

# Natee Utarit

*Optimism is Ridiculous*



**SINGAPORE**

22 January - 22 February 2013

I've never really managed to come up with a completely satisfying explanation for why I've become so obsessed with Western paintings from centuries past. When I was working on the series *Illustration of the Crisis*, I saw these old paintings as merely one method or one kind of pictorial syntax that was particularly well-suited to the complex meanings I was trying to get across. After several more years of study, I eventually discovered that what gave these old works of art their lasting value wasn't just the result of the artists' skill or the manner of expression. It was something much harder to explain - something intangible. It was a feeling that radiated within and around the paintings themselves. I'm tempted to call this special quality "spirit" simply for want of a better word to capture exactly what it is I'm trying to say.

In this latest series of paintings, I have tried to fill the canvases with the desired images and with what I call "spirit." In the contemporary world where the term "traditionalism" is being reinterpreted and where a world that rejects convention is becoming the new mainstream, I've got countless questions about how well my work can succeed in finding a space in which to express itself while employing methods dating back hundreds of years.

My inspiration comes from numerous quarters. There is a scene in Derek Jarman's film about the life of Caravaggio that I absolutely love. The film is an exploration and reinterpretation of the Italian master's life, and in one scene, Caravaggio is shown talking with one of his models while standing next to a pick-up truck!

Yes, that's right. Caravaggio is standing beside a 1960's pick-up truck!

I can't begin to tell you the kind of impact that scene had on me. It left me no choice but to look for an answer to a very important question: how can we break down closed doors with the splendor of art that seems to be at a dead end? Of course, this changed my work and made it impossible for me to go back to conceptual painting

or any of the other styles I had worked in before. Each of my paintings was suddenly about something; every canvas told a story. By employing a pictorial syntax from centuries past - a syntax that genuinely captivated me - I found a goal, something for my paintings to achieve.

At the same time, though, I couldn't help but wonder whether this wasn't just some foolish hope of a painter who grew up in the 1970's.

For me, the 1970's were a period of change. In the West, people may trace the start of the modern era back to the 1950's, but for people in Asia and other parts of the Third World, I'm sure that the first clear signs of some new world order coming to sweep away the old didn't really appear until the 1970's. I noticed changes in esthetic tastes that reflected changes in the way people lived their lives, and it's because of these changes that I began to experience these feelings of nostalgia - a longing for the past. Like certain other people, I'm not particularly happy with the present, and I have real fears for the future. And looking back at myself from the perspective of people around me, I realize I've become pessimistic traditionalist. Lately I've begun to feel that my paintings are a closer expression of who I am personally, and this makes me happy. Within the still lifes, portraits, pictures of animals and landscapes that make up this series of works, there is a great deal that reflects my personal attitudes. I only hope that the paintings have enough power to express these things.

Or am I seriously overestimating my abilities as an artist?

October 31, 2012

Natee Utarit

Artist note for Optimism is ridiculous painting.



