



#### WHERE I WORK

## PINAREE SANPITAK

Photographed by Ohm Phanphiroj for *Art AsiaPacific*.

Pinaree Sanpitak's studio is nestled in a neighborhood near Lumpini Park that is richly mixed in the Bangkok way, stately homes abutting shacks and sidewalk food vendors. The district centers on an old wet market of the sort disappearing elsewhere as convenience stores and hypermarkets transmogrify the city. Most abodes here combine business and residence, with families living on the second floor above the street-level spaces where they make everything from dresses to noodles.

In similar fashion, Pinaree's studio occupies the ground-floor of her home, an agreeably untidy two-story house that she and her former partner, painter Chartchai Puiipia, designed together. They built it in 1994 on the walled plot of land where her grandfather's old wooden house once stood. Although the couple separated in 1998, they remain friends and share parenting of their 13-year old son, Shone, whose games and toys add to the clutter of books and other materials.

Pinaree's works fill the entire studio and beyond. One of the four upstairs bedrooms recently overflowed with dozens of soft, breast-shaped sculptures, each the size of a beach ball, from her 2004 installation *temporary insanity*, awaiting shipment to a September festival of Thai contemporary culture in Paris, "Tout à Fait Thai 2006."

The artist's poetic sculptures, drawings and installations center on imagery of the breast and female body as metaphors for universal human psychology and relationships. Born in 1961,

educated in Thailand, the U.S. and Japan, Pinaree had her first solo show in Bangkok in 1987 and reached her artistic stride by the mid-1990s. The tone of her work then was introverted, but year-by-year it has become increasingly open, celebratory and interactive. This progression in itself is among the pleasures of following her career. Today, more often than toiling alone in the studio, she creates work while conversing around her living room coffee table with suppliers and collaborators. She works with a seamstress who previously served as her grandfather's housekeeper. Apisit Nongbua, former assistant to the late Montien Boonma, casts her sculptures. Apisit's former assistant, in turn, is a ceramicist who kilns her glazed terracotta objects.

In 2005, Pinaree began the ongoing project she calls "breast stupa cookery," in which breast-shaped molds of ceramic and cast aluminum become tools for preparing and serving meals. Unlike Rirkit Tiravanija's cook-ups, the artist herself does not handle the food, but provides implements for use by others. She documents the cookery in photos, and will eventually publish them in a book alongside the recipes. Videographers also record each of these culinary happenings, performed to date in Bangkok, Tokyo, Singapore and Spain. As Pinaree explains, "The idea is to ask people to interpret the breast stupa shape in food, then to eat it. They all come up with different ideas. You can really see each person's character!" ■ BRIAN MERTENS