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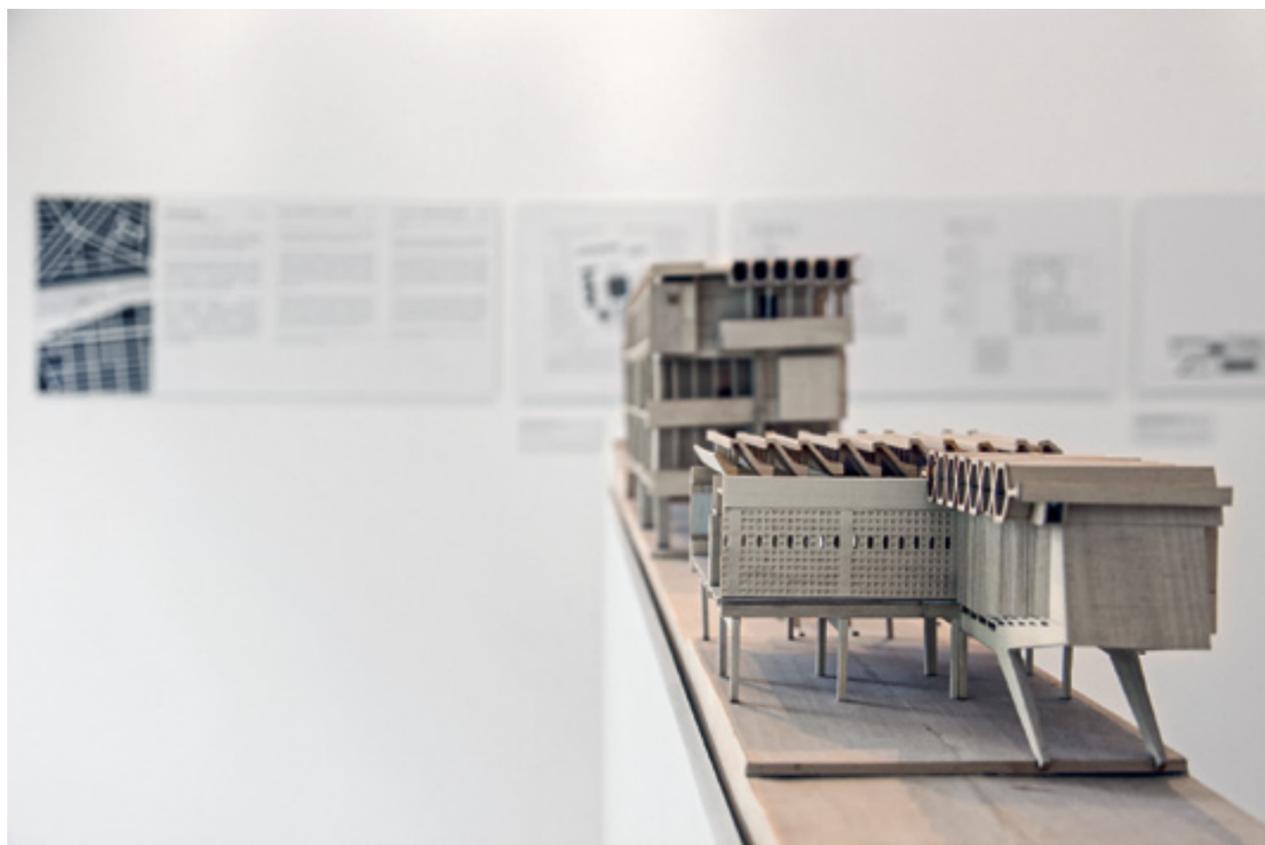
After Cambodia's independence in 1953, under the leadership of prince Norodom Sihanouk, the country sought to transform its image from that of a small colonial state with an agrarian economy to that of a modern independent nation. An extensive building campaign was central to this effort. The buildings of this era have come to be known as New Khmer Architecture. Vann Molyvann was a pioneer of this movement and his work was crucial for the development of an Asian modernism. His engagement reached far beyond the architectural profession, encompassing questions of human habitat, local tradition, and culture. Astonishing both in terms of scale and their unique architectural language, buildings such as the National Sports

Complex, the Chaktomuk Conference Hall, and the Institute of Foreign Languages, in Phnom Penh, still stand as a testament to Molyvann's invaluable contribution to the crafting of a new Cambodian national identity. But these were not the architect's only projects: lesser known than his majestic buildings in Phnom Penh is the 100 Houses project, for which he proposed an alternative to traditional Khmer wooden homes to improve the living standards of the largely rural Cambodian population. Molyvann's design, which attributed great value to the climatic and cultural specificities of the tropical context, combines vernacular architecture with modern materials and techniques that Molyvann learned about while studying in Paris. After the Khmer Rouge regime seized power in 1975, Cambo-

dian scholars were often targeted as political dissidents. Molyvann fled the country, finding refuge in Switzerland with his family. After the civil war, many of Vann Molyvann's buildings fell into decay, while countless documents, drawings, and historical records simply vanished during the years of the Khmer Rouge regime. Today, only a few of the original drawings exist, partly scattered across different collections in Japan and France, and partly held by Molyvann's family in Switzerland. In recent years, the rapid urban development of Phnom Penh put many modern buildings under threat of demolition. In response to this, the Vann Molyvann Project was established in 2009 as a collaboration between the Royal University of Fine Arts and Norton University, both in Phnom Penh,

and the Yale School of Architecture at Yale University in the United States. The goal was to document Molyvann's buildings and produce a new archive of his work. This often meant filling the gaps in the historical records by carrying out new surveys, redrawing the buildings' floor plans, and recording interviews with the protagonists of the post-independence era. Through various exhibitions and publications, the Vann Molyvann Project has offered widespread visibility to New Khmer Architecture, fostering a global conversation about the importance of preserving modernist heritage in Asia and inspiring a new generation of Cambodian architects and scholars.

THE VANN MOLYVANN PROJECT



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Wooden models of Vann Molyvann's Teacher Training College (1972, now Institute of Foreign Languages). Exhibition view, French Cultural Center, Phnom Penh, 2010.

Above
A historical photo, a model, and an architectural sketch of one of Vann Molyvann's 100 Houses, in an exhibition organized by the Vann Molyvann Project at the French Cultural Center, Phnom Penh, 2010.

Right
Presentation of Vann Molyvann's National Stadium in Phnom Penh (1964). Exhibition view, Taipei Biennial 2016.

