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Jakkai Siributr is known as a fiber artist because he weaves and embroiders his satirical allegories into large tapestries. They feature cartoonlike figures—sometimes the political leaders of his native Thailand and sometimes the artist himself as an irreverent monk engaged in activities that would surprise the Buddha. Yet despite his humor and pointed criticism, Siributr’s dedication to traditional crafts demonstrates a loyalty to his homeland.

“Karma Cash & Carry,” his show at Tyler Rollins Fine Art in New York last year, took aim at the commercialization of religion in Thailand, for the way Thai people rely on religious practices for telling fortunes and picking lottery tickets. In *Somdet*, the artist sewed together hundreds of cheap amulets bought in street markets, underscoring the trade in religious items. In *Yantra*, he portrayed himself as a sly sequin-bedecked Buddha, sitting in an untraditional pose, with his hand to his chin. “People forget that the image of a Buddha is supposed to remind you of his teachings and his principles,” says Siributr, speaking by telephone from his Bangkok studio. “It has become a commodity, just another brand name.”

Born in Bangkok in 1969, Siributr is the great-great-grandson of King Mongkut (Rama IV), who inspired the story of *The King and I*. He studied textile design in the United States, receiving a B.A. from Indiana University in 1992 and an M.S. from Philadelphia University in 1996. “Originally, I studied textile design because I was intrigued by its commercial applications,” he says. But in graduate school he gravitated to fine art. “I chose textiles as my medium because it was really interesting for me take simple domestic techniques and see how far I could go with them,” he says.



Siributr’s work has taken on more prominence in recent years. At Tyler Rollins his pieces sell in the \$10,000 to \$25,000 range. He recently appeared in “Here/Not Here: Buddha Presence in Eight Recent Works,” up through October 23 at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, where for a performance component of the show he sat for three days embroidering words written by visitors describing the troubles in their lives. He is also preparing for his first show in Thailand since 2005, at the Chulalongkorn University Art Center.

“The past few shows I have done in New York, so I was able to express whatever I wanted on politics and religion,” he says. “I am not quite sure how it will be received in Bangkok, but I am not interested in having an extremist come to the show and say I disrespected the Buddha.”

—Barbara Pollack

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