

Confronting Confrontation: An Interview with Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook

[« Previous / Next »](#)

Número 0 / October 2007 / One Comment

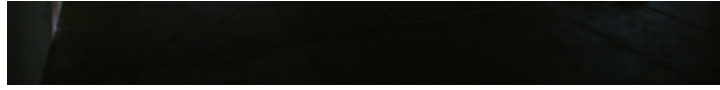
0

By Brian Curtin

Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's output makes the work of a critic easy. Since turning to video in the late 90s she has unfolded an *oeuvre* that approaches questions of the relationship between life and death in the manner expected of all great art. By turns, Araya's imagery is contemplative, mysterious, questioning, illuminating and provocative.

We met at the time of her most recent exhibition at 100 Tonson Gallery in Bangkok during February 2007. Titled *In a Blur of Desire*, the installation consisted of three large video projections depicting animals being slaughtered. This installation offered an interesting spin on her previous, much quieter, work with corpses. Where once she attempted to communicate with life's others, here she rendered the transition from life to death in exceptionally violent and confrontational terms.





Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *In a blur of desire* (2006)

Courtesy of the artist and 100 Tonson Gallery

Photos courtesy of Eakarach Prangchaikul

You intended this video installation to shock?

No.

It is brutal to watch.

But our daily life is brutal! Maybe you never realized that you can be brutalized. Look at this video and you know what brutality is.

Did you film the slaughter yourself?

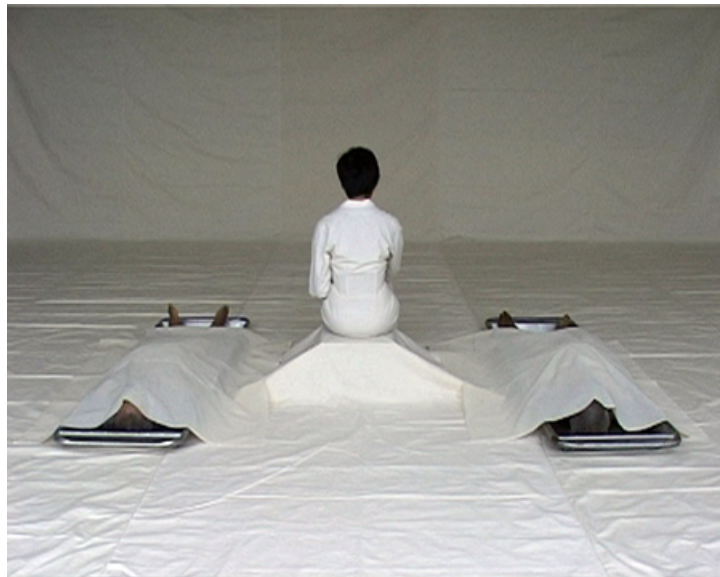
I didn't film the section with the pigs because I found it difficult to move among them. I did film the cows and the buffalos. We shot late at night in order for fresh meat to be produced the following day.

What prompted you to create *In a Blur of Desire* now?

My daily life is full of animals. I am currently writing letters to my seven dog 'kids'. The letters will prepare them for confrontations with life. I tell them all about life and why, for example, I had to neuter them. Love is hard and sex always follows.

Please discuss your interest in provocative and confrontational imagery.

In reality, life and death should not be understood as opposites. People deal with death by trying to hide it. They hide death behind ritual or hope to prevent it with medicine. I want people to have more imagination and confront reality! This is what my previous work addressed. With *In a Blur of Desire* I am interested in the state of 'between-ness', this work is not about death as such.



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Conversation I* (2005)

Courtesy of the Artist and 100 Tonson Gallery

Photos courtesy of Eakarach Prangchaikul

How do you develop ideas?

My videos come out of necessity. I sometimes take photographs but of course there is no sound and movement here. You have seen my video titled Death Seminar? Here I conduct a class where I teach corpses about various topics. Between writing and art, that is how I develop ideas.

Yes, you write as well as making visual art.

My first published story was written after my grandmother's funeral. Then I wrote a book titled Oriental Woman and another called Lustful Attachment, which was a collection of erotic stories. I felt I was at a time in my life when I could approach such subject matter. My third book was I am an Artist where I used the masculine 'pom' (Thai for 'I'). I changed roles and felt a little free and more aggressive.

Being a woman restricts you?

There are some cultural conditions which affect women.

Have you ever consciously sought to look from a 'male' point of view in your visual art?

Interesting question, I have never thought about this! Thank you for opening my eyes to this possibility.

Tell me about your role as an associate professor in fine art at Chiang Mai University.

Boring. The work environment is not for art. Most lecturers remain too close to what they learned as students, and continue to embrace techniques from 20 years ago. The art circle and atmosphere is not strong, and the general infrastructure (museums etc.) is not so good. Also, if you weren't writing about my work, how many people would know about it? There can be little space for knowledge.

I teach a seminar to MA students, where we discuss examples of critical writing. You know Thai students don't like to talk in class, so we often go to a café or somewhere similar to conduct the class. We recently had an administrative success and now our students are allowed to write their thesis in a manner more suitable to them as artists, rather than following conventions developed in and for other disciplines.

What is your next project?

I am currently working with traditional sculpture and painting which will be videoed. I want to make and film a masterpiece; but a masterpiece for Thai farmers. No-one talks about Thai farmer's values. Here I will use video not to register the so-called real but as a vehicle for expressing something like fantasy.

Brian Curtin is a visual artist and writer based in Bangkok

Like Tweet

Tags: [entrevistas](#)

Tweet Like Share Be the first of your friends to like this.

One Comment

Pingback: [Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook | MDE11](#)

Leave a Reply