

SculptureCenter
Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook

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Descartes famously believed that animals were living machines; he was said to beat, torture, and vivisection dogs simply to demonstrate that they had no feelings. He interpreted the sounds emerging from the dog's mouth as mere physical reactions, just the mechanical result of air passing through a windpipe, not indicative of emotional self-expression. According to Descartes and many of his followers, animals were inferior to humans because they lacked the capacity for language.¹ While scientific evidence as well as popular opinion about the emotive actuality and potential of animals has proven that they have inner lives, most do not speak in a language we understand.² And many still suffer abuse by humans.

Women certainly have the ability to speak; yet they have been considered inferior to men in mind and spirit for a long time, in cultures and regions near and far. While notions of equality have been advanced and elaborated in recent decades in many parts of the world, the reality is that many continue to suffer. In relation to gender inequality in the West, we might immediately think of wage disparity: women still earn only 77 cents to the dollar that men earn in the United States, and the Senate just blocked the Paycheck Fairness Act, which was intended to help close this gap.³ Domestic violence and sex trafficking are also huge problems in the U.S.; it is estimated that over 100,000 women are coerced into sexual slavery domestically every year.⁴ As has been discussed in the pioneering work of Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn on the urgency of the plight of many females, exacerbated by globalization, “far more women and girls are shipped into brothels each year in the early twenty-first century than African slaves were shipped in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries—although the overall population was of course far smaller then.”⁵ And if we think globally, women and animals represent the highest proportion of illegally trafficked beings, becoming captives in illicit multibillion-dollar global industries.⁶ Women, across race, religion, and nationality, live with systemic inequities. Daily, frequently unprosecuted, violence against women in places like the United States is enabled by the devaluation of women's speech.⁷ Females have the capacity to protest, but depending on where they are, who is listening, and, further, who believes them?⁸ And what do we make of the speech of other marginalized groups? The mentally ill speak in words, but often unintelligibly and unreliably. Those living in poverty can express themselves, yet, it is safe to say, they are often ignored in most parts of the world. Having deficits in funding and agency, they lack a platform from which to speak—something that could also be said of all the aforementioned examples. And corpses? Well, corpses tend to be completely silent.

Science has proven that dogs are emotional creatures and that they feel pain, forcing us to “reconsider their treatment.”⁹ We have recently begun ascribing an interior world to many living creatures previously thought to be empty vessels or machines. But what else do we not know, and perhaps do not *want* to know about non-human animals, the dead, women, the insane, and the poor? Tackling large questions about cultural hierarchies of sentient beings, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook poetically critiques the construction of knowledge regarding a range of disparate entities linked by “otherness.” Her work asks us, what can we learn by considering women and dogs in relation to one another, perhaps not as exact equals, but in an examination of affinities between the human and non-human? Entering into a dialogue with beings often unrecognized by the mainstream, Rasdjarmrearnsook frequently inserts herself into her work. She—not insignificantly as a woman—takes on the role of mediator, teaching and conversing with Thai villagers, animals, and the dead. Her lessons are couched in questions that are generally met with silence, sometimes an eloquent silence whose meaning we have to take the artist's word for.

The exercise of listening to and giving focused space to corpses is perhaps the most provocative aspect of Rasdjarmrearnsook's exploration. With respect and deference, as well as playfulness, she questions the boundaries between physical and spiritual life and death. In her video *The Class II* (2005), she acknowledges

the inappropriateness of her, as a living person, speaking to the dead about death, a subject they know so much more about. Her conversations with the deceased are not quite like the rituals of Theravada Buddhism—the predominant religion in Thailand—in which monks chant to the departed for several days to ease their transition from this world. The Buddhist ritual presumes that the dead can hear and receive communications from our world, but does not create a space in which they can respond. Rasdjarmreansook, however, has structured the *The Class* series as seminars in which an intellectual and philosophical dialogue takes place. In the classes, the dead speak of the physical world; the artist informs them that autumn is coming or engages them in a more theoretical discourse about the meaning of death. The tone fluctuates from somber to humorous. At times, Rasdjarmreansook's students apparently complain about the heaviness of the subject; they are already dead after all, and would prefer to speak about something lighter—the present moment from which they are excluded. As the professor, Rasdjarmreansook possesses an authority that is intentionally complex, touching on her own social position as a female in the world at large and in Thailand specifically. Though giving corpses the opportunity to speak—using the format of the seminar, more egalitarian and reciprocal than the lecture—as a professor with the agency of the living and the handicap of being a female, she remains implicated within the code of authority and hierarchy.

In some works, Rasdjarmreansook takes a break from verbal communication and joins the corpses in their silence. In *I'm Living* (2002), she cares for a young female corpse, dressing and undressing her. In the *Conversation* (2005) series, we assume that the discussion referred to in the title takes place outside our aural capacities, as Rasdjarmreansook sits with a group of corpses in prolonged silent meditation, interrupted by short periods of song. The durational aspect of these videos is key; the extended periods of time Rasdjarmreansook spends with the dead underscore the performative aspect of her work. The intimacy of the scenes and the absence of an audience are essential to the pieces' psychological impact. The vignettes are highly personal, documenting private experiences. What Rasdjarmreansook might learn of her own subjectivity from intimate familiarity with her subjects—she meets them halfway, or more—she extends to the viewers of her work.

