



NATEE UTARIT
YOUR PAST IS MY FUTURE

NATEE UTARIT
YOUR PAST IS MY FUTURE



Copyright © 2019
Richard Koh Fine Art Sdn. Bhd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronically, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior consent from the artist and gallery.

Publication © 2019
Richard Koh Fine Art Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur

All images Courtesy of Richard Koh Fine Art and the artist.

A digital catalogue for a solo presentation of Natee Utarit at Art Basel Hong Kong, Richard Koh Fine Art, booth 3C34, Convention & Exhibition Centre, 1 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong from 29 - 31 March 2019.

Art | Basel
Hong Kong

CONTENT

07	Essay by Demetrio Paparoni
09	Artist Statement by Natee Utarit
15	List of works
31	Artist profile



YOUR PAST IS MY FUTURE

Demetrio Papanoni
Curator / Writer
Milan, 2018

With the exhibition "Your past is my future", Natee Utarit continues his investigation of the relationship between European colonialism and Southeast Asian culture. If in the previous pictorial cycles, Utarit focused his attention on the dynamics through which the West has exerted its influence both on the style and on the art of Southeast Asia, with these new paintings he looks at the common aspects of different cultures. At the base of the new cycle of works there is the awareness that it is possible to give new life to one's own culture starting from the aspects shared with different cultures with a glorious past. The unreleased series of paintings "Your past is my future" addresses the relationship among individuals in a less pessimistic way than the previous cycles: "We tend to be wary of our neighbours," writes Utarit at this regard, "because the version of the story we learned has taught us to see people from other cultures as enemies or rivals. We think that our culture was created exclusively by our ancestors. We have never had the courage to accept that our customs and traditions may have been influenced or shaped by other cultural forces."



YOUR PAST IS MY FUTURE

Natee Utarit
Bangkok, July 2018

Previously my paintings were often inspired by social concerns and events in the world around me, most of them consequences of the age of colonialism some 150 years ago.

Then, starting in 2006, I began to re-examine the sources that had inspired my earlier works. Adopting a new perspective, I discovered different meanings.

I realized that as attempts to reflect the impact of cultural, social and political forces at work around me, many of my paintings showed clear evidence of conflicted feelings - of a confused combination of pride, shame, and uncertainty in my own sense of identity shaken by changes resulting from the process of globalization.

Everything relates to the past and the content of the past as history. And of course, this can be interpreted such that it has a bearing on other cultural contexts through their connection with our shared historical context.

I am interested in the past.

I am interested in history. I think that our knowledge and understanding of the past filtered through historical consciousness is something extremely interesting.

It explains differences in thinking, attitudes, character and spirit that can engender sweeping changes in society as a whole.

I believe that other cultures in other parts of the world have a similar definition of the past and of history.

History is a mental construct of the past.

History is something that can be changed.

History can be revised and created to achieve certain goals and objectives.

Therefore, one culture's construction of some glorious past can, under the influence of some shared idea, become the future that people of another culture imagine for themselves. For example, the culture and way of life of 19th-century Europe continued to influence the thinking and aspirations of people in various parts of the globe years after the end of colonialism.

Something similar affects the construction of identity. When I was young, people of my generation were taught in history class that the ancient Siamese, under threat from neighboring peoples, had left their homeland in the Altai mountains of southern China and migrated southward into present-day Thailand hundreds of years ago. (Meanwhile, kids today are being taught that their ancient forebears didn't migrate from anywhere but were always native to this part of the world, living side by side with the other indigenous ethnic groups of Southeast Asia.) Consequently, people of my generation, or my parents' or even my grandparents' generation have tended to look at foreigners in a particular way. We're often afraid of them. We tend to be suspicious of our neighbors in the region because the version of history that we learned taught us to see people of other cultures and races as enemies or rivals. We think of our culture as something created solely by our own ancestors. We have never

dared to imagine that our customs and traditions may have been influenced or shaped by other cultural forces.

I am interested in why we so often pass on our thoughts and aspirations through some created version of history or some construction of the past.

