



The “in-between”

Mudassir Sheikh

Korakrit Arunanondchai

- Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. Thailand, 1986) uses video, painting and performance to engage with subjects such as history, self-representation, and cultural dislocation
- Arunanondchai earned his BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009 and his MFA from Columbia University in 2012.





Themes and Research Interests



- His work seeks to find common ground between Western and Thai cultural narratives, belief systems and artistic practices.
- His videos, often the centrepieces of exhibitions, combine found clips with drone and handheld footage. Religious artefacts, news broadcasts and highlights from reality TV are interleaved with slow and sublime cinematic action, sewn together by Arunanondchai's distinct poetic voice and grounded in a close relationship to location.
- "Past political history of Thailand and the current. One foot in the past, one in the present. The personal, the global, the zeitgeist. Multidimensional relation to time"
- "A lot of artists and bodies of work I look into are based on binaries like life and death. But I want to look into the in-between."
- Animism: is the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork, and perhaps even words—as animated and alive.

➤ SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

- 2022
Moderna Museet, Stockholm (forthcoming)
Carlos/Ishikawa, London (forthcoming)
Korakrit Arunanondchai: A Machine Boosting Energy Into the Universe, Singapore Art Museum
- 2021
Songs for dying / Songs for living, Kunstverein Hamburg
Songs for dying / Songs for living, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich
3 SONGS, CLEARING, New York
Songs for Dying, Kunsthall Trondheim, Trondheim
- 2020
Days after the reverie (a prelude), CLEARING, New York
No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5, Museu Serralves, Porto
- 2019
Secession, Vienna
K11, Hong Kong
with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4, Gallery Share: Carlos / Ishikawa hosted by Galeria Jaqueline Martins, Sao Paulo
No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5, in collaboration with Alex Gvojic (with boychild), Bangkok CityCity Gallery, Bangkok
with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4, Kaleidoscope Spazio Maiocchi, Milano
- 2018
No history in a room filled with people with funny names 5, Carlos/Ishikawa, London
with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4, J1, Marseille
A workshop for peace: nowhere to go: let the song hold us: in a room filled with people with funny names 4, CLEARING, Brussels
- 2017
with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4, Kiasma Museum, Helsinki
with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4, CLEARING New York
- *AINTING WITH HISTORY IN A ROOM FILLED WITH MEN WITH FUNNY NAMES 1*, CLEARING New York
Painting with history 3 or two thousand five hundred and fifty nine years to figure stuff out, Museion, Bolzano
2012-2555, 2556, 2557, The Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok
Painting with history in a room filled with people with funny names 3, Bangkok CityCity Gallery, Bangkok
Gift Korakrit Arunanondchai | Letters to Chantri #1, S.M.A.K., Ghent
Korakrit Arunanondchai curated by Franklin Melendez, Lodos Gallery, Mexico City
- 2015
2558, UCCA, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing
Painting with History in a room filled with people with funny names 3, Palais de Tokyo, Paris
- 2014
The Last 3 Years and the Future (with boychild and AJGvojic), performance at ICA Off-Site, Old Selfridges Hotel, London
2012-2555, 2556, *Painting with history in a room filled with men with funny names and the Future* (with boychild, AJGvojic and Harry Bornstein), performance at Warsaw Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw
2557 (*Painting with history in a room filled with men with funny names 2*) (with Korapat Arunanondchai), Carlos/Ishikawa, London
Letters to Chantri #1: The lady at the door/The gift that keeps on giving (in collaboration with Boychild), The Mistake Room, Los Angeles
Korakrit Arunanondchai, MoMA PS1, New York; performance as part of the exhibition at MoMA PS1, NY
- 2013
Painting with history in a room filled with men with funny names 2 (with Korapat Arunanondchai) (*Phrase I*), Bill Brady KC Gallery, Kansas City
Muen Kuey (It's always the same), C L E A R I N G, Brussels
Painting with history in a room filled with men with funny names, C L E A R I N G, Brooklyn, NY



Process



- “I write the work as I edit. It’s always an open process. I get really confused in it a lot. It’s difficult to work with me sometimes, because the process is so open. I’m doing something, my collaborator is doing something, and we don’t know what it is going to become or what precisely is going to be used.”
- “I don’t want to have a separation between the life lived and the work. The places that formed these ideas are important.”

