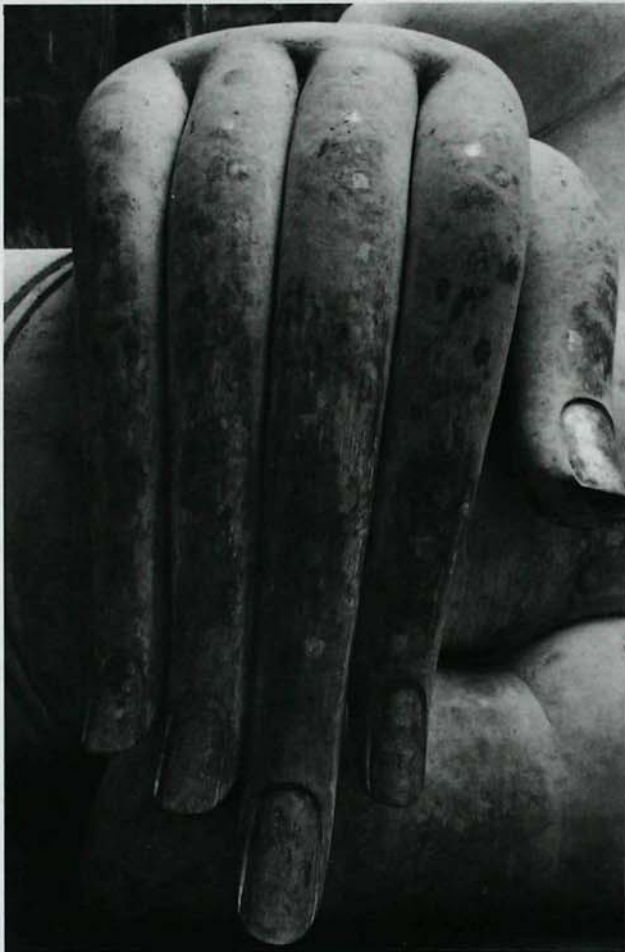




# SPAAFA JOURNAL



A Publication of the SEAMEO Regional Centre for  
*archaeology and fine arts*



*angela's black and white*


**PHOTOGRAPHY**



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**SEAMEO-SPAFA  
Regional Centre for  
Archaeology and Fine Arts**

SPAFA Journal is published three times a year by the SEAMEO-SPAFA Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts. It is a forum for scholars, researchers and professionals on archaeology, performing arts, visual arts and cultural activities in Southeast Asia to share views, research findings and evaluations. The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of SPAFA.

**SPAFA's objectives :**

- ▶ Promote awareness and appreciation of the cultural heritage of Southeast Asian countries through preservation of archaeological and historical artifacts, and traditional arts;
- ▶ Help enrich cultural activities in the region;
- ▶ Strengthen professional competence in the fields of archaeology and fine arts through sharing of resources and experiences on a regional basis;
- ▶ Increase understanding among the countries of Southeast Asia through collaboration in archaeological and fine arts programmes.



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# **SPAFA Journal**

**Volume 12 Number 1 (Jan - Apr 2002)**

## **CONTENTS**

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	<b>5</b>	<b>Angela's Black and White</b>
<b>Ean Lee</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>The Contemporary Art of Nitaya's Inner World</b>
<b>Katell Guiziou</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>Richard Engelhardt: Roving Scholar/ Diplomat for UNESCO</b>
<b>Varsha Nair</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Artists Retreat to Countryside</b>
	<b>37</b>	<b>Bangpakong Mangrove Eco-Museum</b>
<b>Ghafar Ahmad</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>Tropical Architecture and Preservation in Malaysia</b>
<b>Khunying Maenmas Chavalit</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>Bookmark</b>



# Angela's Black and White



## Angela Srisomwongwathana

took up photography as a hobby in 1985. After participating in the 'Art and Environment' Workshop in 1993 by German artist Nikolus Lang (organised by Goethe-Institut and Silpakorn University), Angela started thinking about photography as a profession. "I was then doing work related to computers, and I wanted a change.

I looked at myself, and then thought: 'if I don't do something, my life is going to be that way on and on – if I'm happy about it, that's fine; but I don't seem to be happy'." At the end of 1995, she quit her job and turned to the camera, and began to attend photography classes, the starting point of becoming a professional photographer. The free-lance photographer has taken part in several exhibitions, and has travelled to Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Nepal, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, and Laos.

"The feedback I received contained these feelings of peace and calm. You look at the photography, and there is a quietude of mind, and if you concentrate longer, you will feel the time and place of the photograph, with a sense of peace."





*'An array of wooden Buddha images'  
Wat Vi Xun, Luang Prabang, Laos*

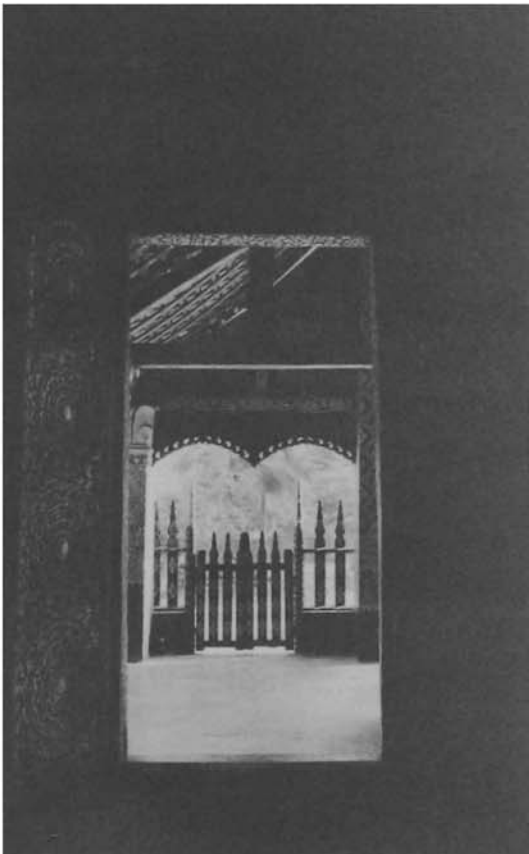


*'No Perfect  
Sacred beauty retained  
in broken objects'*

## **WORLD HERITAGE LUANG PRABANG**

Luang Prabang, the old capital of Lan Xang (Kingdom of a Million Elephants), was listed in 1995 by UNESCO as a world heritage site to preserve the unique character of the place, and prevent excessive tourism from ruining its charms. Located in a mountainous area where the Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers meet, Luang Prabang has been largely untouched by the modern world, leaving its people to live in harmony with nature. Historically, it has been the religious centre of Laos, PDR. While Phu Si, the hilltop temple, is the major landmark, Wat Xiang Thong represents the best examples of the Luang Prabang style of architecture. Wat Vi Xun is the temple where Pra Bang, the Buddha statue symbolising protective spirits in Laotian belief, was kept before it was moved to the National Museum.

*'A peaceful ambience seen through the entrance'*



*"The grandmother (old Woman) did not realize that she herself was being photographed. Five faces, each a different expression. So natural."*



*'Don't be shy...  
Shy kids and  
grandma in the same  
shot'*





*'Restaurant by the stream; enjoying meal by a running stream'*



*'Face on the roof  
... a detail'*

## **WORLD HERITAGE LIJIANG**

Lijiang, in the northwestern Yunnan Province of China, has been listed by UNESCO as a world heritage city (since 1997). Although it was partly destroyed by an earthquake in 1996, the UN allocated funds to restore its historical appearance. Situated in the bend of the Yangtze River, bordered by mountains and nurtured by rivers, the landscape of Lijiang is pristine and naturally beautiful. With the snow-capped Jade Dragon Mountain as its backdrop, Lijiang's lifeline is the Jade Dragon River (from this mountain). The ancestors of the Naxi minority, who settled along the rivers, had a custom of building bridges which was born not so much of structure as of culture. Apart from being a basic theme of the town's scenery, wood and stone bridges in different styles also serve as market places and stages to dance on. The town is vibrant and rich in traditions with a history of 1,300 years. Visitors will be fascinated by the architecture (of classic Ming and Qing Dynasties) found along alleys paved with five-colour stone slabs; the labyrinths lined with brick houses and old shops interspersed with streams and trees. Much of Lijiang's appeal lies in its historical value, natural environment and culture.



Old Town Lijiang  
Life style in the old town



*'Impression...ism  
Painted by the hand of nature'  
Lijiang*

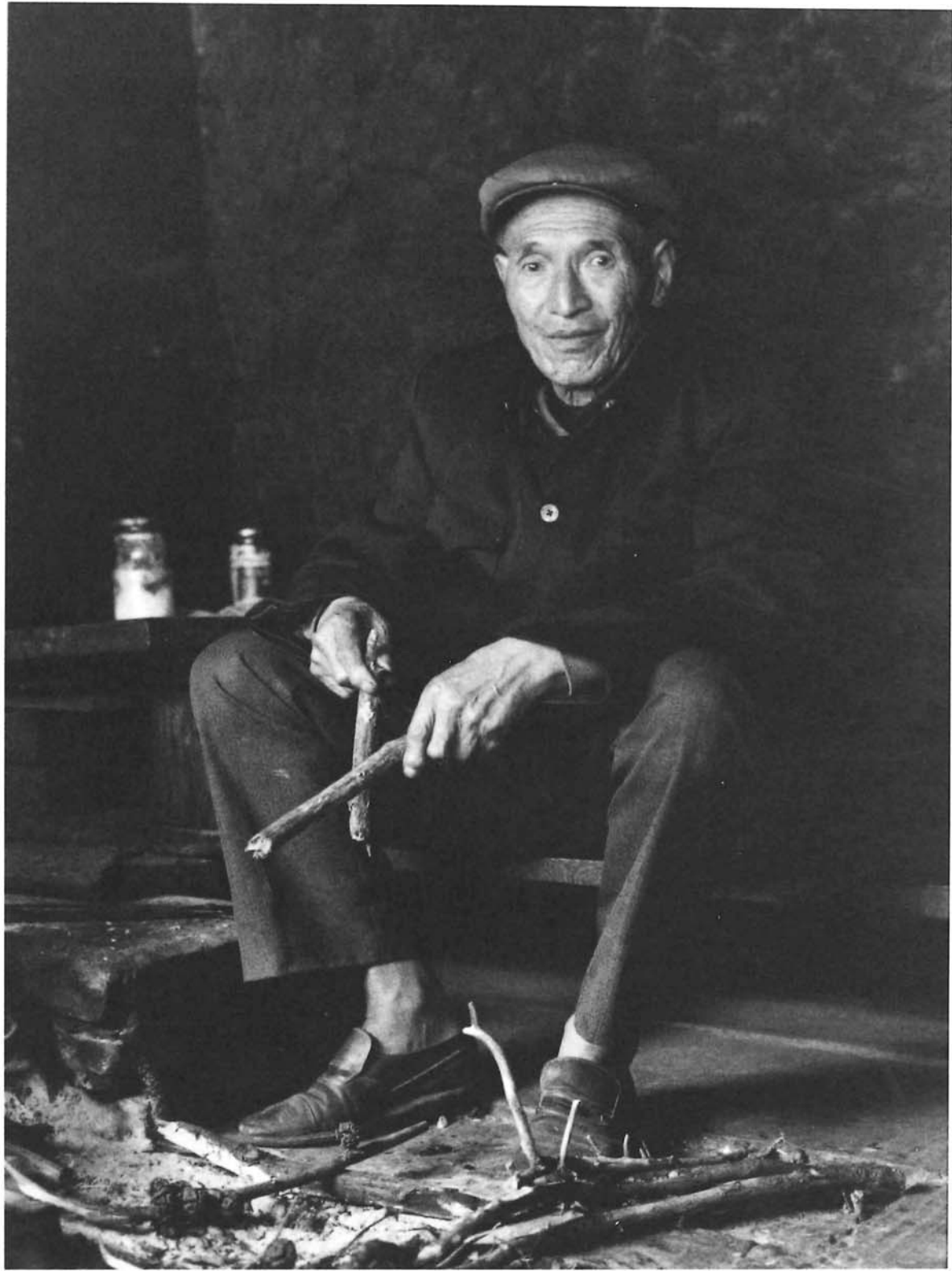
*"I just walked past the place, and at that  
moment, was struck by the reflection (of the temple)  
on the water surface."*

“There are deeper meanings to what we see and I like to draw those up.

