

Contemporary art

## A new country conquered

Art Museum Thailand Art and Media Art Show  
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The Nation March 4, 2013 1:00 am



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### The Guggenheim brings Asian works to New York through its new UBS MAP Global Art Initiative

Masterpieces by acclaimed Thai artists Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook and Navin Rawanchaikul have recently been added to the permanent collections of New York's Guggenheim Museum.

Araya's 12.37-minute video art "The Treachery of the Moon" (2012) and Navin's huge vivid figurative painting "Places of Rebirth" (2009) join a wealth of other Asian art in the new exhibition "No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia" on display at the museum until May 22.

Curated by Singaporean June Yap, it's the debut show of the Guggenheim's and features works in the museum's new collection by 22 artists and collectives from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Since last spring, Yap has been travelling through Asia making her selections for the museum. Yap and Alexandra Munroe, the Guggenheim Museum's senior curator for Asian Art, were in Bangkok on November 28 for the inaugural public education programme, "MAP: Regarding South and Southeast Asia", a project launched in collaboration with the Jim Thompson Art Centre under the supervision of its artistic director Gridthiya Gaweewong.

Yap met a lot Thai contemporary artists during her visit and is also planning to collect works by Kamin Lertchaiprasert.

"With 'No Country', we are beginning to take local, regional and global audiences into a deeper, more rewarding, and we hope, more nuanced cultural exchange. As the exhibition's title suggests, we have tried to take nothing for granted - including the concept of 'country' itself - in thinking about the art that is now being made, in adding to our mutual knowledge and understanding across borders, and in building a vital area of the Guggenheim's collection," says the museum's Richard Armstrong.

Drawn from the opening line in WB Yeats's 1928 poem "Sailing to Byzantium", and later adopted by Cormac McCarthy for his novel "No Country for Old Men", the exhibition title evokes the concept of a culture without borders. Investigating the diversity of contemporary artistic practice in South and Southeast Asia through the work of a cross-generational selection of artists and in the context of the region's historically shifting borders, the exhibition traces the complex relationships and cultural influences that connect the area's people to each other and the rest of the world.

"There is a tremendous diversity of artistic practice in South and Southeast Asia, and certainly more artists and artworks than any single project can accommodate," notes Yap who was the curator at the Singapore Pavilion at Venice Biennale in 2009.

She adds that in this exhibition, the intention is both to present the range of aesthetic developments and subjects of interest to contemporary artists, and simultaneously challenge the privileging of nation and national narrative as the basis for understanding aesthetic practices from different countries. The hope is that these artworks will contribute to a deeper and more critical understanding of the region, both for audiences in the US and those in Asia.

#### ON THE ROAD

"No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia" is at the Guggenheim Museum in New York until May 22.

The show moves to the Asia Society Hong Kong Centre from October to February 2014. It is also expected to travel to Singapore.

For more information, visit [www.Guggenheim.org](http://www.Guggenheim.org).



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