

Cambodian Art on the Siem Reap River

We speak with Treeline Urban Resort's curator Meta Moeng about the hotel's current exhibition, the country's art scene and Treeline's plans to contribute to its growth



Art and design hotel [Treeline Urban Resort](#) recently opened along the Siem Reap River. Part of its remit is to support, nurture and promote local artists, and so the resort is built around an open-air gallery and houses a permanent collection of art by some of the country's foremost artists. There are also plans to initiate a foundation to support the country's aspiring artists.

Currently on view at Treeline Gallery is [Ti Prasap](#) (meaning 'confluence' in English), an exhibition of seldom-seen contemporary Cambodian art curated from the private collection of Larry Strange, an Australian collector who's lived in Cambodia for the last 15 years. Strange's collection, acquired over decades, includes works by renowned Cambodian artists like Svay Ken, Pich Sopheap, Kvay Samnang and Kchao Touch.

We spoke with curator Meta Moeng about the works on show, the country's art scene, and her vision to contribute to its growth through Treeline's programming and initiatives.

Design Anthology: As Treeline Urban Resort's curator, what is your vision for the hotel's exhibition programming?

Meta Moeng: Our exhibitions and programmes focus on supporting and promoting Cambodian artists, advocating the collection of artworks by both local and foreign collectors, and helping to provide a narrative of contemporary Cambodian art. Treeline Gallery is a unique space, it's a way to create more opportunities for artists by supporting their practices and providing space where they can exhibit to the public and the art community.

Why do you think the venue is significant for an exhibition like Ti Prasap, as opposed to a traditional gallery or museum setting?

In Cambodia, the contemporary art community is generally supported by cultural centres, associations or the philanthropic activities of individuals, associations and businesses. Treeline was conceived, designed and is owned by one of Cambodia's leading architects, who also has an interest in supporting local contemporary art. It's important that Cambodians invest in the future of Cambodian artists. We cater to the general public, not just tourists or hotel guests; the gallery and courtyard space is open and free for the public to come and view the exhibitions.

How did Treeline gain access to Larry Strange's personal collection?

The art community in Cambodia is rather small and as such everyone tends to know everyone. Larry's been an avid supporter and collector of contemporary art for years and has developed friendships within this community. When we proposed the invitation to collaborate on an exhibition, Larry graciously accepted.

Putting Larry's collection into an exhibition not only provides a means for these works to have a public audience but also fosters an appreciation for the silent support that private collectors give to the arts and artists. I hope this exhibition might inspire people to start collecting.

The artists in Strange's collection span masters like Svay Ken to contemporary photographers such as Vandy Rattana and Khvay Samnang, and a host of other artists working in various mediums. How did you approach the curation of the exhibition, and what did you hope to communicate with the selection? Was there a guiding idea or goal?

I paid attention to the period of time in which each artist created the work, their vision within it and whether the work has something to express or show. Also, I looked at each body of work in terms of mediums and their relation to each other. With consideration for the gallery space, I decided to divide the exhibition into three sections. The first section deals with history, tradition, modernity and contemporaneity; the second is a reflection on the relationship between nature and rural and urban development, and the artists' roles in presenting social issues and possibilities of a community's self-representation; and the third features imaginative works revealing how the artists make sense of the lived present as well as possibilities for future.

How would you describe Cambodia's current art scene?

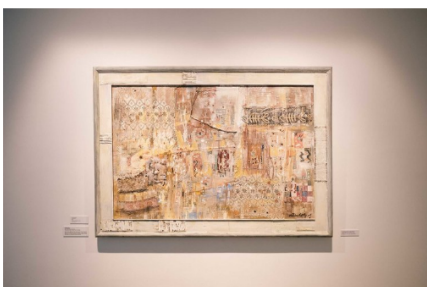
Although Cambodia's art scene is small at this moment, it's at an interesting stage. There are opportunities for young artists, architects, curators, dancers, filmmakers and musicians to develop their skills while still defining what modern Cambodia is. Everyone in the art community supports each other and encourages collaborations between different disciplines. We're committed and we're passionate about the arts.



