



Vuth Lyno, Lion, 2011, Digital C-Print, 60x90cm

This month, Vuth Lyno is showing his work at the SASA Bassac gallery, a "new space for contemporary art" in Phnom Penh. *Lift* culture critic Ouk Elita took in his exhibit and sat down with the artist to find out what the exhibit means to the man who created it.

It was immediately obvious to those in attendance for the opening of Vuth Lyno's exhibit *Thoamada*, which will be shown at SASA gallery until the end of the month, that this was not your typical Phnom Penh photo fare.

As soon as I entered the gallery I found myself encircled by massive portrait photographs hanging from the ceiling. I adjusted to the unique presentation and saw that nine different men were each wearing unique makeup and looking seriously at the camera. My eyes alone still couldn't figure out what it all meant, but then I realised that each photo was accompanied by audio clips of the men telling their own stories of love, hate, happiness and sadness.

The creator of this exhibit, Vuth Lyno, is a 29-year-old Cambodian who, along with the other five members of an all-male artists collective that called themselves *Stiev* (rebel), has been at the centre of a resurgence of the arts in Phnom Penh.

For this exhibit, Vuth Lyno collaborated with his subjects, who are all self-identifying men who have sex with men (MSM), to compile anecdotes, audio recordings and create a visual aesthetic that would encourage people to confront the complexity of their identities.

I was among the first people to arrive at SASA Bassac on the opening night and the atmosphere was quiet yet calming. I began circling the portraits, taking a closer look to try to read the stories behind the masks painted on each of their faces. One of the men painted a colourful butterfly on his face that seemed to me to be very much alive.

I picked up the mp3 player placed on a pole just below the photo and began listening. He

was a charming man. He talked about his life and how he grew up to learn that he was different. He talked of his first love in the same way any teenage boy would, except that his first love was a man.

One by one, I listened to other audio clips. The nine men shared a sexual preference for men, but apart from that, each story was entirely unique. So too were the paintings on each of their faces, which were meant to convey another piece of their personal narrative - their identity.

One painted their face like a *yeak* (giant). Another has a Cambodian flag painted across the features of his face.

People kept trickling in to the gallery, and eventually so did Vuth Lyno. Despite his hectic

day, he immediately began greeting each of the guests at that evening's event. Eventually, he even managed to sit down with me to talk about his life as an artist and how he came to be where he is today.

Vuth Lyno was born to a middle-class family, educated at a good school and he says he had a fairly easy life. He studied Information Technology at university and took a photography course at the French Cultural Centre. It was on trip to the field as a photographer that he had an epiphany.

"I was a city boy. It was when I started working that I went to communities with problems and saw many forms of difficulties... from orphans, HIV patients, to disabled people..."

These trips also led to the blossoming of

Vuth Lyno's relationship with photography, as both an art form and a way to document the world around him. His first exhibition was in 2007, and he had another one in 2008 before receiving a scholarship to enroll in an MBA in Social Science programme in Melbourne, Australia

"My time in Australia and back home gave me a break to think about what I really want to do in life," he told me. Eventually, he decided to be a part of the change he wanted to see through his art.

Lyno took interest in the LGBT community in Cambodia and his project went from there. Starting with two men and working his way up to nine, Lyno worked closely with the group, giving them time to open up and share their experiences and feelings with each other, and eventually with the public.

"There are varieties among them and I want people to understand who they really are," he said.

Before I left, I snuck between two of the photos that formed the circle at the centre of the exhibit so that I became the centre of the exhibit. With their giant faces looking in at me, I took the time to really look back and try to see what they wanted me to see.

Behind each and every one of them was a lifetime of stories waiting to be heard and a young man waiting to be accepted.

I walked out of the gallery that night with an understanding, and sense of caring, about a community that I had previously given little thought to.

I remembered Vuth Lyno telling me that he envisioned his art being the change he wanted to see. I was grateful to be a part of it.

LIFT

I walked in and took time to observe all of their faces one more time. Behind each one was a story waiting to be heard and understood.



If you can't get to the SASA Bassac gallery in person, you can check out selections from past exhibits featuring the work of young Cambodian artists at sasaart.info



តើមានអ្វីថ្មីសម្រាប់សប្តាហ៍នេះ ?

នៅសប្តាហ៍នេះ វុធ លីណូ បានបង្ហាញស្នាដៃសិល្បៈនៅ ស ស បាសាក់ ដែលជាវិចិត្រសាល ដាក់បង្ហាញពីសិល្បៈសម័យ ទំនើប។ អ៊ុក អេលីតា បានទៅផ្តិតយកនូវរូបភាពទាំងនោះ។

អ៊ុក អេលីតា

នៅ ស ស បាសាក់ នៅថ្ងៃអង្គារ ទី១៧ កន្លងទៅនេះ មានបើកសម្ពោធពិពិធីសិល្បៈថ្មីមួយទៀត ដែលលើកនេះមានភាពខុសប្លែកខុសពីសព្វមួយដង។ វាជាការដាក់តាំងបង្ហាញរូបភាពមនុស្សប្រុស រូបភាពខ្នាតធំ ចំនួន៩ ផ្ទាំង ដែលពួកគាត់ ទាំងអស់មានគូរមុខ រូប និងពណ៌ខុសៗគ្នា។ រូបនីមួយៗ មានខ្សែអាត់ សម្រាប់ឲ្យអ្នកចូលទស្សនាស្តាប់ពីជីវិតរបស់អ្នកទាំងនោះ ទាំងការសប្បាយ និងរឿងកំសត់។ សិល្បៈនេះហៅថា ធម្មតា ហើយត្រូវបានបង្កើតឡើងដោយលោក វុធ លីណូ ដែលបានបញ្ចប់ការសិក្សា នៅប្រទេសអូស្ត្រាលី។ លោក វុធ លីណូ បានធ្វើការជាមួយបុរសទាំង៩នៅក្នុងរូបថត ដែលជាបុរសស្រឡាញ់បុរស ដើម្បីឲ្យពួកគាត់និយាយប្រាប់ពីរឿងរ៉ាវរបស់គាត់។

