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# Manit Sriwanichpoom -- photography, working in Thailand, & the Pink Man series

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"This Bloodless War" by Manit Sriwanichpoom

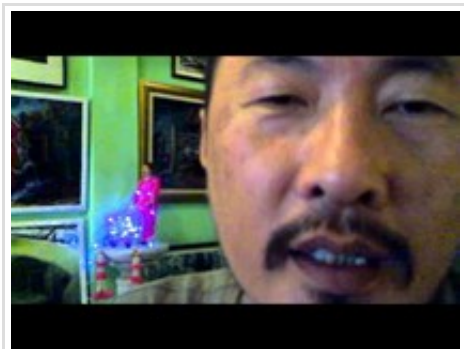
**Credits:** Manit Sriwanichpoom

## Manit Sriwanichpoom

([http://www.rama9art.org/manit\\_s/](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/)) is a [Bangkok](http://www.examiner.com/topic/bangkok) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/bangkok>) -based artist whose work creatively explores Thai identity, including [political](http://www.examiner.com/topic/political) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/political>), sexual, and economic themes. Recently I spoke with Sriwanichpoom about his influences and early developments as an artist, his [Bloodless War](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/) ([http://www.rama9art.org/manit\\_s/](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/)) and [Pink Man](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/) ([http://www.rama9art.org/manit\\_s/](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/)) series, and his ongoing projects.

*How did you first get interested in the arts?*

Sriwanichpoom: Becoming an artist was not my plan at the beginning. I was inspired by my cousin to become an architect like him. But instead of architecture school, the national university entrance examinations landed me at Srinakharinvirot University's [visual](http://www.examiner.com/topic/visual) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/visual>) [art](http://www.examiner.com/topic/art) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/art>) faculty where I had no clue what they'd be teaching me. Gradually I realised that I was learning how to find and express myself.



interview with Mani Sriwanichpoom

### ***Who are some of your influences?***

Sriwanichpoom: I never dreamed of becoming a photographer but one day at the university I met my Thai teacher Pramuel Burutsaphat who graduated from the US. He showed me his prints with complicated techniques. I fell in love with the medium right away. I bought my first camera from him, a Pentax MX. Later on I got to know the work of Arnold Newman and Robert Frank who had influences on me how to look at people and the world.

### ***What is an early memory you have of doing something in the arts?***

Sriwanichpoom: When I was in primary school I enjoyed drawing class, trying to paint a rice-field with buffaloes and learning how to do Thai calligraphy.

### ***You have done a lot of projects that are multidisciplinary in nature --such as combining photography and performnace. What are some things that you like so much about working on projects that include multidisciplinary elements?***

Sriwanichpoom: The outcomes always surprise me. In the case of the Pink Man project, at the beginning in 1997 I planned just only three performances (once a month for three months) and that's it. But the momentum of the project has taken off. Pink Man started having his own life like Superman or Batman. When I need him to state a comment for me he will come and perform for my work.

### ***What do you like so much about working in [Thailand](http://www.examiner.com/topic/thailand) (<http://www.examiner.com/topic/thailand>) ?***

Sriwanichpoom: It's my commitment to my homeland. I have an obligation to pay back with my art. I believe that human nature is the same. They're different just outside but deep down they all are the same. I can talk about consumerism and globalization impacts from my house in Thailand. I don't have to go somewhere else to deal with these issues. Using micro to reflect macro picture.

When you live in another country you are immediately becoming a second or third class citizen and you don't have the same right with the natives which I find problematic.

