

## THAI CAPTION :

documenting and discussing thai contemporary art

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# Why the Pink Man in the Header? — Mani Sriwanichpoom's "Pink Man on Tour #6 (Amazing Rice Field. Northern Thailand)"

Ellen Adams / September 18, 2013

### ABOUT THAI CAPTION :

THAI CAPTION is a project by Fulbright research grantee Ellen Adams to document and analyze Thai contemporary art, with a particular focus on politically and socially engaged art.



Mani Sriwanichpoom's "Pink Man On Tour #6 (Amazing Rice Field. Northern Thailand)"

THAI CAPTION has modified the original 1998 photograph *Pink Man on Tour #6 (Amazing Rice Field. Northern Thailand)* by Mani Sriwanichpoom's (มานิต ศรีวานิชภูมิ) for the design of the website's header. An icon of Thai contemporary art, Mr. Sriwanichpoom's Pink Man (performed by artist Sompong Thawee) journeys throughout Thailand and around the world, often with his pink shopping cart, to places of beauty, power or historical trauma.



Mani Sriwanichpoom's "Pink Man in Paradise #11," from a 2003 series based in Bali in the wake of the island's 2002 nightclub bombing that killed hundreds and devastated the Balinese tourism economy

In his interview with *Art Radar Asia* (link listed below), Mr. Sriwanichpoom explains the thread connects the Pink Man's extensive travels:

“ Like most tourists today, Pink Man travels not to learn but to consume: to collect exotic destinations, to shop, to show off. He searches but he never learns because he's insincere.

In the Pink Man series, which spans over a decade, Mr. Sriwanichpoom employs humor, impeccable technique and a satin suit to shift the focus to issues of consumerism, national identity and corruption.



From Mani Sriwanichpoom's 2005 series "Pink, White & Blue," the sixth photograph of the set shows Thai boys in

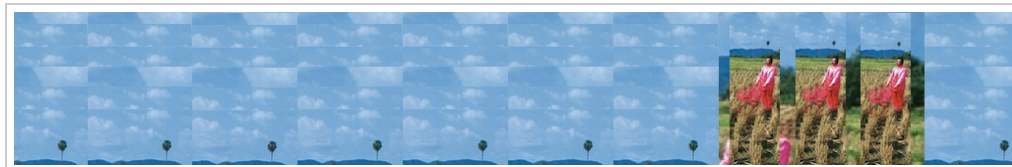
traditional scout uniforms obediently following the Pink Man and his shopping cart

The particular image, however, of *Pink Man on Tour #6 (Amazing Rice Field. Northern Thailand)* was selected to be the header of this site for a number of reasons.

Firstly, through language, its caption sheds light on an underlying message of the photograph. "Amazing Thailand" is a slogan used extensively by the [Tourism Authority of Thailand](#). Colloquially, however, it is also a phrase often used in everyday conversation in a sarcastic or cynical manner, such as in response to political corruption or inefficient infrastructure. This caption captures that duality of exaltation and starker reality with "*Amazing Rice Field.*" Similarly, this research project aims to harness the power of the verbal –though in a format a bit longer than an actual caption–to enrich our understanding of the images before us. This website's focus is artwork in conjunction with language—both interviews with the artists and written analyses of their works—and language's ability to articulate and/or complicate an artwork's message.

Secondly, this photograph was chosen for its geography. The THAI CAPTION project is based in Chiang Mai, and a core goal of the project is to think, seek and discover beyond the Bangkok art world. In the coming year, THAI CAPTION strives to document much of the art of Thailand's provinces, not just the thriving art scene of its capital city.

Thirdly, THAI CAPTION's header selected *Pink Man on Tour #6 (Amazing Rice Field. Northern Thailand)* for its spirit of surprise, dissonance and insight. What we see is not always what we expect. What we see is not always what we think belongs, whether in the natural world or on a gallery wall. Artworks such as this, however, can illuminate contradictions in a way that is as accessible as it is undeniable.



THAI CAPTION's website header

Under the banner of this adapted photograph, it is in the same spirit of complicating captions, far-reaching scope and unexpected discoveries that I would hereby like to launch this research project, and to mark its home on this world's wide web. Welcome, again, to THAI CAPTION.

**For further reading and images related to Mani Sriwanichpoom's work:**

[May 2010 interview with \*Art Radar Asia\* about Singapore Art Museum exhibition](#)

[2010 \*Wall Street Journal\* article about the Pink Man series](#)

[2013 \*BLOUIN ARTINFO\* article on the artist's "Obscene" exhibition](#)

September 18, 2013 in ARTWORKS .: Tags: concept, consumerism, exoticization, Mani Sriwanichpoom, tourism