Rasdjarmreansook often enacts binaries, revealing constructions of “otherness” through extreme and oversimplified oppositions. In her *Village and Elsewhere* series of videos and photographs, she invites villagers to analyze and discuss masterpieces, or at least famous artworks, within the broad canon of Western art. From our position as informed viewers, we may view their assessments humorously. The villagers themselves are often laughing too, seeing portrayals of life that do not correlate with their experience or beliefs and finding certain images absurd, or, conversely, relating to images from perspectives far from that of the assumed viewer. In *Village and Elsewhere: Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith Beheading Holofernes, Jeff Koons' Untitled, and Thai Villagers* (2011), a Buddhist monk leading a discussion in the temple about Koons's work speaks to the sexuality on view in an image. Casting the depiction of a threesome in terms of excess and immorality by invoking the third precept of Buddhism, the monk has the entire group repeating after him: Do not commit or engage in adultery. The monk gives an explanation for why the sexualized scene depicted by Koons is bad: the man with more than one woman cannot look after all his wives and, becoming senseless, will engage in violence. He may be right. By decoding the images in the paintings within the temple, which is adorned with symbols from Thailand's highly established and ancient art system, the assembled read the images according to their own values and assumptions. Pitting West against East through the culture of images and art-historical pedagogy, Rasdjarmreansook examines the basic structures of knowledge formation, context, and cultural legibility. The villagers and laborers have little access to

information about Western art, and they see the works completely out of context. Rasdjarmreansook continually thwarts notions of single readings and privileged expertise. However, what appears to be a straightforward East/West divide collapses into myriad questions about perceived notions of power and the nuanced role of education, culture, and class in the viewing and interpretation of art and images.

The interrogation of positions of authority and verbal fluency is central to Rasdjarmreansook's work. This line of thinking connects to many “ecofeminist”¹⁰ critiques that attempt to break down hierarchies of being to reveal the pernicious implications of human exceptionalism, such as Karen Davis's essay “Thinking like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection”:

*I have been impressed by the realization that a few men have virtually “decided” what experiences count and even exist in the world. The language of Western science—the reigning construct of male hegemony—precludes the ability to express the experiential realities it talks about. Virtually all the actual experiences of this world, expressed through the manifest and mysterious characteristics of all the different beings, are unrepresented in the stainless steel edicts of experts. Where is the voice of the voiceless in the scientific literature, including the literature of environmental ethics?*¹¹

A passionate discourse that attributes to farm animals qualities that challenge their relegation to the status of the most unintelligent and unfeeling of all could easily be dismissed as anthropomorphizing. Davis uses her personal experience, however, to argue that links across species in how they respond to the abuse of power are real:

*If women feel bludgeoned by this oppressive mentality, how must animals be affected by it? Let us consider not only the pain that we impose on them, but the moral ecology within which we inflict it—the belittling sniggering atmosphere of pompous hatred and contempt that we emanate, in which countless billions of beings are forced to live. This moral ecology is as distinctive a human contribution to the range of experiences in the world as anything else that our species has conferred.*¹²

Dogs appear regularly in Rasdjarmreansook's more recent works, embodying vitality for her. In her daily life, the artist cares for strays, feeding them at her workplace, Chiang Mai University, and keeping several in her home. Like Davis, Rasdjarmreansook flirts at times with anthropomorphization, using poetics to open a window into the lives of her “companion species.”¹³ As in her work with corpses, she sides with her subjects, forging subjective alliances in shared isolation. The intimacy she keeps with the dogs—in *The Treachery of the Moon* (2012), they sit with her watching Thai soap operas interspersed with violent news footage, and in *Pray, bless us with rice and curry* (2012), they eat with her—ventures into Donna Haraway's notion of “becoming worldly,” a revision of the entanglement of “being with” animals that Jacques Derrida explores in *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*.¹⁴

The dog has particular connotations in Thailand. Stray dogs are ubiquitous in urban centers and villages, and in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, monks must share food with them.¹⁵ Although dogs have this unique status through religious tradition, they are still considered inferior beings: the word for animal, *sat*, is used as an insult, and the word for dog, *maa*, is also used to denigrate people of various races and classes.¹⁶ What does it mean for

Rasdjarmreansook to join the dogs? And what does it mean for her to invite them to watch TV, visit the beach, or attend a dinner party with her?

“Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? How is ‘becoming with’ a practice of becoming worldly?,” Donna Haraway asks. Haraway “becomes with” dogs, arguing that “touch ramifies and shapes accountability.”¹⁷ Because we travel with other species, whether we acknowledge it or not, we are intertwined in a relationship of becoming with them. Our actions affect them and theirs affect us. To become worldly, we must understand our inexorable entanglement with a soup of genomes, microorganisms, and other species.¹⁸ Rasdjarmreansook’s empathetic alliance with Thai street dogs operates within a specific cultural register, yet it expands into a larger ethical arena. As Derrida notes, the “epoch” of philosophy from Descartes on is comprised of men who behave as if “they themselves had never been looked at, and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them.” The gendered history of the philosophical and scientific assessment of non-human animals is worth mentioning when considering the construction of hierarchies of being.

In his text, Derrida questions the human ability, and perhaps will, to distinguish a response from a reaction.¹⁹ The interest in listening to cues outside narrowly defined human experience is key to Rasdjarmreansook’s work. Momentarily suspending disbelief, she performs the possibility of hearing, speaking, and being with entities in ways that challenge limited definitions of their capacities. By playing professor, she self-reflexively underscores the theaters in which speech is directed toward perceived subordinates. By being with dogs, she entwines her personal story with theirs.

In a new series of sculptures, Rasdjarmreansook has collected hair from twenty-one of the dogs she cares for in her home, at the university, and at various other locations in the Chiang Mai. She has delicately placed the hair into individual jars, each containing a small photograph of the dog and titled after her or him. Creating a sort of memento, Rasdjarmreansook elevates the dogs to a status closer to that of family members than pets (admittedly, in the United States, this isn’t such a strange leap). In this body of work, she examines the power relations between humans and non-human animals in their togetherness, and acknowledges her constructions. Rasdjarmreansook sees the act of collecting and displaying a fragment from her dogs as their passive participation—the contribution of their hair brings them as close as possible to collaborating with her.

In her three-channel video *Great Time Message: Storytellers of the Town* (2006), Rasdjarmreansook turns her attention to the mentally challenged. Women in a mental institution, their images distorted so we cannot make out their features, tell their life stories. As we listen to their monologues, it becomes increasingly clear that they are not credible narrators. While at times their stories seem plausible, it becomes difficult to discern the truth when fantastic statements are seamlessly woven in. An emotionally charged, tragic anecdote of familial abuse gives way to the surreal, as a woman claims to have lived on a farm with mammoths. We understand what these women are saying, but we don’t trust them because their version of reality doesn’t correspond to ours, so much so that they have been excluded from mainstream society. The relationship between credibility and conformity is exaggerated in this work, raising questions about its more subtle forms in the world.