There are many explanations for this, most of them linked to some political context.

But I want to look at the question from a more modest perspective.

I have noticed that it is possible to understand this process of thinking more clearly by examining how social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow us all to construct (and record) our own past based on a historical model, and then how these constructs have an immediate, 'real-time' influence on others' thinking. To exercise such influence in the past required imposition of military force or religious authority.

Social media serves as a convenient platform for micro-historians, providing them with something like a cell for recording and constructing on a small level an image of the past which connects and interacts with other mental constructs, ways of thinking and their impact. It is as though we can photoshop our past, beautify its content, and then launch it into cyberspace where it makes unlimited connections with other personal histories.

Think about what it means to post a personal photograph on Instagram or a picture of a meal on some other social media platform. (This latter bears some resemblance to old Flemish paintings of opulent meals.) Your micro-history is sure to receive some kind of response almost immediately and its influence radiates out to a greater or lesser degree.

Of course, individualism as a defining characteristic of modern life, is a key condition for this. But at the same time, the relationship between the private and public spheres is of great interest in that it is shaped primarily by the immediate "past."

This amazes me. It convinces me that our definition of the past and of history will never be the same again.

These observations are the raw materials of my paintings.

I use this inspiration and my awareness of how our construction of the past has changed as the driving forces for my creativity.

The images in these works are an assemblage of various historical images relating to our present-day cultural identity and influences, linked in a very loose fashion through stories open to a range of interpretations in other contexts touching on society in general.



WORKS



**The Known and
The Unknown**

2018
Oil on canvas
190 x 228 cm



Your Past is My Future

2018
Oil on canvas
190 x 228 cm



The Man Without Past

2018
Oil on canvas
190 x 228 cm



**History of the White
Skeleton Monster**

2018
Oil on canvas
190 x 228 cm



Herstory

2018
Oil on canvas
190 x 190 cm



Cetasika

2018
Oil on canvas
100 x 80 cm

Time Traveler

2018
Oil on canvas
100 x 80 cm





Natee Utarit

Natee Utarit (b. 1970, Bangkok) studied at the College of Fine Art in 1987 and graduated in Graphic Arts at the Painting and Sculpture Faculty at Silpakorn University, both in Bangkok, Thailand in 1991. Solo exhibitions include *Optimism is Ridiculous: the Altarpieces*, The Private Museum, Singapore (2018), *Optimism is Ridiculous: the Altarpieces*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (2017), *Optimism is Ridiculous: the Altarpieces*, Ayala Museum, Manila, the Philippines (2017), *Illustration of the Crisis*, Bangkok University Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand (2013), *After Painting*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2010) and *The Amusement of Dreams, Hope and Perfection*, Art Center of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand (2007). Recent group exhibitions include *Beyond Bliss*, Bangkok Art Biennale 2018, Bangkok, Thailand (2018), *Contemporary Chaos*, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Norway (2018), *Thai Eye*, BACC, Bangkok, Thailand and Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (2016/2015), *Art of ASEAN*, Bank Negara Museum and Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2015), *Time of Others*, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan (2015) and *Asian Art Biennale 2013: Everyday Life*, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan (2013).

His work is part of many renowned collections, such as the Bangkok University, Bangkok, Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, as well as private collections in Europe and Asia.

Utarit's multifaceted practice focuses on the exploration of the medium of painting connecting it with photography and classical Western art. Light and perspective are some of the elements the artist chose to work with, focusing on painting as a means to explore image making. His complex pictures, juggle wide-ranging metaphors usually in the format of the traditional still life, allude to Thailand's current social and political landscapes.

