

Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook

SCULPTURECENTER

44-19 Purves Street

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Dogs and the dead populate the videos, sculptures, and print works in Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's first US retrospective, a show that summons questions about what companion species are beyond human companionship, what cadavers are other than former humans.

"A person who dies had the ability to die," the Thailand-based artist gently proposes in the film *The Class I*, 2005, addressing a room of deceased "students" on trays, bodies borrowed from a hospital in Turin. The line echoes Maurice Blanchot's insight that death is horrifying to us because it promises to take away the mortality that makes us human, but Rasdjarmrearnsook speaks with a frank and unassuming tone that softens the thought. This and the other necrocentric works on view (such as the video *I'm Living*, 2002, in which the artist dresses a corpse lying on its back) impress an amicable continuity between the living and the dead, and are unique in doing so without anthropomorphizing the latter.

In *Some Unexpected Events Sometimes Bring Momentary Happiness*, 2009, a pile of paw-size bandages sits tenderly below projected footage of the dog to whom they once belonged, documenting the day that the animal spontaneously regained control of his long-paralyzed hind legs. Rasdjarmrearnsook's straight presentation lets the dog's obvious enjoyment of moving around her yard speak for itself, and like the exhibition in general, the piece feels risky, out of step with common antisentimentalism. Rasdjarmrearnsook lacks the pretense that she comprehends all that her camera apprehends, and it lends her work a sense of celebratory empathy.



Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Pray, Bless Us with Rice and Curry Our Great Moon*, 2012, HD video, color, sound, 19 minutes.

— Abraham Adams