

THE BROKEN WHITE UMBRELLA

Sawangwongse Yawnghwe

25 February – 30 April 2022

Nova Contemporary is pleased to announce *The Broken White Umbrella* (25 February –30 April 2022), Sawangwongse Yawnghwe's first solo exhibition at the gallery, which presents a new body of work that represents the artist's response to contemporary events in Burma. The internationally-exhibited artist is known for artwork that explicitly commentates on the dynamics of transnational politics, however, in *The Broken White Umbrella* the artist offers a distinctly softer and more personal perspective, one year on from the 2021 military coup.

Building upon a lifetime of sourcing and collecting photographs, stories, and memories has resulted in the artist's complete entwinement with the history of family and of his country. Here, Yawnghwe (b. 1971, Burma) takes eight archival images from early-mid twentieth century Burma, and in relating them on canvas, creates new modernist compositions with Barnett Newman-like bands of color. The source photographs he treats as a neutral document of the past, and—uninterested in its perfect recreation—Yawnghwe explores the act of creating, morphing these untold and fast-fading histories into contemporary objects with new materiality. Removed in time and space as he is from the stills of the archives, he sets a scene for the viewer, almost cinematic, creating a new structure and a new vocabulary through which to come to terms with the present.

In this modern new body of work, Yawnghwe reluctantly addresses the continued uncertainty and pessimism around his country's future, by turning inward and ruminating on Hegel's idea of "imminent reversal." Through these painted works Yawnghwe not only explores current events in parallel with his family's exile following the Burmese military coup of 1962, but posits himself as an unblinking witness to the repetitions of history.

In this most recent chapter of Burma's history, millions more are now experiencing the fear and the exile his parents faced. Yawnghwe does not purport to take us back, he merely asks us to observe the present echoing the past: The undefined and often enigmatic figures of these paintings symbolize the not just the temporal decay of the photographs from which they are based, but also that of tradition, nation, and the gains of the present generation.

Like the refugee artists of the WWII generation who found refuge in the Netherlands, Yawnghwe works in relative anonymity from the quiet sanctuary of Amsterdam, and yet in his work there exists the universality that defines the recurring horrors of humanity.

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The title of this exhibition takes as its inspiration a recent book, *The White Umbrella* about the artist's grandmother. Traditionally, a white umbrella was held over the heads of members of the Shan royal family, of which Yawnghwe is a descendent.

The exhibition will showcase from February 25th – April 30th, 2022 (free of charge). Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Nova Contemporary, Rajdamri Rd. (BTS Rajdamri Exit 2). For additional information, please call +66 90 910 6863, Email: Press@novacontemporary.com

Sawangwongse Yawnghwe (b. 1971, Burma) has exhibited internationally, most recently at Jane Lombard Gallery (New York, 2021) and including: Dhaka Art Summit (Bangladesh, 2020), the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (Australia, 2018), the 12th Gwangju Biennale Exhibition (Korea, 2018), Dhaka Art Summit (Bangladesh, 2018), Qalandiya International — Jerusalem Show VIII (Jerusalem, 2016), Steirischer Herbst (Austria, 2016), and Dak'Art 2016/The 12th Biennale of Contemporary African Art (Senegal, 2016). He has also exhibited in numerous museums, including: National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art – Seoul (Korea, 2020), Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (Poland, 2018), Van Abbemuseum (Netherlands, 2018), MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum (Thailand, 2018), Irish Museum of Modern Art (Ireland, 2016), and Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (Netherlands, 2015). His works are housed in the collections of MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum in Thailand and Singapore Art Museum. He lives and works in the Netherlands.