

DEMOCRATIC
DEVELOPMENT

CAMBODIAN ARTISTS SPEAK OUT
THE ART OF SURVIVAL

PUBLISHED BY:



**Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung**

KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG
KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a German political foundation named after the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War. The KAS provides counseling and education on good governance with a view to promote democratic political institutions and policies. The KAS works in 120 countries worldwide. Half of the foundation's activities continue to be done in Germany. The office in Cambodia has been established in 1994. The partners include the National Assembly and the Senate, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Interior and selected other ministries, the political parties represented in Parliament, media and civil society organizations. In recent years particular emphasis has been given to the support of democratic decentralization.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

In this series the KAS makes available documents emanating from the cooperation with its partners in Cambodia which appear of interest beyond the specific program work.

© Copyright 2008 by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Cambodia

Publisher

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
House No. 4, Street 462,
Khan Chamkar Mon, P.O. Box 944
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia
Tel : (855-23) 213 363 / 726 221
Fax : (855-23) 213 364
Email : office@kas-cambodia.com
Website : www.kas.de/kambodscha

Printed in Cambodia

ISBN-13: 978-99950-880-8-8

PREFACE

Fascinating contemporary artists are active in Cambodia. This volume of the KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG Occasional Papers on Democratic Development introduces some of the country's most outstanding proponents to a wider audience.

We offer this publication as a contribution to a culture of pluralistic and free public debate. Artists all over the world play a role in society beyond providing decorative or entertaining expressions of their creative skills. Their work reflects human social and political reality. And their art communicates this reflection to their audience. Art communicates truth.

What is true and right is often controversial. In restrictive political systems, putting forward the truth about "sensitive issues" - or challenging the powerful with it - is dangerous or illegal. Censorship and self censorship apply; the freedom of expression is restricted. Art is made beyond these restrictions. It must also be free from the compromise of taboo and social etiquette.

Psychologists teach us that speaking the truth builds trust between individuals and in a society at large. Trust in society is often called "social capital" because it is considered a resource for the success of the community. By addressing important human social and political matters in a truthful way, art promotes debates and helps to build trust and to strengthen society. KAS as a political organization supports art projects to promote pluralistic truth-seeking societies.

The Khmer Rouge were radical censors. In their aftermath shaped by "cold war", civil strife, and post conflict conditions the freedom of expression in Cambodia has been affected. Public debate about the Khmer Rouge legacy has been subject to limitations. The artists presented here overcome these limitations with their art and by speaking out, as the title of this volume implies.

This publication was produced at the office of the KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG in cooperation with META HOUSE Art/Media/Communication Centre in Phnom Penh. I express my gratitude to META HOUSE Director Nico Mesterharm and his colleagues for the cooperation. Many gifted individuals have contributed to this project. All deserve recognition and praise. But above all, I thank all the artists for being part of this project.

Wolfgang Meyer
Country Representative
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

INTRODUCTION

I first came to Cambodia in the year 2000 where I spent 5 days in Siem Reap and a weekend in the capital, Phnom Penh. My sightseeing tour led me through the famous temples of Angkor Wat to Toul Sleng (S21), once the site of a genocidal prison, now a memorial and museum. As a teenager I had read about the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge in West German magazines and now, nearly twenty years later, I was about to enter Pol Pot's torture chamber.

I was fortunate enough to be accompanied by a German-speaking tour guide, Mrs Phou, who was eager to show me what had happened in that dark period between 1975 and 1979. "You must see this", said Mrs. Phou, who had studied in the former GDR after liberation. "It is important for all foreigners to understand how this brutal communist regime suppressed the Khmer people, brainwashed them and finally killed more than two million of us. During this time the rest of the world looked away, but it is also important to realise that foreign politics and foreign countries too, were responsible for helping bring Pol Pot to power."

As Mrs. Phou and I stood talking at the entrance gates of Toul Sleng, landmine victims who had lost their limbs begged for dollars in broken English. It was hot that day, even though it was still morning. I was perspiring heavily as I paid the admission fee, but once I entered the compound I could feel the chill of terror and death, still present in the walls, even after all those years. Mrs. Phou led me through the former school building and showed me the cells and interrogation rooms. The oil paintings by Toul Sleng prisoner Vann Nath, who had been forced to depict the cruel torturing techniques, terrified me, and I was stunned by the black and white photos of the Toul Sleng inmates, each with a number pinned to their bodies by a needle.

The latter strongly reminded me of photos I had seen when I had, years earlier, visited the German concentration camps which were built under the rule of Adolf Hitler, the man responsible for the killings of over 6 million Jews, communists, homosexuals, gypsies and disabled people. And although Asian and European people don't look alike, it was the expression of hopelessness and fear in their eyes in these photos that made a strong connection, empty stares of those who were about to die for a sick ideology. I was struck by how Hitler and Pol Pot's aids had both used numbering and filing systems to conduct detailed documentation of their unspeakable horrors.

As a German, Toul Sleng was nothing new to me. It made the same horrible impression that Auschwitz or Theresienstadt (Terezin) had, where I had spent

time working as a filmmaker in 1999. When I told that to my Cambodian guide she was visibly disappointed. To her the Cambodian genocide was something unique, but to me it was just further proof that one will never know what human beings are capable of doing to other human beings. Unfortunately it seems, that mankind does not learn from history.

For my Terezin documentary THE TRIP, I worked with 35 German teenagers who visited the former 'ghetto' for the first time. They compared the German holocaust to 'medieval times' with no connection to their present lives or to the society in which they live in, more concerned with sneakers, game boys and hip hop music than with the genocidal past of their home country. When I started to work with Cambodian youth in the following years, they told me the same thing about their perception of Pol Pot's atrocities, "It happened a long time ago.", "We haven't seen it with our own eyes so it's hard for us to believe.", "We'd rather look into our future and forget about the past."

However, forgetting the past will not lead to a better future. This is why in the 1970s and 1980s German students such as myself were continuously educated about the gruesome German Nazi history, about repression and how only few people stood up against it. At home my parents and I watched films about that period in Germans history and we discussed them together. They told me stories of how they suffered as children under Hitler's rule. The Nazis killed my mother's Jewish family and she became an orphan. My father was sent to fight when he was 16 years old and spent the rest of his life trying to come to terms with it.

I still believe that the education my parents and my schooling gave me, taught me to become a true democrat and freethinker, somebody who will never follow the doctrines of any totalitarian regime. I wish the same for all of the young Cambodians that make up the majority of the Kingdom. Up until recently there has been no real dialogue within Cambodian families about the Pol Pot years (not dissimilar to Germany in the 1950s) and what led to his reign of terror. Still now the Khmer school curriculum is yet to offer sufficient education on this very critical subject.

Shortly after I founded Cambodia's first art/media/communication centre META HOUSE in January 2007, the forthcoming Khmer Rouge Tribunals had started to make headlines and this triggered more interest within the Cambodian public to speak out and start to deal with the past. Then at the opening of an exhibition titled ANON at SALA ARTSPACE months later, an installation by the Cambodian artist Chhim Sothy (born 1969) that focused on the Khmer Rouge period caught my eye. With this work in mind I went to visit the artist at his studio where I asked him if he would like to participate in an art project. My concept for this project being that Khmer and international

artists would reflect on the Cambodian genocide and draw parallels to other genocides that have occurred in other countries around the world, and also look at how those societies have dealt with it in comparison to Khmer society.

Chhim Sothy liked my idea from the beginning as he felt it highly critical to tell the public about his experiences, ones that clearly still haunt him. At the age of 6 he was forced to labour in paddy fields under the Khmer Rouge regime. Five of his relatives died, they were killed or starved to death.

Today Chhim Sothy is one of Cambodia's most acclaimed painters. He earns a decent living for his wife and their three sons - the next Cambodian generation, who will, with any luck, live in a time of peace and prosperity.

At the end of 2007 META HOUSE manager Lydia Parusol and I began approaching more artists to join our project, entitled ART OF SURVIVAL. Initially some of the older generation artists were hesitant to participate for fear of governmental censorship, whereas some of the younger artists told us that they didn't know enough about that part of Cambodian history to create something meaningful. In response to this we set up round-table-discussions and work groups that brought together the old and the young for a vivid and creative exchange.

Finally, 16 Cambodian artists agreed to participate in the first ART OF SURVIVAL exhibition which then opened with huge success on the 24th of January 2008. Over 400 guests attended the opening reception, followed by international TV coverage from CNN to Al-Jazeera. While Svay Ken, Vann Nath and Hen Sophal contributed already existing artworks, 13 artists created new pieces: Chan Nawath, Chhim Sothy, Hiem An Kannitha, Piteak, Prom Vichet, Sin Soda, Soeung Vannara, Oeur Sokuntevy, Suos Sodavy, Tith Kanitha, Tith Veasna, Vandy Rattana and Yam Sokly. We thank them all - as well as our international contributors, Herbert Mueller (Germany), Francis Wittenberger (Israel), Rodney Dickson (USA) and Denis Min Kim (France).

We are very proud to present the book CAMBODIAN ARTISTS SPEAK OUT which includes interviews, artworks and statements by all of the above-mentioned Khmer artists. We have added works & words by Pich Sopheap and Leang Seckon, who participate in the second ART OF SURVIVAL exhibition at META HOUSE (August 2008).

From 2009, ART OF SURVIVAL will be a travelling exhibition to be shown in other countries around the world. We feel it is not only highly important to let an international audience know more about the Cambodian genocide, but also to show the recent development of the Cambodian contemporary art scene, which as yet, remains relatively unknown to the outside world.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG (Wolfgang Meyer and Oum Syvann) for their continuing project support. This support started with our cooperation in the panel discussions CAMBODIA AFTER THE KHMER ROUGE at the Pannasastra International School (February/March 2008) and led to the production of this book.

We would also like to thank German filmmaker Daniel Huhn, who shot the 20-minute video collage CAMBODIAN ARTISTS SPEAK OUT and recorded all the interviews that you will find in this book. The great translating job was done by Som Savuth, Kim Sochetra and Yim Sokly. German media student Nora Zupan kindly helped us with preparation and production, and Swedish photographer Anders Jiras took the portrait photos, supported by So Nita (Make Up). American artist Bradford Edwards shot most of the artworks and will also help us with the catalogue that will accompany the travelling exhibition.

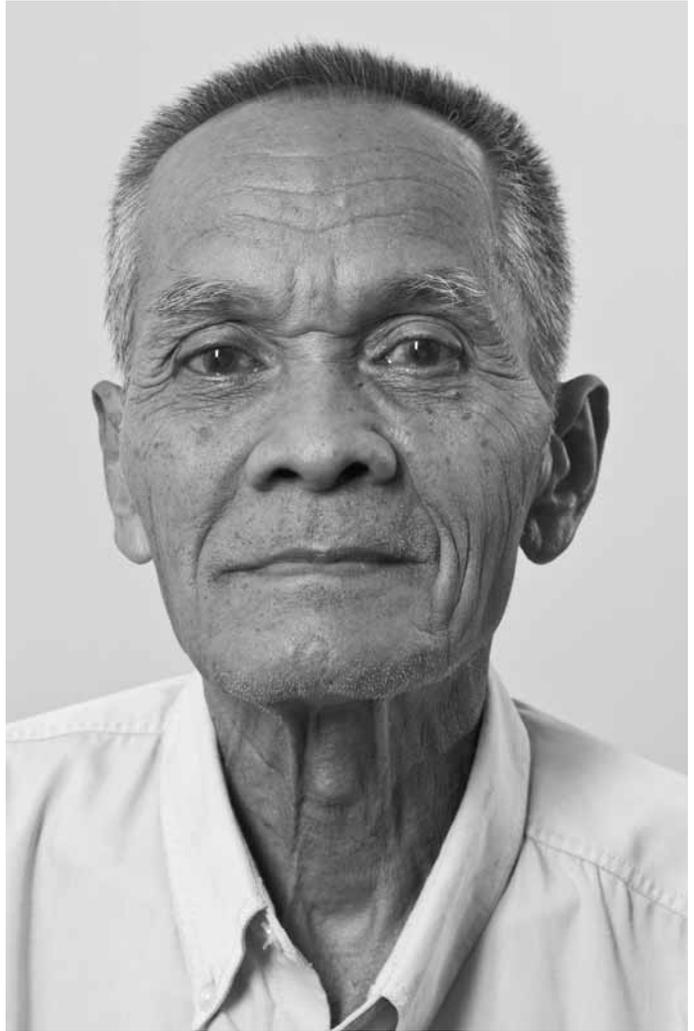
To me, ART OF SURVIVAL and the book CAMBODIAN ARTISTS SPEAK OUT are perfect examples of how Cambodians and foreigners, institutions and private initiatives such as META HOUSE, can join hands together and develop a project that will show the world that the Khmer Rouge did not succeed. In the end they were not able to eradicate Cambodian art and culture. Twenty-nine years after liberation, the Cambodian art scene is blooming again and we are all especially happy to be a part of it.

