



90th ANNIVERSARY

Faculty of Architecture Chulalongkorn University

Lecture

End of Nation: The Politics of Contemporary Art as Visual Culture in Thailand

31 January 2024

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN FOR SOCIETY LECTURE SERIES:

การล่มสลายของชาติ : ความเห็นทางการเมือง ในศิลปะร่วมสมัยเชิงวัฒนธรรมทางศิลปะของ ประเทศไทย

วันที่ 31 มกราคม พ.ศ. 2567 ณ คณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ผู้เข้าร่วมเสวนา: Dr. Brain Curtin, Dr. Paramaporn Sirikulchayanont



การบรรยายของ อาจารย์ ดร. ไบรอัน เคอร์ติส ณ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย เป็นการบรรยายเพื่อนำเสนอส่วนหนึ่งของหนังสือ “End of Nation: The Politics of Contemporary Art as Visual Culture in Thailand” การบรรยายนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงานบรรยาย Architecture and Design for Society 2024 โดยคณะสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

เนื้อหาการบรรยายกล่าวถึงการที่ศิลปินของไทยสร้างงานศิลปะ โดยมีแนวคิดหลักตอบรับกับสถานการณ์ทางการเมืองที่เกิดขึ้นในประเทศไทยในช่วงเวลาต่าง ๆ รวมถึงการพิจารณาบทบาทของศิลปะร่วมสมัยทั้งของไทยและเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ที่มีต่อเวทีศิลปะในระดับนานาชาติ

ไบรอันได้เน้นย้ำให้เห็นถึงการขาดแคลนของการศึกษา การวิเคราะห์เกี่ยวกับประเด็นเรื่องศิลปะและการเมืองนี้ ซึ่งแม้จะมีการศึกษาในประเด็นนี้อยู่บ้าง อย่างไรก็ตามไบรอันได้ยกตัวอย่าง หนังสือที่กล่าวถึงผลงานศิลปะร่วมสมัยในประเทศไทยกัมพูชาและเวียดนาม แต่ก็ไม่ได้เพียงพอที่จะครอบคลุมความเป็นมาเป็นไปตลอดหลายทศวรรษที่ผ่านมา ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น การที่วงการศิลปะร่วมสมัยนั้นกำเนิดและได้รับอิทธิพลจากมุมมองฝั่งโลกตะวันตก ทำให้การมองศิลปะของภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ถูกครอบงำด้วยมุมมองจากฝั่งโลกตะวันตกเช่นกัน คำถามคือ เราสามารถศึกษาศิลปะร่วมสมัยของไทย หรือภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ โดยไม่ยึดโยงกับแว่นของโลกตะวันตกได้หรือไม่ ในขณะที่ประวัติศาสตร์ของภูมิภาคนั้นผูกโยงกับประวัติศาสตร์ในช่วงการล่าอาณานิคม และความขัดแย้งสำคัญ ๆ อย่างแยกไม่ออก

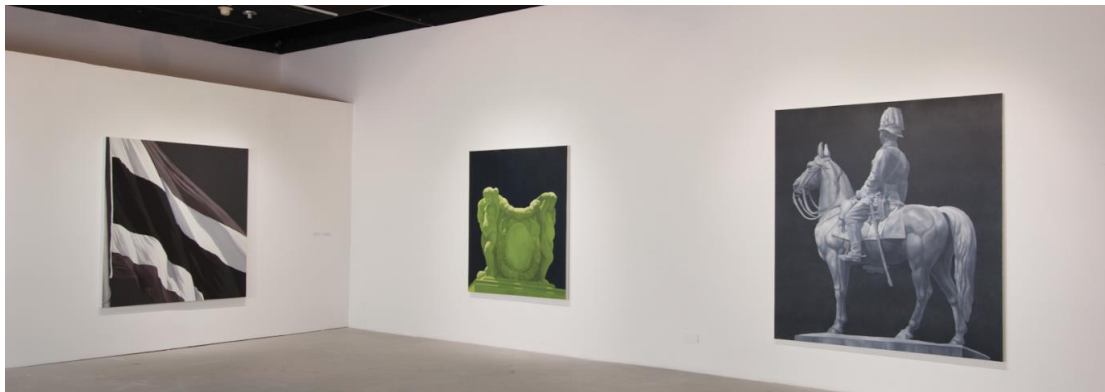
การบรรยายได้พยายามชี้ให้เห็นถึงวัฒนธรรมภาพทางสายตา (Visual culture) ที่ทำขึ้นเพื่อตอบสนองต่อเหตุการณ์ทางการเมืองของไทย โดยเฉพาะในมุมมองของฝั่งประชาชนที่ใช้ศิลปะเป็นเครื่องมือเพื่อประท้วงต่ออำนาจรัฐ ทั้งเหตุการณ์การประท้วงของเสื้อแดง กปปส. ไปจนถึงการประท้วงในปี พ.ศ. 2563 พร้อมทั้งชี้ให้เห็นมุมมองความขัดแย้งในการตีความงานศิลปะผ่านงานของ สุธี คุณาวิชยานนท์

ไบรอันบรรยายถึงรายละเอียดของบทบาทของงานศิลปะ และบริบททางการเมืองที่เกี่ยวข้อง ว่า งานศิลปะเหล่านั้นได้สร้างและสื่อความหมายทางการเมืองออกสู่สาธารณะในน้ำเสียงที่แตกต่างกัน ยกตัวอย่าง เช่น งานของ วสันต์ สิทธิเขตต์ ที่เต็มไปด้วยการประชดประชันเสียดสีนั้น นำไปสู่ความขัดแย้งและแรงปะทะกลับมาจากสังคม



Imagine Peace, 2010, installation view, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre.

นอกจากนี้การบรรยายยังกล่าวถึงแนวคิด ทฤษฎี และงานของศิลปินอีกหลายคน เช่น งานจิตรกรรมภายใต้แนวคิดทางการเมืองของของ นที อุตฤทธิ์ งานศิลปะจัดวางของ อภิชาติพงศ์ วีระเศรษฐกุล ที่แสดงความเปลี่ยนแปลงของสภาพของกรุงเทพมหานครในช่วงเปลี่ยนผ่านระหว่างช่วงยุคฟองสบู่ และหลังฟองสบู่แตก รวมถึงงานภาพถ่ายของ ไมตรี ศิริบุรณ ที่แสดงถึงโลกของวัฒนธรรมเควีย์ร์ (queer) ผ่านมุมมองตลกขำ



Natee Utarit, *The Amusement of Dreams Hope and Perfection*, 2007, installation view, Art Center of Chulalongkorn University.

โดยสรุป การบรรยายของโปรอันพยายามชี้ให้เห็นบทบาทของศิลปะร่วมสมัยของไทย และเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ที่เชื่อมโยงแนวคิด มุมมองทางสังคม การเมือง เข้ากับผลงานทางศิลปะร่วมสมัยอย่างซับซ้อน และน่าสนใจ โดยกระบวนการนี้มีความเป็นมาเป็นไปเกี่ยวโยงกันอย่างลึกซึ้งตลอดระยะเวลาหลายสิบปี

End of Nation: The Politics of Contemporary Art as Visual Culture in Thailand

31 JANUARY 2024 AT THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANTS: DR. BRIAN CURTIN, DR. PARAMAPORN SIRIKULCHAYANONT



Brian Curtin, in his lecture at Chulalongkorn University, introduces his monograph titled “End of Nation: The Politics of Contemporary Art as Visual Culture in Thailand,” part of the Architecture and Design for Society 2024 series. The talk delves into how Thai artists shape ideas that influence from the political events in Thailand and address global interest in contemporary Thai and Southeast Asian art.

Curtin emphasizes the lack of engagement and analysis in the field, encouraging the audience to explore the exhibition and video mapping afterward. He discusses books on contemporary art in Vietnam and Cambodia, emphasizing the need to approach Southeast Asian art without relying on Western aesthetics. Curtin raises questions about discussing Thai art without a Western lens, considering the absence of colonial histories and certain wars in Thailand.

