

REPORT

ASIATOPIA 13/2011
International Performance Art

23 Nov. - 11 Dec. 2011

Bangkok - Chinagmai - Korat

“Eartheffect โลกกระเทือน”

For
Norbert Klassen
Great Artist, Great Friend



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du Canada

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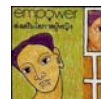
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Co-curators:

Chumpon Apisuk
Vasan Sitthiket

Organizing Committee:

Padungsak Kotchasumrong.....Festival Director
Noppawan Sirivejkul.....Manager
Chantawipa Apisuk.....Administration
Paisan Plienbangchang.....Committee
Mongkol Plienbangchang.....Committee
Chakkrit Chimnok.....Committee / Chiangmai
Pichet Rukgumjon.....Committee / Korat
Jeerasak KarawiwatanaCommittee / Korat

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And many friends of Asiatopia

Video Editing

Paisan Plienbangchang

Thank you
Kosit Chantratip
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Ferruca

CNX
CMU Art Center
Media Art & Design Department of CMU
Hug Lanna Group and Khiew Souy Hom
So-Ho Network
Gub Fai Community Theatre Group
Da Daad Steak Jimkajaew, Korat
Panjadara Hotel, Korat
Klang Center Plaza, Korat

Artists:

Andrea Pagnes & Verena Stenke (Italian-German)
Boonsong Rodthab (Thailand)
Chakkrit Chimnok (Thailand)
Chumpon Apisuk (Thailand)
Francis O'Shaughnessy & Sara Letourneau (Canada)
Jacques Van Poppel (The Netherland)
Jittima Pholsawake (Thailand)
Moohye (Korea)
Mok Chiuyu (Hong Kong)
Mongkol Plienbangchang (Thailand)
Nopawan Sirivejkul (Thailand)
Padungsak Kotchasamrong (Thailand)
Paisan Plienbangchang (Thailand)
Pascale Grau (Swiss)
Pattree Chimnok (Thailand)
Pepertua Rodrigez (Chile)
Richard Martel (Canada)
Raffaello Somazzi (Swiss/Korat)
Sitthikan O-techadilok (Thailand)
Smitchai Lertanan (Thailand)
Suraphol Panyawacheera (Thailand)
Vasan Sitthiket (Thailand)

“Eartheffect โลกระเทือน”

Year 2010-2011

Earth quake shook Heiti, Chili, New Zealand, Japan.

The tear of the sea shredded Japan in our very eyes.

Then nuclear radiation spells the air and water and products of the earth.

Mud slides after off-seasonal heavy rain hit southern Thailand
destroyed many villages and damage the region infrastructure...

In Northern Burma many villages and hundreds of lives were
destroyed by earth quake, while we've never heard of such lost..!

This Eartheffect is of nature...

But in the other Eartheffect...

People uprising in Tansania followed by Egyptians, which change the government.

Today people's call for change echoing in Libya, Yemen, Syria and Jordan and etc...

And here... in Thailand

The politic of voicing untruth,

Politic of power of lies and corruptions.

How long this would let go on?...

.....

Throughout the time we communicating and responded to each other, visiting artists and host artists...

June 2011: the four major rivers in the northern region overflow their bank, flooded villages to district to cities. The flood comes and goes fast, the water rose high as ever, following land slides, mountain collapsed at Nam Paad District in Udtaradit, several villages and houses were buried in mud water.

We are as same as many other people in Bangkok and vicinities – millions – were overwhelm with Parliament dissolves news, the new election is to follow in July. Water is far from reaching, while the smoke of Thailand's hot-politic of 2011 is still warm.

We write to each other about our worried of political climate, which still clear in our memories of 2008 Bangkok airport seized.

However, after the election was over, the political climate on streets was calming down. Suddenly second fast flood hit the western part of northern region again, Maesai, Maesod, Chiangmai ...! Then the flow of water from north to lower central plain becoming topic of the days. We followed the reports on water level in 3 major dams in the north, we have encounter storm and another storms. The medias began to discuss about how Japan fights with disasters. The news and discussion for people to prepare for emergency situation did not help the government to led the preparation. There were no responses from government, as if there were no problems.

Later on the government jumped into the flood at Bangrakam district in upper central plain. But to propagate the new political model until Bangrakam went underwater for the next 5 months.

The situation risen, with high water from the north and northeastern region flown to central plain, from province to provinces until mid-September, that the government has completely failed to do anything to the situation – but let the water flow – let the people to face it alone!

Until October, when our discuaaion over e-mail changed from politic to flood – we the Bangkokian began to realize that the water is coming – the worse flood ever...in Bangkok.

