

Reshaping the Art Ecosystem: A Case Study on Art Space Emergence in Bangkok

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Abstract

This academic article has reflected the observation on the alluring topic of the Art Ecosystem in Thai Contemporary Art scene since the COVID-19 outbreak. The topic was publicly stated in Bangkok Art Biennale 2020 (BAB 2020) Symposium resulting in awakening many nonprofit and profit sectors to take responsibility without thoroughly identifying what is the art ecosystem, who is in and how it affects the individuals. Moreover, there is the drastic emergence of art spaces and art activities in Thailand which many people assume as the growth in the art market. However, this could also be considered as fluctuations of growth if the art activities are initiated from commercial spaces rather than nonprofit spaces. Therefore, this article aims to study on the background of the art ecosystem and to study on how to sustain at the equilibrium which will enhance the healthy condition of the art ecosystem especially in Bangkok. Through texts review, interview and observation, this paper advocates for pioneering model of 'SMSs' or Small and Medium Art Spaces for all individuals in the art ecosystem.

Keywords: Art Ecosystem; Ecology of Culture; Nonprofit Art Institution; Roles of Art Museum; Visual Arts Infrastructure

Introduction

Soon after WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern of COVID-19 in January 2020, the lockdown drastically impacted on all activities onsite including art and culture spaces. Many art spaces quickly implemented virtual experiences in terms of exhibitions, lectures, talks etc. through online platform in order to retain their virtual presence. However, the online platform was massively developed not only for public interest but also for commercial purpose in order that artists, galleries and other art professions can survive. Apart from adapting onsite to online platform, there were art industry advocates namely created a public Facebook page called "Thailand's Art Ecosystem" in April, 2020 for people in the art-related professions to share their knowledge and experiences in Thailand's art field and to better understand different roles within the ecosystem. The page also conducted Thailand's Art Ecosystem survey which published online on January 29, 2021 with the conclusion that the online platforms and marketplaces could facilitate the emerging artists but might disrupt the role of middlemen, the government support could give career opportunities to artists, and the art exhibitions or events could help more accessible to the general public in order to expand the consumption of art and grow the industry. Furthermore, followed by late 2020, when lockdown began to release, Bangkok Art Biennale 2020 bravely opened its biannual events in various venues under the theme "Escape Route" together with series of Symposium which was in Symposium II, session 2 "How can Thai Art Ecosystem Survive: Survey from the Field" that was also the alarm for this research. Finally, with the series of

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Special Seminar MFA Silpakorn University on 27 January, 3 February, 24 February and 3 March 2022, it also shaped questions for this study.

All happenings stated above reflect the impact of COVID-19 and the recurrence of the term 'ecosystem' in Thailand. The popularity of this term also makes the term ubiquitous that all art-related sectors from nonprofit to profit institutions privilege to be their duties and responsibilities to fulfill the art ecosystem without clear explanation of its contextual structures and elements and more importantly its equilibrium; a healthy art community. Those phenomena after the pandemic mainly initiated from the center, Bangkok, which can be contextualized that all art and culture events are centralized structured. Moreover, if we go through the topics and speakers of those symposium and seminars, those events indirectly imply the majority of stakeholders in the art ecosystem in Thailand such as artists, curators, collectors, dealers, gallerists, art handlers, art-related producers etc. The spotlight falls on art professions or art producers. Who else is missing in the art ecosystem? It seems like the art ecosystem nowadays focuses more on art industry economy and on how art professions will survive. Bailey (2016) shared her concern on this terminology that people working in art policy and strategy in Australia have been using 'ecology' rather than 'economy'. To Bailey, the ecology concept in art happens in relationships and conversations where people commune with each other inside and outside their heads, heart and bodies. Her point of view was generated from Markusen research. Markusen (2011: 2) stated that California's Art and Cultural Ecology encompasses complex ties among people, organizations, and places. The ecological approach emphasizes the prominence and contributions of these art ecology components. As a result, in terms of the subsystem of people, Bailey points out a crucial view that audience are not just 'consumers' but part of the ecosystem. Therefore, the people inferred from Markusen and Bailey, art producers and art consumers, will be acknowledged for this study. However, for organizations and places, will also be intensively explored in the art ecosystem.

