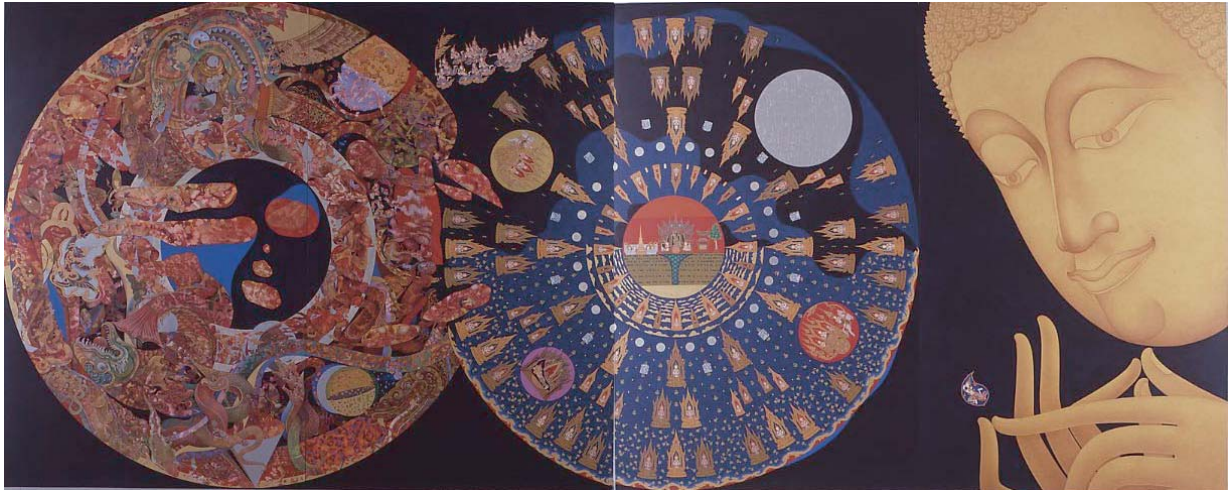


Serene Revolution – Contemporary Art in Thailand

Thursday, September 30 — Saturday, December 25, 2004

Asia Gallery A



Panya Vijinthanasam, *The Journey of Soul*, 2001

This exhibition introduces some remarkable works by Thai artists who have been actively engaged in the Thai art scene since the 1980's to the present day. They seek new ways of expression without being too eccentric or applying extreme forms of expressions. The messages and philosophy contained in their works are very specific to Thailand. The works reflect the contradictions and problems of contemporary society and will, we hope strike a chord in the heart of each visitor.

Thailand in the 80's was in the midst of the rapid economical growth. Contemporary art scene was also vitalized along with economic development. The National Gallery and private galleries were opened as banks and other private companies supported the arts by holding exhibitions and art competitions. Artists who studied abroad came back to the country and sought original ways of expressions that were different from those seen in Western art. Artists who referred to traditional and Buddhism views of the world were called 'Neo Traditionalists'. Panya Vijinthanasam is the pivotal figure among them.

In the 90's, as economic growth slowed down, Thailand faced a series of bloody coup d'état and conflicts between the military and the public, and an economic crisis. In the midst of such social turbulence young artists expressed their views and attitudes to society, the nation state and the world they belonged to. Political instability, social conflicts, distortions in society brought about by rapid economic change became serious issues in society and these artists sought self-expression through the investigation of such themes. Their expressions were not limited to conventional paintings and sculptures but developed into new forms of presentation such as installation and performance. Montien Boonma and Navin Rawanchaikul are the representative figures of this movement who used daily objects in their work and invited viewers to participate in their artworks. They connected art and society, encouraged people to influence each other and helped art become meaningful in society.

There are many international exhibitions and exchange activities in Bangkok and Chiangmai today. Young Thai artists are exposed to foreign influences without traveling abroad, while simultaneously being stimulated by Thai original culture based on Buddhism and the country's rich traditions. We hope the exhibition shows a little of how these young artists create their works in a stream of contemporary art that seeks for the relations and connections between art and society.