

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, 15 February 2011

SA SA BASSAC opens with *The Bomb Ponds* by Vandy Rattana

PHNOM PENH – SA SA BASSAC is pleased to announce its inaugural exhibition: *The Bomb Ponds*, by Vandy Rattana. 17 February - 20 March 2011. Opening on 17 February, 6pm. Artist Talk on 18 February, 6pm.

About the exhibition

There is a Khmer proverb that says: You can hear something a thousand times and not know it, yet if you see it with your eyes just once, you know. -Vandy Rattana

Between 1964 and 1975 the United States of America military dropped 2,756,941 tons (230,516 sorties on 113,716 sites) of bombs across politically neutral Cambodia. This figure went unacknowledged until 2000 when Bill Clinton traveled to Vietnam and quietly released previously classified Air Force data on American bombings in former Indochina.¹

Dissatisfied with the level of documentation produced on the subject, photographer Vandy Rattana traveled to the ten Cambodian provinces most severely bombed in the U.S. military campaign during the Vietnam War. Along the way, he engaged villagers in locating and testifying to the existence of the craters made by the bombings, known in the Khmer language as the "bomb ponds".

The resultant work is a series of nine quiet, mysteriously serene landscape photographs and a confronting one-channel documentary film in which villagers describe their memories of the bombings as well as their relationship to the ponds today. *The Bomb Ponds* invites audiences to experience both the fragility and the resilience of the people and the land, to reconsider the historical thread of America's actions during the Vietnam War and subsequently, similar acts of violence worldwide. First exhibited in the United States at the Hessel Museum, Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, curated by Francesca Sonara, *The Bomb Ponds* was selected as one of the top ten museum exhibitions to see in 2010 by Art Asia Pacific Almanac editors. *The Bomb Ponds* is a part of UNFIXED, the Netherlands, and will travel to San Art, Ho Chi Minh City in April, 2011.

About the artist

Born into the tenuous recovery period after the official fall of the Khmer Rouge, Vandy Rattana (b.1980 Phnom Penh) is concerned with the lack of physical documentation accounting for the stories, traits, and monuments unique to his culture. His serial work employs a range of analog cameras and formats, straddling the line between strict photojournalism and artistic practice. The extensive nature of his subject matter forges against the plethora of stymied documentation on Cambodia today, and makes critical connections between present-day narratives and the historical value inherent in chronicling the contemporary moment.

Select exhibitions include: *The Bomb Ponds*, Hessel Museum, NY (2010); *Fire of the Year*, The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT6), Brisbane, Australia (2009); *Walking Through*, Sa Sa Art Gallery, Phnom Penh, Cambodia (2009); *TADAIMA: Looking for Sweet Home*, Kyushu University, Japan (2009); *Magnetic Power*, ASEAN-Korean Center, Seoul, Korea (2009); *Forever Until Now: Contemporary Art From Cambodia*, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Hong Kong (2009); *Another Asia*, Noorderlicht Photo Festival, The Netherlands (2006).

About SA SA BASSAC

SA SA BASSAC is an art space dedicated to creating, facilitating, producing, and sharing contemporary visual culture and projects in and from Cambodia. Our programming is focused on the creative and educational experience of the gallery exhibition by Cambodian artists. Mindful of the local context, we aim to support diverse practices amongst artists, curators, writers, and other cultural producers as a way to facilitate knowledge sharing and continuity of traditions while expanding the potentials and understanding of what art can be.

For more information, please contact Erin Gleeson at +855 (0)12 507917 or erin@sasabassac.com.

¹ Taylor Owen and Ben Kiernan, "Bombs Over Cambodia," *Walrus Magazine* (Canada), 9 September, 2009.