To observe the art venues (places) and their characteristics (organizations) within the last two decades, the emergence of art spaces such as galleries, alternative art spaces, auction houses, art fairs etc., indicate the growth in the art market place. However, since the pandemic, there has been an irregular increase of art projects, art events, and art spaces around Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, where the art scene is vibrant and dynamic. Despite the rises, it can be considered as fluctuations in its growing conditions, particularly in comparison with the physical conditions of spaces and activities beyond the area of market place, for instance, in the nonprofit area like art museum, university art gallery, as well as alternative experimenting art space etc. The overwhelming expansion of art spaces and organizations in commercial wing will possibly create an imbalance condition in the ecosystem, as a result it effects the general and potential audience (as of art and culture value), who are consumers (as of economic value) of those art productions and who are essential elements to drive a healthy art ecosystem.

Suspecting recurring onsite and online art activities, symposiums related to the topic of the art ecosystem and the drastic emergence of commercial art spaces in Bangkok lead to the comprehensive study on the background of the art ecosystem, the values led relationships among artists, audience and art institutions and the relevant case studies with the objective to sustain the equilibrium in the art ecosystem in Thailand.

The Background of Art Ecosystem

Search from Britannica website, ‘ecology’, word invented by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, is the study of the relationships between organisms and physical surroundings. It involves interactions between individuals, between populations, and between organisms and their environment from ecological systems or ecosystems. Then, ‘ecosystem’ is the complex of living organisms, their physical environment, and all their interrelationships in a particular unit of space. The ecological system has been widely studied in relation to science especially biology. Until 1950s, Julian Steward coined the term ‘cultural ecology’. He stated that ‘Cultural ecology differs from human and social ecology in seeking to explain the origin of particular cultural features and patterns which characterize different areas rather than to derive general principles applicable to any cultural-environmental situation’. Thus, to Steward, the cultural ecology presents both a problem and a method. The problem is to ascertain whether the adjustments of human societies to their environments require particular modes of behavior or whether they permit latitude for a certain range of possible behavior pattern (Steward, 2006).

From the concept of ecology in science and culture above nurtures a view of interconnectedness in the art and cultural sphere. The interactions and the adjustments of organisms and the physical systems conform human’s attitudes and behavior patterns. From the researcher observation, many nonprofit and alternative experimenting venues are disappearing. They are replaced by the massive emergence of commercial visual art platforms both online and onsite. Moreover, the art and culture activities are mostly initiated by non-governmental sectors. These could be signs of unhealthy art ecosystem in Thailand and of course art appreciation behavior. Art and culture are meaningful reflecting one’s own trait, heritage, knowledge of shared beliefs and values. Therefore, art and culture should be assessed as ecology not as economy. And to create meaningful art and culture experiences to general public, non-commercial attitude should be recognized.

In 2011, Markusen researched on California’s art and cultural ecology focusing on the understudied nonprofit art and cultural sector and its intersections with people and place. The conclusion stated that (Markusen, 2011: 7) ‘nonprofit art organizations play a key role. They form a huge seedbed for new art and cultural forms and are also major caretakers for cultural heritage and fine art. They provide food for thought, underscore meanings and interpretations of past and present, and deliver delight and beauty. They are often the originators of ideas and forms that result in creative industry products and services that generate many more jobs and incomes than those generated directly by their operations.’ The research was conducted within American context where art and cultural ecology includes interdependencies among commercial, nonprofit, public and informal organizations. The nonprofit organizations in the US are acknowledged and supported by tax policies that affirm their contribution to the public good. However, considering nonprofit sectors in Thai context where tax policies related to art and culture are overlooked, Markusen’s research is a potential comparative study to find a proper methodology for philanthropy on art and culture in Thailand. Moreover, as California is the world’s richest art and cultural ecologies, it is a good idea to scope the exploration of the complex interdependencies of art and culture demand and supply in Bangkok, the center of art and culture offerings in Thailand.

Yan (2014) affirms the notion about different context conform different organization structure as mentioned above that nonprofit sectors in the US differ from ones in Thailand. The conceptual framework of his study comes from the understanding that the art ecosystem includes the individuals and public and private sector institutions that support the art, for-profit and nonprofit art and entertainment organizations that provide support and venues for art experiences, artists that create and interpret works of art, and the general public, which participates in, experiences, supports the art. As in any ecosystem, these different actors are connected to and influence one another, and their vitality impacts the system's overall health. The focused location of his study was in Song Zhuang art village in Beijing where he would like to show how the cooperation between government and non-government organization could promote the cultural industry. In this paragraph, apart from pointing out the differences in organization characteristics, it recalls that culture is always discussed as an industry.