Rasdjarmreansook often shows *Great Time Message: Storytellers of the Town* together with *The Nine-Day Pregnancy of a Single Middle-Aged Associate Professor* (2003), placing herself—and her own story—in close proximity to the women isolated inside the camera’s frame. *The Nine-Day Pregnancy of a Single Middle-Aged Associate Professor* is Rasdjarmreansook’s most obviously autobiographical work. In the video, the artist has returned to her university job from time away in Europe, claiming to be pregnant with a false belly. The unexplained

and dramatic event in the life of an unmarried middle-aged woman produces a stir of wonder, scandal, and excitement at her workplace. When the pregnancy is revealed to be fake, an artwork, there is dismay and feelings of betrayal on the part of many of her academic and artistic colleagues; when I visited Rasdjarmreansook in 2014, people were still talking about it. The video explores the considerable social investment that is made in the individual’s life in terms of sexuality, reproduction, and the perpetuation of the species.

Thai tradition informs much of Rasdjarmreansook’s work, although her subject matter and artistic approach are legible to audiences beyond Southeast Asia. In *In this circumstance the sole object of attention should be the treachery of the moon* (2009), Rasdjarmreansook captures young and old villagers walking through rice fields in the early morning. The work operates as a celebratory meditation on the importance of connections to rural life in Thai culture. It is also directly related to a Buddhist saying in Thailand that observes that life begins and ends in the village. Perhaps surprisingly, celebrations appear frequently in Rasdjarmreansook’s work, taking their place in the cycle of life and death she continually explores. In *Pray, bless us with rice and curry our great moon*, amid upsetting news footage of the capture and torture of dogs for the Chinese meat industry, Rasdjarmreansook barbecues for her and the neighborhood’s dogs—they will have a party. In *I’m Living*, she dresses a female corpse in colorful clothes appropriate for festivities. And in *Some Unexpected Events Sometimes Bring Momentary Happiness* (2013), one of her dogs, who is paralyzed, runs and plays with sheer joy after spontaneously and inexplicably gaining use of his legs for a single day. The bittersweet tone that Rasdjarmreansook strikes is direct. Joy and sadness, celebration and finality, are two sides of the same coin and are expressed in many ways by many entities, whether we notice the parallels or not.

- 1 This is discussed in numerous accounts, including Richard Dawkins’s essay on vivisection: boingboing.net/2011/06/30/richard-dawkins-on-v.html.
- 2 One example of a non-human animal gaining tools to communicate across species, a gorilla named Koko learned sign language and is able to communicate with humans. As evinced in numerous YouTube videos, she cried when learning of actor Robin Williams’s death. More information on Koko can be found in *Koko: A Talking Gorilla*, a 1978 documentary by Barbet Schroeder.
- 3 More information on the Paycheck Fairness Act and wage disparity can be found at thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/04/09/3424853/senate-republicans-paycheck-fairness-act/; and nytimes.com/2014/09/13/opinion/a-showdown-on-the-pay-gap.html?_r=0.
- 4 Lauren Gambino, “The underworld of US sex trafficking: ‘If there were no johns there would be no prostitutes,’” *The Guardian*, January 26, 2015: theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/26/path-appears-sex-trafficking-pbs-documentary.
- 5 Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 10–11.
- 6 While it is difficult to gather exact statistics due to the nature of the crimes, some numbers can be found at equalitynow.org/node/1010. According to government and NGO sources, approximately 20.9 million adults and children are bought and sold into sexual slavery and forced labor; 98% of those sold for sex are women and girls. The illegal animal trade brings in about \$10 billion a year, and, according to the Humane Society, the United States is one of the biggest consumers: humanesociety.org/issues/wildlife_trade/.
- 7 Rebecca Solnit, “Listen up, women are telling their story now,” *The Guardian*, December 30, 2014: theguardian.com/news/2014/dec/30/sp-rebecca-solnit-listen-up-women-are-telling-their-story-now.
- 8 Emma Sulkowicz made headlines by protesting the lack of an investigation by Columbia University, where she is a senior, into her rape allegations. She has carried her dorm mattress around as a performative act, visualizing the burden the victim of rape must carry. It also underscores the problems around the he-said-she-said problematic in many of these cases. She was invited by New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand to the State of the Union in 2015, an invitation that some criticized for providing such a public platform for Sulkowicz: news.artnet.com/in-brief/senator-gillibrand-criticized-for-mattress-girl-state-of-the-union-invite-234347.
- 9 Gregory Berns, “Dogs Are People, Too,” *The New York Times*, October 5, 2013: nytimes.com/2013/10/06/opinion/sunday/dogs-are-people-too.html?pagewanted=all.
- 10 Ecofeminism is distinct from Marxist feminism in extending a reading of power dynamics from human-centered social dynamics to a breakdown of speciesism and extension into posthumanism. Some feminists have rejected any comparisons of women to notions of nature, to avoid linking women to animals and inviting potential connections to biological determinism. More information on the different schools of thought can be found in Karen Davis’s introduction to her *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).
- 11 Karen Davis, “Thinking Like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection,” in *ibid.*, 208.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 The “companion species” is a concept articulated in Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
- 14 Jacques Derrida and David Willis, “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” in *Critical Inquiry* 28 (Winter 2002), 369–418.
- 15 David Teh, “The Lowest Form of Person: Dogs, Excess and Symbolic Exchange in Contemporary Thailand,” *Focas 6: Regional Animalities*, ed. Lucy Davis (Singapore: Forum on Contemporary Art and Society (focas), 2007), 19–43.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 35–36.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 3–4.
- 19 Derrida and Willis, “The Animal That Therefore I Am.”



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *The Class I*, 2005. Video still. Courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Village and Elsewhere: Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith Beheading Holofernes, Jeff Koons' Untitled, and Thai Villagers*, 2011. Video still. Courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York

Lament of Desire: Loss and Intimacy in the Video Art of Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook.

