

25 November
to 7 December
2014

No Vacancy
Gallery,
Melbourne



**Swimming
in Sand;**

**Growing Rice
under an Umbrella**



Front cover image:
Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai,
Out, 2012 (detail)

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**Swimming
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under an Umbrella**

Curators

Roger Nelson
Anita Archer

Artists

Alfredo and
Isabel Aquilizan
Chan Dany
Khvay Samnang
with Nget Rady
Nge Lay
Nguyen Thi
Thanh Mai
Phan Quang
Piyarat
Piyapongwiwat

Introduction

Anita Archer Fine Art is proud to present *Swimming in Sand; Growing Rice under an Umbrella*, taking place at No Vacancy Gallery in Melbourne's CBD with parallel programming on the Big Screen at Federation Square. This exhibition presents my ongoing commitment to bring contemporary art from Asia to the attention of Australian collectors.

It is important to me that this exhibition be curated in order to provide a constructive narrative for Australian collectors to appreciate the placement of these artists and their practice within local and global contexts.

Curator Roger Nelson has been immersed in Cambodia and the practice of artists in Southeast Asia through his research as a PhD candidate and as an international curator. I would like to extend my very sincere thanks to Roger for curating this exhibition. His vision, insight, focus and professionalism have crafted this project at every turn.

My thanks also go to the artists, and their representative galleries, for allowing me to present their works here in Melbourne. It is an honour to show artworks that have never before been seen in Australia and I hope that this exhibition presents an opportunity for dialogue,

discussion and understanding amongst Australian collectors, as well as curators and artists, to build on knowledge of outstanding contemporary practice from the Asian region.

A number of individuals and organisations have helped to bring this exhibition to life; in no particular order, I would like to thank Jessica Jia for her enthusiastic energy; Richard Thompson for believing in this project and its importance; Mikala Tai for devising a broad and insightful public program; Emer Diviney for expanding the visibility of the exhibition; Louise Joel at Asialink Arts for offering access and introductions to a significant network of support; Erin Gleeson, whose passionate advocacy for artists from Cambodia originally ignited my passion to bring this project to life; and Bala Starr for understanding and embracing the intent of the curators and crafting this so eloquently in her Foreword.

Finally, I would like to thank Multicultural Arts Victoria for their support and enthusiasm of this project and for incorporating our Public Program into their 'Mapping Melbourne' festival, ensuring that the artworks and artists get far-reaching exposure to the Victorian public.

—
Anita Archer

Foreword

Swimming in Sand; Growing Rice under an Umbrella is an unusual project not least because curated exhibitions of contemporary Southeast Asian art are only occasionally staged in Melbourne. In examining the scope of important contemporary practices, we might all work to rectify that absence. This major exhibition, co-curated by Anita Archer and Roger Nelson, based in Melbourne and Phnom Penh respectively, will serve as a reference for future projects.

The roles and social responsibilities taken up by artists in many Southeast Asian cultures are often implicated in issues of injustice and inequality. Art practice is rarely seen as divisible from the communities that the artists come from or adopt. Most art-historical narratives argue that the first generation of contemporary art practice in Southeast Asia has been concerned with ideas of artistic agency, social activism and relational engagement. Following this first generation, the artists whose work is explored in *Swimming in Sand; Growing Rice under an Umbrella* also adopt positions in close proximity to the anxieties and concerns of their local communities.

Roger Nelson's essay in this catalogue interestingly uses a discussion of 'artistic research' as a critical thread by which to explore and connect each artist's practice. He pays particular attention to the formal logic of artistic research as a means to conceptualise disparate materials and processes. But Nelson's enthusiasm extends to the capacity of such an idea of art-making to release and entitle these artists, and to provide critical space for the keen sense of sadness and entanglement in the world that they reveal to us.

The ambitious works of art that comprise this wonderfully titled exhibition present Australian audiences with a special opportunity to reconsider assumptions about recent art in terms of a wider pan-Asian internationalism. I commend the curators for sharing their vision through this exhibition and for the hospitality they have extended to the artists.

Our debt is ultimately to the artists themselves. I warmly congratulate and thank Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, Chan Dany, Khvay Samnang and Nget Rady, Nge Lay, Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, Phan Quang and Piyarat Piyapongwiwat.

—
Bala Starr,
Director, Institute
of Contemporary
Arts Singapore

Swimming in Sand; Growing Rice Under an Umbrella

—
by Roger Nelson

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the exhibiting artists are from conversations with the author, 2012-14. Sincere thanks to them all for their generosity in joining this exhibition and their patience in sharing their thinking with me. Thanks also to Arnont Nongyao and Clare McCracken for conversations about artistic research that informed my thinking here, and to Erin Gleeson and Vuth Lyno for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this text.

i

[The King of Spirits] looked around and showed [Hanuman] a platter. On it were thousands of rings. They were all Rama’s rings. The king brought the platter to Hanuman, set it down, and said, “Pick out your Rama’s ring and take it.”

They were all exactly the same. “I don’t know which one it is,” said Hanuman, shaking his head.

The King of Spirits said, “There have been as many Ramas as there are rings on this platter. When you return to earth, you will not find Rama. This incarnation of Rama is now over. Whenever an incarnation of Rama is about to be over, his ring falls down. I collect them and keep them. Now you can go.”

So Hanuman left.

*This story is usually told to suggest that for every such Rama there is a Ramayana.*¹

Rama is a god-king, and the *Ramayana* is his story: an Indian epic dating to around the 5th century BCE, and subsequently retold in dozens of languages across Southeast Asia and beyond. New versions of the story — often known as “tellings”² — are found in Cambodia, Myanmar/Burma, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, and many other places too.

But why begin with thousands of rings, thousands of Ramas, and thousands of Ramayana stories? The work of an artist is a telling of the world. And a story becomes new each time it is told.

ii

But the work of an artist is not only a telling of the world, it is also the asking of impossible, unanswerable questions. It is beginning to tell a story without knowing how the story will end.