I consider my work as follows: go to places; take a series of photographs, and once they are developed, I look through them and think about what I could do with them. I usually do not plan beforehand. I choose the less-planned way of just go, have something in mind, let things happen. I took only a couple of shots, and the outcome was this.

My photography is more concerned with art and culture. I find that people prefer the more straightforward ... of a view, scene, etc.; personally, I like abstract and conceptual work.

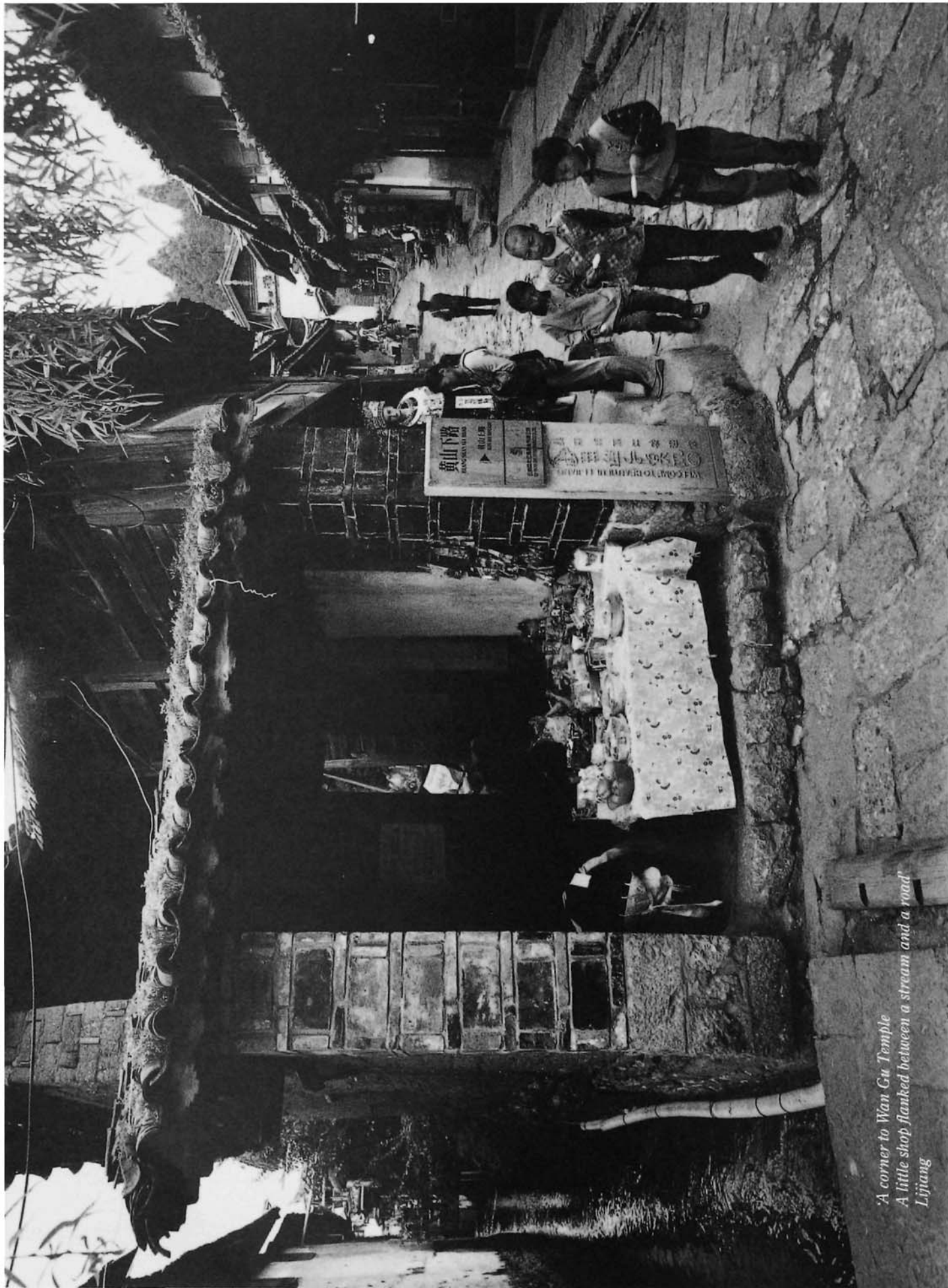
I have themes for my work that will probably take a lifetime. One of these themes involves the capturing movements which actually in turn reflect the changing of myself [photographing and the photograph becoming an introspective], from one stage to the other. Like human growth which involves ‘travelling’ from one stage to another. And when you grow, you are ‘travelling’... a lifetime of ‘travelling’.”



*Lijiang Elder  
Found in a simple house next to 500-year-old camellia tree  
Lijiang*

*"Taken in a very low light condition, reflecting old man  
living in a very basic way."*





*'A corner to Wan Gu Temple  
A little shop flanked between a stream and a road'  
Lijiang*





*'Capturing the Beauty  
Chinese artists are lost in their concentration'  
Lijiang*

“My father gave me his old Nikomat camera, after learning of my interest in photography. It was very heavy though (laugh) when I used it for my hobby. Now I use a light and little German camera, Leica, with range-finder and small lenses. It produces very good quality pictures, and is extremely handy. The good thing about using a small camera is that people don't think you are a photographer; they are natural when you take their pictures, with them thinking that you may simply be a tourist. I'm used to travelling and can't stay in one place for too long.

In terms of actual travelling, I have visited more than twenty countries, and from all these experiences, I'm now no longer perceiving my own culture as I used to, or as most other native would. I like to think of myself as a photographer who looks at her own culture with international perspectives, and then presents those points of view to the people of her country. This is a lifetime project.”

“Exciting but anxious. Yes. Different. I started from scratch, and I didn’t have any connections in this field. I’ve thought about it: this is probably going to be my last career; to be good at one thing takes so many years, and fortunately for me photography had been a hobby before, and I know that I really like it, and would like to make a living out of it. As a hobby, it started with some friends, going out to take photographs of the city. I didn’t know I would like it that much. I like playing ping-pong, listening to music and sometimes painting also, but I realise that photography is closest to my heart.

I like the work of photographer Angel Adams; he died in 1960; I think. His black and white photographs could be seen in many calendars, and his portraits of people carry subtle symbolisms; for example, shooting from the back of a famous pianist showing the musician’s fingers at the keyboard.



*‘Roof image on opposite wall’  
Lijiang*



*‘Through the window  
View of the market square’  
Lijiang*

I like to continue the world Heritage work, which will be in Hui and Hoi An, Vietnam. I can feel something changing in me, and I believe it will show, though my photography, within this couple of years. The reason why I switched from colour to black-and-white photography is because colour photographs do not give me what want. I will not stop using colour but black-and-white takes you to the subject, the object itself without the distractions of colours.”

*Group Exhibit:*

- 2001 “Recording Cultural Traditionals and Change”, Chiangmai University Art Museum, Chiangmai and Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, Bangkok, 2000
- 1995 “Art and Environment”, National Gallery, Bangkok
- 1993 - 1994 “Artists & Social Commitments”

Third ASEAN Traveling Exhibition of Painting, Photography and Children’s Art (Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines, Thailand)

*Solo Exhibit:*

- 2000 “Movement...Still-Life...Enlightenment”, Gong Dee Studio, Chiangmai
- 1999 “Luang Prabang”, Gong Dee Gallery, Chiangmai
- 1994 “World Collage”, The British Council Art Gallery, Bangkok
- 1992 “Flashes of Memory”, American University Alumni (AUA), Bangkok



*‘Shadow play’  
Lijiang*

## The Contemporary Art of Nitaya's Inner World



*Regarded as one of the most prominent female contemporary artist in Thailand, Nitaya Ueareworakul recently presented 'Manosareh', another of her intimately personal exhibitions.*

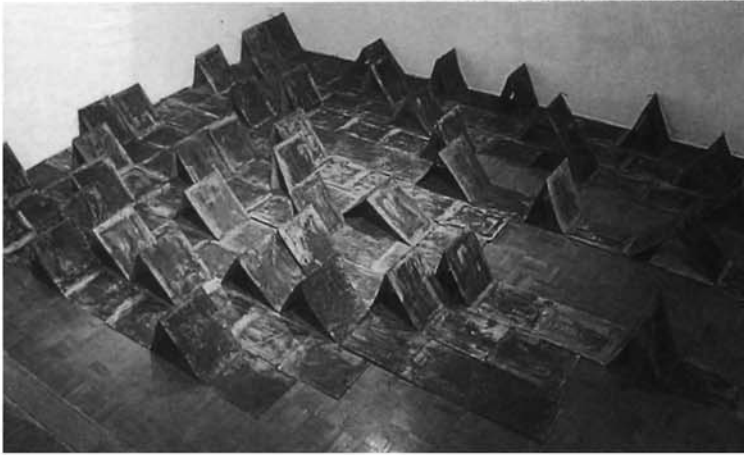
Walking on a sunny afternoon down Bangkok's narrow Sansuk Tai soi (street), encroached on by the atmosphere of the Klong Toey slum close by, I found Si-Am Art Space gallery appearing by the sidewalk. The experience seemed to be one of stumbling into something unexpected and intriguingly incongruous.

Mildly stumped, I stepped into the gallery and experienced feelings of being in a Kafka-esque scenario - entering a completely different environment and unexpected circumstances through an innocuous-looking door. Inside, the art gallery was simple and somewhat as unpretentious as the back alleys around this area are. On display in a solo exhibition entitled, "One's Private Affairs" (January 2002) were art works of Nitaya Ueareworakul, considered to be "one of the few consistently productive local female painters".

