

NOVA | CONTEMPORARY

Love Tied Down At the End of Memory Lane. (Under the Same Sky Exhibition Text)

We are inevitably the product of our time period and generation.

From the day we are born, we begin to feel, sense, taste, and make sounds, taking in as much as we can, as fast as we can, until we grow older.

Our future is a blank canvas in which we paint with the events that occur around us; events that turn into unique experiences for each individual.

And as we grow older, there comes a point when we start to take life in at a slower pace. We start to pick and choose the slices and pieces to take in. We no longer interact with just our mouth (verbally), but rather with our eyes (sight), ears (sound), and hands (touch), understanding and knowing how to express something in various creative ways in order to indicate its existence. Sometimes the intention not to say, or show is in and of itself an expression - to express by implying, comparing, and gesturing.

At every moment and juncture, we are determining our own path in life and how we see the world. The only question is:

“Will I become a product of my time period and generation, or will I resist.”

As we get older, the important process becomes digesting and sorting the experiences that we have accumulated over the years like layers of sediment, or the growth rings of a tree, which come from the future in the form of experience, pass through us in the present, and becomes the layers of the past. If only we could cut a gash into our own lives, perhaps we would see these rings in ourselves.

At some point we passionately say to ourselves, “I think, therefore I am,” or “My life belongs to me alone.” This perception and consciousness comes from our own experiences and memories and imply that the development of an individual is not fed by the circumstances of their time period and generation. Instead, it is connected to our aspirations and pursuits.

But while memories are locked in our minds, they are perpetually flowing in a state of digestion and classification. There are moments of contentment and sorrow that always occur; a slice or memory that surfaces, often missing its head and tail. They come out of nowhere and linger because they have no place to go either. They seem as though they are linked and connected to another slice of a faint memory. In this state, we often find all the dots that connect to one another, realizing that they form a big picture. An individual's state of mind connects to other memories from a different time period, or era beyond our own generation through the the blood bond of our ancestors. It is like a fabric woven by the words and stories told throughout our immediate history, which make us believe that

romanticized, and dressed up, deleted, or left out in order to bring about peace in a time of war, or to create chaos to bring about unity.

The works of Tada Hengsapkul reflects some odd memories of his childhood in historical contexts and events that remain as the ruined wonder in his life. Those memories, though time passed, could not blend perfectly with his personal memory. Some of the old football fields, big areas of land, or even the railway in his childhood memories were once the battle field of war before he was born. The lasting whisper of those historical moments, he thought were the sounds of ghosts and spirits striving for love or despairing in their loss. He later found out some concrete evidence of those historical events when he grew up. He found pictures, historical items, and even more so, what he thought was a ghost, or spirit was indeed his Thai-American relative. This relatives mother is his aunt who married an American soldier. Their love story went back to the 60's (1962-1975) when the American Army had their base in Nakornratchasima and many other provinces in the Northeastern region of Thailand during the Vietnam war, and war against communism.

Thus, many historical events and memories remain within Tada's hometown and his family stories: the large holes caused by the explosion of the jettisoned fuel tanks, the war gadgets that were sold on the black market, or kept in the warehouse cooperation, and friendships made between the Thais and Americans, which resulted in many developments in Thailand. This went beyond development in the army but also impacted the development of roads, new faculties in universities, geospatial surveys, and many other things that are visible in the new generation. Some of these were even identified as confidential by the CIA, and were requested for submission after a preliminary report was made.

All of these gigantic and complex landmarks in the stories that Tada explored have remained with him, whether from personal memory or from historical data. This historical data came from both regional and national levels and revealed several different pieces of the story much like peeling an onion to reveal new layers and depths than previously thought. Some of the new information could be smelt strongly and could perhaps make you cry just like an onion!

Chai Siri's work represents the same idea. It explores personal memory, but in a darker and more superstitious way. Chai Siri used the dark and mysterious space from time awake and also dream time through enchanted witness and ceremony. These superstitious ceremonial activities are often linked and referred to by various 'scientific,' and 'logical' stories. However, the charm and curiosity of those that 'should be avoided,' or 'could not be explained,' together with the holy and supernatural nature of things always attract more. Often, you need to look through those in the dark in more detail, alternatively you could try to find and explore them during the daylight.

The object evidence of Chai Siri's short film, movie scripts, neon light, and banana tree has become the media that is filled with spirit whether the illuminiscent reaction, the gloomy shade of the scene, the magical appearance and disappearance of the characters,

or the wordings that have been scripted on banana trees. These are shown as engravings, the printed memory of the scars and grief that would remain forever in a vicious cycle of born-dead-born-dead, or 'Love is dead, long live love.' The non-stop desire and repelling loops that imply no-happy ending.

While Tada explored his memory from the northeastern area, Chai Siri turned away and explored the northern border of Thailand. Such no-happy ending desire and repelling are shown through the backtrack of personal memories along the Salawin River that divides Thailand and Myanmar. There is certainly hatred between the two nations that has been well documented and kept in the history lessons of both countries. This is the beginning and the ending of the love, the bond, the memory of when Chai learned that his ancestors came from the other side of the river. The moving back-and-forth, the past-and-present happen periodically, and can be seen interchangeably and reversibly in the middle of the river tide.

Chai found that the cause of his mom eloping to escape Myanmar was in fact to avoid an uprising in her home town because of the Coup D'etat. She escaped to start a new life on the other side of the river. Chai went back to explore his mother hometown while the country he was currently residing in also experienced its own Coup D'etat. The history and memories in Chai Siri's mind have circled around, becoming more vague, and it is indeed hard to predict what his destiny will be.

At present, our personal and true selves lie in the reflection of thought and both bodies of work by the the two artists. It is perceived that not all of the worlds memories are within us; but our presence is creating new memories for the world and for others to remember.

We are ourselves in our own generation but this is not the entirety of our existence. We are connected through blood and history, through our country's regime and past, from our cultures, traditions and beliefs and through who we perceive ourselves to be. 'We are who we are and we must be ourselves'. 'We' are indeed part of the shared memories that have been received and then transmitted out, circulating within the definition of lives of the present days and generation.

This is the age of self-exploration, and realization as individuals seek whether we are added or mixed with other ingredients. Among those, what could be extracted out and diluted. The point is not to add stories, modify definitions and look from different angles, to make the stories more reliable and realistic but is meant to extract the true self of each individual in the midst of vagueness and this circling era.

Uthis Haemamool

Prologue translated by Paul Sucharitkul