The lecture links visual cultures to political events in Thailand, highlighting the role of aesthetics in protests. Curtin explores specific projects that are influenced by the Red shirt movement in Bangkok, questioning the relationship



Imagine Peace, 2010, installation view, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre.

between contemporary Thai art and politics. He discusses the controversy around Sutee Kunavichayanont's inclusion in an exhibition, addressing the challenges of interpreting political messages in artworks.

Curtin delves into the political and artistic implications of Sutee's works and those of other surveyed artists, examining how meanings are mediated through aesthetics. He critiques the sensational view of Southeast Asian nations and shifts to discussing Vasan Sitthiket's agitprop work. The talk touches on themes of irony and cynicism in Thai art and explores the impact of international pressures and local expectations.

Curtin introduces theories related to Natee Utarit's career, discussing classical-inspired paintings with political undertones. Apichatpong Weerasethakul's installation, Marakot, and Maitri's Silk Room are explored, addressing themes of

personal histories, queer interests, and layered engagement with Bangkok's changes. The presentation concludes by examining artists Sornchai Phongsa and Korakrit Arunanondchai, inviting further exploration of factors influencing artists moving away from nationalist identifications.



Natee Utarit, *The Amusement of Dreams Hope and Perfection*, 2007, installation view, Art Center of Chulalongkorn University.

Brian Curtin's lecture provides comprehensive insights and persuades audiences to observe the complex relationship between contemporary Thai art, politics, and societal changes over the years.

Special Talk Transcription.

Topic: End of Nation: The Politics of Faculty Contemporary Art as Visual Culture in Thailand

Records File: 2023-03-20 15-53-35.mvk

Audio/Video Duration: 02:20:56

Date transcribed: 12 March 2024

Time	Speaker	Audio
2:42	Moderator	Today, I'm going to be the moderator for Brian Curtin. This lecture series is part of Architecture and Design for Society 2024, which is an activity to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Faculty of Architecture, Chulalongkorn University. We will be held monthly, once or twice a month, by the lecturers who have diverse specifications and academic backgrounds. We hope that the audience will get some knowledge and experience in terms of design and research topics that are related to the society. First of all, on behalf of the Faculty of Architecture, we would like to thank you, Sakul Thai United, for supporting this terrific activity today. First of all, I would like to welcome the Dean of the Faculty, Assistant Professor Sarayut Supsook, to give an opening speech.
3:46	Assistant Professor Sarayut Supsook	Welcome everyone to the Faculty of Architecture again. Thank you for coming to our lecture. In fact, I'm an architect and I cannot comment on the things about contemporary art and visual culture, really, because I don't know anything about that. But one thing I'm sure that this could be my observation is that the Thai visual culture, or Thai art, is different among Thai and foreigners, because we have different eyes to see things. Because we are mainly Thai people, we live in the culture so long, so we would see something as Thai, differently from foreigners. Maybe today we can have some point on that and we can discuss it later after the lecture. Thank

		<p>you, Dr. Brian Curtin, for giving us some interesting lecture tonight. And if you're still interested in art, after the lecture, we've got a little exhibition downstairs on the second floor. And after 6.30pm, we have a light-up of our buildings. So it's a bonus for every one of you. I think it's about half after we finish this, so we can see the video mapping in the front and take it together. Thank you for your event.</p>
5:38	Moderator	<p>Okay, so to keep it brief, I would like to introduce a little bit to you for this lecture. We have our lecturer here today, Dr. Brian Curtin. And the lecture is titled, End of Nation, the Politics of Contemporary Art as Visual Culture in Thailand. So Brian is a lecturer on BFA and MFA in Communication Design in the Faculty of Architecture here at Denmark University. He has been living in Bangkok since 2000. As well as teaching, Brian writes on contemporary art and publishes across a range of popular and academic contexts. He also curates, and this year he will be one of the curatorial team for Bangkok at Biennale 2024 as well. So Brian's lecture is based on his monograph, Essential Designs, Contemporary Art in Thailand, which was published by Reaction Books in UK in 2021. And as the promotional text reads, the book addresses how Thai artists are generating new ideas about their country.</p>
6:39	Moderator	<p>This lecture both introduces the book and expands on the deepening of the politics of nationalism as it aims to shape the critical interests of contemporary Thai art since the late 1980s. So after the lecture, you're welcome to throw in questions if you have some questions in mind. So please welcome Brian Curtin.</p>
7:05	Brian Curtin	<p>Thanks a lot to everyone for coming. I'm not sure how the lecture is going to pan out, actually, because some of it is quite dense.</p>

7:23		Okay, so first of all, it's actually to promote the book. So please go out and buy it because nobody else is. It hasn't, the sales have not been skyrocketing, which also we can talk about is what exactly would, that's an interesting point as well that could be discussed, is really what interest would Thai art, contemporary art in Thailand, what interest would contemporary Thai art hold for the rest of the world?
7:55		Why would anyone be interested in it? And furthermore, what can we actually say about it?
8:04		The book itself, I'll just give a quick brief intro to it, is just a basic survey. So it surveys all the major artists in and from Thailand since the late, since the 90s to recently. And the late 80s, as we know, the late 80s is really dated as the beginning of contemporary art, when around the end of the modern period.
8:34		As I kept on pointing out, one of the reasons I think the book was commissioned is because actually two of the most well-known artists in the world happen to be Thai, (8:43) Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Rirkrit Tiravanija. So their work is very well known, but it's not always understood in a type of, as Thai, it's not understood in a Thai context. So there's different things to say.
9:01		Now, I'm going to begin a bit, that's a sort of question.
9:04		I want to keep the talk as loose and informal as possible. And by the way, I forgot to thank and thank everyone for inviting me to give the first lecture of Architecture and Design, which this is very loosely related to. (9:20) Another point is that it would be a good introduction to contemporary art in Thailand, which again, I don't think it's commonly well known, and there isn't a large engagement with it
9:31		That's not really to do with the work. It's also to do with what's written about it and how it circulates, which is also partly addressed in the book.

9:40		Now, I think I'm all over the place. So thanks again for offering me. So hopefully you will get something out of it that is comparable or applicable to your own disciplines, which is why I tried to link contemporary art as visual culture and visual culture as more of a sort of general field, as more of raises questions about aesthetics and the analysis of aesthetics, which a lot of Thai artists suffered from a lack of that analysis.
10:15		So I'm going to begin according to my notes. Now, this is very vain of me, because in terms of actually relating my book amongst my betters, but this should adequately introduce why I made the decisions I did about the approach or narrative of my book.
10:33		This will also begin to focus the theme of this talk, and I believe, of course, this is a good introduction to contemporary art in Thailand.
10:43		This is also a point of comparison between Thailand and our neighbors.
10:48		I've been teaching for years. I can ask you students to put up your hands and tell me what you know about Cambodia or tell me what you know about Vietnam, and then you can ask me what do I know about France, Germany, and blah, blah, blah.
11:04		So in return, but that leads us into a point, which is the point that I want to make.
11:10		Firstly, I'm going to introduce these two amazing books, which were published around the same time as mine, and they're based in basically contemporary art in Vietnam and Cambodia.
11:24		Return Engagements would have a greater emphasis on Cambodia, and certainly Pamela's book, The City in Time, has a much greater engagement of Vietnam.
11:37		Now here, Vietnamese Return Engagement looks at artists in Vietnam and Cambodia who were displaced because of the Vietnam War and other forms of national violence, but they returned later to their countries to establish international careers as artists.

11:56		Now Viet is interested in how the aim of the book is in how they complicate, these artists complicate stereotypical views of the region by drawing on their awareness of trends encountered in largely the US, but also Europe to a degree, and these artists refuse to fit a strict category of Asian artists, and a strict sort of stereotypical category would be that Asian artists typically present views of war, trauma, etc.
12:28		So the book looks at how basically artists from Cambodia and Vietnam push against this.
12:33		Now Pamela Khoury's The City in Time is similar because she focuses on contemporary arts engagement with urban change and development, which is here, and these are places, I mean the cities in Cambodia and Vietnam, these are places that saw colonialism, post-colonialism, communism, post-socialism.
12:56		So that's an amazing question to ask, how would that affect urban form?
13:01		That's a good design angle, and furthermore how would artists, oh shit, what have I done, hang on, put that back on, and then furthermore how would artists in turn, I'll go back a slide, and back, back, back, and further how in time, you know, artists would address this.
13:26		So in Pamela's term, artists are not representing any fixed notions of place, they're unpacking the different and dynamic impact that these political systems, such as colonialism, post-colonialism, etc., have had on people's daily lives, people who lived in
13:44		So these are incredibly strong themes to talk about contemporary art, but the reason we draw this point of comparison is not simply because we're all part of Southeast Asia, it's more the question is how would you write about contemporary art from a region like Southeast Asia, from a region like, from a country like Thailand, how would you begin to approach that without writing about it through Western aesthetics, without writing it through European art history?