Glancing about, I was drawn to an installation, '**Dedicated to the Declination**', which was laid on the floor and about the size of a ping-pong table. It evoked impressions of undulation, the relentless and unstoppable rising-and-falling waves of changes, the ebbs and flows of sensations, birth, decay, death



*'Dedicated to the declination', 2001, mixed media, variable size*



*'Dedicated to the declination', 2001, mixed media, variable size*

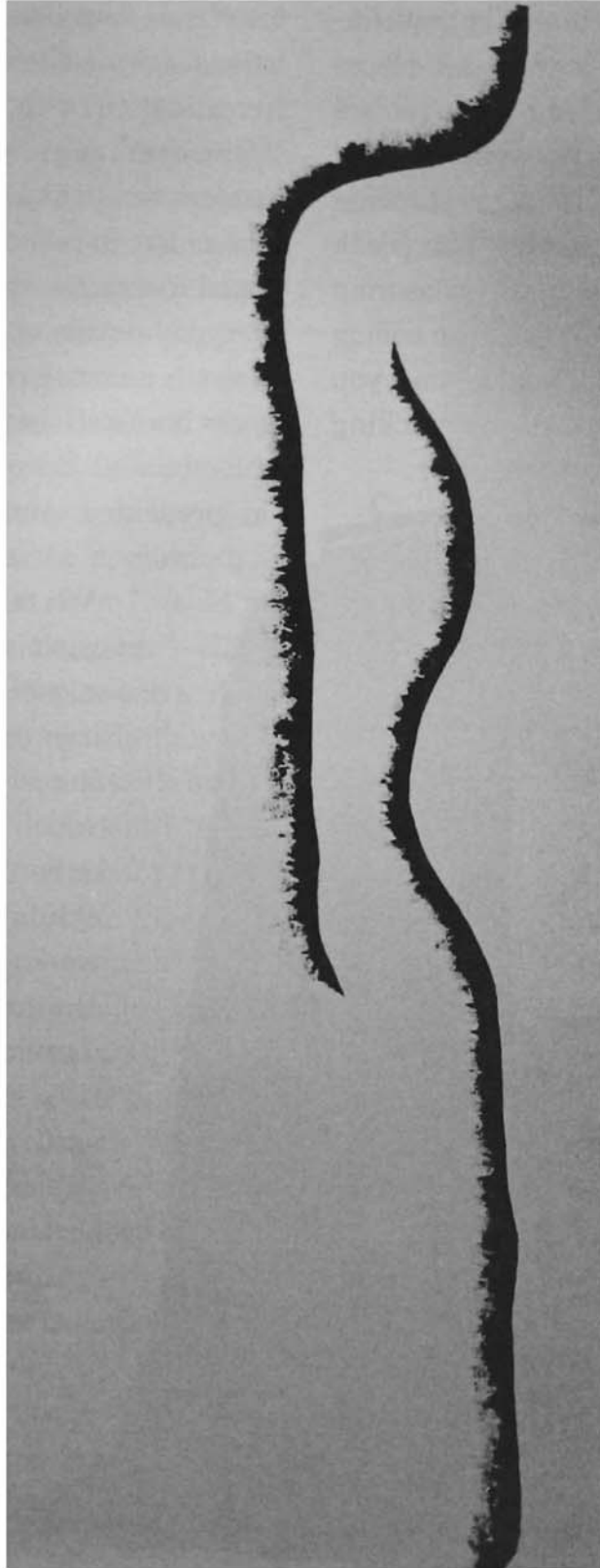


*'My mother's heart', 2001, mixed media, 150 x 43 x 26 cm*

(a real cockroach remained lifelessly at an obscure end of the art piece, which I later pointed out to the artist herself, who laughed and said, “No, that’s not part of the work!”). The undulating rolls were made mainly of used pieces of paper stitched together with threads, and dyed with cotton, water, glue, and colour powder of a murky brown that suggested old wood or dirty parquet. It was obvious that a labour of love had been involved (“meditation, really,” Nitaya countered).

As if at first subliminally charmed, then captivated, and finally enchanted by a warm sense of familiarity to it, I found my attention riveted to ‘The Absolute Body’ on the wall, a long vertical painting consisting only of two stark chinese-ink black lines on white canvas, that revealed the sensual shape of a woman’s body. The image was simple yet spontaneously sensuous. I was mesmerised by the thought process behind it, admiring the bold, expressive strokes; and resisted moving on. Nitaya’s deep appreciation of the aesthetics of the female form was evident.

By the time the artist joined me on my tour, I was at ‘My Mother’s Heart’, a mixed-media installation that the artist doubtlessly had much affection for. She explained that she wanted it to exude respect for women by applying objects that, inversely, symbolised traditional reverence for the male (particularly the cascade of bowls - in bright orange wrap - used by Buddhist monks). Referring to the shapes of a woman’s womb and breasts, Nitaya said, “These are formed by stickers, bus tickets, receipts, etc. with plaster and glue.” I was impressed by her resourcefulness and the let’s-waste-not environmental message somewhere in there, including the use of a chair. “I have become very interested in chairs, and furniture, in general,” the diminutive Chulalongkorn University arts graduate said, “the fascination with them sparked when I was in Kenya, and also in India where I was provided with old, broken furniture to work on; as a domestic item, the chair is so recognisable and useful but is such an often-neglected detail of daily life.”

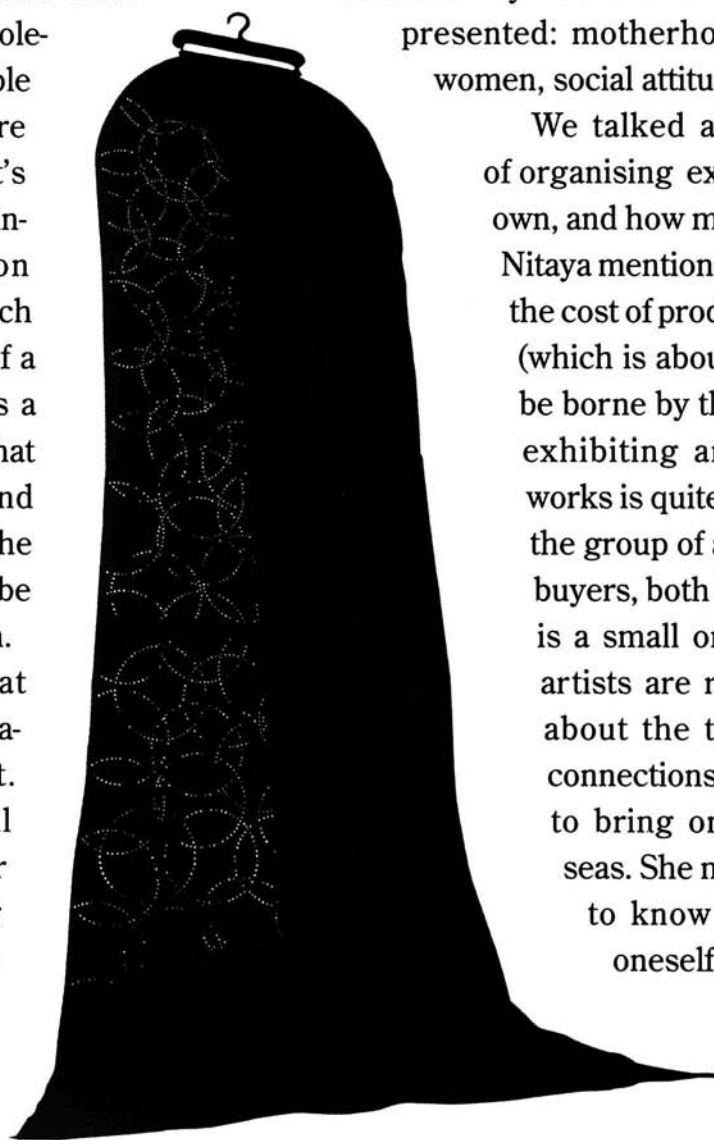


*'The Absolute Body', 1999, acrylic  
on canvas, 193 x 78 cm.*



Among the combination of large three-dimensional works and canvas-based pieces (some of which were created and exhibited between 1997 and 2000), a few works involved painstaking detailed embroidery, stitching and perforation; for example, 'The Black Skirt', huge, dark and ominous (measuring 317 x 123 cm and dangled from the ceiling with a clothes hanger). Lit from behind, you step back, and a pattern of interlocking concentric circles (made with holes from a leather hole-puncher) becomes visible on the entire piece; here you realise the artist's commitment, and the intensive concentration required to achieve such effects. This spectre of a bell seemed to possess a raw, primal sensuality that filled me with awe; and interestingly for me, the 'skirt' also appeared to be a phallic representation.

Afterwards, I sat down to have a conversation with the artist. Nitaya Ueareeworakul has been creating art for over ten years. Among the several shows she participated in, seven have been solo exhibitions. Initially working mainly in oils and acryl-



*'The black skirt', 2001, mixed media, 317 x 123 cm*

ics, Nitaya is now exploring the art of installations and mixed-media creations. I asked her about the title of her current show, 'Manosareh', and she explained that in Thai, it refers to the small, minute episodes of a human life; in reflecting upon her own, she hoped to express some of the complex and everyday details of our experiences which we were unaware of changing us. "All the works here also show miscellaneous aspects of femininity. Several different issues are presented: motherhood, religion and women, social attitudes," she added.

We talked about the matter of organising exhibitions on her own, and how much this entailed. Nitaya mentioned that, first of all, the cost of producing catalogues (which is about \$465.00) would be borne by the artist; and that exhibiting and selling one's works is quite complicated. As the group of art collectors and buyers, both local and foreign, is a small one, she said that artists are required to learn about the trends, and with connections, one may be able to bring one's works overseas. She noted that one has to know how to present oneself and one's work, and here politics are involved too "to get to the point when the value and

price of your art go to where it is beyond your expectations.” Nitaya said she was following her own instincts: “I’m not making art because I want to be among the top. Before I taught art to children, but now I’m only surviving with no other income apart from what I made from my art work, I don’t mind.” The engaging and friendly artist told me that she will be returning to her roots, the province of Sisaket (Northeast Thailand) where she was born. “I’ve chosen to work there because the cost of living is very low. I can get everything from the land, all kinds of vegetables, fish from the river. I would not spend money as I do in Bangkok.” Nitaya will be establishing a workplace on a plot of rural land where she will work with natural materials, with the locals, and with inspiration from the idyllic environment. “I don’t know yet what materials to use for creating my works there, but I’m going to experiment with what is available. There’s much to learn: if the resources of different values are fragile, stable, and durable or not; taking the time to explore the possibilities, and study waste and re-cycleable materials (which I’ve already started on).” She mused, “It’s funny, I like the situation because for decades I had been using paper, plastic, etc., and now I’ll be back to my roots, and managing materials of a very different nature.”

It will be interesting to follow the experience of this artist in her experimenting and creating from an environment she had been born into. I asked Nitaya if she, having lived in the city for almost twenty years, would be bored there in her home

village. “I think this problem can be solved ... I will return to Bangkok every one or two months, to view other exhibitions, to communicate, and prepare my own shows which will be in the city,” she answered, “I’m going to spend time building my work



*'Endless's woman', 2001, mixed media, 108 x 120 x 84 cm.*



*'The spiral', 2001, mixed media, 121 x 63 x 73 cm*



*'My mother's heart', 2001, mixed media, 150 x 43 x 26 cm*  
*'The black skirt', 2001, mixed media, 317 x 123 cm*

environment in the countryside, speaking with the local villagers, and writing the project to propose to a foundation for support.”

The artist now collects fibres from tree trunks because her mother explained that “in the old days, people made paper with these fibres.” As she has been travelling back and forth between Bangkok and Sisaket, she has already been collecting. “There are a lot of big trees, and big leaves fall from them - they are beautiful! – and at first my mother asked, ‘What are you going to do with them?’ but she knows now.”

While Nitaya is going to be living a life of slower pace in the countryside, letting ideas rise in her creative mind, she has already made projections of a few shows in the future; chief among them will be an exhibition at the end of year 2002. “It will involve furniture, installations; I have completed several pieces. It’s very fun.”