Arnika Fuhrmann

Since 1997 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook has repeatedly visited a hospital morgue in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand to film corpses in different scenes and arrangements. Having stated at one point that she could no longer make art about life but only about death, Rasdjarmrearnsook takes the viewer through recurrent scenes of primarily female death in these videos.¹ In these performances, the artist reads passages from Thai classical literature or from her own erotic writing, sings to, converses with, and dresses the corpses. While her performances have typically been read to express affects around grief, more fundamentally they draw loss and death into relation with issues of femininity, desire, and sexuality.

In 2005, Rasdjarmrearnsook presented her video work on death at the Venice Biennale in an exhibition entitled *Making Contact*. Her performance videos were exhibited in the Thai Pavilion, where they were juxtaposed with the work of the late Montien Boonma. The title of the joint Thai exhibition, presented at the Convento di San Francesco della Vigna, was *Those Dying Wishing to Stay, Those Living Preparing to Leave*.²

The Venice exhibition's Thai title, *Khon tai yak yu, khon yu yak tai*, translates slightly differently, to *The Dead/Dying Want to Stay/Live, the Living Want to Die*. The exhibition title is significant in two ways. Most importantly, it invokes the reversals between the dead and the living that are essential to Rasdjarmrearnsook's video work and the ways in which it deploys inequalities of gender, longing, and agency. In this context, the verb *yak*, to want, further substantiates that what the artist delineates in these scenes—which are ostensibly scenes of ritual action around death—is a feminist aesthetic and anatomy of desire. In addition, the Thai title indicates that the desire that is the subject of this project is riven by ironies of possibility and boundedness.

Focusing on conceptual and performative aspects of Rasdjarmrearnsook's video work, this essay thus follows the question of how scenarios of loss and invocations of scenes of intimacy are made to relate in the videos. In these works from the late 1990s until the mid-2000s longing and sexuality are situated in a highly abstracted and dehistoricized domain, yet Rasdjarmrearnsook's video installations nevertheless proffer critiques of women's current erotic possibilities and may further be read to pick up on and defamiliarize popular conventions of depicting female death and attachment to the dead female body in Thailand.³

Since the 1980s Rasdjarmrearnsook's work has continually problematized what it means for women to make their desires publicly known. Lisa Rofel has described the China of the 1990s as a place where the public expression of "private" desires constituted a new development, and one that was moreover in concordance with economic restructuring and neoliberal privatization.⁴ In Thailand, the novelty of the 1990s lay in the fact that the kinds of public expressions around love and sexuality diversified to a great extent. This was a time when the Thai public sphere became increasingly explicitly sexualized.

Since the late 1990s, national cultural identity and citizenship began to be more closely articulated with normative prescriptions for sexuality.⁵ In the early 2000s, the government introduced disciplinary campaigns of social ordering (*kan jad rabiab sangkhom*) and cultural monitoring (*kan fao rawang thang wathanatham*) designed to regulate the sexualities of broad sections of the population. At this time, the Thai state's sexual politics resided in a domain of policy and discursive activism that straddled the field of the law and new forms of public speech about sexuality.⁶ In this context, homosexuality, transidentitarian positions, and the public performance of femininity fell under the scrutiny of the state in unprecedented ways, but also came to stand at the center of new discourses about sexual and democratic civil rights.

At the same time, the media landscape diversified; new bourgeois modes of representation (such as heritage cinema) emerged in tandem with the return of many regional forms (such as *luk thung*, Thai country music) to

mainstream media.⁷ The expression of new bourgeois desires and the centering of regional artistic forms coincided with a profusion of discourses about minority identities and desires. Thus, while a vocal conservatism asserted its positions on sexuality, the recent past also saw a publishing boom of first person accounts about sexuality by women, gays, lesbians, and *kathoey*.⁸

Against this background, we can understand Rasdjarmrearnsook's work on death to use the frame of a particular, culturally located form of continued attachment in the wake of loss to outline counternormative possibilities of attachment. In these performances, the artist avails herself of Buddhist form, without reproducing orthodox pedagogies around death. In Theravada Buddhism the female corpse represents a privileged pedagogic tool, the contemplation of which is supposed to let the viewer understand and affectively experience the futility of attachment.⁹ On the other hand, Thai practices of engaging with the dead are marked by enduring attachments to the deceased. It is this domain of tension between the actual practices and Theravada doctrine's categorical demand for detachment that Rasdjarmrearnsook mines for her performances. In dwelling on the erotic and extending desire beyond its physical possibilities, the artist puts forth a complaint about the possibilities of sexual choice and pushes the boundaries of expression for women toward more explicitly sexual forms.

Rasdjarmrearnsook is one of a relatively small number of nationally and internationally recognized Thai women artists and at present the most widely exhibited.¹⁰ The artist's background is important, because the content of her work is intimately tied to her biography and her professional development in national and international art circuits; her video work is part of a larger pedagogic project that includes fiction and nonfiction writing, photography, and performance; and she incorporates aspects of the reception of her art back into her projects.¹¹

Prolific as an artist and writer, Rasdjarmrearnsook focused on issues of femininity, sexuality, and publicity long before she began her work on death in the late 1990s.¹² Her installation art before 1997 as well as her later video work about women in a psychiatric hospital (*Great Time Message: Storytellers of the Town*, 2006), performances in a slaughterhouse (*In a Blur of Desire*, 2007), and *In this Circumstance* (2009) are all marked by an abiding focus on feminist issues, by conceptual complexity, and by approaches that involve the notion of self-revelation.¹³ Holding several advanced degrees from Thai and foreign art universities, most notably that of *Meisterschülerin* from the Hochschule der Bildenden Künste in Braunschweig, Rasdjarmrearnsook is also a professor at Chiang Mai University's Faculty of Fine Arts. As a public voice of considerable influence, Rasdjarmrearnsook is a regular contributor to the Thai print media and in 2005 published a volume of essays and polemics on art, (*I*) [masculine pronoun] *Am an Artist* (*(Phom) pen silapin*).¹⁴ Among other fiction, she has written a collection of erotic short stories, *Khuen sin klin kamarot* (*The Night the Scent of Desire Ceased*).¹⁵ In these capacities as artist, public intellectual, and writer Rasdjarmrearnsook has continuously initiated controversial public discussions of gender, sexuality, and affects around loss in Thailand.¹⁶