Swimming in Sand; Growing Rice Under an Umbrella is an exhibition that explores a diversity of methods by which artists in Southeast Asia creatively investigate (and “tell”) their worlds. Encompassing

photography, video, installation and textiles, the exhibited works share a focus on local concerns that intersect with global forces, and demand close and careful scrutiny. The emphatically specific merges with the unavoidably universal. The work of the exhibited artists is variously, at times, ethnography, experimentation, collaboration, and meditation. In short, the work of these artists is a process of research.

To conceptualize of artistic practice as research is to value the artist’s process as well as the exhibited result, and also to see the knowledge and vision of the artist as of vital—and often critical—importance in the telling of the world. To conceptualize of artistic practice as research is also to foreground art’s incursions into the humanities, the sciences, the religions, and course also into the realm of play. In an essay on the topic, artist Florian Dombois, curator Ute Meta Bauer, et al observe that “‘artistic research’ is independent of ‘discipline’ and might occur in all contexts once epistemic expectations have shifted....It is both a matter of productive and reflective work.”³

Telling and asking can be fused together. The word “research” in English means to look or study intensively. In the Cambodian language of Khmer, the word is *sraavchriev*, which comprises *sraav* meaning “to untangle,” and *chriev* meaning “to stir” or “to mix.” We can perceive this intensive looking, this untangling and stirring, at work in each artist’s practice.

iii

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan’s *Seascape* (2011, from the series *Mabini Art Project*) pulls apart and reassembles stylized painted visions of the Philippines. Known as “Mabini art,” the landscape paintings that are the source material for *Seascape* are typically dismissed as tourist fodder. Yet the artists reveal that this style of painting originates

in the 1950s, when a group of painters split from the Art Association of the Philippines in protest against its perceived favouring of modernist styles over traditional approaches. “As tourists in our own homeland, we now see the Philippines in a different way, with a sense of displacement,” the artists explain.⁴ For Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, to look intensively is to hear an ocean in mass-produced strokes of paint.

Alfredo Aquilizan’s graphite drawings of packing boxes, crates and pallets also speak of the experience of displacement, relocation, and recontextualisation: recurrent concerns in the artist’s practice both individually and collaboratively. Like many of the exhibited works, the Aquilizans’ approach to research combines a reflection on personal experience with an investigation of social processes.

Chan Dany explores the ancient Cambodian temples of Angkor, examining the codified forms of ornamentation known as Khmer *kbach*, based on locally familiar shapes such as the lotus flower, the fish egg and the buffalo’s tooth.⁵ These ornamental designs have been in continuous use in Cambodia for over a millennium, decorating all manner of surfaces from royal palaces to government offices to humble farmers’ homes. Yet the materials Chan uses in the *Sampot: The Collection of Small Things* series (2013) are recent arrivals to Cambodia: just a few years ago, synthetic fabrics and laces, beads and sequins such as these were unavailable or prohibitively expensive in cost.⁶ The artist explores the meeting of the very old and the very new, the exchange embodied in his glittering textiles. “Cambodia is still filled with *kbach*, it’s just that now they change the form,” Chan explains. His close attention to a specifically Khmer phenomenon echoes a coequality that is now surely universal.⁷

Also universal is a preoccupation with mortality, yet its implications are often ...

³ Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab, “Introduction,” in *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*, ed. Florian Dombois, Ute Meta Bauer, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab (London: Koenig Books, 2012), 10-11. They further observe that “equipped with the luxury of ignoring demands for definitions, artists can transgress and thus challenge what any single narrative may project as research.”

⁴ Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, artist statement for *Mabini Project: 100 Paintings*, 2011. Sharjah Art Foundation. www.sharjahart.org/projects/projects-by-date/2013/mabini-art-project-100-paintings-2011

⁵ Chan Vitharin and Preap Chanmara, *Kbach: A Study of Khmer Ornament*, ed. Ly Daravuth and Ingrid Muan, trans. Ingrid Muan (Phnom Penh: Reyum, 2005).

⁶ See also: Roger Nelson, “On the Coequalities of the Contemporary in Cambodia. Review: *Sampot: The Collection of Small Things* by Chan Dany.” *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2014): 193-207.

⁷ Elsewhere, I have proposed that “a coequality of old and new is inescapable and may well be defining of our time and its cultural politics.” See Roger Nelson, “‘Performance is Contemporary’: Performance and its Documentation in Visual Art in Cambodia,” *Udaya: Journal of Khmer Studies* 12 (2014).

¹ A.K. Ramanujan, “Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation,” in *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. Paula Richman (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 24.

² Ibid.

individually and locally particular. In *Observing of Self on Being Dead* (2011), Nge Lay dons the torn dress of a woman from her village who died in childbirth, her blood dried and dark. Wearing this haunted garment, the artist returns to the sites of horrific political violence she witnessed as a child growing up in Myanmar/Burma. “Can death really put life to an end?” she asks. “We accept birth cheerfully, then why can’t we accept death in the same way...? What will my true death be like? Like the one I make as the artwork?”

Unanswerable questions are also at the heart of Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai’s *Out* (2012). The artist collects the gynecological equipment that is used to investigate women’s bodies, in turn investigating its physical forms and ideological implications. The meticulousness of her research is matched by her painstaking process. Adhering beads to these instruments’ cold metallic surfaces makes them at once alluring to the eye and repellant to the body. “These instruments become recurring symbols...inferring a sense of obsession, worry, fear and insecurity,” the artist suggests. The paucity of sexual education in Vietnam makes this physical and psychological unease particularly pronounced for Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai.

