

CHAPTER 5

ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS AND FORMS OF PATRONAGE

This chapter details the specific forms and developments of art patronage in Thailand during the last two decades of extraordinary change. It appears the social production of art is not a simple process, and many agents may be involved to varying degrees in the production, distribution and reception of art.

The western models of art patronage outlined by Williams and described in Chapter 2 may be useful as points of reference, especially as we consider early royal, elite and religious patrons, but the Thai government policy on art patronage and the exceptional conditions in Asia during the eighties and nineties require specific investigation. Early royal and elite commissions of religious art which are detailed in Chapter 3 are referred to here to show how art has been used as a political tool in the past, to justify authority. Art has long been used to satisfy the demands, desires, and visions of ruling powers, and on an international level, it has been used to project an image of the country to the outside world. Political change in Thailand during the early twentieth century saw the emergence of military-backed governments and nationalist leaders with policies which during the 1920s-1970s focused almost entirely on economic development.

Chapter 4 has addressed the enormous changes in Thailand as a result of the boom in Asian economies. The rise of the middle class, recent democratic struggles and developments, and the increase in individual and multinational corporate wealth have had an impact on the production of art. Soaring property and stock markets resulted in a large sector of newly-rich individuals with excessive demands for luxury products and lifestyles. The prestige attached to art appealed to this group who aspired to display their new wealth and project images of being among the elite. These new customers helped fuel a booming art market within the country. At the same time, the international art market was in a lull and seeking the 'next big thing.' Asia commanded international interest. Dealers honed their skills on the new buyers and collectors, resulting in large turnovers and boosted prices in the irrational art market. This raises questions such as to what extent is art production related to market forces of supply and demand? To what extent is the buyer influenced by the seller's oratory prowess, as opposed to the single aesthetic merits of a work of art? How has the commoditisation of art by market forces influenced the type of art that is produced? How much interaction occurs between the agents, and to what effect?

Dominant organisations in contemporary Thai society, including banks and corporations, first became interested in sponsoring Thai art during the 1970s, and by the eighties this means of promotion and 'social contribution' had taken off, becoming a popular form of

corporate marketing and advertising. Sponsors' agendas are advanced and reputations enhanced when company logos are attached to royal, religious, nationalistic, environmentally-friendly images and events. A flurry of property development and construction in Thailand during the eighties and nineties produced new spaces for art, commissioned to decorate the new walls. Art moved out of the museums and galleries into offices and public spaces. Artists were invited and sponsored to take part in more international exhibitions, competitions and fairs. Government tourism campaigns employed culture and art as a means to promote the country to tourists. The media responded to the heightened interest and the need for more information about contemporary art in Thailand (and Asia) by increasing coverage and various publications.

In order to develop their artistic talents, to enable their visions to reach an audience and to sell their work, artists require support: time, space, emotional encouragement, and financial assistance. The old adage that "the best art is produced in adverse conditions" - that the struggling artist is inspired by (economic) hardship - may be tested in Thailand in the future.

This chapter presents data from archival research and observations as well as interviews with agents in the network of art production, distribution and reception. It investigates the various forms of support and poses further questions regarding the politics and influence that these agents exert on the art itself.

Religious and Royal Patrons

As outlined in Chapter 3, much early Thai art was essentially related to religious expression, with a large proportion of the kingdom's income spent on the building of temples, as the highest form of merit-making. These temples were decorated with mural paintings and sculptures which were painstakingly crafted by anonymous artisans in the service of Buddhism and the monarch. The highest points in the social hierarchy, Ayudhya kings were considered *Deva-raja* (God-Kings) and much of the art they commissioned or supported reinforced the concept of sacred power of the ruler and was linked to the Hindu gods Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva, in particular. The Buddhist text the Traiphum (Three Worlds of the Buddhist Cosmology) also served as inspiration for artists who depicted the hierarchy of beings in the cosmology on temple walls, with the ruler at the centre of the universe. Early art functioned as decoration and as a means to convey religious messages, with the temples at the centre of the community and frequented by the people.

The Chakri dynasty continued to support the Ayudhya model of political and social structure. Still acting as the major patrons of arts and architecture, the early kings commanded the construction of the new capital in Bangkok, along with temples and palaces.