In the past decade, Rasdjarmrearnsook exhibited widely in Asia, Europe, and the U.S. Exhibitions showcasing her video installations and photographic work on death included a solo show at Gimpel Fils Gallery in London in 2006 and a live performance with corpses in Turin in 2005.¹⁷ After showing in Venice, Rasdjarmrearnsook's videos were also included in the group exhibition *Politics of Fun*, at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2005).¹⁸ While her 2002 exhibition *Why Is It Poetry Rather Than Awareness?* at the National Gallery in Bangkok was still self-funded, in 2005, she was chosen to represent Thailand at the Venice Biennale. When the title of the Thai exhibition in Venice, *Khon tai yak yu, khon yu yak tai—The Dead/Dying Want to Stay/Live, The Living Want to Die*—was announced in Thailand, however, one critic reacted with the comment, "Well, if she wants to die, she can."¹⁹ The remark is

significant in that it exemplifies some of the hostility and derision that Rasdjarmrearnsook's work has drawn, while it has on the other hand elevated her to the status of one of Thailand's most recognized artists.

In the context of the Thai arts scene, Rasdjarmrearnsook opposes herself to current neotraditionalist trends in art that recuperate national or religious symbols, a phenomenon that she terms, somewhat derisively, *thai-phut*, "the Buddhist-Thai," not even bothering to make the compound into a real noun (*khwam pen thai-phut*—Buddhist-Thainess).²⁰ However, although she opposes a certain opportunist use of Thainess and Buddhism in art, and although her work uses cosmopolitan and global references and media, it retains a central concern with speaking from the Thai context and, as I will argue, relies on Buddhist forms of engaging with the dead. Thus, as much as her work can be aligned with feminist video and body art such as that of Carolee Schneemann, Tracy Moffatt, Mona Hatoum, Louise Bourgeois, and especially Joan Jonas, it relies in equal measure on Thai literature, music, bodies, and social contexts. What the artist ultimately aims to outline with her particular combination of "transaesthetics" with the very located foci and references of her work, is a Thai-inflected, cosmopolitan feminist model of desire.²¹

Rasdjarmrearnsook's video work situates women's sexual expression in the sphere of death and literary language. Her work never features complete nudity and her language, though explicit regarding sexual details, remains within the registers of poetry and literary prose. This is relevant for the national reception of Rasdjarmrearnsook's art. Scholars of Thai literature have stressed the preeminence of form in classical literature.²² As Craig Reynolds further argues, historically the registers of Thai literary works therefore bore considerable import for their political impact.²³ This claim about the impact of form also translates to several cases of contemporary expressions of women's sexual desire in visual and print media. While writers of erotic fiction such as Kham Phaka, who are understood to work with everyday, 'vulgar' language, are subjected to severe criticism, the fact that Rasdjarmrearnsook's written and video work meets the formal criteria of literary language means that no matter how sexual its content, her work is spared such critique.²⁴

In the few lines that reviewers have to date devoted to Rasdjarmrearnsook's work, it is frequently taken to express Buddhist understandings of life and death, to portray care for the dead, nostalgia, and loneliness, or to interrogate "spiritual realities of the afterlife."²⁵ However, while they may do several of these things, Rasdjarmrearnsook's videos more centrally link their scenes of death to desire, as her catalog titles expressly indicate. Since 1997 the majority of her videos consistently set scenes of desire invoked by the artist's reading of love poetry and of her own erotic writing against the background of death and the environment of the morgue.

Without explicitly referencing contemporary representational, political, or ritual contexts, Rasdjarmrearnsook's art consistently brings into focus the absence of a state in which "love and yearning do not have to hide," as the artist says.²⁶ Evident from the works themselves, from Rasdjarmrearnsook's catalog texts, and from interviews with the artist is that her videos contemplate possibilities of attachment by investing the domain of longing and mourning with feminist meaning and by expanding it to previously unimagined objects. On the most immediate level, her performances convey the attachment to lost objects, or to loss as such: video after video shows the artist engaging with corpses in a morgue. As scenes of loss and performances of continued attachment persist across frames, videos, and installations, Rasdjarmrearnsook's work initially indeed seems overwhelmingly concerned with conveying sorrow.

That Rasdjarmrearnsook's sketches of non-normative attachment are centrally concerned with women and femininity becomes evident from the amount and quality of the attention that the videos pay to the female dead.

Although Rasdjarmrearnsook performs with men, women, and mixed groups, all pieces that focus on individuals, depict bodies in detail, or are constructed around the identity of the dead concentrate on women and female bodies. As we see Rasdjarmrearnsook perform with and for old women—their small bodies decorated with *lan thom* (white frangipani symbolizing death)—and covered in cloths with bright prints²⁷ and for women who died young, and whose beauty, as the artist says, compels her to perform for and with them,²⁸ or as the camera takes in the minute details of female bodies in what the artist calls *femalescapes*,²⁹ Rasdjarmrearnsook's art exhibits a continuous, unparalleled concentration on women and on ordinary female bodies.

In addition, many of the artist's performances recreate all-female semipublic spheres common in Thailand. In interviews, the artist stated that the most natural addressees for conversations about love, attachment, and sexuality were other women, and that her videos reflect this wherever possible.³⁰ The morgue thus comes to function as a sphere of shared sorrow, confidences, and pleasures in which the artist is free to hold "conversations" with the dead on topics that might ordinarily not find serious consideration in public discussion.³¹ Here the artist can present "that which is left out as life proceeds, is forgotten, not paid attention to, that which one is ashamed to speak of."³² In these scenes, the performer thus holds "conversations" with the dead that bring into view subjects ranging from betrayal, rivalry, and love suicide to multiple attachments and same-sex desire. Through "making contact" with the dead in this way Rasdjarmrearnsook critiques constraints in forms of relating to the living.