Nico Mesterharm

(META HOUSE Director)

CONTENT

Preface	5
Introduction	7
Svay Ken	13
Vann Nath	17
Suos Sodavy	23
Prom Vichet	27
Hen Sophal	33
Soeung Vannara	39
Piteak	45
Chhim Sothy	49
Pich Sopheap	53
Leang Seckon	59
Chan Nawath	63
Vandy Rattana	67
Sin Soda	71
Oeur Sokuntevy	75
Hiem An Kannitha	79
Tith Veasna	83
Yam Sokly	87
Tith Kanitha	91



SVAY KEN

Cambodia (born in 1933)

Svay Ken was born in Takeo Province and came to Phnom Penh to work at HOTEL LE ROYAL, where he served as a waiter and handyman for 34 years. During that time he began to make sketches of everyday Cambodian life, of the past and of the present. His outstanding, naïve style art works were chosen as Cambodia's entry for the FUKUOKA ART TRIENNIAL and articles on his work have appeared in numerous publications including ASIAN ART NEWS, VIETNAM TIMES and THE NEW YORK TIMES.

SVAY KEN: “I was in Phnom Penh when the Khmer Rouge entered the city. Immediately they began to evacuate the people. During that time my mother was hit by bomb shrapnel dropping on Phnom Penh and I took her to hospital where she unfortunately became weaker and weaker. When I tried to go home, a Pol Pot soldier pointed his rifle at me and asked me to go north to Prek Pnov. I got rather worried because my wife and kids were on the other side of the city and I had nothing in my possession except the clothes that I was wearing. I then decided to beg the soldier. Luckily for me, he was alone and decided to let me go. I ran all the way, as I was scared of being shot from behind. I bear no bitterness for what happened that day; instead, I thanked the soldier for allowing me to go south while the evacuation was directed to the other side of the town.

On April the 18th, they opened the west route crossing at Stung Mean Chey Bridge. Along the route, there were Pol Pot soldiers telling people where to go. After 9 days and 9 nights of walking and sleeping along the road, we arrived at Por Pe commune, Tram Kak district.

There were only evacuees and local people who were then known as “the local people”. At the time, there were two distinctions among the people, the Phnom Penh evacuees were labelled “the 17th people” and the local people were called “the 18th people”. These 18th people controlled the 17th people. Fortunately I had a friend in this town and I asked him to be our guarantors so that we could stay, I think without them we would have been forced to walk further, right down to Kampot.

There was no shelter and no food. My family and I had slept on the ground soil for three months before we managed to have enough wood to make a wooden bed. I was assigned to work in the field, ploughing the rice fields inside and outside the villages, until the collapse of the regime came in 1979.

The reason I chose to make this painting was to leave an impression of war for the next generation. My hope is that they will recognise the difficulties, the destruction, the casualties and the disabilities that are brought about by wars like this, and understand the reasons why Cambodia was led to war, because of two competing ideologies maintained by the Khmer Rouge and the Khmer Blue.

I am happy with the development of the country since that time. As I mentioned, during that time it took us 9 days and nights to travel from Phnom Penh to Takeo but nowadays it takes only an hour and a half back and forth. That is called development, and it is beyond my expectation. I have four children and there was a time that I thought they might have to live their lives illiterate, now, one is a medical doctor, one an engineer and so on. I am very proud of what I have.”

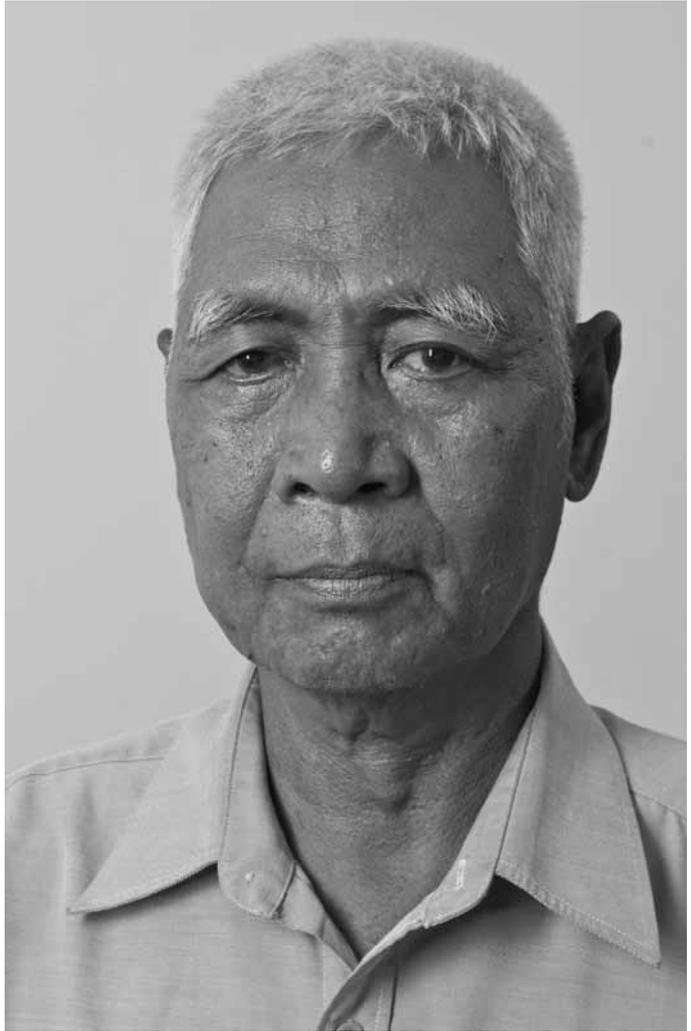


“KHMER ROUGE HOSPITAL”

By Svay Ken

Oil on canvas (60 x 80 cm), 2005

SVAY KEN: “You can see me sitting on a bench at the Khmer Rouge Hospital without a shirt, waiting for rice porridge. It is already late, but we haven’t received it yet. The clock you can see in this painting wasn’t there at that time. We guessed the time by the sun.”



VANN NATH

Cambodia (born in 1946)

Vann Nath was born in Battambang Province. Before the war he painted movie posters and portraits. The fact that Vann Nath's background was non-traditional helped spare his life during the Pol Pot regime. At the end of the war Vann Nath was one of seven survivors of TUOL SLENG, where nearly 20,000 people died. In 1979 Vann Nath was asked by the new government to paint pictures of the prison tortures for the world to learn of the secret horrors of the "Killing Fields." These moving works hang in the prison-turned-museum today, and are unforgettable for all visitors.

VANN NATH: “Like other people in Phnom Penh, on the 17th of April 1975 I was evacuated from the city to a sleepy village where there was not a single shelter. I tried hard to build a shelter on my own, and I had to work hard in order to fill my stomach. I needed nothing but to survive, but to survive at that time was not favourable. On the 30th of December that same year, I was arrested and sent to S21 (TOUL SLENG) prison. I didn't know why I had been arrested and sent to this prison, all I had been told was that I was to be transferred to another work area. On my first day as a prisoner I was questioned about things I had never heard of. The questions were about traitorous activities, asking if I were a traitor to Angkar, to Angkar's wills or to their revolutionary cause and so on. In fact, I was innocent. I was doing hard work in my village when they arrested me but I had learnt that when someone was accused of these activities, it meant for sure that they wanted you killed. Once a person set their foot on S21 prison grounds, that was going to be the end of their life.

However luckily for me, because I was good at painting, I was temporarily allowed to do painting work for the Khmer Rouge at the prison. If I hadn't the knowledge of painting, I would have been killed like all the others. Consequently, I managed to stay alive by working for them using my painting skills until the liberation day on the 7th of January 1979.

So far, most of my paintings have been about genocidal activities during the Khmer Rouge regime, particularly those that happened in S21 prison. There are several reasons why I drew these particular images. First of all, I wanted to take the audience back to the time when my friends were tortured to death in S21 prison. I wanted to let the public know that many, many people were cruelly and painfully killed there. I don't want those victims, my friends, to have died meaninglessly. I feel that these tragic incidents are on the path to being forgotten but they must be remembered and shared with sympathy.

The paintings clearly reflect their meanings. They explicitly show all of the innocent prisoners being handcuffed and killed. Some are being questioned and then tortured to death.

I have to say that I am not overly serious about history. I just tend to record whatever I encounter and compile it so that the next generation will have the chance to find out for themselves whether the stories about the Khmer Rouge are correct. Having said that, I can not say that I know for sure what happened throughout Cambodia's extraordinary and perplexing history.

Art means emotional attraction. In Cambodia, art is an important means to keep track of what has occurred in the past. For example, the sculptures and carvings that adorn the walls of Angkor Wat's temples were carved or created

more than a thousand years ago, and from this, one can try to understand what really took place during that time. So to me, art is crucial.

When I was in S21 prison, I often thought to myself that if I had a chance to stay alive, I would share with the public all of my experiences through my works of art. Fortunately, I made it, so I started working on my paintings a year after the liberation day, right after the former S21 prison had been converted into the genocide museum that it remains today. I want to let others know how enormous the agonies of the innocent people at that time were, and how frustrated they were when they were pleading for help and liberation.

So far, I have been able to share ideas with other people of the pressure that the Khmer Rouge placed on innocent people, especially on their own compatriots. What happened in the Cambodia's past should be a lesson for upcoming leaders to take their citizens' interests into high consideration. They should consider the sustainability of the nation and not use their citizens as a stepping-stone to their personal political power.

I am hopeful about the future of Cambodia but it is yet to be known, so we just have to wait and see. In my lifetime I have experienced four or five different regimes and I am confident that this current society is moving forward. And although the poverty rate among the poor is still high, the government is doing its best to gradually reduce it. There are some worrying concerns though, for example, within poor communities in the countryside, because of lack of education, people are exchanging their rice fields in return for money which leaves them with no land with which to work on. That is when poverty occurs.

I think the Khmer Rouge regime has had an enormous, sadly negative, impact on Cambodia's current society. Most young people who participated in the Khmer Rouge regime were trained and educated with the Khmer Rouge ideologies using violence, killing and other immoral ways. I have noticed a kind of social chaos where I see family members killing each other, the father kills the child, the child kills the mother...etc. Prior to the Khmer Rouge regime we would not have been able to comprehend such an aggressive act.

The impact is also felt on art. After 1979, there was nothing left. As artists, we had to start from scratch so I am extremely delighted with what we have achieved up until now. We may not be as civilized as some countries, but I am hopeful that we are not too far behind”



“UNTITLED”

By Vann Nath

Oil on canvas (100 x 150 cm), 1997

"I was arrested on December 30, 1977 because I was accused of mobilizing a movement against the Revolutionary Policy, and of being a CIA agent. In the file they put down "Painter in an enemy zone". After 7 days of being tortured and interrogated at Kandal Pagoda in Battambang, I was transported to Phnom Penh with over 30 other prisoners in two trucks.

When we got to Phnom Penh on January 7th, 1978 at midnight, I did not realize it was Security Office S-21. I knew only one thing, that this detention centre had once been a school. When we got there the first thing they did was subject us to several interrogations. We were then handcuffed and blindfolded. We were tied together with a heavy rope around our necks and towed along to another place within the prison where we were photographed and our measurements taken. Then they put the black blindfolds back around our eyes which they had removed when the pictures were taken, and we were pulled up to the second floor of Building D where we were confined to a set of iron stocks with all the other prisoners. That took place the same night at about 3 o'clock in the morning. At that point they removed our handcuffs."

Statement and translation were provided by Bophana Audiovisual Recourse Center, Phnom Penh /Cambodia, www.bophana.org



SUOS SODAVY

Cambodia (born in 1955)

Suos Sodavy studied at the ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, in Budapest, Hungary from 1987 until 1994. Today, he is DEPUTY HEAD OF THE PLASTIC ARTS AND HANDICRAFT DEPARTMENT at the MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS in Cambodia. In a career spanning from the 80s to the present he has had over twenty exhibitions in such places as Vietnam, Hungary and Thailand, as well as numerous shows in Cambodia.

SUOS SODAVY: "I lived during the Khmer Rouge regime right after I had left school. I was learning at Chompou Vorn School when I was evacuated from my hometown to a village nearby known as Kambol. I was with a mobile unit and worked almost twenty-four hours a day with only about four hours of sleep at night. The hardest time was in the year 1976. It was the worst year of all. I lost 29 family members. I am an orphan now.