Asiatopia organizing committee decided on 5th November, that we cannot wait until the airport were seized by flood, and begun to see other possibilities – Chiangmai international airport will continue to open despite flood in Bangkok. The flood report to artists was intensified.

5th November the Bangkok Art & Culture Center, our major partner, agreed to move Asiatopia out of Bangkok, we thank BACC.

Sent: Saturday, November 05, 2011 5:48 PM

Subject: RE: Asiatopia 13 is on

Dear Asiatopia Colleagues,

We decided to move ASIATOPIA 13/2011 to Chiangmai and extending the program in Chiangmai from 25 Nov. - 4 Dec.....

“ASIA TOPIA ESCAPES FLOOD IN BANGKOK TO CHIANGMAI”



Chumpon Apisuk & Vasan Sitthiket (with Guitar) co-curator of Asiatopia 13 welcome artists at Sud Sanaen Restaurant & Pub in Chiangmai 24/11/2011

When we decided to move the festival from Bangkok to Chiangmai, the program in Chiangmai has already set for the first week of December. The program was in cooperation with many local organizations and Chiangmai municipal government. So it is better to hold a week of Bangkok program before Chiangmai program. That means artists will perform in 2 events in the same city. However, thanks to Chiangmai University Art Center and Media & Design Department for their cooperation and kindly provide the space for the week, as well as 2 artists workshops.



At the welcoming night: Vasan Sitthiket Zai Kunning และ Jacques van Poppel



Ricard Martel, Chakkrit Chimnok and Jacques van Poppel

Tableau Vivant



Tableau Vivant of **นางพระยาพนาถ God of Water** was the result of the working process between Pascale Grau (Swiss) and 10 art students (Chiangmai U., Chulalongkorn U. and Bangkok U. from Bangkok). At the workshop students learned about the history of performance art and how to prepare the work. At this Tableau Vivant workshop students brought images that means to them to discuss in the group. The photo of American soldiers holding big long fish from Meakong river they caught in 1973 in Laos, was chosen to be re-enacted as the title of the photo stated God of Water or Naga, which was refer to local believes and the Maekong river is still a river of Naga until today.



This original photo took 27 June 1973, when US military bases stationed in Laos. They caught one big fish, which charatorized Naga as Laotians believe. The photo title Queen of water or Naga Queen, the fish length was 7.80 meters.

Moreover, the Naga existing though is a myth, however, the fact behind this picture are the presents of American soldiers in the regional liberation war. There are many angles in this pictures although the myth about only one of those soldiers in this group photo survive the war to tell this story.



Street Action



Street Action is a group intervention in public space by **Richard Martel(Quebec)** the normal dress for ceremonial with face mask hood that turn the dress in to peculiar uniform. Each in the group carry toilet pump-stick and hold them as military men hold machine guns. However, the parade of white dress group marching on the street, reminding people about the political rally of people in certain colour shirts – red shirt and yellow shirt. For many interpretation of face mask hood – some refer to thieves, terrorists, though in theory the mask has one way take out individual self, but to become a group (the purpose of uniformity) The toilet gears for Thai people at the time refer to problem of flood in Bangkok, as it relate to flooded toilet.



For Asiatopia, the street action brought Asiatopia out to the street, interacting with people without interfering their daily activities. However, several people in the public ask if we want donation to help the flood people in Bangkok.

Other performances

Flood

Vasan Sitthiket make use of a wreck boat lie in the art center lawn to be his Noah. It was not clear whether he wants to build a new Noah Arc, but instead he asked audience to help make paper boats, and lit candles inside them. Although the international flag he raised, as he said names of countries recently effected by natural disaster, Japan, Chile, New Zealand, etc... may be clear enough that he see flood situation in Thailand today, is part of global damaging.

However, the second piece of Vasan, in the park was much more dynamic, in his new subject – panda. The piece refered to Pandas in Chiangmai Zoo, which he said it has been caged against animal freedom, and this is considering cruel to animal.

Chumpon Apisuk told the audience that caged ducks in a farm were drown in the flood. He shouted “lose duck doesn’t drown” while dragging a medal bucket full of water around. His body was wraped with duck feathers, and use his head pushing another bow of water, which dripped from the bottle attached to his head.

His work slightly changed when he did the second time in the park. He said he dedicate this piece to a just passed away swiss artist Norbert Klassen. Chumpon covered his face and hands with ducks feathers, holding bows full of water in both hands. he asked the audience to place lit candles on the rim of each bow. Then he led the audience in procession along the walk way in the park.

