

# elevations

CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECTS IN LAOS



2018 - 2019

**EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**

AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

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THE ARTISTS AND GALLERIES.

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elevations

CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECTS IN LAOS



# elevations

CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECTS IN LAOS







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# ABOUT ELEVATIONS LAOS

ELEVATIONS LAOS is a non-profit contemporary art initiative founded in 2018 aiming to support and stimulate mobility and exchange in Laos. This will be achieved through regular programming of exhibitions, workshops and art prizes. The initiative launched with an international exhibition at the i:cat gallery in Vientiane titled *Depths: Others, Lands, Selves*. A series of public programs animated the exhibition and featured a symposium with participation by all of the artists. The inaugural Elevations Laos Exhibition opened on 9 November 2018 and closed on 16 February 2019 and this is the catalogue for the exhibition and its associated public programs.

Elevations Laos was founded by Gary Stafford of The Spellbrook Foundation (ACN 603 929 871). Spellbrook provides assistance to communities in developing countries with a focus on Laos.

In its inaugural year, Elevations Laos was co-funded by Spellbrook and Australian Aid through The Australian Embassy in Laos.

Elevations Laos is a partnership comprising Australian registered charities: The Spellbrook Foundation Fund and Global Development Group (GDG); and their Lao registered partner STELLA.

THE SPELLBROOK FOUNDATION FUND (ABN 71 502 819 388) is

a registered private charity in Australia and is the Australian funding partner. Spellbrook is the project manager and implementing partner and works closely with the local partner STELLA to formulate and implement strategy and manage expenditure, advisors, project managers and project partners. Spellbrook also collaborates with GDG to facilitate the exercise of GDG's compliance role.

Gary Stafford was the founding Managing Director of PanAust Limited which, through its subsidiary Phu Bia Mining, became a major contributor to Lao GDP and the improvement of regional infrastructure, skills

and livelihoods. Under Gary's leadership, PanAust grew from a junior exploration company to an S&P/ASX 100 company.

Gary left PanAust in November 2014 and founded Spellbrook in early 2015. [www.spellbrook.com](http://www.spellbrook.com)

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP (ABN 57 102 400 993) is a registered public charity in Australia and is responsible for managing compliance with the Australian Government's guidelines for overseas aid.

STELLA is the In-Country Partner and is registered in Laos as a Social Venture. STELLA implements and locally manages the project consistent with the approved plan,

## ELEVATIONS LAOS – FOUNDING AND FUNDING PARTNERSHIP





budget and financial procedure and the instructions and approvals from Spellbrook. STELLA is specifically responsible for the accountability of funds sent through GDG, regular reporting, complaints handling, and informing Spellbrook and GDG of news and any major issues relating to the project.

Souphaphone Dangmany and Khouanfa Siriphone are the co-founders of STELLA, a non-profit, social enterprise focusing on youth empowerment in Laos through a wide range of projects.

Erin Gleeson was the founding curator of the inaugural Elevations Laos 2018-19 exhibition and public program, supported by curatorial assistant, Sin Many.

The Lao gallery partner for the 2018-19 exhibition was the i:cat gallery (proprietor Catherine O'Brien supported by intern, (Luck) Souphaluck Phongsavath. Space for the Reading Room for the 2018-19 exhibition was provided by The Little House (Yoko Masushima).

IMPLEMENTING AND

## MANAGING PARTNERS



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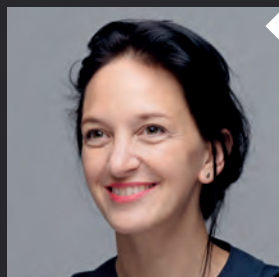
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STELLA  
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DANGMANY



2018-2019

## EXHIBITION TEAM



CURATOR,  
ERIN GLEESON



CURATORIAL  
ASSISTANT,  
SIN MANY

INTERN, SOUPHA  
PHONGSAVATH



GALLERY  
PROPRIETOR,  
CATHERINE  
O'BRIEN

THE LITTLE  
HOUSE, YOKO  
MASUSHIMA











# ABOUT THE 2018-2019 EXHIBITION

## **DEPTHS: OTHERS, LANDS, SELVES**

The inaugural Elevations Laos Exhibition, entitled Depths, opened on the 9 November 2018 and closed on 16 February 2019.

The Exhibition coincided with and was inspired by the first-ever inclusion of artists who live and work in Laos in the ninth Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT9) in Brisbane, Australia, namely: Tcheu Siong, Bounpaul Phothyzan, and Souliya Phoumivong.

Depths drew from each artist's interest in visualising the unseen, whether from the dreamworld, layers and histories of the land, or the complexities of identity. Thus the exhibition's three cross-referential chapters — Others, Lands, Selves — were rooted in the three APT artists' practices, which grew in dialogue alongside their colleagues' work in and from Southeast Asia and beyond.

**MEET  
THE  
ARTISTS**





**A NGUYEN TRINH THI**

**B THAN SOK**

**C BUSUI AJAW**

**D SHEN XIN**

**E BOUNPAUL POTHYZAN**

**F ARIN RUNGJANG**

**G TCHEU SIONG**



**H WAWI NAVARROZA**

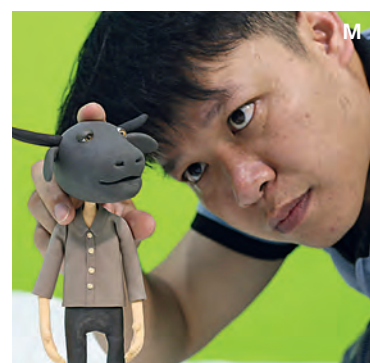
**I ANNE SAMAT**

**J PAO HOUA HER**

**K SUTTHIRAT SUPAPARINYA**

**L GUO-LIANG TAN**

**M SOULIYA PHOUMIVONG**



*Biographies of the artists: p64-66.*







# OTHERS

## LANDS

## SELVES

It is common to use the word “others” to denote differences for people or things that fall outside the dominant subject.

This first chapter of the exhibition embraces others as its subject, with the intention of highlighting relationships with and between material and conceptual practices that challenge conventions of their medium and often society’s dominant proscriptions.

Another theme binding this chapter together are textiles – a core tradition across Laos uniquely expressing ethnic and cultural identity. Here, the medium is expanded in four surprising ways.



Picture: © Yves Bernard

## TCHEU SIONG

Born 1968, Laos, Hmong

Lives and works in Luang Prabang, Laos

Tcheu Siong is a self-taught artist with a prolific textile practice in hand stitched embroidery and reverse appliqué. While such techniques have been integral to Hmong culture for centuries, Tcheu's compositions and iconography depart from Hmong traditions of geometric abstraction, favoring organic and bold figurative motifs that foreground a field of white. While differentiated, her works retain Hmong designs' symbolic function to express identity and culture through a visual language within an oral culture.

Tcheu's process involves both receiving images in her dreams as well as creating her own designs in order to design and plot the infinite characters populating the Hmong spirit world. While at times her complete compositions narrate specific oral histories, at other times Tcheu welcomes multiple readings of her work. In the artist giving presence to the unseen, she in turn gives agency to the active and complex role of spirits in everyday life, such as those for fertility or good health, to those who invoke punishment for harming the land, to elder spirits who train adolescent ones how to govern fairly.

Yawm Saub Chao / Chao and the Three Spirits narrates the story of the immortal spirit who gave birth to the eighteen family names that comprise Hmong identity.



YAWM SAUB CHAO / CHAO AND THE THREE SPIRITS, 2009

Embroidery and reverse appliqué on cotton 215 x 285 cm

Courtesy: the artist and Pha Tad Ke

Visit: [elevationslaos.net/tcheu\\_siong](http://elevationslaos.net/tcheu_siong)



**'OTHERS'**

ARTIST PROFILE | TCHEU SIONG







### ANNE SAMAT

Born 1973, Malaysia

Lives and works, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Trained as a weaver, Anne Samat both draws on, and departs from traditional weaving techniques and aesthetics belonging to different cultures in Malaysia. Using synthetic fibers and rattan sticks in place of natural and ornate threads, she further incorporates a wide range of vernacular objects that together give shape to complex symmetrical figures.

