



The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015 **MEDIA RELEASE**

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The National Sports Complex (Olympic Stadium), Phnom Penh under construction, 1963. Collection Vann Molyvann

About Vann Molyvann

Vann Molyvann is the most prominent and prolific architect of Cambodia's New Khmer Architecture movement.

Vann Molyvann was born in Kampot province in 1926. In 1946, he was awarded a scholarship to study in France. He studied architecture along with other arts at Paris's Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) and returned to a newly independent Cambodia in 1956. Soon after, he was appointed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk as a state architect. He went on to design many of Cambodia's most ambitious and well-known public projects, constructed as part of the nationwide modernization heralded by Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum ("People's Socialist Community") regime. He also designed numerous private homes and smaller structures during this period.

In addition to his extensive work as an architect, Vann Molyvann was also an urban planner and oversaw the expansion of Phnom Penh as well as the establishment of the sea-port at Sihanoukville (Kampong Som), among other sites. Furthermore, he was also involved in the leadership of Phnom Penh's Royal University of Fine Arts, and published several articles on Cambodia's modernization in Khmer journals. He is popularly remembered as one of the most prominent figures in the active cultural life of Cambodia's post-Independence period.

Following the military coup in 1970 that overthrew Sihanouk and his regime, Vann Molyvann relocated to Switzerland. In the following decades, he continued his work with the United Nations Human Settlements Program in developing countries internationally.

In 1991, Vann Molyvann returned to Cambodia and was appointed as Minister of Culture, Fine Arts, Town and Country Planning. He was instrumental in the establishment of the APSARA Authority, a collaborative multi-party organization intended to oversee research into and administration of the ancient temples of Angkor Wat. He also continued his research, publishing several books and completing a doctorate on the history of human settlements in Southeast Asia.

With his wife Trudy, Vann Molyvann now lives in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

About The New Khmer Architecture Movement

Vann Molyvann is the most prominent and prolific proponent of a nation-wide school of building design, known as New Khmer Architecture. This unique approach to the challenges and opportunities of postcolonial construction was influential across Cambodia, in both cities and rural areas, in the years following Independence (1953) and before the Khmer Rouge takeover (1975). Vann Molyvann was not its only advocate; other major figures included Lu Ban Hap and Mam Sophana.

New Khmer Architecture can be characterized by:

- the use of new construction materials, chiefly reinforced concrete;
- visual and structural references to pre-existing Cambodian construction techniques, especially elevation of buildings on stilts;
- a sensitivity to the tropical climate, expressed in creative use of natural airflow and shading;
- the sparing use of ornamentation, chiefly bas reliefs inspired by Angkorean temple decorations.

As well as drawing on pre-existing Cambodian forms of construction, New Khmer Architecture also engaged with diverse other international modernisms. Architects and engineers from Japan, Europe, the former Soviet Union, the United States and elsewhere joined with Cambodians on many major projects, including the influential engineer Vladimir Bodiansky. New Khmer Architecture can thus be understood not only as a vernacularization of “International Style” modernism, but also as a negotiation between many other design approaches from diverse sources.

Under Prince Sihanouk’s active patronage, many ambitious public projects throughout Cambodia became showcases for New Khmer Architecture, including large educational and cultural institutions. Yet the unique new style was also enthusiastically embraced by citizens, and New Khmer Architecture was popularly used in private housing, as well.

New Khmer Architecture is today remembered as one of many intertwined facets of creative cultural achievement in the post-Independence era. New Khmer Architecture’s distinctly modern buildings were the scene of many films made by Cambodia’s burgeoning cinema industry following 1960; Khmer rock’n’roll music echoed in their airy spaces; their walls were adorned by a new style of painting; their inhabitants wore new fashions combining European and local elements.

Like these related cultural forms, New Khmer Architecture expressed the spirit of its time in its unique approach to local circumstances.

