

MAMI KATAOKA

ALLISON HARDING

# PHANTOMS OF ASIA *contemporary awakens the past*

**V Asian**

Asian Art Museum | San Francisco

## JAKKAI SIRIBUTR

Jakkai Siributr's artwork explores the interactions of materialism, popular culture, and religion in contemporary Thailand, where an indigenous blend of animism, superstition, and Theravada Buddhism characterizes spiritual life. Jakkai's commentary critically yet empathetically points to the tensions among these influences. *Karma Cash & Carry*, 2010–2012, is based on a well-known manifestation of animism in Thai life: the ritual of constructing "spirit houses" to shelter celestial beings or spirits of the

land and appease them with regular offerings so that they will provide protection from misfortune. As Jakkai explains, "A personal shrine such as *Karma Cash & Carry* is a way to pay respect to my ancestors and a step toward a spiritual path through mindful living."<sup>1</sup> Fabric embroidered with images of his ancestors shrouds the structure. "As a practicing Buddhist, my goal in life is to find the path to spiritual enlightenment. So these images of my ancestors that I have meditatively embroidered on the fabric and

used to shroud this spirit house become a reminder of how I should conduct myself. Gilded dolls inside the shrouded structure allude to rebirth, the many reincarnations one has to endure before achieving nirvana." Jakkai invites viewers to make offerings—small figurines of the artist on which they can write their good deeds—and help guide the artist on his spiritual path. A.H.

<sup>1</sup> All quotes are from Jakkai Siributr's artist's statement (February 2012).



*Karma Cash & Carry*, 2010–2012.  
Bamboo, eucalyptus, found objects, gold leaf,  
and cheesecloth with embroidery.  
Approx. h. 59 × w. 47 × d. 39 in.