

Our Place



in Their
World

*V*enezia

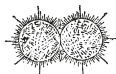
45°26'24.24"N 12°20'08.64"E

2024

*B*angkok

13°45'09"N 100°29'39"E

1897



Our Place in Their World

Our Place In Their World, a collaborative work by Nakrob Moonmanas and Chitti Kasemkitvatana, focuses on a string of moments when the head of state and commoners from the far east - Siam traveled to the west at the turn of the 19th - 20th century. On the threshold of Siamese modernity, King Chulalongkorn perceived the seriousness of foreign affairs with imperial power. His Majesty desired European recognition of Siam as a fully independent power, then made a diplomatic journey to Europe for the first time in 1897. It marked the beginning of an auspicious moment of Siam having its place in the international assembly. By taking account of all possible histories, the project presents an official narrative of modern-groomed Siam together with the chronicle accounts of commoners, K.S.R. Kulap, Nai Tong Khum, Boosra Mahin, among others.

"K.S.R. Kulap, a commoner who lifted himself from obscure background to take a prominent place in the history of Siamese journalism. He fed his passion for history by collecting books, unpublished manuscripts and bits of printed matter from which he fashioned historical essays. Controversy arose over the accuracy of these essays, many of which concerned monarchical history, and the royal was sufficiently alarmed to respond officially to Kulap's activities." wrote Craig J. Reynolds in his essay "The Case of K.S.R. Kulap : A Challenge to Royal History Writing in the Late 19th Century Thailand" (Journal of The Siam Society 61 part 2, July 1973). K.S.R. Kulap transmitted bodies of knowledge once preserved for royal circle and high ranking monks to commoners at the arrival of new medium of printing, a medium which gave him authority and power.



The 16 years old Nai Tong Khum, from Phetchaburi, traveled alone to Europe and then the US and lived abroad for 25 years. Over there, he earned his living from being a laborer to an entrepreneur. During his time in England, he became a famous acrobat with the stage name "Tom Kuma". Upon his return, he became a foreigner in his homeland, being called "Manu Pralad Chat Thai" (trans. weirdo of Thailand) by his people.

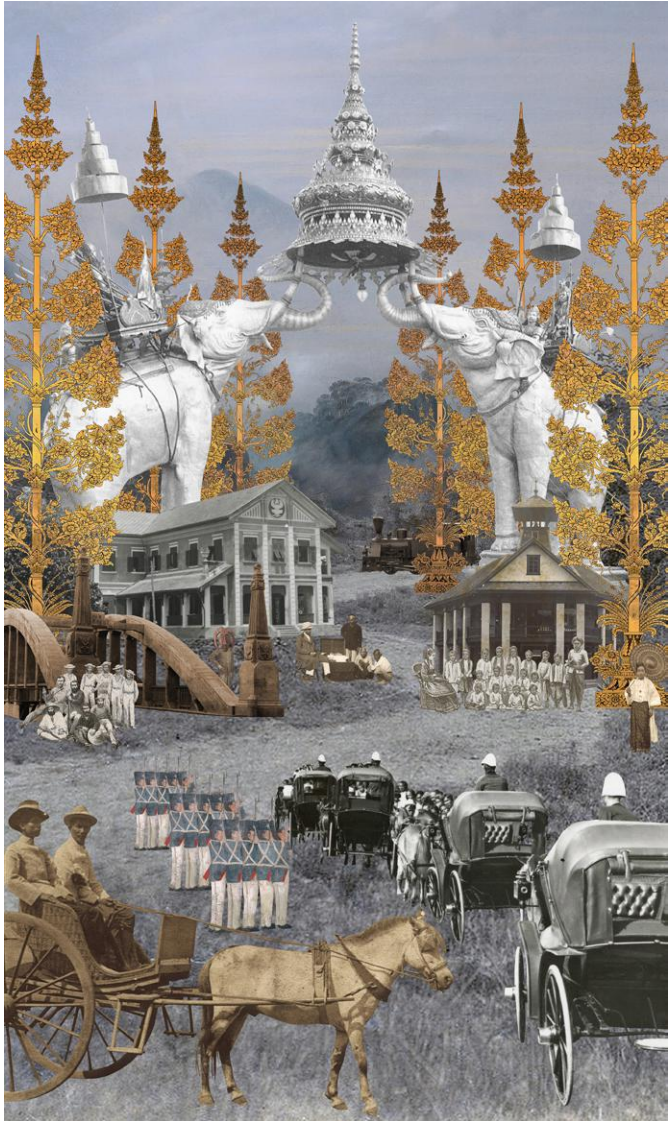
Boosra Mahin, who traveled with his hybrid theater troupe to Europe and contributed to world history. His troupe was the first Siamese who performed overseas. In 1900, whilst performing at the Berlin Zoo, his orchestra was recorded for the first time ever on the Edison wax cylinder by Carl Stumpf, an ethnomusicologist from the University of Berlin. The recordings were filed "Sonic System and Music of the Siamese" and kept at Berliner Phonogramm Archiv. In 1999, the collection was added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

