

BLOUINARTINFO

Published on *Artinfo* (<http://www.artinfo.com>)

Nudes and Politics in Manit Sriwanichpoom's Latest Show "Obscene"

Language
English



Manit Sriwanichpoom

Manit Sriwanichpoom's "Narcissist", one of the works in the firebrand Thai photographer latest exhibition "Obscene".

by Max Crosbie-Jones

Published: January 4, 2013



"Goddess of Democracy": As in the current Thai political arena, red rules.

CHIANG MAI — Leading Thai photographer Mani Sriwanichpoom has been steadily curating shows at Bangkok's [Kathmandu Photo Gallery](#) over the past couple of years, most notably exhibitions showcasing forgotten Thai photographers. However, while his own output appears to have slowed recently, the soft-spoken artist — still best known internationally for his consumerism-critiquing *Pink Man* series — remains a potent provocateur.

In April last year a horror movie adaption of Macbeth he worked on, "Shakespeare Must Die", was banned, after Thailand's film board declared that its depiction of an alternate Kingdom ruled by a megalomaniacal and murderous dictator might cause social "divisiveness" (a court battle looms).

First exhibited at H Gallery Bangkok last June and now showing at its [Chiang Mai branch](#), his latest show "Obscene" — two photo series in one linked by the "masculine vices of greed and lust" — finds him both taking swipes at hot-button Thai politics and stepping back from it.

The 'greed' part in "Obscene", is a set of Carravagio-esque semi-nudes in which, to Thai audiences at least, the themes of political vanity and venality are as laid bare as the models. In *Goddess of Democracy*, for example, one clad in transparent gauze and chains holds a copy of the Thai constitution above her head in one hand, an automatic rifle in the other. The saturated reds overtly reference the ruling Pheu Thai party, while the use of woman models alludes to its leader Yingluck Shinawatra, Thailand's first female prime minister.

The more introspective and less piquant 'lust' segment, *Holy Machismo*, consists of semi-abstract black and white photographs of sacred Thai *lingam*, or phallic fertility symbols. According to Sriwanichpoom, who turned 50 last year, these deal with themes of virility and sexual insecurity and are some of his most personal works yet. "I hardly ever deal with me — I've always looked out, not in — but recently I have been worrying about middle age and all that comes with it," he tells ARTINFO. "I felt I should share this feeling with other people."

After experimenting with digital, both series were shot on film using a 4x5 view camera as the results were more painterly — "softer and richer," he says.

"Obscene" runs into February (closing date unknown) at H Gallery Chiang Mai.

[Visual Arts](#), [Contemporary Arts](#), [Thai contemporary art](#), [Mani Sriwanichpoom](#)