
**kunstverein
göttingen**

DORISEA
Dynamics of Religion
in Southeast Asia



GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN

PRESS RELEASE

HAUNTED THRESHOLDS

Spirituality in Contemporary Southeast Asia

November 9 – December 21, 2014

Vernissage: November 9, 2014 11:30 am

Altes Rathaus • Markt 9 • 37073 Göttingen

Opening Hours: Tue-Sun 11am-5pm

Kunstverein Göttingen in collaboration with the Research Network "Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia" (DORISEA)

ARTISTS:

Art Labor (Vietnam), Maung DAY (Myanmar), Riel HILARIO (Philippines), HO Tzu Nyen (Singapore), NGUYEN TRINH Thi (Vietnam), Jakrawal NILTHAMRONG (Thailand), Yudi NOOR (Indonesia), Kaensan RATTANASOMRERK (Thailand), John Frank SABADO (Philippines), Taiki SAKPISIT, Chulayarnnon SIRIPHOL (Thailand), THAN Sok (Cambodia), TRUONG CONG Tung (Vietnam), Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL (Thailand), Entang WIHARSO (Indonesia)

CURATOR: Lauren Reid

Haunted Thresholds arises from the collaboration of the Kunstverein Göttingen and "Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia" (DORISEA), a research network dedicated to investigating the relationship between religion and the contemporary in this region. Southeast Asia is particularly marked by a complex coexistence and cooperation among different cultures and religions. Religions there have developed a rich dynamic and play a prime role in shaping modernisation processes.

Investigating the subtle yet omnipresent influence of religion and spirituality in the everyday, this exhibition features artists from Southeast Asia who explore the thresholds or tipping-points between contemporary living and the incorporeal realm. Their works speak of invisible forces, modern enchantment, and karmic gestures. Spirituality and mythology merge almost seamlessly with the everyday, dissolving the boundaries between different realities, times or states of being.

The artists each present idiosyncratic and unresolved perspectives that spring from their unique experiences and current cultural contexts, rather than one that is representative of a single country, region or ideology. In particular, each artist uses their own index of mythical elements to form a bridge between their present moment and the complex of buried histories, shifting geographies and colonial wounds from which it has arisen.

Focusing on the effects of the past on the present and future are artists such as the filmmaker **Apichatpong Weerasethakul** who subtly refers to the violent history of Nabua, Thailand. **Maung Day's** poems question the Burmese government, tracking across cultural references from Depeche Mode to the celestial beings called devas in a single piece. Filipino artist, **John Frank Sabado's** intricate drawings of forests and the spirits within them convey the disequilibrium between the environment and the myriad ancestors who have come before.

Attitudes towards different strands of Buddhism, one of the most predominant religions in Southeast Asia, can be found throughout the exhibition. **Jakrawal Nilthamrong's** film of a monk's meditative work is inspired by a friend who lives in a jungle temple in Thailand; while **Than Sok** questions the practice of monetary almsgiving to monks in Cambodia. Taking a quietly critical approach, **Kaensan Rattanasomrerk** shows how objects can be elevated to the sacred through ritual; and **Chulayarnnon Siriphol** draws parallels between religious reverie and politics in present-day Bangkok. Here, both artists imply a confusion or misplacement of modern belief.

Taking an experimental documentary approach, artists such as **Truong Cong Tung** and **Nguyen Trinh Thi** poetically show unique rituals in Vietnam: the healing rituals in the Magical Garden in Long An Province and those of the homosexual spirit mediums in the Dao Mau folk religion in Hanoi respectively.

Haunted Thresholds draws together a wide variety of artistic media, from traditional techniques such as **Riel Hilario's** near-obsolete wood-carving ritual from his childhood home of San Vicente Ilocos Sur, Philippines; to more contemporary approaches such as **Taiki Sakpisit's** intricate editing of 80s B movies from Thailand. The Indonesian artist **Yudi Noor** focuses on the multiplicity of religions in Indonesia. Particularly influenced by his Muslim background, he creates assemblages from collected objects. What recurs in each of these artists' work is the mixing of spiritual and cultural influences from Christianity to animism, East to West, ancient folklore to modern media.

Entang Wiharso, whose metal reliefs often refer to transcendental dream states, fuses personal memory with the greater narrative of Indonesia. Also focusing on the mythology of his home country of Singapore, **Ho Tzu Nyen** digs into the past to reveal other versions of history that instead reveal it to be more complex, layered and interwoven than it seems.

Finally **Art Labor** explores belief more broadly, collaborating with theorists from different disciplines to build resources on spirituality and mythology in Southeast Asia and further abroad. The artists here simultaneously emphasise the plurality of mythology and spirituality, extending beyond the borders of Southeast Asia.

The art works are brought into an experimental dialogue with ethnographic objects from the Ethnographic Collection of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Göttingen. With their own aesthetic qualities, religious meanings and intellectual reflexivity, these objects from Southeast Asia, speak of the same topics as the art works: invisible forces, ancestral spirits and otherworldly powers in the everyday.

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