*Nitaya is now establishing herself and her studio in the rural northeast of Thailand.*



*'Beliefs', 2001,  
Black crayon on newspaper*

# DICTIONARY OF SOUTH & SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART

Gwyneth Chaturachinda  
Suranda Krishnamurty  
Pauline W. Tabtiang

**Who is Avalokitesvara?  
Where is the Golden  
Temple?  
What is a dharmachakra?  
What kind of creature is  
the Garuda?  
Of what significance is the  
naga?  
What is a zari?**



**T**his basic dictionary of South and Southeast Asian art offers clear and concise explanations of all these terms and hundreds more. With over 700 entries, 78 line illustrations, and 15 colour photographs, this little volume makes a handy reference for anyone interested and engaged in South and Southeast Asia - travellers and residents, new students in the field, museum goers, and general readers. Explanations are succinct and easy to understand. Entries range from terms encountered in South and Southeast Asian history, religion, mythology, and literature, to those specific to art and architecture. Words are drawn from the diverse religious traditions of the region, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Taoism, and from

the countries of the region, including Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

From abhayamudra through ziarat, this is an essential dictionary for anyone stepping into the fascinating world of South and Southeast Asian art.

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# Richard Engelhardt: Roving Scholar/Diplomat for UNESCO

**Katell Guiziou**, who did part of her research work at SPAFA before obtaining her Master of Law in International Cultural Relations and Exchange (*Droit des Relations et des Echanges Culturels Internationaux*) from the Institut d'etudes Politiques (Lyon, France), recently had a chat with Richard Engelhardt about UNESCO and his role as its Regional Advisor for Culture (Asia and the Pacific)

Richard feels totally at ease with both strangers and acquaintances. As UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture, you do not discover a mere “advisor” but an articulate, humorous person and a brilliant and motivated advocate for all things cultural in the Asia-Pacific region. The heaps of paperwork and documents that fill his office testify to the numerous cases he is involved in. Hidden behind the piles of paper you will discover numerous proofs of his achievements, most notably an ornately framed certificate bestowing upon Richard the coveted title of *Commandeur de l'Ordre Royal du Cambodge* which had been awarded to him by H.M King Norodom Sihanouk (Preah Bat Samdej Preah Norodom Sihanouk Varman) in recognition of his services in the preservation of the Angkor Monuments of Cambodia.

When relating his four years (from 1991 to 1995) as UNESCO Representative and Head of the UNESCO Office in Cambodia, Richard reflected on the challenges of being a diplomat responsible for the implementation of the Cambodian peace process, where the conservation of Angkor was



Richard Engelhardt

“the lynchpin for the success of the entire peace process” because it was the first major topic the four contending parties were all willing to discuss.

The International Safeguarding Campaign for Angkor which Richard launched in 1991 was an integral part of that process, not only for diplomatic reasons, but also because it represented “an important symbol for nation-building after the civil war, and it was also clear that it was the only immediate source of international foreign exchange for Cambodia”.

Richard is an outstanding scholar in the field of Asian culture and heritage, with degrees from Yale and Harvard universities. He has held visiting lectureships in universities in Hawaii, Japan and Thailand, and publishes numerous articles and books (including *The Ethno-Archaeology of Maritime Communities in the Southeast Asian Archipelago* and *Two Thousand Years of Engineering Genius on the Angkor Plain*). He is, however, more related to the species of 'globe-trotter' rather than bookworm and likes traveling in space as much as in time. He has been 'migrating' since childhood: every summer from school in Boston to his summer house in Minnesota, where he was born. He was raised in an intellectual family, notably by his grandmother, a historian who studied the role of women in the settlement of the Americas; and his grandfather who was a pioneer in the environmental movement. Encouraged by his family, the young Richard would devour history books from the large family library; and then follow the trail of dinosaur bones and Indian arrowheads.



Richard explains his interest in prehistoric history from his initial eagerness to know the origins of "native American culture" and, indeed, the very origin of "history itself". At university, he studied Asian history, and traveled to Asia many times because "it was the place to come face-to-face with history". He first came to Asia as a teenager when he made up his own exchange programme to stay for a year in Nakhon Si Thammarat in the far south of Thailand – in those days a wild and rough sort of place, though one steeped in ancient history. He reminisces: "I travelled around the country, stayed overnight in temples and lived with the monks. At night, we would talk and they would explain to me local lore and history. It is a good way to learn from the grassroots." Upon graduation from Yale, he was awarded a Yale-China Fellowship to study and teach archaeology in Hong Kong.

During the fellowship of three years, Richard taught archaeology, while mastering the Chinese language. At this time - the early 1970s - the world was entering the computer revolution, and the field of archaeology benefited from scientific and technological advances. Richard quickly adopted computer techniques to create virtual models of reconstructed archaeological sites and to calculate their statistical relevance.

Returning to the United States to do graduate work at Harvard University, Richard pioneered work in the field of "ethno-archaeology" or the study of living communities using the techniques of the archaeologist. His PhD thesis entitled "Post-Pleistocene Maritime Adaptation in the Southeast Asian Archipelago" sets out a computer-aided model to understand the evolu-

tion of maritime adaptation over the past 12,000 years.

When asked to describe the core idea of this thesis, he explains: “At the end of the Pleistocene when the glaciers began to melt and the sea level rose, Southeast Asia became formed anew. Vast areas of low-lying grasslands became flooded, creating a new geography of an archipelago of islands and coastal eco-niches. The people who inhabited this area had to learn to adapt to the new geography, which they gradually did, becoming more and more aware of the potential of marine resources and more adept at exploiting them, through the development of boats, innovations in fishing tackle, and changes in social structures. Although with these technical and social changes, there was also an intellectual development with people becoming expert in knowledge about the sea, about weather and about marine biology. The evolution was rapid – in archaeological time – so much so that we can say that here in Southeast Asia there was an intellectual, economic and social revolution which laid the foundation for the development of complex societies in the region such as Sri Vijaya, Angkor, and Ayutthaya. The significance of this contribution to human development on a global scale can be grasped if we consider that Sri Vijaya controlled a regional trading network larger than ASEAN today, and that both Angkor and Ayutthaya were among the world’s largest cities of their time. It is therefore no surprise that Singapore and Hong Kong are still today at the hub of the world’s trade networks while the region’s cities from Bangkok to Jakarta

and Manila are among the world’s most active urban commercial centres.”

With this academic background, Richard was invited to enter the service of the United Nations. Twenty years later, he recalls that moment: “UNHCR (the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) asked me to put



*in UNESCO office*

together for the first time a system of registering refugees, computerising and collecting cultural data about them, to understand what kind of person becomes a refugee and what happens to them, and what the international community can do to help them. This procedure, unheard of and innovative at that time has now become standard for UNHCR”.



As a test case, he profiled the backgrounds of two kinds of refugees, the Laotian hill tribe refugees and the Vietnamese boat people.

Today, in his UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Unit for Culture, “we are exploring a hypothesis that there may be cultural factors which predict which people are at risk to exclusion from the development paradigm and thus vulnerable to exploitation and worse. A very good example is HIV-AIDS education. If people don’t go to school, of course, they do not hear the ‘danger of HIV infection’ message, the language of which they don’t speak, thus cannot protect themselves against it. This idea, is far from a resignation implied by pessimistic assumptions of cultural predeterminations of poverty and exploitation. UNESCO will be able to guide the international community to target its assistance to the right people at the right places so that it has a positive impact, one which solves problems, but does so in a culturally appropriate way. Development need not necessarily imply a destruction of the culture, in fact the flourishing of culture is the end goal of all development. It is now popular to say that development must be given a human face. What is that human face? It is the face of culture.”

During his ten years in UNHCR, he did work for the UN Secretariat in Thailand and Cambodia (from 1989 to 1991) and for UNESCO, which he officially joined in 1991. Richard was the first Head of UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh where he launched the international safeguarding campaign for Angkor and shepherded the nomination of Angkor to the World Heritage List, activities for which he was honoured with a knighthood by King Sihanouk. He was then promoted to UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture for Asia and the Pacific. In this role he has reinvented the cultural role of UNESCO in the region, invigorating its actions by giving

priority to community involvement in the preservation of heritage and by emphasizing the primary place of culture as a tool for development. These efforts have been so successful that in addition to his Cambodian knighthood, Richard has been decorated by the governments of Viet Nam, China and the Philippines.

**Linking archaeology** to political and environmental issues, the archaeologist/advocate says: “With archaeology, one studies environmental issues, such as the extinction of prehistoric megafauna, and inevitably one comes to the conclusion that humankind, in its march through history, has had a profoundly negative effect on the earth’s total environment. The archaeological layers that one studies are all marked by some kind of environmental degradation followed by evidence of a political catastrophe, so in fact the study of archaeology is not only the study of humans in their natural environment, it is also the study of humans in their social environment — an environment which we have ourselves created, for better or for worse.”

For many years, Richard has been studying the transformations of ancient and modern societies in tandem, to understand where we have come from in order to better determine where we are going. As an ethno-archaeologist, the future development of the human race has always been at the centre of his preoccupations. He advocates the idea of “looking at culture and especially the conservation of our heritage resources as a prerequisite for sustainable development, just like the conservation of water, trees and the air is a prerequisite for sustainable development.” These preoccupa-



tions are highly visible in UNESCO projects, such as the LEAP (Local Effort in Asia and the Pacific) which is a programme that integrates community development and cultural and natural site preservation, and allows local communities to take an active role in the management of their heritage as well as the development of tourism-related industries.

Richard remarks that “heritage conservation is becoming an issue of common concern to policymakers and to the public alike across the length and breadth of the Asia-Pacific region.” Many advances in preserving the heritage have taken place, and national and local legislation for heritage protection are now common in the region, thanks to Richard’s constant advocacy. “I never tire” he says “of talking about the need for protecting our common heritage, whether it be at the individual level, the community level, the national level, or the global level. Perhaps some people liken me to a broken record, but my theme song is now one which many people are also singing.”

**Heritage conservation** has also recently entered the educational curriculum of the region’s school system, where the UNESCO World Heritage Education Resource Kit has become a familiar tool used to teach high school students to respect and appreciate their heritage. More and more of the region’s universities offer degree courses in Cultural Resources Management, linked together in a network call the UNESCO-ICCROM Asian Academy for Conservation Management of Cultural Heritage – another of

Richard’s many innovative ideas to promote professional heritage conservation.

The increase in attention being paid to heritage conservation has also spurred an increase in the support of the private sector for these activities. “If heritage conservation is a tool for development, then it’s got to have a broad base,” says Richard, “I’ve wanted to transform the whole paradigm of heritage conservation in the region from a top-down elitist activity into a bottom-up, grassroots, community-based movement. Now, six years later, I look back on this and I do think that we have succeeded in mobilizing a grassroots concern for conservation as well as a movement

“I never tire of talking about the need for protecting our common heritage, whether it be at the individual level, the community level, the national level, or the global level.”



to professionalize heritage management.” UNESCO’s regional network of heritage conservation personnel working in the region has grown from a mere 45 in 1995, to more than 600 registered professionals today.