Beads or PVC sections become the veins and bones; a broom's brush, the hair; or a mosquito coil holder, a face. Inspired by an ancient tale of love between a princess and a fisherman.

Anne's sculptures evince her desire to merge the feminine and masculine. Simultaneously stoic guardians and playful individuals, they demand our gaze, and we are compelled into relation with the Other.



#### A: JURAGAN ALI, 2018

Rattan sticks, yarn, washers, rakes, PVC chains, fashion and home accessories, utensils, stationary items  
92 x 42 x 30cm

#### B: PUTERI 1 (ULEK MAYANG KU ULEK), 2018

Rattan sticks, yarn, washers, rakes, PVC chains, fashion and home accessories, utensils, stationary items  
92 x 42 x 30cm

*Courtesy: the artist and Richard Koh Fine Art  
Visit: [www.elevationslaos.net/anne-samat](http://www.elevationslaos.net/anne-samat)*

**'OTHERS'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | ANNE SAMAT

B







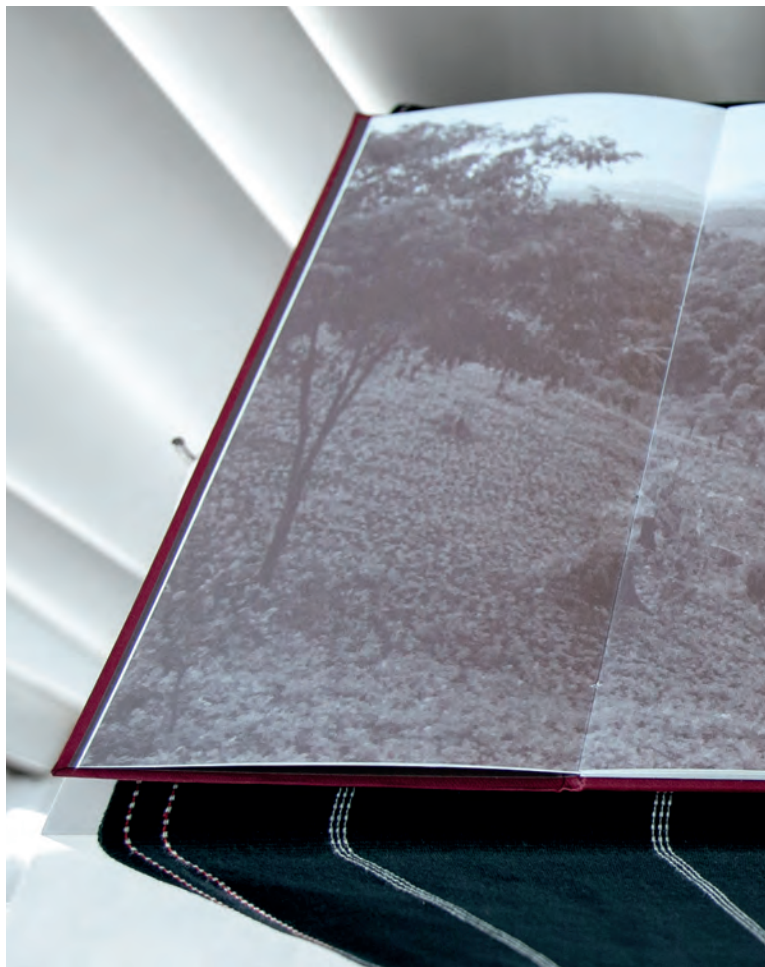
## ARIN RUNGJANG

Born 1975, Bangkok, Thailand  
Lives and works, Bangkok, Thailand

Arin Rungjang has long been committed to a blurring of documentary and fictional practices in search of other pathways and expand perceptions of truth and history.

Like many of his works, *Remember (Ratanakiri)*, takes as a starting point an object in which personal and official narratives intersect; in this case, within the work of a hand-dyed and woven blanket by Vek Tounh, an indigenous Tampoeun weaver living in northeastern Cambodia.

Vek's story, as told to Arin, is extended in both audio – in Tampoeun language – and book form – in English and Khmer languages. Through the direct account of her life's circumstances, we not only learn how weapon motifs entered part of her narrative weavings, but are given access to intimate versions of official histories.

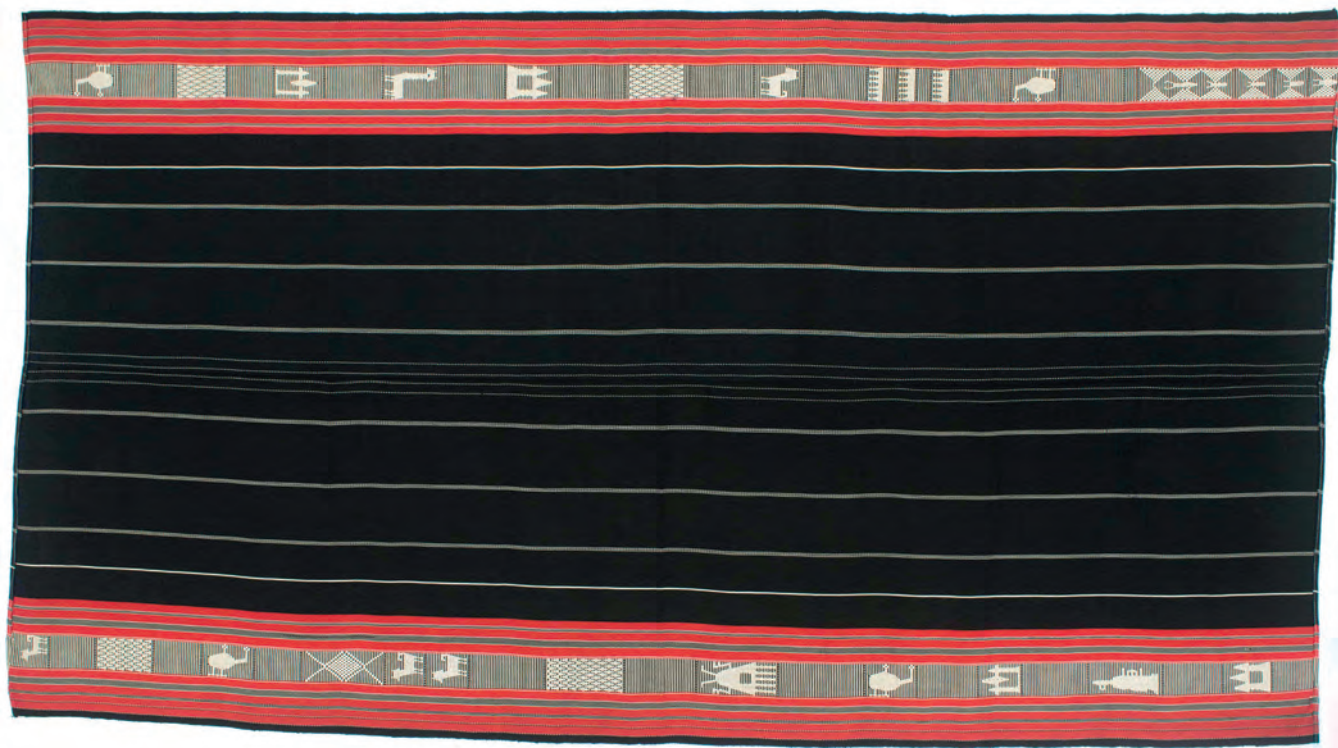


## REMEMBRANCE (RATANAKIRI), 2017

Cotton textile, book, sound  
Variable dimensions

*Courtesy: the artist and Gallery Ver*  
Visit: [elevationslaos.net/arin\\_rungjang](http://elevationslaos.net/arin_rungjang)

**'OTHERS'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | ARIN RUNGJANG







# **GUO-LIANG TAN**

Born 1980, Singapore,  
Lives and works, Singapore

Guo-Liang Tan's paintings defy most understandings of the medium itself.

Rather than using a brush for definitive or representational marks, he guides paint across fabric's surface through various control systems, mediating the relationship between the materials as they assert their own gestures and character.

The resulting works' translucency integrates the stretcher bars beyond the role of supportive architecture, creating simultaneity of background and foreground, absence and presence.

Guo-Liang has expressed his interest in phantasmal presence in painting and how his practice can "be used to rethink the material body of painting as a site for evocation rather than expression."

