriation and revaluation of our urban and architectural heritages in Asia and its application in heritage planning, design, and management.
3. The possibilities of furthering the discourse and interventions through education and youth empowerment, to nurture new generations of architects, planners, and administrators, and to cultivate new and sustainable approaches to heritage management.
4. The imperative to bridge the divide between research and practice and dedicating ourselves to improve the lives of millions of Asians who have faith in modernity, by restoring the vital presence of our modern Asian architecture.
5. The necessities to expand the network of cooperation, partnership, and collaboration with international, regional, and local heritage organizations, especially with UNESCO, DoCoMoMo International, ICOMOS Scientific Committee, Asian Academy for Heritage Management, TICCIH, universities, etc.

### **mAAN's Journey 2000–2009 (and Beyond) mAAN International Conferences**

- 2000, Guangzhou (China), China: Preparation meeting.
- 2001, Macau (China SAR): 1st Founding Conference: "mAAN Macau Declaration"; Partners: Cultural Institute of the Macau SAR Government.
- 2002, Singapore (Singapore): 2nd International Conference: "Towards Modern Asian Architecture"; Partner: Centre for Advanced Studies in Architecture—National University of Singapore.

- 2003, Surabaya (Indonesia): 3rd International Conference: “Documenting Built Heritage—Revitalization of Modern Architecture in Asia”; Partner: Department of Architecture—Petra Christian University.
- 2004, Tokyo (Japan): 3.5th International seminar: “Towards the Revitalization of Urban Heritage in Asia”; Partners: Fujimori Laboratory—University of Tokyo and Kunihiro Laboratory—Kokushikan University.
- 2004, Shanghai (China): 4th International Conference: “Safeguarding and Revitalizing Local Heritage”; Partners: College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University, and Shanghai Urban Planning Administration Bureau.
- 2005, Istanbul (Turkey): 5th International Conference: “Re-Thinking and Re-Constructing Modern Asian Architecture”; Partners: Turkey Chamber of Architects—Istanbul Metropolitan Branch and Istanbul Technical University—Faculty of Architecture.
- 2006, Tokyo (Japan): 6th International Conference: “Our Modern—Re-Appropriating Asia’s Urban Heritage”; Partner: The University of Tokyo, Japan.
- 2009, New Delhi (India): 7th International Conference: “Asian Cities—Legacies of Modernity”; Partners: The Vastu-Silpa Foundation (Ahmedabad, India) and the Department of Architecture and Architectural Conservation, School of Planning and Architecture (New Delhi, India).
- 2010, Singapore (Singapore): 8th mAAN International Event: “worKonference@SG2010: Asia Diversified | Modernity Modified | Possibilities Multiplied”; Partners: re:ACT.
- 2011, Seoul (Korea): 9th International Conference, focused on issues related to Industrial Heritages in Asia; Partner: Seoul University & TICCIH (proposed).

#### **mAAN Comprehensive Inventory Workshops in Southeast Asia**

- 2002, Medan (Indonesia): Understanding Heritage; Partner: Badan Warisan Sumatra (Sumatra Heritage Trust).
- 2004, Padang (Indonesia): Understanding Heritage; Partner: Bung Hatta University.
- 2005, Melaka (Malaysia): Understanding Heritage; Partners: Malacca Heritage Resources Society, PERZIM (Melacca Museum Corporation), Majelis Bandaraya Melaka Bersejarah (Melacca Municipal Government), and University of Malaya.
- 2005, Jakarta (Indonesia): Understanding Heritage, phase 1; Partner: Trisakti University.
- 2006, Jakarta (Indonesia): Understanding Heritage, phase 2; Partner: Tarumanagara University.
- 2006, Palembang (Indonesia): Understanding Heritage; Partner: STT Musi.
- 2006, Bogor (Indonesia): Understanding Heritage; Partner: Bogor100.

#### **mAAN Comprehensive Inventory Workshops in East and Central Asia**

- Ulan Baator (Mongolia).
- Kazakhstan.

#### **mAAN Design and Revitalization Workshops**

- 2004, Shanghai (China): 1st Great Shanghai Factory Revitalization Workshop; Partners: Architect Deng Kunyan Associates and Tongji University.
- 2007, Bogor (Indonesia): Rumah Silaban workshop and book publication, by mAAN-Indonesia.
- 2009, Padang (Indonesia): International Design Workshop: The Great Padang Cement Factory Revitalization, by mAAN-Indonesia.

- 2010, Bogor (Indonesia): Bogor Botanical Garden Revitalization Workshop by mAAN-Indonesia, Bogor Botanical Garden, and Bogor100.

#### **Special Meetings**

- 2003, Chandigarh (India): “UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2nd Regional Meeting on Modern Heritage: Asia”; Partners: UNESCO WHC, Chandigarh Administration, DoCoMoMo International, and mAAN.

#### **mAAN International Partnerships**

- UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Paris).
- Asian Academy for Heritage Management (Bangkok).
- DoCoMoMo International (Paris).
- ICOMOS 20th Century Heritage Committee.
- UIA (Union of International Architects).
- TICCIH (The International Commission for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage).

#### **mAAN Points of Contact**

- Main website: <http://www.m-aan.org>.
- Mailing lists.
  - For core members: [core@m-aan.org](mailto:core@m-aan.org) (close list).
  - For general information: [mAAN\\_hall@yahoogroups.com](mailto:mAAN_hall@yahoogroups.com) (open list).
  - For special discussion: [mAAN\\_corner@yahoogroups.com](mailto:mAAN_corner@yahoogroups.com) (special list).
- General inquiries: [server@m-aan.org](mailto:server@m-aan.org).
- Social networks.
  - mAAN @ Facebook (group).
  - mAAN @ LinkedIn.
  - Blogs and Facebook Groups related to various mAAN projects and initiatives.
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