



Painting, Prayer, Text
An exhibition by
Korakrit Arunanondchai
February 10 - April 15, 2023
CLEARING, Los Angeles

Korakrit Arunanondchai's exhibition *Painting, Prayer, Text*, presents a suite of history paintings and spirit houses that articulate the tension between the exploration and exploitation of one's sense of home and identity. While home may be where we start from, the development of selfhood and identity also involves the leaving behind of our origins and at times their disavowal or wreckage.

Upon entering the exhibition space, the viewer is offered two passageways through which to view the spirit house sculptures *Bridge* and *Shore of Security*. The structure for the spirit houses was originally created by Arunanondchai's mother, who worked as a designer of commercial wooden dollhouses; these were then emptied out and burned before being reassembled by the artist with their new accoutrement of discarded scraps from traditional Thai spirit houses, which are shrines ubiquitous throughout the artist's native country and used to offer prayers and gifts to the protective spirits of a place. The process of building and creating is a form of prayer—a home's structure dictates the flow of bodies, expressing the wish to be well guided and the hope that our chosen forms will stand the test of time. They are spiritual strivings that are doomed to profanity—while the spirit houses are an offering to the gods, they also speak to the human hubris of daring to challenge the will of those who rule above from our based, earthly constraints.

The creative process for these sculptures is one of dismantling and collage, and is echoed in the five history paintings Arunanondchai creates by first crafting layers of paint, bodily imprints, and photo-collage on denim canvas, then setting them ablaze, with the flame emerging as a protagonist on the canvas's stage. The artist photographs this performance process from a bird's eye perspective; the resulting images are then recreated to scale and interwoven with the ashes and remaining denim canvas, creating a kind of trompe l'oeil where the edge of the photograph and painting meet to capture and materialize a memory of burning. The three blue "Void" paintings, made from a metallic foil transfer process, create a sky-screen, a space for projective promises neither fulfilled nor denied. Arunanondchai's work frequently flirts with the boundary between irreverence and allegiance to that which is unassailably symbolic or sacred: exhausted markers of American masculinity such as denim and fire are turned inside out in value and form, while devotional objects become subject to scrutiny in a critical turn that accompanies true faith.

On the gallery floor, installed with a mixture of compressed earth, ash, and house paint, a prayer text reads:

In the beginning there was discovery / New nightmares, to challenge sleep / The need to impose order unto chaos / We create this world through unanswered prayers. / There's a

splendor beyond the upheaval / A nostalgia for unity / In the landscape of mourning / Give yourself to the air, to what you cannot hold / The ghost possesses nothing

A home first requires the boundaries of an enveloping, infrastructural container; second, an interior, in which to seek refuge, rest, and rootedness; as well as recognition from social reality, which together link to structure a sense of belonging. Our body is our first home and indelibly marked by its origins in the mother's body; the process of reckoning with the abandonment of birth by constructing an internal sense of home might be seen as the ongoing task of Arunanondchai's work. View the canvases as an extension of the artist's psychic skin; by destroying and rebuilding them from their burnt remnants, the artist reflects the tension between being contained and the act of containing.

"This house is far away, it is lost, we inhabit it no more; we are, alas, certain of inhabiting it never again. It is, however, more than a memory. It is a house of dreams, our oneiric house."
—Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 1948

- Hiji Nam

Korakrit Arunanondchai (born 1986 in Bangkok, Thailand) lives and works in New York and Bangkok.

He received his BFA from RISD, Providence, in 2009, and his MFA from Columbia University, New York, in 2012.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been held at MoMA PS1, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; UCCA, Beijing; S.M.A.K., Ghent; Museion, Bolzano; Kiasma, Helsinki; Serralves Museum, Porto; Secession, Vienna; Kunstverein in Hamburg; Migros Museum, Zurich; Kunsthall Trondheim; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Singapore Art Museum and Sonje Art Center, Seoul.

His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions at the Whitney Biennial, New York; Venice Biennale; Istanbul Biennial; Gropius Bau, Berlin; Kunstverein Hamburg; Kasseler Kunstverein; Baltic Triennial, Vilnius; Belgrade Biennial; Dhaka Art Summit; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Gwangju Biennial; Benaki Museum, Athens; Berlin Biennial; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; ICA, London; and Sculpture Center, New York.

Korakrit Arunanondchai's work belongs to the collections of the Whitney Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham; RISD Museum, Providence; The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas; Rubell Museum, Miami; Tate Modern, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; S.M.A.K., Ghent; Museion, Bolzano; Migros Museum, Zurich; Kiasma, Helsinki; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; K11, Hong Kong/Shanghai/Beijing; Zabludowicz Collection, London; Aishti Foundation, Beirut; and Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels.