

## S.E.ASIA ART EXCHANGE PROGRAM

From 20<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> August 2012 the S.E. Asia Art Exchange Program, organized by the New Zero Art Space in partnership with the Nippon International Performance Art Festival and sponsored by the Open Society Foundation was held at the New Zero Art Space in Yangon, Myanmar.

The first of the two-part program was a curatorial exchange – two days of symposium from the 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> July 2012. This innovative cross cultural event brought together owners and representatives of Yangon's most prominent art galleries and collectives, art critics and independent cultural practitioners with curators from Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam, with the aim to create dialogue and maximize collective action that will uplift the current contemporary art scene in Myanmar.

"It is vital for the visual artist to be exposed to new cultural and artistic landscapes to build on and develop their creative powers," said Mr. Aye Ko, event organizer and founder/director of the non profit New Zero Art Space in Yangon. "Due to so many years of isolation it is important that Myanmar artists create more connections to international contemporary art communities."

Part two of the program a contemporary art exhibition ran from the 20<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> August 2012 at the Beikthano Gallery in Yangon, as well as a workshop program from 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> August at the New Zero Art Space.

The participating artists from South East Asia countries were Angie Seah from Singapore, Antonius Kho from Indonesia, Mideo Cruz from Philippines, SeahZe Lin from Malaysia, Seiji Shimoda from Japan, Mai Tung from Vietnam, Kong Vollaik From Cambodia and from Thailand Dearborn Mendhaka From Thailand.

Participating artists from Myanmar were Aung Myint, Aye Ko, Aung Myat Htay, Aung Khin Myint, Benjamin, U Ba Win, Hein Thit, Ko Ko Naing, Kaung Su, Nan Nan, Bagyi Lynn Wunna, Nyein Chan Su, Set AungT.T, TharGyi, Tar Tie, Thu Rein, Zar Min Htike, San Minn, Hsu Thit Ni, Nyo Win Maung, Phyu Mon, Myat Kywat, Zay Phyo, Soe Nnin Aung, Min Yee Thway, Yadanar Win, Zun Pwint Thu, Hlaing Lay, Weekmoteti, Hla Myint Maung and Thwe Thwe from the capital city of Yangon.

Artists from the city of Mandalay were Su MyintThein and Cho ChoAung, Ye' Min from Maw Kyawn, Hla Htay from Pathein, Kyaw Htoo from Bokalay, Kyaw Ko Htet from Dawei, Salai Lai Lone and Ko Naung from the Chinn State, Tin Win from Beikthano, Nora from Dawei, Thyitar, Ko So and Phyo Kyi from Taung Gyi, Kyu Kyu from Dawei and Zoncy from Kotthaung.

The workshop program allowed each invited artist to give a 30 minute presentation aimed at introducing the artists skills and back ground during which they discussed the various circumstances they faced as an artist and the factors that both inhibit the creative process as well as support them in their desire to follow their artistic pursuits. Slide shows of art works, exhibitions, performances, creative processes as well as art videos were shown.

"Myanmar contemporary art is characterized by a profusion of performance artists who's creativity is unrestricted by their choice and size of media," said Artist Nyein Chan Su. "Performance art is multidimensional and may be expressed anywhere, at any time, allowing for spontaneity and greater opportunities for the artist to release suppressed emotions.

During his presentation Nyein Chan Su showed his art video "Gold Fish" which was a nominated artwork for the Signature Art Prize in 2011 by the Singapore Art Museum. The videos narrative culminated with the death of a gold fish in a bowl of water.



Certificate of Registration + Consent for the Exhibition



Event Organizer Aye Ko from Myanmar Addresses the Audience, top center



Indonesian Artist Antonius Kho During His Presentation to the Audience of Artists



Myanmar Government Officials Inspecting Art Works for S.E. Asia Art Exchange Program Exhibition at Beikthano Gallery, Yangon



"This film highlights the fact that in Myanmar each day many people are facing death due to starvation and poverty," said the artist.

The workshop brought light to the issues facing contemporary artists in S.E. Asian countries such as government censorship, poverty and cultural complexity.

"Even though there has been a recent change in the government of Myanmar the process of transformation will be slow and the people must be patient," said Aye Ko.

"The greatest challenge faced in organizing events like this is sourcing funding and this can be a time consuming process and this must be focused towards international foundations outside of Myanmar. We are very grateful to the Open society Foundation for their financial support of this years event and we hope that now the situation of funding will become increasingly easier for us."

Indonesian artist and intercultural art exchange event organizer Antonius Kho, born in Klaten, Central Java in 1958, of Javanese Chinese parents, began his presentation by giving an outline of the infrastructure of the Indonesian contemporary art world and then a description of Ubud, Bali, the internationally renown artists village where he has resided since 1975.

He went on to reveal some of the historical factors that have influenced the development of contemporary art in the country as well as some of the cultural complexities that Indonesians of Chinese heritage have faced after the formation of the Indonesian republic.

"This event allowed me an opportunity meet other S.E. Asian artists and continue develop my network in the region," said Antonius.

"Prior to the exhibition the Myanmar police assessed all artists works, checking for political and sexual content or themes that were not in line with government policy, the event was then given an official certificate of authorization. Indonesian artists are now free from such official censorship," he stated.

Antonius studied art and design in Cologne, Germany where he resided for 14 years and he organized his first inter cultural exchange program and exhibitions between Malaysian and Indonesian contemporary artists in 2007 with the then director of the National Gallery of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

The curator's exchange symposium in July revealed that new ways of collaborating and co-operating are needed if new paradigms for the Myanmar contemporary art scene are to be found. It suggested that art must manifest itself in the public arena in line with the impending changes to the country's economic climate.

In response to the prevalent mood sweeping Myanmar, broad initiatives that require both the support of the government as well as the public and private sector are needed that would enable a strong foundation for the local visual arts industry to become a viable component of the socio economic environment.

The establishment of a National Art Council is necessary to oversee the required development with increasing levels of professionalism.

"Events like these are significant because they are future orientated and are aimed at developing community based systems that will benefit future generations," says Aye Ko.

"Young local artists will have new opportunities for more experience that will eventually manifest into fresh creative inspiration and increasing prosperity and will revolutionize the contemporary art world in Myanmar.

The Audience Watches a Presentation by Filipino Artist Mideo Cruz at New Zero Art Space



'Reflection of Concrete.' Dearborn, digital print, 76x90cm.



The Audience Watches a Presentation by Filipino Artist Mideo Cruz at New Zero Art Space