Our Place In Their World redrafts the historical scene of Siamese maritime crossing by assembling the remnants of the forgotten with the grand narrative. The project demonstrates the coexistence of different narrative layers in the same moment, in which they are interwoven in a multitude of ways.

Our Place In Their World is commissioned by Bangkok Art Biennale Foundation for The Spirits Of Maritime Crossing, a collateral event of the 60th La Biennale di Venezia, 2024. This project is made possible with the support of Thai Film Archive, Office of Art and Culture Chulalongkorn University and National Archives of Thailand.

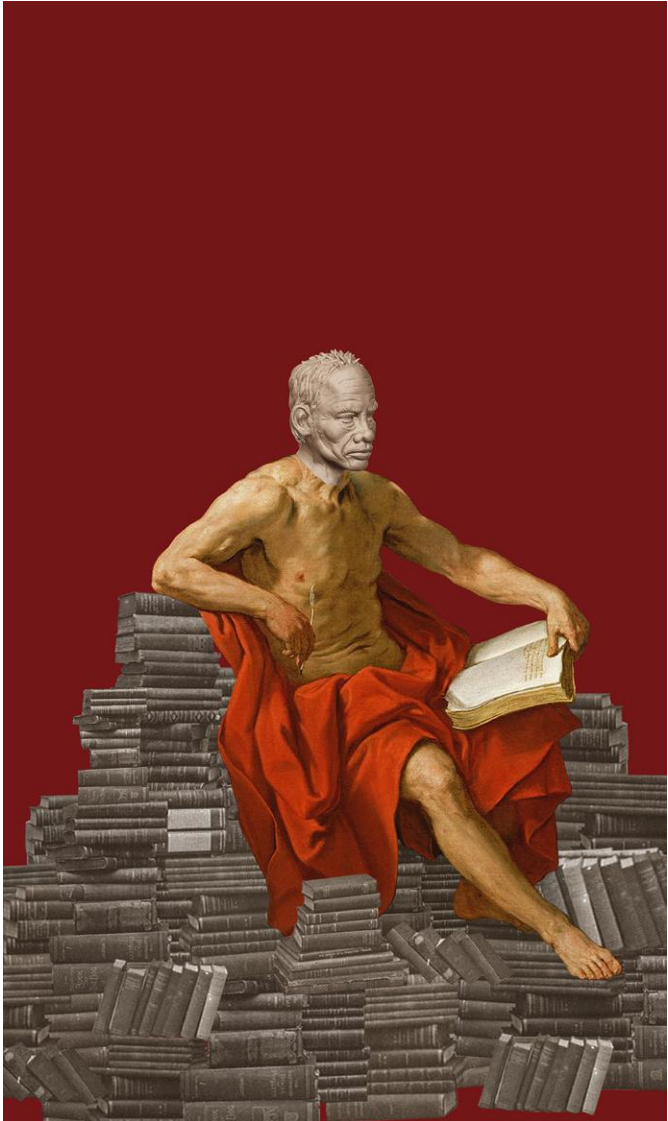






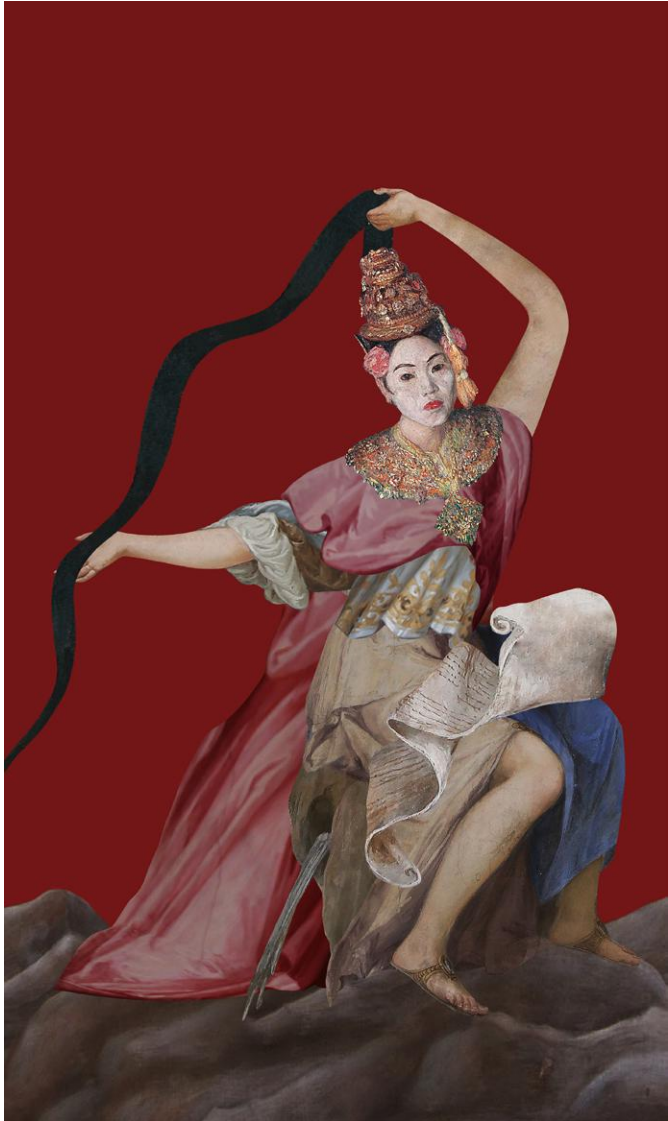












Ku, Kala, Gaia, and the Wandering Mind

Sayan Daengklom

Sayan Daengklom is an art historian from the Department of Art History, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University (Bangkok). After his PhD degree from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), he pursues his research combining art, literature, and philosophy.

His contribution also includes translation from French to Thai.

Ku

Beginning with the sun. The Sun.
But the Sun, the Two Suns?
The grand paradigm, along with its
consequence. Predictable.

We will travel soon. By boat.

I'm still at the airport, waiting schedule
on screen. The sun is outside. Already.

"ku" (verb) :

invent stories, distort, falsify, lie.

Supposed to come from K.S.R. Kularb,

historical figure who modified texts,
stories, histories.

I "ku", so I invent.

Ku myself as foreigner, stranger.

Forgive for my language. I ku my language,
assume my errors. Foreigner as I'm, as I ku.

Then, do not correct.

I forget: Kularb means also "rose".

The rose who lies that the Sun has its twin.
Where will it go? Everywhere, nowhere,
in my world or in "their world"?
When? When? When?

The Wanderer

(C.D. Friedrich)