Apart from the royal and sacred dimensions of much early Thai art, non-religious artwork, such as illustrations on manuscripts outlining astrological

arrangements, dances, other texts, was produced by and for commoners.

As Western ideas entered Thailand via increased international trade and travel, Thailand's rulers recognised a need to adapt the country in order to preserve national independence and project an image of a 'civilised country'. Following this strategy, they spent considerable funds, energy and time learning about and incorporating European artistic techniques and styles of art into decorations in palaces, parliament buildings and public sites. King Chulalongkorn's visits to Europe in 1897 and 1907 resulted in major social and economic changes in the country, as detailed in Chapter 3, and a rise of elite high-ranking officials as patrons of art which was increasingly secular. Artwork was acquired for collections, and the western concept of museums and 'high' art was introduced.

While King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) is still today revered by many Thai citizens as a great developer/protector of the country, Thailand's present king, H.M. Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), is widely adored and respected for his exemplary performance as leader and is commonly known as the 'Father of the Thai people.' The world's longest reigning monarch (50 years in 1996), H.M. King Bhumibol is also internationally recognised for his talents as an award-winning yachtsman, and an accomplished musician, composer, photographer and artist. Mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records for the holder of the most honorary degrees, H.M. Bhumibol is a model for his citizens and much loved. A self-taught artist,

King Bhumibol has enthusiastically experimented with cubist (Fig. 20), abstract, still life and landscape painting over the years, with particular interest in producing portraits of H.M. Queen Sirikit (Fig 21). His works are displayed at the National Exhibitions annually and in the permanent collection at the National Art Gallery. In 1965, Silpakorn University presented His Majesty with an Honorary Doctorate degree in painting. His daughter H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has also shown interest in art, allowing some of her paintings to be included in the Bank of Thailand's 50th Anniversary publication. In 1989, the National Culture Commission bestowed upon H.M. the King the title "Akara Silapin" (Supreme Artist) for his contributions in the fields of sculpture, painting, handicrafts, photography and music.

To mark his 50th anniversary on the throne, H.M. King Bhumibol wrote and translated the Buddhist story of Mahajanaka, which carries the moral of Perseverance. He requested that the publication be illustrated by artists who represent the best of Thai art and was given a list of Thai artists to personally select the illustrators. Wat Praram IX Kanjanapisit on the new Rama IX road is currently under construction and is planned to open in December 1998 on H.M. the King's birthday. Built with H.M. the King's money, the murals are being painted by Preecha Thaothong of Silpakorn University Painting Department, and will feature the Rama IX Golden Jubilee logo on each wall, along with the concept of forests in the four regions of Thailand, instead of the Traiphum.

(Interview with Preecha Thaothong, 16 March, 1998). This indicates that the royal patronage of religious/Buddhist art is still active today.

Thai Government Policy on Arts and Culture

Following the 1932 coup and the shift in political power from absolute to constitutional monarchy, the Thai government became the major patron of the arts. The School of Fine Arts was established in 1933 and Italian sculptor Feroci who had been invited to Thailand by King Vajiravudh in 1922 was retained, put in charge of the school and given commissions which supported the government's nationalist vision.

The extreme cultural policy implemented by Phibul Songkram, Prime Minister 1938-44 and again 1948-57, sought to project the image of a strong independent nation and involved much sponsorship of art in public spaces. The dominant landmarks in Bangkok today of Democracy Monument (1939) (Fig. 10) and Victory Monument (1940) clearly reflect this era of art being used as a political tool to further the government agenda (i.e. as propaganda). The twelve cultural mandates issued by Pibul between 1939-42 laid down the criteria for an ideal Thai culture. Laws issued to support arts and culture during this period included the 1940 Cultural Development Act (ammended in 1942) and the National Cultural Act 1943.

In 1941, the National Council for Culture was set up, becoming the Ministry of Culture in 1953.