To make *A Farmer’s Diary* (2010), Phan Quang traveled to his home province of Binh Dinh in south central Vietnam to determine what would happen if rice was planted in perpetual shade. In a common Vietnamese colloquialism, to be “under an umbrella” is to enjoy the unofficial protection and patronage of the authorities. The artist’s experiment in growing rice under an umbrella revealed that the crop at first rocketed up, only to become stunted, devoid of nutritional value. *A Farmer’s Diary* can be understood as a biting critique of corruption; the artist’s work is pointless, yet daringly pointed. Phan’s friend, a farmer who planted the rice for him, also

photographed its progress thrice daily for an entire season. It was an act of utter futility and also of great purpose; an indictment of a human system and a celebration of a natural order. “I like to play all the time, and learn all the time,” the artist laughs.

Khvay Samnang agrees. “If you want to know, you have to come, and not just talk, but *enjoy!* And spend time, not just one hour or one day,” he insists. Yet on repeated visits over a period of months, Khvay and dancer Nget Rady discovered that at sites of extreme erosion, mass sand mining, and large-scale land reclamation, it becomes impossible to speak, and impossible to enjoy. In Cambodia, public lakes are filled with sand and then sold to private companies. The sand is mined from rivers, causing the riverbanks to collapse: several hundred homes have fallen into Cambodia’s rivers in recent years, and several deaths have been reported. Their ghosts haunt the sites that Khvay and Nget visited. With few options for compensation and no access to the luxury developments for which the sand is being mined, many are left wondering: *Where Is My Land?*

Nget Rady’s performance in each of these locations responds to the intensity of the physical environment. “It’s like I feel the place in my body,” Nget explains. While he is classically trained in the Khmer *lkhon khol* tradition of masked dance based in stories from the *Ramayana*, in *Where Is My Land* little trace of recognizably Cambodian dance gestures can be seen. A tantalizing narrative begins to emerge, with the dancing figure appearing displaced, disturbed, desperate. The work investigates a collapse that is not only environmental, but human too.

The human impact of rapid change is also of critical concern for Piyarat Piyapongwiwat. Interviewing workers in garment factories in Chiang Khong, a Special Economic Zone in Chiang Rai province, the artist discovered that “many of them had resisted this government’s

policy for many years. Finally, they found that their voices have no meaning.” Her *Untitled* quilt is sewn by workers in her hometown of Chiang Mai, using offcuts of fabric collected by the artist from factories in northern Thailand. According to historian Thongchai Winichakul, “Thailand is a nation, though not the only one, which concerns itself with the preservation and promotion of the national culture as if it might suddenly disappear.”⁸ But at its fringes, national culture has always been secondary to transnational economics. The modern nation of Thailand incorporates many former kingdoms, some once shared with neighbouring and nearby powers, including Myanmar/Burma and China to the north. The northern city of Chiang Mai, once part of Lanna, was in the past surrounded by “numerous tiny chiefdoms.”⁹ Perhaps history does repeat as tragedy and as farce: Special Economic Zones, a comparatively recent invention, share the right to exert control over and profit from territories in northern Thailand with their Chinese neighbours, much like the “chiefdoms” of times past. Piyarat Piyapongwiwat, raised in Chiang Mai, felt compelled to investigate the human effects of this political geography.

Each of these works reveals to us the world of these artists. And they reveal also that this is our own world, too. Our understanding of reality is now unavoidably networked; the local cannot but “untangle” and “stir” itself into the universal. The sand mined from Cambodia’s rivers is sent to Vietnam, to beautify private beaches, and to Singapore, to expand the coastline making room for Chinese and American and Australian office towers. The garments sewn in northern Thailand, often by Myanma/Burmese workers, clothe women and men in countless nations. The kbach of Angkor can be found in temples from Saigon to Pagan, and in the colonial décor and paintings of the French and their neighbours. And, of course, the sea

surrounding the Philippines rises, as it does the world over.

For every Rama there is a *Ramayana*. A story becomes new each time it is told.

iiii

Swimming in Sand; Growing Rice Under an Umbrella — the title invokes, perhaps, a sense of absurd futility. But in fact these are actions of the bravest order: urgent investigations of a world that is itself at times absurd, and interventions into circumstances that are at once locally specific and universally resonant.

In contexts where governments and other official institutions cannot be relied on to always investigate thoroughly; in settings where collaboration is a norm, not an exception; in times when the generally accepted meaning of words like “artist” are radically changing, almost as rapidly as the cities, forests, waterways, and ways of life: here, creative practice as research becomes most crucial and most exciting. As Dombois, Meta Bauer et al astutely observe, “artistic research is neither a novel phenomenon nor one with an established history.”¹⁰ The work of an artist is a telling of the world. And a story becomes new each time it is told.

iiiii

To swim and to plant rice are actions that must be learned, of course, but they are also movements that can seem to live in the body; to form a kind of muscular memory. For an artist to research, to strive to discover the world and to make its mysteries and meanings known, might also be a kind of memory that is held in the muscle. Telling and asking can be fused together. Whatever questions an artist asks, whatever telling of the world an artist untangles and stirs, we might imagine the artist’s work as a kind of *Swimming in Sand, Growing Rice Under an Umbrella*.

⁸ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1995), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