## Innocence is overrated

Oil on linen, 180 x 160 cm, 2012

**Innocence is overrated**

Oil on linen, 150 x 100 cm, 2012





**The man who is a pessimist before 48 knows too much;  
if he is an optimist after it he knows too little**

Oil on linen, 100 x 240 cm, 2012



**Study no. 4**

Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm, 2012



**Aesthetic of condemnation**

Oil on linen, 160 x 140 cm, 2012

**We are Asia**

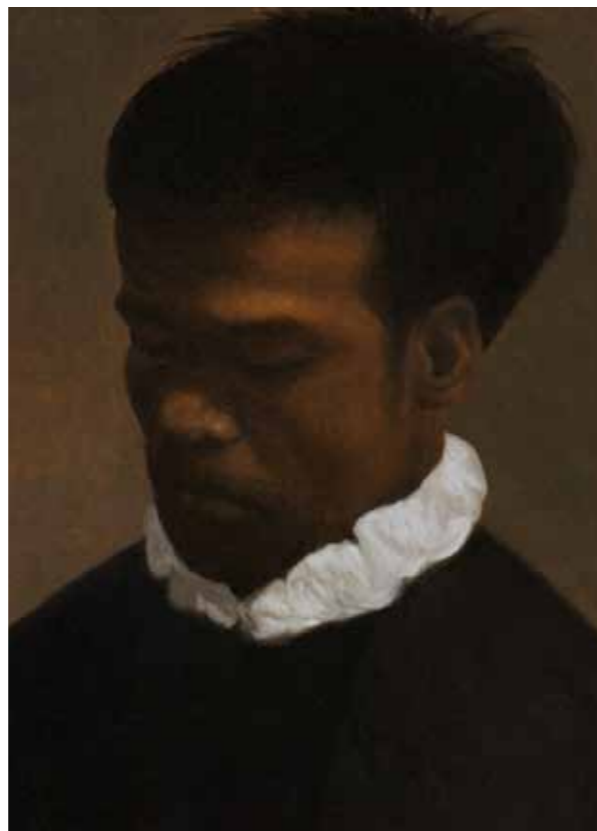
Oil on linen, 150 x 100 cm, 2012





**Dwarf portrait no. 1**

Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm, 2012



**Dwarf portrait no. 2**

Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm, 2012



**Dwarf portrait no. 3**

Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm, 2012



**Dwarf portrait no. 4**

Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 cm, 2012





## **Innocence is overrated**

Oil on linen, 170 x 120 cm, 2012

## Innocence is overrated

Oil on linen, 200 x 150 cm, 2012





**Nickel**

Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm, 2012

**Innocence is overrated**

Oil on linen, 170 x 120 cm, 2012

**THE ALTAR PIECES**  
Faith means not wanting to know what is true  
Oil on linen, 12 panels, 463 x 298 cm, 2012





THE ALTAR PIECES (details)



THE ALTAR PIECES (details)

# Natee Utarit

Born in Bangkok, Thailand in 1970

Lives and works in Bangkok

## Solo Exhibitions

- 2013 - Optimism is Ridiculous, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore.
- 2013 - Optimism is Ridiculous, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur.
- 2012 - Illustration of the Crisis, ARNDT Berlin, Germany.
- 2011 - Bourgeois Dilemma, Finale Art File, Philippines
- Illustration of The crisis, Art Season Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland.
- 2010 - After Painting, Natee Utarit's survey exhibition, works from 1992 – 2008, Singapore Art museum, Singapore
- 2009 - Tales of yesterday, today and tomorrow, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 2008 - Dreams, Hope and Perfection, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Transparency happiness, Soka Art Center, Beijing, China.
- 2007 - The Amusement of Dreams, Hope and Perfection, The Art Center, Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
- The Amusement of Dreams, Hope and Perfection, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 2006 - The fragment and the sublime, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Kyotek Sae-Wu's 12 photographs during 1969-1973, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 2005 - New Works, The Art Gallery of the faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University, Bangkok.
- Ballad for Khrua Inkong, Chiang Mai University Art Museum, Chiang Mai.
- The Last Description of the Old Romantic, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 2003 - Still Pictures, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore.
- Recent Paintings, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 2003 - Recent Paintings, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 2002 - Silent laughing of monster, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- Painting with pure reason, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- Silent laughing of monster/Large scale, The Gallery of Art and Design, Silpakorn University, Bangkok.
- 2001 - Equivalence second dialectic, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore.
- Views and Transference, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 2000 - Pictorial Statement, Bangkok University Art Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1999 - Homage to Landscape Painting, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- Internal Landscape, Art Forum, Singapore.
- Appearance and Reality, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1998 - Internal Landscape, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1997 - Mother Figure, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1995 - Drawing and Water colors, British Council Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1994 - Anthropology, The Bangkok Playhouse, Bangkok.

