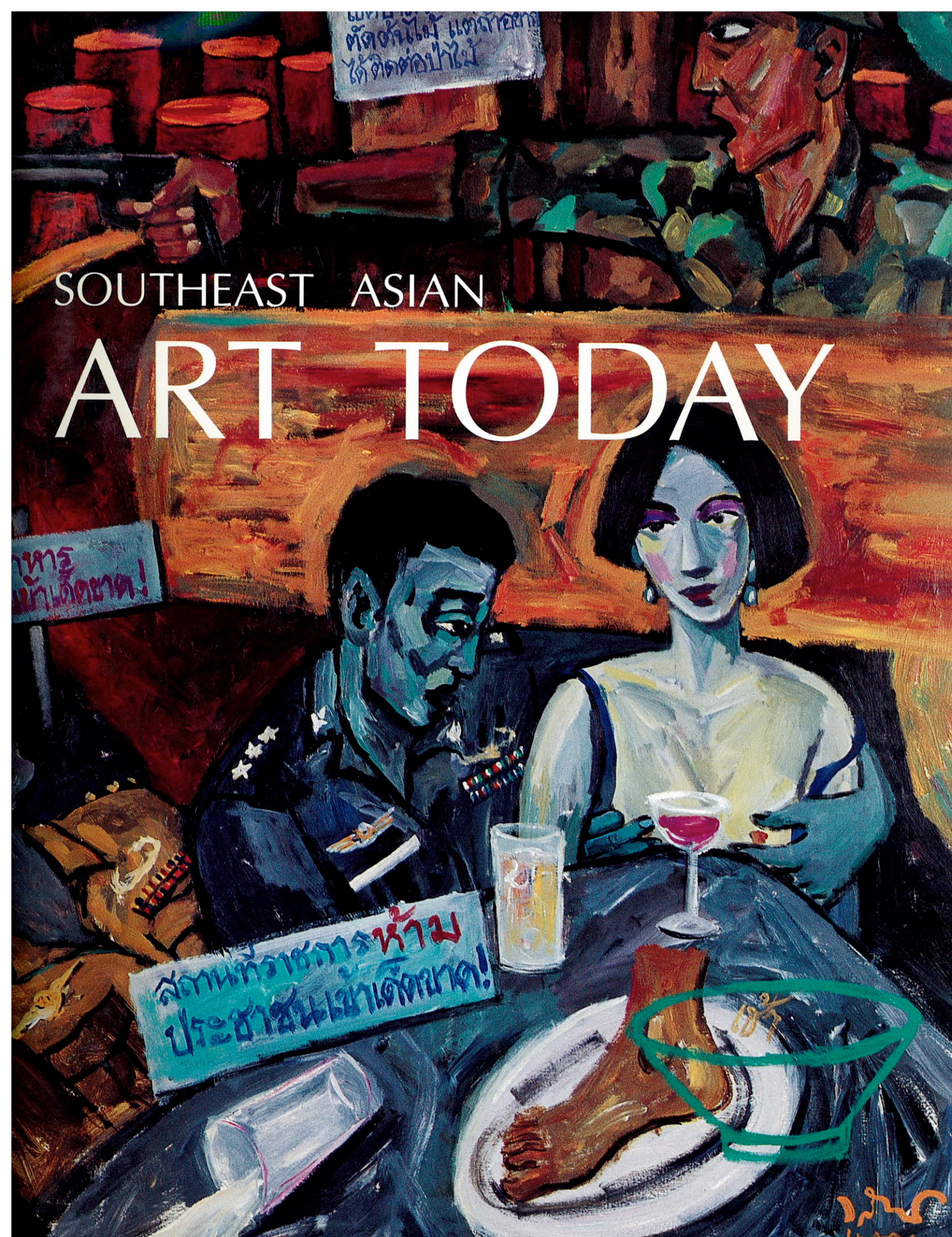


SOUTHEAST ASIAN

# ART TODAY





## ARAYA RASDJARMREARNSOOK

**"A**s an only child," said Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, "my private world played a crucial part in my thinking and imagination which I, in turn, expressed through my writing and art. The influence of what I had read during my childhood and my sensitivity to the changing environment have had an enormous impact on my work."