A



B



## **A: UNTITLED, 2018**

Acrylic on fabric and wood  
48 x 39 cm

## **B: UNTITLED (DEPOSITS), 2017**

Acrylic and fabric on wood  
111 x 91 cm

## **C: INFRA-MINCE 1, 2018**

Acrylic on fabric and wood  
121 x 100 cm

*Courtesy: the artist and Ota Fine Arts  
View: [elevationslaos.net/guo-liang-tan/](http://elevationslaos.net/guo-liang-tan/)*

**'OTHERS'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | GUO-LIANG TAN

C









# OTHERS LANDS SELVES

Our perceptions and relationship with nature are central to our histories, lived experiences, and futures.

This chapter of the exhibition reflects on land – its physical elements; landscape – our shaping and re-shaping of the land for desired views and experiences; and land use – our consumption of natural resources.

The four artists approach the subject uniquely through installation, photography, video, and painting.





### BOUNPAUL PHOTHYZAN

Born 1979, Champasak province, Laos

Lives and works, Vientiane, Laos

Once a painter known for landscapes, Bounpaul Phothyzan turned to conceptual and social practices after his studies in Thailand, interested less in perfecting techniques and more in interpreting layers of his environment.

For the artist, the land, and what is below its surface, is part of us.

Laos was one of the most heavily bombed countries worldwide and unexploded ordinances (UXOs) continue to threaten life on a daily basis.

Dove House was created site-specifically in the artist's parent's garden in Champasak. Made with cluster bomb shells harvested by villagers in Attapeu province on the Cambodian-Laos border, the installation quickly became a fixture of his home village, provoking spontaneous and ongoing sharing of war times.

While the installation memorializes the emptying of villages during the war, it materializes the ongoing reality of living with UXOs today. In the artist's words, "If I could tell my village's stories through artwork, they would look like this."



### DOVE HOUSE, 2018

Cluster bomb shells, wooden houses, earth

Variable dimensions

*Courtesy: the artist*

*Visit: [elevationslaos.net/bounpaul\\_phothyzan](http://elevationslaos.net/bounpaul_phothyzan)*



**'LANDS'**

ARTIST PROFILE | BOUNPAUL PHOTHYZAN







**SUTTHIRAT SUPAPARINYA (SOM)**  
Born 1973, Chiang Mai, Thailand  
Lives and works, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Working across media, Sutthirat Supaparinya (Som)'s artistic practice questions and interprets public information with a focus on the impact of human activities on other humans and the landscape.

In *When Need Moves The Earth*, Som is witness at two sites used to generate electricity in Thailand: an active coal mine and dam site. In the artist's words, "I am a consumer of electricity, so it is my duty to know how it is produced and the impact that has on the environment."

Her three-channel video combines documentary, archival and aerial footage, allowing us to witness with her the impact of large-scale construction in sensitive geological environments, and to consider alternatives.



**'LANDS'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | SUTTHIRAT SUPAPARINYA



**WHEN NEED MOVES THE EARTH, 2014**

Synchronized three-channel HD video  
20 minutes 25 seconds, colour, sound  
Thai language with English subtitles

Courtesy: the artist  
Visit: [elevationslaos.net/sutthirat-supaparinya](http://elevationslaos.net/sutthirat-supaparinya)





## THAN SOK

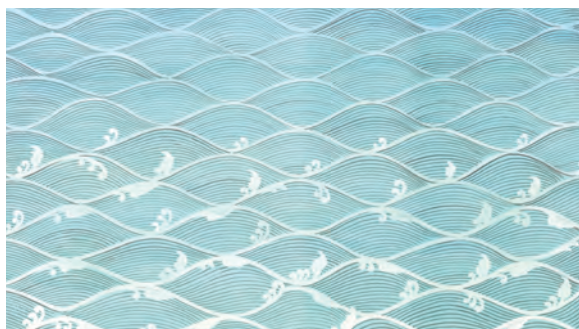
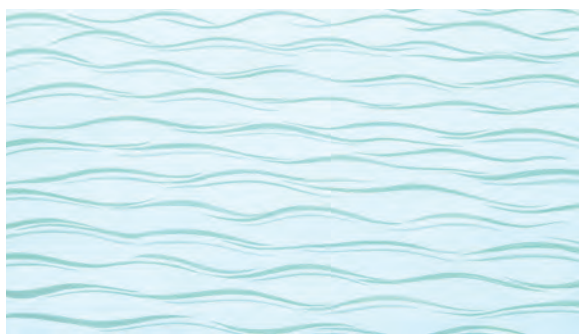
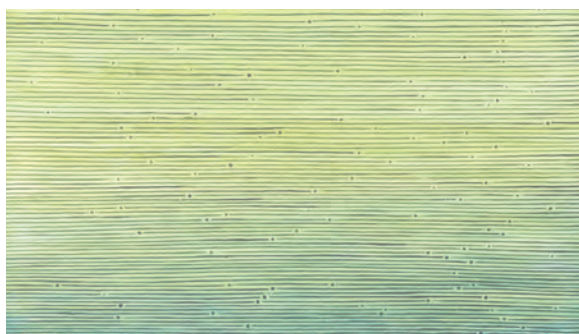
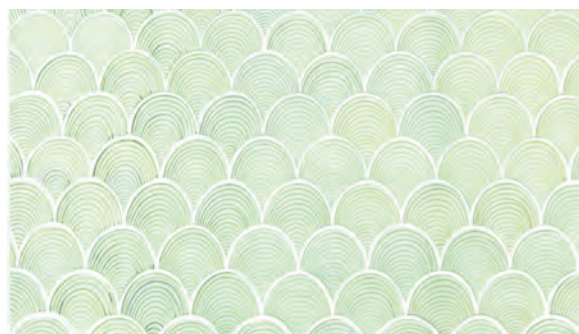
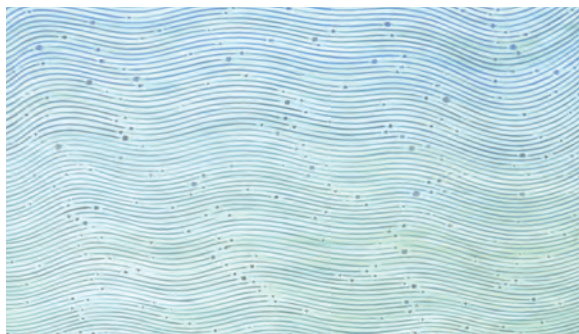
Born 1984, Takeo, Cambodia  
Lives and works, Phnom Penh,  
Cambodia

Than Sok's most recent series Kbach Teuk translates from Khmer as "water forms" or "water design codes", and pays homage to the artist's former teacher, Khmer traditional painting master, Duong Saree, who called for innovation to a century-or-more-old canon of water forms.

Ms. Saree's goal was to achieve more accurate representations of the character of water and its role and significance in ancient Hindu and Buddhist narrative painting as found in temple painting and book illustration. While traditional representations of water in Cambodian painting have tended to be a secondary and complimentary subject to human and mythical characters' drama, the artist's study isolates water as the subject itself.

In the artist's words, "The ancient stories relate to today. For example, we are geographically divided by water, but water has the potential to bring us together."

His miniature watercolors combine both existing canonical forms alongside his creations.





