

THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

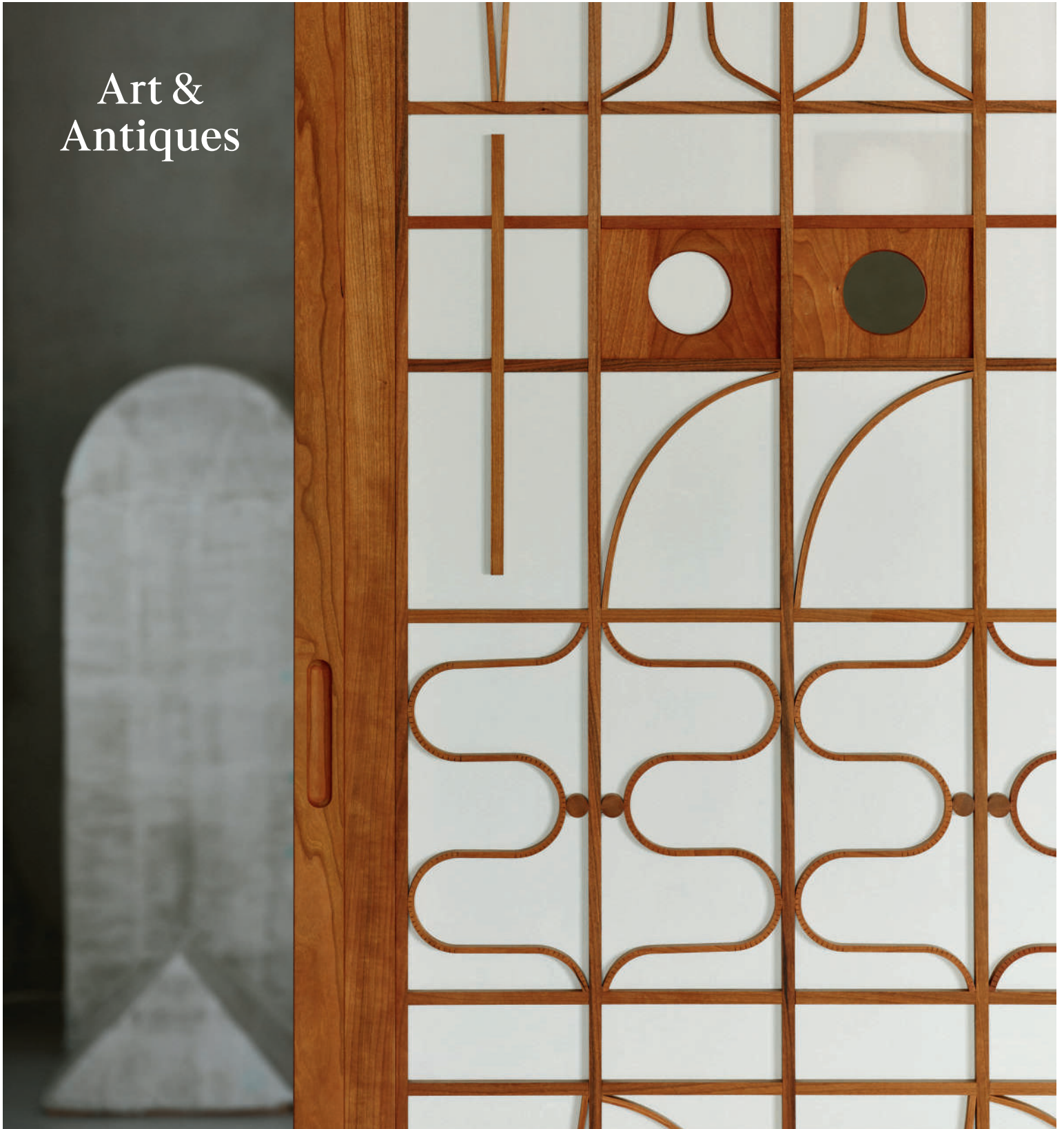
JUNE 2025 £5.99



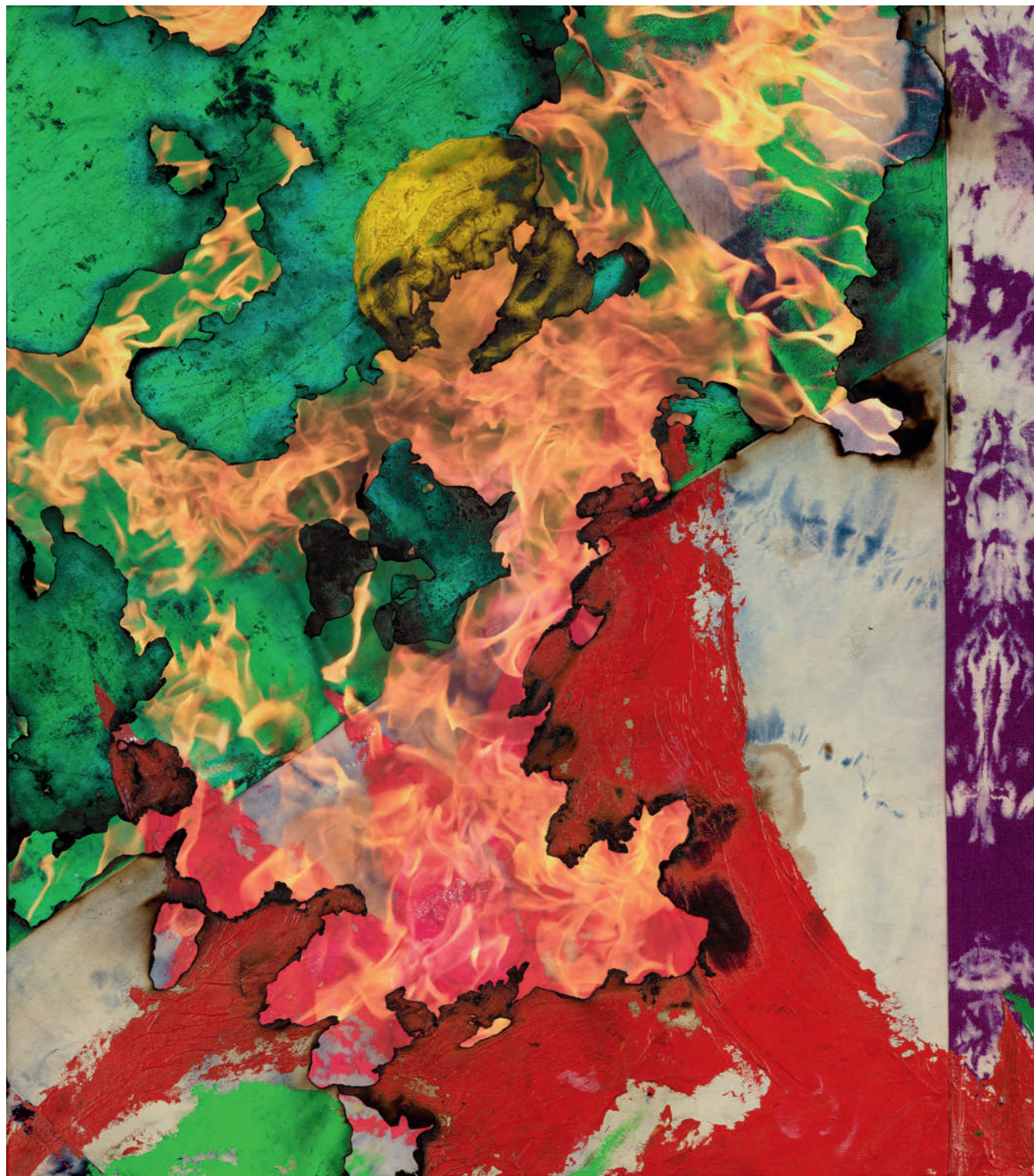
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Art &
Antiques



Super Nova



Above: Korakrit Arunanondchai, 'Loosely Earth', 2023, acrylic polymer on denim on canvas, aluminium stretcher, 119.5 × 71.5 × 3.8cm.
Opposite: Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, 'The Treachery of the Moon', 2012, single-channel video, colour, sound, 12:37 minutes

Affinities

Until 5 July

Nova Contemporary, 86 Si Phraya Rd,
Bang Rak, Bangkok 10500

The move of Bangkok's Nova Contemporary to a bigger space and hipper district is indicative of the wider changes in and current ambitions of the Thai art world. The country currently mounts two biennials and a triennial, a *Kunsthalle* opened in 2024 and DIB, a contemporary museum organised around the collection of the late collector Petch Osathanugrah, will emerge this coming December. Add to all this a plethora of smaller galleries and the increasing presence of local artists on international circuits and we have the ingredients of a very vibrant culture of contemporary art.

The new gallery occupies what was a shop/house in the Bang Rak neighbourhood, heading towards the serpentine Chao Phraya river, a more historic setting than that of the previous home, which was on the ground floor of an upmarket condominium in a largely residential area. Spread across six storeys – including two

dedicated to gallery space and a viewing room – the conversion was led by the team at Skarn Chaiyawat Architects and will continue to be steered by Nova's founder and director, Sutima Sucharitakul. This new iteration is akin to Warehouse 30, a clutch of commercial galleries, shops and cafés, and Talad Noi, a rapidly gentrifying district of designer outlets and the aforementioned Bangkok Kunsthalle, which abuts the bustling Chinatown.