The level of pain that I lived with and witnessed over the three years, eight months and 20 days between 1975 and 1979 is something I am still unable to explain. I still have questions about it. What were the leaders doing? Were all the people who lived under this regime just seen as toys that could be killed and tortured for pleasure, at the will of the leaders? Were those people born, to be murdered and punished by the leaders, innocent?

I still have dreams about the the Khmer Rouge, of all the difficult times I lived through. This kind of memory will last forever, but perhaps not for those who didn't live through it as I did. Perhaps they just think that something as cruel and heinous an act as this seems impossible to be real.

The reason why we as Cambodian artists have to speak out about The Khmer Rouge regime is to keep the memory of those who suffered during that time alive. This is how The ART OF SURVIVAL exhibition can play a significant role; it reflects and reveals a particular time that can not be forgotten.

The works of the younger generation of artists, to me, seem to lack a strong critique of what actually happened during this period. For elder artists like myself, the works we make largely reflect on what really occurred during the regime, for we witnessed the incidents with our own eyes. However, perhaps others will consider our works differently, but it is important to realise that the meanings and feelings behind that of the elder artists' works cannot be compared to their profound feelings about the devastation of Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime.

I am happy to play a part in the ART OF SURVIVAL project. A society of art is an advanced society, not a backward one. When there is war there is no art and when the war is over there comes art."



“MY RELATIVES”

By Suos Sodavy

Oil and ink on canvas (110 x 90 cm), 2008

SUOS SODAVY: “My painting is black and white. I used the images of those who were killed because I believe that their spirits are not resting in peace. They hadn’t realized that they were going to die or why they had to die. The pictures I included were taken from behind, not from the front. They refer to every Khmer Rouge victim, not only my personal lost ones.”



PROM VICHET

Cambodia (born in 1956)

Prom Vichet studied at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS from 1971 until 1974, just before the Khmer Rouge came to power. He has worked as an artist in the field of education throughout his whole career. He has illustrated textbooks and designed a Khmer font called 'Phnom Penh 95'. He is currently working as an artist for WORLD VISION CAMBODIA as well as for the MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORT.

PROM VICHET: "I experienced the KR regime from the 17th of April 1975. As survivors we must share our experiences and what we saw. I want to address the name of Pol Pot, and ask why this man became so powerful and why is it that everywhere he pointed was annihilated. From my research, the name Pol Pot comes from 2 words. The word Pol means "politics" whereas the word Pot means "potential". If we translate it into Khmer, it means great imperialist full of dirty tricks. Therefore, it was inevitable that wherever Pol Pot was leading the people was always going to end in suffering.

Art is an important platform with which to remind the younger generation of that dark time. If we tell them verbally, they may not believe us, they could perhaps find it hard to accept the fact that Khmer killed Khmer on such an horrific scale. People were killed indiscriminately with no exception to the innocent babies and the mothers alike. This is what my paintings aim to convey, the innocent victims and their futile cry for help. Once taken, you were dead.

In general, we were really starving. I was the 4th oldest son in the family and all my older siblings had left the family after they got married. During the KR regime it was impossible to find out who was alive or who was dead; it was only after its collapse that we could do so. At the time, I was assigned to be part of a mobile group in the district, we moved from place to place. Six months into the regime I was taken away from my family. From that time on, the starvation got worse. Many of the children in the mobile group starved and died one after the other.

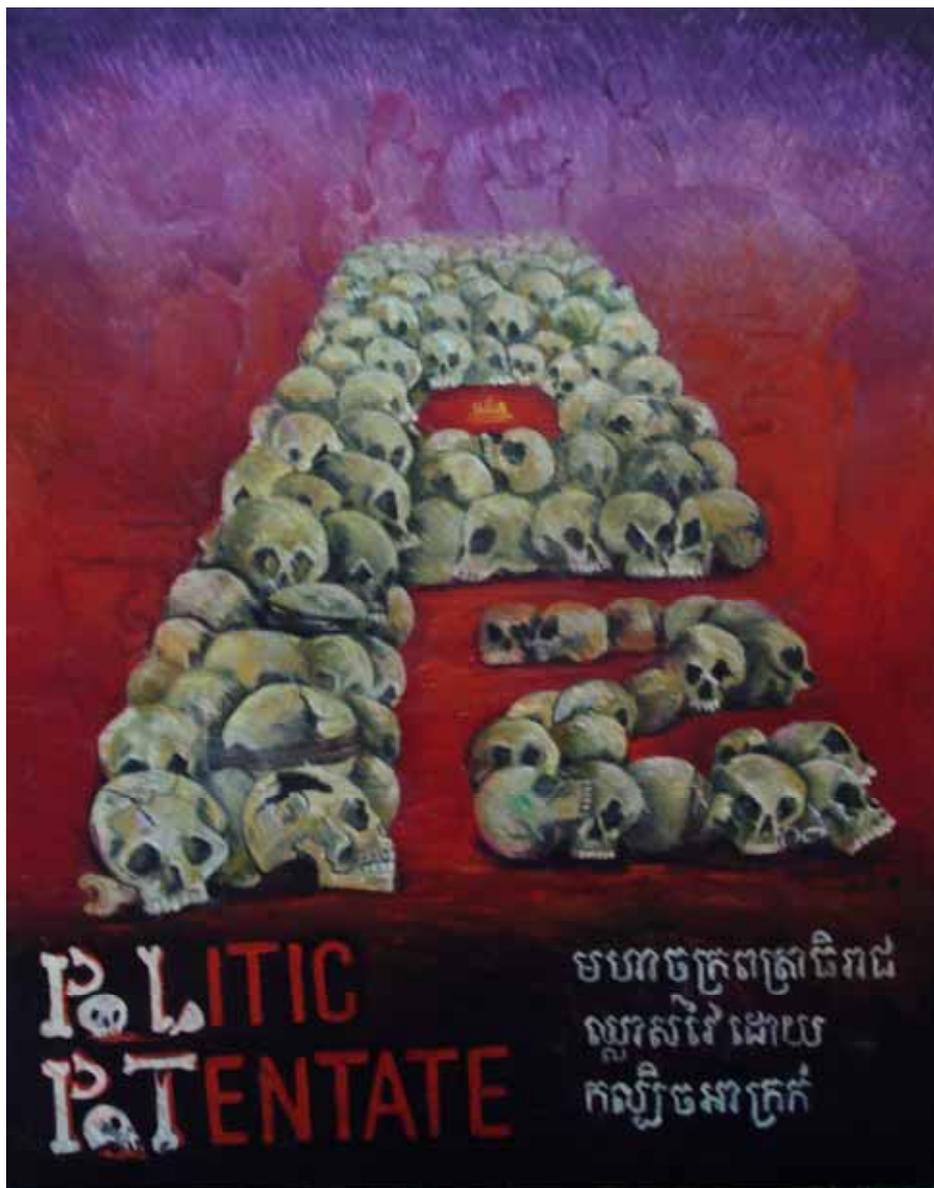
I believe the Khmer Rouge Regime has had a huge impact on today's society. Nowadays we see a lot of violence. During the Khmer Rouge we were discouraged and furious with ourselves and consequently, stressed out. And although under the current regime we can live relatively free and happy with enough food to eat, we are still being affected by that stress and there is anger inside us. When anyone says or does anything wrong, we tend to get angry very easily. This is because of a shared mindset that was shaped by the events in the past, and this mindset is something that cannot be changed.

People nowadays have two opposing responses to the Khmer Rouge. For some their privilege and wealth is directly due to the Khmer Rouge period, and so, their feelings are of fulfilment and security. However for many others who lost family and friends there is a deep sense of injustice and anger towards them and although they may have a good education and subsequently a good job they will never be able to forgive. For most they will never speak out, but inside their hearts, something hot still burns.

We as artists create in order to let others remember. We also want to send a message to our leaders that they must renounce their bad deeds which lead to the harming of others. I think it is their utmost responsibility to be moral, and love and help the people.

This is the first time that Cambodian artists have come together to address this issue. Some artists do not like to talk or even hear about the past, they want to let bygones be bygones. This is perhaps because inside their heart, there is still pain. However, I feel that in memory of our collaboration it is important to talk, and I think based on society and literature, art is made in a way that reflects the social reality.

I hope that future Khmer societies will experience a better and more secure lifestyle than before. In general, I think people respect each other and I want this to continue into the young Khmer generations. In this sense, art is a good education and I think we can start from art, not politics, because education via art is more tender and eye opening.”



“POLITIC POTENTATE”

By Prom Vichet

Oil on canvas (100 x 80 cm), 2008

PROM VICHET: “In the Democratic Kampuchea Regime, the right-wing powerful leaders were full of sky-high pride and set themselves up as politic

potentates. They had so many bad and wily thoughts that the people thought to create the name, Pol Pot. It appeared that they shortened it from the words "politic potentate". This dirty Khmer Rouge regime leader of Cambodia fell into a deep cave, which was a mountain of remains and bloody tributaries leading to a sea of tears of all the Cambodian people. They destroyed all infrastructures. There were no schools, national identities, culture, civilization, religion, national tradition or customs, or any form of human emotions. Everything was full of doctrine, foot-shuffling and marvellous cheating. It brought whole families of innocent people to be killed. There were no mercies, so that all Cambodian people that survived the killing would not forget it."



HEN SOPHAL

Cambodia (born in 1958)

Hen Sophal studied from 1982 until 1985 at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS in Phnom Penh. As well as being a member of the PAINTING DEPARTMENT at the MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS, Hen Sophal is also the owner of the HEN SOPHAL VISUAL ART GALLERY in Phnom Penh near the National Museum. Having won a number of different competitions throughout his career, he has also exhibited his work in Bangkok, Thailand.

HEN SOPHAL: "I worked as a farmer temporarily during the KR regime. During this time I had heard about the executions but did not really know how they executed their victims. Later, when I saw the piles of bones of thousands of people, I realized that the executions really did exist. After the collapse of the regime, I was even more surprised and shocked at how many piles of bones there were in open graves in many different places. I don't think I will ever forget it.

Artists, intellectuals and well-educated people were killed, and the rest were deprived of food in order to make them powerless to fight back. They forced the young and the old to work heavily both day and night. Under the dictatorship, people were accused of being the enemy for making small mistakes, and were killed using various methods: the base of bamboo poles, hoe handles, axes and palm leaves. The small mistakes were things such as stealing pepper (that they had even grown themselves), stealing a chicken egg, stealing potatoes, stealing rice plants, secret love, not being focused on work etc. They pushed people to work, and anything other than work was used as an excuse to kill them.

A lot of journalists have asked me why I did not paint about Pol Pot during the years 1979 and 1980. I did not paint because I thought that at that time the international community had already seen and heard enough from the government broadcasts. Now, the most important factor motivating me to make such paintings is to persist in the prosecution of the Khmer Rouge. These particular paintings sum up many experiences and I want to show that the victims I saw in piles of bones came from all strata of life.

My paintings have significant connections to today's society, and although the Khmer Rouge is over, its impacts are still felt heavily today. One of those is that many Khmer Rouge officials whose hands are stained by blood are still at large. I would like to appeal to the international community to help penalise these people.

All events that occur in Cambodia are linked to the past and to the present as well as the future. During the Pol Pot regime most educated people were killed. Consequently, when the regime was over, it left only the uneducated and this led to a lack of human resources. Many people today tend to make decisions without thinking them through properly; they do it on their own will. This is something that could lead to negative effects in our younger generation's future.