The Ecology of Culture by John Holden (2015) was frequently cited when the issue related to the art ecosystem. Apart from proposing that culture should be assessed through ecological approach, he also noted on the importance of audience because he examined that there was overwhelmingly concerned on the supply-side of culture rather than demand-side. The worries fell on what artists produced and how they were funded without the concern on the important role of audiences, participants, and the public as consumers, and therefore as shapers, of the cultural ecology. In the report, Holden framed three spheres of culture which could be applied for the characteristics in art and cultural organizations. First, it is the publicly funded sector with its essential roles as guardians of assets and tradition, as providers of foundation knowledge which the rest of culture is built and as supporters of research and development for the whole culture ecology. Second, it is homemade culture with the fact that people do not get paid for their work such as amateur or volunteer. Third, it is commercial culture defined by the existence without the public support and the organization must make profit in order to survive. However, the interrelatedness of the three spheres is being recognized. As a result, the cautions for the nonprofit ideal would be cultural values-led rather than finance-led and public-interest rather than private-interest. According to Holden, ecological approach for art and culture involves making of meaning, expression of identity and construction of social significances, in a way it also intangibly generates monetary flow in the economic system. In terms of art and culture infrastructure, the public realm is a physical space (Holden: 2011, 23) where affordable expenses and small-scale size should be fundamentally considered for long-term management.

The ecosystem is interrelationships between organisms and their physical surroundings. To assess its health, it requires the observations on people, organizations and places. Furthermore, ecological approach is time-consumed process and privileges non-monetary values. Then, the nonprofit sector should be focused in the sphere of art and culture.

Art Institution: Its Interrelations for Contribution

Usually, museums are recognized as depositories of objects and collections. However, there is a shift to view that they are active public educational institutions where relationships and networks among people are located at the center of their mission and where visitors' voices are heard and reflected in their practices (Jung, 2011). Through museum practices, conventional and contemporary issues on art, culture, history, economics, politics etc. are recognized for audience to revise. Jung applied ecological approach to foster diverse perspectives from museum's stakeholders. She described art museum functions as an ecosystem where staff members, departments, collections, mission statements, visitors, and other cultural and educational institutions are linked together, influencing and being influenced by each other. In terms of titles who perform those jobs, there are wide range of roles implying duties and responsibilities such as director, curator, educator, museum registrar, conservator, exhibition designer etc. However, from the birth of museums until early twentieth century, museums were traditionally not 'managed' at all, but were 'administered' by curators or keepers (Moore: 2002, 1-14). The titles and job descriptions were gradually clearly appointed by 1960s when some museum services in Britain had begun to apply management thinking especially the local government-run museums to improve the organization and to survive amidst the rapid increase of museums. It seemed like museums were pushed into the marketplace and competed with each other for all kinds of visitor engagement and support. Moore stated that management is a set of ideas about how organizations and businesses can be most effectively run and there have been two main traditions in management thought; scientific management and the human relations approach. After the management thinking applied, museums in Britain were evaluated with both excellence and poor performance. That could be because scientific management was preferably implemented rather than developed with human resources management. Moore also described that 'museums rely heavily on knowledge and experiences of highly skilled staff; they seek to engage with and involve all sections of society; and they remain non-profit context, it the most fertile ground for management ideas that museums can use and develop.' To this extent, the management with human relations approach has come to the nonprofit institution. Furthermore, Moore introduced the McKinsey 7-S framework as a device to analyze the management of the organization. Seven interlinked elements are shared values, strategy, staff, skills, style, structure and systems. Moore stated that excellence management in museums is based on a delicate balance of all seven elements. For art institution, the first S should be intensely focused because the sense of purpose and the sense of direction need to clearly define in mission and vision statements in order that all personnel would keep in mind and constantly contribute those values through all museum activities.

