

The female breast inspires contemporary art

GINA FAIRLEY

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Internationally celebrated Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak comes to SCAF for first Australian solo exhibition.



Pinaree Sanpitak's Breast Stupas Topiary series shown here at Yavuz Fine Art, Singapore, will be shown in Sydney.

This will be Pinaree Sanpitak's first solo exhibition in Australia, a coup for Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (SCAF) to corral significant works from international and private collections by this internationally renowned Thai artist.

It follows a sensational year for Sanpitak, who presented solo exhibitions at two US museums: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Contemporary Austin, Texas.

Australian audiences are perhaps most familiar with Sanpitak's installation *Anything Can Break*, which was included in the 2012 Biennale of Sydney at Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), where thousands of ornaments and origami forms were suspended from the ceiling and "tinkled" with the movement of visitors.

The SCAF exhibition offers a rare moment to expand on our understanding of one of South East Asia's most compelling and important artists working today. Curator Jasmin Stephens said: 'Pinaree has engaged with notions of the self, feminism and female experience for many years. Her approach to these issues is an expansive one which I do think has been shaped by her experience of showing all over the world'

Stephens added: 'I think her work resists any dominating or rigid accounts of feminism while being of interest to scholars and audiences engaged in feminism throughout the world.'

Stephens has secured work from Sanpitak's iconic *Breast Stupas Topiary* series, for the Sydney show, along with her stunning group of paper columns *Womanly Bodies*, and reflective work *The Mirror* (2009).



The Mirror (2009) will be shown in SCAF's Collection+ Piranee Sanpitak show.

Since the birth of the artist's son in the early 1990s, Sanpitak has returned to the motif of the female breast, which she relates to the form of the Buddhist stupa (shrine) and offering bowl. Explored through a variety of media – painting, drawing, sculpture, textiles, ceramics, performance and culinary arts, to name but a few – they convey a sense of tranquility and weightlessness, otherworldly and innovative yet profoundly natural.

Often called a feminist, Sanpitak resists such easy categorisations as politically motivated, rather hoping to explore, and communicate, the breadth of female expression as an articulation of life.

'I was drawn to Pinaree's work because of her approach to materials. She always tested and refined her materials over time and working with her on the exhibition has involved some really stimulating discussion about the properties and associations of her materials - how they enrich thinking and making in the studio and then how different materials intersect with each other and with the sight lines and conversations set up by exhibitions in galleries,' said Stephens.

It was a view Sanpitak's New York Gallery Tyler Rollins Fine Art reiterated: 'The quiet, Zen-like abstraction of her work owes something to her training in Japan and sets it somewhat apart from the colourful intensity of much Thai art.'

Collection+: *Pinaree Sanpitak* marks the third iteration of the SCAF series, which invites a curator to springboard from The Gene & Brian Sherman Collection significant collection of over 800 works by choosing and researching and individual artist and placing their work in context.

'Working with Pinaree has involved learning about the collectors, the exhibition situations, the thematic concerns, the friendships and the philosophical considerations that have propelled Pinaree's journey,' concluded Stephens.

Sanpitak's artworks are held in private and institutional collections in Australia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and the United States, and she has participated in major biennials in Australia, Italy, Japan, and Korea.

Collection+ Pinaree Sanpitak

Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Paddington

17 October - 13 December 2014

Opening: Thursday 16 October

www.sherman-scaf.org.au (<http://www.sherman-scaf.org.au/exhibition/collection-pinaree-sanpitak/>)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gina Fairley covers the Visual Arts nationally for ArtsHub. Based in Sydney you can follow her on Twitter @ginafairley.