Spirituality as Anthropological Research

- ▶ I believe in spirits because many people in Thailand believe in them. I can't deny the reality of the belief. But I'm actually not that spiritual.
- ▶ My fascination with spirituality, particularly with the idea of spirits and ghosts, is in deconstructing it and allowing it to be a form of knowledge without taking a Western approach which says, 'This is the opposite of science.' Even within Thailand, if you're a city person, you're less likely to have animistic beliefs than a rural person. The mentality of the city people is, 'These people are dumb, they believe in all these things that are not true.' I want to find a way to deconstruct these mentalities to talk about them in a socio-historical way.
- ▶ "There are people interested in the history of spirituality, and then there are people in Los Angeles being New Age-y spiritual. **Maybe the question is, 'Do you believe in something that is immaterial, bigger than all of us and unites us?' If you deconstruct that, you realize that maybe it's also a story.** Some people find spirituality in capitalism, because it's a bigger thing that makes sense to them. **For me, it's more important to see spirituality as a product of history and from the perspective of anthropology.**

The Denim Painter

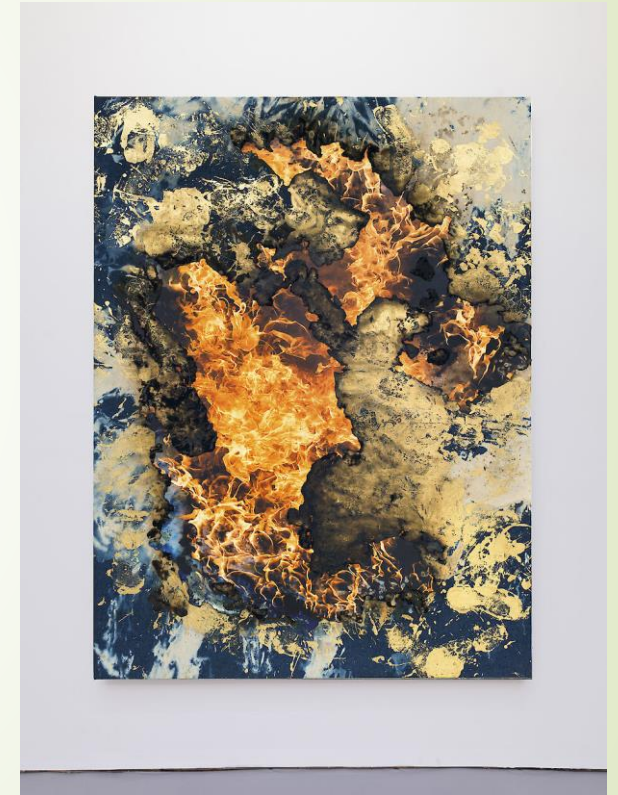
- The Denim painter is a character, which Arunanondchai describes as “basically just me but more like the art character of me.”



- ▶ “It began with this denim painter character, which was basically just me. I wanted to make a story or narrative around the word denim. For me, contemporary art has always been this globalizing force. As soon as someone painted on a canvas, that's when they entered the Western canon of painting. Painting with a capital “P”. I felt like I wanted to paint on denim because denim constantly signifies Western globalization and the soft power of America. Today, one in seven people in the world have denim. It felt like that was the thread or the canvas I wanted to build my practice upon.”



In using fire to burn denim and then transforming the photograph with graphic representations of fire, he found a way to make the past physically present in the present—to allow his past to produce the present.



Painting with History in a Room Filled With People With Funny Names 3

- ▶ “Painting with history in a room filled with people with funny names 3” is the epilogue to a series of works created over four years, about the making of the Denim Painter, who is the artist's fictional double. The identity of this figure is forged by globalization, but also encapsulates the social and spiritual reality of Thailand
- ▶ His autobiography, his constructed image as an artist, the social realities of present-day Thailand, and the phenomenon of globalization are mixed together in the exhibition to form what the artist calls “a memory palace.”



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- <https://youtu.be/vbWxS9JToXM>
 - <https://youtu.be/Cs6KVUywoec?t=77> interview

- The installation is made in two parts. “The Body” is composed of a large denim body painting, only visible in its entirety from a bird’s eye view. It functions as a landscape and a stage for the audience. “The Spirit” presents a video, in the artist converses with Chantri - the invisible main character of the trilogy and the incarnation of the audience and Korakrit Arunanondchai’s consciousness.

Ghost:2561 (curated by Korakrit Arunanondchai)

- Ghost:2561 IS A VIDEO AND PERFORMANCE ART SERIES IN BANGKOK, SET IN OCTOBER 11th–28th, 2018.
- This work explores the ghost as a metaphor for suppressed and overlooked histories.

- <https://ghost2561.com/>
- https://vimeo.com/288060141?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=2466416





A LETTER FROM THE CURATOR:

Dear Ghost,

Welcome to my body. Breathe through my skin, make kin with my unconscious and connect me to the great flow of beings that you belong to. The invisible world feels like an ocean, so much data, so much unresolved feeling all around us. Reality is made up of words and words make worlds. But our worlds today are falling apart because they are built on public fiction and empty promises, historical narratives that were written by the oppressor and future narratives to continue those oppressions. History is often structured by unanticipated reversals. The center disintegrates in the face of mountains, rivers and rains—bodies greater than our own. Bodies greater than the ones we have imagined. Your body, Ghost, in communion with mine and others around me, with our primogenitors and with the future carriers of our DNA.