In memorable of nonprofit art institutions

After reviewing the art ecosystem background and its elements including relevant activities, articles and events, it is apparent that the term ‘art ecosystem’ currently indicates economic values rather than substantial cultural values. How to balance the interconnectedness of individuals in the system? It is undeniable that economy helps driving the art ecosystem but the non-economic aspect should also be counted to sustain the whole system. This study places an emphasis on observing nonprofit art institutions particularly in Bangkok. To understand the current situation, the research will review on the rise and fall of some iconic art spaces including alternative ones and revise some case studies.

Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA), renowned as the first public art gallery in Thailand, was founded in 1974. It was initiated by Silpa Bhirasri or Corrado Feroci, the Father of Modern Art in Thailand. He passed away in 1962. Twelve years later, the construction of his initiation was built with half of the funding provided by the government and the other half supported by patrons and artists (Chaiyong: 2023). The government support was embedded in the physical appearance. During 14 years of service, the gallery mainly supported by Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art Foundation, artists, patrons including international cultural organizations and hosted fascinating, prevalent, diverse and creative art events such as visual art exhibitions, dances, performing art and music. However, without government’s vision on art and cultural support and fund, BIMA closed down in 1988. The disappearing of the first public art gallery could be an unforgettable missing element in the art ecosystem in Thailand. And BIMA is always the case to raise the issue about the public art space and the nonprofit art institution in this country. In 2002 after 14 years out of service, Ark Fongsmut the curator of Bangkok University Gallery at that time raised awareness on public art space in Thailand with the exhibition ‘PRESENT PERFECT’ during December 14, 2002 – January 25, 2003 at Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art. There were artists, art scholars and art and cultural advocates participated in the event. Through PERSENT PERFECT catalogue, there were articles written by academics, all of which reflected their intellect, philosophy, remembrance, hope and even criticism. For the exhibition, there was a site-specific work ‘Record of Journey’ by Ithipol Thangchalok remained the physical and spiritual prove of the event. Even twenty plus years later, Ithipol’s journey was still an authentic prove of the endless dialogue on public art space as there was an art and cultural event called Revitalizing Bangkok through Art and Architecture: A Case Study on BIMA’s Vision for the City’s Future during 28-30 March 2024. Since the beginning of this journey, BIMA is still structure of the ambition to have art infrastructure.



Picture 1 ‘Record of Journey’ by Ithipol in 2003 (Left)
and Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art in March 2024 (Right)
Source: (Left) Taken by the author, (Right) www.sarakadeelite.com

To contemporary art, the practice is experimental and multi-disciplinary. Without infrastructure in modern era, contemporary art in Thailand has been groomed and grown in alternative art spaces. On one hand, those alternative art spaces emerged from the art movement itself but on the other hand the emergence was driven by the lack of support from both government and private sector. Project 304, an independent nonprofit alternative art space, was initiated in 1996 and fully run by artists and curators in Bangkok. The space provided a platform for emerging local artists, as well as for well-established national and international ones (Oupkum: 2014). Because of financial constraint, the physical space of Project 304 closed down in 2002 but the spirit kept recurring. In Parallel, there were two more renowned alternative art spaces, About Studio and Café and Tadu Contemporary Art, which were run by foundation and patrons. To conclude, all three spaces were the struggle of art spaces and the vibe for contemporary art movement in Thailand during 1990s and early 2000s.

Talking about nonprofit, the study on university gallery is a potential case. Rojanatanti conducted the individual study ‘The Shape of Problems and Issues: Art Spaces in Educational Institutions in Bangkok’ for MA in Cultural Management in 2004. Her study emphasized on the nonprofit making art space in educational institutions in relation to Thai socio-cultural context with objectives to update the existence, to understand problems and to propose feasible solutions for those spaces and future art infrastructure. There were 10 art spaces in her accumulated data; Bangkok University Gallery, Jamjuree Art Gallery, Phra Phrombhichitr Architecture and Art Gallery, Poh Chang Gallery, Silpakorn University Art Centre (now called Art Centre Silpakorn University), Srinakharinwirot Art Exhibition Hall, The Art Gallery of the Faculty of Painting Sculpture and Graphic Art, The Gallery of Art and Design, The Suan Dusit Art Gallery and Vajiravudh College Gallery. There are three interesting findings after the review. Firstly, updated in 2024, some spaces are closed; Bangkok University Gallery (City Campus), Jamjuree Art Gallery, The Suan Dusit Art Gallery, Vajiravudh College Gallery and some are suspended its direction; Poh Chang Gallery and Srinakharinwirot Art Exhibition Hall.