Chumpon made another piece with ducks feathers in Korat, where he wrapped his body with ducks feather and roll across the room up the audience seating ramp. At the end he walked in feathers meditatively holding traditional chimes very close to each other. The rhythm of his body movement was slow, and somehow moved the chimes to break the silence.

Padungsak Kotchasamrong, another performer who reflect in his work on the issue of flood. He used small gas blower to break large glass bow filled with ice, until the bow broke and melted ice water slowly move down along the painted paper he use as bridge to connect the ice bow and the floor. The piece was simple but intense in the process of hot frame hit the iced bow.

Moohye a young woman artist from Korea. Though her works recently dealt with issue of woman position in the men’s world. But in Thailand she choose to work on a bird eye view of flood in Thailand. Places paper boats in circle at the art center lawn, while the audience watch from the roof top. She moved crawled on her back circle around the paper boats, while spraying water from water host to the boats.





But in the second performance in the park, she set up a Korean massage service in front of the Thai massage service in the park.

Jittima Pholsawake reflecting to the nuclear power of destruction and cleaning a fish with own saliva. This political comment action responded to the direction of Thailand energy policy – the clean nuclear energy as against fossil energy and carbon foot print era.



Mongkol Plienbangchang works was about our politic which was only play lip service about the word "Harmony" and his action slowly change the word to "Hurt".



Chakkrit Chimnok dressed as Madam her – like a TV cooking program, he/she showed the audience how to prepare food from donated can food in survival bag, government gave to flood victims. A sack of rice, can fish,



instant noodles, fish sauce, sugar, cooking oil and salt were his/her materials. He cleverly twisted the audience in his talk like story telling during cooking, by bringing the audience to



discuss with him on consumerism, how wonderful Thai food and many ways which Thai can make food. His work could be seen as a performance as well as comedy.

Relationship & Gender Issue

Perpetua Rodriguez (Chile) made plastic flower rain in three colours, resemble the colours in Thailand's flag. Three water filled ritual cup. The piece refer to flood water spilled by the foot, and flow over the flower rains in three colours. Though this piece of Rodriguez seems too simple than most of her works. But it was appreciated by many Thai audience, who felt that she has express her sympathy to Thai people.



But in her work at Suan Buak Haad Park, she gained more confidence with the environment in Chiangmai, and staged the work that she usually takes on. With the Christian legend, apple was used to emphasis men & women, she cut her palm and let the blood drop slowly to the cut apples, as to question about brother & Sisterhood.



Rodriguez performance in Korat challenged the audience to questions the relationship between man and woman, by tying a rope around her neck in connecting to a random selected from the audience – a man. Her naked body moved slowly leading a man in full dress cross the dimly lit hall to the tightly space under the stage. "...The piece pivots on an historicising of performance art, referencing *Rope Piece (1983/84)* by Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh in which the two were tied together for one year. Rodriguez's piece acted as a reminder of the important role Asian artists have played in developing performance art..." (Realtimeart February 2012)

Rodriguez works are always question the status of women in relationship to men, society, politic.



Verena Stenge & Andre Pagnes a dual performer performs the preciously fragile of their relationship (rather for women & men in general). Their works based on body movement in the form of creative dance. Strong with dramatic movement and body gesture, theatrical combination, with sensitive materials like fire, broken glass, and strong lighting. The outer and the inner of relationship.





Patree Chimnok wanted to break all problems that she could feel in Thai society, by putting them in words on the balloon filled with reddish water. She slowly breaks each balloon on her head and lets red water run through her whole body. At the end she held a pig head used for worshipping in traditional Thai-Chinese practices.



Nopawan Sirivejkul is one of a handful of Thai women performers who try to open up issues of gender politics in Thai art. In her work she uses flowers to emphasize the traditional belief that women are flowers, and her strength is compared to sewing thread. Her works hide discourse in materials she uses, and how she places the materials which on the other hand her body becomes tools rather than content.

Francis O'Shaunnessey and Sara Letourneau (Quebec) are not specifically focused on men-women relationships, but their own relationship as in work and as in lives. They create materials that would work together as conflict as well as compliment each other. Though many times their combination works spontaneously, as in response to situation.



Consumerism - Autonomism

Consumerism and nationalism in food were stated in Chakkrit's parody and Mok Chiuyu (Hong Kong) who followed with similar approach. Their anti-performance, anti-aesthetic, and emphasis on nationalism in food, however, Mok seems to be more political, while Chakkrit was more social. They both created dialogue between people in the audience and performer, as well as helping shape the performances.

Mok Chiuyu (Hong Kong) started with Chinese tea with Chinese crackers served to the audience, following with Thai spicy fish, which he criticized as too spicy and colorless. Chakkrit/Madam joined in the tasting part of Mok's food theory as if they had



prepare to work together before hand.