In *The Senses Still*, Nadia Seremetakis describes the capacity of objects to store sensory histories. According to Seremetakis, "commensality" occurs when we enter into an exchange with objects, "a corporate communication between the body and things, the person and the world," to recover sensory histories.³³ As "bodies or traces of memory," the dead in Rasdjarmrearnsook's videos represent such commensal objects, with which the artist is able to reproduce states of desire.³⁴

In order to sketch out her feminist anatomy of desire, Rasdjarmrearnsook further brings into play a commensality that is particular to Thai ways of transacting with the dead. She does this not to instantiate traditional proceedings and pedagogies around death and transience, however. In her performances and in the writing that accompanies her art, she invokes death ritual not to explore its inherent pedagogic value, but rather to mine it for other sensory and affective potentials.

To understand how the artist's work defamiliarizes conventional transactions with the dead, a look at such practices in Thailand is instructive. Rasdjarmrearnsook both improvises on customary modes of tending to the dead in the Thai context and invents new ones. Theories of gendered mourning and lamentation have especially noted the important roles that women occupy with regard to voice in death rituals.³⁵ A look at forms of mourning in Thailand reveals that women once occupied the roles of active lamenters. As in many traditions, desire and attachment were explicitly voiced parts of lamentation in the performances of *Mon* 'crying women'—*nang rong hai*—who were employed in dominant funerary traditions in Thailand.³⁶

In contemporary urban Thai practice, however, traditions of voice that are not orthodox Buddhist have been all but abandoned. Conventions of female ritual such as that of the *Mon* crying women, or of female dancers performing in front of the open coffin, have become rare. Instead, Theravadin Buddhist death ritual is concentrated almost entirely in the hands of men, while women perform the 'silent' tasks of preparing the corpse, providing the food for the funeral, taking care of all of the more intimate details around death. Women thus no longer have a formal part in ritual and funerary verbal exchange.³⁷ As in cases described by Veena Das and Nadia Seremetakis, a "good death" in the Thai contemporary urban context is also an acknowledged death—one that is witnessed by many mourners.

In ceremonies that last several days, mourners come together nightly at the temple to listen to the recitation and sermons of the monks. Accompanying official ritual is a kind of commensality between the dead and the living. These material and affective exchanges can be seen in the many services that one renders the dead during the funeral and long after. Through these, the mourners take responsibility for the wellbeing of the dead through care. They ensure the felicitous passage of the dead to another state of being through offering them food, keeping them company through the nights, communicating with them, and adding symbolic objects that the deceased might need to the crematory fire. Depending on age, the circumstances of the death, and the status of the family, the dead are often kept for a number of days (for instance, one hundred days), months, or even years before cremation. Although orthodox Buddhist teaching decrees the swift relinquishing of attachment upon death, Thai practices of exchange with the dead are firmly anchored in everyday life and can last across lifetimes. In this respect, mourning remains open-ended and the attachment to the lost object is continuous. Rasdjarmrearnsook improvises on Thai conventions of continuing intimacy with the dead, and we can further understand her performances to invent new traditions of female voice and ritual role. In this context, the artist mines classical Thai literature's extensive lexicon of desiring and of enduring attachment in the wake of loss. In summary, Rasdjarmrearnsook's art can thus be said to avail itself of Buddhist form, while deviating from strictly religious chartings of the relations of death and desire.

Rasdjarmrearnsook's art can further be situated in relation to specifically Thai modes of eroticizing contingency, prominently represented in a popular visual culture that exploits the erotic possibilities of the deferral of detachment from the dead. From the traditional realm of Buddhist visual practices to the neofolklore of a reviving Thai cinema, female death is thus a ubiquitous trope in regular and specialized print and electronic media and other visual culture.³⁸ Stories around and images of female death are therefore familiar to Thai audiences, but would be expected to follow predetermined scripts as well as to convey a relatively fixed set of meanings, especially where gender norms, sexuality, and desire are concerned.³⁹ By contrast, Rasdjarmrearnsook's videos can be understood to undertake a thorough, feminist reworking of these erotics of femininity and loss.

(This is an excerpted and modified version of a text originally published in *positons: asia critique* 21:4, Fall 2013, published by Duke University Press.)

1 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, interview by author, Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai, Thailand, August 21–22, 2005.

2 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's and Montien Boonma's works were exhibited in Venice from June 12–November 6, 2005. The Thai exhibition was curated by Luckkana Kunavichayanont, Sutee Kunavichayanont, and Panya Vijinthanasarn and commissioned by Apinan Poshyananda. <http://www.ocac.go.th/lamine/concept.htm>.

3 The artist's work on death and desire is collected in three catalogs: *Thuk haeng prathana (Lament of Desire)* (Bangkok: Amarin, 1999); *Thamai thueng mi rot kawi thaen khwam ru than? (Why Is It Poetry Rather Than Awareness?)* (Bangkok: Amarin, 2002); *Sinlapa kap thoi khwam (Art and Words)* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2006).

4 Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

5 Rosalind C. Morris provides an assessment of the political valences of non-normative sexualities in Thailand in the late 1990s in "Educating Desire: Thailand, Transnationalism, and Transgression. A Ban on Gay Teachers: Education and Prohibition in the 'Land of the Free.'" *Social Text* 52/53 15, nos. 3 and 4 (1997): 53–79.

6 Most significant about the state's new sexual politics was that rather than rely on new legislation, the disciplinary campaigns turned on the formulation of new lexicons for public sexuality. New social and cultural policy regarding sexuality thus combined regulatory measures with discriminating rhetoric in the attempt to streamline, monitor, and profitably manage especially urban sexualities. Citizenship at this time was sexualized in that the disciplinary campaigns consciously aimed to align a new sexual order with cultural revival, notions of "Thainess," and economic recovery after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis.

7 See especially May Adadol Ingawanij, "Nang Nak: Thai Bourgeois Heritage Cinema." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 180–93.

8 *Kathoei* can roughly be translated as "transgender" and nowadays refers almost exclusively to male-to-female transgender positions.

9 Liz Wilson provides an analysis of the deployment of female death and decay in Buddhist hagiographies in *Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

10 The artist's work can be viewed at Rama IX Art Museum Foundation, *Artist: Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, available from <http://www.rama9art.org/araya/index.html> (accessed June 18, 2013).