When the first National Economic Development five-year plan was established in 1960, culture and human/social development were largely disregarded. Instead, the focus was on an economic programme which supported industrialisation. The repercussions of this short-sighted approach to development have been felt widely during the 1980s and 1990s as Thai people suffer the effects of environmental deterioration and a range of social problems. The Ministry of Culture was given low priority and became managed by Ministry of Education. Later, in 1979, the Act for the Establishment of the Office of the National Cultural Commission (ONCC) produced an institution which has remained low-profile and relatively inactive, due to undefined goals, poor publicity and uncreative management. The ONCC's Cultural Development Plan of guidelines to promote culture has been criticised by Gridthiya Gaweewong as 'vague and impractical and serving specific groups involved with traditional performance art.' This criticism addresses the fixed structure which implements projects in a top-down fashion incorporating little collaboration with artists, thereby causing the 40 million baht annual budget to be spent ineffectively (Grithiya, 1996: 54).

In 1985, the ONCC under the Ministry of Education began National Artist awards in Visual Arts, Literature and Performing Arts. February 24 was designated National Artist Day by the ONCC, commemorating the birthday of King Rama II who is remembered as a talented artist. From

1985-97, 23 National Artist awards have been made. The most recent award was made last year to relatively-young Thai ex-patriate Kamol Tassananchalee. Following a market-driven cultural policy during 1980s, the Seventh NESD plan (1992-96) included policy programmes for the promotion of national culture and recommended the recognition and promotion of talented people in all creative areas, including scholars and artists. 'National Artists' were rewarded and supported i.e. their livelihoods supplemented, and works preserved.

The Thailand Cultural Centre on Rachadapisek Road was designed, built and paid for by the Japanese government, as a goodwill gesture, and opened in 1987. It was planned that this institution would supplement the activities of the National Art Gallery which was opened in 1977, and in some way fill the gap left by the closure of the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA). However, staid management has supported largely traditional exhibitions and performances. The construction of the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in 1991 for the World Bank conference cost the Thai government 2000 million baht and features a prominent work of art by Chalood Nimsamer outside (see Fig. 37).

To encourage the conservation and promotion of Thai arts and culture, a series of programmes have been implemented by the Thai government in the nineties. The 1994 *Thai Culture Year* was widely publicised and specifically aimed to preserve and support Thai culture. The *Thai Cultural Heritage* programme was essentially the 1994 campaign extended for 3 more years. A *Culture and*

Development programme in 1995 was followed by a *Culture and Tourism* programme in 1996 and a *Culture and Mass Media* programme in 1997. The current, eighth National Economic and Social Development (NESD) plan (1996-2001) includes mention of the importance of human resources and recommends investment in culture as a strategy to strengthen individuals, family and the community.

An artist himself, Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai in 1996 approved government funding of 50 million baht each to three regional universities: Chiang Mai (north), Khon Khaen (northeast), and Songkla Nakarin (south) to support the building of arts museums. This sum was considered sufficient for construction but funding for operations would need to be sought from the private sector (Grithaya, 1996: 75). In April, 1998, the Chiang Mai University Arts Museum, the first of these projects, will be opened. At Silpakorn University in Bangkok, the Art Gallery was opened in 1977 and in 1989 another gallery in the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts was opened. A third Gallery of Art and Design, part of the Decorative Arts Faculty, opened in 1997. On Silpa Bhirasri day at Silpakorn University in September 1997, Chuan Leekpai, was pictured in the newspaper opening an art exhibition posing before a piece of art depicting democracy and the constitution.

The 1987 *Visit Thailand Year* marked the beginning of a major government thrust to develop the service industry and tourism in particular. By emphasising Thailand's exotic character to the international tourist market, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

successfully attracted tourists and boosted the national income. Since then, traditional Thai culture and arts have been adapted and commercialised to meet tourist needs; new versions of traditional culture have been created to suit popular imagination.

The current *Amazing Thailand 1998-99* campaign is a major drive by the government to stimulate the desperate Thai economy and hopes to bring in 600 million baht and 17 million visitors over the two years. Further and rampant commoditisation of traditional arts and culture is evident in the promotional images displayed in shows, sales, posters etc. At a time of widespread cutbacks and economic squeeze, the TAT via the considerable *Amazing Thailand* campaign budget, has been influential in facilitating exhibitions which had previously been rejected/declined due to shrunken budgets. TAT officials managed to encourage a reluctant Bangkok Bank to sponsor an exhibition of Northern Artists in December 1997 by offering to supplement the costs of the exhibition, which included the opening, airconditioning and cleaning. (Interview with Wancharoen Japakang 7 January, 1998). The Artists League of Thailand, a new gallery run by a self-promoted billboard tycoon, opened in December 1997 to coincide with the *Amazing Thailand* campaign. Eager to seize this new business opportunity, the gallery has produced a brochure in 'Thaiglish' which enthuses "art created by native artists...Thai cultural products exist to complement your tourism selections." The space in a prime location near

Democracy monument is filled with artworks of forests, lotus, coconuts, floating markets, and royal portraits.