I think about a “world community” with participants who are not only human but represent all forms of being. New kinds of storytelling are needed to convey the complexity of this “world community”; New Ghosts. The older ones must mutate. We must recognize that the act of respect is the same thing as the act of love. To love something is to give it a possibility to exist beyond one’s limited imagination.

I grew up fearful of you, Ghost, because you felt out of our control, out of reason, non–negotiable. But now, as time moves forward and the world starts to undo you, as the sea of data washes over all your invisibility and reveals your history, more than ever, I want to keep you with me and within me.

I know you are a story and I know the world is a story. There are aspects of the world that are uncontrollable. Let this anarchic energy pass through us and, as it does, become a part of us.

This is the way that I choose to love you, Ghost.

Korakrit Arunanondchai

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- Although each culture has its own concept of “ghosts,” common is the notion that “ghosts” give form and presence to invisible systems.
 - To experience a “ghost” connects you to the infinite reverberations of human experience simultaneously as it brings you back to your own body. Uniting past and present, singularity and multiplicity.

- Video works by Ian Cheng, Stephanie Comilang, Josh Kline, Metahaven, Jon Rafman, Raqs Media Collective, Rachel Rose, Chulayarnnon Siriphol, Hito Steyerl, Jon Wang, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Samson Young. Performances by boychild, Thanapol Virulhakul and Ashland Mines (Total Freedom).

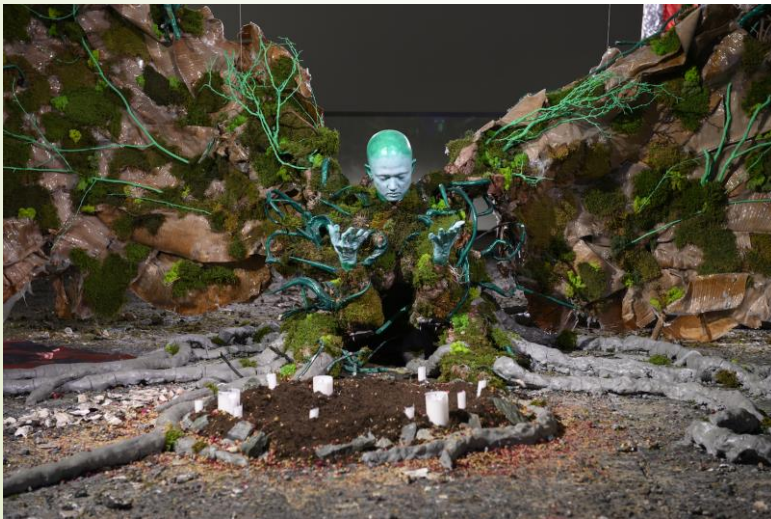




Songs for dying/ Songs for living

Inspired by the death of his grandfather and the Buddhist saying how change is inevitable, and the only thing that's certain is change.

"It started out as this research project on animistic and shamanic traditions in different countries and places that were colonized, where you can kind of trace the effects and the built-up trauma"



"I was thinking of the ocean as a womb-like space as well as this dividing line between the sea and the sky, the mind and the body. *Songs for dying* is about the splitting of those spaces and *Songs for living* is about how they then come back together."





- The exhibition comprises film, installation, painting on a large piece of denim textile, and a mural made from local flowers collected in Trøndelag.
- Arunanondchai unites the personal and intimate with the spiritual, the technological, and global politics. The exhibition spotlights how the past pulsates in the present, highlights alternative knowledge systems, and shows how bodies and spirits are interconnected in a greater whole.



Scattered around in the exhibition space lay clay models of the UN building in New York City. This architectural body rose up from the ashes after World War II, springing out from a notion of world peace.


Clay models of UN Secretariat Building, Inkjet transfer, acrylic paint, varieties of pressed plant life,







Evolution of His Practice

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- ▶ “In the beginning I started with building a character called the Denim Painter, which was essentially myself. As I grow older, my art making process is not about going into my own head and my own feelings any more. Now it's about going outside, trying to find things in the past, present or future, and finding connections between people.”
 - ▶ “I'm interested in ancient human beings, evolution, prehistoric stuff, human beings as a species, because this stuff connects all of us in a wider sphere of existence. I'm an artist, a person, a point in an economic system, and a part of a bigger continuation of life on the planet. My work can go outwards in all these directions. It creates an emotional magnitude that comes from being able to travel through these worlds.”