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Pinaree Sanpitak's Mesmerizing Meditations at Tyler Rollins

BY Nicholas Forrest | May 12, 2017



“Mats and Pillows and Vessels” is Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak’s fourth solo exhibition at Tyler Rollins Fine Art in New York. The two-part showcase features the first-time showing of the installation “The Mats and The Pillows” as well as a new series of works on paper titled “In the Jars” which are contextualised by an overview of more than 20 years of Sanpitak’s works on paper.

Conceived in conjunction with a large-scale hanging fabric installation commissioned by Arts Brookfield, “The Mats and The Pillows” invites viewers to take refuge from the world, make themselves comfortable, and incorporate themselves into the installation by either sitting on the collage of traditional, natural fiber mats or on one of the cushions scattered throughout the space.

Describing “The Mats and The Pillows,” Sanpitak says: “One of the four basic necessities of life is a place to live, to sleep. The installation The Mats and The Pillows takes off from a Thai expression, ‘one mat one pillow,’ referring to immigrants, mainly Chinese, coming to the

country with nothing and hoping to pursue a new life. My ancestors also came to Thailand this way.”

Sanpitak’s new series of beautifully minimalist drawings continues her ongoing engagement with the vessel motif. Taking inspiration from a group of terracotta jars that she created as homages to traditional Thai water storage pots and “the sense of nurture, receptivity, and security that they evoke,” the graphite drawings echo the different forms and moods that the vessels embody.

To find out more about “Mats and Pillows and Vessels,” BLOUIN ARTINFO got in touch with Pinaree Sanpitak and asked her a few questions.

What was the inspiration and motivation behind the exhibition Mats and Pillows and Vessels?

I had proposed to install “The Mats and The Pillows” at the Winter Garden, Brookfield Place when we started discussing in 2015. It was then titled “Under the Palms”. But because of the heavy traffic in the atrium after the renovation was completed, Arts Brookfield has asked me to propose a hanging piece instead. Thus came “The Roof”.

We decided to install “The Mats and The Pillows” at the gallery at the same time because the 2 installations relate and would create a dialog across town. The visual aspect of “The Mats and The Pillows” have changed, becoming more subdued and layered in context. By collaging the different mats’ sizes and textures, I see it as an interruption of the borders of the body and then inviting the bodies to enter and share. The rectangle block pillows add another dimensional which can alter the installation along with the visitors.

We then decided to include the works on paper which rarely have been exhibited to give an insight to my works on the body and vessels.

What are the works in the exhibition?

The exhibition comprises of the installation “The Mats and The Pillows” and new works on paper “In the Jars” which are based on my new terracotta works of water jars where some will be empty, some will have water, fish and plants, some will grow trees. (The terracotta works are not in the show.) Earlier works on paper based on the body and vessels are also included to lend a background on the journey of my works.

What is the significance and importance of the different materials that you work with?

I started using different materials in my works after my print workshop at Northern Editions in Darwin in 1999. Working on the different variety of printing plates inspired me. Although the works were of the same forms, the outcome changed. Decision on each material came about naturally. What I encounter and am drawn to or what is appropriate and available. Larger scale interactive installations prompt a challenge not only to make the materials work with the concept but also to be visually compelling.

What is your interest in domesticity and how is it expressed in the works in the exhibition?

With “The Mats and The Pillows” and “The Roof” domesticity is referred to as less about the individual home but rather in the sense of being able to share space (one’s world) and the ability and opportunity to settle.

What are the recurring motifs that you use in your work and how do they convey and express the main concerns and issues that you deal with in your work?

I would say one aspect of my work is the semi-biographical nature relating to the personal. The recurring motifs, such as the breast, bodies, vessels become a personal vehicle in expressing my views and interests in multiple facets and viewpoints. Exploring and looking at a form inside and out from all sides helps me to examine the self, first and foremost.