14:14		Do we want to use European art history, do we want to use Western aesthetics?
14:19		Not really. So how would you begin to unpack this and contextualize it?
14:25		So people often ask me then, like, Brian, why did you write the book the way you did?
14:30		I mean, I have an answer. So my aim here, and I don't want to be contentious, so don't kill the messenger, my aim here is to basically raise the question of how contemporary art from Thailand can be represented or discussed.
14:45		As I said, the comparison with Cambodian Vietnam is not a question of proximity within Southeast Asia any more than you would write about Irish art in relation to French art, but rather the question of how to approach art that has been developed outside major cultural centers such as London, New York, or Berlin.
15:06		So I want to, like, this is a bit like a class or a symposium. I know the answer, but I'll throw it open to you.
15:13		How would you? And furthermore, Thailand, lovely country, we don't have the histories of colonialism, and we don't have the histories of, I won't go into details, of wars, et cetera, that often are a sort of international lens.
15:28		They're a means of identifying art from Cambodia, from Burma, from, on international art circuits, where Thailand always sits.
15:36		Now, I have the answer. It's what's in the book. It's why I wrote, but as to keep it a bit lively here, to throw the question back to you, I mean, how would you talk about art?
15:46		Okay, so visual cultures further to the various political meltdowns in Thailand of the last two decades have been addressed by scholars.

15:57		These include Rachel Harrison, which is the far one. Rachel Harrison is a scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.
16:05		These include Rachel Harrison's account of cultural influences on protesters, which we all know from the famed three-fingers salute taken from the film series The Hunger Games to examples such as protesters distributing free tickets to a cinema screening of The Hunger Games in order to encourage recognition of an analogy to Thailand's then political situation.
16:29		Okay, so this, and Claire Veal over here traced the centrality, the importance of aesthetics, to the 2010 street protests, which beyond the color-coded factions of red and yellow, created virtual anti-government collectives through internet platforms and graffiti that allowed for the challenging of national narratives and also the avoidance of censorship.
17:00		So if aesthetics are playing such an important role in people identifying as a collective group, pro- or anti-government, then you might ask the question, which I have with this in mind, there is a context. So people like Harrison, Claire Veal, there is a context.
17:21		With this in mind, there is a context to ask about the role that contemporary Thai artists have played or play amidst the urges of the politics of the country.
17:32		That is, given artists' primary engagement with aesthetics, it's the one thing artists do, how can their practices become implicated in politics?
17:41		Now this is not an overly speculative question in relation to the writings of Harrison and Veal, which I've just mentioned. This question, as we say, can be grounded, can be embedded, or comes from certain events and projects that have happened in Bangkok.
18:01		This question can be raised around projects such as the Imagine Peace exhibition at the Bangkok Art and Culture

		Centre, BACC, which was organized in response to the deadly 2010 street protests.
18:15		Now the exhibition was widely criticized as incoherent and facile. It was saying nothing. It wasn't helping anyone. It was sort of bullshitty, if I can say that word.
18:28		It was thrown together. The sort of national political language, I think, as David Tay put it, and David Tay, I think, put it wrongly, but the political language in Thai art was just, it was a sort of mess. Now that's actually not true. What the mess was the curating of the exhibition, because artists made work too quickly. They were asked to make work in response to these, you know, urgent political problems. That was really the problem. It wasn't the work in itself.
18:58		Because of the artworks, yeah, this is a curatorial issue, as I've just said because many of the artworks were already made in response to the theme, rather than assembling, rather than curating or bringing together artworks that offer insight into why not Thai politics arrived at this violent point in history.
19:18		So we can ask again, we could ask, can, would artworks offer some insight into why Thai politics has arrived at this terrible and very violent point in history to the, with the 2010 protests?
19:34		Now a second incident, which I've gone backwards, is again, these are quite controversial.
19:40		I'm not taking sides. In 2016, a group called Cultural Activists for Democracy, CAD, in Thailand distributed an open letter. We know what an open letter is.
19:53		Almost anyone can sign it, with hundreds of signatories. This was addressed to the Gwangju Museum of Art in South Korea, and it was a protest against the inclusion of works by Thai artist Sutee Kunavichayanont in an exhibition under the title, Asia, Democracy, Human Rights and Peace.

20:16		Now you can look this up. It was a controversial moment.
20:18		This exhibition commemorated the infamous Gwangju uprising in South Korea of 1980.
20:25		Now the Cultural Activists for Democracy claimed that Sutee had contributed to fundraising efforts for the People's Democratic Reform Committee, the PDRC, who are an, and I say, allegedly conservative political group.
20:40		The works in question were agitprop, we know what agitprop, agitation and propaganda, which, as we can see here, with slogans such as reform.
20:50		Now, in a word, it was said that Sutee supported protests against Yingluck Shinawatra's democratically elected government and seized Thailand, and the date of some of the works from 2014 could link him to the Bangkok shutdown protests, which paralysed central Bangkok, called for a boycott of a free election, and blocked voting booths.
21:16		So this was the political upheaval that was at the time.
21:19		Some people, and we don't have to agree with them, claim that Sutee should not be in an exhibition celebrating democracy and human rights if he can be connected to the Bangkok shutdown protests.
21:31		Now, Sutee denied the claims.
21:33		He said that he opposed alleged corruption in Yingluck Shinawatra's administration, in her government, which was the central claim of the PDRC.
21:42		An open letter by leading artists, who I look at, such as Manish Rewanich, Puman Vasanthi Sitthiket, and again hundreds of signatories, defended Sutee and reiterated, remade the claim that corruption breeds problems and might legitimately necessitate the opposing of an elected government.
22:10		CAD, the cultural activist, could highlight circumstantial facts of Sutee's relationship to the protesters, who somewhat got what they asked for, because Yingluck's government was

		removed, while Manish and others pleaded for an understanding of pure-hearted citizens.
22:28		Now, my point here would be that neither side, whether pro or anti-Sutee, neither of them produced a strong argument about how artists can be implicated or not in the conservatism of national politics.
22:45		Neither of them produced an actual argument, how would you interpret those artworks.
22:51		And here it highlighted how Sutee's art has long, here it can be, in other words, I did, here it can be highlighted how Sutee's art has long participated in the official concerns of the nation the very definition of nationalism, and he was accused of a sort of conservative version of them.
23:12		CAD, the cultural activist for democracy, thus necessitated a demand of understanding Thai artists' implication in traditional forms of nationalism, while not answering this.
23:24		And this failure was to remain pronounced as the factiousness, the disagreements, and arguments evolved.
23:31		So I'm simply saying, as the book tries to explore quite lightly, how can you interpret these artworks as political?
23:42		And what are they saying? Would you understand them as conservative? Would you understand them as more radical?
23:49		And what do we mean by any of these terms in a local context?
23:52		Now here is where I can bring you right through a survey. Okay, that's fine. So here I can bring you through a survey. So we basically ask this question of how are we going to interpret artworks according to politics.
24:14		And we've got examples where we need to, basically. And we've got examples where there is this primarily strong interest in Thailand of how meanings get mediated through aesthetics.