Education

- 1987 College of Fine Art, Bangkok, Thailand
- 1991 BFA Graphic Art, The Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphical Arts, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 *Your Past is My Future*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Art Basel Hong Kong, Hong Kong
- 2018 *Untitled Poems Of Théodore Rousseau*, Tang Contemporary Art, Bangkok, Thailand
View from the Tower, Richard Koh Projects, Bangkok, Thailand
Untitled Poems Of Théodore Rousseau, Tang Contemporary Art, Hong Kong
Untitled Poems Of Théodore Rousseau (in remembrance of Théodore Rousseau, "a man who is tormented by several devils"), THAI FOCUS, ART STAGE Singapore 2018, Singapore
- 2017 *It Would Be Silly to Be Jealous of a Flower*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2016 *Samlee & Co., The Absolutely Fabulous Show*, Art Stage Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia
Optimism is Ridiculous, Megumi Ogita Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2013 *Optimism is Ridiculous*, Gallery Hyundai, Seoul, South Korea
Optimism is Ridiculous, Richard Koh Fine Art, Singapore
Optimism is Ridiculous, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2012 *Illustration of the Crisis*, ARNDT Berlin, Germany
- 2011 *Bourgeois Dilemma*, Finale Art File, Philippines
Illustration of The Crisis, Art Season Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland
- 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*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
- 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, Thailand

2005 *The Last Description of the Old Romantic*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

2003 *Still Pictures*, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore

Recent Paintings, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Recent Paintings, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

2002 *Silent Laughing of Monster*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Painting with Pure Reason, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

2001 *Equivalence Second Dialectic*, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore

Views and Transference, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1999 *Homage to Landscape Painting*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Internal Landscape, Art Forum, Singapore

Appearance and Reality, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1998 *Internal Landscape*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1997 *Mother Figure*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1995 *Drawing and Watercolors*, British Council Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1994 *Anthropology*, The Bangkok Playhouse, Bangkok, Thailand

Asian Art Now, Soka Contemporary Space, Taiwan

2006 *Signed and Dated*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2005 *Portrait*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2002 *Developing Time*, Tadu Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

2001 *Painted*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Thai Contemporary Exhibition, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Root, Open Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand

2000 *Snapshot*, Plum Blossoms Gallery, Singapore

1998 *Portrait*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Book, Kurusapa Building, Bangkok. - Bangkok Art Project 1998, *Public Art in Community lives across the Rattanakosin Island*, Bangkok, Thailand

1997 *Conversing Contemporary*, Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1996 *Hidden Agenda*, Project 304, Bangkok, Thailand

1993 *Life Now*, 3 Artists Exhibition, Dialogue Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1992 *Small Work*, An Art Exhibition by 56 Thai Artists, Silom Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand

The Exhibition of Prints, Dialogue Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1991 *Small Work, Group Show by 3 Artists*, The Seven Seas Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Spiritual Sense, 2 Artists Exhibition of Prints, British Council Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

The Small Prints by 10 Artists, River City Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

1990-1985 The 2nd, 3rd Youth Art Exhibition of Thailand, Thailand

Selected Group Exhibitions

2017 *Hermann Nitsch & Natee Utarit: Existence & Senses*, Galerie Zimmermann Kratochwill, Austria

2015 *Thai Eye*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

I am Ten, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2012 *Beacons of Archipelago*, Arario Gallery, Cheonan, South Korea

Clouds, Power of Asian Contemporary Art, Soka Art Center, 798, Beijing, China

2011 *Asia: Looking South*, ARNDT, Berlin, Germany

2008 *Mapping Asia*, The Special Project of CIGE 2008, Beijing, China

This is not a Fairy-tale, Contemporary Thai Art Exhibition, Soka Art Centre, Taipei, Taiwan

2007 *Thai Contemporary: Charm and Chasm*, Tang Gallery, Beijing, China

Southeast Asian Contemporary Art, Soka Art Centre, Beijing, China

Institution & Museum Exhibitions

2019 *Made in Cloister* Foundation, Naples, Italy

Haugar Art Museum, Oslo, Norway

To See the Forest and the Trees, Asia Society Hong Kong Center, Hong Kong

2018 *Beyond Bliss*, Bangkok Art Biennale 2018, Bangkok, Thailand

Two House: Politics and Histories in the Contemporary Art Collections of John Chia and Yeap Lam Yang, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, Singapore

Optimism is Ridiculous, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Optimism is Ridiculous: The Altarpieces, The Private Museum, Singapore