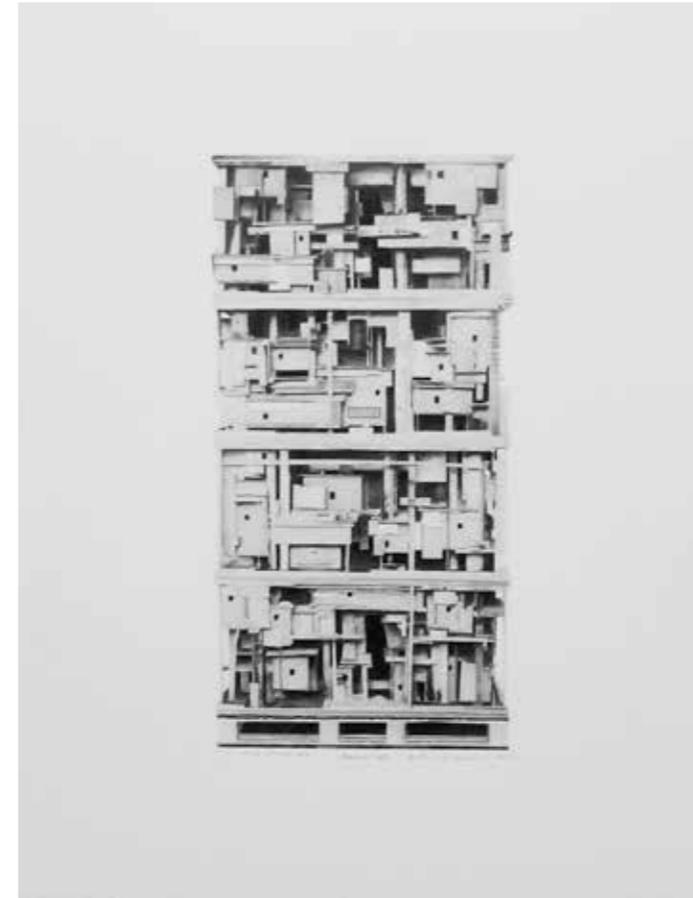
¹⁰ Dombois, Meta Bauer et al, “Introduction,” 9.

Alfredo and Isabel
Aquilizan
Seascape, 2011
Oil on canvas and
various frames

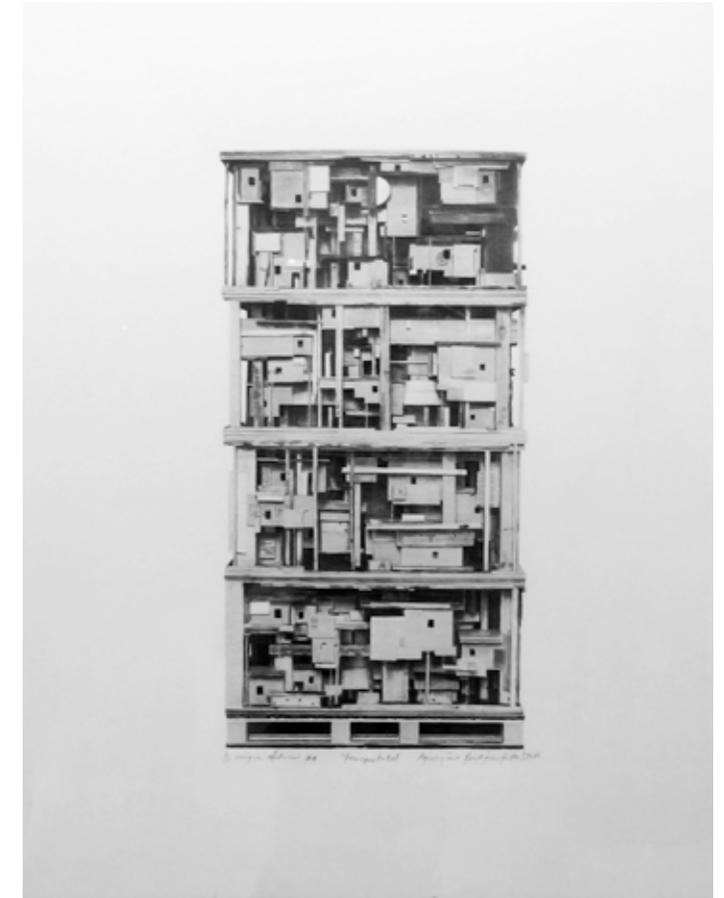




Alfredo Aquilizan
Transportables #1 (after *Inhabit: Project Another Country*), 2013
Graphite over print on paper



Alfredo Aquilizan
Transportables #2 (after *Inhabit: Project Another Country*), 2013
Graphite over print on paper



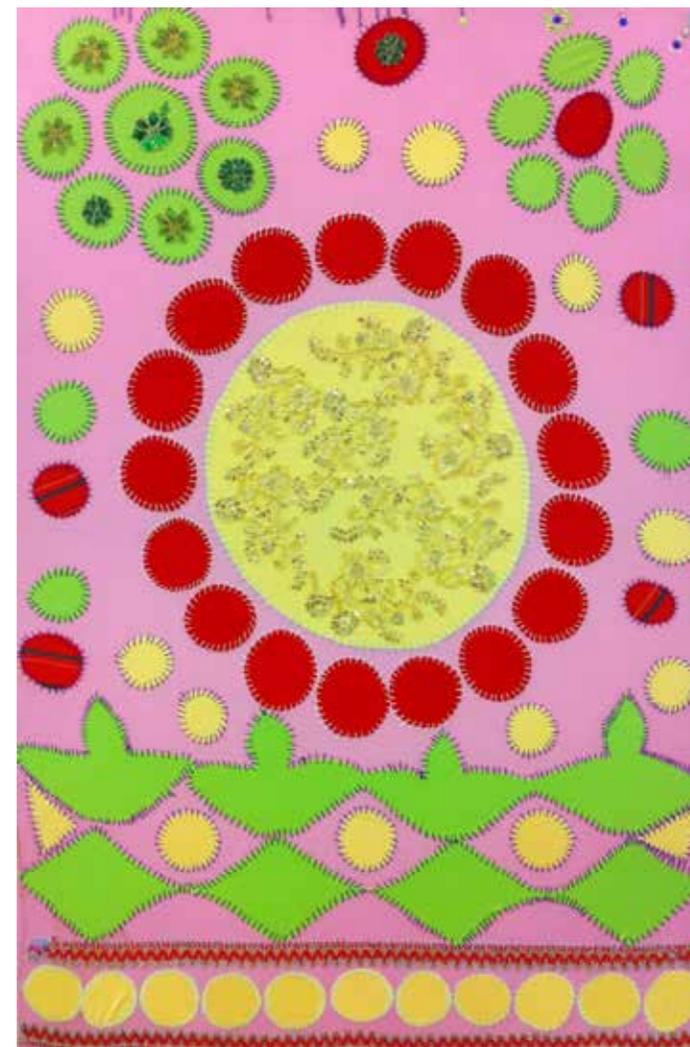
Alfredo Aquilizan
Transportables #4 (after *Inhabit: Project Another Country*), 2013
Graphite over print on paper



