

**NIRANAM**

**ARAYA RASDJARMREARNSOOK**

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**TYLER ROLLINS**  
FINE ART

# FOREWORD

## TYLER ROLLINS

Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook is one of Southeast Asia's most respected and internationally active contemporary artists, and for the past 25 years, her video, installation, and graphic works have been regularly shown in institutions in her native Thailand and throughout the world. Her second solo exhibition at Tyler Rollins Fine Art, *Niranam* (February 19 – April 11, 2015), presents a wide range of new works, encompassing video, installation, photography, and sculpture, and runs concurrently with the first major survey of her work in the United States at SculptureCenter in New York (January 25 – March 30, 2015).

Born in Trad, Thailand, in 1956, Araya received her MFA from Silpakorn University in Bangkok in 1986, focusing on intaglio printmaking. Her etchings and aquatints of the late 1980s and early 1990s, with their ghost-like female figures in shadowy environments, set up themes – death, the body, and women's experience – that would endure throughout her career. Feelings of loss and isolation, informed by the early death of her mother, and a heightened sensitivity to the strictures traditionally placed on women within Thai society, would increasingly find their expression in her work through the physicality of the body and the concreteness of sculptural installations, which by the early 1990s had become the primary focus of her work. Often incorporating semi-abstract, totemic female forms, natural materials, and haunting photographic imagery, all marked by a patina of age and wear, these installations confront us with the raw physicality of both life and death, charged with an almost animistic power that seems to channel powerful psychological states. These works were widely shown in such seminal exhibitions as the first Asia-Pacific Triennial in Brisbane, Australia (1993), and *Traditions / Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia*, at Asia Society in New York (1996). Living with these often fragile, ephemeral sculptural works in her home, Araya began to examine more closely her relationship with "otherness," with entities that were radically distinct from her, yet intimately linked by a commonality of experience, a participation in the basic cycles of nature, of life and death. By the late 1990s, this led her to bring rituals of the dead into her artistic practice, and to a shift to video work. In collaboration with the medical community, she began to film her own rituals for the dead at morgues, using corpses of individuals who died without family members to attend them. Incorporating her experience as a teacher (she remains an active member of an art school faculty), as well as her familiarity with Thai ritual practices, she created an extraordinary series of video works evoking the pedagogy of the classroom and the intimacy of private ceremonies, in which she attempts to connect the worlds of the living and the dead. The series was further developed in a residency at Artpace in San Antonio, Texas, in 1998, and had its culmination in a multi-channel video installation for the Thai Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale. Videos such as *The Class* (2005) have since been widely exhibited at museums and biennials on four continents.

Video has remained the primary medium of Araya's artistic practice to the present day. Still deeply informed by her earlier sculptural installation work, her videos are imbued with a strong physicality, with a close focus on bodies, often positioned in semi-abstract environments, their aura extending outward into the viewer's own space. These videos typically imply the presence of an audience that is both observing the action and ceremonially participating in it. They reference traditions of village storytelling, which create continuities between the present and the past, the everyday world and the world of spirits and of legend. Her videos have a meditative, ritualistic quality, and, like many of humanity's important rituals, they are often centered on the idea of communication between different realms: between the living and the dead, the insane and "normal" people, humans and animals, the worlds of art and "real life." With her highly acclaimed series *Two Planets* (2008) and *Village and Elsewhere* (2011) – shown as part of her first New York solo exhibition in New York (Tyler Rollins Fine Art, 2012) – Araya focused on art itself and the way the viewer interacts with a work of art, placing framed reproductions of iconic Western paintings in rural villages, markets, and Buddhist temples in Thailand, where she filmed groups of farmers discussing the artworks. These videos create a meeting point between apparent oppositions: high art and everyday life; the personal and private spheres; elite and mass culture; art and commerce; East and West. While issues of class and cultural differences, exoticization of the "other," etc., are invoked, these videos also convey a sense of curiosity, humor, and joy that emphasize a common humanity.