But not all problems concerning the safeguarding of the region’s rich cultural heritage have

been solved. Looking at what has been happening in the tourism industry, Richard admits he is “deeply worried about the speed at which tourism is despoiling the region’s cultural – and natural – heritage. When culture is used



as an advertising gimmick and nothing more, the few spoil it for the many. Both the physical heritage and intangible culture are equally at risk of commodification, trivialization and over-use; but what industry can be profitable in the long term if they do not invest in their resource base?” He advises : “We must work very hard for a complete paradigm shift in the tourism industry. The industry must reform itself - or be reformed through public pressure - into a conservation movement to ensure that the cultural and natural resources on which tourism depends are not used up, but are conserved. If not, the region’s precious culture heritage resources will be irreparably degraded, and, with the loss of these resources, cultural tourism, too, will soon become a moribund industry. It should not be such a hard choice to make – either it is win-win or it is lose-lose.”

Richard has also placed many other innovative and forward-looking activities on UNESCO’s agenda for the Asia-Pacific region. Inspired by the success of small business incubators to assist dot.coms and other small-and-medium scale IT company start-ups, the UNESCO small business incubators for cultural industries will demystify the process of business for creative producers and teach them how to set up a culture-based business without the need for

heavy capital investment or administration. The promotion of cultural industries and a large range of creative enterprises is a cornerstone of UNESCO future strategy for the Asia-Pacific region. Architecture, design, fashion, handicraft, film,

television, and other media; the performing arts such as music, dance, and theatre will be promoted; including painting, writing, publishing, and software development, the running of museums, art galleries and concert halls, even tourism. According to the seasoned culture campaigner: “If you look at basic development statistics, you’ll see that the cultural industries have an important role to play in development, but, unlike in some other parts of the world, their contribution to the economies of Asia and the Pacific is negligible, in spite of the fact that the region is home to the richest mosaic of culture in the world: This means that there is a huge potential for growth in the cultural industries in Asia and Pacific. It is an untapped development sector in this part of the world, and knowing that we have tremendous cultural heritage resources here, the conservation of those resources and the





utilisation of that for development is an obvious development strategy which must be vigorously pursued if we are to continue to make headway in the fight against poverty.”

Educated as he was, Richard could have become a conventional scholar, teaching archaeology in a prestigious American university. Instead, he chose another, more difficult path, combining scholarship with service to the developing world. This was a fortunate and happy choice for the cause of heritage conservation and for local community development in Asia and the Pacific. This scholar-diplomat works as he lives - with passion, intelligence and a love for culture.

“What I did not want to be was a dusty historian, spending the rest of my life confined inside libraries. I wanted to be outside, doing things, seeing the things I do have an impact on society,” he says.



*Katell Guiziou*

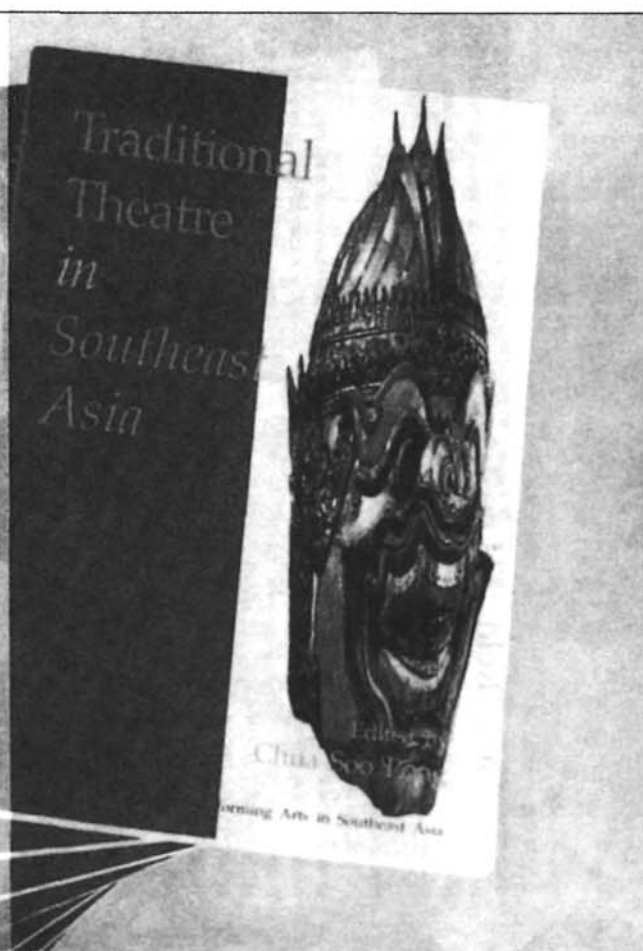
*All photos by Nipon Sud-Ngam*

### **Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia**

*Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia* introduces many traditional forms of theatre that are not widely known outside their countries of origin. Edited by Dr Chua Soo Pong, Currently the Director of the Chinese Opera Institute in Singapore, the book discusses how traditional forms of theatre should be revitalised in the rapidly changing socio-economic environments of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

*Traditional Theatre in Southeast Asia* (US\$ 10 excluding postage cost) can be obtained from:

Regional Centre for Archaeology  
and Fine Arts  
SPAFA  
81/1 Sri Ayutthaya Road  
Samsen, Theves  
Bangkok 10300, Thailand  
Tel : (66-2) 2804022-9  
Fax : (66-2) 2804030  
Email : [spafa@ksc.th.com](mailto:spafa@ksc.th.com)



THERE  
BEFORE  
YOU

# ANGKOR OBSERVED



DAWN ROONEY



# ORCHID GUIDES

# ANGKOR OBSERVED

by DAWN ROONEY

This is the second book in the series **THERE BEFORE YOU**. It consists of a selection of early travellers' impressions of the Khmer empire's ancient, 12th century capital and the legends that inspired the majestic stone temples of Angkor, which were described by a visitor in the 1920s as "the most impressive sight in the world of edifices".

The work brings to the reader out-of-print impression of early western travellers, and also includes tales and legends based on an oral tradition, published for the first time. It serves as a guide-book companion, as an introduction to Angkor and as

supplementary reading following a visit. It is also of interest to the armchair traveller unable to venture as far afield as Cambodia.

The author has a PhD in art history, and has written several books on Southeast Asian art and culture, including *Angkor. An Introduction to the Temples* (1994).

*"Go to Angkor, my friend,  
to its ruins and its dreams."*

P. Jeannerat de Beerski, 1923.

*Approximately 260 pp., richly illustrated,  
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## Artists retreat to countryside

*Varsha Nair, a visual artist who lives in Bangkok, reports on the recently-held Womanifesto Workshop, which was a gathering of artists from different parts. It took place in a rural environment, on a farm in Isarn, Northeast of Thailand*

“I really do not have to make a work ... ?”

“Yes, really ...”

Thus began my discussion with Thai ceramic artist Surojana Sethabutra, about her participation at the **Womanifesto Workshop 2001**.

Unlike its previous manifestations (biannual

exhibitions held in Bangkok

in 1997 and 1999), this

Womanifesto event was

designed as a ten-day workshop

in the remote setting of north-

eastern Thailand with no formal

exhibition of works planned

thereafter. At Boon Bandaan

Farm near Kantha ralak, Si

Saket, a group of eighteen

professional women - artists,

curators and art administrators,

as well as five students of cultural

management as volunteers -

were invited to interact and

exchange not only with each

other but also with the local crafts people

and community. Focusing particularly on the

position of women and the wealth of stored

knowledge - shared amongst men, women and

children in rural areas, handed down from

generation to generation - the emphasis was on

engaging with crafts people, exploring local

materials and a traditional way of life. The set-up

of the workshop was carefully planned to initiate

dialogue and create a dynamic environment

for process and exchange. In addition, the

participants were not required to produce ‘work’

in the ten days but were free to devote the time

to gather material and document to use at a later

date. Womanifesto Workshop

2001 was fully funded by the

Chiang Mai-based Heinrich

Boell Foundation.

In our contemporary

environment, the gaze is focused

on urbanisation and city centres.

Traditional methods of produc-

tion and rural knowledge of

living are being overlooked and

quickly forgotten. According to

**Nilofar Akmut**, an artist from

Pakistan and one of the invited

participants, “the tradition of

craft which has its roots from the

beginning of time in women’s

work and creativity to clothe, provide utensils,

religious objects to furnish their homes was later

to be usurped by men as industrialization took

over on a global scale. The look and feel of

industrially crafted objects is synonymous with

globalisation. Lost is the creative voice of these

artisans. Traditionally, artisans carried the

mental images of pure forms from generation to



*Local inspiration: Khun Mae's unique style of weaving*

generation. Co-operative sharing of skills between the artist and artisan could bring high art and everyday objects together in maintaining individual creativity in our mechanized world.”

Under the thatched roof of the central *sala* (a pavilion, usually within temple grounds), which was also the venue for post-dinner slide presentation and talks, a hive of activity ensued each morning with members of the local community arriving to hold individual ‘workshops’ demonstrating their own particular knowledge and skills. We might refer to them in special terms, i.e. as “artisans” or “crafts people”, but in effect, they simply carried out what was part of their everyday lives – making or mending basket, turning coconut shells into ladles and cups, weaving cloth and mats, etc.. All this is due to and in a way controlled by the seasons, because during planting and harvesting the staple rice, almost everyone in the community is fully engaged working in the fields, leaving them little time to devote to other activities.

Local resident **Khun Pikul Deelon-ngam**, who runs a women’s co-operative in a nearby village, differs from the more traditional basket weavers in that she uses cut-up strips of old newspapers to wrap around wire and weaves these into more decorative forms. Khun Pikul found a dynamic collaborator in **Karla Sachse** from Berlin, who is recognised for her text-based works, her use of “left-over”, carefully preserved documents and other bits of paper. For example, in one of her installations titled *‘Don’t search for them’*, Karla carefully cut out the senders’ addresses from letters sent to her over the last thirty-odd years. These individual hand-written addresses were then laminated, and the pieces strung together to make up a giant hammock which was installed in the wait-

ing room of the now defunct Bahnhof Westend railway station in Berlin. At the workshop and along with khun Pikul, Karla embarked upon weaving a large paper container. Titled *‘Female vessel’*, she took the concept of a basket being a container or vessel further by engaging all present – female and male. Handing out blank strips of paper she asked us to record our bodily experiences in the time we had been there. These hand-written strips, including ones written by Khun Pikul and her sister, bearing some very personal accounts were then rolled and woven along with the newspaper to become part of the large belly like form. As she explained, “... the first step is this basket and asking all to write their texts. This is to make people see that what they write is a visible record of their experiences which are personal but invisible to others. Similarly, opened up the writing on the strips is visible but once rolled up, it becomes invisible and yet remains present in the form of this vessel”.

This also became a point for Karla to launch yet another collaborative work based on a text or poem relating to her own ‘female’ history. Handing out these texts to the group, the collaboration called for individual responses in the form of texts, images, etc., which she aims to combine into a book in the future. Karla, who is interested in individuals communicating memories and histories in a fresh and thought provoking manner, said “to me what is most important is to hand out this text about my female history and give it into your hands ... I start a new project which is invisible at the moment and I wish to make it visible in the future.”