Art today, plays a crucial role in the analysis and improvement of our society after the Khmer Rouge. In addition, it can help communicate the problems that still prevail in Cambodia. There are countless problems. Livelihood

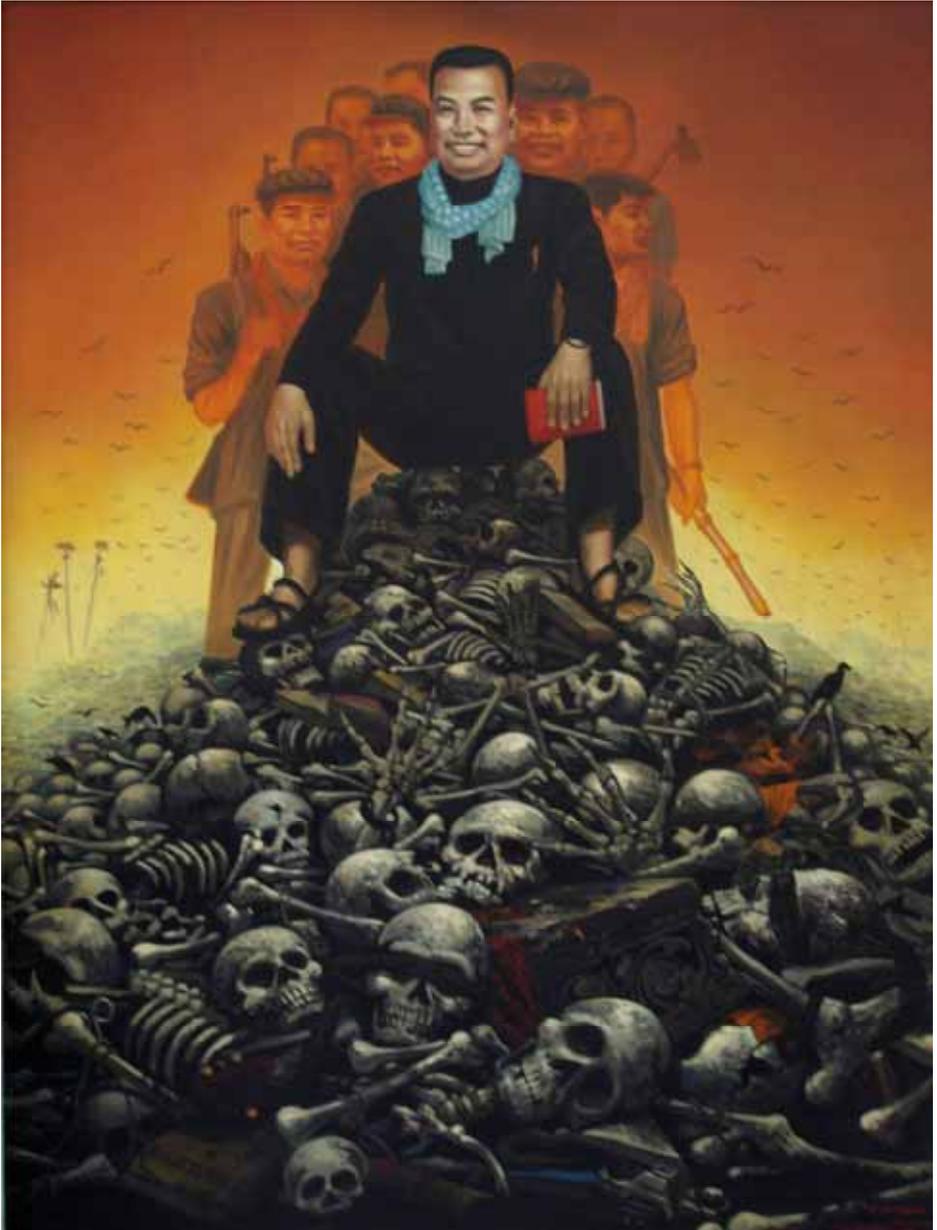
problems, social problems, security problems and jealousy are widespread. They have led many people to resort to violence and selfishness, and to an erosion of social morality.

I believe that through the art of painting we can educate people, including the international community, of the problems that we're facing. We can appeal to the international community for their assistance. Government and non-governmental organizations have already given assistance to Cambodia in many areas, including violence elimination, women's rights, poverty reduction and so on.

As far as the future of our country is concerned I am optimistic and hopeful that Cambodia will make the transition from hardship and immorality to a more moral one with better living conditions. I hope that with the assistance from different organizations, people will be better educated and they will be able to live in happiness. I notice nowadays that there is a lot of dissemination made by organizations aimed at educating people. From these people we can be better informed.

I have also noticed that violence is decreasing and people's suffering is decreasing due to the assistance of these organizations. The poor are able to have access to employment opportunities, and orphans are now being vocationally trained. In short, I feel optimistic.

Finally, under the leadership of the United Nations in bringing the Khmer Rouge leaders to trial, there is high potential and hope for some retribution. I believe that the tribunal will be a success."



**“THE KHMER ROUGE LEADER REIGNED
OVER MORE THAN 3 MILLION BONES”**

*By Hen Sophal
Oil on canvas (182 x 117 cm), 2000*

HEN SOPHAL: “In this painting I wanted to convey three messages. Firstly, I want to remind the survivors of the regime and of the importance that this time was on their lives, so as they don't forget. Secondly, I want to persist with the international bodies who have brought the Khmer Rouge to trial. Thirdly, I want to show the real face of the regime to the younger Cambodian generation. In a deeper sense, I want to communicate that the regime, which lasted for more than 3 years, completely destroyed everything. They killed all kinds of people, piles of bones of intellectuals, religious people, cultural people artists, as well as children.

This painting is significantly related to me. It affects me as an artist who witnessed the regime. Unfortunately many artists were killed, religion was forbidden and people were not allowed to have any religious beliefs or to worship anything. Buddhist monks were not tolerated and monasteries were abolished. I'm very happy to be part of the exhibition ART OF SURVIVAL. This is an opportunity for Cambodian artists, like me, to show my work and for this I am grateful.”



SOEUNG VANNARA

Cambodia (born in 1962)

Soeung Vannara studied at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS in Phnom Penh during the early 1980s. He was later sent to Poland to study at the ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS in Warsaw where he received his M.F.A. in 'monumental painting' (fresco and wall painting) in 1995. He is currently a lecturer in painting at the FACULTY OF PLASTIC ARTS at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS.

SOEUNG VANNARA: "I was 13 years old before the Khmer Rouge took control. At that time, Cambodia was a country of development and prosperity. My father was an art teacher who was making enough money to support the whole family, adequately and happily.

During the Khmer Rouge regime all of my family members as well as most Cambodian people were separated. Other teenagers of my own age and I were grouped by the Pol Pot organization in a unit known as a Mobile Unit. Our duties consisted of building dams, digging up channels of water and trapping and capturing mice or rats so that they would not be able to destroy crops or stored food. My group and I had to get up as early as at 6 o'clock in the morning so that we could travel to work and be at the construction site at 6:30.

The hours we worked were unlimited as it entirely depended on the work designated by the Khmer Rouge. Having dug every day, the channel was getting increasingly longer and longer day by day, and the more the channel became longer, the further we had to travel to work. We travelled around 10 km back and forth.

Every morning before we set off for work, we had a boiled ripen corn and for lunch we had a ladle of cooked rice and some meatless soup with a few water convolvuluses. If the Khmer Rouge found out that a person had caught fish or picked a vegetable without their orders, he or she would be killed or at least tortured.

My father was killed by the Khmer Rouge in 1978 because of vindictiveness and the fact that his previous profession was as a teacher, in addition, they accused him of having been a soldier. After the Pol Pot regime was over, my family were, once again, reunited.

In the wake of the defeat of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, I served as a village militiaman, protecting my village. After that, I served as a soldier with the Vietnamese army where I was transferred from Kandal province to Phnom Penh. Eventually, I returned to Kandal province to live with my family. There were nine people in my family. I was then sent by my eldest brother to study at the Royal University of Fine Arts as I was a gifted artist from a young age, and because our late father was once an artist, he would have wanted me to follow in his footsteps. In my family there are two artists, my fifth younger brother and myself. I specialize in visual painting while my brother specializes in traditional painting.

When I was young I saw art merely as entertainment, but since the time I studied art, I highly value it. I acknowledge clearly the core value of art. Art cannot change a society but it can teach people to seek the meaning and

objective of the art which sometimes reflects problems occurring in a particular society. Prior to learning art, I thought my only purpose was to make money to support my family, however, with my passion for art and the value I place on its importance, my main objective has become to pass my experience on to students of the next generation. That is why, I took up art teaching as a profession.

I feel that students nowadays are less concerned with important issues than the students of say, the late 1980's. I understand that this is a modern society in which motorbikes, cell phones, clothes and other material things play a vital part in arousing and intensifying young people's desires, but these influences seem to affect their studies negatively. Many rarely obey school regulations, they don't focus on their studies, and are reckless in their lives. Having said that, there are a few conscientious students that take care and work hard.

The Cambodian people throughout the country were freed from the Pol Pot regime on the 7th of January 1979. Since then we have survived and even living under the Vietnamese occupation (1979-1989) we had our rights and freedom, but learning had become hard for us. For example if you wanted to learn a foreign language at the time you could only learn Vietnamese or Russian, whereas now you can learn any language and any skill you wish as long as you have the means.

There does exist still though, discrimination, social class hierarchies and law violations with which I disagree. For instance, if there is a traffic sign that says no vehicle is allowed to pass through, for some officials driving a vehicle with a RCAF (Royal Cambodian Armed Forces) number plate, those rules do not apply. These are issues of corruption and bribery.

Furthermore, I have noticed that many families in Cambodia nowadays are not living in such a state of poverty, the middle and upper classes are more visible. Some families have become rich thanks to the sale of their rice fields or farms. I am happy to see that Cambodian society is constantly developing. Of course, in the future I would like my country to be one of good political stability and progressive development in all fields. Furthermore, I would like to see the day when there is no more fighting and no violence, to see that there is a mutual understanding in which discrimination is eradicated. We must exchange our experiences with one another, and this is where art can play a significant role.

Without a shadow of a doubt, I feel very happy and satisfied to be exhibiting my art work together with works from other artists in the ART OF SURVIVAL exhibition. "



“TO THINK”

By Soeung Vannara

Computer Montage (50 x 40 cm), 2008

SOEUNG VANNARA: “Normally, both your family and your society provide you with education, love, forgiveness, sympathy and a sense of value as a

human being. Many people grow up surrounded by happiness in their society and family. So my question is: why do some people hurt their own family or their own society?

I believe Khmer people think a lot about their violent past, the torture, both physical and mental, and the fact that during the Khmer Rouge regime Khmers killed those of their own nationality. Before the genocide people were warm and loving, full of joy and happiness just to be together. So who is guilty in our aggressive history?"



PITEAK

Cambodia (born in 1967)

From 1988 until 1991 Piteak studied modern art at THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS. In 1994 Piteak became a monk to return a good deed to his parents and then left precept in 1997 and began painting. He painted and sketched classical drawings of the Ramayana story for HIS MAJESTY SAMDECH PREAH NORODOM SIHANOUK. Based on classical drawings, modern visual icons and using accessible materials, Piteak's work reflects his personal journey as an artist and a street living individual.

PITEAK: “My father was a civil servant in the Lon Nol regime. The Khmer Rouge killed him. I was put in a Children’s Special Unit. Our duties involved collecting materials for producing natural fertilizer. Sometimes, we had to travel from one village to another to investigate if a person was pretending to be sick so that he or she didn’t have to go to work. We had to find out if that person was telling the truth.

Some Cambodian leaders in the past were good ones. However, sometimes leaders use foreign ideologies and apply them directly to their own nation without any modification. It’s just like testing drugs on a guinea pig. Nowadays, Cambodian people get confused, living between the traditional ideologies and the new ones. Our leaders should balance these ideologies to suit the real-life situation in Cambodia. If they do, they will be able to stimulate people to participate in developing the nation. We cannot just abandon what we have, like culture for example, we can not just replace it with a foreign one. In the past we had a long history of prosperity. I’d like to see our people working hand in hand to develop our country and see this prosperity again.

In the ART OF SURVIVAL project, META HOUSE and the KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG are drawing the public’s attention, including an international audience, and showing them the great achievements of Cambodian artists. They are working hard to help Cambodian art by digging up and bringing back to existence some long-lost masterpieces. This is so as people can acknowledge that great artistic works are still valuable to Cambodian society and that, they too, can start or continue creating this kind of work rather than, in some cases, doing nothing”



“ABOUT POL POT”

By Piteak

Oil on canvas (100 x 120 cm), 2008

PITEAK: “My painting is about Pol Pot. Pol Pot graduated from a Paris university and joined the Indochinese Communist Party, which then consisted of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos.

Through my painting I want to show how the Khmer Rouge replicated foreign ideologies and applied them to our society without alteration to suit the actual circumstances of the nation and the needs of the Cambodian people. They should have considered Cambodian people more so and applied the new ideology in conjunction with the old one. Buddha educated us to commit only good deeds instead of doing bad things and being discriminatory.”



CHHIM SOTHY

Cambodia (born in 1969)

Chhim Sothy studied at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, Phnom Penh, where he specialized in Buddhist themes such as the Ramayana, a mythical Hindu epic. His paintings reflect traditional ideas combined with contemporary elements. His oil works have been exhibited in Thailand, Singapore, the USA and France. Mr. Sothy works in the MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS. In 2008 he travelled to Beijing, China for the OLYMPIC GAMES, where he represents Cambodia as an artist.

CHHIM SOTHY: “I was placed in a children's unit, but we worked like adults. After the liberation day on the 7th of January 1979, I resumed my studies. I'd like all Cambodian people to remember that life under the Khmer Rouge was absolutely devastating. We must evoke these memories so that we know we have to prevent such a regime happening again. As humans we have the ability to distinguish between what is right and wrong, what is good and what is bad. We are not like animals, incapable of thinking of growth and development.