### ***How did you come up with the idea for [“This Bloodless War”](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/) ([http://www.rama9art.org/manit\\_s/](http://www.rama9art.org/manit_s/)) ? It is a very powerful series. Why did you decide to revisit that [film footage of General Ngoyen Ngoc Loan shooting a Vietcong soldier](http://www.youtube.com/verify_age?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3D7s3JuwkoxZk) ([http://www.youtube.com/verify\\_age?next\\_url=/watch%3Fv%3D7s3JuwkoxZk](http://www.youtube.com/verify_age?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3D7s3JuwkoxZk)) ?***

Sriwanichpoom: *This Bloodless War* series was my reaction towards the economic crisis of 1997 when

Thailand lost the currency war led by hedge funds. The Thai baht was devalued and the whole country went bankrupt and was forced to be more open to foreign economic domination. This was a good example of modern colonization practicing through monetary system and stock market. It's a bloodless war and this time Thailand was a loser. When I was thinking of any war that could reflect imperialism and colonialism in this region then I thought of the Vietnam war which is a case in living memory. Besides the photograph of General Nguyen Ngoc Loan shooting a Vietcong soldier, [a naked girl running away from napalm bombs \(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phan\\_Thi\\_Kim\\_Phuc\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phan_Thi_Kim_Phuc) in the picture taken by [AP photographer Nick Ut \(http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng2.htm\)](http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0008/ng2.htm) is our [collective \(http://www.examiner.com/topic/collective/articles\)](http://www.examiner.com/topic/collective/articles) memory of the horrendous war that a strong and powerful country waged on a smaller one.

***Your "Pink Man" series is amazing. How did you come up with the idea for the "Pink Man"?***

Sriwanichpoom: In 1997 when hypermarket chains (like Tesco Lotus or Carrefour) started their business in the outskirts of Bangkok, I went to one of them and was shocked with what I saw. The excessive consumption by each family who came out of the hypermarket was a sign to me that the end of the world is coming soon. I felt that I had to do something to make people realize what'd happened to us now and question who's behind all of this. Then a picture of a fat man in a suit like a politician or businessman with a shopping cart came up in my mind. After a while I added the colour pink to his suit and the cart to ridicule him like a joker or a roadside bar comedian.

**How has that project evolved since its inception in 1997? What are some plans you have for the future of that project?**

Sriwanichpoom: Pink Man is still alive although getting older. I don't have any plan at the moment but he will come to perform when I get an idea for him.

***How did you come up with the idea for "Protest"?***

Sriwanichpoom: When Thaksin Shinawatra became prime minister in his term, the media and some academics believed that Thai democracy was progressing. But to me, I had doubts and questions. *Protest* was conceived to bear witness to my suspicions. When I worked as a photojournalist for a local news agency, I used to cover protests in front of government house.

***Why did you want to create that photographic record of every Tuesday for an entire year?***

I know that every Tuesday people come to make their voices heard by the government and the media who were hanging out there.

***What have been the public's response to "Protest"?***

Sriwanichpoom: This project was well received by a few academics and journalists, but it is difficult to assess the public's reaction *Protest* since I've never had a chance to show in a proper venue accessible to them.

***How did you come up with the idea for "The Lambs of God" (http://www.rama9art.org/manit\_s/lambs.html)? That's another remarkable project.***

Sriwanichpoom: Actually I didn't have a plan for the series. It just happened naturally when in late 2005 Thai people started protesting against Thaksin Shinawatra their corrupt prime minister, after finding out how he and his family were exempt from paying tax on for their two billion USD stock sale. I started documenting the protests when I had a chance and sometimes I conceived ideas for the studio works. My work from 2006 – 2008 is my response to Thai political unrest. This series was more like my diary of that time.

***What other ongoing projects have you been working on?***

Sriwanichpoom: I'm working on a project called *Lost* -- a photographic series of nature from national and urban park. I try to capture the spirits of the places. As I'm a very urban man whenever I confront with nature I feel insecure and humble. I lose sense of control and direction. I'm in the hand of mother nature.



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Dan Godston teaches and lives in Chicago. His writings have appeared in Chase Park, After Hours, BlazeVOX, Versal, Beard of Bees, Horse Less Review, Moria, Apparatus Magazine, EOAGH, Requited Journal, Sentinel Poetry, and other print publications and online journals.