ខ្ញុំបានទៅដល់ ស ស បាសាក់ នៅពេលមិនសូវទានមានមនុស្សម្នាច្រើនទៅដល់នៅឡើយទេ។ ពេលចូលទៅដល់ទីនោះ បរិយាកាសគឺស្ងប់ស្ងាត់ ហើយ រូបគំនូរ ទាំង៩ ផ្ទាំងនោះ នៅចំកណ្តាលតែម្តង។ ខ្ញុំដើរមើលជុំវិញរូបថតទាំងអស់ ដោយសង្កេតមើលទឹកមុខរបស់មនុស្សម្នាក់ៗ។ ក្នុងនោះមានបុរសម្នាក់ គូរមុខរបស់គាត់ រូបមេរំពោយ៉ាងស្រស់ស្អាត។ ខ្ញុំចាប់យកម៉ាស៊ីន ៣០៣ ដែលដាក់នៅខាងក្រោមរូប ហើយស្តាប់ការរៀបរាប់ពីរឿងរ៉ាវរូបនោះ។ គាត់ជាមនុស្សម្នាក់ដែលរស់រាយ។ គាត់និយាយពីស្នេហាដ៏ប្លែករបស់គាត់មានប្រវត្តិដូចក្មេងប្រុសជំទង់ដទៃទៀតដែរ ប៉ុន្តែសង្សាររបស់គាត់គឺជាប្រុស។ ខ្ញុំបានស្តាប់រឿងអ្នកដទៃទៀតម្តងមួយៗ។ វាមានសាច់រឿងខុសប្លែកពីគ្នា។ មានបុរសម្នាក់គូរមុខខ្លួនគាត់ជាមុខយក្ស ម្នាក់ទៀតរូបទង់ជាតិប្រទេសកម្ពុជា។ រូបទាំងអស់តំណាងពីខ្លួនគាត់ និងស្ថានភាពនៅក្នុងសង្គម។ ក្រោយមក មនុស្សក៏ចាប់ផ្តើមមកច្រើនឡើង ហើយ លោក វុធ លីណូ ក៏មកដល់ផងដែរ។ ទោះ

“ រូបនីមួយៗមានខ្សែអាត់ សម្រាប់ឲ្យអ្នកចូលទស្សនា ស្តាប់ពីជីវិតរបស់រូបទាំងនោះ ទាំងសប្បាយ និងកំសត់ ”

បីជាលោក ជាប់រល់យ៉ាងណាក្តី ក៏គាត់ឆ្លៀតពេលដើម្បីនិយាយពីខ្លួនគាត់ និងការងារសិល្បៈប្រាប់ដល់ខ្ញុំដែរ។

លោក លីណូ កើតនៅក្នុងគ្រួសារដែលមានជីវភាពសមរម្យ។ គាត់បានសិក្សាផ្នែកព័ត៌មានវិទ្យា។ ជាងនេះទៅទៀត គាត់បានរៀនថ្នាក់ថតរូបនៅមជ្ឈមណ្ឌលវប្បធម៌បារាំង។ នៅពេលលោក លីណូ ចុះទៅតាមខេត្ត ដើម្បីជួយថតរូប ការគិតរបស់គាត់បានផ្លាស់ប្តូរ។ លោកបានបញ្ជាក់ថា៖ «ខ្ញុំបានឃើញការលំបាកជាច្រើន ដូចជា ក្មេងកំព្រា អ្នកផ្ទុកមេរោគអេដស៍ និងជនពិការ»។

ពិពិធីដ៏បង្កប់នូវរបស់លោក លីណូ គឺនៅឆ្នាំ២០០៧ ហើយបន្ទាប់មកទៀត គឺធ្វើនៅឆ្នាំ២០០៨។ នៅឆ្នាំដដែលនេះ គាត់បានទទួលអាហារូបករណ៍ ទៅសិក្សាថ្នាក់ អនុបណ្ឌិត ផ្នែកវិទ្យាសាស្ត្រសង្គមនៅប្រទេសអូស្ត្រាលី។ លោកបានឲ្យដឹងថា៖ «ចន្លោះពេលនៅប្រទេសអូស្ត្រាលី និងមកកម្ពុជាវិញ បានផ្តល់ពេលឲ្យខ្ញុំគិតពីអ្វីដែលខ្ញុំចង់ធ្វើ»។ គាត់សម្រេចចិត្តធ្វើការជួយដល់សង្គមតាមរយៈការងាររបស់គាត់។

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Check out Vuth Lyno's
paintings for yourself and
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SASA Bassac Gallery

#18 2nd Floor, Sothea Blvd.
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Sat - Sun, 10am-6pm
Phone: 077 374 110
Web: www.sasabassac.com



Vuth Lyno, Thoamada, 2011