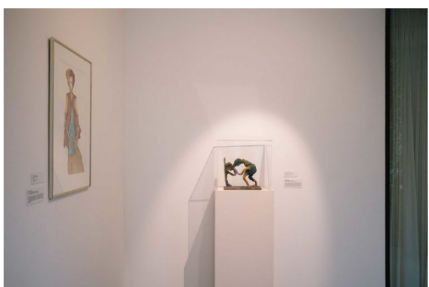
Image courtesy of TreeLine Urban Resort



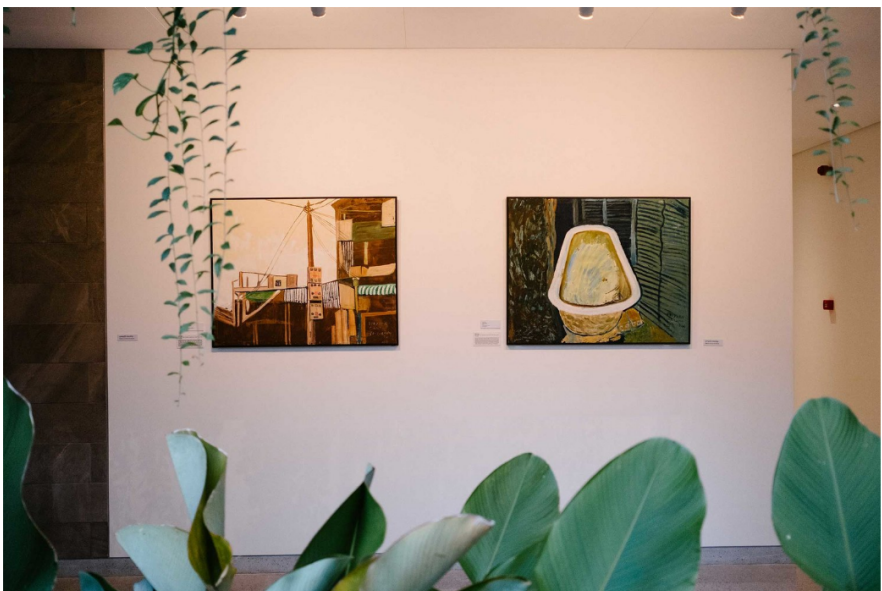
Image courtesy of TreeLine Urban Resort



Installation view of Ti Prasap at TreeLine Gallery



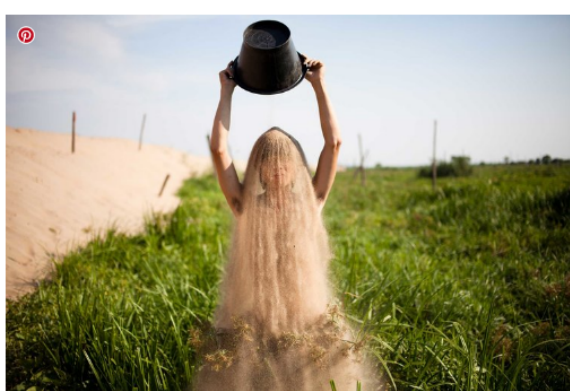
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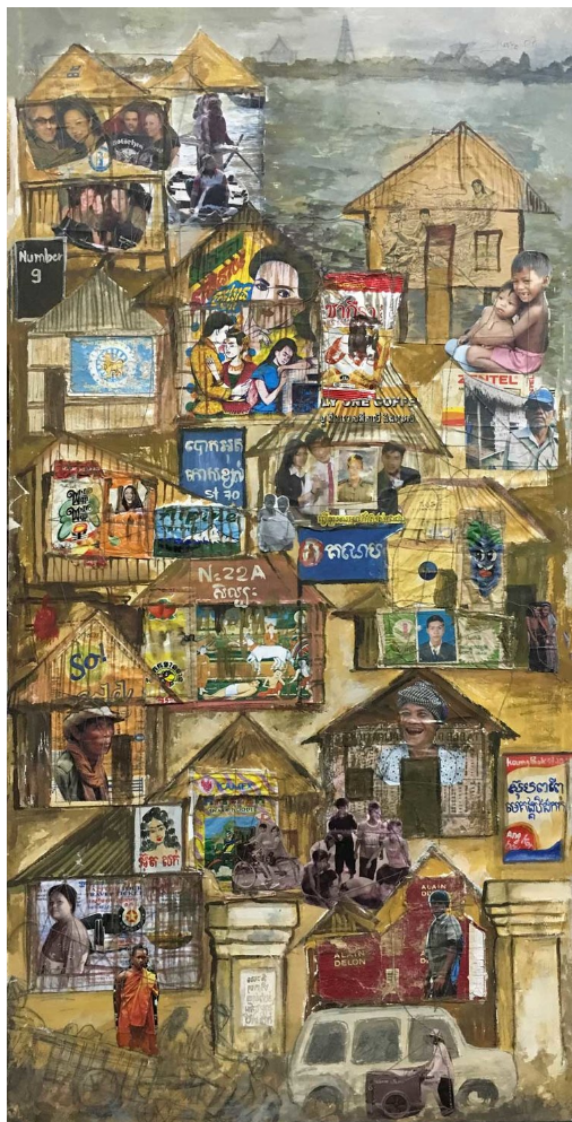
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Khvao Touch, *With a body comes suffering*, 2009. Tissue paper, wire, oil painting, Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist



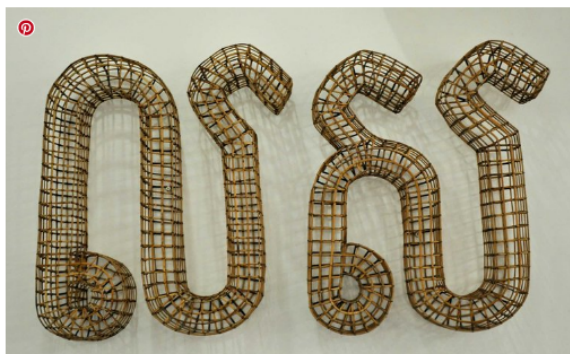
Khway Samnang, *Untitled*, 2011. Digital C-print, 80 x 120cm. Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist



Leang Seckon, *Boeng Kok Number 9*, 2007. Mixed media on canvas, 42 x 63cm. Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist



Oeur Sokuntey, *Untitled*, 2006. Mixed media, 107 x 90cm. Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist



Pich Sopheap, *Sculpture Khmer Alphabets*, 2012. 93 x 55 x 15cm. Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist



Svay Ken, *Electrical Lines*, 2007. Oil painting on canvas, 100 x 80cm. Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist



Vandy Rattana, *Looking In*, 2005. Digital C-Print, 60 x 40cm. Image courtesy of Larry Strange and the artist