**'LANDS'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | THAN SOK



**KBACH TEUK, 2018**

Watercolor on Arches 100% Pure Cotton

23 x 31cm, series of 6

*Courtesy: the artist*

*Visit: [elevationslaos.net/than\\_sok](http://elevationslaos.net/than_sok)*





## WAWI NAVARROZA

Born 1979, Manila, Philippines

Lives and works, Manila, Philippines

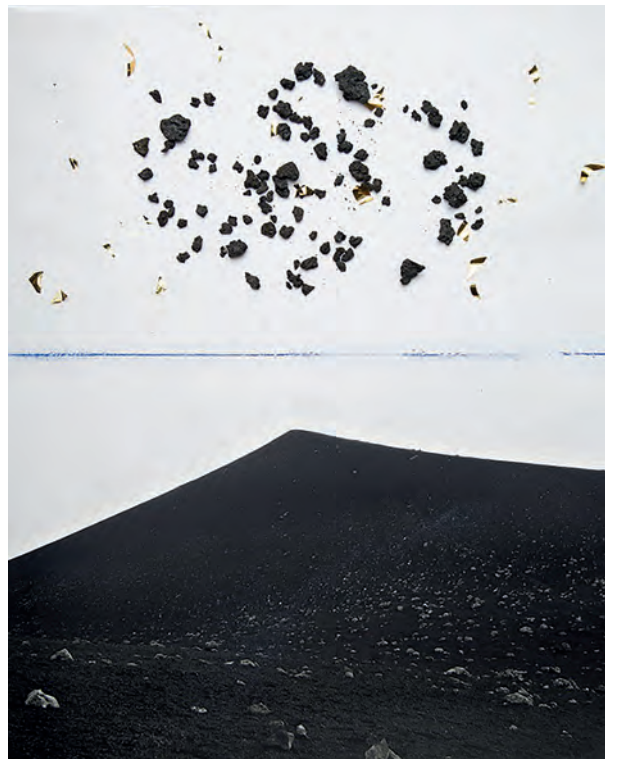
Tierra Salvaje translates from Spanish as “wild land”.

In Wawi Navarroza’s works on contemporary landscape, locations emerge as artistic research with an interest in transforming perspectives from encounters with place.

In her words, “The landscape I’m interested in is when you look at land from where you’re standing: on your feet. Not the other view, not the postcard.”

Her two-part photographs pair captures of landforms and fragments with those of abstract and minimalist earth drawings meticulously hand made from organic and industrial elements.

As Wawi puts forward the sensorial experience of land, she expands the material potentials of photography and conceptual frameworks of landscape.



## TIERRA SALVAJE, 2014

Archival pigment print and earth drawings; soil, sand, lava, chalk, charcoal, carbonates.

50.8 x 40.59 cm

Courtesy: the artist and Silverlens

Visit: [elevationslaos.net/wawi\\_navarroza](http://elevationslaos.net/wawi_navarroza)

**'LANDS'**

ARTIST PROFILE | WAWI NAVARROZA









# OTHERS LANDS SELVES

Representational practices of self and others create a visuality that significantly shapes our beliefs and positions.

In this chapter, five artists — working across media including painting, photography, sculpture, film, and video — explore identity as it relates to the individual and society, to one's role in representing others, and to indigenous self-representation.





Picture: © Jamie Maxtone-Graham

## NGUYEN TRINH THI

Born 1973, Hanoi, Vietnam

Lives and works, Hanoi, Vietnam

The film begins with a quiet statement, "I am a filmmaker, as you know." That text and what follows, by Maori filmmaker Barry Barclay, who coined the term 'Fourth Cinema' to distinguish Indigenous cinema from the established 'First, Second, and Third Cinema' framework, provides structure to Nguyen's hybrid essay film that moves on multiple cinematic and topical terrains.

Eschewing voice in favor of the written word and juxtaposing moving images of the filmmaker's own daughter with archival images of Vietnamese women seen through the lens of the "ship's officers", the film slowly leads the viewer through a narrative of colonialism, indigeneity and cinematic limitations in representation.



## FIFTH CINEMA, 2018

56 minutes, color and black and white, sound  
Vietnamese and English subtitles

*Courtesy: the artist*

*Visit: [elevationslaos.net/nguyen-trinh-thi](http://elevationslaos.net/nguyen-trinh-thi)*

**'SELVES'**

ARTIST PROFILE | NGUYEN TRINH THI







# SOULIYA PHOUMIVONG

Born 1983, Ban Kokxay, Laos

Lives and works, Vientiane, Laos

Souliya Phoumivong developed an interest in photography and animation while on a residency in Japan, and has since become one of Laos' leading media-artists.

Working primarily in stop-motion, the artist reflects on changes in Laos' society brought about by technology and an opening economy, noticing greater flows of information and material resources have brought about new conformist desires.

The video *Flow* questions both conscious and unconscious habits of following the masses through a colorful cast of buffalo who tempt human protagonists to join the herd in a cyclic meandering.

## FLOW, 2018

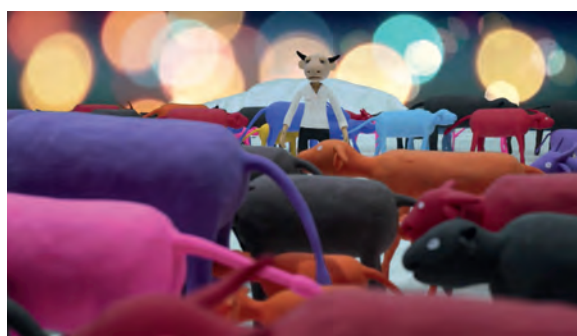
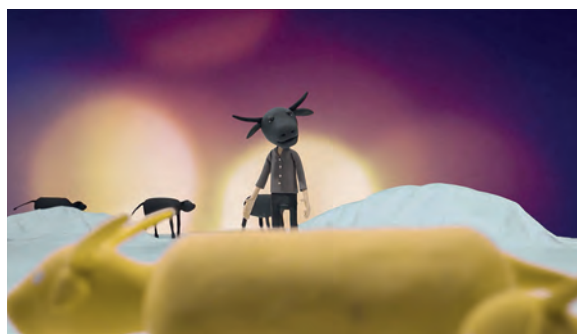
Single-channel HD video, colour, sound

8 minutes 50 seconds

Installation of clay sculptures

*Courtesy: the artist*

*Visit: [elevationslaos.net/souliya-phoumivong](http://elevationslaos.net/souliya-phoumivong)*



**'SELVES'**

ARTIST PROFILE | SOULIYA PHOUMIVONG







## SHEN XIN

Born 1990, Chengdu, China  
Lives and works, Amsterdam,  
The Netherlands

This intimate portrait of the artist and her artist-father, Dahong Shen (1946-2018) carefully explores practices of othering that have long underpinned aesthetic representations of minority groups.

As Shen documents in their family home, his photo archive, and on the road, she questions her father's pursuit of realism and authenticity in his paintings of Tibetan people and culture.

In doing so, she candidly shares aspects of her own ambitions, which act to leverage delicate paradoxes around ways of being an artist, and create space for thinking through and beyond established structures.





**'SELVES'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | SHEN XIN

**COUNTING BLESSINGS, 2014**

Single-channel HD video, colour, sound, 37 minutes

Language: Sichuan Dialect, China

Subtitles: English / Lao on site in print

*Courtesy: the artist and MadIn Gallery*

*Visit: [elevationslaos.net/shen\\_xin](http://elevationslaos.net/shen_xin)*







### **BUSUI AJAW**

Born 1990, Myanmar (Akha region)  
Lives and works, Chiang Rai, Thailand

A self-taught artist, Busui Ajaw began drawing at fifteen years old and has over time developed an expressive painterly language to communicate both the seen and unseen, the exterior and interior, the material and the psychological.

Born in a remote mountainous region of Myanmar, the artist was forced to flee as a young child with her family after a military invasion of their land.

Her Untitled self-portraits express her experiences and identity as an Ahka woman, and as an individual who embraces dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and suffering, and life and death.



**UNTITLED (2018),**  
Acrylic on canvas, 80 × 60 cm

**UNTITLED (2018),**  
Acrylic on canvas, 80 × 60 cm

*Courtesy: the artist and Artist+Run  
View: [elevationslaos.net/busui-ajaw](http://elevationslaos.net/busui-ajaw)*



**'SELVES'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | BUSUI AJAW







### PAO HOUA HER

Born 1982, Laos (Hmong region)  
Lives and works, Minnesota, USA

Pao Her photographs in Laos – her birth country, and where she visits annually, and Minnesota, USA, where she and her family resettled as refugees in the late 1980s.

Her's often open-ended serial practice in portraiture, still life, and landscape genres, explore simultaneity of the aspirational and artificial, with a focus on the Hmong diasporic community.

She is particularly interested in studio portraiture and its traces beyond the studio – composed backdrops, posing, fake flowers and ornamentation. Effectively playing with the veracity of the image and its subjects, we can never be sure if Her has staged, manipulated, or straight documented her subjects.