I ku : the guy looks down beneath the fog, cloud, admiring the old image of Bangkok during its transformation. Bangkok blurred into a countryside. Strange observer, with his strange costume. Please turn around so that I see your face. No, stay as you are. I need to falsify your expression. To invent what you see. Let my "ku" continue in this time changing. Ah! I see, you are *Rückenfigur*. Face absent.

Only back offered.

You wander? Ahead to where? Till Siam.
Can you struggle against the fog, the cloud?
Can you bear the Sun?

Ku, Kala, Gaia : mythomania, mythology, myth, mask, mystic.
Always telling behind. Blind message.
The face is out, the back faces other faces.
The world becomes theatre since the beginning.
Demythologize our place, let see if you mask fits their world.

Grand narrative and micro narrative. Hostile division.
Mixture is better? which one is more ideologically founded?
Rhetoric question or naive one?
Where is your place in their world? Don't know.
Just trust me. I am foreigner since the sunset. A rosy sun,
a sunny rose.

Haiku. 1 *ku*
Tentative 1:

*A rosy sunrise
with smile of wanderer
music of the time*

Meiku done

My flight is on time. Gate 31. Boarding 8.50 am.
I ku, surrounded by tourists. Where am I?
At the airport or at the "waterport"?
The Sun did not come with the Wanderer at
the "waterport". He comes with fog and cloud,
waiting for embarkation. He arrives or departs?
A royal commoner who goes everywhere.
See nowhere.

I hear the voice

“...Please watch your
step.”

Repetitive melody. But the siren announces
the departure of the boat. Imminent.
They have to wander, officially.
To see the world. Bring the modernity home.
As if the modernization has its first condition:
to invent oneself as foreigner. Foreigners since then.
Foreigners from the land of the two Suns.
I ku.

Haiku. 1 ku
Tentative 2:

I ku haiku done
Shame, shy, lie, under the sun
Eclipse of the midst

Kala

She cries. Maybe too many foreigners. Maybe too much sunshine. She wants to swallow herself, maybe.

Horrifying. The face looks like Medusa.