Dogs have been a recurring motif in Araya's work, and indeed dogs are a very important part of her life; she cares for dozens of abandoned, often injured dogs in and near her home in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In an ongoing series of videos and multi-media installations, she explores the interrelationship between humans and dogs, chronicling the daily routines of life, but also suggesting wider themes about overcoming the binarisms of self and object, life and death, human and animal. For her installation project presented at the 2012 edition of Documenta, videos of her interactions with her canine family were screened on the outside of a small cabin in a park, where she and her dog Ngab also lived together for a month. This intimate pairing of the artist's own body with that of her dogs appears throughout her current exhibition, *Niranam*. While the Thai title can be translated as "nameless," in fact the works are highly personal, often featuring images of the artist or the individual dogs she lives with, and are a meditation on ways that the self, one's body and psyche, exists in a continuum with other living beings (including animals), all participating in the ongoing cycle of life and death. The title *Niranam* can thus suggest that by delving deep into one's experience, one can attempt to get at something that is beyond the self, and to a kind of pure experience that transcends the particularities of one's circumstances, the pain of suffering, and even the apparent finality of death.





VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION AT TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART



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SCAPIST  
2015  
single channel video  
26:48 min.



**THE ONE AND THREE NIRANAMS**

2015

two Lambda prints

diptych: each image 10 x 7 inches (24.5 x 18.5 cm)





**NIRANAM**

2008

metal cabinets, wooden chairs, tv monitor, and video  
sizes variable



## AN ARTIST WITH SIX DEAD DOGS' SPIRITS

2015

set of six photographs on canvas  
12 x 17 inches (31 x 42.5 cm) each



**NIRANAM'S OBJECT**

2015

dog fur carpet

37 x 61 inches (95 x 155 cm)



CUCKOO

2014

two screens in one channel video

9:55 min.





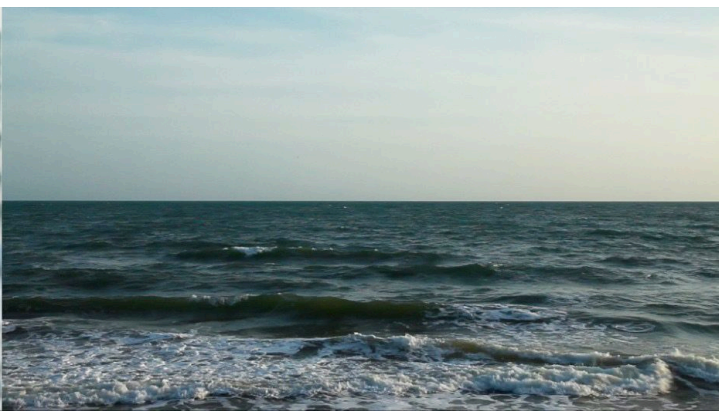
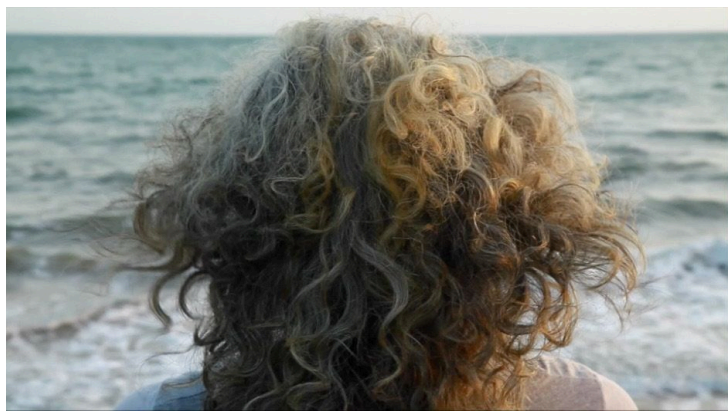
## HAIR'S FUNCTION

2015

Lambda print and dog fur carpet

photo: 23 x 15 inches (59 x 30 cm)

carpet: 23 x 15 inches (59 x 39 cm)



LAI LEE YA  
2015  
two channel video  
11:24 min.