While pasted directly to the wall – just as photographs were throughout temporary homes in the refugee camps in Her's experience – these photographs allow us a direct encounter, continuing her questioning of presentation and perfection.



### MY GRANDFATHER TURNED INTO A TIGER

Digital archive prints, glue

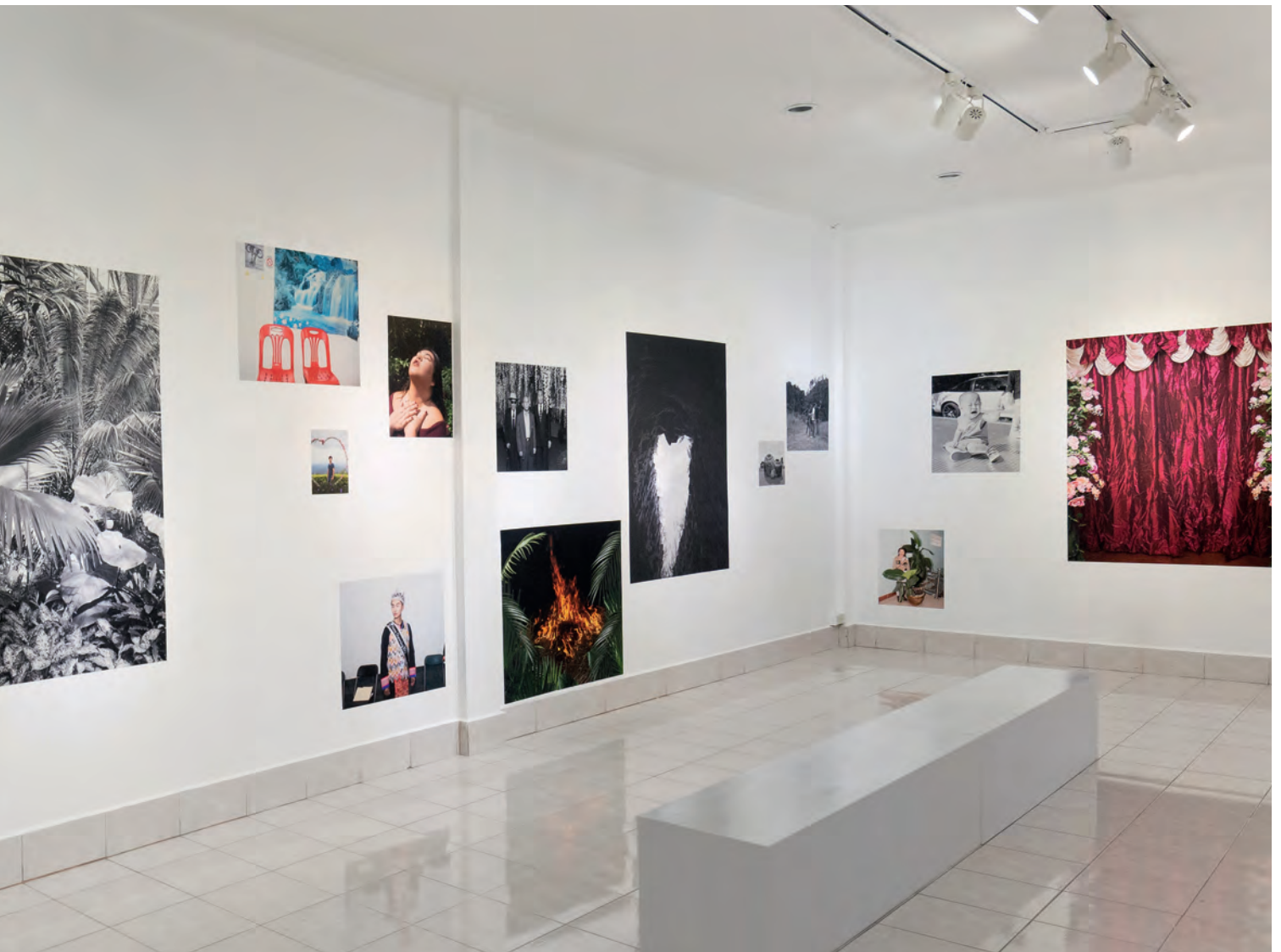
Various dimensions

Various editions

*Courtesy: the artist and Bockley Gallery*

*Visit: [elevationslaos.net/pao-houa-her](http://elevationslaos.net/pao-houa-her)*

**'SELVES'**  
ARTIST PROFILE | PAO HOUA HER





2018-2019 EXHIBITION

# AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PREVIEW EVENT

7 NOVEMBER 2018, THE I:CAT GALLERY

Laos has a rich and diverse culture, with artist expression perhaps best recognised through traditional weaving, dance and music.

Lesser known, but just as important, are the growing number of emerging artists, who use a diverse range of mediums to express contemporary themes and issues. Until now there have been few opportunities for these artists to showcase their works within or outside Laos. That is why the Australian Embassy in Vientiane is delighted to be a founding partner with the Spellbrook Foundation in establishing Elevation Laos.

We hope that Elevations Laos will not only provide greater exposure within Laos and beyond to the diverse range of contemporary Laos art, but that it will also act as an incubator for other emerging Laos artists. Inspiring, connecting and elevating their ideas and works to new heights.

HIS EXCELLENCY AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR TO LAOS,  
**JEAN-BERNARD CARRASCO**









**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PREVIEW EVENT**  
7 NOVEMBER 2018





2018-2019 EXHIBITION

# EXHIBITION OPENING

9 NOVEMBER 2018, THE I:CAT GALLERY

The exhibition has been inspired by the first-time inclusion of three Lao artists in the Asia Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art.

The work from the Lao artists span the genres of installation, video and textile and collectively they demonstrate the creative potential of this young and vibrant country.

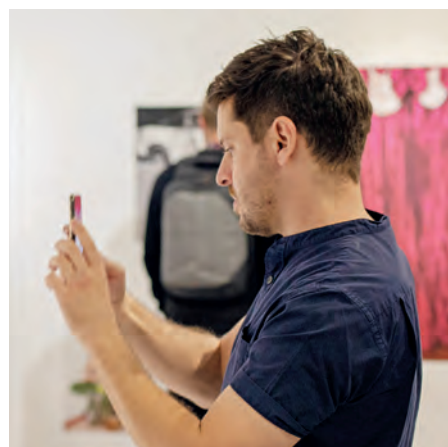
They speak to the legacy of war, the resilience of its people, they provide encouragement to innovate and lead and illustrate the importance of spiritual beliefs through Lao culture.