The rest are still open and, in the precinct of Silpakorn University, where visual art in Thailand developed. Secondly, unlike The Art Gallery of the Faculty of Painting Sculpture and Graphic Art, The Gallery of Art and Design and Phra Phrombhichitr Architecture and Art Gallery, Art Centre Silpakorn University is the only art space in educational institution that has inhouse curator and proficient team to run exhibitions and programs. The others are available for proposals, faculty members and degree's shows. Thirdly, in terms of mode of governance, Bangkok University Gallery (City Campus) was categorized as nonprofit organization under private sector. Interestingly, by the time of its service, the gallery provided diversity in Bangkok art ecosystem with remarkable exhibitions from local and international artists, educational programs and activities including pioneered projects of Artist in Residency and BRANDNEW Art project which the latter supported and promoted emerging contemporary artists in Thailand (Fongsmut, 2022). Although the shared values of nonprofit art gallery were rooted in all the director, curator and staff at Bangkok University Gallery, this space was already only in our memory. To conclude from this case study, there are three notions related to Bangkok art ecosystem; the decreases of nonprofit art space especially in educational institutions, the need of insourcing professional staff for public programs and activities, and the disappearing of nonprofit-led private sector.

Accordingly, there is another case study related to university art museum from international context. Recently, Gellatly (2003) wrote an online article 'Why university art museums play a vital role' to raise awareness and opposition after the proposed closure of Griffith University Art Museum (GUAM). Like Rojanatanti, Gellatly elaborated that "university art museums do more than simply exhibit art in a university setting – they are "in and of" the university. As such, they can embrace experimentation and risk taking in ways not possible in our larger public art institutions and, in doing so, play a vial role in providing public access to and better understanding of the role of universities and academic research in our society... offer a real point of difference, creating and presenting exhibitions and programs in a space where research, scholarship, teaching and learning are first and foremost." She also argued the leadership of understanding the significance of the university art museum which, in terms of management, is relevant to mission and vision statement that must embed in the organization and in this case the nonprofit organization. Let's hope for the near future that the Art Centre of Silpakorn University and the Griffith University Art Museum will exist for the diversity in their particular art ecosystem.

Diagnose the state of Bangkok art ecosystem

For someone, COVID-19 provides economic challenges. Ajchariyasophon (Interview, 26 October 2022) mentioned that soon after the pandemic relief in early 2019, the art spaces in Bangkok are hunger to regain the in-person contact with much vitality and energy. They have been opening and operating in various business modules ranging from conventional commercial art spaces to multifunctional art spaces for instance exhibiting spaces with bar or café, collaborative art projects with big shopping malls or real estate companies. Moreover, some galleries were emerged from personal attitudes of the owners such as Warin Lab, a commercial gallery opened in 2021 for the purpose of environment issues in visual art run by Sukontip Nakasem, the owner of Lalanta Gallery which was opened in 2006. Furthermore, there are also additional platforms like local art fairs and auction houses that significantly drive the local art market. Ratthawongirakul (Interview, 30 November 2022) stated that from

superficial observation it seems the art market is growing. There are younger generation of buyers and collectors with the focus on contemporary art replacing the older generation of traditional or modern art. It seems like the producer and buyer are the only key factors to fulfill the whole art ecosystem. Even though, the emergence of commercial art spaces boosts art exhibitions, events and networks among dealers and buyers, it is not a vital part of the art ecosystem. It serves the monetary values for particular group of people rather than the cultural values which are non-monetary led for all individuals.

From the data accumulation of this survey conducted in cooperation with the team from Creative Art and Curatorial Studies, the King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, until February 2024 there are 63 art spaces in Bangkok, 12 spaces categorized themselves as nonprofit and 51 as commercial. It is interesting to discover that after the pandemic relief, there are 39 art spaces newly opened. This drastic number is related with what Ajcharyasophon stated above and is opposite to what that financial investors predict on the economic recession after the pandemic. According to Ajcharyasophon, the art market is constantly expanded considered from the summary report of local art fairs. He called this phenomenon 'hype' as he, artist, curator, gallerist and dealer himself, had never seen people queuing for exhibitions or buying artworks like this before. He admitted that he could not explain the situations, it was beyond his experience in the visual art sphere. From the collector's point of view, Kittiporn Jalichandra, the president of Thai Art Collector Association, it could be called 'passion investment'. He elaborated that previously people really collected the artworks in long term, do not sell and do not think of profit. Nowadays, new generation collector they look for profit and how much they gain from the collection. That is the reason to combine the words 'passion' and 'investment'. Furthermore, Michael Findlay (2016), the director of Acquavella Galleries New York, explained a situation which was correlated with 'passion investment' that Jalichandra mentioned in his lecture for the Fundación Arte y Mecenazgo that 'buying something with money you can afford because you think it would be fun or nice to have in your house is really what collecting is all about. And following the advice of another because they have discovered an artist that some other people are buying, who is currently hot, is going to disrupt the ecosystem because what you have now, in that market, is a big bubble'.