Chan Dany
Sampot: the Collection of Small Things (The Light of Color), 2013
Lycra, plastic lace, beads,
cotton thread



Chan Dany
Sampot: the Collection of Small Things (Star of the Chaka Chan), 2013
Cotton, sequins, thread,
cotton thread



Chan Dany

*Sampot: the Collection of Small
Things (Rahu the Moon-Eater), 2013*
Lycra, plastic beads, cotton thread



Khvay Samnang
with Nget Rady
Where is My Land? 2014
Three channel video



Khvay Samnang
with Nget Rady
Where is My Land? 2014
Chromogenic print on
archival paper

Khvay Samnang
with Nget Rady
Where is My Land? 2014
Chromogenic print on
archival paper

Khvay Samnang
with Nget Rady
Where is My Land? 2014
Chromogenic print on
archival paper

Khvay Samnang
with Nget Rady
Where is My Land? 2014
Chromogenic print on
archival paper

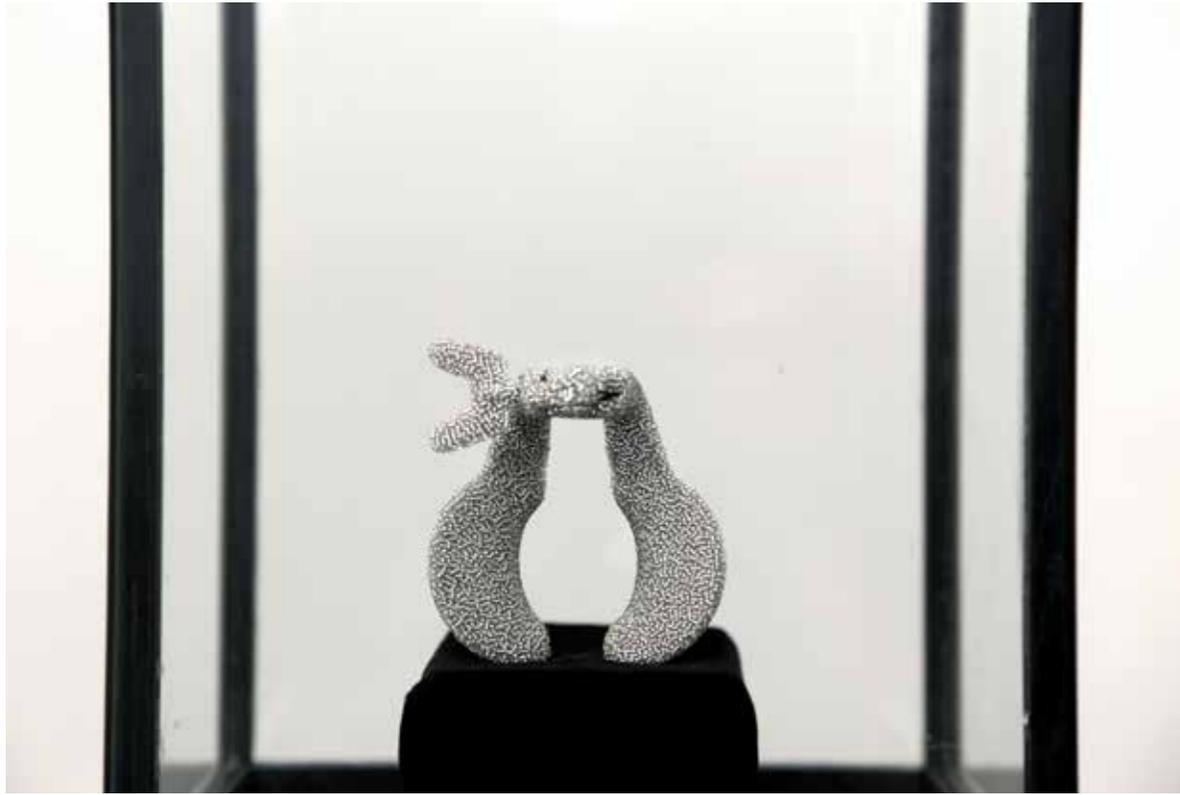


Nge Lay
*Observing of Self on
Being Dead, 2011*
Chromogenic print
on archival paper

Nge Lay
*Observing of Self on
Being Dead, 2011*
Chromogenic print
on archival paper

Nge Lay
*Observing of Self on
Being Dead, 2011*
Chromogenic print
on archival paper





Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai
Out, 2012
Vaginal specula, beads,
glass, wood



Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai
Out, 2012
Vaginal specula, beads,
glass, wood