Contemporary Chaos, Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Norway

2017 *Optimism is Ridiculous: The Altarpieces*, National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Optimism is Ridiculous: The Altarpieces, Ayala Museum, Manila, Philippines

Problem-Wisdom: Thai Art in the 1990s, Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland, Australia

The New Frontier of Painting, Fondazione Stelline, Milan, Italy

2016 *SEMANGAT X: Visual Expressions of Southeast Asian Identity*, Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Thai Eye, Bangkok Art and Culture Center (BACC), Bangkok, Thailand

2015 *Art of ASEAN*, Bank Negara Museum and Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Time of Others, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Japan

2014 *Medium at Large*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

2013 *Illustration of the Crisis*, Bangkok University Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Asian Art Biennale 2013: Everyday Life, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan

2012 *THAI TREND from Localism to Internationalism*, Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Bangkok, Thailand

Future Pass – From Asia to the World, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China

Future Pass – From Asia to the World, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan

2011 *Future Pass – From Asia to the World Collateral Event of the 54th International Art Exhibition*, la Biennale di Venezia, Palazzo Mangilli-Valmarana, Venice, Italy

Future Pass – From Asia to the World, Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Negotiating Home, History and Nation: Two decades of Contemporary Art in Southeast Asia 1991 - 2011, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

Wonderland, G23 Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand

2010 *After Painting*, Natee Utarit's survey exhibition, works from 1992 – 2008, Singapore Art museum, Singapore

2008 *Traces of Siamese Smile/Art, Faith, Politics and Love*, Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Bangkok, Thailand

2007 *The Amusement of Dreams, Hope and Perfection*, The Art Center, Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Diversity in Print, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore

2005 *New Works*, The Art Gallery of the faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Ballad for Khrua Inkong, Chiang Mai University Art Museum, Chiang Mai, Thailand

On Paintings, Bangkok University Art Gallery (Rangsit), Bangkok, Thailand

2003 *Overseas*, The Gallery of Art and Design, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Next Move, Earl Lu Gallery, Lasalle-Sia College of the Art, Singapore

2002 *Silent Laughing of Monster/Large Scale*, The Gallery of Art and Design, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Present Perfect, Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art, Bangkok, Thailand

Fusion Vision, Thai Australian Artistic Connection, The Gallery of Art and Design, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

2001 *ARS 01*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland

2000 *Pictorial Statement*, Bangkok University Art Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

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, Thailand

1998 *The Art Exhibition of Vietnamese - Thai Artist*, Fine Art Museum of Ho Chi Minh City Hanoi Fine Art University, Hanoi, Viet Nam

The 3rd International Mini Print Triennial 1998, Lahti, Poland

1995 *Man and the Forest*, A Fundraising Exhibition Benefit The Northern Development, The Art Center, The Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

1993 *Premio Internazionale Biella Per l'Incisione 1993*, Biella, Italy

1992 *The Contemporary Graphic Arts by New Artists*, The National Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Art Thesis Exhibition by the Graduating Class of the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

The Exhibition of Prints, Foyer Gallery, Canberra School of Art, Australia

1991 *The 19th International Biennial of Graphic Art 1991*, Ljubijana, Yugoslavia



Richard Koh Fine Art has been in operation since 2005 and is regarded as a pioneer for introducing contemporary art to Malaysia and the region. Promoting an adventurous roster of emerging and established artists, the gallery regularly mounts exhibitions locally and abroad with a commitment to emerging practices and challenging media.

RICHARD KOH FINE ART

KUALA LUMPUR

229 Jalan Maarof
Bukit Bandaraya, Bangsar
59100 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

T +603 2095 3300

@ info@rkfineart.com

SINGAPORE

Blk 47 Malan Road
#01-26 Gillman Barracks
Singapore 109444

T +65 6513 2640

RICHARD KOH PROJECTS

BANGKOK

Unit A, 3rd Floor,
N22 Art Warehouse, 2198/10-11
Narathiwas Road Soi 22, Chong Nonsi,
Yannawa, 109210 Bangkok, Thailand

T +66 2037 6944



RK
RICHARD KOH
FINE ART