Boonsong Rodtup a young Thai artist participated the first time at international festival. He created three pieces of performances in three different location. His first performance was series of actions using his top-boots sculptures as main materials. In the park his work was related to guessing game, the sense of being left alone and waiting with uncertainty. Another piece of Boonsong in Korat was about blood dripping out of lotus flowers, which is a very strong statement in Thai Buddhist society.

Paisan Plienbangchang created the most memorable works in Korat. The work was combination of strong continuous movement, precised actions, good transition from one action to next. The piece he dedicated to Norbert Klassen a great swiss performer who passed away on the day of the opening of Asiatopia Festival this year.

While the other two works of Paisan in Chiangmai were combinations of strong words, swear words, which reflected to the use of force by the power that be in Thailand.

Smitchai Lertanan one of the three young generation from Chiangmai. His works was responded to the way society control individual behaviors by rules of traditions and morality, and he wants to work against these. Another piece of his work in the park, he cut foamica in a form of a wing at Thailand's democracy monument, and try to use it as a boat to row across the small lake in the park. However, at the end the foamica wing of democracy broke into pieces, even before reaching the other side of the lake.



Suthigun O-Techadilok works about earth quake and in relation to the feeling of losing faith. Suthigun spent long time to prepare his work, by making small cramic pieces which will be destroy at the end.





A group work by **Jittima Pholsawake, Patree Chimnok and Chakkrit Chimnok**, was a try-out by the artists, after spending time together finding local materials, they try to combine their responsive action to each of their own materials. They slowly built up their togetherness and try to make their performance into one unity piece. This is a very exciting experimentation.

Philosophy, Thought, and Life

Jacques van Poppel one of the best story teller performer who paradoxically shift a story from one to another like collage. He mixed his thought and stories with images, music like they are not together. He sometimes imitate other artists and make fun of his friends the audience, the technicians. He often drink beer and smoke cigarettes during his performance because he cannot do anymore in real life.

In Chiangmai **Jacques** playfully teased a translator, make her mis-interpret his story, he jumps from technical error to immigration officers, classical music where he could play drum along, his wife images, like they are all mistake.

In his idea Jacques said art should be fun, but not fantasy or nonsense, however, many things in our real lives do not make sense.

Pascale Grau (Swiss) perform a solo piece in the park, she wore night dress with reversed wig look like a person walk backward. She sang old sweet love songs to the audience and invite them to interact with her. Some dance with her while most people listen to her beautiful voice.

This is her real intimate style of performance, closing the gap between being together and art.

In her talk she suggested that one of the aspect of performance art is try to bring art closer to our daily activities, art should not be private property but being part of lives.



What we learn from ASIATOPIA 13:

What we have achieved? And how we cultivate our achievement?

1. Because of our website has been collapsed and we could not re-construct it on time. This year we tried to use facebook as a channel to connect with our fan. There were more than 200 people visited regularly and following our activities. Many expressed disappointing that we could not hold event in Bangkok. But there were several traveled from Bangkok to see Asiatopia in Chiangmai and Korat.
2. There were 3 art students from Bangkok, traveled 700 km from Bangkok to participate in Asiatopia workshops, as well as took part in group performance with Pascal Grau and Richard Martel. This is encouraging that there are now many young students would like to know more about performance art.
3. It is also interesting when we see many young students came to see performances with a study note book and busy write down what they saw. When asked one of the girl said to make school report. The college they attended just open a course on contemporary art study, and the subject they did was performance art. This shows how important the institution has in developing the art practice. Asiatopia has been advocate for performance in Thailand since 1998, and we begin to hear that the art school just started to include performance art as a subject, in 2011.
4. In positive side, the event in Chiangmai this year was in fact in cooperated with many local organization, who put themselves together as a "Cultural Network". They agreed to help each other organizing event in the traditional way, when community work together to hold city event together. The local network has slowly recognized by local businesses and get small support, mostly in kind; restaurants in Chiangmai and Korat held special reception for artists, hotels in Korat gave special discount to our artists, also local TV channel put us on the program.
5. The development of Thai performers has been clearly progress, since many of us has been exposed in many international festivals. Regional exchange has been active lately especially since 2010, when artists exchange take place in Singapore, Bangkok, Manila as well as in Yangon, firther more in Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, where artists in the region have more opportunity to work together and learn from each other.
6. However, the local support to contemporary art has been decline, due to the government policy, that only focuses in expanding local infrastructure like museum and art center. The lack of long term vision and support for local artists to go abroad is eventually discouraging for new development.