Two days into the workshop and **Surojana Sethabuttra**, well known for her complex architectural installations, largely employing self and/



or factory-made ceramics, decided to build a kiln. Attempting to do so for the first time, Surojana based her design on the simplest kind of kiln known in Thailand, one that is open at the top; but instead of using bricks and the more common rectangular form, she laid down a circular bamboo inner structure which was then packed with clay containing a mixture of mud, straw and sand. Inside the kiln, found bits of iron were trimmed and placed to construct a grid, making a platform to hold the objects during firing. The purpose of building a kiln on site was two-fold: not only did Surojana want to re-create a kiln on the farm where, she was told, one had existed in the past; but, more importantly, she wanted to establish the foundations to revive the tradition of making pots and other objects amongst the residents of the farm and surrounding community. Demonstrating a firm commitment to the project, she ensured her own return to the site in future to conduct workshops with students from local schools. Preferring to experiment and work with materials found in the immediate environment, the clay used for making pots and other objects was found on the land which she mixed with sand and mud from termite hills to achieve the right consistency. The natural presence of iron in the clay gave it a reddish colour when fired. At the firing stage, burning materials such as coconut and rice husks, cow manure and driftwood - all found on the farm - were gathered to stoke the kiln. Surojana's foresight also synthesized and brought many on the farm to work together - from helping to build the kiln to preparing the clay and making objects

*Surojana's foresight also synthesized and brought many on the farm to work together - from helping to build the kiln to preparing the clay and making objects which were successfully fired towards the end of the workshop period.*

which were successfully fired towards the end of the workshop period.

Another fruitful collaboration resulted from the sensitive interaction between **Khun Phromma** and **Nitaya Ueareworakul**. An expert at making traditional large baskets called *Toom* which are used as fish-traps, Khun Phromma raised many a question as to the "new" form that Nitaya discussed and embarked upon with his valuable assistance. Highlighting the functionality of the objects that have been produced for generations, Nitaya discussed how it was also possible to employ the same materials and techniques and take it further to explore new shapes and forms which could be presented in a more contemporary context. This, in turn, would help nurture and maintain the continuity of individual creativity, traditional techniques and use of materials, keeping the 'craft' alive for future generations.

From weaving materials to weaving a camera - filmmaker **Lawan Jirasuradej's** ingenious video footage of working hands was carefully filmed and edited in the process. Wishing to capture the many processes that various pairs of hands were involved with - from cooking, drawing, kneading clay, weaving cloth or baskets to washing clothes and pouring water - Lawan's video captures the essence of the workshop in many ways. Titled *'Hands in the coop'*, the piece was filmed and completed during the course of the workshop. On the final day, Lawan installed her work inside the chicken coop, and could be viewed through a peephole cut into one of the thatched walls, ensuring that

the residents of the coop were not disturbed. The connection between the image on the TV and the scene inside the chicken coop was an obvious one, hens roosting in the baskets connected to the image of hands weaving said, “when the audience look at the installation, they see on the TV monitor hands that weave, saw, hammer, cook and build from both experts and novices, and at



*Khun Phomma and Nitaya Ueareeworakul:  
a fruitful collaboration*

the same time, they witness the surroundings. A chicken coop, turned theatre, is an art installation within itself. The villagers have installed with their hands different shapes and forms of nests for their dwellers.”

*‘Hands in the coop’* also became a part of the presentation during the post-workshop discussion at About Studio/Café, where the participants were asked to speak about their work and experience when their hands appeared on the screen.

Some artists, with the energetic input from volunteers, explored the exciting possibility of making site-specific works. **Yoshiko Kanai**, a New York-based Japanese artist, constructed out of a mud wall, a large outlined form titled *‘Earth woman’* in the midst of the rice field. Painter **Maritta Nurmi’s** (from Finland, living in Vietnam) sensitive and subtle “marks” can be perceived to be honouring the abundance of different species of trees on the farm. Placing small sheets of silver leaf, a material widely employed in her canvas-based works, on the trunks of trees on a winding path around the rice field, Maritta painted almost invisible images on the bark and the silver background. “By using the same silver leaf I use in my paintings on canvas, this time straight on tree trunks, I painted these small marks in the midst of this area of great silence in order to create a momentary shattering, shaking or sparkling in the minds of passerby. On one of them I painted across the road. On another one I painted fishes to mark the small river nearby... more anyhow wishing it to give a glimpse about ‘the river beneath the river’, the big Creator herself. The third one is telling about yet another river; tears being the river that take you somewhere. Tears will lift your boat off the rocks, off dry ground, carrying it



*Trouble in the Henhouse: Lawau Jirasuradej filming working hands*



down river to someplace new, someplace better.” Maritta’s charged and meaningful shift became a major factor in expanding the horizon of her own art practice. “Like all my work I wish those small marks to give wind for new hopes and dreams, flashes from other worlds, other possibilities”. Taking a bold step away from the confines of a canvas, she successfully juxtaposed her images in direct response to the environment and landscape.

Day 5 was set aside to conduct workshops with students from local schools, which 40 students, spanning from age 6 to 15, along with their teachers, attended. Five groups were set up according to age. A group of older students joined a video workshop led by Lawan Jirasuradej, myself and **Nataya Masawisut**. Some joined Surojana’s ceramic workshop, yet another group of younger children joined Nilofar and **Vipapat Wadkeaw** to draw on the floor of the forest and simultaneously use body movements to express themselves. And, a group of eight became teachers for the day to teach vital lessons to **Preenun Nana** and **Sirinapa Sirinakorn**. Preenun’s main aim was to stress upon the community the importance of inherited practices and continuing with their way of life. “This idea came from my personal interest in local vegetables and medicinal properties of plants we use in everyday cooking and I want the local people, especially kids, to be proud of the richness of nature around them. So in the workshop with the students I asked them to be the teachers telling about the properties of plants they knew as we walked through the forest and along the rice fields. Not only I could learn from them but also the rest of the group could as they took turns to share what each of them knew. I asked them to write and attach tags to the

relevant plants so others could also read and learn. Some of them told us at the conclusion session how proud and glad they were that the “little” knowledge that is handed down to them by their parents and grandparents could be so



*Marietta Nurmi: “to give wind for new hopes dreams, flashes from other worlds”*

meaningful to people. To me, it’s very important and enriching to have this kind of a sharing and learning experience”

Certainly the camaraderie, openness and willingness to share, particularly from the residents on the farm, extended beyond simple hospitality. The genuine welcome and input of the owners of Boon Badaan Farm - the Parahom family including fellow artist **Maitree Parahom**, his brother **Ngam Parahom** and most importantly their mother **Khun Mae** - contributed to the success of this event in more ways than one. Furthermore, Khun Mae, who proved to be the ultimate story teller, experiments with the natural flora and fauna on her farm to make dyes for silk and cotton yarn which she weaves into cloth. From learning about which colour could be obtained from a particular plant to the matter of how to fix colours whilst dyeing, and that of

peeling the inner bark of the *areeca palm* and its uses in the intricacies of fabric weaving patterns, being in Khun Mae's company and experiencing her immense energy and depth of knowledge was inspirational to us all.

**Yin Xuizhen**, an artist from Beijing explained: "I was beginning to dislike life as an artist, the pressure of exhibitions. This makes me see what it should be about... I really needed this ..." Xuizhen, who is known for her humour-filled installations in which she explores personal materials and conditions to

speak of universal human experiences, spent the ten days recording in her diary what she saw and experienced at the workshop, among so much beauty of nature's own great installations. **Naomi Urabe** (ex-curator at About Studio/Café and currently curator at Art in General, New York), a co-organiser of Womanifesto Workshop 2001, rightly summed up, "...while some of the work inspired by the Workshop may not be evident right away, it is hoped that the experience of living in Northeastern Thailand, even for only a short while, will help to inspire future projects and perhaps further collaborations. We hope that this first Workshop and exchange, not only among the artists but with the local community

as well, will continue beyond the ten days that we spent on the Boon Bandaan Farm. Many of us did not know each other before the event and having the time to exchange our experiences and have dialogues, both formal and informal, was crucial to the whole Workshop process."



*Wise beyond their years: Children at the workshop show the instructors how it's done.*

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### **Varsha Nair**

Womanifesto Workshop was held from October 22 to November 4, 2001 and organised by Preenun Nana, Nitaya Uaeree-worakul, Naomi Urabe & Varsha Nair

**Participants:** Nilofar Akmut, Hiroko Inoue, Lawan Jirasura-

dej, Yoshiko Kanai, Varsha Nair, Preenun Nana, Maritta Nurmi, Karla Sachse, Narumol Thamapruksha, Surojana Sethabuttra, Nitaya Uaereeworakul, Naomi Urabe, Yin Xuizhen.

**Volunteers:** Vipapat Wadkeaw, Nataya Masawisut, Sirinapa Sirinakorn, Duangnapa Silapasai and Jiratti Khuttanam

Catalogue and Video available April 2002. Contact e-mail: [womanifesto2001@yahoo.com](mailto:womanifesto2001@yahoo.com)

This report is also published in art4d magazine, Bangkok

Photographs by Preenun Nana and Varsha Nair

# The Bangpakong Mangrove Eco-Museum

*A secondary school in the Chacheongsao province of Thailand is developing and establishing an eco-museum, and water culture and sports centre among its community and in its vicinity of mangrove plantations, natural vegetation and maritime habitat*

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*Developing the area into a fishing village model, displaying houses, boats, and fishing tools*

'Eco-Museum' may seem to be a new term and type of museum, but the concept is not; it is believed that the word emerged in 1971, and refers to a museum dedicated to the environment (the idea was developed in France and Algeria). The eco-museum, evolving from the 'open-air' museum model, is essentially made up of two inter-related museums – a spatial, unconfined, no-walls museum; and an enclosed temporal one. This kind of museum has a role in the education and culture of a very wide audience, and a community that can see its past, feel its present, and be involved in its future (which the museum can contribute toward – for a local, regional, national and international public).

During the past three years, SPAFA (Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts) has been working closely with the administration and the Alumni Association of the Bovorn Witthayayon School to provide the Bangpakong community there and the general public just such a museum. Bangpakong Bovorn Witthayayon Secondary School is located in Chacheongsao Province (to the east of Bangkok), Thailand. It is one of the ninety-two schools established (1897) in what was then called Siam during the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910). The school (having been distinguished as a centre for environmental studies), with about eight hundred school children and eighty teachers, covers eleven hectares of land, and is situated near a mangrove area. SPAFA has been extending regular technical and academic assistance\* to the school on the development of programmes on culture and ecology, and to establish the Bangpakong Mangrove Eco-Museum, and Water Culture and Sports Centre.

Surrounding the Bovorn Witthayayon school and the community are mangrove plantations, natural vegetation and maritime habitat, and the Bangpakong River along it. Primarily to preserve its pristine environment and culture, SPAFA began a community involvement project to create an eco-museum out of the area, and to make it a precedent of museums that are different from the closed, huge buildings which house collections of objects of beauty and



*food cycle chart*



*walkways of eco-museum*



*Bangpakong River*

history. Here, the school mangrove *is* the museum. It can accommodate between forty and



fifty visitors at a time. There are elevated walkways, over the water, leading to the view and study of various kinds of plants, marine life-forms, a collection of boats (donated by members of the Bangpakong fishing community), all of which provide the visitor with information substantial enough for understanding their types, physiography and functions. There is also a pavilion which provides scientific information on

plants, animals, etc.. that highlight the relevance of the mangrove to the community, and raises awareness whilst instilling a sense of communal protection of it. Scientific information is presented on signboards, in an easily comprehensible format; and focuses on various aspects of the mangrove community: the ecology of mangroves and its importance, effective practices in management of its preservation and restoration, the uses and functions of mangroves (emphasizing the long-term economic yield to be obtained for the improvement in mangrove dwellers' quality of life, etc.). Naturally, as an ongoing project, the eco-museum is evolving, and is not entirely complete in its present form and state.

