



# Art exhibitions attract young Cambodians

**Y**OUNG Cambodians are pushing the boundaries in modern and abstract art and are gaining great respect from professionals who deal in the art business.

One gallery curator Ou Monich said she really admires the artists who put their true spirit into art, exposing themselves to the public as Cambodian

youths with an attitude to put out there.

Generally most Cambodian artists are inspired by works from overseas, with only a few brave enough to burst through with their own exhibitions.

One young man - Rin Chhoum Virak - organised his own exhibition based on his love of films from the 1950s and 1960s and has zeroed in on the peak period of the film industry during that era.

He wants more Cambodians to be educated about it.

Ly Sotheany, 24, has exhibited her works and after completing a photographic course where she realised the advantage of being seen by the wider public.

The slender Sotheany has exposed her masterpieces twice in 2011 and was recently exhibited in House number 240, with support from the French Cultural Center.

But there remains a barrier between young artists and getting access to the gallery scene.

At just 16, Virak has devoted much of his time researching old films and other pop culture material from the period.

"I consider it more realistic for young people to know where to get advice to exhibit in a place they will be seen," he says. "But while some are so eager they don't know the process."

Youth have to be brave and Meta House offers a venue for pushing the limits. "Meta House welcomes the inputs of Cambodians," says Nicolaus Mesterharm of the local NGO.

"We want to show more Cambodian artworks - films, photos and more. Young Cambodians can meet other Cambodians or foreigners to exchange ideas, and together we can all become stronger."

"I think in general that the public lack information about our exhibitions. Cambodians who come to the exhibition usually heard about it from friends or that a family member is part of the creation of the exhibition."

"I think lack of knowledge about artwork is the biggest barrier in getting them here."

In short, foreigners dominate the audience.

"I see a lot of artworks by Cambodian youth, but most of the time it's only foreigners who come to look at it," he says. **LIFT**



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