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This dissertation investigates the role of the Thai *sala* (pavilion) in Thai society, and its resilience and transformation in form, function and meaning through time.

The *sala* is considered as a symbol for many aspects and characteristics of Thai social life; a representation of Thai society today. It is also defined as a site for participation and expression and discussed within the context of the current turbulent socio-economic and political situation, with particular reference to modern urban life in Bangkok. This research brings together references and ideas regarding the *sala* to build a selective cultural history of the *sala*, including the *sala* in the 2000s.

The project also proceeds to explore the inspirational *sala* installations created by contemporary Thai artist Montien Boonma for their messages and vision of the *sala* as spiritual space – a place for contemplation, healing and peace. These two areas of interest are brought together to test their intersection. Montien's *sala* are interpreted as a metaphor for a solution that urgently needs to be found in Thai society - calm space for conflict resolution.

While the formal symbols of nation, religion and monarchy are promoted by authorities in Thailand as the three pillars of Thai society, this research provides an alternative model for understanding informal Bangkok social life. It views the *sala* as a very relevant symbol in Thai studies, emphasises architectural heritage as an essential field and places the *sala* at the centre of contemporary debates about Thai urban society.

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