For more information and images of New Khmer Architecture, please visit: nka.lumhor.org

About The Vann Molyvann Project

The Vann Molyvann Project is an international team of architects, architectural students and other researchers working in Phnom Penh to document the buildings of Vann Molyvann.

The project was founded in 2009 by Canadian architect Bill Greaves to survey, draw, document, archive, publish and raise awareness of these extraordinary buildings that are today threatened by decay and development.

Vann Molyvann's work forms one of the most important collections of postcolonial buildings in the developing world—and is of utmost importance to Cambodia's modern architectural heritage. Under the patronage of Norodom Sihanouk, Vann Molyvann transformed Phnom Penh and Cambodia, designing the Senate, National Sports Complex, National Theater, Council of Ministers, Chaktomuk Conference Hall, and over 60 other governmental, academic, institutional, industrial and residential buildings throughout the country.

These extraordinary buildings are threatened by decay and development, and the rate at which Cambodia is losing them is accelerating. In 2008, two of Vann Molyvann's greatest works, the National Theater and the Council of Ministers, were demolished. But demolition is not the only threat. Because virtually all of Vann Molyvann's drawings were destroyed after he was forced to flee the country in 1971, no trace remains if a building comes down. *The Vann Molyvann Project* is addressing this urgent situation.

The Vann Molyvann Project's mission is three-fold:

1. To fill the gap in the historical record by surveying Vann Molyvann's remaining buildings and generating a database of measured drawings.
2. To raise the profile of Vann Molyvann's work and improve the likelihood of its preservation through exhibition and publication, actively reaching out to broad Cambodian and international audiences.
3. To foster collaboration between young Cambodian and foreign architects, students, and researchers, connecting them to this extraordinary example of Cambodia's modern heritage, and providing the basis for educational materials of ongoing value in Cambodia and elsewhere.

An initial intensive research studio in 2009-10 in Phnom Penh was followed by exhibitions of models, architectural drawings and other materials held at the French Cultural Center, Phnom Penh (2010) and Phnom Penh International Airport, Phnom Penh (2011). Models were also displayed at Norton University, Phnom Penh (2011-2015) and will be on display at the Center for Khmer Studies, Siem Reap (late 2015-ongoing).

About *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015*

Open Tuesday to Saturday 10-5pm, from 8 June to 5 September 2015

Led by architect and urban researcher Pen Sereypagna, *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015* at SA SA BASSAC will act as a transparent architecture and research studio, designed to engage students and visitors alike. Visitors to SA SA BASSAC will be met with processes of collaboration, research, archiving and building around Vann Molyvann's guiding principles, New Khmer Architecture, histories of urban development, and the model-making craft of the past and the technologies of architecture today.

The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015 is a three-month intensive research, conducted by a team of Cambodian architecture students and international researchers, and open to the public to visit and engage. Together, they will undertake the following:

- Extend existing architectural drawing database of recorded buildings. Additional documentation will include: Pasteur Institute, Capitol Cinema, Campus of Phnom Penh University, National Bank, Sihanoukville, Royal residence, Sihanoukville.
- Transform CAD database into PDF-based archive of finished drawings available freely online at www.vannmolyvannproject.org with hard copies available at the Center for Khmer Studies. These materials will also be the basis for future exhibitions and publications described below.
- Produce a new physical model of the National Stadium based on our existing drawings.
- Conduct interviews and record oral histories of inhabitants and users of Vann Molyvann's buildings.
- Produce a travelling set of models for exhibition nationally and internationally.

Visitors to *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015* are invited to navigate through an evolving exhibition of architectural models, drawings, information panels and maps while observing the processes of students from the Royal University of Fine Arts and Norton University in Phnom Penh, and Parsons The New School for Design in New York, as they collaborate to finalize surveys of buildings and generate a public database of measured drawings, research social histories by through interviews and oral histories of inhabitants and users of Vann Molyvann's buildings and, at the heart of the studio, build a model of the Olympic Stadium. Further context and experience is also offered in our reading and screening room, as well as our public programs on and offsite.

