

Digital Material Library: Thai Indigenous Materials and Cultural Perspectives in Thailand's Design Education

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Abstract Summary

This thesis concerns the socio-economic impact of using indigenous Thai materials in Thailand's university design curricula and design industry. An exploration of silk serves as a model for how to conduct a cultural investigation of an indigenous material's physical properties, manufacturing processes, symbolic meaning, and cultural functions. Using these four components of analysis, I constructed a digital material library for use as a supplementary tool to the design curriculum for King Mongkut Institute of Technology, Ladkrabang (KMITL). The library is a response to the ever-expanding use of digital technology in design education and offers users an opportunity to learn and explore the importance of local materials in the Thai contemporary design industry.

My research reveals that using local, indigenous materials can benefit export commodities as well as increase the level of awareness concerning traditional and local Thai crafts. This thesis suggests that learning about indigenous materials, such as handmade and machine-woven silk, is necessary for the Thai design industry to develop a product identity that is distinctly Thai and to remain competitive with the international export market.

If traditional methods of local and rural crafts are studied, the developing contemporary Thai design identity will have a stronger connection to Thai lifestyle, culture, and social structure. Therefore, the library is also designed to serve as an information center to provide information about indigenous materials to Thailand's design industry.

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