Phan Quang
A Farmer's Diary, 2010
Chromogenic print on
archival paper

Phan Quang
A Farmer's Diary, 2010
Chromogenic print on
archival paper

Phan Quang
A Farmer's Diary, 2010
Chromogenic print on
archival paper





Piyarat Piyapongwiwat
Untitled, 2013
Cloth remnants, thread

List of Artworks

	Chan Dany <i>Sampot: the Collection of Small Things (The Light of Color)</i> , 2013 Lycra, plastic lace, beads, cotton thread 100.0 x 150.0cm	Nge Lay <i>Observing of Self on Being Dead</i> , 2011 Chromogenic print on archival paper 91.0 x 137.0cm Edition of 5
	Chan Dany <i>Sampot: the Collection of Small Things (Star of the Chaka Chan)</i> , 2013 Cotton, sequins, thread, cotton thread 100.0 x 150.0cm	Nge Lay <i>Observing of Self on Being Dead</i> , 2011 Chromogenic print on archival paper 91.0 x 137.0cm Edition of 9
	Chan Dany <i>Sampot: the Collection of Small Things (Rahu the Moon-Eater)</i> , 2013 Lycra, plastic beads, cotton thread 100.0 x 150.0cm	Nge Lay <i>Observing of Self on Being Dead</i> , 2011 Chromogenic print on archival paper 91.0 x 137.0cm Edition of 9
	Khvay Samnang with Nget Rady <i>Where is My Land?</i> 2014 Three channel video with sound, 13 minutes Edition of 3	Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai <i>Out</i> , 2012 Vaginal specula, beads, glass, wood 120.0 x 25.0 x 25.0cm
Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan <i>Seascape</i> , 2011 oil on canvas and various frames 228.5 x 228.5cm	Khvay Samnang with Nget Rady <i>Where is My Land?</i> 2014 Chromogenic print on archival paper 60.0 x 89.0cm Edition of 4	Phan Quang <i>A Farmer's Diary</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print on archival paper Edition of 3 90.0 x 150.0cm
Alfredo Aquilizan <i>Transportables #1</i> (after Inhabit: Project Another Country), 2013 Graphite over print on paper 1/3 Unique edition 66.0 x 50.0cm	Khvay Samnang with Nget Rady <i>Where is My Land?</i> 2014 Chromogenic print on archival paper 90.0 x 200.0cm Edition of 3	Phan Quang <i>A Farmer's Diary</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print on archival paper Edition of 3 90.0 x 150.0cm
Alfredo Aquilizan <i>Transportables #2</i> (after Inhabit: Project Another Country), 2013 Graphite over print on paper 1/3 Unique edition 66.0 x 50.0cm	Khvay Samnang with Nget Rady <i>Where is My Land?</i> 2014 Chromogenic print on archival paper 90.0 x 267.0cm Edition of 3	Phan Quang <i>A Farmer's Diary</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print on archival paper Edition of 3 90.0 x 150.0cm
Alfredo Aquilizan <i>Transportables #4</i> (after Inhabit: Project Another Country), 2013 Graphite over print on paper 1/3 Unique edition 66.0 x 50.0cm	Khvay Samnang with Nget Rady <i>Where is My Land?</i> 2014 Chromogenic print on archival paper 80.0x 120.0cm Edition of 4	Piyarat Piyapongwiwat <i>Untitled</i> , 2013 Cloth remnants, thread 250.0 x 200.0cm

The Artists

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan
Alfredo born 1962, Cagayan Valley, the Philippines
Isabel born 1965, Manila, the Philippines
Live and work in Brisbane, Australia and Manila, the Philippines

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan's collaborative practice often involves the participation of specific communities, and explores processes of creation and migration, as well as the experience of place and memory. They have exhibited in major biennales and museums internationally for over 15 years. Selected solo exhibitions include *In-Habit: Project Another Country*, The Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide, 2014 and 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, 2013; *Address*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, Quezon City, 2011; *Stock*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, Quezon City, 2010. Selected group exhibitions include *Collective Memories*, Ichihara Lakeside Museum, Chiba, 2014; *5th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art*, Moscow, 2013; *Yes Naturally*, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague, 2013; *Sharjah Biennial 11*, Sharjah, 2011; *Asian Art Biennial*, Taichung, Taiwan, 2011; *Stealing the Senses*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, 2011; *Negotiating Home; History and Nation: Two Decades of Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia 1991-2011*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, 2011; *Last Words Phase II*, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, 2010; *Liverpool Biennial 10*, Liverpool, 2010; *6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT6)*, QAGOMA, Brisbane, 2009; *Singapore Biennale*, Singapore, 2008; *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Adelaide, SA, 2008; *Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial*, Niigata-ken, 2006; *15th Biennale of Sydney*, Sydney 2006; *50th International Venice Biennale*, Venice, 2003; *Busan Biennale*, Busan, 2002; *Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT3)*, Queensland Art Gallery, 1999; *1st Fukuoka Art Triennale*, Fukuoka, 1999; *VI Bienal de La Haban*, Havana, 1997. Alfredo Aquilizan was educated in Australia (PhD, Queensland College of Art at Griffith University), the UK (MFA, Anglia Polytechnic University, Norwich), the USA (Art Student League of New York) and the Philippines (BFA, Philippines Women's University). Isabel Aquilizan was educated in the Philippines (BA, Assumption College).

Chan Dany
Born 1984, Prey Veng
Lives and works in Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Chan Dany's meticulously handmade works typically explore the ancient Cambodian system of ornamentation known as the *Khmer kbach*, and its meaning and continuing relevance in the contemporary context. He has exhibited in many of the most significant venues for contemporary art in Cambodia and Southeast Asia, as well as internationally. Selected solo exhibitions include *The Collection of Small Things* SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh, 2013; *If They Were With Us Today* SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh, 2012. Selected group exhibitions include *Phnom Penh: Rescue Archaeology*, ifa-Galerie, Berlin and Stuttgart, 2013; *Possession (I)* Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Bangkok, 2013; *Art Basel Hong Kong*, Hong Kong, 2013; *L'Asie en Vogue*, Pagoda Paris, 2012; *In Transition*, Reyum Institute, Phnom Penh, 2008; *Strategies from Within*, curated by Biljana Ciric, Ke Centre, Shanghai, 2008. Selected publications include Erin Gleeson et al., eds, *Phnom Penh: Rescue Archaeology / Contemporary Art and Urban Change in Cambodia*, Berlin and Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 2013; Ly Daravuth ed., *In Transition*, Reyum Institute, Phnom Penh, 2008. Chan Dany was educated in Cambodia (Reyum Institute).