About *The Vann Molyvann Project* Website

The Vann Molyvann Project in 2015 will launch as an ambitious new “open source” resource, available freely for architects, students and researchers in Cambodia and internationally through the website: www.vannmolyvannproject.org. All drawings and other materials generated since the project’s inception in 2009 will be made available for free download at the culmination of *The Vann Molyvann Project Summer School 2015*. The website will also house a dynamic oral history database.

***The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015* Public Programs**

The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015 is open daily from Tuesday to Saturday 10am-5pm. Visitors are welcome at any time to see work in progress, browse the Project library, and view the evolving exhibition of architectural models and drawings.

In addition to being open for visitors daily, the project welcomes visitors to the following special events:

Programming Schedule

Opening reception

Saturday 13 June | 6:00 – 8:00PM
SA SA BASSAC
#182E Sothearos Blvd, Phnom Penh

Presentations

For both the general public and students of architecture at Phnom Penh’s leading universities, Pen Sereypagna offers an introduction to the historical context of Vann Molyvann and his works, and the founding goals and ongoing activities of *The Vann Molyvann Project* and *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015*. In Khmer with English translation.

Friday 19 June | 2.00 - 4.00PM
Norton University, Architecture Department
Street 118, Chroy Changvar, Phnom Penh

Monday 22 June 2015 / 9.00 – 11.00 AM
Royal University of Fine Arts, Architecture Department
#72 Street 19, Phnom Penh

Screenings

Saturday 18 July | 5.00 - 6.30PM
Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center
#64, Street 200 Oknha Men, Phnom Penh

Views of Phnom Penh: before and during the Sangkum

This evening brings together selections from the Bophana archives focusing on views of Phnom Penh before and during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (1955-1970). Slide shows of rare photographic collections by individuals committed to documenting the capital include Mami Palgen (1942-1962) and Adolf Sherl (1966-1970), as well as anonymous short clips of a drive through the city in 1945 and labor at the construction of the airport in 1958. The program closes with *Cambodia 1965*, a documentary produced by Norodom Sihanouk promoting visions of "progress" in infrastructure, economy, education, public health, agriculture and industry during the Sangkum. In Khmer with English translation.

Friday 21 August | 7:00PM
Meta House / German-Cambodian Cultural Center
37 Samdech Sothearos Blvd, Phnom Penh

Concrete Visions by Nico Mesterharm (2009, 17 Min.)

"It is hard to imagine a crueler fate for an urban planner than seeing his country taken over by a regime with a murderous hatred of cities. As Cambodia's pre-eminent architect and chief urban planner during the 1960's, Vann Molyvann laid out significant portions of Phnom Penh and designed dozens of landmark structures fusing High Modernist design with classical Khmer elements. Then, in 1975, the Khmer Rouge marched into the capital and evacuated its entire population. Vann Molyvann, who survived the Khmer Rouge Regime in Swiss exile, returned in 1991 to Cambodia. Nowadays, his legacy is under threat due to Cambodia's on-going construction boom. Helen Grant-Ross, an Art historian and architect, and filmmaker Nico Mesterharm, interviewed Vann Molyvann at the age of 80, in 2008. While the great architect's views on the current development of Phnom Penh are still respectfully listened to, they are seldom acted upon." In English with some Khmer.

Ongoing

13 June – 5 September | 10-5pm
SA SA BASASC
#18 2E Sothearos Blvd, Phnom Penh

As a part of *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015*, enjoy a screening room with works from the past and present that offer context around the urban history of Phnom Penh and New Khmer Architecture. In Khmer with English translation.

Saturday Studio Tours

For audiences wishing to hear about the detailed work of the Summer School 2015 directly from its students and architects, join a one-hour studio tour every other Saturday throughout the project's duration. In Khmer and English.

