



Australian Thai Artist Interchange presents The Hua Krathi Project

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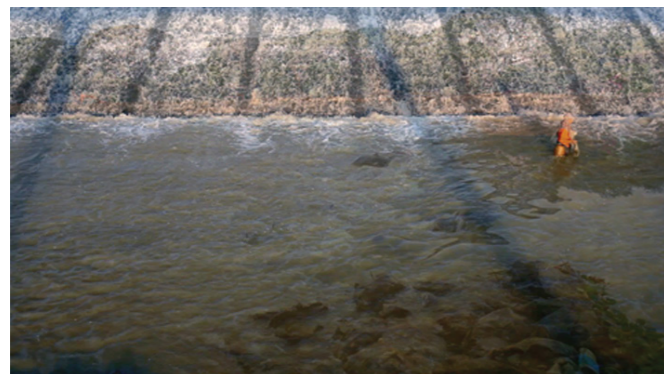


Asia Institute



Kata Sangkhae, Sutthirat Supaparinya, Jakraphun Thanateeranon

Curated by Rushdi Anwar, Melanie Jayne Taylor and Shukit Panmongkol



The Convergence of Moving Image in Thai Contemporary Art and the Divergence of Contemporary Thainess

This exhibition tackles two intersecting concerns between contemporary Thai video art and perceptions of *Thainess*, which are intertwined against political turbulences that brought Thailand to international attention in recent years. Since the 2006 coup d'état and series of the public protests, followed by the November 2008 Bangkok International Airport seizure, civil unrest erupted again during May 2010, which resulted in 91 deaths with mayhem around Bangkok and several provincial town halls. Other political clashes since 2004 include 5,400 deaths in the Deep South Muslim majority provinces. These disunities are not the kind of subservient *Thainess* that is taught at school.

In terms of regional art history, Modern Art was initially imported into Siam (Thailand's former name) during 1923, at a turning point of the Siamese revolution; Modern Art for the Thai public served a purpose in nation building. Whilst today's contemporary Thai video art is almost exclusively made for export as very few works are collected or exhibited domestically. Nevertheless, artists Sutthirat Supaparinya, Jakraphun Thanateeranon and Kata Sangkhae remain some of the few artists who insist on pushing their art practices through to new territories. These artists are of a similar generation but were trained at different Thai universities; their professional career paths could not have been more different.

Sutthirat was born and educated in Chiang Mai, the northern Thai capital, before going onto Leipzig, Germany where she gained her postgraduate degree in Media Arts. Her video work *My Grandpa's Route Has Been Forever Blocked* references the genre of documentary filmmaking with a deeply personal journey from memories of her grandfather and implications of Siamese-European trade.

Jakraphun was born in Tak province and attended university in Bangkok; UNESCO had awarded him international travel bursaries as an undergraduate student, which subsequently connected him to many artist residency programs around the world after his graduation. His *Mr. Siam* video performance launches playful questions at the metaphorical mask that identifies each of us as individuals.

Kata was born and educated in Bangkok before completing his sculpture MFA degree at the University of California at Los Angeles. He is currently a PhD candidate at RMIT University, Melbourne on a scholarship from Bangkok University where he holds his teaching post. Kata's practice-led research focuses on the location-specific relationship between art practice and identity, his investigation of Thai identities as cultural phenomena can be seen through his performance *Sentences on My Art 2012*, a doubtful and mind-numbing rehearsal of what he may hope to become.

What connects these individual practices together is the common theme of rendering personal identity within a hopeful context of becoming a global citizen. Perhaps the question of Thai identity is strictly reserved only for the privileged few that can afford to travel the world. Thankfully, for over a decade these three artists have been fortunate enough to be awarded overseas scholarships, bursaries and residencies in far corners of our globalised world. This global perspective has informed and shaped their practices to the degree that each work articulates relevant questions that often go unanswered within Thailand.

Prapon Kumjim is head of The Art Center at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He completed his Fine Art doctoral degree at RMIT University in 2009.

Images: Sutthirat Supaparinya (left), Jakraphun Thanateeranon (top right), Kata Sangkhae (bottom right), Jakraphun Thanateeranon (overleaf).