It's been more than 30 years since people were freed from the genocidal regime. They now have enough food to eat and they are free to take up any profession they want in accordance to their individual capabilities. I believe that all of the people in Cambodia are completely enthusiastic about the Khmer Rouge Tribunals, sponsored by the international community. People aren't thinking, “Ok, that's it, let the past be in the past”. In fact, they want to find out who is responsible for committing the genocide and they want to see these people judged and brought to justice.

Art and society are closely related to each other. Art mirrors society. Artists are able to record most historical events that have occurred and extract the main ideas of events through their works of art. Art can be a reminder, a suggestion, or a critique of a past history, therefore, much of the understanding of historical events in society can be attributed to art.

Unfortunately, in Cambodia the freedom of expression of artists is not so broad. Art is not seen to be as valuable as it is in the western world, where, if they feel the need, artists can critique their government through their art, while in Cambodia we are not able to have that freedom of expression. When will the Cambodian government realise the value of art and afford us more freedom. If this happened I think the government could learn, with some constructive criticism, about some of the mistakes it makes, and this would be in the best interests for both parties. They could then be able to adjust certain political positions in response to the citizens' interests. Censorship is hard on artists in Cambodia, they need to be given this freedom for a better outcome.

In the future, I hope that the people who make up the 'great big family' that is Cambodia, regardless of colour, sex, language, religion, political conscience or social status, will come together to do whatever they can to move our country forward. Above all else, I hope that they will honour the rule of law. When we don't respect the laws, we aren't able to find a way out. If we don't respect each other, killings and violence will keep happening. And ultimately, when people are of a certain morality, we will be able to live in harmony and bring happiness to both our families and our country. I am positive about the bright future of Cambodia as long as we do not compromise each other”



“HISTORY WHEEL”

By Chhim Sothy

Mixed media installation (140 x 80 cm), 2008

CHHIM SOTHY: “For my work I have used wood and other materials that I acquired from the market and the countryside. I've used a cattle horn, a wooden clapper, some barbed wire and some other disposables. To emphasize the meaning of my works, I have attached some pictures about the Khmer Rouge that I had taken inside the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, together with various Khmer Rouge symbols, such as a hammer and a sickle.

The Khmer Rouge regime forced people to work according to the principles of the so-called Angkar who created the phrase “history wheel”, a wheel that always keeps moving forward. Those who inserted their hands would have their hands cut off. Those who inserted their legs would have their legs cut off. In the end though, even those who were innocent died. They died with extreme injustice.”



PICH SOPHEAP

Cambodia (born in 1969)

Pich Sopheap was born in Battambang, near the border to Thailand. After the Khmer Rouge regime ended he moved with his family to the USA where he completed his education. Pich returned to Cambodia in 2001, where he developed his unique sculptures made out of bamboo and rattan. In 2005 he organized the first Cambodian art festival VISUAL ARTS OPEN (VAO) together with Linda Saphan. Pich's art work has also been exhibited in France, Norway, Thailand and China.

PICH SOPHEAP: "People are often surprised by how well I remember the time growing up during the Khmer Rouge. I was four when they took over Cambodia. Even though it's hard to put every event in chronological order, some specific events are etched in my memory as clear as daylight.

One of the most beautiful memories was of the very first fish I caught with a fish hook that my father had taught me to make out of a simple wire. That was in 1975 just before my grandmother and grandfather were separated from my family. The fish was a tiny silver catfish. My father was so proud.

We were moved from commune to commune and settled in Macleur in Battambang province in 1976. There my father taught me to make all sorts of things like slingshots, clay marbles, arrows out of wood and bicycle spokes, lizard and rat traps, small toy boats out of the kapok branches, and small knives out of nails. He told me not to stay still, to always try to make something. He said, "If you're hungry, go look for food!" As a four or five year old boy, this was a very difficult challenge and I had to learn very quickly. Being as small as I was I could never compete with other kids at the commune cafeteria. So I was always hungry.

My father hated working on the farm. He didn't like to be in the heat and he didn't like working with a large group of people. So one day he got permission to be the commune's metal smith, making buckets, cooking pots, oil lamps, shovels, spoons and plates out of light metal and tin. Often there were times when he would find me after lunch and he would have me help him with simple tasks. To make plates and spoons, he would carve a mould out of hard wood, lay a piece of tin on it and hammer it into shape. He'd get the shape stable, then ask me to try to finish it. Then he would take a scissor and cut along the edges and had me file it until it was smooth.

One day, we made a spoon out of metal by casting it from a mould made of sand in two wooden boxes. He made the negative from an original spoon, and then poured melted metal in through a small opening. It wasn't perfect, but he was so proud that he'd figured it out. When he wanted to take a nap, he would have me sit with a hammer and bang on things to make noise so that it sounded like he was working. My father never stayed still. Many nights a week he would wake me up around two or three in the morning and show me what he had caught from the fields, mostly lizards and farm rats. These, he would grill. One night he caught a big snake. It was in a bucket and there were baby snakes crawling all over it. It was like magic.

In 1977 or 1978, I spent about two weeks in a boy's labour camp. When the Angkar realized that I was too weak to lift stones in the rice fields and was always lost, they sent me back home. At home, most of my time was spent

looking after my younger brother, making toys, playing games with other kids, and trying to fill my hungry stomach. A few days a week I helped my father with his work. Otherwise, I was left alone to wander. The only time I had to remember was that when the bell chimed, I was to go as quickly as possible to the commune cafeteria with my tin plate and spoon. This happened once around noon and again in the late afternoon.

In 1979, after the regime ended, my family made way on foot toward Battambang Provincial Town with not much more than some rice, a cooking pot and a couple of other things. It was during this time that I saw dead people for the first time. We walked for several days and they were everywhere – on the roads, in the rice fields, in the ponds, trenches, even in hammocks on the trees. They were men, women, children and soldiers. There were burned out tanks and unexploded bomb shells scattered all along the way. It was like a serial nightmare for me but my mother and father were calm. We just kept on walking...

The Khmer Rouge Era still has influences on my everyday life. At that time you had to obey people and you didn't trust anybody. So still now, people have a hard time trusting others. They are also still very afraid. I think that, in some cases, the mentality of the people is that if you want respect, you have to make people afraid. People are very scared of authority because it is never about a two-way negotiation. There is always the one who is giving and one who is receiving.

People tell me, that in comparison to the Khmer Rouge era, children today are too individualistic and are mostly concerned with what they want and who they are. Children now, especially in Phnom Penh, want to be independent and this is very hard for the parents to deal with. I personally believe that this is essential for them, it's what they have to do to find out who they are and get away from this authoritarian kind of mindset.

I think that the society has to change itself because nobody else can change it for them. We have to get back to basics, we have to go to school and learn how to read again and learn how to listen, be curious and interested. We have to educate ourselves. Society can do this through reading and listening to people. Then I think we, as a society, we are making progress. Having said that, people are trying to do the best they can in spite of many difficulties they face. I believe there will be change.

Firstly though, mentalities have to change. People must change themselves first before they can change a society. Individuals need to feel that they want to be better people and not do things because it will get them a job but because they need to do it to better themselves. Then finally society can perhaps come

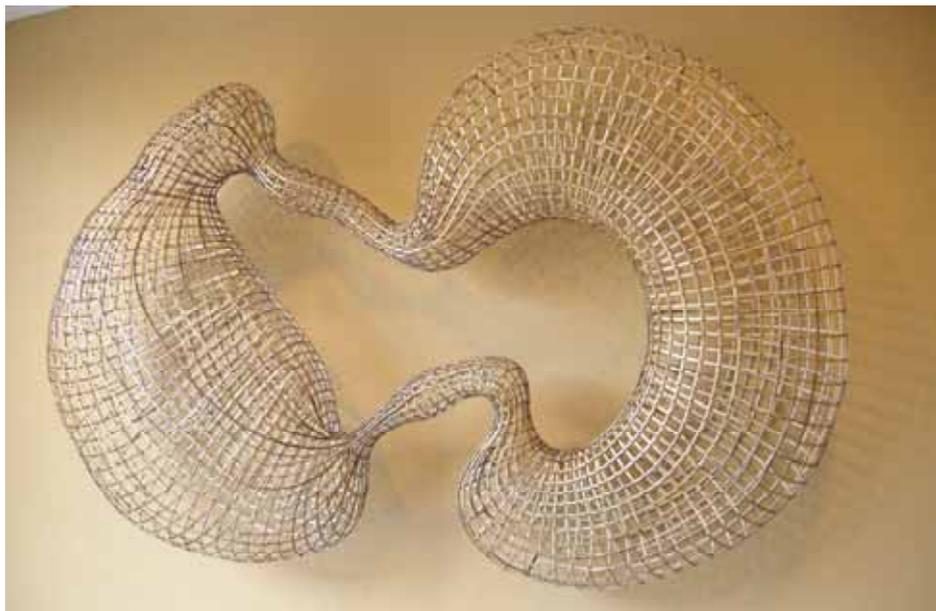
together and create something meaningful. The biggest change will take place in the people's mind.

Cambodia needs to open up. It's too small a place to remain closed. The Khmer Rouge Tribunal is an important step in bringing Cambodia to the attention of an international audience. I suppose the best outcome from this is that hopefully people will tell some truths about what they know, and not continue the history of lying, the history of deceit. I feel that if the people open up and be brave enough to explain their positions, not politicize them, that the public will understand and that will make for a greater good.

As far as artists are concerned I think we should be free to deal with whatever issue that we feel needs to be addressed. To do this, particularly depends upon each respective artist, on his or her own philosophy. I personally think that dealing with the Khmer Rouge, dealing with that time, is not just about trying to make images that speak about it. It's as important to deal with it through one's way of being as well as recognise and remember that you did live through that time. Expressing oneself comes in many forms, you just have to find your own way of expression.

As an artist in Cambodia you have many things to deal with. There is the present time which is still difficult, and I think for young kids growing up after the 80s, Cambodia is a very strange place. It has gone through so many transitions. It is perhaps a lot for them to handle when they are 25, to learn exactly what the Khmer Rouge time was about. In my opinion it's important for us to tell them that they should learn and know this history. Perhaps when they are 35 or 40, maybe then, they'll realise that they are done with searching themselves and that they need to go back a little bit further in their history and put everything together.

As an artist I think you can not change anything if you don't work, working is a kind of resistance. If you work to better yourself, other people around you will somehow receive impacts and influences from your work. An artist can inspire perhaps even just a few people, but that is already a start. Therefore, the more artists the better."



“CYCLE 1 (EDITION OF 3)”

By Pich Sopheap

Rattan and Wire installation (230 x 135 x 52 cm), 2008

PICH SOPHEAP: “I made a big shift from painting to sculpture in 2004. I believed the shift happened because I was thinking more and more three dimensionally as the shapes from the Cambodian countryside began to speak to me of my childhood memories. It seemed to me that there were meanings imbued in the shapes of the rice straw stacks, the barns with walls made from clay and straw, the buffalos covered in mud and the bamboo chicken cages. They were all sculptures to me. I kept thinking: “There are meanings in all of this, I have to make sense of it.” When I made my first sculpture out of rattan and wire it was like going back in time. I felt like a kid again.

I tend to approach each new work intuitively. I’ve always thought that when the work is true to me, it has in it, all my experiences. I never feel that I have to make work about one particular thing. It’s better to have a good idea as a potential to start with, and the hope to arrive somewhere meaningful with it. My sense of when a sculpture is successful is when the end product leaves me with a kind of wonderment. There should always be some room for others to relate to it in their own way.

“Cycle”, is a variation of a larger version I made in 2004. I connected two stomachs together to suggest ideas of family ties, a pattern of poverty and hunger, and the struggle to stay together with limited means.”



LEANG SECKON

Cambodia (born in 1974)

Leang Seckon holds a BA degree from the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS with an emphasis in Design. He has exhibited extensively in Cambodia and in places such as Norway, Hong Kong and the US. As well as painting, he has run workshops, given lectures and illustrated a book. An ardent supporter of environmental issues, he is one of the founders of the RUBBISH PROJECT, a network of volunteers working in the arts and entertainment industry raising the profile of environmental issues in Cambodia.

LEANG SECKON: "I experienced the Khmer Rouge regime but I was very little, around three or four years of age. One day I went to defecate outside a hospital that was adjacent to a school that functioned as a prison at time. I was completely horrified when I saw some of the prisoners pulling a plough on a rice field. As they were too weak to pull the plough the Khmer Rouge guards started hitting them with a nest of large ants. The beatings left them crawling and rolling, naked in the rice field. I hurried back inside the hospital and since that day that image remains with me.

Another incident happened in late 1979. There was a lot of gunfire at the time and we went without food for a long period. We were so scared we didn't know where to go and I didn't know where my father and other relatives were. I only had my mother. I can't recollect everything as I was so young, but I remember feeling deeply terrified.

