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The **Chiang Mai Digital Crafts Project** is a joint collaboration between the **British Council** and the **Chiang Mai Creative City Initiative**, represented by the College of Arts Media and Technology (CAMT), Chiang Mai University, the Technology Development Centre for Industry (TDCI), Chiang Mai University, and the Northern Handicrafts Manufacturers and Exporters Association (NOHMEX).

Chiang Mai, 800 kilometres north of Bangkok, is Thailand's second most important city and a centre for education, trade, commerce, education and creativity. Besides food and agro-industry, Chiang Mai is also renowned for its craft and tourist industries. Chiang Mai has also seen recent growth in its digital output, including software and application development. In 2010, the city announced the Chiang Mai Creative City initiative, designed to stimulate the economy, leveraging creativity and innovation. The initiative receives support from organisations in the government, private and education sectors.

Chiang Mai, perhaps, owes its popularity as a tourist destination to its historical sites, unique culture and handicrafts. Local crafts, tourism and art related industries generate an annual income

of more than 30,000 million baht, (Chiang Mai province, inclusive of Chiang Mai city). These industries are important in terms of employment, but they also play a significant role as markers of national identity. In 2011, the initiative was further endorsed by the Ministry of Commerce, when Chiang Mai was declared a Prototype Creative City for Crafts. Chiang Mai's application to join the UNESCO Creative Cities is currently on-going.

Despite its strengths, Chiang Mai's craft industry faces a number of challenges, many a result of a lack of investment in innovation, and digital technologies. Alongside the British Council, Chiang Mai Digital Crafts aims to help Chiang Mai's creative industries, particularly in the tourism and crafts sectors. It proposes to do so by integrating creativity, technology and local wisdom – with a focus on commercialization / economic benefits – allowing local business to become more competitive in their own right. The project also encourages creative economy through the collaboration of Thailand and the U.K in an exchange of knowledge, practice, expertise and technology.

The project will have two phases:

Phase 1

- With a focus on digital story-telling, the first phase of the Chiang Mai Digital Crafts project runs from February to July 2012. A richly informative, interactive website will provide a virtual platform for the Chiang Mai craft sector. The website will be the epitome of functionality, with a modern feel achieved using a combination of high-resolution images, video clips and 3D (rotatable) images.
- The website will offer an in-depth look at the wood, textile, and ceramics craft sectors. In order to communicate its own, unique story, each subsector will look at three products as proposed by manufacturers working within that sector. The story will show, amongst other things, how the product is made, where the raw materials are sourced, the design concept, and the product's history.
- Additional seminars, workshops and related events will be organized to explain the project further. Such events will also train participants in the use of new technologies and showcase the project's results to the public and stakeholders.

Phase 2

- If the first phase is well received, a second longer phase will be arranged so as to further address the role of digital technologies in the development of Chiang Mai's creative industries. The scope of the second phase is still under discussion, but will likely focus on digital design, production, training and capacity development. The concept of a second phase will be to support participating companies in the development of new products, use of a wide range of materials, export, and other skills relevant to the arts.

Source: Chiang Mai Digital Crafts

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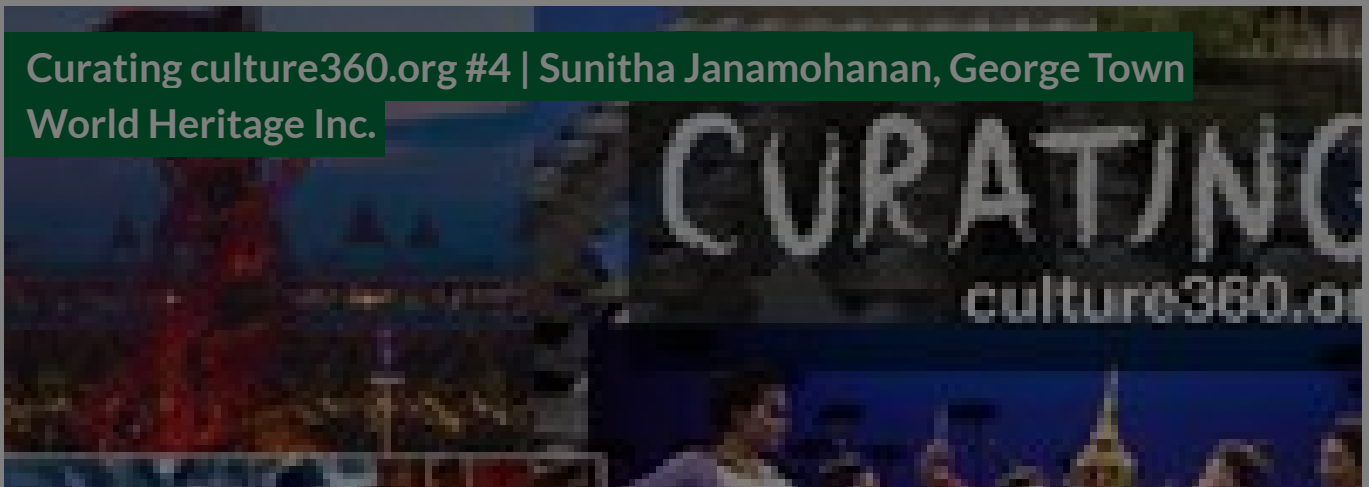
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