Born in Trad, Thailand in 1957, Araya's world must have been mixed with sorrow and confusion when, at the age of three, she lost her mother. During her teens, Araya was sent to a boarding school where she was taught, along with two thousand other girls, the roles and duties of Thai women and the restrictions placed upon them. She recalls one of the many verses they were made to recite. "Girl, do not sell your love to a man. You will not have his respect. And he'll return to you your insulted honour."

Araya began to study art in 1974 when she entered the College of Fine Arts and continued her education specializing in printmaking at Silpakorn University, Bangkok. She achieved early recognition and prestigious awards at national art exhibitions. Her intaglio prints consist mainly of landscape scenes. While she worked as a teacher at the College of Fine Arts, Araya pursued her graduate studies at Silpakorn University. She created a series of stunning monochromatic prints with titles that evoke metaphorical interpretation, for example, *A PAINFUL PSYCHE*, 1985, depicts a craggy mass looming in darkness.

In 1987, Araya's career blossomed. She held her first solo exhibition in Bangkok and was hired as an art lecturer by Chiangmai University. Her success, however, was tinged with sorrow, as her grandmother passed away. It was a second event related to death which Araya would later use to reminisce in her work.

A scholarship allowed her to study in Germany where she obtained a Master of Fine Arts degree at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Braunschweig. Exposure to contemporary European art not only further developed her technical virtuosity in prints like *THE DREAM OF THE MOTHER*, 1990, but also encouraged forceful expression of her self-awareness. *RAINY DAY WITH A STRANGER*, 1991, and *PHOTO OF WOMEN I*, 1991, arouse feelings of solitude and melancholy as isolated figures loom against a sombre background.

As Araya wrote: "I was like most Asian women raised according to the culture, beliefs and paths of the past. Until one day I found that truth as we know it changes, and the age of choice arrives. It hurts to realize that we never really make choices directly and completely independently because we cannot cut loose from these socio-cultural conditions. They have a lot of influence on my art making. I often wish I could reach that ultimate state of self-realization: individuality through the process of making art."

**OPPOSITE:** HAS GIRL LOST HER  
MEMORY? II, 1993, CORN, HUSK,  
METAL, CLOTH, ROOM  
INSTALLATION.

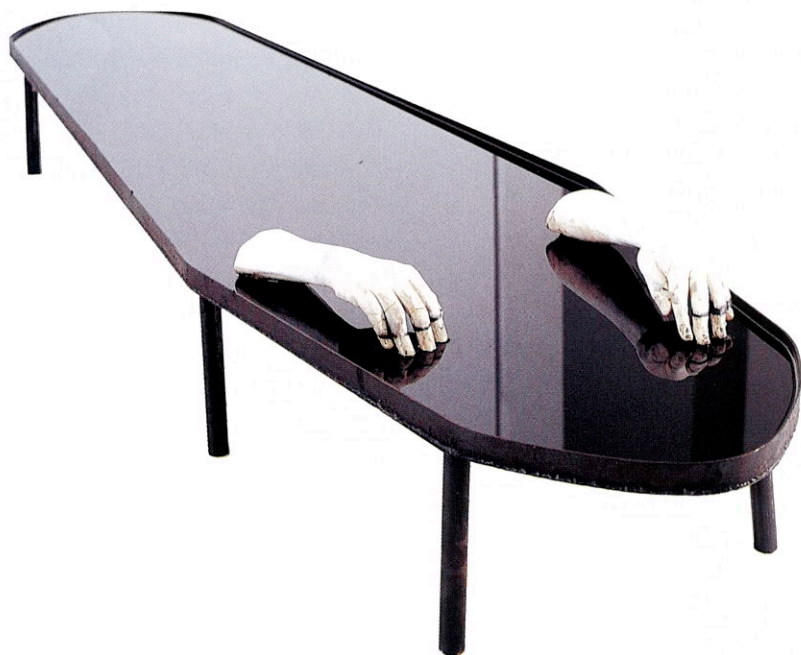












**TOP:** ISOLATED HANDS ASKING FOR HELP, 1992, METAL, PLASTER, MOTOR OIL, 180 X 65 X 30 CM. **ABOVE:** THREE NARCISSUSES, 1993, PLASTER, METAL, WATER, 180 X 170 X 180 CM. **LEFT:** THE DINNER WITH CANCER, 1993, METAL, PLASTIC TUBES, GLASS, WATER, ROOM INSTALLATION.