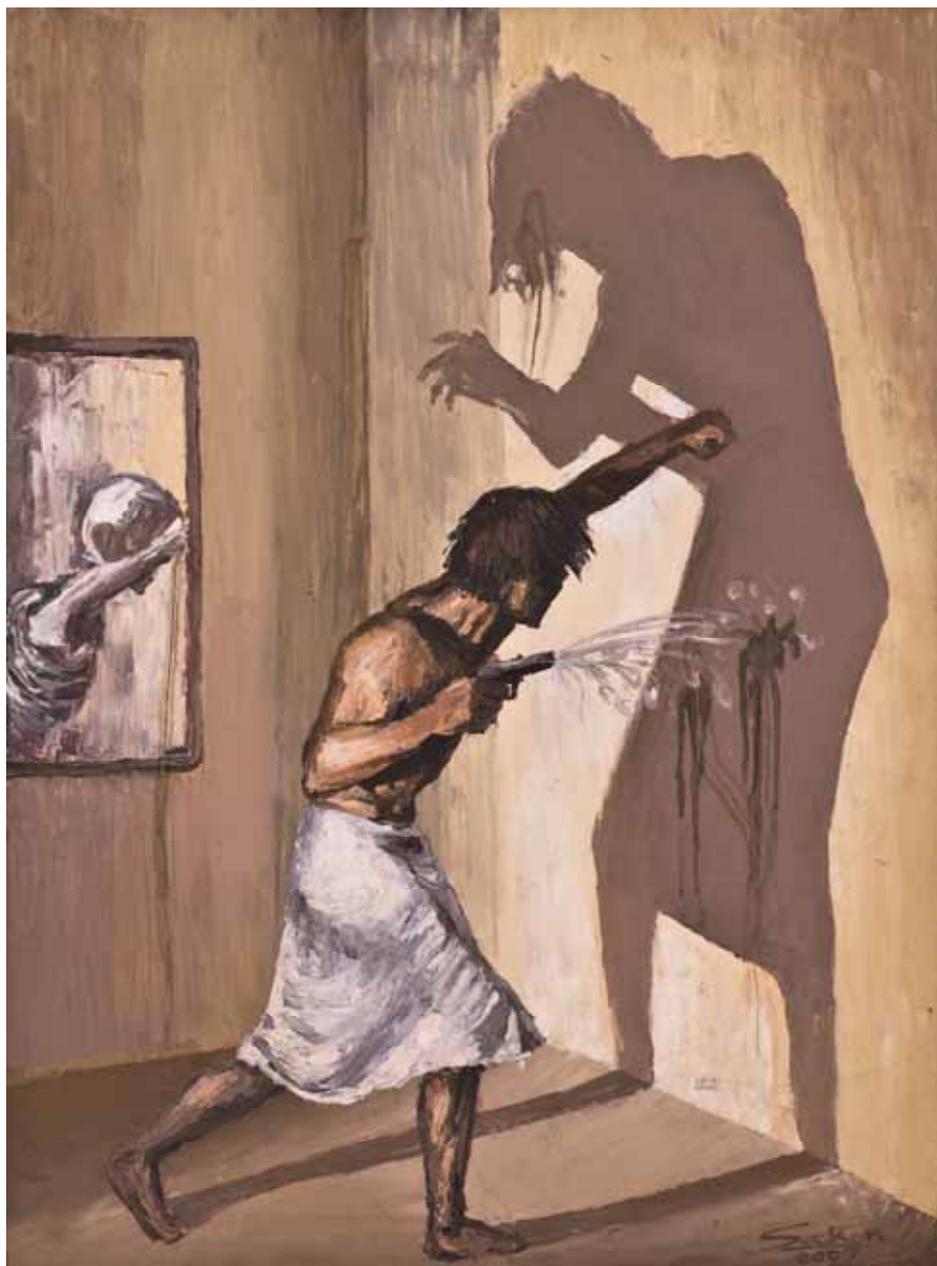
When I talk to youngsters in this generation about what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime, they don't believe what I'm telling them. They say it's impossible for human beings to kill or starve each other. Consequently I am very worried that new generations will not believe that this is exactly what happened. Having experienced it myself, I would like historians to record it correctly and precisely.

Last year I visited TOUL SLENG GENOCIDE MUSEUM for the first time. I was so terrified and shocked it made me sick. However, the visit refreshed my memory of the past and my belief that we must work hand in hand to prevent this kind of injustice. It is my deepest hope that the Khmer Rouge trial will be fair to those who suffered in the past.

The aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime has influenced people emotionally- both those who suffered and those who committed the crimes, resulting in a confusing situation. If one mixes clean and bloodstained cloth and then divides it into two piles, the result is two piles of mixed-up cloth. The same holds true for the people who lived during the Khmer Rouge regime - there is no clear cut between those who suffered the tragedy and those who caused it.

The best way to end the confusion is through justice and the people who committed the crimes should be held responsible for their actions. We should ensure safety and transparency to the victims, as bringing justice to the people is the most important issue for Cambodian development and for the future of the nation.

Artists represent people and as artists we need to express our opinions since they play a vital role in society. People can easily identify aspects of society through our work. Artists play a unique and vital role just like the main character in a Cambodian folklore, they are like God in the 'Ramayana'..."



“MY SHADOW”

By Leang Seckon

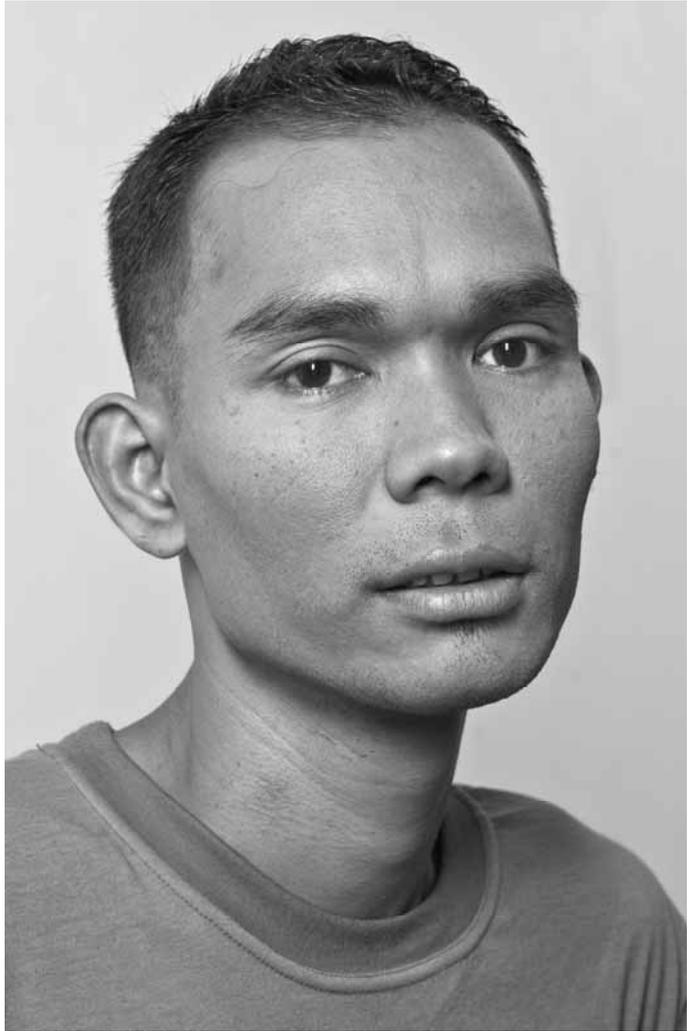
Oil and mixed media on canvas (90 x 70 cm), 2003

LEANG SECKON: “The purpose of my painting is to reflect the shadow of a person, one’s own shadow. When we move forward our shadow stays behind us, but if we try to pursue our shadow it darts away. The shadow in my painting is moving towards us. It mirrors who we are and what we are doing.

This shadow reflects an interim regime in which people committed violent crimes lied and refused to tell the truth. It shows the fears of those who committed the crimes and their fears for the consequences of their actions. The mirror is reflecting the guilty- those who killed and destroyed our nation.

The aim of this painting is firstly to focus on the survivors of the Khmer Rouge regime and secondly to focus on ex-Khmer Rouge officials who survived the regime and who now hold high-ranking positions in the government. I finally wish to focus on humble people who make mistakes. I believe that if there is no justice and feasible solutions provided for these people the problem will inevitably last forever.

My work is straightforward in its meaning. It is about a man who visits the bathroom to have a shower. This man was a killer in a cruel regime and this cleansing is only of the outer part of his body, in reality his hands and his heart are covered with cruelty and with the victims’ blood. It is like a shadow and it reflects his cruelty and the brutal acts he committed towards other people...”



CHAN NAWATH

Cambodia (born in 1975)

Chan Nawath studied Traditional Khmer painting at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, Phnom Penh, as well as Modern painting, Interior Design and Plastic Arts. He won first prize in a painting competition on HIV/AIDS organized between the MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS and UNESCO. He has participated in a number of different group exhibitions in places such as SALA ART, the KHMER ARTS ACADEMY and META HOUSE. When not busy with own work Chan Nawath collaborates with foreign artists to provide arts activities to the children of the NGO MITH SAMLANH (FRIENDS).

CHAN NAWATH: “Throughout Cambodian history leaders tend to regard themselves as God and this kind of feeling lasts for generations. During the Khmer Rouge regime the leaders considered themselves the ‘father of Angkar’- that meant that they were the father of the nation and we, the society, were their children.

The children of Khmer Rouge were not allowed to do anything; people were forced to work like robots. They used people as tools to accomplish their objectives denying them any freedom of expression and reducing them to slaves, ready to execute their orders- without any autonomy.

Today people still tend to act like robots - albeit for different reasons. Cambodia’s economic development is remarkable, but emotional and social development is still weak. Poor and incompetent people are treated as dirt. Society is neither equal nor fair, except for those who have money.

To me this is similar to living in the Khmer Rouge times: the people who have power can do anything. Teenagers spend their time with gangsters, sniffing glue or taking drugs. They allow drugs to influence their lives and they are uncertain about their future. They should focus on self-awareness instead, so that they do not end up being a tool for someone else. If we are not knowledgeable we cannot manage or control anything and we just do what we are told - like robots.

Without a shadow of a doubt our society has been influenced by the Khmer Rouge regime. Cruel and intolerant behavior, selfishness and the feeling of “If I don’t kill you, you’ll kill me” are part of this legacy. One we seem incapable of escaping.

Contemporary Cambodian society is very materialistic and people are so selfish that another regime is likely. During Pol Pot’s time they did what they did for the sake of the collective objectives of Angkar, but what is happening today is merely for personal benefit...”



“CHILD OF ANGKAR 1”

By Chan Nawath

Oil and mixed media on canvas (80 x 60 cm), 2008

CHAN NAWATH: “In the book ‘The History of the Khmer Rouge’ I found the following quotations taken from the slogans of the Khmer Rouge regarding education: “ANGKAR had no educational certificates for students. It had only a sign that read: ‘if you need a school grade you must get it from the work done at the dam and channel. Learning, writing and mathematics are not important. The significant things are work and the Revolution Movement.”

Children received minimal training in reading and writing. Most of their studies were focused on political education. They were taken away from their homes to join ideological training groups in order to serve the military, guards or others.

Children were also assigned work in the Democratic Kampuchea regime. It was their job to collect cow dung and human excrement to make fertilizer. They would also transport weapons to battlefields where they ran the risk of being wounded or killed. Moreover, these children were torn away from their parents and had never known their family’s warmth.”



VANDY RATTANA

Cambodia (born in 1979)

Vandy Rattana is a self-taught photographer whose interest in politics, design and philosophy is reflected in his work. Images of chess players focused on their game or office workers looking bored are just some of the worlds he has tapped into. As part of the recent MEKONG ART AND CULTURE PROJECT he had the chance to work with artists from Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. His work has been exhibited in the Netherlands and in various shows in Cambodia.

VANDY RATTANA: "I was born in 1980 so I was slightly influenced by the Khmer Rouge regime and cannot help but wonder why they massacred well-educated people.

