

TOKYO: UNTIL 2 JUNE 1997  
HIROSHIMA: 2 AUGUST > 15 SEPTEMBER 1997

# 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.



The Horn Bill and the True Missionary (1996) by Agus Suwage (True Missionary (1996) (Indonesia)

has left the larg with high-rise r cities bristling struggling with architecture but including traffic coving problems, lution, and rampngestion, air-poll-trial development r slums. Indus-tr resulted in degrand tourism have tion of the naturalization and pollu-damaged life in senvironment and fishing villages. Tnall farming and lems in implemere are also prob-protecting humating democracy, venting gender d rights, and pre-raising the social rrimination, and

These problemisition of women. exclusive to Southare certainly not faced in every past Asia. They are today. But that det of the world fact that they are not change the from which Southart of the reality cannot escape. Thast Asian artists observing the rese artists react by attentively, makiiry around them ments, and active assertive state-selves in the life of (involving them- this stance, their ociety. Because of portant messages rtk contains im-view it.

Artists: Nunelucio Alvarado (the Philippines), Arahmaiani (Indone-sia), Dadang Christanto (Indonesia), Moelyono (Indonesia), Sanggawa (the Philippines), Semsar Siahaan (Indonesia). ■

**Asian Art**  
A number of exhib- tions introduc- ing the art of Asia have been held in Japan in recent years. Art in Southeast Asia is de- signed 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: Indo- nesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sing- apore, and Thailand. The exhibi- tion will include 80 works, some of them made especially for this exhibi- tion, by 17 individuals or groups rep- resenting these countries, grouped under three headings

### Crossroads of Culture

Southeast Asia is the site of great cultural diversity. Traditional indig- enous cultures exist side by side with remnants of Western colonial cul- tures and cultural influences from India and China brought in by im- migrants. More recently deep in- roads have been made by the urban consumer culture of the United States as well as a subculture of Japa- nese cartoons and popular music, ac- celerating the process of diversifica- tion. Out of the criss-crossing of these varied cultural paths a new hy- brid culture is taking form.

Artists are seeking their own cul- tural identity in this environment, referring to the cultures of the spe- cific ethnic groups to which they be- long or actively incorporating the new hybrid culture as they create

works of art suited to the present age. The artists introduced here are doing experimental work with a contemporary viewpoint, making use of a broad range of cultural motifs including the mythical heritage of their peoples, religious feelings, implements used in everyday life, and kitsch and folk culture. Not content to be involved in a simple- minded traditionalism implying a return to, or reinterpretation of, traditional artistic techniques, they are creating new forms of art based on the cultural conditions found in the places where they live.

The artists are: Brenda Fajardo (the Philippines), Chandrasekaran (Singapore), Liew Kung Yu (Malay- sia), Montien Boonma (Thailand), Navin Production Co. Ltd. (Thailand)

### The Shifting Region of the 'I'

Individual identity in Southeast Asia is threatened by rapid modern- ization and the huge influx of foreign culture. Older social orders and value systems are breaking down, and individuals previously support- ed by a stable community and family network find themselves cast into a state of uncertainty and confusion. Artists have embarked on a search for personal identity, attempting to bring some stability to a self which is cracked, warped and split.

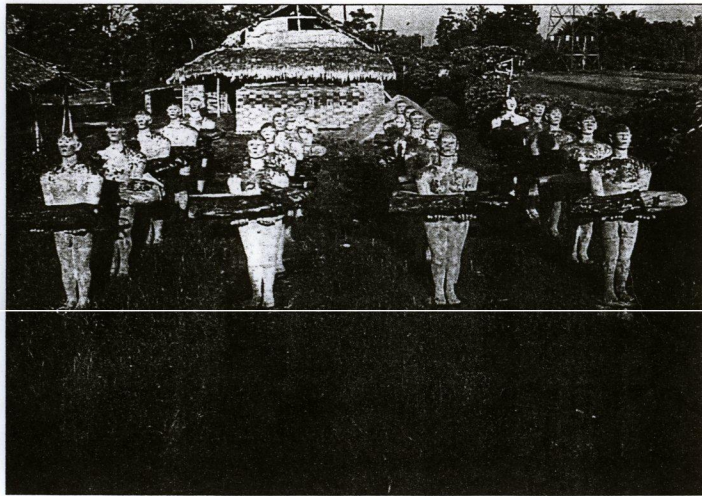
Individual identity is inevitably involved with ethnic identity. For an artist of Chinese extraction, a minor- ity in the multi-ethnic nation of Mal- yasia, there is a close link between the origin and history of his family and his present self.

Changes in feudal systems of val- ues have had led to changes in the position of women in society. For women artists, exploring the issue of identity necessarily entails an in- quiry into the meaning of being a woman. Southeast Asian women are examining this issue seriously but without becoming strident.

Artists: Agus Suwage (Indonesia), Chatchai Puipia (Thailand), Eng Hwee Chu (Malaysia), Imelda Cajipe- Endaya (the Philippines), Pinaree Sanpitak (Thailand), Wong Hoy Che- ong (Malaysia)

### Social Statement

The rush to modernize in South- east Asia has brought phenomenal economic growth, but with an inevi- table shadow side. A building boom



Uncle Pan, from the project 'Pha Khao Mar on Tour' (1997) by the Navin Production Co., Ltd. (Thailand)

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