Khvay Samnang
Born 1982, Svay Rieng, Cambodia
Lives and works in Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Khvay Samnang's practice incorporates photography, video, performance and installation in a sharply playful investigation of transformation of social, political and cultural circumstances in the contemporary world, especially in Cambodia and its surrounding regions. Selected solo exhibitions include *Rubber Man*, Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2015; *Rubber Man*, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh, 2014; *Newspaper Man*, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh, 2012; *Human Nature*, PhotoPhnomPenh, Phnom Penh, 2012; *Untitled*, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh, 2011. Selected group exhibitions include *Phnom Penh Rescue Archaeology: The Body, The Lens, The City*, as part of *The Disappearance*, Center for Contemporary Art, Singapore, 2014; *Medicine to Heal: Cambodian Photography since 2000*, Xishuangbanna Foto Festival, Yunnan, China, 2014; *Censorship*, The 7th Move On Asia, Alternative Space LOOB, Seoul, Korea, 2014; 4th Asian Art Biennale, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taipei, 2013; *4th Singapore Biennale*, Singapore, 2013;

Sights and Sounds: Global Video Art, The Jewish Museum, New York City, 2013; *Phnom Penh: Rescue Archaeology*, ifa-Galerie, Berlin and Stuttgart, 2013; *Staging Cambodia: Video, Memory and Rock-n-Roll*, HAU, Berlin, 2012; Tobias Rehberger Pavilion "You Owe Me. I Don't Owe You Nothin." as part of *Gwangju Biennale*, Gwangju, 2012; *Poetic Politic*, Kadist Foundation, San Francisco, 2012; *Ruptures and Revival: Cambodian Photography in the Last Decade*, Institute of Contemporary Art Singapore, 2012; *Tokyo 2010*, Tokyo Wonder Site, Hongo, 2011; *Luxury Time and Space*, Tokyo Wonder Site Aoyama, 2010; *Orange International Photography Festival*, Changsa, China, 2010. Khvay Samnang was educated in Cambodia (BFA, Royal University of Fine Arts). He is currently 2014-15 artist-in-residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany.

Nget Rady
Born 1988, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Lives and works in Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Nget Rady is a contemporary dancer with over 15 years of training and experience, who has toured extensively in Asia and Europe. Significant international performances include *Khmeropédies III*, choreographed by Emmanuele Phuon, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2013 and *da:ns Festival*, Singapore, 2013; *Crack*, choreographed by Arco Renz, which was awarded the ZKB prize in Zurich, 2012; and *Temporal Pattern*, choreographed by Hiraoki Umeda, *Aichi Triennale*, Nagoya and *da:ns Festival*, Singapore, 2013. In Cambodia, Nget has performed at major venues including *Street Dance*, Institut Français, 2011-14; and with the *Cambodian Royal Ballet Troupe*, World Heritage Committee Meeting, Siem Reap, 2013. Nget has danced with Sovanna Phum Arts Association since 2006 and with Amrita Performing Arts, since 2010. *Forward*, the first video to feature Nget's choreography, was included in *Our City Festival*, Phnom Penh, 2014. Nget Rady was educated in Cambodia (BFA, Royal University of Fine Arts).

Nge Lay
Born 1979, Pyin Oo Lwin, Myanmar/
Burma. Lives and works in Yangon,
Myanmar/Burma

Nge Lay's photographic and installation works often explore the complex challenges of life in contemporary Myanmar/Burma, especially for women and survivors of political violence. Together with artist Aung Ko, she has organized the *Thuye'dan Village Art Project* since 2007, a critically acclaimed experiment in non-urban public and participatory research and presentation. She has exhibited in major biennales and museums in Asia and internationally, and was a featured participant in Ong Keng Sen's *Flying Circus Project*, Myanmar/Burma and Singapore, 2013. Nge Lay's selected group exhibitions include *Concept Context Contestation: Art and the Collective in Southeast Asia*, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Bangkok, 2013-14; *4th Singapore Biennale*, Singapore, 2013; *Women In-Between 1985-2012*, Okinawa Prefecture Art Museum, 2012; *Orange International Photography Festival*, Changsa, China, 2010. Nge Lay was educated in Myanmar/Burma (BFA, University of Culture and B.Ec., Yangon East University).

Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai
Born 1983, Hanoi, Vietnam
Lives and works in Hue,
Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai works in a variety of media to explore experiences of struggle and oppression; at times her focus is on complex issues affecting women's bodies, while in other works she turns to questions raised by migration and national identity. A leading artist in the central Vietnamese city of Hue, Nguyen Thi Thanh is a 2014 recipient of the prestigious Pollock Krasner Foundation grant, and has also received grants from the Cultural Development and Exchange Fund in 2012 and 2014. Selected solo exhibitions include *Day By Day*, Sao La, Ho Chi Minh City and Sa Sa Bassac, Phnom Penh, 2014; *The Scar*, Thomas Gallery, Ho Chi Minh City, 2012. Selected group exhibitions include *I-Camp 2013*, Muong's Cultural Space Museum, Hoa Binh, Vietnam, 2013; *XEM*, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, 2013; *No.1*, New Space Arts Foundation, Hue, 2012; *Riverscapes In Flux*, Goethe Institut, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia, 2012. Nguyen Thi Thanh has undertaken residencies in Vietnam, Cambodia and South Korea and was educated in Vietnam (BFA, Hue College of the Arts) and Thailand (MFA, Mahasarakham University). She was recently announced as 2015-16 artist-in-residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany.

Piyarat Piyapongwiwat
Born 1977, Phrae, Thailand
Lives and works in Bangkok and
Chiang Mai, Thailand

—
Piyarat Piyapongwiwat's practice shifts between photography, video, participatory practice and new media and is often collaborative in nature. Selected solo exhibitions include *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, Angkrit Gallery, Chiang Rai, 2013; *Queerness*, Toot Yung Gallery, Bangkok, 2012. Selected group exhibitions include *Radiation: Art and Queer Ideas from Bangkok and Manila, Un-Compared* Art Center, Chulalongkorn University, 2014; *Zeitgeist*, SOMArts Cultural Center, San Francisco, 2013; *Radiation*, Department of Avant-Garde Cliches, Manila, 2012; *Thai Trends from Localism to Internationalism* Bangkok Art & Cultural Centre, Bangkok, 2011 ; *City of Angels/Identity Crisis*, Gallery 59 Rivoli, Paris

2011. Piyapongwiwat's videos and short films have screened internationally, including in *MicroCities*, *inCube Arts* and *inToAsia: Time-based Art Festival*, The NARS foundation, New York, 2012; *29th Tehran International Short Film Festival*, Tehran, Iran, 2012; and *28th Kasseler Dokumentarfilm und Videofest*, Kassel, Germany, 2011. She was educated in France (BFA Hons, Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Montpellier) and Australia (BA, RMIT University).

