

Make (it) Up

The "SHOPHOUSE" typology represents a modern architectural style and community development tool. However, as urban dynamics shift, this typology has often contributed to the loss of community spirit by failing to foster a unique identity and adapt to the changing environment. This project aims to address this issue by creating adaptable tools for existing shophouse facades. These tools, including architectural "cosmetics" such as facade enhancements, will be accessible through global e-commerce platforms. By doing so, the shophouses will become more adaptable to their surroundings and gain distinct character, helping to reinvigorate community identity.

Lopburi is a province that was once heavily influenced by modern architecture, particularly around the Srakeaw roundabout, which was modeled after Parisian urban planning under the influence of P. Marshal. This area showcased a thriving modern architectural landscape, with the Lopburi Theater quarter standing out as a vibrant hub. Locals would gather there for leisure activities, contributing to a bustling shophouse community filled with restaurants, shops, and markets that boosted the local economy. However, as time passed, urban dynamics changed, and the once lively theater quarter and surrounding shophouses began to deteriorate. Today, the Lopburi Theater quarter is quiet and lifeless, representing the loss of the area's unique identity.

The area once thrived, but as noted in "Learning from Las Vegas," many urban designs suffer from a preoccupation with total design and "tastefulness," often leading to the decline of unique community expressions. As Venturi and Brown discuss, cities and their spaces must embrace inclusiveness, even if it involves architectural elements that appear incongruous, in order to maintain vibrancy. Lopburi, once a vivid expression of modern architecture, similarly failed to sustain this balance.

In contrast, Banthat Thong Road in Bangkok provides an observation of how architectural cosmetics applied to modern shophouse facades can revitalize a community. The enhancements to the shophouses in this area have drawn increasing numbers of people to the community, restoring its identity and integrating the architecture with the surrounding environment.

This project introduces architectural cosmetic tools that can be applied to generic shophouses. These tools will be made available through e-commerce platforms, making them accessible to a wide audience and enabling other communities to revitalize their shophouse districts. The project will start with generic cosmetic tools before moving on to specific areas, such as the Lopburi Theater quarter. By applying customized cosmetic tools to the Lopburi shophouses, the project aims to restore the quarter's identity and adapt its function to modern needs.

Ultimately, this approach will help restore the soul of communities like Lopburi by revitalizing their shophouses and re-establishing a sense of identity. As "Learning from Las Vegas" suggests, the strength of urban architecture often lies in its ability to blend the sacred with the profane—elements that evoke community spirit through symbolism, allusion, and everyday inclusions that are currently absent in many modern developments. By making these architectural cosmetics widely accessible, the project seeks to democratize community-driven architectural enhancements, empowering locals to take part in the transformation of their urban spaces.

References

Venturi, Robert, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*. Revised Edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1977.