Opened on 17 November 2001, this extraordinary museum also concentrates on maritime history of the world through stamps and pictures (with clear captions in simple English and Thai languages), and the Water Sports Centre there will organise activities such as swimming in the river (especially for students and children), and boat-rowing too, under the supervision and care of professional trainers. Teachers and students are being trained in the management of the museum and ecological resource centre. The museum has become a mirror where people can watch and better recognise themselves, and where they are able to look for the important values in which they are settled. As a paramount means of improving understanding and preserving the environment itself, The Bangpakong Mangrove Eco-Museum is possibly the first of its type in Southeast Asia.



*Museum officially opened by Dr. Kasama Varavarn, Director-General, Dept. of General Education, M.O.E. Thailand.*

*\* Since its inception in 1996, the SEAMEO Community Involvement Project has adopted under its ambit five primary schools in the Philippines, Thailand, and Brunei. It has been regularly providing technical, academic and other assistance through the adopt-a-school programme initiated by the SEAMEO Secretariat, and implemented by Innotech, Searca, Voctech, and Spafa. Other SEAMEO Centres have also participated by supplying training scholarships for teachers in adopted schools, and are in the process of formalising their adoption of schools.*



# Tropical Architecture and Preservation in Malaysia



**Dr. A. Ghafar Ahmad** highlights the architectural styles of the traditional and colonial buildings in Malaysia, and identifies some building features that are responsive to the local climatic conditions. He also discusses the preservation of heritage buildings in Malaysia.

## Overview of Malaysia

Situated in the central part of Southeast Asia, Malaysia has a warm-humid equatorial climate with high humidity and temperatures ranging from 22°C to 34°C. It has an annual rainfall of 80 to 100 inches with heavy monsoon rain. With a total population of 23 million (2000), Malaysia is one of the few countries in the world that has a multi-racial society. The country has 51% Malays, 35% Chinese, 10% Indians and 4% other ethnic groups, such as the Dayaks, Kadazans, Eurasians, Thais, Filipinos, Indonesians and Arabs.

Even though Islam is the official religion of the country, freedom of worship is enjoyed by all ethnic groups. This diversity is not only reflected in the beliefs and cultures but also in the architectural styles and building elements. Mosques, churches, temples, Malay vernacular houses, shophouses, terrace houses and clan houses or

association buildings are some examples of building types which are found throughout the country. Once colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British between 1511 and 1957, Malaysia also boasts a great number of colonial buildings which are still intact. Some of the colonial buildings have been converted into new uses while others have been listed by the Government under the present Antiquities Act of 1976 for greater protection and preservation.

With the country's current rapid development, in which the practice of demolishing old buildings has been the norm, greater efforts and commitments are being made by various authorities and local communities in Malaysia to ensure that the traditional and colonial buildings are well preserved and handed onto future generations in good condition. Such buildings also play a major role in keeping track of the country's development.

## Traditional and Colonial Architecture

As far as the tropical architecture is concerned, both the traditional and colonial buildings in Malaysia are architecturally significant because they are designed and built with a sound understanding and respect for nature and the environment, incorporating and reflecting the local lifestyles and cultures. These buildings are considered as the architectural heritage of Malaysia and have been influenced by various architectural styles, including the Indian (7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century), Southern Chinese (15<sup>th</sup> century to the present), Portuguese (1511 to 1641), Dutch (1641 to 1795), Indonesian (18<sup>th</sup> century) and the British (1795 to 1957). The most prominent traditional architecture in Malaysia are the

Malay Vernacular, Southern Chinese as well as the colonial buildings. Table 1.0 shows the different types and architectural influences of the traditional and colonial architecture in Malaysia.

## Malay Vernacular Architecture

Early Malay houses were raised on timber stilts and made of materials which were easily available from the tropical forests such as timber, bamboo, rattan, tree roots and leaves. Usually the houses have pitched roofs, verandahs or porches in the front, high ceilings and many big openings for ventilation purposes. Although these characteristics are common in all Malay houses, their shapes and sizes can differ from

Architectural Styles		Periods	Building Types	Architectural Influences
Traditional	Malay Vernacular	14 <sup>th</sup> century to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- early houses (on-stilt)</li> <li>- mansions</li> <li>- timber mosques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional</li> <li>- Indonesian</li> <li>- Moorish</li> <li>- Islamic</li> </ul>
	Southern Chinese	15 <sup>th</sup> century to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shophouses</li> <li>- terrace houses</li> <li>- temples</li> <li>- clan houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chinese</li> <li>- Classical</li> <li>- Malay Vernacular</li> </ul>
Colonial	Portuguese	1511 -1641	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fort (ruins)</li> <li>- church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classical</li> <li>- Portuguese influence</li> </ul>
	Dutch	1641 - 1795	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fort (ruins)</li> <li>- Governor's house</li> <li>- churches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classical</li> <li>- Dutch influence</li> </ul>
	British	1795 -1957	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- forts</li> <li>- mosques</li> <li>- churches</li> <li>- prisons</li> <li>- schools</li> <li>- palaces</li> <li>- clock towers</li> <li>- court houses</li> <li>- museums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moorish</li> <li>- Neo-Gothic</li> <li>- Neo-Classical</li> <li>- Tudor</li> <li>- Art-Deco</li> </ul>

Table 1.0 : Classifications of Traditional and Colonial Architecture in Malaysia

state to state. The Malay architecture has been influenced by the Indonesian Bugis, Riau and Java from the south; Siamese, British, Arab and Indian from the north; Portuguese, Dutch, Aceh, Minangkabau from the west; and Southern Chinese from the east. Thus, vernacular architecture has evolved and modified their styles to adapt to these influences. For example, some houses in Kelantan state have similar roof to that of Southern Thailand. This type of roof style is totally different from the ones in Negeri Sembilan state which have been greatly influenced by the Minangkabau of Indonesia.

As a whole, Malay vernacular architecture has been influenced by 4 major factors:

### **1. Material resources**

With Malaysia's climate, building materials are easily available from tropical forests. Timber is used for building structure, rattan and tree roots for securing joints, and bamboo and leaves for floors and walls.

### **2. Climatic conditions**

With a steady rainfall all year round, the roofs of the Malay vernacular houses are very steep, allowing rainwater to run down onto the ground.

Flooding is a common occurrence; to elevate the building above ground level, timber stilts are used. For ventilation purposes, many buildings have large openings on the sides and grilles are provided at high level in gable ends. Sun-shaded verandahs and canopies are designed in such a way to give protection from the sun and rain. The

buildings raised on stilts also provide good natural ventilation.

### **3. Malay cultural and religious beliefs**

Lavishly designed, buildings such as houses and palaces reflect the owners' status in Malay society. For instance, the old Kenangan Palace in Kuala Kangsar, Perak which was built by a Malay sultan, has magnificently-crafted walls. The Malays have adopted the Islamic principles of orientation of mosques, particularly the prayer halls which have to be designed facing Mecca. In other cases, some of the traditional Malay houses have floors at different levels, indicating the room functions. For instance, the living room floor is raised higher than the verandah room floor, providing a sense of spatial transition in the building.



*The Malay vernacular houses are raised on timber stilts and made of local materials such as timber, bamboo, rattan and leaves. They usually have pitched roofs, verandahs in front, high ceilings and many big openings for ventilation purposes. Their shapes and sizes are different from state to state.*

### **4. Western influences**

During the colonisation periods of the Portuguese, Dutch and British, the Malay vernacular architecture was exposed to new building technologies. These features are portrayed in the Alor Setar's Balai Besar (Audience Hall) in Kedah state. Built in 1898, the building - designed in the vernacular style - has clay tile roofs, brick and cement stairs, glass windows with brick and timber walls. It is clear that these building materials have had a profound impact on the Malay vernacular architecture. Nevertheless, the process of adopting new technologies in ancient architecture is not an entirely new idea. The vernacular architecture has been modified

through technological and cultural changes for many centuries.

### **Southern Chinese Culture**

The Malaysian Chinese population historically were the descendants of immigrants from the southern provinces of China. They were divided into several different clans including the Hakkas, Foochows, Hainanese, Teochius and Cantonese. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese, who had migrated to the Malay Peninsula via Penang, Malacca and Singapore, were mostly employed in tin mines and rubber estates. Some were hired



in trade, as craftsmen and skilled mechanics while others worked as shopkeepers. The Chinese who were hard-working labourers eventually changed the fabric of urban society in the Malay Peninsula. Many new settlements and urban centres were developed, among them Taiping, Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. The Chinese had not only settled inland permanently but had brought along their customs, religion and language as well as the Southern Chinese architecture.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Southern Chinese architecture in Malaysia had virtually combined the adaptation to the tropical climate with the influences of the Malay and the Europeans. Their styles can be classified into residential such as the traditional shophouses and terrace houses, religious such Buddhist temples; and public such as clan houses or association buildings. The traditional shophouses and terrace houses are the most popular residential buildings found in urban areas in the country. A shophouse, normally two or more storeys, is a commercial and private structure. The tenants usually use the first floor for commercial purposes such as sundry shop, light industry or warehouse, and reside in the upper floors. The building is not free standing; rather, it is connected to several other shophouses, which create a shophouse block. This shophouse unit is repeated to form streets and town squares. Building materials such as brick, plaster, concrete and timber are used.

A typical traditional terrace house is a single-storey building with a street-level porch in the front. Such a building usually has big entrance doors with timber bars locked into the door head, metal-bar and louvered-panel windows; and several openings. The building is often designed symmetrically with the entrance door located in the middle and windows on both sides. Depending on the tenant's wealth, the terrace house sometimes has glazed tiles at the base of the front walls. Like the shophouse, the terrace house uses brick, plaster, concrete and timber as the major building materials.

Although many Chinese have embraced Islam and Christianity, the majority are still Buddhists. Like the mosques, the Buddhist



temples can be found in villages as well as in small towns and cities. These temples possess significant characteristics that contribute to the Southern Chinese architecture. A typical Buddhist temple will have overhanging eaves made of clay tiles jointed by mortar, ornamented figures of people, angels, flowers or animals located on roof ridges; a big entrance door in the middle, windows of simple geometrical shape; and colourful mosaic tiles.

The Chinese are divided into several different clans and communities, and there are many kinds of Chinese association buildings intended for social gatherings, ethnic festivals and ceremonial functions. Architecturally, a typical Chinese association building is one-or two-storeyed; has an ornamented clay-tile roof similar to the ones on the Buddhist temples, a big entrance door, a front porch, large metal bars covering the windows which have both louvered panels and canopies. The building materials used in the association buildings are usually brick, concrete, plaster and timber.

Generally, the styles of the Southern Chinese architecture in Malaysia have been influenced by 3 major factors:

## 1. History

Many traditional buildings including shophouses and association buildings have incorporated the local and colonial architecture into their building facades. Some have arches and classical columns to support the building structures. Another pertinent factor is the building by-laws, first introduced by Sir Frank Swettenham, a British resident of Selangor in 1884. These regulations were imposed after a fire episode in some shophouses in Penang and also after a period of building activity in Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. The law, among other things, required the use of fire-resistant building materials.