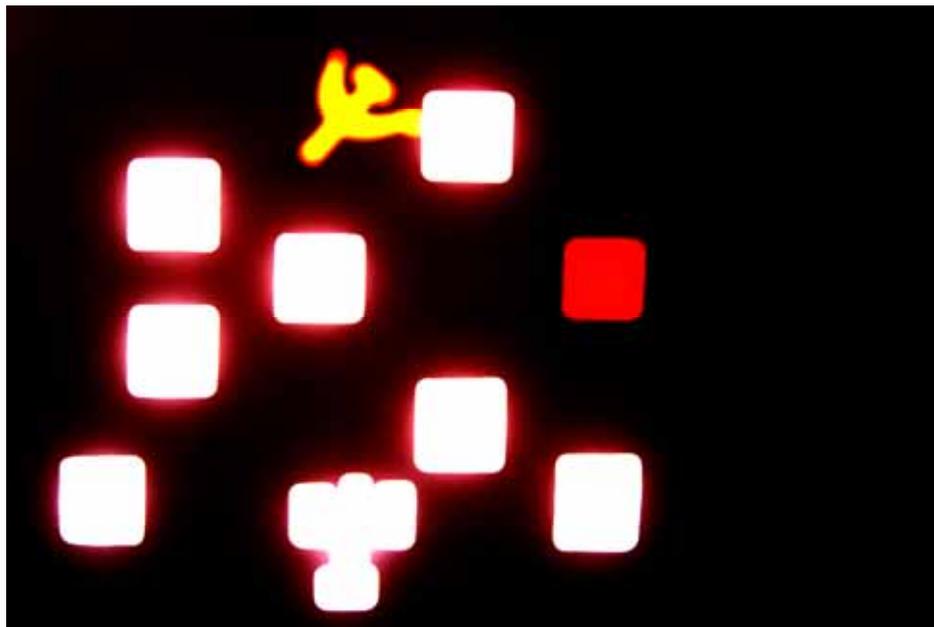
I believe it's necessary to improve people's education about the Khmer Rouge. There is plenty of information available; who they were, where they were from, et cetera. However, materials in Khmer and especially in plain and simple language are still lacking, despite the fact that more than 80% of Cambodian people are farmers whose general knowledge is still limited. If we can help them understand why the genocide took place we can prevent it from happening again.

Despite some unacceptable aspects in Cambodian society, I am optimistic about the future of this country. It is at a turning point, similar to riding in a car- when you reach a crossroads and are deciding whether to turn left or right, your body will sway back and forth before you settle into your chosen direction.

I don't mind the changes taking place in the political arena but I would like the government to accelerate the process. In developed societies citizens, through a voting process, elect leaders. It is not done by a dictatorial power. The government of Cambodia, conversely, is ruling the country regardless of what people decide.

I wish to appeal to our young people, for they are our fundamental resources, to participate in the building of our nation. They must understand that this landmark obligation does not fall merely on the government, but on them as well.

I'd like all Cambodian people and the government to work hand in hand in order to seek the causes of the genocide. Above all else, we must do whatever we can to achieve a qualified educational system because a country without one will easily be affected by violence committed by uneducated people; it's a natural cause."



“GOING FANATIC”

By Vandy Rattana

Photograph (40 x 60cm), 2008

VANDY RATTANA: “My installation shows a political chessboard. There are two blocks, or countries, in the installation. They are the United States and the Former Soviet Union. Cambodia was one the countries victimized by the ideologies of these two blocks, symbolized by the red square among all the black squares in the installation.

GOING FANATIC is my personal opinion on the Khmer Rouge and how they came to be; one cause is the influence of the contradictions between Communism introduced by the Soviet Union (that collapsed in early the 1990s) and the famous democracy introduced by the United States of America. Secondly is the fact that the Khmer Rouge group itself was going fanatic with the ideology.”



SIN SODA

Cambodia (born in 1980)

In 2006 Sin Soda graduated from the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ART with a B.A in painting. Her work emphasizes mask making and she has participated in exhibitions at META HOUSE as well as at the DEPARTMENT OF PLASTIC ARTS at the MINISTRY OF CULTURE in Phnom Penh. In 2007 she became a member of SELAPAK NEARI an art group of women founded by Cambodian artist Linda Saphan.

SIN SODA: "I joined the ART OF SURVIVAL project at META HOUSE because I wanted to let the public know about the Khmer Rouge regime. It is vital for every artist to have a chance to express their opinions and to show the public their works of art reflecting the difficult time our people endured during the regime.

The main of idea behind my artwork is to reveal people's hardship during the Khmer Rouge regime. They were separated from their family and most lost their loved ones. Some of them were killed, whilst most of them starved.

In fact, when I was making this piece I feared that it would annoy some because it is about the genocide regime. I was born in 1980 and learned about the Khmer Rouge through stories told by my parents and relatives and by reading documents and watching movies. I used to talk to my friends about the Khmer Rouge and they too learned about it through their relatives.

Cambodian society today is influenced by the Khmer Rouge regime. Some of the influences include violence and fear. We fear that this type of killing regime may return. However the country is under development and I am hopeful that in the future Cambodia will not suffer any more wars or genocide regimes ever again."



“PRISONER”

By Sin Soda

Mixed media object (65 x 45 cm), 2008

SIN SODA: “The main of idea behind my piece is to reveal people’s hardship during the Khmer Rouge regime. They were separated from their family and most lost their loved ones. Some of them were killed and many others starved. The colour black represents the sadness and the suffering of the prisoners. The smiles on their faces show their innocent imprisonment.”



OEUR SOKUNTEVY

Cambodia (born in 1983)

Oeur Sokuntevy studied Art and Painting from 2001 to 2004 at PHARE PONLEU SELEPAK Art School in Battambang. Her work is on display at THE SINGAPOREAN ART MUSEUM and part of the permanent collection at META HOUSE. She has had solo shows at different locations around Phnom Penh, showcasing her contemporary take on traditional themes and this has recently included a sculpture exhibition. She currently resides in Phnom Penh.

OEUR SOKUNTEVY: “I did not pay much attention to the Khmer Rouge issues although I heard about them through my elder relatives. I know about the killings, but I never witnessed any of them with my own eyes so how can I feel the pain? I believe I have to forward.

The ART OF SURVIVAL project asked for ideas from artists, both young and old regarding the Khmer Rouge regime. However, the younger artists cannot understand the pain experienced, as they were not born then.

I believe the Khmer Rouge era doesn't have any influence on young people in this generation, nor will it on the generations to come. Yet the older generation is still affected by the bitter memories and they cannot forget. Some rich people send their children abroad as they are scared that another genocide regime may occur.

I don't know what will happen in the future, I know only about the present. I wish for Cambodia to be prosperous in many different areas of development. Cambodia is in peace now and there is freedom for individuals. However, there's a big gap between the rich and the poor, one that just keeps growing. I wish for an end to this.

An improved educational system is very important in Cambodia. When equipped with sufficient human resources, a country can be developed. People from rural areas are not educated so they work as labourers or factory workers and make little money.

Art is very helpful for the development of a society and every country needs it. I just wish for the works of art to be valued by the public, and I wish for artists to be treated like other white-collar workers.”



“I AM TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS”

By Oeur Sokuntevy

Acrylic on self-made paper (82 x 78 cm), 2008

*“In Democratic Kampuchea, there is no exploiting class,
and thus no longer any victims of the exploiters....*

Clean and pure, there is no corruption...

independence, perfect peace, and complete neutrality.”

(From Pol Pot’s Little Red Book, page 56/57, by Pol Pot)

OEUR SOKUNTEVY: “My painting for the ART OF SURVIVAL exhibition shows a young girl in sexy clothes making a phone call. You could say the girl is me. She is staring through the window overlooking the river to a suburb

area. She is thinking hard about the future. At her feet there is a dead body, bloodstains and some ropes.

I am still young and I don't want to think about the past, only about the future. That is why the girl in the picture is looking ahead although she knows that a lot of bad things took place in the past. She doesn't want to look back."



HIEM AN KANNITHA

Cambodia (born in 1984)

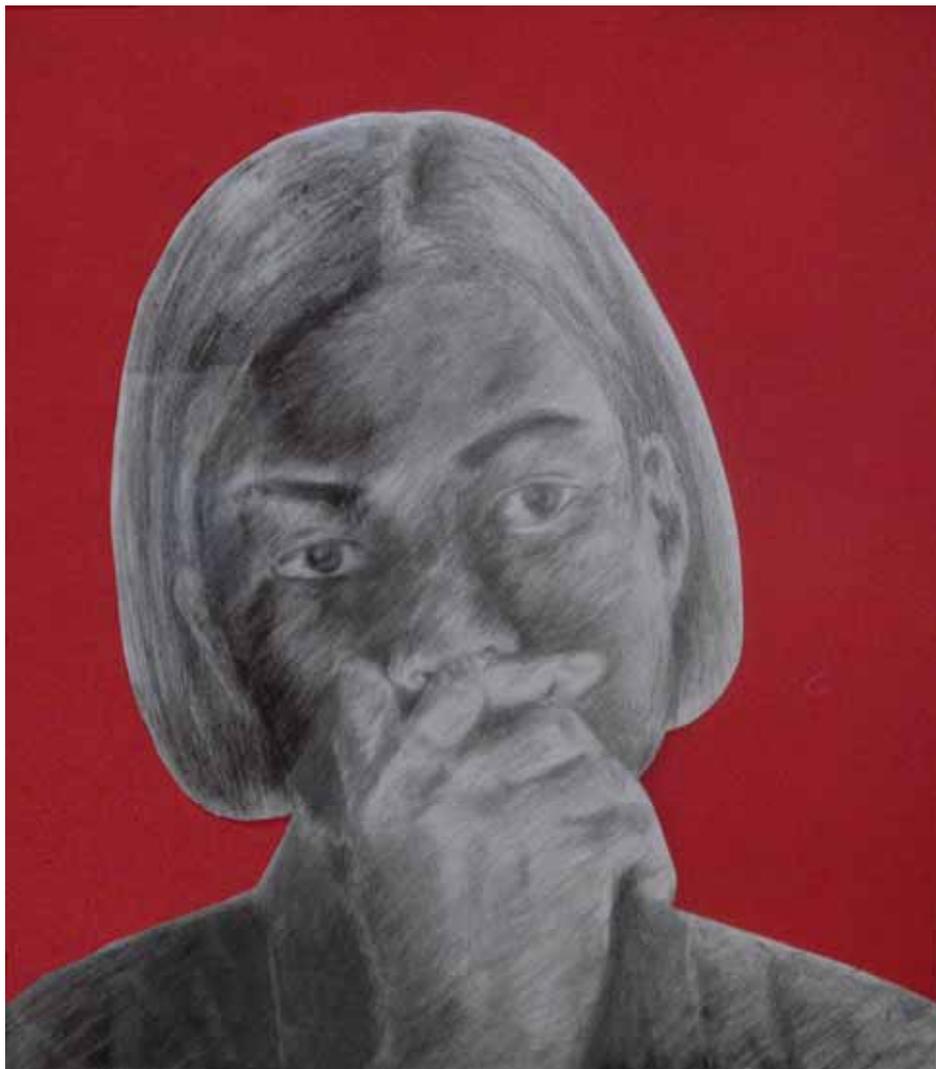
Having graduated from the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, Hiem An Kannitha describes drawing as a way to express emotions that she cannot put into words. As well as taking part in various group exhibitions in the capital, she has completed a course in Pedagogical studies at NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, Phnom Penh. In 2007 she joined SELAPAK NEARI an art group of women founded by Cambodian artist Linda Saphan.

HIEM AN KANNITHA: “I was not born during the Khmer Rouge regime, but I remember the year 1993 when a few ousted Khmer Rouge guerrillas came into my village and fired some shots to scare people. I ran for my life.

The ART OF SURVIVAL project plays a key role in reminding people of the Khmer Rouge regime and what happened. It is a valuable opportunity for Cambodians, as well as foreigners, to witness certain aspects of the Khmer Rouge regime.

The Khmer Rouge era still affects our society. The country lacks valuable human resources and some youngsters in this generation are very aggressive.

I am nevertheless hopeful that the future of Cambodia will be brighter. I strongly believe that the genocide regime will not happen again because Cambodia has become a member of the United Nations and various other associations. If anything happens those countries will get themselves involved. The future of Cambodia will be a prosperous one.”



“BEING SILENT”

By Hiem An Kannitha

Pencil and mixed media (50 x 48 cm), 2008

HIEM AN KANNITHA: “I used to hear my parents talk about their suffering during the Pol Pot regime. I can imagine that it was better for them to be silent during those days....”

While making my artwork I found it hard to apply real feelings to the drawing, as I didn't live through that regime. The works done by older artists who went through it clearly mirror the way the Khmer Rouge's government treated people. We, the younger artists, basically depend on documents and materials about Khmer Rouge together with our personal skills to develop all these works because we did not experience it."



TITH VEASNA

Cambodia (born in 1984)

A graduate from the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, Tith Veasna has exhibited at different galleries in Phnom Penh. She also recently curated her first exhibition entitled I WONDER at the DEPARTMENT OF PLASTIC ARTS. She took part in an exchange program INDONESIA ARTS AND CULTURE 2007 and was also involved the 2008 SPOTLIGHT FESTIVAL in Phnom Penh. In 2007 she joined SELAPAK NEARI women's art group - founded by Cambodian artist Linda Saphan.