In terms of local government effort towards supporting art, the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) policy on culture and art according to BMA Advisor Kraissak Choonhavan "has often been associated with commercialism in the past... associated with politicians in power... money has been wasted lining the pockets of contractors. Lamenting the lack of passion for art in Thailand, Kraissak described how it was "managed by a bureaucracy who doesn't know about art and this lack of understanding has caused passive and outright resistance." (Interview Kraissak Choonhavan, 8 August 1997). In an attempt to stimulate more public art including street theatre and music, the BMA is engaging in several policies with the private sector as outside support is needed. The popular car-less street festivals have been supported by European embassies who have brought a variety of performing artists to join the fun. A budget of 10 million baht has been allocated by the BMA for the 'Bang Rak Walking Street' public art project on the new Narathivas Ratchanakharin Road between Silom and Surawong Roads. Two large sculptures by Silpakorn instructors, Sarawut Duangjumpa's The Crystal of Love and Unity (inspired by the traditional Thai triangular pillow) and Amrit Chusuwan's steel and copper windmill, together cost 2 million baht.

The December 1996 Golden Jubilee art exhibition held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre (QSNCC), involved 1900 pieces of artwork and cost 26

million baht to organise. Due to excessive costs and low attendance as a result of poor publicity, this exhibition had to be cut back after one week. Inefficient management and bad planning resulted in a final debt of 6 million baht for the BMA. Although the economic decline was distinctly hitting home at that time, such an important celebration as the 50th anniversary of H.M. the King's accession to the throne could not be neglected and those involved with art used the event to attain public recognition of their support of H.M. the King and the country. As well as the exhibition, an auction of 40 pieces of artwork donated by artists and largely purchased by the members of the organising exhibition committee raised one million baht towards funding the building of a new Rama IX Art Museum. In a display of prestige and power, auction buyers from the business and financial sectors bid prominently with 'face-making' enthusiasm to have their names recorded alongside the event.

Due to conflicting objectives, two projects have emerged from these initial efforts. The Rama IX Art Museum committee, led by Sivaporn Dardarananda and Pipat Pongrapeeporn, has taken its own direction and set up an office on Sap Road, collating data on Thai art and continuing to solicit funds from wealthy patrons who have not yet been forced to join the ranks of the 'formerly-rich.' The Tobacco Authority of Thailand was due to move out of the inner city and this piece of land in Sukhumvit was proposed as the location for the new Rama IX Art Museum but the move has been cancelled due to the

economic downturn and a site is still being sought. Alternatively, the BMA Art Museum, is planned to be built on two rai of land in Siam Square, opposite MBK and Discovery shopping centres. However, in January 1998, the BMA announced that due to financial constraints the budget for the proposed art museum had been slashed from 390 million baht to 190 million baht. Regarding the operation and sustainability of this project, from the interview with the BMA it appears that more creative and practical planning is required as to how the new museum will survive and support itself. The audience profile was undefined and projected forms of income generation vague. Especially in a less-favourable economic climate, such projects cannot rely on the hope of private sector donations over an extended period.

In conclusion, for more than sixty years, the state government has played a role in the patronage of art in Thailand, from commissioning public monuments to allocating budgets for government institutions including the ONCC, the Ministry of Education, Department of Fine Arts, the Ministry of University Affairs, TAT, and the BMA local government. While there has been considerable extension of Thai government policy regarding culture and arts in Thailand, it has been largely concerned with the preservation of traditional arts and culture. Since the tourism drive in the late eighties, Thai culture and certain kinds of art have been used as convenient and effective promotional tools (i.e. commodities in the implementation of the government agenda). Traditional decorative arts, Buddhist and folk art are popular among

foreign tourists and government institutions. Contemporary art which may directly address more controversial issues such as environmental degradation and social upset is considered unsuitable in terms of national vision and is overlooked in terms of financial sponsorship by the government. Eager to project an image of a developed, global nation, and yet at the same time aware of the allure of 'buffalo magic' (nostalgic images of rustic village life) to tourists, and unable to ignore the glaring and growing social problems, government policy makers along with the rest of the country struggle to juggle the tension between the traditional and the modern and to define a national Thai identity. Lacking clear direction and infrastructure, and administered by uninspired staff who struggle with ego management, government efforts to support art are relatively ineffective and receive little respect or response from artists or the general public.