*The Southern Chinese terrace houses and shophouses are the two most common buildings found in many urban areas in Malaysia. Each building is connected to several other houses to form a block with a street-level porch in the front. Building materials such as brick, plaster, concrete and timber are commonly found in the buildings.*

## 2. Climatic conditions

Most buildings have large openings, louvered doors and covered walkways. These elements were designed in response to the warm and humid climate of Malaysia. Then, there is the jack-roof and air-wells that can be seen in many old shophouses and terrace houses. This segment of roof, separated from the main roof, has a clerestory opening or patterned grilles. It provides stack ventilation that reduces the internal heat build-up, especially during daytime.



### 3. Religious beliefs

Although the majority of the Malaysian Chinese are Buddhists, the belief in supernatural spirits has been a primary concern in designing and erecting any building. For example, the concept of "Feng Shui", which literally means wind-water, is a geometric system by which the orientation of sites are determined to encapsulate harmonic relationships with the cosmic forces. Ornamental symbolism plays an important part in the conveyance of meaning in placement. The use of bright colours such as red, orange and yellow has become a characteristic of the Chinese buildings which represent an ethnic rite. The emphasis of ornamentation on the temple and association buildings is considered important among Chinese believers.



*Portuguese and Dutch architecture are primarily found in the historic city of Malacca. Some have been preserved and converted into museums.*

### Portuguese, Dutch and British Colonial Architecture

The Malay sultanate of Malacca came to an end when the Portuguese conquered Malacca in 1511. In 1641, the Dutch, who controlled most parts of

Indonesia, defeated the Portuguese in Malacca and conquered the Malay Peninsula. The first British settlement and military support in the Malay Peninsula was in the island of Penang in 1795.



As a country which had been colonised, the remains of its colonial architecture can still be found in most major cities including Malacca, Georgetown, Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Taiping, Ipoh, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu. Portuguese and Dutch architecture is largely limited to Malacca. Examples of Portuguese architecture include Porta de Santiago Gate (1511) and the St. Paul's Church (1590). During the Dutch occupation, however, both buildings were destroyed. The Dutch architecture includes the Stadhuis building (1641-60) for the Dutch Governor and the Christ Church (1753). Today, these buildings remain intact and are well-maintained, with the Stadhuis building having been converted into a state museum.

The 160 years of British occupation in Malaysia brought major changes in the local architecture. British colonial buildings range from official residences of British resident-generals and Anglican churches to railway stations and public buildings. All these buildings portray distinctive design characteristics that are similar to their contemporary designs in England, but also contain interesting features which are responsive to the local climatic conditions. This can be seen in the use of louvered windows, big

openings, shaped gables, shading devices, internal courtyards, high ceilings, porticos, verandahs and air-wells in such buildings.

Aesthetically, British colonial architecture in Malaysia is essentially a hybrid, with four main architectural styles: Moorish, Tudor, Neo-Classical and Neo-Gothic. The buildings were designed and built by trained architects, contractors, bricklayers, soldiers and even priests. Some British architects and engineers, who had previously worked in India and other parts of the British Empire, were inspired by the Moghul architecture and had incorporated such architectural styles into the designs of government offices and railway stations in the Malay Peninsula. This was accomplished with due respect to the Islamic faith of the local Malays, particularly the sultans. The Moorish influence can be seen in many buildings in the heart of Kuala Lumpur city such as the majestic Sultan Abdul Samad Building (1897), Railway Station (1911) and Railway Administration Headquarters (1917). Even though the colonial buildings represent a relatively small part of Malaysian building heritage, their characteristics, design styles and building features have had a significant influence on modern residential and institutional buildings.

### **Situation of Preservation in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, the practice of preserving buildings is relatively new in the local architectural scene. It has been of concern since the establishment of the Antiquities Act of 1976. In the past two decades, the Government has undertaken many initiatives through the channels of the Museum and Antiquities Department, Ministry of Works, local authori-

ties as well as conservation bodies including the Heritage of Malaysia Trust and Penang Heritage Trust to preserve many traditional and colonial buildings.



*British colonial architecture can be found in most major cities including Georgetown, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Ipoh, Taiping, Johor Bahru and Kuching. The British colonial buildings range from official residences of British resident-generals and Anglican churches to schools and railway stations.*

During the early 1980's, the level of public awareness on the importance of preserving heritage buildings and monuments was less than encouraging. It was not until the successful project of adaptive re-use of Central Market in Kuala Lumpur in the late 1980's that the public had begun to develop a genuine concern. Based

on the concept of Covent Garden in London, a wet market built in the 1930's in an Art-Deco style with noisy stalls and unpleasant odours has been well-restored and converted into a pleasant and colourful handicraft centre. Today, the Kuala Lumpur Central Market is a favourite among locals and foreign tourists. This success has become a precedent to many other preservation



*Building preservation practice is considered relatively new in the Malaysian architectural scene.*

*Under the local Antiquities Act of 1976, many heritage buildings have been preserved and conserved.*

projects in the country. The old mansions along Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur have also been restored and converted into commercial, residential or office uses.

It is crucial to highlight the practice of urban conservation adopted by many city councils in Malaysia. Urban conservation is a concept of urban planning and development in which the unique historical, architectural and cultural values in the urban areas are accentuated. First introduced in Malaysia in the early 1980's, several cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Georgetown, Malacca, Taiping and Kota Bharu have since adopted it. The urban conservation policies have been implemented co-jointly by

local authorities, Federal and State governments, Department of Museum and Antiquity, heritage trusts and other professionals. The Municipal Council of Penang, for instance, has shown a great effort in dealing with the issues of building preservation and conservation areas mainly in the inner city of Georgetown. The city, with a total of 12,000 traditional and colonial buildings including shophouses of all types, has designated six conservation areas. Similarly, the Municipal Council of Malacca has also identified its conservation areas and some roads in the old city have been converted into pedestrian malls to encourage preservation activities.

The practice of building preservation is also perceived as one of the main avenues to promote the Malaysian tourism industry. Tourists are often captivated by buildings of significant architectural and historical value. Rehabilitation or careful adaptive re-use of old buildings as shops, museums, restaurants and entertainment centres may help boost the tourism industry. With a wide array of traditional and colonial buildings located in most urban, rural and hillside areas, Malaysian architecture has much to offer.

It is, therefore, imperative to perceive all efforts geared towards the preservation of heritage buildings and cities in a positive manner. Preservation is not only crucial for national development but also to inculcate a sense of self-identity and pride for national heritage amongst the future generations.

### **Current Issues and Problems**

Over the years, Government agencies and the public have rallied much effort towards

building preservation in Malaysia. Nonetheless, 3 major issues still persist in dealing with such practice:

### **1. Insufficient laws and legislations**

Present laws and legislations are insufficient and unsuitable for the protection of heritage buildings from being demolished and destroyed forever. While there are currently acts and enactments addressing and documenting certain aspects of building preservation in Malaysia, it is felt however that the applications and formulations of these laws are too restrictive and are not intended to address the questions of heritage preservation adequately and extensively. Ironically, there is no current law that can prevent a developer from developing or demolishing an old building that has not been listed or gazetted for preservation. A building of significant architectural and historical value of less than 100 years old may not be protected outright under the present legislations. Therefore, it is critical that the present acts and enactments be revised and strengthened accordingly to protect and prevent any historic building from being demolished and destroyed.

### **2. Lack of knowledge and expertise in building preservation practice**

There is also currently no system for discovering and recording historic buildings. As buildings are scattered throughout the country, building documentations, records and information tend to be collected and kept separately by various government agencies and local institutions. In effect, the Malaysian Government, through the channels of related agencies and conservation bodies, should compile and record historic buildings in the country for archival

purposes. This can be achieved by conducting building surveys that involve local authorities, state museums and local communities. All information about the historic buildings including their structural conditions, architectural significance and historical information such as photographs, original drawings and written articles are invaluable data, particularly for the purposes of tender document preparations and planning applications.

### **3. Unsystematic system for discovering and recording historic buildings**

Finally, there is an overall lack of skilled labourers and technical experts in the field, particularly in preservation methods and



*The practice of building preservation is perceived as one of the main avenues to promote and enhance the heritage tourism industry.*

techniques. This is a major shortcoming since most preservation jobs involve both repair and maintenance stages, requiring an understanding of and analysis of building defect diagnoses. There are also the questions of testing and treating building materials, choosing appro-



appropriate tools and specifications, recording and documenting building conditions, introducing new technologies as well as meeting contemporary regulations and attitudes. There is a need for urban planners, conservation architects, landscape architects, quantity surveyors, specialized engineers, building contractors, archaeologists, art historians, antiquaries, skilled craftsmen, biologists, chemists and geologists. Obviously, when many disciplines are involved at work, the need to understand the basic principles, objectives and preservation methods are highly essential. The condition of an old building may be put at greater risk if handled by unskilled and inexperienced individuals.

### Conclusions

With the advent of modern building technologies and rapid economic development, many of these buildings of historical value are at risk of demolition or haphazard redevelopment. As key issues and problems associated with building preservation practice in Malaysia have been examined here, some recommendations to allay such fears follow: the laws and regulations should be strengthened to safeguard historic buildings; the authorities concerned should adopt a more systematic and centralised documentation system of building and there is also an impending need to train and educate the workers in preservation and conservation jobs. It is clear that a concerted effort should be orchestrated to preserve traditional Malaysian architecture.

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## Voice of Asia's Young

The youth of Southeast Asia and China, India, Japan, Korea and Taiwan have been invited to present the views of Asian young people, and submit an "Asian Youth Charter" to the United Nations later this year.

In January 2002, UNICEF, MTV Asia and the Levis Strauss Foundation initiated a "Speak Your Mind" campaign to provide opportunities for young members of the public to express their opinions on television, the Internet and at retail outlets.

They have been requested, as part of a contest, to suggest by mail or email, how to improve the world for their generation, and have also been encouraged to air their concerns and discuss issues relevant to them - with peers across the region.

MTV will be interviewing some of these youngsters, and, in March, eleven will be selected to present the Asian Youth Charter to UN. It is hoped that a clearer idea of what the young consider as important to them will emerge, and can contribute towards understanding the issues of HIV/Aids, education, economic consideration, etc. from their perspectives.

UNICEF and the Levi Strauss Foundation are committed to further identify and support projects relating to young people in Asia.

## Art in digital print

Can art be mass-produced without devaluation? Through the contemporary technology of digital printing, thirteen Japanese artists are endeavouring to revive the historical practice of unlimited reproduction, as exemplified by the 'ukiyo-e' woodblock print images during the Edo Period (1600-1868).

Most of the works of these artists, exhibited at the Franco-Japanese Institute in December 2001, were created on computers with a 'paint box' programme, a pen sensor,

a mouse or a touch screen, in a way similar to the ukiyo-e, which were engraved in wood and then printed as pictures, cards or book illustrations.

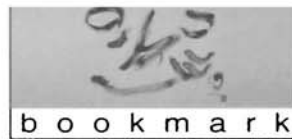
There are many who believe that digital printing is going to revolutionize art, reminiscent of how oil paints in

tubes contributed to the birth of impressionism by allowing artists the freedom of experiencing natural light outside the confines of their studios.

Some of the advantages of using the computer to create art, say artists and graphic designers, are that a one-hundred percent clarity of line can be guaranteed, juxtaposition of texture imitating oils with that resembling water colours is possible; and that the size of the digital prints can be modified.



*Damrong Wong-Upraraj, Northern Village  
(Tempera) 1959.*



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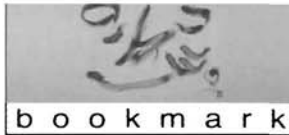
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