FOUNDER OF ELEVATIONS LAOS &  
THE SPELLBROOK FOUNDATION,  
**GARY STAFFORD**





**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
THE I:CAT GALLERY









2018-2019 EXHIBITION

# PUBLIC PROGRAMS

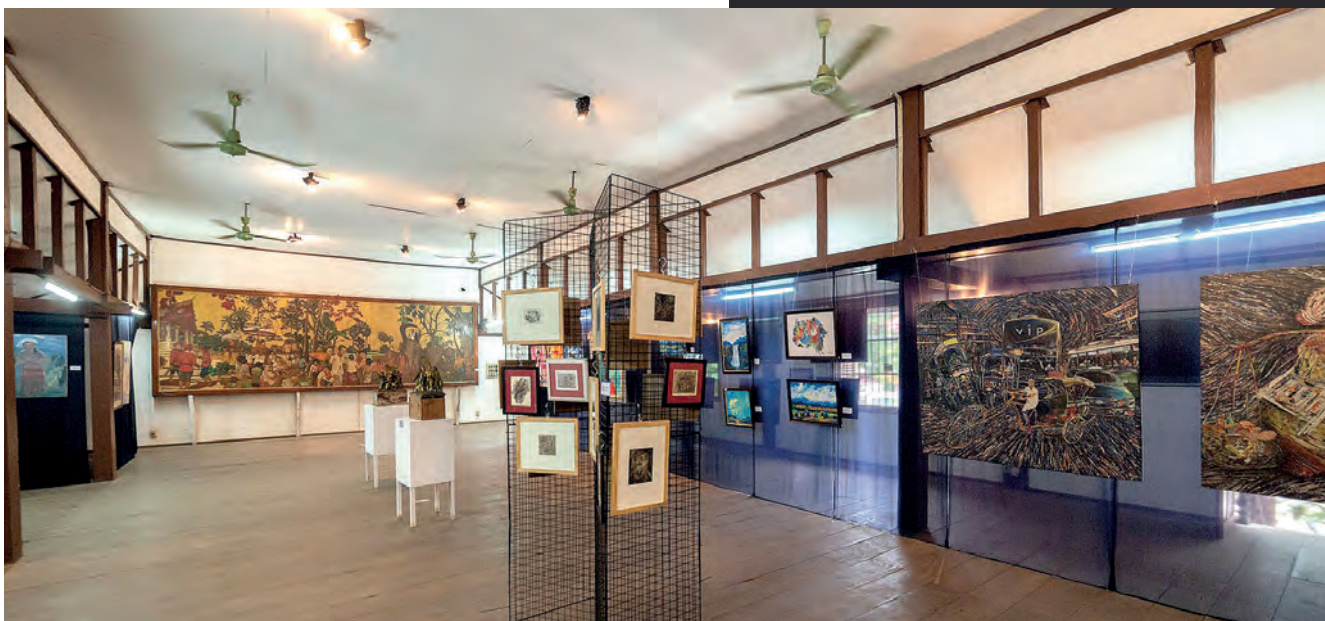


## SCREENING FIFTH CINEMA, BY NGUYEN TRINH THI

8<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018, THE MANDALA HOTEL

Fifth Cinema (54 minutes, colour and black & white, 2018), by exhibiting artist Nguyen Trinh Thi, is an essay film that brings together Barry Barclay's text on Fourth Cinema or Indigenous Cinema with Thi's challenging archive captures and personal footage from over a decade's work.





## **VIENTIANE: A TWO-PART CITY TOUR**

9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018

### **Part 1**

#### Vientiane Through Literature

Exploration of the city's literary history, led by Dr. Chairat Polmuk, a specialist on Lao literature, and special guest experts.

During visits to various historic sites, the participants discovered how literature developed before and after the emergence of the first Lao-language newspaper in 1941, and how literary stories of the city related to the nation's complex histories of conflict.

### **Part 2**

#### Vientiane Through Visual Arts

Tour of some highlights of the city's visual arts. This included visits to other exhibitions, as well as the studios of Lao artists.





**TARUN NAGESH**



**BIUNG ISMAHASAN**



**ERIN GLEESON**



**DR ROGER NELSON**



**ZOE BUTT**



**DUONG BICH HANH**



**DR CHAIRAT POLMUK**

## **ELEVATIONS LAOS SYMPOSIUM**

10<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018  
THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
RECREATIONAL CLUB

The inaugural Elevations Laos | Symposium, co-convened by Dr. Roger Nelson (Australia/Singapore) and Erin Gleeson (USA/Cambodia).

The proceeds of the symposium were recorded and are available for viewing on [elevationslaos.net](http://elevationslaos.net).

The symposium was opened by HE Jean-Bernard Carrasco (Australian Ambassador to Laos) and opening addresses included: a video presentation from Tarun Nagesh curator at the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane titled "Lao artists in the ninth Asia Pacific Triennial (APT9)"; a paper from Duong Bich Hanh, Chief of Culture, UNESCO, Bangkok titled "Promoting Artists' Freedom of Expression and Mobility"; a keynote address by Dr Chairat Polmuk Professor of Southeast Asian Languages and Literature, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok titled "Texture of Memory: Lao Diasporic Practices"; and, a presentation by Erin Gleeson on her curatorial notes and the development of the concepts for the exhibition.

The afternoon of moderated panels paired exhibiting artists with leading scholars and curators in the region including Polmuk, Zoe Butt (Australia/Vietnam), and Biung Ismahasan (Bunun Nation/Taiwan).

Closing remarks by Dr Roger Nelson.

*Please also reference Biographies: p64-66.*







## ART EXHIBITION DOCUMENTATION PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018

I:CAT GALLERY, VIENTIANE

This 3-hour workshop, led by Elevations Laos Technical Coordinator and photographer Prum Ero, introduced lens-based seeing and documentation of art exhibitions to students of photography. After viewing and discussing examples, the practicum asked participants to focus on documenting different works in the Elevations exhibition, followed by review and discussion of each participant's work





## IN CONVERSATION WITH TCHEU SIONG

11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018

I:CAT GALLERY, VIENTIANE

STELLA brought together exhibiting artist Tcheu Siong with young Lao fashion designers and representatives from *LINES Magazine Art-Design & Inspiration* to discuss Tcheu's inspiration and processes for her textile artwork.



ARTIST: TCHEU SIONG







## CLAY ANIMATION WORKSHOP

15<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018

THE VIENTIANE DEAF SCHOOL

Clay Animation Workshop was inspired by Souliya Phoumivong's "Flow" stop-motion video art:

Teachers and 15 Students (Grade 9) from Vientiane Pattana International school assisted 25 students from the Vientiane Deaf School with the support of Souphaluck Phongsavath, Zusee, artist Jihyun, Yoko and art teacher Jamie Henderson.







## EXHIBITION WALK-THROUGH

25<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER & 16<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2018

6<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2019

The walk-throughs offered an insight into the curatorial ideas as well as the 13 artists and their artworks.

## READING ROOM @ THE LITTLE HOUSE

Reading materials for all ages were provided relating to arts in Laos and the exhibited artists in the comfort of The Little House café. The reading materials have now been relocated to the i:cat gallery.





**MY GRANDMOTHER'S  
FAVORITE GRANDCHILD-  
PAO HOUA HER, 2017  
/ DIGITAL ARCHIVAL  
PRINT, 8"X10"**

## **SESSION #1**

### **ARTIST TALK**

Asia Culture Station  
Chiang Mai, Thailand.

## **SESSION #2**

### **ARTIST TALK**

Bophana Centre, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

## **SESSION #3** **PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP**

MALAO Studios, Luang  
Prabang, Laos

This full-day workshop with Pao Houa Her  
focused on studio portraiture.

The first morning session began with the  
contemporary art history of studio portraiture  
with examples across continents including a  
focus on Laos. The second morning session  
expanded on the significance of this history  
within Pao's own practice.

The afternoon sessions saw students making  
and sharing as Pao facilitated an assignment,  
resulting in the presentation of new work in-  
progress, with discussion.

## **ARTIST TALK - PAO HOUA HER** **3 SESSIONS PHNOM PENH |** **LUANG PRABANG | CHIANG MAI**

JANUARY 2019

Artist Pao Houa Her hosted a circuit of special events,  
engaging three art communities and publics across  
mainland Southeast Asia.

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Pao Houa Her (born 1982, northern Laos, and lives and  
works Minnesota, USA) works across multiple genres and  
technologies of photography to address Hmong identity  
and related notions of desire and belonging within the  
Hmong community and its diaspora.

Pao holds a BFA in Photography from the Minneapolis  
College of Art and Design, MN, and an MFA in  
Photography from Yale University, CT where she was the  
first-ever Hmong to graduate from the program. She is  
the recipient of many prestigious awards including the  
McKnight Fellowship and Jerome Foundation Grant, and  
she is currently Lecturer in Photography at the University  
of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Recent solo exhibitions include Attention, Minneapolis  
Institute of Art, and My Grandfather turned into a Tiger,  
Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis. Her work is  
in the collections of the Minneapolis Institute of Art,  
Singapore Art Museum, MAMMO Contemporary Art  
Museum, among others.

### **ABOUT THE EVENTS**

Pao Houa Her: Phnom Penh / Luang Prabang / Chiang  
Mai. The events were part of the public programs for two  
exhibitions that were running con-currently and featured  
Pao's work: Depths: Others, Lands, Selves, ELEVATIONS  
LAOS, Vientiane, and DIASPORA: Exile, Exit, Exodus,  
MAMMO, Chiang Mai.

The events were made possible through the support of  
Elevations Laos, MAMMO, and Bockley Gallery and hosts:  
Bophana Audiovisual Resource Centre, Phnom Penh;  
MALAO Studios, Luang Prabang; and Asian Cultural  
Station, Chiang Mai.