24:30		Now again, here we get a clear sense of the need to engage Thai artists' practices firmly in national politics.
24:38		How? In the example of Sutee, if we look at earlier works, such as Siamese Breath Twins, which was made in response to the 1997, way before most of you were born, Asian financial crisis that began in Bangkok, we can see a color-coded reference to East and West, or West and East, White and Yellow, and a distinct symbol of Thai in the twin form, in the famous Siamese twins.
25:04		Made from silicone, the bodies can be inflated by public participation.
25:09		And the implication is a question of a balancing act that can defy one being weak or disempowered against the other.
25:19		Sutee has explained this as a matter of weighing so-called Western modern development against the traditional indigenous values of Siam and Thailand.
25:28		As my book elaborates, this was the same argument that was being made by political elites, it was the same argument being made by the governments at the time, and one which can offer, can I say panacea, one that can offer, what does panacea mean?
25:44		A sort of panacea, like a gentle cleansing of, or to a displacement of critical questions about, basically, the work is sort of displacing critical questions about the institutions and individuals complicit with the financial crash
26:03		Or we can note the appeal, the appeal to an idealized past, the old Siam of, and I don't want to be controversial, of tradition, indigenous values, really displaces critical questions about where we are now, and why this happened, and how we can deal with it.
26:23		It's a similar argument that was being made by the governments, by the government at the time, the government that welcomed in international corporations, etc.

26:32		So it's, I mean, I'm not, it sounds a bit sort of critical, or bitchy even, but I don't really want to be, we're trying to read the artworks.
26:40		Manit Sriwanishpoom also addressed this specific context.
26:44		Now this is a period, most of you are really young, you may not have heard of these artists, and if you have, you certainly have probably not heard of these works.
26:52		So Manit Sriwanishpoom addressed this specific context of the 1997 financial crash, and again, in terms already offered by political elites, by the people ruling the country, a critique of globalization as an external threat to a vulnerable country.
27:10		His photographic series, This Bloodless War, originally exhibited as large prints on a central Bangkok roadside, restaged iconic images from the Vietnam War, and the bombing of Nagasaki in World War II.
27:23		So they restaged these, you can see them, but in this series the Thai population is portrayed as the victim of consumerism, and the murderous power of financial corporations.
27:34		Which mediated by the recognizable media imagery, heightens the subject as profoundly disastrous.
27:43		An irony is present here though, however, in that Manit's critique of globalization, nevertheless shapes the country in stereotypical terms.
27:53		The sensational and somewhat cliched view of a Southeast Asian nation, typically the victim of greater powers, and not reflecting how problems evolved within, are any insight about how famous documentary photography of the histories of the region can promote violent spectacle and misunderstanding.
28:15		We can unpack this in the Q&A.
28:17		Okay, but it's basically, I think, quite a stereotypical view, it's a very predictable view.

28:22		Who's the white guy at the back? I'm always actually wondering.
28:26		Vasan Sitthiket's, I keep going backwards, Vasan Sitthiket's long-standing career in Agitprop gives his work a bombastic, very provocative, well that's what I said, bombastic, provocative appeal.
28:38		But he can be curiously aligned to Sooty and Mani, in so far as his avowal, his claiming of problems within the national status quo, did not particularly involve a fundamental questioning of its terms. Its symbols are a desire for unity.
28:53		His series, Blue October, consists of expressionist paintings based on the infamous photographs of the brutal military and paramilitary murder of student protesters on the 6th of October, 1976, at Thammasat University, which was organized against the return of an exiled dictator.
29:10		In another exhibition, it's okay to show some of this image, I hope, in another Exhibition.
	Brian Curtin	As well as the performance of those who carry it. Or from pressures within the country with a certain degree of irony and cynicism.
29:19		You can take these as themes of the time. Again, that irony and cynicism about what it means to be Kai to receive.
29:37		As Kai internationally to be pressured into conforming to certain appearances more locally.
30:03		So I'll just run you through some theories.
30:33		Natee Uthairat's steadily evolving and increasingly visible career has drawn on iconic classical-inspired paintings with a political edge.
31:15		Toy flowers, toy animals, flowers, flags and Buddha statues are often rendered as isolated against monochromatic backgrounds. And Foch's wide references to the political

		landscape of Ireland and the pillars of Kai nationalism as it recalls to be moved around.
32:17		His works have been references to European art history and came in theatrical rhetoric, rhetoric with a moral aura.
32:17		Especially given the early role of European art in the form of visual education for illiterate masses.
32:22		The subjects of the paintings can appear curiously weightless or illusionistic, mirage-like.
32:28		We don't know if he's playing homage or a bit like digital culture or if he was something more critical at work.
32:36		This is Apichatpong Weerasethakul's single screen visual installation. Marakot, which is a hotel at the end of, beginning of summer on Petroli Road, Tongor.
32:42		Ghostly Figures, I've seen this, it's the most amazing installation.
32:46		This is Apichatpong Weerasethakul's single screen video installation Marakot.
32:51		Ghostly Figures recount personal histories within the rooms of a dilapidated hotel in central Bangkok.
32:57		One built during the booming 1980s and which also served as a refuge for Cambodians fleeing their still violently unstable country after the rule of the Khmer Rouge fell at the end of the previous decade.
33:13		The place was abandoned during the financial crash of 1997.
33:20		While hypnotic and fantastical, nostalgia floats across the hard edges and squalor, some squalor or dirtiness of the room as the actors' faces appear as wandering stars and recount their dreams, hometown lives and bad memories.
33:36		They also recite love poems.

33:38		Audiences are encouraged to dream of the multiple and often discomfoting histories of time, times that continue to live in and beyond the rooms of Apichatpong membranes.
33:50		This temporal, this incongruity, this contradiction between time is a trope of Buddhism and animism, between karma and belief in ghosts and spirit.
34:00		And here serves the suggestion that personal, not national, histories are important and may live forever.
34:07		Now, it might be a question, you might want to compare this work to Manuscripts, to Bollywood, or Sutton's work and think about the differences, think about the lives, think about the changes.
34:19		How Aphichatpong can capture so much about how much Bangkok has changed are the references to the financial boom of the 80s, the 1997 financial crash, how hotel spaces, how we think about the places that are luxurious and then used for refugees, whose lives are here.
34:37		If you start to think of it in these terms, it opens up, I mean, you've come up with a much better explanation than me, but it sort of opens up a much more layered engagement that are not critical of Aphichatpong.
34:51		My question is quite brazen, actually.
34:55		Maitri's Silk Room has explored queer interests in the contemporary world of high artists via cultural context, but his work has got quite a vulgar humor.
35:04		There are so many people I know who hate his photographs and he's decided not to do it.
35:10		These are called Isan Boy 4, as you can see, Soi 4, which invokes both the impoverished region of Isan, the North East, where many of Aphichatpong's service workers come from, and the long-standing gay district of Bangkok which is still on Soi 4, which is famously frequented by Caucasian foreigners.

35:29		Now, playing on stereotypical age differences between the denizens of this distinctly international zone, Maitri's use of camp aesthetics also proves some of his sleazy implications are there.
35:41		So, again, it's my thinking about power and relationships that he's doing what he's doing.
35:46		In 1978, Jack Aiwea's striking political commentary through religious and historical references exploring violence between Pailese form in Pailese culture.
35:57		And think about artists who have actually addressed a specific incident within Pai history.
36:02		The title refers to the number of detainees who died in the so-called Pak-Pai incident in southern Thailand.
36:09		He's thinking about the Pak-Pai incident in southern Thailand, in which a crowd protested the arrest of men accused of supplying weapons to Islamic insurgents was overpowered by police brutality.
36:23		The Muslim-dominated South has been a society's vassal state by the federal state and maintained its own traditions.
38:31		But once the nation rebuilt the efforts of the 40s and 50s through the reign of King Bongsong Khan, in the 30s, the region suffered from the imposition of Pai-centric practices in language, dress, and education.
38:34		In other words, there was an attempt to wipe out local Malay Muslim culture.
38:39		Now, Jack Aiwea's piece is modeled on the Kumbal, the sacred keyboard structure in Mecca, that functions as a unifying focal point for the Islamic world.
36:50		And visitors experience a claustrophobic view, in which rows of trains are occupied by traditional Arab clothing and