Raising Artists

Humans are a product of genes and environment. The children of artistically-inclined parents often grow up in creative environments, observing and taking part in their parents' artistic activities. They may be nurtured and stimulated to explore various mediums by parents who are aware of the creative process and needs. Among the numerous artistic families in Thailand, some of the more

well-known include the Jumsais, Tantisuks, Nirands, and Yipintsois. Top Thai architect, patron and artist in the 1960s Sumet Jumsai exhibited drawings and paintings alongside artworks by two of his children in December 1997. The venue for the exhibition, the Marsi Gallery at Suan Pakkard Palace, is managed by Sumet's third child, May-May. Veteran Thai artist Sawasdi Tantisuk, a student of Silpa Bhirasri whose work has commanded substantial prices (see Fig. 13) and Thailand's representative on the panel of judges of the ASEAN Art Awards, has introduced his son Prinya (see Fig. 43), who teaches in the Faculty of Painting at Silpakorn University, to a career in art. Leading neo-traditional Buddhist artist Pichai Nirand's daughter, Asavine, recently won first prize in the traditional section of the Bua Luang Art competition. Misiem Yipintsoi, prize-winning artist, sculptor and committed art patron, is succeeded in the Thai art world by her grand-daughter, Klaomard, who graduated abroad in art education and presently runs the popular About Café (subsidised by her father) which actively supports local and international artists, along with a variety of outreach programmes to educate the public.

Along with family support in its various forms, the development of artists requires education, which takes time and money. Pierre Bourdieu's research, outlined in Chapter 2 notes that art is governed by a logic of distinction and to be appropriated, an aesthetic disposition and time for education and consumption time are required. Bourdieu's theory of distinction was developed from an analysis of the education system and

the role of educational institutions in the creation and transference of what counts as legitimate knowledge and forms of communication. Bourdieu uses the term 'habitus' in reference to background and group, and suggests that certain members are socially-positioned to inherit economic and cultural capital and subsequently economic, social and symbolic power, which is in turn reproduced by institutions. Education and socialisation transmit cultural capital in the form of particular valued signs, and the styles of presentations such as symbolic systems. Reproduction via the historical safety of tradition, and an economy of taste can be used to legitimise power and reinforce class relations. As investment strategy, cultural capital can be converted into economic capital through certification at an educational institution which is valuable in the labour market, and convertible into economic capital. The benefits go to those who know how to use the inherited privileges of cultural capital and how to work the patronage system.

While some self-taught artists, such as Pratuang Emjaroen, Niti Wattuya, Chang Sae Tang, and Wancharoen Japakang have managed to do well without receiving any formal art education, talented art teachers are influential in an artist's development. Within Southeast Asia, Joyce van Fenema suggests Thailand is the only country which does not suffer from a lack funds for art education (van Fenema, 1996: 7). However, the previous section on government policy on art and culture indicates that while there is funding allocated to art education

under various ministries, these funds are poorly managed and unevenly distributed among art forms and styles.

Some galleries in Bangkok run weekend and summer courses employing artists to teach art classes to children. These include Kid Sinn (Think Art), Nitaya Ueareeworakul from Studio Xang, and Tadu Contemporary Art. In July 1997, Tadu's weekend workshop for children (5-10 years) involved painting, puppets and theatre and was taught by well-known artist, Chalit Nakpaw. The fee of 1,600 baht, including materials, makes this a somewhat expensive and exclusive course, yet at that time the response was strong (i.e. full class). Aimed at the BMW-buying audience, Tadu's activities are distinctly upmarket. The proceeds from Tadu's recent *Dek Rak Pa* (*Children Love the Forest*) exhibition by Surin (a province in the northeast) school students are to go to the foundation of the Dek Rak Pa school. While rural children are often at a disadvantage when it comes to being able to study art in school or even to afford the necessary materials, primary school students of Srisongkram School Princess Sirindhorn Art Centre in Loei have achieved an impressive reputation for winning an extraordinary number of international art awards. As well as stimulating his young artists, art teacher Sangkhom Thongmee raised funds to build the art centre by soliciting businesses in Bangkok while visiting to teach at Chitralada Palace school. Sangkhom also joined Phadung Phrommoon and Suchart Wongthong to teach a weekend drawing class at the Children's Foundation at the Saviour Home in September 1997. Weekly art and poetry activities