- 11 Despite its national and international acclaim, Rasdjarmrearnsook's art has thus far failed to elicit a meaningful body of critical scholarly publications or detailed reviews of her art. A notable exception are the writings of Sayan Daengklom. See his essay on Rasdjarmrearnsook's 2002 exhibition at Bangkok's National Gallery, Sayan Daengklom, "Waeo krading kring krung khlung klin kawi wa 'Chan chue Araya'" ("A Faint Sound of Fragrant Poetry: 'My Name Is Araya'"), *ART RECORD* 10, no. 23 (2003): 26–31. See also Chamnongsri Hanjenlak, "Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: Khon pen khon tai sen khan thi lop luean" ("Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: The Living and the Dead—Vanishing Disparities"), *Matichon Sud Sapda*, January 24–30, 2003, 66; and Steven Pettifor, "Embracing Taboos," *Asian Art News* 16, no. 4 (2006): 79–83. The artist provides conceptual framing and critical commentary on her own work in texts accompanying her videos as well as in her analytic writing.
- 12 Examples of earlier work that centered on Thai femininity, and specifically on topics such as sex work and women's rural-urban migration include, for instance, "Prostitute's Room (1994)," "Has Girl Lost Her Memory?" (1993), and "The Dance of Three Thai Girls" (1995).
- 13 *Great Times Message: Storytellers of the Town* (2006) and *In a Blur of Desire* (2007) were shown at 100 Tonson Gallery, and *In this Circumstance, the Sole Object of Attention Should be the Treachery of the Moon* (2009) at Ardel Gallery of Modern Art in Bangkok.
- 14 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *(Phom) pen sinlapin (I) Am an Artist* (Bangkok: Matichon, 2005).
- 15 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Khuen sin klin kamarot (The Night the Scent of Desire Ceased)* (Bangkok: Sam Si, 1999). The title can also be understood to mean "Returning the Scent of Desire Altogether." This book followed her collection of short stories *Phu ying Tawanok (Oriental Woman)* (Bangkok: Si San, 1993).
- 16 As Rasdjarmrearnsook states, "If loss could be openly revealed and accepted like any other human delight, then there would not be so many suppressed feelings." *Artnews*, "Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook" (2007), available from *Gimpel Fils*, www.gimpelfils.com/pages/exhibitions/exhibition.php?exhid=45&subsec=1 (accessed July 30, 2013)
- 17 Other solo exhibitions of her work on death and desire include *Lament*, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm (2003); *At Nightfall Candles Are Lighted*, Chulalongkorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok (2000); and *Lament of Desire*, ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas, and the Faculty of Fine Arts Gallery, Chiang Mai, Thailand (1998–99).
- 18 Further group exhibitions included *The Pantagruel Syndrome*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2005–06), the *54th Carnegie International*, Pittsburg, (2004–05), *Poetic Justice*, 8th International Istanbul Biennial (2003), *Parallel Time*, Hangzhou, China (2003), and *Time after Time*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2003).
- 19 Quoted by Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, interview by author, August 21–22, 2005.
- 20 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *(Phom) pen sinlapin*, 55. Here Rasdjarmrearnsook writes, "Artists who work in the genre of tradition are lauded as preservers and protectors of the Buddhist-Thai. The wind never blows in the wrong direction for their work in this country." The grammatically conventional form in Thai would be *khwan pen thai phut*. The omission of *khwan pen*, which would in this case stand for "-ness" (Buddhist-Thainess), adds to the dismissive tone of the phrase.
- 21 What Tani Barlow writes about the Chinese feminist Dai Jinhua applies also to Rasdjarmrearnsook's art: "Her theoretical landscape cannot be reduced to the national melodrama." Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 307.
- I take the concept of a "transaesthetic" from Hamid Dabashi, "Transcending the Boundaries of an Imaginative Geography," in *Shirin Neshat: La ultima palabra/The Last Word* (Milan: Charta, 2005), 31–85. While I am not suggesting that we read Rasdjarmrearnsook's art as analogous to Shirin Neshat's, both trace similar paths in their international circulation. Dabashi's essay teaches us to read dialectically the divergent verbal, visual, and sonic components of diasporic and transnationally produced and exhibited video work.
- 22 See Manas Chitakasem, "Poetic Conventions and Modern Thai Poetry," in *Thai Constructions of Knowledge*, ed. Manas Chitakasem; Andrew Turton (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1991), 39.
- 23 Craig Reynolds explains that the charges of sedition against the author of a nineteenth-century poem were based on his transgressions of the poetic order, rather than on the critical content of the work per se. "Sedition in Thai History: A Nineteenth-Century Poem and Its Critics," in Chitakasem and Turton, *Thai Constructions*, 15–36.
- 24 See for instance the collection *Isatri irotik (Female Erotic)* (Bangkok: Open Publishing, 2002) which includes Kham Paka's story "Khuen wan phut" ("Wednesday Night").
- 25 "Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: 'The Class,'" Asymptote, www.asymptotejournal.com/article.php?cat=Visual&id=6&curr_index=0 (accessed July 30, 2013). <http://www.artnews.info/gallery.php?i=116&exi=1929>
- 26 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Thuk haeng prathana*, 41.
- 27 This is the case, for instance, in "Thai Medley," Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Thamai thueng*, 28–30.
- 28 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Thuk haeng prathana*, 34–35 and *Thamai thueng*, 12–13.
- 29 Some *femalescapes* can be viewed in Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Thamai thueng*, 24–27.
- 30 Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, interview by author, August 21–22, 2005.
- 31 These are conversations in the sense that the artist recites to the dead—and sometimes her recitations include passages of conversation—however, she does not answer for the dead in these videos. Conversations held in a simulated question and answer format between the artist and the dead only begin in the videos "Death Seminar" (2005) and "The Class" (2005).
- 32 Referring to what can be expressed in literature, Rasdjarmrearnsook writes, "That which is left out as life proceeds, forgotten, not paid attention to, that which one is ashamed to speak of, appears in scenes, passages, in the rows of letters, reflecting an absorbing image of life, without creating a gap in understanding, experience, age, belief and/or perspective." (Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Thuk haeng prathana*, 41).
- 33 Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 6. Seremetakis further explains the relation between the commensal object, the perceiver, and sensory remembering as follows (10–11): Mnemonic sensory experience implies that the artifact bears within it layered commensal meanings (shared substance and material reciprocities), and histories. ... As a sensory form in itself, the artifact can provoke the emergence, the awakening of the layered memories, and thus the senses contained within it. The object invested with sensory memory speaks; it provokes re-call as a missing, detached yet antiphonic element of the perceiver.
- 34 Sayan Daengklom, "Waeo krading," 31.
- 35 Because of the centrality of voice and the ostensibly ritual action of Rasdjarmrearnsook's art, Veena Das' and Nadia Seremetakis' writings on lamentation provide useful frames of reference. Das and Seremetakis examine traditions of lamentation in India and Inner Mani, Greece that are marked by antiphonic elements and gendered divisions of labor. Under ordinary conditions of mourning, both authors ascribe extensive transformative qualities to women's public proclamations of loss. It is female lamentation that converts the death that has occurred into a "good death" and brings a reparative effect to bear both on the dead and the living. Nadia Seremetakis, *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 101. For Das the expression of pain and the recognition of this pain by another makes mourning a "conduit" between the private and the public

