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Treeline Urban Resort unveils seldom-seen contemporary Cambodian artwork from internationally renowned artists

SIEM REAP—Treeline Urban Resort, the newest luxury art and design hotel along the leafy banks of the Siem Reap River, today announced a public exhibition of rare and renowned contemporary Cambodian artwork sourced from one of the country’s most extensive private collections.

The exhibit — titled *Ti Prasap* (meaning “Confluence” in English) — will open on July 21, 2019 in the resort’s distinctive open-air gallery and is expected to run until September 30.

For the first time in more than 10 years, the public will be able to see two oil paintings by the “grandfather of contemporary Cambodian art”, Svay Ken — one of only two contemporary artists to survive the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s. American art critic and curator Erin Gleeson heralded Svay Ken’s work as radical: “He was the first Cambodian artist to candidly depict daily life, rather than glorify rural vistas or ancient monuments,” she said. Curated by Meta Moeng, the show includes Svay Ken’s *Old Bathtub*, an oil on canvas from 2006, as well as *Electrical Lines*, from one of the last exhibitions before the artist’s death in 2008. His work depicts both everyday life in Cambodia as well as the dislocation and trauma of the civil war.

Another highlight of the group exhibition are two artworks by established artist Pich Sopheap, whose sinuous sculptural forms — made primarily from materials such as rattan, burlap and bamboo — have taken centre stage in solo exhibitions at New York’s illustrious

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Singapore Art Museum and the Guggenheim. On show in *Ti Prasap* are some of the artist's earlier works: an ink and watercolour painting from 2006 as well as the organic rattan installations Pich is most well known for.

The range of contemporary art *Ti Prasap* presents — featuring artists who have shown works in major galleries and events around the world such as the Venice Biennale and Switzerland's Art Basel — is both diverse and striking. There's the vivid, almost painterly work of acclaimed photographer Kvy Samnang; the richly detailed collage and mixed media paintings of Leang Seckon; the delicate pencil-shaving artworks of Chan Dany; oil and acrylic paintings by Chhim Sothy; surreal sculptures by Kchao Touch; and the ethereal watercolours of young artist Mil Chankrim.

The comprehensive body of work was collected over the last 15 years by Larry Strange, a long-time Australian resident in Cambodia. Strange moved to Cambodia from Australia in late 2003 to take up a position as the head of Cambodia's leading independent development policy research institute (CDRI). He had studied Cambodia and the history, culture and politics of the broader Asian region since his undergraduate university days in the 1970s, and developed a keen interest in contemporary art.

"I began collecting in 2004, unaware that I was actually 'collecting' rather than just buying works that I liked whenever the opportunity arose; and also unaware that some of the earliest artists I collected such as Pich Sopheap, Leang Seckon, and Khvay Samnang would over the following decade gain international reputations, and become good friends," said Strange.

"Larry Strange's collection is a significant confluence of works by some of the most important Cambodian artists — artists who have shaped their communities and arts practice in the country. It provides a historical reflection on Cambodian contemporary art that continues to grow and resonate locally and internationally," said Vuth Lyno, the artistic director of contemporary art initiative Sa Sa Arts Project in Phnom Penh.

The seven-month-old Treeline, the first hotel venture for award-winning property developer Urbanland, is passionate about promoting Cambodian art to the world and committed to helping Cambodia's creative community. This is the hotel's third exhibition.

Cambodia's contemporary art scene is coming of age, yet is one still in need of support. An estimated 90% of the country's working artists were targeted and executed by the brutal Khmer Rouge regime, which overtook the country from 1975-79. And while a new generation of young and exciting artists are making waves, there is still a lack of art infrastructure — from art schools to exhibition spaces and museums. Treeline aims to fill this void, with the resort built around an open-air gallery and a permanent collection of artwork by some of the country's best artists. The hotel also has plans to create a foundation to support the country's aspiring artists, says founder Hok Kang.

“Community and creativity is part of our DNA,” said Treeline’s General Manager Joni Aker. “These are two of our guiding principles at Treeline and are part of everything we do — from showcasing Cambodian heritage and art as a way of celebrating the local culture and people, to supporting talented, up-and-coming creatives.”

Part of Treeline’s larger vision for the city is to help regenerate Siem Reap’s riverside district into a buzzing creative district for tourists and locals alike. Treeline founder and architect Hok Kang believes the area has endless opportunities, not to mention historical significance: as one of the country’s most sacred waterways, it flows from the waterfalls of Kulen Mountain — which have ancient lingas carved into the riverbeds — meanders around the temples of Angkor and then into present-day Siem Reap, before flowing out into the vast Tonle Sap, the largest freshwater lake in all of Asia.

“Siem Reap without this river wouldn’t be such an inspiring city — so we need to protect it. When you drive or stroll along this tree-lined river, and there’s a cool breeze in the air, there’s nothing quite as magical. My dream is to see the river turned into a leafy, clean community space filled with public art installations and pop-up galleries,” he said.

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Treeline Urban Resort is a privately owned, 48-room design hotel on Siem Reap’s Riverside in Cambodia. Treeline Urban Resort offers a one-of-a-kind home for guests traveling to gateway city for the temples of Angkor. Masterfully crafted with leading Cambodian artists, our curated experience includes dedicated spaces for a growing private collection of contemporary art. www.treelinehotels.com