Phan Quang
Born 1976, Binh Dinh, Vietnam
Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh
City, Vietnam

—
Phan Quang's practice is based in photography, and explores with a critical humour the contradictory political and cultural circumstances of contemporary Vietnam and its surrounds. Before beginning to exhibit his artwork, Phan worked for over a decade as a photojournalist for some of Asia's best known media, including *Forbes* and *Viet Nam Economic Times*. Selected solo exhibitions include *Space/Limit*, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, 2013 (banned by Vietnamese government); and *Adaptations*, Koganecho Bazaar, Yokohama, 2013. Selected group exhibitions include *5th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale*, Fukuoka, 2014; *Poetic Politic*, Kadist Foundation, San Francisco, 2012; *PhotoPhnomPenh*, Institut Français du Cambodge, Phnom Penh, 2011, and *To Ho Chi Minh City With Love: A Social Sculpture*, an exhibition by Phong Bui, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City. Phan was educated in Vietnam (B.Ec., University of Economics) and USA (Long Beach City College), and is 2014-15 Asian Cultural Council Fellow in New York City, USA.

The Curators

Roger Nelson is an independent curator based in Phnom Penh, and a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne researching contemporaneity and recent Cambodian art. He publishes internationally on Southeast Asian contemporary art, including in *ArtAsiaPacific*; *Artlink*; *Art Monthly Australia*; *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture*; *The Phnom Penh Post*; *Randian* and *The Lifted Brow*. Recent catalogue essays include Pinaree Sanpitak at Yavuz Fine Art, Singapore; Khvay Samnang at Tomio Koyama Gallery, Singapore; and Khvay Samnang at Taipei's *Asian Art Biennial* (co-authored with Erin Gleeson). Roger recently spoke on performance in Cambodian visual art at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and is currently working on curatorial projects in Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam. He was recently accepted for the Getty Foundation and University of Sydney's *Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art* research initiative. rogernelson.net

Anita Archer is director of Anita Archer Fine Art which was established in 2002 and is one of Australia's leading independent art consultancies specialising in Australian and contemporary Asian art. Anita trained at Sotheby's in London and has held senior corporate and auctioneering roles for major auction houses from Australia, Indonesia, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. As well as advising significant Australian collectors on the establishment and development of their collections, Anita has co-curated a number of exhibitions including *Closing the Gap: Contemporary Indonesian Art* at MiFA, Melbourne. Anita is the curator of Mainland Art Fund, Australia's only collector group focused on contemporary Asian art. She is also a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne researching the market for contemporary Chinese art. anitaarcherfineart.com.au

Public Programs

—
Part of Multicultural
Arts Victoria's Mapping
Melbourne 2014

15 Nov. – 7 Dec. Melbourne Federation Square Big Screen Program

—
Daily screenings at Federation Square's "Big Screen" will showcase video artworks and documentary footage by the exhibited artists and others. Early projects by Khvay Samnang and Piyarat Piyapongwiwat will provide context for the exhibited works, while a range of other short films reveal a variety of approaches to the moving image, creative research and daily life. *Check FedSquare.com/events/fedtv/ for daily screening times.*

25 Nov. 5.30pm Curator Walk-Through

—
Join Phnom Penh based curator Roger Nelson for a private walk through of the exhibition before its official opening. Roger is an expert on contemporary art in Southeast Asia, and has worked closely with each of the exhibited artists for a number of years. This tour will illustrate the dynamic and diverse contemporary culture from which the exhibited works emerge. *Free event, no bookings required.*

28 Nov. 6.00-7.00pm Curating Asia

—
As we venture further into the Asian Century Australia's engagement with the wider region expands. This roundtable discussion brings together three curators who, over the last decade, have been instrumental in forging new curatorial ties and connections between Australia and Asia. *Free event, no bookings required.*

29 Nov. 10.00am-2.00pm Rhythm and Repeat

—
In this workshop we join noted graphic designer and illustrator Spencer Harrison to examine contemporary artworks from Southeast Asia and draw inspiration to create our own digital patterns. We will be working on paper first to produce hand drawn marks, which we will scan and digitise to create vector-based patterns suitable for a variety of applications. The skills you learn can be used to create patterns for textile design, interior design, packaging, branding and more. *Cost: \$35. Bookings required, at www.spenceroni.com/shop/swimming-in-sand-pattern-design-workshop*

30 Nov. 10.30am-12.00pm Kids Program: Everyday to Ornament

—
Reflect and respond to the exciting work of Southeast Asian art with Blanc Canvas. Kate Matheson has created a kids program especially for children aged 5-10 that will have them creating masterpieces inspired by the work of Chan Dany. *Cost: \$15. Bookings required, contact studio@blanccanvas.com.au*

2 Dec. 5.30pm Art Basel in Hong Kong, Art Dubai & Sharjah Biennial Tour Info Night

—
Exhibition co-curator Anita Archer discusses upcoming tour to Art Basel in Hong Kong, Art Dubai and the Sharjah Biennial in March 2015. *Free event, no bookings required.*

2 Dec. 6.00-7.00pm Collecting Contemporary Asian Art

—
Join three Asian art world aficionados as they discuss the market for contemporary Asian art and its current trends. *Free event, no bookings required.*

This catalogue is published
to accompany the exhibition
*Swimming in Sand; Growing
Rice Under An Umbrella*
Curated by: Roger Nelson
and Anita Archer
25 Nov. - 7 Dec. 2014

~

No Vacancy Gallery
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