- and constitutes mourning's redemptive element. Veena Das, "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain," in *Social Suffering*, ed. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 70. Although Rasdjarmrearnsook's actions in the videos do not represent mourning per se, she likewise uses the frame of ministering to the dead to transport affects that have to do with longing from privacy into publicity. Not concerned with social reconciliation, however, her work instead aims to effect ruptures especially in conventional ways of gendered relating.
- 36 Santi Phakdikham, "Prawad pithi Mon Rong Hai" ("The History of the Ceremony of Mon Rong Hai—The Crying Mon") and Santi Phakdikham "Nang rong hai ma jak nai? Kiao arai kap Mon Rong Hai?" ("Crying Women—Where Do They Come From and What Do They Have To Do With [the song and ceremony of] The Crying Mon?") *Sinlapawatthanatham (Art and Culture)* 23, no. 11 (2002): 158–63.
- 37 In contemporary ritual, there is antiphony, or responsive verbal exchange, only in the listening and occasional answering of the mourners to the recitation and sermons of the monks. The standard text for recitation by monks at funerals comes from the *Abhidhammapitaka* of the Pali Canon. Its recitation does not sound mournful and the atmosphere of funerals is mostly calm and subdued. Only special forms of recitation carry the mood of sorrow, such as the *Phra malai* and *Sangkhaha* forms of recitation.
- 38 By specialized print media, I mean widely available weekly and monthly magazines that variously combine images and stories of wounding, sex, and the occult, such as *Achayakam (Crime News)* as well as the weeklies *Rueang phi* (Ghostly Matters), *Trakun phi phi (Ghostly Relations)*, *Susan phi (Ghost Cemetery)*, *Sayawet (Necromancy)*, and *Mae Nak*. For an analysis of the public circulation and political import of death imagery from the massacres of prodemocracy protestors in the 1970s and 1990s, see Alan Klima, *The Funeral Casino: Meditation, Massacre, and Exchange with the Dead in Thailand* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).
- 39 Thus the plots of ghost films, for instance, can generally be expected to end with the thwarting of the female ghost's sexual desire and with her exorcism. Nonzee Nimbutr's *Nang Nak* (DVD, Bangkok: Tai Entertainment, 1999) is a prominent contemporary example.



Installation view, *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella



Installation view, *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella



Installation view, *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella



Installation view, *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Pray, bless us with rice and curry our great moon*, 2012.
Installation view, SculptureCenter, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella



Installation view, *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella



Installation view, *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella

Checklist of Works in the Exhibition



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Great Time Message: Storytellers of the Town (The Insane)*, 2006. Installation view, SculptureCenter, 2015. Photo: Jason Mandella

The Class I, 2005
Single channel video
16:30 min
Color, sound

The Class II, 2005
Single channel video
21:00 min
Color, sound

The Class III, 2005
Single channel video
26:00 min
Color, sound

Conversation I, 2005
Single channel video
52:00 min
Color, sound

Great Time Message: Storytellers of the Town (The Insane), 2006
Video I: 16:04 min
Video II: 19:00 min
Video III: 16:54 min
Black and white, sound

I'm Living, 2002
Single channel video
25:00 min
Color, sound

In this circumstance the sole object of attention should be the treachery of the moon, 2009
Single channel video
30:00 min
Color, sound

Kaidown, Karong, Lam, Long, Masee, Mee, Mommam, Ngab, Nuanoi, Nudee, Peuy, Plakem, Rambo, Rublor, Sibsee, Somrak, Sua, Tao, Tualek, Tun, Yon, 2015
21 glass jars, dog hair, digital pigment prints
Dimensions variable

Ngab, 2012
Digital pigment print
18 3/8 x 27 3/4 inches

The Nine-Day Pregnancy of a Single Middle-Aged Associate Professor, 2003
Single channel video
5:00 min
Color, sound

Pray, bless us with rice and curry our great moon, 2012
Single channel video
19:00 min
Color, sound

Some unexpected events sometimes bring momentary happiness, 2009
Single channel video
20:03 min
Black and white, silent

Some unexpected events sometimes bring momentary happiness, 2013
Magrud's bandages
Dimensions variable

The Treachery of the Moon, 2012
Single channel video
12:36 min
Color, sound

The Treachery of the Moon, 2012
Glasses and cell phone destroyed by Namtal
Dimensions variable

Two Planets: Millet's The Gleaners and the Thai Farmers, 2008
Digital pigment print
29 x 29 inches (75.5 x 75 cm)

Two Planets: Renoir's Ball at the Moulin de la Galette and the Thai Villagers, 2008
Digital pigment print
29 x 29 inches (75.5 x 75 cm)

Two Planets: Van Gogh's The Midday Sleep and the Thai Villagers, 2008
Digital pigment print
29 x 29 inches (75.5 x 75 cm)

Village and Elsewhere: Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith Beheading Holofernes, Jeff Koons' Untitled, and Thai Villagers, 2011
Single channel video
19:40 min
Color, sound

All works courtesy the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York