27 June | 10.00 – 11.00AM
11 July | 4.00 – 5.00PM
25 July | 10.00 – 11.00AM
8 August | 4.00 – 5.00PM
22 August | 10.00 – 11.00AM

Sunday Architecture Tours

Khmer Architecture Tours focus on buildings erected after Cambodia's independence in 1953, a style described as 'New Khmer Architecture', while setting these within the historical context of Phnom Penh. Regular public tours take place on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. In English. For details about each tour, cost, and booking information visit: www.ka-tours.org

Sunday 28 June 15, 2.30pm
New Khmer Architecture of the 1960s

Sunday 12 July 15, 8.30am
Central Phnom Penh by *cyclo*

Sunday 26 July 15, 8.30am
1960s Houses and Villas in Toul Kork (with White Building)

Sunday 9 August 15, 8.30am
Central Phnom Penh by *cyclo*

Sunday 23 August 15, 8.30am
1960s Houses and Villas in Toul Kork (with White Building)

Project Participants

The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School involves Cambodian and international architects, students and researchers. Participants include students and graduates of the following institutions:

- Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh
- Norton University, Phnom Penh
- Parson The New School For Design, New York City
- University of Melbourne, Australia

The project's lead researcher, **Pen Sereypagna** is a freelance architect and urban researcher based in Phnom Penh. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism from the Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh (2012) and audited courses at Parsons The New School for Design, School of Constructed Environments, NYC (2012). He is the founder of *Phnom Penh Visions*, a project to foster discussion around new urban ideas for Phnom Penh; *Lumhor*, an online journal focusing on architecture, urbanism and design in Cambodia; and *Genealogy of Bassac*, a project to investigate the urban form and the characteristics of urban ruptures through various historical eras. He was a resident at Sa Sa Art Projects, Phnom Penh (2014), and participated in the residency and exhibition program *Rates of Exchange, Un-Compared: Contemporary Art in Bangkok and Phnom Penh* (2014-2015). Pagna has worked for national and international urban NGOs including *The Vann Molyvann Project*, Khmer Architecture Tours and Sahmakum Teang Tnaut. He received the Asian Cultural Council (ACC) grant (2012), and through East-West Center, he will commence the US/International Council on Monuments and Sites Internship Program, Honolulu, 2015.

Students

Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- Tum Youryphol, Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism candidate
- Sok Sopheap, Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism candidate

Norton University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- Seng Chanraksmeay, Bachelor of Architecture candidate
- Ly Roset, Bachelor of Architecture candidate

Parsons The New School for Design, New York City, USA

- Jimmie Drummond, dual-degree Master of Architecture and Master of Fine Art Lighting Design candidate
- Hayley Reiter, Master of Architecture candidate

Research Fellow

- Mikaela Kvan, an urban researcher and designer based in New York City and a graduate of Parsons The New School For Design.

Support

- Sun Pora, a freelance architect who holds a Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism (2013) from Royal University Fine Arts
- Loeung Sakona, currently a Master of Architecture candidate at Chiang Mai University, Thailand. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism from Royal University of Fine Arts (2013) and a Bachelor of Translation and Interpretation from Institute of Foreign Languages (2011).
- Veng Sopagna, currently an architect at Hok Keng Architects. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism from Royal University of Fine Arts (2013).
- Bun Chandara, a freelance architect. He holds a Bachelor of Architecture and Urbanism from Royal University of Fine Arts (2012).
- Roger Nelson, PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne researching modern and contemporary Cambodian arts and culture

Thanks to our Funding Partners

The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015 is made possible with funding generously provided by:

- U.S. Embassy, Phnom Penh
- Parsons The New School for Design, New York

Thanks to our Supporting Partners

The Vann Molyvann Project
East-West Center
Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh
Norton University, Phnom Penh
Khmer Architecture Tours, Phnom Penh
Space for Architecture Cambodia, Phnom Penh
Lumhor Journal, www.lumhor.org
Meta House, Phnom Penh
Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, Phnom Penh