Findlay started to explain the art ecosystem using an artist as a main organism to have interconnected with others in the whole system such as art suppliers, studio landlord, supporter from local government, gallery owner, dealer, collector, art handler, art assistant, art institution etc. He explained that the vital role in the ecosystem of the government support in the US went through grant, working permit, materials or even tax policy. Eventually, even he comes from commercial side, he convinces that the community needs the existing public museums. Like Findlay, Ajcharyasophon and Nakasem agreed on the need of public art museum as accessible for all individuals. However, when we look through Bangkok art ecosystem, museums and art institutions especially the public oriented spaces are missing. They are the places where individuals especially children develop their learning skills from different directions, from different disciplines, apart from knowledge they gain from the traditional educational system. The main reason of its missing comes from the lack of government's understanding, support and long-term plan for art and culture policy. The policy would have never been thoroughly planed as Ajcharyasophon mentioned that Thai bureaucracy is too complicated to catch up with the art and culture disruption driven by social media.

Museum in Thailand was found and developed from the Western countries, especially from the United Kingdom. In terms of visual art, we have the National Gallery on Chao Fa Road under the Fine Art Department, Ministry of Culture and the National Art Gallery on Ratchadaphisek Road under the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture. It seems to be an argument with the paragraph above. But it is true that art museums and art institutions are missing because they fail to strengthen their role as an attractive, accessible and vibrant part of society (Henrichsen, 2014). The National Gallery was opened for public on May 5, 1978. However, the government agency in charge of this space is the Fine Art Department. As a result, with conservative management style together with inadequate and incompetent human resources, there are limitations on delivering mission and vision statements of public art museum in terms of attractive and initiative exhibitions and educational programs. For the National Art Gallery on Ratchadaphisek Road, the physical structure was completed many years ago and there were PR news on the inauguration for public since 2020 followed by some temporary projects exploiting the space. But currently, the access is still suspended for general public and the building is empty without competent software to run this huge space. The assumption here is that the art infrastructure should be fully supported by government budget not only for the structure of the space but also for the software such as qualified human resource, public access for contemporary experiences and exhibitions, extensive range of education and public programs etc.

The closings of Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art, Project 304, About Studio and Café, Tadu Contemporary Art together with 'Present Perfect' the awakening exhibition calling for government support for art space were probably factors for the establishment of Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC) in 2008. This institution was the cooperation and support from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the People's Network for the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre which later became a foundation. Presently, from the online article 'The Life of Bangkok Art and Culture Centre', it is undeniable the same problems and limitations recur such as the lack of support from the state, budget constraint, incompetent human resources in terms of quantity and quality etc. With the disappearing of art institutions in the university and the excessive emergence of commercial art spaces, it reflects the abnormal state in the art ecosystem in terms of interconnectedness of the people, organizations and places. Therefore, after all symptoms have been analyzed, the research will propose how to regain the healthy art ecosystem.

Towards the equilibrium of BKK art ecosystem

In Thailand, art ecosystem is frequently considered as economic values rather than cultural values. Economics is the condition of material prosperity focusing on the production, the consumption and the distribution of goods and services. For art and cultural prosperity, it is intangible, time-consumed process and non-monetary return. Therefore, the art ecosystem resilience should be evaluated through cultural value. Unlike many discussions of art ecosystem, this study places an emphasis on nonprofit institutions for the benefit of public or all individuals, not specific group of people. Bangkok is vast in terms of populations with layers of history and cultures. The growth in business-oriented art spaces, situated in hi-end mall or property, overlooks the diversity of other types of art spaces. It reflects some particular groups who consume the art; middle-class, high-class and new rich people. It also echoes the art

appreciation process, the superficial aesthetics, because those spaces display the artworks in short time without thoroughly concern on dialogue for the audience.