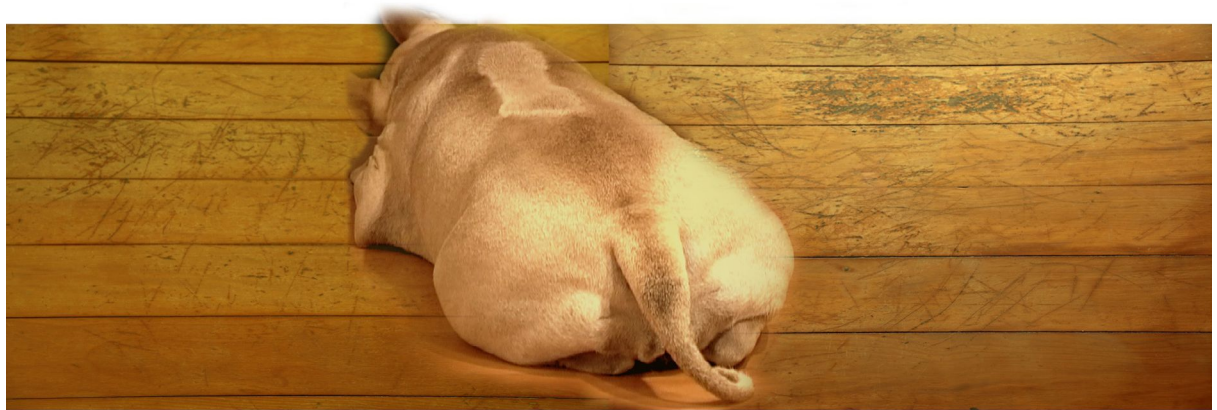
**VILLAGE KIDS SINGING AND FIVE YOUNG VILLAGERS HAVE NO IPHONE**

2004-2015

single channel video with five Lambda prints

photos: 52 x 20 inches (132 x 50 cm) each

video: 1:45 min.



**HER TRACES**

2014

Lambda print

14 x 35 inches (35.5 x 90 cm)





IN A BLUR OF DESIRE

2007

three screens in one channel video

5:54 min.

# ARAYA RASDJARMREARNSOOK

## SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

Born 1957 in Trad, Thailand. Lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

### EDUCATION

- 1994 Meisterschuelerin, Hochschule Fuer Bildende Kuenste Braunschweig, Germany.  
1990 Diplom Fuer Bildende Kuenste, Hochschule Fuer Bildende Kuenste Braunschweig, Germany.  
1986 MFA, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook*, Sculpture Center, New York, NY.  
*Niranam*, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY.  
2014 *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook – The Village and Elsewhere*, University of Sydney, Australia.  
*Storytellers of the Town*, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney, Australia.  
2013 *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: Recent Video Works*, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO.  
2012 *The Endless Renaissance: Six Solo Artist Projects*, Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL.  
*Two Planets*, Walters Museum, Baltimore, MD.  
*Two Planets/Village and Elsewhere*, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York, NY.  
2003 *Lament, Tensta Konsthall*, Stockholm, Sweden.  
2002 *Why Is It Poetry Rather than Awareness?*, National Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.  
1999 *At Nightfall Candles Are Lighted*, Contemporary Art Museum, Chiang Mai and Chulalongkorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.  
1998 *Lament of Desire*, Artpace, San Antonio, Texas, and the Faculty of Fine Art Gallery, Chiang Mai, Thailand.  
1995 *Lustful Attachment*, National Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.  
1994 *Water Is Never Still*, National Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.  
1992 *Stories in Room*, National Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.  
1990 *Printmaking and Drawing*, Atelier Forsthaus, Gifhorn, Germany.  
1990 *Printmaking, Vereins und Westbank*, Hanover, Germany.  
1987 *Small Graphic*, Goethe Institute, Bangkok, Thailand.  
*Graphic Notes*, National Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *Inside*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris France.  
*The Roving Eye*, ARTER Space for Art, Istanbul, Turkey.  
*Past Traditions/New Voices in Asian Art*, Hofstra University Museum, Hemstead, NY.  
*No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, Asia Society Hong Kong Center, Hong Kong.  
*Thai Charisma*, Bangkok Art and Culture Center, Bangkok, Thailand.  
*DIRGE: Reflections on (Life and) Death*, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, Cleveland, OH.  
2013 *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.  
California Pacific Triennial, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA.  
Dojima River Biennial, Dojima River Forum, Osaka, Japan.  
Asian Art Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan.  
*The Floating Eternity Project*, Para Site, Hong Kong.  
*Lunch with Olympia*, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT.  
2012 dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany.  
*Thai Transience*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
*Phantoms of Asia: Contemporary Awakens the Past*, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.  
*Beyond Geography*, Art Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