		embroidered by the artist with the names of those killed in Malay and Javanese script, a local language.
37:06		Standing amidst 70 days, which also suggests a type of concentration camp, I think, there's no assurance what side of history one is standing on as the installation skips sternly between memorial and death camp.
37:20		Do we feel powerful within this, or do we feel sorry, or do we pray for the figures that have been lost?
37:27		I don't think it's the next word.
37:30		But Jack Aiwea has also worked with histories of his mother, who is a descendant of the famous Singa Saini family, and the piece was made as he closes up his deceased mother.
37:36		And we also, there's a sound installation we read from her diary, so she could talk about how he came from cooking food to witnessing political events over the 40 to 50 years that she lived.
37:42		So combined with personal and political, there's no strong political point of view on it.
37:49		It's really impressive how we relate to where we came from, our knowledge, our history of peace.
37:56		As Dr. Eads, who's in the audience, has returned from studying in the early 2000s involving a practice based on metaphysical notions to the impermanence of the human body within a Theravada Buddhist sociology, within Theravada Buddhist notions of salvation, which all religions have, living is associated with suffering, and hence, therefore, the social role of meditation and ideals of transcendence.
38:04		Itakern has explored visual analogies to these notions.
38:07		His early sculptural works created a concave illusion of the three-dimensional male body, influenced by the weightless

		quality that Buddhist statues will possess due to the enlightenment of traditional Thai temples.
38:19		Plainer, rather, than the relative naturalistic forms of eco-romanticity. The figures can be seen through a tunnel structure that suggests religious faces.
38:39		So he was very interested in religious imagery, eco-roman imagery, and religious faces like temple shrines.
38:46		And there is a sense of the venerable darkness where you wanted to bow down when you saw these things.
38:52		I should include an image of them.
38:54		But his sculptures and installations of more recent years have been less localized, facing the creation of a type of viscera.
39:02		Viscera, what does viscera mean?
39:04		It's like the interior of the human body, usually formed from customized decorative plastic durables.
39:14		And his resonance suggests both the interior of the human body and fantastical landscapes, while not set in either characterization.
39:16		They're quite abstract.
39:18		They're round and round, illustrated here.
39:20		The detailed form is glimpsed through an aperture in a monolith that suggests infinite space, a brilliant otherworld where orderly physical and perceptual distinctions segue.
39:32		They're in flux. They move. They go soft.
39:35		The artist was inspired by Stanley Kubrick's famous film, 2001: A Space Odyssey, with the suggestion of a secret eternal truth within.

39:45		But in departure from his early interest, which is my main point, in departure from his early interest in Buddhist philosophy, there's now an abstract play with the material and the immaterial, and the human body and landscape are the core interest.
40:05		So we play off immaterial imagery here in a much more way that audiences can analogize with, identify with, change, and move away from a more strict identification of Buddhism. And this evolution, more minutes, okay, this evolution away from concerns more typically marred in nationalist identifications than intended ideologies, also allows for questions and considerations of how these are constructed, how nationalist ideologies' identifications are created, are indeed the very idea of historical construction who writes history and why, with the basic premise.
40:15		On Finnish history project, begun in 2012, it steps back from running directly into Thailand as the installation invites audiences to identify arbitrary connections between historical world events.
40:29		Combining redrawn images from official history books and random selections from the internet and organizing according to the year, the content can change also according to the host country of the installation.
40:42		Audiences are also invited to participate in creating narratives in a comic book format, drawing connections between images and events from a shelf of available materials.
40:53		These sorts of books raise questions about how history is written and by whom, and refuse the very possibility of an answer which requires a notably radical gesture against power.
41:10		These are images of Thai political prisoners, which they've done on turbo-plug, twins, turbo-plug acting.
41:21		So basically they're black, but when they're subject to warmth, they become invisible.

41:28		So you go in, they're black, but then you open to your body, and the image of various political prisoners.
41:33		It's the only, with risk censorship, it's the only exhibition you might be able to go to in Thailand that risks censorship. Thai parties tend to not monitor exhibitions as much as film or other forms of visual culture.
41:43		That would be a point. This was done in Paris.
41:47		Sornchai Phongsa is of Hmong descent.
41:50		He was born in a state place in Thailand, so he has no passports.
41:55		We're one of the earliest ethnic groups in the region of Southeast Asia.
42:00		His family had fled violence in Myanmar and Burma during the '70s.
42:05		He was born, as I said, officially stateless, and many of his works explore lineage, heritage, and belonging.
42:10		In Montopia, Montopia, as we know from Utopia, means place, Sornchai filmed himself as a refugee living homeless in Paris in an act of identification with recent waves of refugees from Syria at the time.
42:25		The title Montopia suggests a utopian destination.
42:29		Sornchai is seen carrying cultural items and a totem as a means to access ethnic divinities that provide protection as well as keeping hope alive as red-colored threads coming to his work refer to bloodlines and the fragile awareness of community amidst a history of violence.
42:40		And then we've got the last slide, which is Korakrit.
42:42		Take a slide. Korakrit has become unbelievably famous.

42:45		He's held exhibitions in New York, Europe.
42:49		He's been exhibiting. His career went international at the age of 27.
42:55		There are installations at London's ICA, Paris's Palais d'Etropeo.
42:59		There are installations at the Beach, and paints at Lafayette and Denham.
43:02		They are notions of action painting in a simultaneously humorous reference to local reticence about self-expression by evoking a contrast to the traditional forms of patterning in which Thai artists are strictly trained.
43:13		If we look at, say, the training. For Corn, he did an animal scene in Thailand's Got Talent episode where the contestant painted with her breasts and Chalermchai.
43:24		Because if you have no Chalermchai, an actual Chalermchai complained about you.
43:29		So this is a sort of humorous reference to that and also a humorous reference to self-expression.
43:35		He studied it in America because often sometimes Thai artists can be trained in a very strict way.
43:41		The works also evoke the regional history of the material Denham itself, its fluctuating value and significance.
43:56		The artist's great-grandparents emigrated from China and as for his past, he loved the foreign air that he played in here.
44:06		He perceived it as a distinctly Western icon, which it was.
44:09		But in Corn's own time, it's become a common cheap material.

43:13		His videos include twilight shots of Bangkok and self-attractive wrapping accompanied by images of temples, Thai boxing, and elephants.
43:21		Hoping fun, they confronted generic general cultural symbols and ecology.
43:36		So I think, you know, a lot of artists might have some issues in their mind that want to go to Ryan, so please welcome to Ryan.
44:21		Thank you for having me.
44:36		You can always take the opportunity to pick out an artist that might be more appealing to you and do some more work.
44:42		You might also note that I haven't drawn any conclusion, even in the book. That was a stricken. I'm still working on that.
44:50		How would we talk about it? One of the points you might make is that there is a serious lack of art criticism, maybe, in the country.
44:57		Or maybe in Thailand, so it's not accessible to a wide audience. Why would Thai artists lose interest in more nationalist identifications when it's become very strong?
45:08		And over the past few years, what are the factors involved?
45:15		So I haven't drawn any particular conclusion or way of tying all of this up as yet.
45:20		But what would be the main factors that would produce big artists start to think, I need to act like Padilfeo, like a liar.
45:28		So you ask these questions, why would an artist like Ajahn Mee move further away from Buddhist iconography to more general and analogous images of materiality?

45:43		Remember, a lot of Thai artists selling now is also the market for exhibitions.
45:47		It's financial globalization. All these are having an impact as well.

Time	Speaker	Audio
46:11	Brian Curtin	As well as the performance of those who carry it. Or from pressures within the country with a certain degree of irony and cynicism.
46:20		You can take these as themes of the time. Again, that irony and cynicism about what it means to be Kai to receive.
46:29		As Kai internationally to be pressured into conforming to certain appearances more locally.
46:37		So I'll just run you through some theories.
46:41		Natee Utarit's steadily evolving and increasingly visible career has drawn on iconic classical-inspired paintings with a political edge.
46:53		Toy flowers, toy animals, flowers, flags and Buddha statues are often rendered as isolated against monochromatic backgrounds. And Foch's wide references to the political landscape of Ireland and the pillars of Kai nationalism as it recalls to be moved around.
47:13		His works have been references to European art history and came in theatrical rhetoric, rhetoric with a moral aura.