From data analysis, the interviewees recommend on the policy and support from the government. Among the proposals, tax deduction and tax exempt are included which are relevant to an approach to sustain the art ecosystem described by Findlay (2016). He elaborated that the government support by tax benefit will encourage people to give their collection or donate money to museums and consequently museums will have collection or budget to accomplish the roles of museums for public interest. However, to build the art infrastructure, it requires feasibility study, in-dept interview with academics, scholars and stakeholders and most importantly competent staff prior having the building itself. Henrichsen (2014) introduced the New Munch Museum at Oslo's waterfront as part of the city development plan initiated by Oslo Municipality in 2008. The New Munch Museum was opened in 2021 but the vision and mission statement, the architecture, the collection, the resources, the public program, the relation with cultural institutions surrounded etc. were assessed more than ten years earlier.

The lesson learned from government subsidized art institutions Bangkok Art and Culture Centre and the National Art Gallery on Ratchadaphisek Road reflects the founding problem in terms of the size of the space which leads to the impact on budget allocation and the management efficiency. To sustain the healthy art ecosystem while those limitations and difficulties exist, this study recommends an alternative concept of art space in consistent with the cultural landscape in Bangkok. While commercial art spaces are rapidly increasing, the researcher proposes nonprofit "**Small and Medium Art Spaces (SMSs)**" probably initiated from either public and private sector to provide diversity in art ecosystem. SMSs is the concept of readiness and feasibility in the way that is related to the size, scale and capability of the space while graving for the government run art institution. SMSs should be grounded in the community as the center of cultivating art and culture experiences for all individuals to gain knowledge and understanding in contemporary issues. It is unnecessary to focus on a large-scale space because there are limitations in almost every aspect under the bureaucratic management system. Moreover, SMSs rely not only on the monetary support from the government but also non-monetary support such as policy or strategic plan to facilitate public or private sector to initiate nonprofit art spaces.

SMSs provides diversity in the art ecosystem and accessibility for public. Once it is established in the community, it will engage with all individuals in its surrounding as art and cultural participants and consumers, the interconnectedness between people, organizations and places will be revealed and the art and cultural values will be cultivated and consumed which in a way generate economic values. While waiting for the future and proper art infrastructure, SMSs concept provides solutions to 1) increase the nonprofit organization either run by government or private sector 2) initiate affordable and adaptable size of art space with variety of activities and programs 3) be agile in terms of management and administration on activities and budget allocation 4) contribute to community relationships. However, the government sector still should put effort on the long-term plan starting with feasibility study to originate and fulfill the healthy art ecosystem.

To summarize, the study has achieved to identify the art ecosystem as the equilibrium of the interconnectedness of all individuals especially both producer and consumer in the art and cultural sphere. The healthiness of the art ecosystem sphere should be considered through cultural ecology approaches or non-monetary values. However, the emergence of the commercial art spaces and the disappearing of the nonprofit ones imply the unhealthiness. With difficulties and limitations of public art space infrastructure in Thai context reviewed from case studies, 'SMSs' or Small and Medium Art Spaces will be an approach to develop a healthy art ecosystem in Thailand and will welcome everyone in the community to explore art in everyday life.

Conclusion

This article presents a comprehensive study on the art ecosystem through ecological approach and proposes the idea to sustain a healthy art ecosystem. The paper observes the recurring events about the art ecosystem and the unusual emergence of the art space in Bangkok. All of which lead to the studies on the background of the art ecosystem, cultural ecology and related case studies. After data collection and analysis, the paper proposes the pioneering model of 'SMSs' or Small and Medium Art Spaces to enhance the healthy condition of the art ecosystem. Art and cultural prosperity are intangible and time-consumed process with non-monetary return. This concept is applicable to the Law of Slowness stated by Samudavanija (2014) when he discussed on the balance in the educational, social and democratic reform process. He stated that 'The faster speed we look for, the slower speed we get.' Art and culture represent the cultivation of attitude, belief, behavior, ethic, manner and moral. This learning process takes time. As a result, if we keep this Law of Slowness in mind, we would understand why we should consider the art ecosystem as cultural values rather than economic values.

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