Art in Southeast Asia

Glimpses into the future

The artists of Southeast Asia are creating remarkable works of art as they face the new social and cultural realities of the nineties and search for their own modes of expression. These forms of expression are unique in Southeast Asia and differ significantly from American, European, or Japanese contemporary art. In these countries, the position of the artists and art itself seems to be different from that in the West or Japan. Many of the artists produce work rooted in the life of the community, and their artistic investigations often have what might be called a moralistic tendency. Naturally, this is reflected in the formal aspects of their work.

A number of exhibitions introducing the art of Asia have been held in Japan in recent years. Art in Southeast Asia is designed to provide a comprehensive presentation of the contemporary art of this area, including painting and installations with strongly local characteristics rather than the more sophisticated forms of expression seen in the contemporary art of the West and Japan. This exhibition focuses on the fundamental role of art and artists demonstrated by the current art of five Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The exhibition will include 80 works, some of them made especially for this exhibition, by 17 individuals or groups representing these countries, grouped under three headings:

Crossroads of Culture
Southeast Asia is the site of great cultural diversity. Traditional indigenous cultures exist side by side with remnants of Western colonial cultures and cultural influences from India and China brought in by immigrants. More recently deep inland roads have been made by the urban consumer culture of the United States as well as a subculture of Japanese cartoons and popular music, accelerating the process of diversification. Out of the cross-casing of these varied cultural paths, the hybrid culture is taking form.

Artists are seeking their own cultural identity in this environment, referring to the cultures of the specific ethnic groups to which they belong or actively incorporating the new hybrid culture as their own.

Changes in feudal systems of values have led to changes in the position of women in society. For women artists, exploring the issue of identity, inevitably entails an inquiry into the meaning of being a woman. Southeast Asian women are examining this issue seriously but without becoming radical.

Artists: Nuncalucio Alvarado (the Philippines), Arahamaian (Indonesia), Daddg Chitharano (Indonesia), Moelyono (Indonesia), Songgawa (the Philippines), Semaar Siahhan (Indonesia).

Social Statement
The rush to modernize in Southeast Asia has brought phenomenal economic growth, but with an inevitable shadow side. A building boom has left the high-rise cities bristling with architecture but including traffic-clogging problems, pollution, and rampant, air-pollution, and river-pollution slums. Industrialized in degradant tourism have taken the natural and polluted life in environment and fishing villages. Thuil farming and forests are implemented and protecting humanity. These problem solutions of women, exclusive to Southeast certainly not face in every past Asia. They are today. But that art of the world fact that they are not change from the which Souchet of the reality cannot escape. Tastt Asian artists observing the fact that artists react by attentively, making them change, and active assault on the life of offspring chem's this stance, their scree. Because of portents messages for contains some view it.

Artists: Nuncalucio Alvarado (the Philippines), Arahamaian (Indonesia), Daddg Chitharano (Indonesia), Moelyono (Indonesia), Songgawa (the Philippines), Semaar Siahhan (Indonesia).

The Horn Bill and the Missionary 1996 (Painting)

THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART TOKYO
4-1-1 Mihama Koto-ku
Tokyo 135
Japan
Tel: +81-3-3245411
Fax: +81-3-3245140

HIROSHIMA CITY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
1-1 Piyama-ku,
Hiroshima
Japan
Tel: +81-82-264-1100
Fax: +81-82-264-1198

Spring 1997 • IIAS NEWSLETTER NO12 • 51