## Group and Selected Exhibitions

- 2012 - THAI TREND from Localism to Internationalism, Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Bangkok.
- South East Asian Contemporary Art, Richard Koh Fine Art, Art Stage Singapore, Singapore.
- 2011 - Asia: Looking South, ARNDT, Berlin, Germany.
- Wonderland, G23 Srinakharinwirot University.
- Future Pass – From Asia to the World Collateral Event of the 54th International Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Mangilli-Valmarana, Venice, Italy.
- Negotiating Home, History and Nation: Two decades of contemporary art in Southeast Asia 1991 - 2011, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.
- South East Asian Contemporary Art, Richard Koh Fine Art, Art Stage Singapore, Singapore.
- 2010 - Beacons of Archipelago, Arario Gallery, Cheonan, Korea.
- Clouds, Power of Asian Contemporary Art, Soka Art Center, 798, Beijing, China.
- 2008 - Mapping Asia, The Special Project of CIGE 2008, Beijing, China.
- This is not a fairytale, Contemporary Thai Art Exhibition, Soka Art Center, Taipei.
- Traces of Siamese Smile/Art, Faith, Politics and Love, Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Bangkok.
- 2007 - Diversity in print, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore.
- Thai Contemporary: Charm and Chasm, Tang Gallery, Beijing, China.
- Southeast Asian Contemporary Art, Soka Art Center, Beijing, China.
- Asian Art Now, Soka Contemporary Space, Taiwan.
- 2006 - Signed and Dated, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 2005 - On Paintings, Bangkok University Art Gallery (Rangsit), Bangkok.
- Portrait, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 2003 - Overseas, The Gallery of Art and Design, Silpakorn University, Bangkok.
- Next Move, Earl Lu Gallery, Lasalle-Sia College of the Art, Singapore.
- 2002 - Present perfect, Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art, Bangkok Catalogue, 2002.
- Fusion Vision, Thai Australian Artistic Connection, The Gallery of Art and Design, Silpakorn University, Bangkok.
- Developing Time, Tadu Gallery, Bangkok.
- 2001 - Painted, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- ARS 01, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland.
- Thai Contemporary Exhibition, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Root, Open Art Space, Bangkok.
- 2000 - Snapshot, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore.
- 1999 - The Third Asia - Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.
- Alter Ego, The 1st Thai - EU Art Project, The Art Gallery of The Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University, Bangkok.
- 1998 - Portrait, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- The Art Exhibition of Vietnamese - Thai Artist, Fine Art Museum of Ho Chi Minh City Hanoi Fine Art University, Hanoi, Viet Nam.
- Book, Kurusapa Building, Bangkok.
- Bangkok Art Project 1998, Public Art in Community lives across the Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok.
- The 3rd International Mini Print Triennial 1998, Lahti, Poland.
- 1997 - Conversing Contemporary, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1996 - Hidden Agenda, Project 304, Bangkok.
- 1995 - Man and the forest, A Fundraising Exhibition Benefit The Northern Development, The Art Center, The Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.
- 1993 - Life Now, 3 artists exhibition, Dialogue Gallery, Bangkok.
- Premio Internazionale Biella Per l'Incisione 1993, Biella, Italy.
- 1992 - Small Work, An Art Exhibition by 56 Thai Artists, Silom Art Space, Bangkok.
- The Exhibition of Prints, Dialogue Gallery, Bangkok.
- Art Thesis Exhibition by the Graduating Class of the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University, Bangkok.
- The Exhibition of Prints, Foyer Gallery, Canberra School of Art, Australia.
- The Contemporary Graphic Arts by New Artists, The National Gallery, Bangkok.
- 1991 - The 19th International Biennial of Graphic Art 1991, Ljubijana, Yugoslavia.
- The Contemporary Art Competition 1991, The National Gallery, Bangkok.
- Small Work, Group Show by 3 Artists, The Seven Seas Gallery, Bangkok.
- Spiritual Sense, 2 Artists Exhibition of Prints, British Council Gallery, Bangkok.
- The Small Prints by 10 Artists, River City Gallery, Bangkok.
- The 3rd Toshiba Art Competition, Silpakorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok.
- The 8th Exhibition of Contemporary Art by Young Artists, Silpakorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok.
- The 5th International Biennial Print Exhibition 1991, ROC Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taiwan.
- 1990-85 - The Contemporary Art Competition 1990, The National Gallery, Bangkok.
- The 3rd, 5th Exhibition of Contemporary Art by PTT, Silpakorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok.
- The 3rd, 7th Exhibition of Contemporary Art by Young Artists, Silpakorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok.
- The 1st, 2nd Toshiba Art Competition, Silpakorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok.
- The Male Formy Grafiki, Polska-Lodz'89, Poland.
- The 2nd, 3rd Youth Art Exhibition of Thailand.



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