47:19		Especially given the early role of European art in the form of visual education for illiterate masses.
47:25		The subjects of the paintings can appear curiously weightless or illusionistic, mirage-like.
47:31		We don't know if he's playing homage or a bit like digital culture or if he was something more critical at work.
47:39		This is Apichatpong Weerasethakul's single screen visual installation. Marakot, which is a hotel at the end of, beginning of summer on Petroli Road, Tongor.
47:52		Ghostly Figures, I've seen this, it's the most amazing installation.
47:56		This is Apichatpong Weerasethakul's single screen video installation Marakot.
48:01		Ghostly Figures recount personal histories within the rooms of a dilapidated hotel in central Bangkok.
48:07		One built during the booming 1980s and which also served as a refuge for Cambodians fleeing their still violently unstable country after the rule of the Khmer Rouge felt at the end of the previous decade.
48:21		The place was abandoned during the financial crash of 1997.
48:28		While hypnotic and fantastical, nostalgia floats across the hard edges and squalor, some squalor or dirtiness of the room as the actors' faces appear as wandering stars and recount their dreams, hometown lives and bad memories.
48:46		They also recite love poems.
48:48		Audiences are encouraged to dream of the multiple and often discomforting histories of time, times that continue to live in and beyond the rooms of Apichatpong membranes.

48:58		This temporal, this incongruity, this contradiction between time is a trope of Buddhism and animism, between karma and belief in ghosts and spirit.
49:08		And here serves the suggestion that personal, not national, histories are important and may live forever.
49:15		Now, it might be a question, you might want to compare this work to Manuscripts, to Bollywood, or Sutton's work and think about the differences, think about the lives, think about the changes.
49:27		How Abhichatpong can capture so much about how much Bangkok has changed are the references to the financial boom of the 80s, the 1997 financial crash, how hotel spaces, how we think about the places that are luxurious and then used for refugees, whose lives are here.
49:45		If you start to think of it in these terms, it opens up, I mean, you've come up with a much better explanation than me, but it sort of opens up a much more layered engagement that are not critical of Apichatpong.
49:59		My question is quite brazen, actually.
50:03		Maitri's Silk Room has explored queer interests in the contemporary world of high artists via cultural context, but his work has got quite a vulgar humor.
50:12		There are so many people I know who hate his photographs and he's decided not to do it.
50:18		These are called Isan Boy 4, as you can see, Soi 4, which invokes both the impoverished region of Isan, the North East, where many of Abhichatpong's service workers come from, and the long-standing gay district of Bangkok which is still on Soi 4, which is famously frequented by Caucasian foreigners.
50:37		Now, playing on stereotypical age differences between the denizens of this distinctly international zone, Maitri's

		use of camp aesthetics also proves some of his sleazy implications are there.
50:45		So, again, it's my thinking about power and relationships that he's doing what he's doing.
50:50		In 1978, Jack Aiwea's striking political commentary through religious and historical references exploring violence between Pailese form in Pailese culture.
51:01		And think about artists who have actually addressed a specific incident within Pai history.
51:06		The title refers to the number of detainees who died in the so-called Pak-Pai incident in southern Thailand.
51:10		He's thinking about the Pak-Pai incident in southern Thailand, in which a crowd protested the arrest of men accused of supplying weapons to Islamic insurgents was overpowered by police brutality.
51:24		The Muslim-dominated South has been a society's vassal state by the federal state and maintained its own traditions.
51:32		But once the nation rebuilt the efforts of the 40s and 50s through the reign of King Bonsong Khan, in the 30s, the region suffered from the imposition of Pai-centric practices in language, dress, and education.
51:39		In other words, there was an attempt to wipe out local Malay Muslim culture.
51:44		Now, Jack Aiwea's piece is modeled on the Kumbal, the sacred keyboard structure in Mecca, that functions as a unifying focal point for the Islamic world.
51:55		And visitors experience a claustrophobic view, in which rows of trains are occupied by traditional Arab clothing and embroidered by the artist with the names of those killed in Malay and Javanese script, a local language.

52:11		Standing amidst 70 days, which also suggests a type of concentration camp, I think, there's no assurance what side of history one is standing on as the installation skips sternly between memorial and death camp.
52:15		Do we feel powerful within this, or do we feel sorry, or do we pray for the figures that have been lost?
52:22		I don't think it's the next word.
52:25		But Jack Aiwea has also worked with histories of his mother, who is a descendant of the famous Singa Saini family, and the piece was made as he closes up his deceased mother.
52:39		And we also, there's a sound installation we read from her diary, so she could talk about how he came from cooking food to witnessing political events over the 40 to 50 years that she lived.
52:51		So combined with personal and political, there's no strong political point of view on it.
52:58		It's really impressive how we relate to where we came from, our knowledge, our history of peace.
53:03		As Dr. Eads, who's in the audience, has returned from studying in the early 2000s involving a practice based on metaphysical notions to the impermanence of the human body within a Theravada Buddhist sociology, within Theravada Buddhist notions of salvation, which all religions have, living is associated with suffering, and hence, therefore, the social role of meditation and ideals of transcendence.
53:31		Itakern has explored visual analogies to these notions.
53:34		His early sculptural works created a concave illusion of the three-dimensional male body, influenced by the weightless quality that Buddhist statues will possess due to the enlightenment of traditional Thai temples.

53:46		Plainer, rather, than the relative naturalistic forms of eco-romanticity. The figures can be seen through a tunnel structure that suggests religious faces.
54:06		So he was very interested in religious imagery, eco-roman imagery, and religious faces like temple shrines.
54:13		And there is a sense of the venerable darkness where you wanted to bow down when you saw these things.
54:20		I should include an image of them.
54:22		But his sculptures and installations of more recent years have been less localized, facing the creation of a type of viscera.
54:30		Viscera, what does viscera mean?
54:32		It's like the interior of the human body, usually formed from customized decorative plastic durables.
54:40		And his resonance suggests both the interior of the human body and fantastical landscapes, while not set in either characterization.
54:50		They're quite abstract.
54:52		They're round and round, illustrated here.
54:54		The detailed form is glimpsed through an aperture in a monolith that suggests infinite space, a brilliant otherworld where orderly physical and perceptual distinctions segue.
55:06		They're in flux. They move. They go soft.
55:09		The artist was inspired by Stanley Kubrick's famous film, 2001: A Space Odyssey, with the suggestion of a secret eternal truth within.
55:19		But in departure from his early interest, which is my main point, in departure from his early interest in Buddhist philosophy, there's now an abstract play with

		the material and the immaterial, and the human body and landscape are the core interest.
55:24		So we play off immaterial imagery here in a much more way that audiences can analogize with, identify with, change, and move away from a more strict identification of Buddhism. And this evolution, more minutes, okay, this evolution away from concerns more typically marred in nationalist identifications than intended ideologies, also allows for questions and considerations of how these are constructed, how nationalist ideologies' identifications are created, are indeed the very idea of historical construction who writes history and why, with the basic premise.
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56:44		These sorts of books raise questions about how history is written and by whom, and refuse the very possibility of an answer which requires a notably radical gesture against power.
57:01		These are images of Thai political prisoners, which they've done on turbo-plug, twins, turbo-plug acting.
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57:19		So you go in, they're black, but then you open to your body, and the image of various political prisoners.
57:24		It's the only, with risk censorship, it's the only exhibition you might be able to go to in Thailand that risks censorship. Thai parties tend to not monitor exhibitions as much as film or other forms of visual culture.
57:40		That would be a point. This was done in Paris.
57:44		Sornchai Khonsa is of Hmong descent.
57:47		He was born in a state place in Thailand, so he has no passports.
57:52		We're one of the earliest ethnic groups in the region of Southeast Asia.
57:57		His family had fled violence in Myanmar and Burma during the '70s.
58:02		He was born, as I said, officially stateless, and many of his works explore lineage, heritage, and belonging.
58:07		In Montopia, Montopia, as we know from Utopia, means place, Sornchai filmed himself as a refugee living homeless in Paris in an act of identification with recent waves of refugees from Syria at the time.
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58:37		And then we've got the last slide, which is Korakrit.
58:39		Take a slide. Korakrit has become unbelievably famous.
58:42		He's held exhibitions in New York, Europe.