TITH VEASNA: "I'm not a living witness. As an artist, I have learnt about the Khmer Rouge from what I have researched. It is history- meaning it is not some kind of story that you can create from your imagination. As kids we learnt firsthand about the regime from our family and as we became more educated we understood more.

I don't want to talk about political issues, even though as artists we have freedom, we cannot really touch deeply into politics as, strictly speaking, it is not our area of expertise. We are mirrors reflecting what has happened, but we cannot attack any specific person; instead as artists we want people to see our work and to show that it is made based on our knowledge and research.

Written publications on the Khmer Rouge are printed for the literate, not the illiterate. A book based on serious research is very important for educated people, as they are what we call "the child who one day becomes the father of the man." These educated people can lead society.

Having said that, it does not mean that the people who lack education and understanding are not important; they are absolutely important as well. That is why two kinds of books are necessary; one filled with words and the other one filled with drawings. When the less educated people see the drawings with a few written explanations they can work out the meanings.

The impacts of the Khmer Rouge are still felt- particularly through the complete loss of self-confidence in people. Once the scenes of fear and killings are printed in people's memories they become nightmares that keep haunting them. It is these nightmares that make them lose their self-confidence. They were afraid of the regime that they survived because the regime did not give them a sense of security, but a sense of selfishness in which they had to do whatever they could just to survive. Today many people are still selfish.

Young people need to know that the regime really occurred in this country and that the aging generation really experienced it. A country needs to be reminded of its past at times; or one day the past might come back and repeat itself.

Art helps to remind and because of the arts we have many records and stories from the past that help us visualize the future. This is why artists play a vital role, they function as a mirror reflecting society...."



“BLIND PINS”

By Tith Veasna

Mixed media on canvas (60 x 90 cm), 2008

TITH VEASNA: “To Cambodians a pin attached to a black piece of cloth represents mourning. Cambodians believe in Buddhism, however during the regime people were not allowed to express mourning over any death. They suffered tremendously yet they had no way of expressing it as sorrow was seen as betraying the regime and led to death. It was a nightmare in the history of Cambodia – Cambodians killed Cambodians.”



YAM SOKLY

Cambodia (born in 1984)

Currently an architecture student at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, Yam Sokly also works for ARCHITECTURE RESEARCH KHMER (ARK) – founded by art historian and book author Helen Grant Ross – surveying old buildings and making designs for renovation. He also works as SOPHIA MISSION’S Project Architect, working on the preservation of the temples of Angkor and as a guide for KHMER ARCHITECTURE TOURS.

YAM SOKLY: “In relation to the Khmer Rouge, I absolutely believe that everyone, including my family, is affected either directly or indirectly. I lost three family members and despite being born after the Khmer Rouge regime it still has a painful effect on me, not to mention the effect it has on my father.

The memories keep on interfering in people’s ways of living, their social lives, and their communication. We must not frighten ourselves with those memories, for they are obstacles to advancement. Instead it is crucial for us to know, understand and remember what took place in the past and to learn from this experience and use it in real-life situations so that the bad does not repeat itself.

Art mirrors society. Art can describe something soundlessly. The ART OF SURVIVAL EXHIBITION is an epoch in our society as it enables Cambodian people, most importantly the younger people in this generation, to express their opinions about what they heard from their parents and from other people. This is particularly poignant in light of the KHMER ROUGE TRIBUNAL. We will be able to speak our minds about the Khmer Rouge regime. An opportunity we have not yet experienced.

Today people are filled with fear, for example the fear of making mistakes. In this context we must be brave enough to move on and when we make a mistake, we should learn from it. In addition nepotism impedes the development of our society. We shouldn’t care who people are or where they’re from; as long as they are capable of performing an assigned task we should give them a chance.

Finally, I think if people are increasingly concerned with the pain and let it consume all of their time they will not have adequate time to develop themselves. We must learn from the pain and move on.”



“REFLECTION”

By Yam Sokly

Mixed media on canvas (60 x 90cm), 2008

YAM SOKLY: “The mirror is a tool for reflection. When standing in front of a mirror with a kind and compassionate person, we see an angel playing a trumpet from heaven. If we put a member of the Khmer Rouge in front of a mirror we see the shocking images of men -- close to 2 million Cambodians -- slaughtered, worked to death or killed by starvation.

My piece is about reflection. There are people on the upper half of the painting and their shadows are on the bottom half. The colours I used were mostly black and white for the black refers to one aspect of society and the white to another.

The people walking on the upper part of the paintings are Pol Pot’s soldiers escorting three people to be killed. There are five different shadows for the five people in the painting. Two belong to the soldiers while the other three belong to the victims. The victims are wearing different hats. Through the hats we can tell that one victim is an art performer, because he’s wearing a mock crown; one is very wealthy person; and the other one represents well-educated people because he’s wearing a black hat. I wanted to show that during the Khmer Rouge regime people from all walks of life were executed but it is impossible for me to paint all the people killed during at that time, so these three represent all the victims.”



TITH KANITHA

Cambodia (born in 1987)

Tith Kanitha studied Interior Design at the ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ART in Phnom Penh and she did a case study on traditional houses in Kandal province. In 2006/ 2007 she attended an art workshop with foreign artists Marc Pollack and Margherita del Balzo and she has exhibited her paintings and installations in group-shows at both META HOUSE and the DEPARTMENT OF PLASTIC ARTS in Phnom Penh.

TITH KANITHA: “When I think about the Pol Pot time I ask myself, ‘how could Khmer people live without human rights?’ In this regime people weren’t physically chained, but mentally. They breathed but were actually dying.

The Khmer Rouge regime has a lot of impact on today’s society. In the past Cambodians were kind and gentle, but now a lot of people lie to one another and are very selfish. The rich don’t care about the homeless and the poor.

I am grateful to the ART OF SURVIVAL project because it is an opportunity for us as artists to express what we wanted to say about the Khmer Rouge and to reveal what happened. As artists we have to stand in the middle; we cannot oppose the government or any other political parties, meaning we can only show people our work, the work that is created after doing some serious thinking. We want people to think when viewing our work.”



“PRISON WITHOUT WALLS”

By Tith Kanitha

Mixed media installation, 2008

TITH KANITHA: “I titled my work PRISON WITHOUT WALLS. Throughout Cambodia during the regime the Khmer Rouge did not need to use a prison because it was useless to chain people as they had no freedom anyway.

My work has four messages. Firstly, I made it from chain sprayed in black and then used that to form the Cambodian flag with the three towers of Angkor Wat – the flag used by the Khmer Rouge. I also used balloons attached to strings. I blindfolded the balloons, making them look like people being blindfolded with scarves or black pieces of fabric, as happened when they were marched off to be killed during the regime. I used strings to attach the balloons because the balloons represent freedom. I tied the strings to the flag-decorated chain because during the regime the whole country, including Phnom Penh and provinces, was controlled by Pol Pot.”

META HOUSE

Founded in January 2007 by German filmmaker and journalist Nico Mesterharm, META HOUSE is Cambodia's first art/media/communication centre. In cooperation with the International Academy at the Free University of Berlin (Germany), the centre is conceived as an overall artistic environment, incorporating the talents of a diversity of artists from around the globe with a focus on Cambodia and the resurrection of the Khmer Arts.

One of our main goals is the direct and equal exchange between artists from Cambodia and the rest of the world to strengthen and develop the Cambodian art scene after nearly 30 years of civil war. To us it makes perfect sense to approach the darkest years in Cambodian history through visual arts like the CAMBODIAN ARTISTS SPEAK OUT project. The Khmer Rouge banned everything that was related to creativity and freedom in all areas from music to the visual and performing arts. Cambodia's artists, who influenced the Southeast Asian subcontinent in the 60s, died or fled into exile. In recent years Cambodia's art scene has blossomed again and Meta House is a part of that.

Art can help to reflect on certain topics and it can heal without using what is, at times, difficult spoken language by simplifying thoughts and emotions. Through an artistic dialog on concepts of identity, culture and lifestyle many boundaries can be dissolved and new perspectives created. Art is unlimited in her pure structure.

Within the first 18 months META HOUSE hosted 16 exhibitions and several workshops with contributions by both Cambodian and international artists. The Khmer masters Svay Ken and Chhim Sothy met young aspiring painters such as Sokuntevy Oeur and Kong Vollak. Furthermore we were happy to welcome international guests such as Alfred Banze (Germany), "B-Crew" (Vietnam), Bruce Gunderson (USA), Juhani Koivumaki (Finland), KM Lo (Singapore), Lutz Mattstaedt (Germany), Beat Presser (Switzerland), Denise Scott (USA), Sutthirat Supaparinya (Thailand), Yoko Toda (Japan) and Jakapan Vilasineekul (Thailand).

We see META HOUSE as a creative platform filled with the enthusiasm of each visiting artist, irrespective of gender, nationality or artistic style. Our approach through these exchanges also functions on an educational level: providing Cambodian artists insight and knowledge about new methods through video art workshops and exposure to other art centres in the region and beyond. Therefore we network with and between artists (both visual and performing), galleries and art centres worldwide to be informed and up to date on all the latest global happenings. The world is as big or small as you

imagine it to be.

META HOUSE is open to all and especially to the Cambodian community. We focus on the involvement of Cambodian society, who sadly lacks knowledge about their own artists. The understanding of art and especially of contemporary art in Cambodia is very limited and emerging artists do not get the appreciation they deserve. Young female artists in particular often face opposition in their decision to become artists as not following the traditional way of life as Cambodian woman is frowned upon. We are highly supportive of female artists and endeavour to adhere to the principles of gender mainstreaming in all our activities.

Promoting Cambodian artists in Cambodia gives recognition to the creative minds living in this country. We invite children and youth groups from orphanages and youth NGOs to visit art exhibitions, documentary screenings and to join artist talks. META HOUSE also offers exhibition space to children's art projects that in the past have included shows such as the "Peace Project" and "Day Dreaming". By providing art education and an understanding of the subject these projects could very well give rise to a future generation of artists.

META HOUSE is a multidimensional space focusing on art, culture and social development. It is an open house for national and international artists, all parts of Cambodian society and foreigners living in Cambodia, or those just passing through. Come and see for yourself...

Lydia Parusol
(META HOUSE Art Manager)

META HOUSE

Street 264, #6 - Sangkat Chaktomuk, Khan Daun Penh,
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia
Fixed : +855- (0) 23 – 224 140
Homepage : www.meta-house.com
Email : mesterharm@gmx.net

Open Tuesday to Sunday, 6PM
Special appointments/info: 012 607 465 or 012 208 347

Portrait Photos by

ANDERS JIRAS

Swedish Photographer, born 1946 in Örebro. He had his first exhibition in 1966 and in 1990 he specialized in dance photography and stage experiments. In 2005 he visited Cambodia for the first time and decided to move to the Kingdom two years later. His Cambodian dance photography has been exhibited in Sweden (2006/2007). As well as the portrait photography, Anders has also photographed some of the artwork in this book.



Artworks Photos by

BRADFORD BOWMAN EDWARDS

Hailing from Maryland, USA Bradford Edwards has exhibited his works in the USA, Germany, Cambodia and in Vietnam, which is where he has lived and worked since the middle of the 90s. His art is also part of the ART OF SURVIVAL exhibition. Also known for his writing on contemporary art, his articles have appeared in various publications such as the NEW YORK TIMES (USA), ART ASIA PACIFIC (Australia), VIETNAM NEWS (VN).



Imprint

Concept	: Wolfgang Meyer, Nico Mesterharm
Editors	: Nico Mesterharm, Wolfgang Meyer, Oum Syvan, Anika Böttcher
Production	: Oum Syvan, Lydia Parusol
Interviews	: Daniel Huhn, Nora Zupan, Oum Syvan
Add. Interview	: Dang Kosal, Sao Sopheak
Translation	: Som Savuth, Kim Sochetra, Yim Sokly
Pre-Selection	: Oum Syvan, Anika Böttcher
Proofreading	: Ali Sanderson, Tanja Wessels
Photos	: Bradford Edwards, Anders Jiras
Make-Up	: So Nita
Design and Layout	: Phang Sokla
Cover Design	: Phang Sokla, Oliver Peters
Printing House	: Hawaii Printing House
Thanks to	: Jim Mizierski, Fleur Smith

A Khmer language version of this paper is available. It may be obtained from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung office in Phnom Penh

www.kas.de/kambodscha

House No. 04, Street 462,
Khan Chamkar Mon, P.O.Box: 944
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

ISBN-9789995088088