Hybrid invention of mythology. Monster.

Horrific. Stunning. Deity somehow. Deity of time, Kala.

The Angel will come? The foreign angel will come to destroy History, or to reinvent it?

What if ouroboros - snake or dragon, choose one, or both - intervenes? The circle that consumes itself. And the Sun? Obsession, obviously.

Air-condition is not too cold.

It's time to cross the time. Bringing my time to another place. Modifying my place into another kind of time.



Foreigner, foreigner, foreigner. I ku myself, my ego. Consumed by Kala, absorbed by ouroboros, petrified by Medusa.

Then she did not cry anymore. Thank you, Angel. Remerciement à la rose. I invent "I ku".

l'entracte



Grand narrative : European splendor and its romantic icon
wandering through the fog. Big ship.

Micro narrative : small boat. Domestic flight. And
archaeological ruins. Nostalgic pictures of
the old time, savage mind.

Bricolage obligé. Collage obligé: ruins in
everywhere, either grand or micro
narrative. Ruins in romantic painting,
Siamese ruins of the past.

Blend them, intertwine them, making
with what you have in hand, then you will
see the world of the *Pensée sauvage*.

Modernity is savage. (Merci Lévi-Strauss.
Why didn't you come explore our place?)

PS: The Wanderer whispers: (he doesn't
understand why two distinct narratives).

I whisper in return with my accent:

(Please consult the Sun)

Origami

Modernity from
outside and old regime within
our place. Definition belongs to who believes
the sun. Travelling includes perception: we saw
and we were seen. Seeing is politics, looking is
ideology. Or vice versa.

I wonder, I wander, if what they see sees them.
They come to find modernity or to reaffirm their old
modernity? Never known. Were they wet by culture choc?
Bangkok as Venice of the East. Image. Metaphor.

Hybridity. Fragment.

Cross-culture.

Time^e weaving. Dispersion. Frankenstein effect.
Ku : collage. Deconstruction. Not a complete sentence.
Word-word, phrase-phrase.
Heteroclitite. Discordance. Multi views. Monsters.
Encyclopedia. Collection. Bizarre. Trace. Memory.
Falsify, *encore*? Toujours. ต่อ - ติด - ปะ - แต่ง - เติม -
J'en peux plus. I'm done. The trip has no transit,
continue *per favore*.



I lost my notes. Have to ku my memory.

Something like: *"Waiting for medical consult, I do an origami.*

A boat. A common boat, but long. -

"It will cross the ocean till canal of Venice?",

asked the doctor - Too small, work of paper,

I said. - The storm will help. - And my health? -

Do exercises: climb mountain, swallow yourself,

embark in a paper boat, behold your old time. -

I need to be modern. - But you are stranger,

stranger everywhere. - Either in my place

or in their world."

The queue numbers are twin: 114, 411.

Long, quite long waiting.

Objet a

Otherness. Alterity. Freak show.
The other defines our desire.
Objet a, in psychoanalytical
language. Desire of curiosity,
visual curiosity. Keen to know
by seeing. Or just curiosity.
Modernity doesn't appear when
travelling to other land. It's evident
when difference perceived, sensed, when the gap
underlined, and the void unavoidable.

Also when the same sun betrays
its twin. The ruins reconnect
memory not with the past, but with
the present existence,
our breathe. All is freak,
even our body. Alterity is inside,
beneath the skin. Original.
Exotic in two ways. Their world is
never situated outside, but
from our place. Alterity is a kind of
"ku" ness, word invented, that states
our *étrangeté* within everywhere.
Can you normalize yourself without wandering?

Dear wanderers,

your backs seem clearer than your face. What are you looking in their world within your mind? Your costume is extraordinary. Did you climb the mountain? On the way, did you meet him, that Wanderer above the sea of fog, he has climbed since 1818 approximatively? Maybe he jumped already into the void, to see the two suns. Maybe he arrived at Siam from that mountain. Anonymous. Without face, only the face of time telling the old days of Siam.

Stranger in your own country. Does it mean
your own country is also strange to you since then?

Different time, different mind, different perception.
They have to wander, officially.

It's cold. A monk next to me. Lucky with his saffron cloth
against cold air. People talk loudly. I'm tired.

Gaia

collage : memory
reconciled,
composite memory,
confusion, borrow with
return uncertain,
recycle, cycle, another face
of Kala so. Face of time = collage.

The opposite of *Rückenfigur*?

Its twin. The two Suns,
the two sons of Dharaṇī, maybe.

As Mother Earth, Asian Dharaṇī and
Greek Gaia are *Doppelgänger*. I ku.