- 2011 *The Global Contemporary. Art Worlds After 1989*, Zentrum fuer Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany.  
*MDE11: Teaching and learning: Places of knowledge in art*, Medellin, Colombia.  
*Video: An Art: A History 1965 – 2010*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
*Kaza Ana/ Air Hole: Another Form of Conceptualism from Asia*, National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan.  
*Speech Objects*, Musée de l'objet, Blois, France.  
Changwon Asian Art Festival, Gyeongnam, South Korea.  
*Roving Eye*, SKMU Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand, Norway.  
2010 5th International Video Art Biennial in Israel, Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel.  
1st Ural Industrial Biennale of Contemporary Art, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Ekaterinburg, Russia.  
*AND Writers*, 1st Nanjing Biennial, Jiangsu Provincial Art Museum, Nanjing, China.  
*Realism in Asian Art*, The National Art Gallery, Singapore.  
17th Biennale of Sydney, Australia.  
2009 *Unreal Asia*, the 55th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany.  
Incheon Women Artists Biennale South Korea.  
2008 *Dreaming/Sleeping*, Passage de Retz gallery, Paris, France and The Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Israel.  
2007 *Six Feet Under: Autopsy of our relation to the dead*, Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden, Germany.  
*Thermocline of Art*, Zentrum fuer Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany.  
*Thresholds of Tolerance*, ANU The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.  
*Wind from the East: Perspectives on Asian Contemporary Art*, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland  
*Dirty Yoga*, The 2006 Taipei Biennial, Taipei, Taiwan.  
2006 *Six Feet Under*, Fine Arts Museum Berne, Berne, Switzerland.  
*Trace Root: Unfolding Asian Stories*, 6th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea.  
2005 51st Venice Biennale, Thai Pavilion. Venice, Italy.  
*The Pantagruel Syndrome*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy.  
*Spaces and Shadows*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany.  
*54th Carnegie International*, Pittsburgh, PA.  
*Insomnia*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK.  
2003 *Poetic Justice*, 8th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey.  
*Time after Time*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.  
2002 *EV+A 2002*, Limerick, Ireland.  
2001 *ARS 01: Unfolding Perspectives*, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland.  
2000 *Global Scents of Thailand*, Edsvik Museum, Sweden.  
1996 *Jurassic Technologies Revenant*, 10th Biennial of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.  
*Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia*, Asia Society and Queens Museum, New York, NY.  
1995 1st Johannesburg Biennial, South Africa.  
1993 1st Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, Australia.

### SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.  
Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA.  
Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA.  
Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland.  
National Museum, Osaka, Japan.  
Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.  
H+F Collection, the Netherlands.  
Thai Farmers Bank PCL, Thailand.  
Mori Art Museum, Japan.

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NIRANAM

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