58:46		He's been exhibiting. His career went international at the age of 27.
58:52		There are installations at London's ICA, Paris's Palais d'Etropeo.
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58:59		They are notions of action painting in a simultaneously humorous reference to local reticence about self-expression by evoking a contrast to the traditional forms of patterning in which Thai artists are strictly trained.
59:13		If we look at, say, the training. For Corn, he did an animal scene in Thailand's Got Talent episode where the contestant painted with her breasts and Chalermchai.
59:24		Because if you have no Chalermchai, an actual Chalermchai complained about you.
59:29		So this is a sort of humorous reference to that and also a humorous reference to self-expression.
59:35		He studied it in America because often sometimes Thai artists can be trained in a very strict way.
59:41		The works also evoke the regional history of the material Denham itself, its fluctuating value and significance.
59:46		The artist's great-grandparents emigrated from China and as for his past, he loved the foreign air that he played in here.
59:56		He perceived it as a distinctly Western icon, which it was.
59:59		But in Corn's own time, it's become a common cheap material.

01:00:04		His videos include twilight shots of Bangkok and self-attractive wrapping accompanied by images of temples, Thai boxing, and elephants.
01:00:12		Hoping fun, they confronted generic general cultural symbols and ecology.
01:00:27		So I think, you know, a lot of artists might have some issues in their mind that want to go to Ryan, so please welcome to Ryan.
01:01:10		Thank you for having me.
01:01:25		You can always take the opportunity to pick out an artist that might be more appealing to you and do some more work.
01:01:31		You might also note that I haven't drawn any conclusion, even in the book. That was a stricken. I'm still working on that.
01:01:39		How would we talk about it? One of the points you might make is that there is a serious lack of art criticism, maybe, in the country.
01:01:46		Or maybe in Thailand, so it's not accessible to a wide audience. Why would Thai artists lose interest in more nationalist identifications when it's become very strong?
01:01:57		And over the past few years, what are the factors involved?
01:02:04		So I haven't drawn any particular conclusion or way of tying all of this up as yet.
01:01:09		But what would be the main factors that would produce big artists start to think, I need to act like Padilfeo, like a liar.
01:02:16		So you ask these questions, why would an artist like Ajarn Mee move further away from Buddhist iconography to more general and analogous images of materiality?

01:02:31		Remember, a lot of Thai artists selling now is also the market for exhibitions.
01:02:35		It's financial globalization. All these are having an impact as well.
Q&A		
01:02:49	Audience	Hi Brian, thank you for being here for the lecture.
01:02:55		Perhaps I could ask a little bit about, because you mentioned briefly in the lecture title, the relationship between visual culture and contemporary art.
01:03:08		Because you teach a visual culture to all students.
01:03:11		So I'm also curious if you could work to kind of maybe tie them together.
01:03:17	Brian Curtin	Excellent point.
01:03:20		Because art isn't often, it's often first of all as a disciplinary procedure.
01:03:26		Within universities, visual culture and art history are often taught as separate disciplines.
01:03:33		Now one of the things that's interesting about Padilfeo, that has been written quite extensively, is the primary role of aesthetics.
01:03:42		The cultural value of appearances.
01:03:45		Peter A. Jackson, a well-known scholar on Padilfeo from Australia, tied it to the regime of images.
01:03:53		We know there is a strong value within Padilfeo, certainly based on the cultural appearances.
01:04:00		Now once we know this, we ask, why does nobody talk about priorities?
101:04:05		Surely they'd be experts on aesthetics, wouldn't they?

01:04:10		That's a question that I have in my mind the whole time.
01:04:12		So when you look at, say, like the colour, we don't want to get controversial, but red and yellow shirts, once you get the role of, because a few people have written more and more on graffiti in that cup, once you get this, again, this primarily aesthetic form that is serving a political function, that's bringing people together, you wonder, where are artists in this?
01:04:34		So that's why I just think that the link hasn't been made in a disciplinary sense.
01:04:40		And art often isolates. Nigel was here as well.
01:04:44		He might say, oh, yeah, that's for throwing the conversation, but art people often mystify rather than clarify.
01:04:52		Art likes to do this, to play. But we are seeing change.
01:04:58		But I think that's the primary and most interesting thing, that if you think about the importance of visual culture, the importance of aesthetics, the importance of appearances, then you just ask this question, where are priorities then, what are they telling us?
01:05:12		So that was to try and actually link them in.
01:05:16		And again, the two figures salute Therabela's article on these, I mean, what do you think, slashing political posters?
01:05:26		Yeah, again, again, priorities don't, so I think we have to, actually, I'm not really answering your question.
01:05:33		I think it's a disciplinary thing.
01:05:39		We don't write about art in those terms.
01:05:42		We don't often show it in those terms.
01:05:44		I would think, primarily, we don't write about art in those terms

01:05:48		We write art in the terms that are towards the politics.
01:05:52		We don't talk, we don't write about it, but I'm trying to say, alongside writing about a poster.
01:05:59		We're not making those connections.
01:06:05		The law.
01:06:08		This is a case of law.
01:06:13		Art criticism.
01:06:14		Art criticism per se.
01:06:16		So that's how art is actually written about.
01:06:19		We are going to make connections between what, like, Sutee does.
01:06:23		Like, that was the point I tried to make.
01:06:25		I mean, Sutee and Mallet and Abhijamal were fighting each other, but none of them were making an argument.
01:06:32		You can show that Sutee's quite conservative, but you can't show it.
01:06:38		You can show that none of them are not in a disciplinary way.
01:06:41		They're not critical of people.
01:06:42		For us, we're only talking about artworks.
01:06:48		But that's how the White House is bound to be, to think, you know, well then, shouldn't we be writing about art in these terms?
01:06:56		You know?
01:06:57		Most people wouldn't have a clue.

01:06:59		And of course, there is this sort of description of certain goals, and there is the application for these subsets, and there is all that.
01:07:10		Art criticism in Thailand is one thing, but the effectiveness beyond that itself, that's my question.
01:07:22		What's the effectiveness
01:07:23		How has there been an effectiveness in Thailand?
01:07:35		Staking the political opinions of the artists to the public?
01:07:45		Well, there's evidence that she did.
01:07:48		I was talking recently to a young lady who was based in Singapore, and she would argue that a lot of the seventh-stage artists, because of this lack of sort of intellectual context, we have artists like Marek.
01:08:04		You know, when we talk about artists from the 1890s, not so much now, but we have artists like Marek, because she argues that his work has a very direct appeal, and he is making a clear political statement.
01:08:22		But what's he making of that?
01:08:27		You know, what's the problem?
01:08:33	Audience	Comparison is the problem.
01:08:36		At least one musician is meant to collect items from the box, from both sides.
01:08:44		Whatever they produce, during the process for many years, right, people produce, not artists, produce objects, like hand-clapping made of plastic, and then the other side made of heat-clapping, and then whatever kind of...
01:09:25	Brian Curti	Excellent point.

01:09:35		So people say that the thermologists will collect the sorts of objects that jazz musicians use, because they see them as important.
01:09:42		Also, a lot of protests with some of the new sort of totems, is that the word?
01:09:49		They use images or objects that are from their own ethnic groups.
01:09:56		Do you remember at some point, there was a talk that even Thailand could be divided up into two different countries?
01:10:01		They were showing sort of ethnic...
01:10:03		I'm inspired by Khmer music. What he does is an art. He's showing galleries.
01:10:05		Excellent. That's a brilliant point. Increased activities, if you compare them to the earlier ones, are any of them making differences?
01:10:11		I don't think they are.
01:10:12		I think they're caught up in the current that they don't fully control.
01:10:32		It's special to see speakers here, amazing.
01:10:42	Audience	I have a question. Thank you for the lecture. I'm a Mathayom student, and I'm starting to interest in Thai culture and Thai art.
01:10:56		Do you have any recommended artists, or do you have any favorite artists for me to go surfing for?
01:11:04		Who would be your favorite?
01:11:05	Brian Curtin	I would go to Apichatpong. Have you seen Apichatpong? Do you know any of his movies?
01:11:11	Audience	Oh, no.