**JOHN McDONALD**

**BIOGRAPHY**

John McDonald is the art critic for the Sydney Morning Herald, a post he has held – on and off – for almost thirty years. He has written for many Australian and international publications, worked as an editor and publisher; and lectured at colleges and galleries around the country.

He was Head of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia from 1999-2000, acting as curator for the exhibition, Federation: Australian Art & Society 1901-2000. From 2002-04 he was director of New Contemporaries, a non-commercial gallery in Sydney.

John has written numerous monographs on, and has been curator, for a wide range of exhibitions.

In 2007 he collaborated with photographer, Ian Lloyd, on the book: Studio, Australian Painters on the Nature of Creativity, which also became a DVD and a touring exhibition. In 2009 he published The Art of Australia Vol. 1: Exploration to Federation (Pan Macmillan) – the first part of a new, comprehensive history of Australian art.

Increasingly, John is turning his attention to Chinese art. He was a major contributor to The Big Bang, the catalogue for the White Rabbit Gallery in Sydney.

## **AN EVENING WITH JOHN McDONALD**

10<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2019

STELLA CONFERENCE ROOM

Elevations Laos, i:cat gallery and STELLA hosted an audience with renowned art historian, writer and curator John McDonald.

The audience had a chance to discuss with John McDonald his impressions of Lao contemporary art and his thoughts on the role of contemporary art and culture in sustainable development.









## BIOGRAPHIES

(as at November 2018)

### ARTISTS

#### BUSUI AJAW

Busui Ajaw (b. 1990, Ahka highland region, Myanmar) is a self-taught painter focusing on portraiture that expresses dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and suffering, and life and death. She is represented by Artist + Run in Bangkok and Angkrit Gallery in Chiang Rai, where she has held solo exhibitions beginning in 2016. Her work is in numerous private collections. Busui lives and works in Chiang Rai, Thailand.

#### PAO HOUA HER

Pao Houa Her (b. 1982, Hmong highland region, Laos) is a Hmong American Artist. She works across multiple genres and technologies of photography to address Hmong identity and related notions of desire and belonging within the Hmong American community. With her family she fled conflict in Laos resulting from the American War in Vietnam, and like many others, was relocated to and settled in Minnesota, USA.

Pao holds a BFA in Photography from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, MN, and an MFA in Photography from Yale University, CT where she was the first-ever Hmong to graduate from the program. She is the recipient of many prestigious fellowships and grants, and has exhibited extensively in Minnesota, as well as across the United States, and more recently, in Southeast Asia. Pao is currently Lecturer in Photography at the University of Minnesota. Her work is in numerous collections including the Minneapolis Institute of Art, MAM Contemporary Art Museum, Singapore Art Museum.

#### ARIN RUNGJANG

Arin Rungjang (b. 1975, Bangkok) is based in Bangkok. Since graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Silpakorn University in 2002, he has been recognized as a leader in conceptual and installation practice in Thailand, exhibiting extensively abroad since

2006. He represented Thailand at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013). He has most recently exhibited in 2017 Jakarta Biennale, documenta14, Athens and Kassel (2017), Shanghai Biennale (2018), and has held solo exhibitions globally including Portikus, Frankfurt; Jim Thompson Contemporary Art Centre, Bangkok; and CAPC, Bordeaux.

#### ANNE SAMAT

Anne Samat (b. 1973, Malaysia) studied weaving and textile design in Malaysia. She has been nominated and received various awards including the top ten female artists in Malaysia in 2013. Select exhibitions include Malaysian Eye, Saatchi Gallery, London (2014), Yokohama Triennial (2017), Sultanate in the Eye, Monarchy at Heart, a solo exhibition at Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur (2017), and Stories We Scare Ourselves With, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (2018). Anne lives and works in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

#### SUTTHIRAT SUPAPARINYA

Sutthirat Supaparinya (born 1973, Thailand) lives and works in Chiang Mai. Her works encompass a variety of mediums such as installation, objects, still and moving images. The change and use of landscapes are her primary interest. It touches on the environment, science, history, politic or social aspect. Actively engaged in its art scene, she is a founder of Chiang Mai Art Conversations (CAC), which promotes contemporary art in Chiang Mai and operates Asian Culture Station (ACS). Sutthirat earned a BFA in painting in Thailand and a postgraduate diploma in Media Arts from Leipzig, Germany. She has held residencies globally including in Paris, Wellington, Tokyo, and New York City. Her recent exhibitions in 2018 include EVA International, Ireland, and 12th Gwangju Biennale, South Korea.

#### BOUNPAUL PHOTHYZAN

Bounpaul Phothyzan (b. 1979, Laos) works in sculpture and installation. His

land art practice is driven by social and environmental issues relevant to Laos — from deforestation to the devastating legacies of war. Bounpaul studied painting at the National Institute of Fine Arts in Laos, then studied contemporary practice in Thailand. Since 1998, he has exhibited regularly around Southeast Asia. Recent exhibitions include If The World Changed, 4th Singapore Biennale (2014), We Are Lao!, M Gallery, Singapore (2014), Photo Phnom Penh, Java Café and Gallery, Phnom Penh (2017), Thailand Biennale, Krabi (2018), and the APT9, QAGOMA, Brisbane (2018-19).

#### GUO-LIANG TAN

Guo-Liang Tan (b. 1980, Singapore) is a visual artist working primarily in painting and text. Tan completed his BA Fine Art & Critical Studies at Goldsmiths College, London and his MFA at Glasgow School of Art. He was also a guest student at The Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. His work has been exhibited and collected in Asia and Europe. A selection of his paintings was first selected for the Singapore Platform at the inaugural Art Stage, after which he presented his first solo exhibition 'Dead Play' (2012) at Space Cottonseed. He was subsequently awarded the National Arts Council Scholarship for visual art as well as the Mackendrick Scholarship and the Antje und Jürgen Conzelmann Preis for painting. 'Ghost Screen' (2017) is his second solo exhibition and the first with OTA Fine Arts. Alongside his own work, he also collaborates with other artists on curatorial and publication projects and currently runs the project space Peninsular.

#### TCHEU SIONG

Tcheu Siong's (b. 1968, Hmong highland region, northern Laos) unique, large-scale textile works capture her own dreams and visions in connection to her Hmong ancestry and spirituality. Her first solo exhibition Genie Behind the Scissors was held at Project Space, Luang Prabang in 2009. Since then, she has exhibited widely, including the 5th Singapore

Biennale (2016), Concordia University Gallery, Minneapolis (2016), and APT9, QAGOMA, Brisbane 2018-19. Tcheu lives and works in Luang Prabang, Laos.

### THAN SOK

Than Sok's (b. 1984, Takeo, Cambodia) practice involves an ongoing study of the form, materiality and meaning within cultural practices in Cambodia. He studied both traditional Khmer art forms and techniques as well as contemporary art at the Art School of Reyum Institute of Art and Culture in Phnom Penh, graduating in 2007. He has been awarded a number of artist residencies, including at San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (2014), Sa Sa Art Projects, White Building, Phnom Penh (2014), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York City (2013), S-AIR, Sapporo, Japan (2011). A selection of Than Sok's group exhibitions include A Beast, A God, and A Line, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland; Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh; Myanmar, Yangon, Myanmar; and Parasite, Hong Kong (2018); SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia from 1980 to today, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2017); Sights and Sounds: Global Video Art, The Jewish Museum, NYC (2013).

### NGUYEN TRINH THI

Nguyen Trinh Thi (b. in 1973, Hanoi Vietnam) is known for her layered, personal, and poetic approach to contentious histories and current events through experiments with the moving image. Her work is included in film festivals and exhibitions alike. Recent exhibitions include solos at CAPC, Bordeaux and Jeu de Paume, Paris, and group exhibitions include Sydney Biennale (2018) and the APT9, QGOMA, Brisbane (2018-19). Thi was a DAAD resident in Berlin from 2015-2016. She is a co-founding director of Hanoi DocLab – a centre for documentary filmmaking and video art in Hanoi, Vietnam.

### SHEN XIN

Shen Xin (b. 1990, Chengdu, China) lives

and works in London and Amsterdam. Through films and video installations, as well as performative events, Shen's practice examines and fabricates techniques and effect of how emotion, judgment and ethic circulate through individual and collective subjects. By focusing on interpersonal complexity and political narratives, her films often aim to generate reflectiveness to dismantle dominant power structures.

