

Siem Reap Galleries Open For Art's Sake

Peter Olszewski / Khmer Times /



Portrait of Vuth Lyno. Roun Ry



Siem Reap's art scene has blossomed after months of pandemic-induced dormancy, with two spectacular exhibitions launched one after the other.



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Mirage Contemporary Art Space launched an intriguing exhibition, titled "Sala Samnak", by Phnom Penh artist Vuth Lyno. This comprises light installations and paintings and explores the rest halls – or sala samnak – that exist throughout Cambodia, albeit sadly disappearing.

Over the duration of the exhibition, six renditions of glowing rest halls, represented by six black voids, will be appearing one by one, reflecting the transient nature and changing character of these halls.

The collaboration with Lyno has been in the planning for a year. Mirage press officer Kasia Sumislawska says “Lyno is an artist, curator and co-founding director of Sa Sa Art Projects who has exhibited widely in Cambodia and internationally.”

“The exhibited works, a neon-light installation and a series of paintings were created for this particular exhibition and have not been exhibited elsewhere,” Sumislawska says.

Lyno says his long-held interest in communal and public areas was sparked during childhood.

“I usually saw different sala samnak whenever I travelled to the provinces, either with my parents visiting Buddhist pagodas or for other purposes,” he says.

“These salas caught my attention, but it was only a couple of years ago that I started to think about how to make an artwork with them. My ambition was to create a life-size sala samnak in an open space, where you can walk in and sit inside,” he says.

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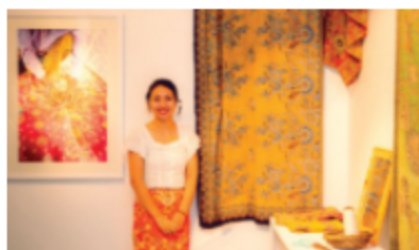
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“So when I got an invitation from Mirage for a solo show, I adapted to the physical condition of the space and tried to maximise the use of it. I created a smaller scale and presented it suspended in space at the glass corner of the gallery facing outside so people can view it from both outside and inside the gallery,” he adds.

Another intriguing exhibition, titled “**Invisible** Voices”, curated by Meta Moeng, opened at Treeline Urban Resort the day after Mirage’s opening.

The exhibition presents the work of six Khmer artists – Kong Siden, Hul Kanha, Prak Dalin, Prum Ero, So Vitou and Tyl Kan. They were selected earlier this year to participate in the Treeline Artist Grants 2020, which provides space at Treeline Gallery for an exhibition, and serves as a platform for artists to develop.



Hul Kanha and her exhibition inspired by the proverb, “Women have 100 hands”. Supplied

The exhibition features mixed mediums, ranging from paintings, photography, sculptures and installations.

Ero, for example, is a documentarian interested in nature and architecture who became intrigued by coral reefs when he started scuba diving in 2019. He regards the reefs as examples of the beautiful architecture of nature, and the exhibition features photographs he took in Koh Kong province.

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TWO BANDS



Artist Prum Ero and his exhibition of photographs of coral reefs. Supplied

The work of Dalin, an architect originally from Kampong Cham, comprises two sculptures and an installation inspired by the roofs of traditional Khmer houses. The installation spills out of the gallery on to the riverbank in front of the resort, to reflect the traditional wooden houses along the river.

Vitou from Siem Reap province is also fascinated by architecture and nature, and his work comprises one drawing of Angkorian temples upside down, and two installations – one showing the temples rendered from one long continuous metal wire, and ‘Moss’, another continuous metal wire structure which audiences can walk through. Light and shadows cast on the audience’s skin resembles moss growing on the temples.

Another Siem Reap artist, Kahna, was inspired by the proverb: “Women have 100 hands”. She held workshops and took photos of women’s hands sewing a sarong. Six of her photos combined with mixed media elements are exhibited, along with the sarong itself.

Artist Kan has created three large paintings in which she laments the sense of loss of identity in transition, and she has also produced a short film, *Self Identity*. Siden’s work in metal expresses his interest in various forms of sacrifice.