

# Cambodian sculptor draws on rural influences in Australian exhibition

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By Sen Lam for Asia Pacific

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His sculptures are being shown as part of a series at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in Sydney.

Mr Pich, who fled the killing fields at the age of seven, has made a name for himself in America, where he eventually settled.

While Mr Pich's work has been shown at some of the most prominent venues on the international art stage including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, he has returned to Cambodia, working out of his studio on the banks of the Mekong river.

Mr Pich told Radio Australia (<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/>)'s Asia Pacific program he fell in love with sculpting after moving back to Cambodia in 2002.

"After staying in Cambodia for two years, I stumbled on rattan, to make a sculpture," he said.

"I made my first sculpture in rattan and I just fell in love with it.

"Then I discovered bamboo, to go with the rattan, to strengthen parts of the sculpture, and it just resonated."

Mr Pich says he was inspired by his rural surroundings to use bamboo and rattan in his works.

"The two materials are the most used, in terms of functional, daily agrarian culture," he said.

While he is considered to be Cambodia's most internationally prominent contemporary artist, Mr Pich says not everyone back home knows him apart from those who follow art.

It is very difficult for one to make a living as an artist and also tough for parents to understand why anyone would choose such a career path, according to Mr Pich.

"In Cambodia, particularly, most parents (think) their son should be a monk and then they should be a doctor."

Mr Pich says he would encourage people to be seduced by the idea of being an artist.

"I was seduced art from a very young age, and there was no way I was going to do anything else," he said.

"As far as being comfortable... anyone who knows me, comes to see me, where I live, where I work .. they think I've done pretty good for myself... but I'm certainly not comfortable."



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