The Wanderer at the top is manly defined. Dharaṇī,
by contrast, is the Earth goddess. Not deity, but he seems
as high as the sun. Not wanderer, but she is everywhere (stranger. stranger).
Above the sea of fog, does he see the ground in the valley?
Image of one of the 4 elements, does she sense the air, and the two others?
What if the Wanderer is a man on ground? What if Dharaṇī stands on
the mountain peak? I ku: the water split from her hair will become a sea of fog,
and the costume of the Wanderer will get dust. He will be unstable, destabilized.
She will contemplate the two suns through the massive fog.

O Earth, witness their metamorphosis, otherwise their modernization.
O Wanderer, twist your hair so that the fog dissipates.

Did they ever wander, Dharaṇī and Gaia?
Wandering and wondering as foreigners on their own grounds.
Everywhere, in their world, our place.



Chitti Kasemkitvatana

Chitti Kasemkitvatana (born in 1969, Bangkok) is a Bangkok-based artist, independent curator and educator. His methodology relies on research-based art practice that relates to the use of archival fragments and spatial practice. Applying the new materialist lens, he focuses on entangled ideas in sociocultural history, especially on the moment in which various spheres become “porous”. His artistic operation involves transmission of collective memories via object-device and conversion of data that entails an active process of construction of time in the society. It is to study the convergence of things - in the form of conversation, collision, as well as diffraction. A recipient of the 22nd Silpa Bhirasri Creativity Grants in 2023 and DAAD Artist-in-Berlin Programme in 2014, Kasemkitvatana's work has been shown both in national and international institutions such as The Art Centre Silpakorn University, Bangkok; Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei; Centre Pompidou, Paris; daadgalerie, Berlin; CEAAC, Strasbourg; Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou; Le Plateau, Paris; Art in General, New York; Succession, Vienna; CAPC, Bordeaux and PS1, New York. His recent exhibitions include Thailand Biennale, Chiang Rai (2023), Bangkok Art Biennale (2022), The Tenebrous Spiral Staircase of the - (Gallery VER, 2021) and Stories We Tell To Scare Ourselves With (MOCA Taipei, 2019).

Nakrob Moonmanas

Nakrob Moonmanas (born in 1990, Bangkok) is a visual artist based in Bangkok, primarily working with the medium of collage. He graduated from Thai literature studies at Chulalongkorn University. His focus centers on exploring the historical memories of Thai visual arts and cultures. Moonmanas endeavours to unveil, play with, and question these aspects in various dimensions. By delving into pictorial archives spanning multiple times and places, his artworks come to life through the juxtaposition of local and exotic fragments of history and visual culture. Infused with a contemporary aesthetic, this amalgamation creates an alternative narrative, prompting a reexamination of the past and inviting viewers to explore and assess once again topics they are almost familiar with. Moonmanas's recent work has been shown at various institutes, such as the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre, Warin Lab Contemporary, Jim Thompson Art Center in Bangkok and Mizuma Gallery in Singapore. From 2020 to 2021, Moonmanas was a laureate of the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. His artist residency in Paris was supported by the Institut français and the Embassy of France in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2022, Moonmanas was one of the artists of the Bangkok Art Biennale.

Published on the occasion of the presentation of
Our Place in Their World in The Spirits Of Maritime Crossing,
a Collateral Event of the 60th La Biennale di Venezia,
at Palazzo Smith Mangilli Valmarana,
20 April - 24 November 2024.

The Spirits of Maritime Crossing, a Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, showcases a constellation of artworks from Southeast Asia reflecting upon cultural flows and moving water as metaphors of unexplored ocean and territories. The featured artworks range from paintings, and sculptures to mixed media works and video installations. The Spirits of Maritime Crossing, curated by Prof. Dr. Apinan Poshyananda, highlights themes of displacement, diaspora, colonialism, and hybrids of diverse cultures across Southeast Asia with a particular emphasis on symbolism of water and maritime crossings. More information on smc.bkkartbiennale.com.

Our Place in Their World (2024)

Chitti Kasemkitvatana and Nakrob Moonmanas
2 channels moving-image installation (colour, sound, 5.04 minutes)
Dimension variable
Commissioned by Bangkok Art Biennale Foundation

Online platform

[instagram.com/ourplaceintheirworld](https://www.instagram.com/ourplaceintheirworld)

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Score : Pradit Saengkrai

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Ebook

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Chitti Kaseemkivatana + Nakroob Moommanas

The Spirits of Maritime Crossing
A Collateral Event of the 60th La Biennale di Venezia