The inaugural exhibition at Nova Contemporary is a group show of more than 20 artists entitled *Affinities*. As well as the gallery's roster of painters and conceptual artists such as Latthapon Korkiatarkul, Prae Pupityastaporn, Kawita Vatanajyankur and Tada Hengsapkul, there are also a few surprises in store. A major work by Montien Boonma is on display, as well as pieces from the New York-based wunderkind Korakrit Arunanondchai and the fiercely brilliant Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook. The late Boonma is considered a godfather of the contemporary scene in Thailand, thanks to his melding of European Modern and Postmodern art with a Buddhist sensibility. He was recently

acquired by New York's Moma. Arunanondchai, who is in his thirties, has built an international reputation based on a similar exploration of the intersections of East and West, although more tinged with irony. His burnt-denim assemblages speak to the fractious relationship between the spiritual and secular. Rasdjarmrearnsook, meanwhile, persistently explodes taboos, not least with videos of herself interacting with corpses, which were shown at the Venice Biennale in 2005. More recent films include footage of Thai farmers and monks discussing masterpieces from the Western canon.

Affinities and the space in which it is housed will add up to more than the sum of their parts. The beguiling abstraction of Korkiatarkul, painterly views of Pupityastaporn, and more outwardly political stances of Vatanajyankur and Hengsapkul build a rich tapestry that tell us much about the local scene. Here we have what Bangkok galleries do best: grounding recent developments in art practice, which flourishes where the global and the local meet. *Brian Curtin is an Irish-born writer and educator based in Bangkok*