Her recent solo presentations include Methods of Inhabiting, K11 Shanghai (2018), Slices Units, Center for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester (2018), half-sung, half spoken, Serpentine Pavilion, London (2017), and At Home, Surplus Space, Wuhan, China (2016). Recent group exhibitions include New Metallurgists, Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf (2018), Songs for Sabotage, the New Museum Triennial, New York (2018), and The New Normal, UCCA, Beijing (2017). Shen was awarded the BALTIC Artists' Award in 2017, and she is currently an artist in residence at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam.

### WAWI NAVARROZA

Wawi Navarroza is a Filipino contemporary artist mostly identified for her works using photography, recently following a cycle of work depicting notions of looking at contemporary landscape seen from an experiential, self-reflexive point of view. She has exhibited widely in the Philippines and internationally, including National Museum of the Philippines, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Singapore Art Museum 8Q, Hangaram Museum, Korea, National Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, and Fries Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum Belvedere, Netherlands, also in art fairs and festivals, with a recent showing at Art Basel Hong Kong 2017.

### SOULIYA PHOUMIVONG

Souliya Phoumivong (b. 1983, Laos) is a media artist based in Laos and Professor of Media Studies at the National Institute of Fine Art in Vientiane. In 2012,

Phoumivong established The Clay House Studio which focuses on video and stop-motion works and is the first of its kind in Laos. The studio is responsible for an array of projects, including the production of the first clay animation TV show in Laos which has reached its 4th season. He has been awarded artist residencies from The Japan Foundation and Center for Contemporary Art Singapore. His work has been included in exhibitions such as Missing Links, The Jim Thompson Art Centre, Bangkok, Thailand (2015) and Cross+Scape, ASEAN-Korea Contemporary Media Art Exhibition, Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea (2011) and APT9, QAGOMA, Brisbane (2018-19).

## SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS AT THE SYMPOSIUM

### ZOE BUTT

Zoe Butt is a curator and writer. She is currently Artistic Director of the Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Vietnam's first purpose-built space for contemporary art in Ho Chi Minh City. She formerly served as: Executive Director and Curator, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City (2009-2016); Director, International Programs, Long March Project, Beijing, China (2007-2009) and Assistant Curator, Contemporary Asian Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia (2001-2007).

Her curatorial projects include interdisciplinary platforms such as Conscious Realities; the online exhibition Embedded South(s); and group exhibitions of Vietnamese and international artists at various venues globally.

Zoe is a member of the Asian Art Council for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum since 2015. In 2019, Zoe presents 'Leaving the Echo Chamber - Journey Beyond the Arrow', one of three exhibitions, as part of the 14th Sharjah Biennial.



## ERIN GLEESON

Erin Gleeson is a curator, researcher and writer. Based primarily in Phnom Penh since 2002, her work has focused on knowledge and practices in and related to Southeast Asia.

Previous projects include: Season of Cambodia visual arts residency and the public program in-residence, New York; the exhibition and book Phnom Penh: Rescue Archaeology/Contemporary Art and Urban Change in Cambodia IFA Gallery, Berlin; and the 4th Singapore Biennale. She was a nominee for the 2012 ICI Independent Vision Award and the recipient of a 2013 Foundation for Arts Initiatives travel grant. Erin was formerly the Artistic Director of SA SA BASSAC, an exhibition and residency space and reading room dedicated to facilitating, archiving, and mediating contemporary art projects and dialogues in and from Cambodia.

Select exhibitions include On Attachments and Unknowns, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh (2017), Enter the Stream at the Turn, Satellite Program 8, Jeu de Paume and CAPC, France (2015-2016); 4th Singapore Biennale (2014). Erin is a guest speaker with numerous partners, including most recently Experimental Curator's Hub, Kolkata (2018), the symposiums Flight from the Empire, House of World Cultures, Berlin (2017), SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia from 1980-Today, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2017). With a critical interest in the notion and practice of fieldwork, Erin co-founded with Vera Mey, FIELDS, a triennial residency. She contributes to numerous publications, most recently to Mousse, Art Asia Pacific, and Bezalel Academy Journal.

From 2015-2018, Erin was an Alphawood Scholar, MA, Contemporary Art and Art Theory of Asia and Africa, at SOAS, University of London. From 2011-2018, she was the co-founding director of SA SA BASSAC, a non-profit contemporary art space in Phnom Penh.

She was the founding curator of Elevations Laos (2018).

## DUONG BICH HANH (PhD)

Duong Bich Hanh is an anthropologist with extensive knowledge and experience

in Southeast Asia and international development. Before joining UNESCO in 2009, she has worked with universities, NGOs and international organizations, and was involved in establishing the first Vietnamese NGO that promotes cultural tradition and creativity for income generation and sustainable development. In her capacity as Program Specialist and Chief of Culture Unit at UNESCO Bangkok Office, Ms. Hanh has been leading a number of projects to support the Mekong cluster countries to implement the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, through research, capacity building, policy review and facilitating dialogues between the government and civil society in the arts and culture field.

## BIUNG ISMAHASAN

Biung Ismahasan (Bunun Nation, one of the sixteen Nations of Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples) is an independent curator, artist and researcher, working on his Practice-based PhD in Curating at the Centre for Curatorial Studies, School of Philosophy and Art History at the University of Essex. He received an MA in Cultural Policy, Relations and Diplomacy from The Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2014. He was awarded the PULIMA Art Award which is the first national art award dedicated to Indigenous contemporary art and exhibited in 2016 at Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts in the southern Taiwan. Curatorial projects have included Disposessions: Performative Encounter(s) of Taiwanese Indigenous Contemporary Art 2014-2019 which is an international performance art exchange of Indigenous artists from Taiwan.

## TARUN NAGESH

Tarun Nagesh is Associate Curator, Asian Art at the Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia. Tarun is part of the core curatorial team for the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT) and curated the South Asian and parts of the Southeast Asian components of APT8 (2015-16) and APT9 (2018-19), including the first-time participation of (three) Lao artists in APT9. He regularly curates exhibitions from the QAGOMA Collection along with touring exhibitions and working with historical material.

## ROGER NELSON (PhD)

Roger Nelson is currently a Post Doc Fellow at Nanyang Technological University / Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. He received his PhD from the University of Melbourne in 2017. His research approaches modern and contemporary arts of Southeast Asia from interdisciplinary perspectives, grounded in the historical, and with a focus on Cambodia and Laos as points of intersection. Roger is co-founding co-editor of Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia, a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published by NUS Press at the National University of Singapore.

He is co-convener of Gender in Southeast Asian Art Histories, an international symposium at the University of Sydney, held in October 2017. From 2015-16, he was a participating scholar in Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art, a cross-regional research initiative funded by the Getty Foundation's "Connection Art Histories" program. Roger also works as an independent curator, specialized in contemporary art in Southeast Asia. He has organized exhibitions, lectures, and other curatorial projects in Australia, Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

## CHAIRAT POLMUK (PhD)

Chairat Polmuk is a professor of Southeast Asian language and literature at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He holds a PhD in Asian literature, religion, and culture at Cornell University. He received his MA in Southeast Asian studies from Cornell in 2013, writing a thesis on Lao literary modernity. Prior to his academic journey to Ithaca, Chairat taught Thai language and poetry at the Department of Thai, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, where he obtained his BA (first-class Hons) and MA in Thai literature. He has published book chapters on contemporary Thai cinema and Lao literature, including 'Labor of Love: Intimacy and Biopolitics in a Thai-Burmese Romance' (2016) and "Old Tales in a New World: Lao Literature and Cultural Movements under French Colonialism" (2015), both by Chiang Mai University Press.

2018-2019

## EXHIBITION SUPPORTERS

<p><b>Co-funders:</b></p>    <p><b>Additional sponsorship from:</b></p>  	<p><b>With support from:</b></p>      	<p><b>Cultural partner:</b></p>   <p><b>Gallery partner:</b></p> 	<p><b>Media Sponsor:</b></p>  <p><b>Reading Room partner:</b></p> 	<p><b>Administrative partner:</b></p>  <p><b>Hotel partner:</b></p> 
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**SPELLBROOK FOUNDATION**  
**2019**