Project Details

Exhibition: *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015*
Opening: Saturday 13 June, 6.00-8.00
Press conference: Saturday 13 June, 4.00PM
Dates: 13 June – 5 September, 2015
Opening Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm
Location: SA SA BASSAC #182E Sothearos Blvd. Phnom Penh
Web: www.sasabassac.com + www.vannmolyvannproject.org

About SA SA BASSAC

SA SA BASSAC is a gallery, resource center and reading room dedicated to Cambodian contemporary visual culture. Our exhibition program is based on commissioning new works by leading Cambodian artists as well as hosting process-based collaborations both on and offsite of our space in Phnom Penh. Our library and reading room provide critical material for study and reference, with a focus on Cambodia and Southeast Asian history, art and culture. A dynamic bilingual public program in Khmer and English includes symposia, artist's talks, publications, children's workshops, screenings, and happenings. We partner with local, regional and international institutions, residencies, museums, and galleries expand networks and knowledge for artists and audiences alike. SA SA BASSAC is a registered non-profit association, co-founded in 2011 by Stiev Selapak artist collective and its Artistic Director and curator Erin Gleeson. All exhibitions, events and programs are free to all visitors. Our partner artist-run space is Sa Sa Art Projects.

Contacts

Pen Sereypagna, lead researcher at *The Vann Molyvann Project: Summer School 2015*

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Erin Gleeson, Artistic Director at SA SA BASSAC

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Moeng Meta, Community Projects Manager at SA SA BASSAC

meta@sasabassac.com

Past Media Coverage

Press Highlights

Building Cambodia: The New Khmer Architecture, by Helen Grant Ross and Daryl Collins

The most comprehensive record of Cambodian Architecture of the 1950s, 60s and early 70s.

- Copies available to browse and read at SA SA BASSAC
- Review online at:
<http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.cambodia/2007-10/msg00340.html>

Perspecta 45: "Agency." Edited by Kurt Evans, Iben Falconer and Ian Mills.

- A leading architecture journal, published by Yale University Press. This issue includes an interview with Vann Molyvann, as well as an essay by Siem Reap-based art historian Darryl Collins, titled "Vann Molyvann: situating the work of Cambodia's most influential architect."
- The journal is available to browse and read at SA SA BASSAC, and can be purchased online at [Amazon](#)

The City He Built by Matt Steinglass (2005, May 15) *The New York Times*
www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/magazine/15CAMBODIA.html

Other Press

Diving Deeper into Vann Molyvann's Architecture by Marina Shafik (2015, June 11) *The Khmer Times*

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/12181/diving-deeper-into-vann-molyvann---s-architecture/>

ការសិក្សានៅរដូវក្តៅ ឆ្នាំ ២០១៥ បង្ហាញពីស្នាដៃរបស់លោក វណ្ណ ម៉ូលី ដោយ វិចិត្រ
(2015, June 10) ដំណឹងក្នុងស្រុក

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<http://hangmeasdaily.com/index.php/2014-09-08-02-22-14/5938-2015-06-10-08-27-23>

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<http://www.dap-news.com/2011-06-14-02-39-55/93013-2015-06-10-10-02-54.html>

Vann Molyvann: my legacy will disappear by Claire Knox (2013, Jan 25) *The Phnom Penh Post*

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/7days/vann-molyvann-my-legacy-will-disappear>

Modern Masterpieces by Tom Vater (2010, May 28) The Wall Street Journal
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704113504575265531678205848> - articleTabs=article

Reimagining Cambodia by Dianne Janes (2009, Aug 18) The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2009081827819/Life-Style/reimagining-cambodia.html>

Cambodia's New Khmer Architecture by Ron Gluckman (2008, Mar) The Urban Land Institute.

<http://www.gluckman.com/Cambodian%20Architecture.htm>

Award for Building Cambodia: The New Khmer Architecture (2006, Dec 16) Time Magazine

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570746,00.html>

Modern Khmer Heritage in Peril (2003, Nov 10) Khmer Connection

<http://khmerconnection.com/topic/modern-khmer-heritage-in-peril-16448/>