01:11:12	Brian Curtin	Okay, it's a bit scary to say, but it's easy for me.
01:11:15		I like to sort of try different things.
01:11:32		A very rare filmmaker installation artist.
01:11:33	Audience	I'm not happy that your work is still being used.
01:11:39		In the end, you don't get much help or attention from society as much as you should from the owner or this work. especially in this day and age?
01:11:54		It can't be denied that artists can choose to use images from the past and transform them into their own works. The image should belong to someone no one can use it.
01:12:33		So, the question was something like who owns the rights to photograph?
01:12:36	Brian Curtin	That's an amazing question the background of the exhibition was visited by the army. a theatre activist who had been arrested had organized the exhibition.
01:12:54		And in turn, she had contacted the police as her member because she thought her image was being used without her permission.
01:13:03		Okay? So, there's no real answer to the border of rights.
01:13:07		In a philosophical sense, I wouldn't know what to say.
01:13:20		But I would say that in terms of pilot, where there are both legal and cultural restrictions, that you're not supposed to use somebody else's image without their knowledge.
01:13:22		I mean, generally speaking, it's not, it's a cultural pilot, it's a culturally quite offensive thing to do.
01:13:29		But if the image is in public domain, which a lot of those images were, if he's taking them off the internet, the internet has killed our future.

01:13:38		I mean, that's a very good example.
01:13:41		But then if you found your photograph being used in a context that you didn't approve of, does anybody have anything else to say?
01:13:50		You found yourself in a photo, because that's why she was very offended ironically, because it was in her support.
01:13:58		And that's why the army quit. But the army actually, they didn't show the army that exhibition.
01:14:06		They distracted them to go to another exhibition.
01:14:09		Which was then censored, and then they put that down.
01:14:13		This time it could have gone, could have been jarred.
01:14:15		Could have even killed, maybe, I don't know.
01:14:25		Anyway, so I don't know if there is, it's artists pushing that boundary between private and public, public use, copyright law.
01:14:28		Lots of artists push it at those boundaries
01:14:31		Because again, if you find something on the internet darn it, what do you do?
01:14:37		Is there anybody in the studio there?
01:14:40		Bee, do you have anything to say about that?
01:14:43	Audience	I don't like it. Well yeah, because here I did do the whole series on queer couples, on gay couples. She stayed non-existent. We obviously gave her permission.
01:15:27		I think it was an amazing question, though.
01:15:43	Brian Curtin	I would like to look at, if you're interested in these ideas, look at the artist Richard Prince.

01:15:50		He's always in court, and he's pushing, which has become his art, because he's always pushing at the boundaries of copyright laws. you can do this video, if you feel that you'd like to see it.
01:16:08		Okay, do you have a question?
01:16:18	Audience	So, first, thank you for the lecture. explain my question.
01:16:29		But I think my question is about the fact that when I go through all your lectures, a lot of the names, I just recognize that these are not very familiar to me, even though I've studied within the art and design field.
01:16:52		And this raises a question that I would like your opinion on.
01:16:58		Do you think that these kind of art pieces and discourses on various and topics of Thai artists are sort of kind of like not necessarily being made to be understood easily or very available to more common people?
01:17:24		Am I making sense?
01:17:27	Brian Curtin	No, like, you know, like the artworks in general then we have to say that it's right.
01:17:39		There is a complaint, there is a legitimate complaint that the artwork mystifies.
01:17:45		It doesn't answer, it doesn't give.
01:17:47		Now, there is a counter-argument that if you went to a science lecture or if you went to physics, would you expect to understand it?
01:17:55		But that's the counter-argument.
01:17:58		The counter-argument is that physics doesn't come across as as a lot of art does.

01:18:06		But that was Jake Chapman of the Chapman Brothers who was very used to it because he made that point.
01:18:13		The journalists went to see him and she said, don't use art to beat them.
01:18:17		She said, you wouldn't say that to Stephen Hawking.
01:18:23		So, you're right
01:18:26		But I mean, it's been laughed at.
01:18:28		Press releases from galleries have been studied.
01:18:33		There is, I don't think, by education, our colleagues, there is a degree of mystification
01:18:38		Mystification in the world. But at the same time, what do you think about physics and science and why we do these things?
01:18:44		I mean, they're not acceptable otherwise.
01:18:47		Um, I think we might go to the, you know, the artist's intention and so on.
01:18:58		Do you think as you have been working or interacting with most of them, do you think there are certain degrees that they do not wish to um, how do I say this?
01:19:12		They do not really wish their work to be understood to a sense in order to
01:19:17		I don't know, sort of, kind of like mystification, as you say.
01:19:22		There is, yeah.
01:19:24		I mean, it's, yes. You see, often artists create ideas that are testable. So you can actually, like a scientist, so you can actually disprove their claims.
01:19:36		So I think that's one of the reasons that artists are not fully honest about what they do.

01:19:40		But then, of course, how we engage with our topics is on multiple levels.
01:19:46		So I'm interested to hear what an artist thinks about their work.
01:19:49		Like Sorensen might be interested because of the forms.
01:19:53		He might be interested in a relationship to other artworks.
01:19:56		But his intention wouldn't support his ability to find it.
01:20:00		In my personal experience with artists, as an anecdote, I do think artists avoid telling you this is what I do. Because they're often usually by giving ideas that you can just disprove it.
01:20:13		You know, so that's why artists, but everybody knows that art then works on multiple levels, multiple ways, it just leads. I'm not an artist, but I'm asking artists, people, what do you think? You haven't got an answer.
01:20:29	Audience	My answer would be, I, for one, try to demystify art in my work. I can't stand work that is layered, super layered, with meaning, and don't make the work be accessible.
01:20:56		I got this kick when Office Girls near my studio came to see my work in progress and kind of got an ecstasy seeing my work growing.
01:21:16		The cleaner at N22 thought that too. And I don't care if the curator care about my work. But I'm trying to think of examples that are very obscure.
01:21:35	Brian Curtin	As I said, we use the word bombastic. Can you explain bombastic? I think it's like loud. A lot of the work we do is quite loud. So it is quite loud, bombastic. So that is something that is appealing to a large group, at least it's understood as accessible.

01:21:55		I think you might deal with something slightly different. I'm interested in analogies of what people think that actually draw from.
01:23:02		And in the case of your work, that identification of a human body is something that we all are bodies.
01:23:08		And then there are lots of art folks in here.
01:23:20		What would be a good example of the worst type of conceptual art?
01:23:23		What would be the worst type of conceptual art that is inaccessible?
01:23:30		Don't mention anybody. I think like the Bricks, Carl Andre is the style, would you call that obscure?
01:23:41		Sorry, Carl Andre collected Bricks and famously the tapes in London for hundreds of thousands and the public went crazy.
01:23:53		Because earlier you and me discussed about the I don't want to say this but in quotation, the qualification of artists uninspired by current events and you asked whether or not his arts are arts.
01:24:12		But for me personally because I engage a lot with his work and it's very approachable very accessible and kind of like it's more on an easier spectrum to understand.
01:24:28		So there are spectrums of people who want art to be easily understood and politically understood and others use these kind of cool ideologies or agendas and mystify them.
01:24:46		So I just want to ask your opinion on kind of like what do you think? even things like John Clark has actually tried to write.
01:24:57	Brian Curtin	John Clark I think is actually writing about the intention behind some artists' work is not being serious.

01:25:07		That's something for the future to think about I think some of his writing he writes on Asian artists it's questioning their intentions as being just an absolutely basic something like that. But that's a whole ideology how you judge something by its outcome or how you judge something by its intention not by its outcome, I'm more interested in how art works.
01:25:08	Audience	I'm not happy that your work is still being used.
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01:37:30	Moderator	Any more questions?
01:37:35		Can I please thank Dr. Day from Silicon Valley University has done amazing work and was also one of the curators of the upcoming Bangkok Art Finale 2024. Anyway, everything's informal, so we'll still be here.
01:37:55		Thanks again, especially to the Scoop Kids for coming. They are amazing.
01:38:00		So, thank you so much. And if you have, like, more questions that you want to talk privately with Brian, you are welcome.