have been run in disadvantaged communities in Bangkok by ATD Fourth World, an international non-profit organisation. Artworks by children aged 3-15 years from these communities were gathered in the *Blue Buffaloes in the Sky* exhibition on display at Baan Chao Phraya Gallery at the end of February, 1998. The Amarin Printing and Publishing organised an art training course for children aged 5-12 called *Happy Holidays: Art for Children* teaching light and shade in drawing, colour theory, watercolour and chalk techniques.

Hotels have begun to participate more actively in the sponsorship of art for children as part of their promotional campaigns; the Mercure holds young children's painting competitions as part of their Sunday Brunch Project, to entertain children while parents relax and dine; the Rama Gardens Hotel used paintings done by children during their *Thai Traditional Lifestyles* painting competition to decorate their 1998 calendar; and the Oriental organised a national drawing contest for children in May 1996 on the theme *Portrait of Our King*. Required to draw portraits on the day before the judging committee, the prize winners received scholarships of 20,000, 10,000 and 5,000 baht. A camp for secondary school students titled *Tor Sai Yai Silp Phandin Sukhothai* (*Spinning Threads of Sukhothai*) organised by Phonelink, TAT, National Youth Bureau, ONCC, and the Fine Arts Department, enlisted Silpakorn instructors Preecha Thaonthong and Chalermchai Kositpipat to teach painting to the children on the field trip. The competition's stated objectives were "to stimulate an interest in history and

architecture, teach young people to appreciate the beauty and function of relics from our glorious past, and encourage them to take a more hands-on role in the preservation of our culture." A trophy was presented by HRH Princess Bhajara Kitiyabha to the winning student. In December 1997, Jotun Paints, in cooperation with the Sirindhorn Art and Culture Centre, the Hornbill Research Foundation and the Dusit Zoo, sponsored a *Hornbill Painting Contest* for high school students.

These various children's art events, sponsored by hotels and corporate organisations and often in cooperation with local bodies, are largely public relations exercises which appear on society pages of the newspapers and serve as advertising, while at the same time benefiting young artists by providing opportunities which would not otherwise be possible.

Regarding more formal art education, Poh Chang became the first tertiary educational institute devoted to arts and crafts in Thailand when it was established by H.M. King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) in 1913. As detailed in Chapter 3, the arrival of Italian Corrado Feroci (Silpa Bhirasri) in 1922 brought western academic ideas of art education and effectively introduced modern art to Thailand. In 1943, the School of Fine Arts where Prof. Silpa Bhirasri was head was officially renamed Silpakorn University. A Florentine classicist by training and professing no religion, Bhirasri acquainted his students with other schools of thoughts and art styles, and encouraged them to experience all kinds of literature and music, and to research into Thai traditional art. While

Bhirasri stressed the importance of knowing their own cultural and artistic roots, Thai scholar Chetana Nagavajara projects that together the Italian teacher and his Thai students went in search of a supra-national aesthetics that was at the same time a quest for the absolute in art (Chetana, 1996: 216).

Reminiscing about the old days at the Italian-Thai conference in November 1997, Bhirasri's student Damrong Wong-Uparaj reported that his teacher never taught about money, whereas today art teachers do. At the same meeting, another of Bhirasri's students noted that Prof. Silpa Bhirasri himself lent money to young artists sometimes. (Presentations by Damrong Wong Uparat and Manot Kongkan at the Italian-Thai conference, 19 November, 1997).

It was not until the eighties that other government universities gradually developed their support of art by opening Fine Arts Faculties, teaching degree courses, and operating art galleries - Chulalongkorn University in 1981; Chiang Mai University in 1983; Khon Khaen, Burapha, and Srinakharinwirot in 1993. Private universities such as Rangsit and Bangkok University allocated funds to art development according to the personal interests of the university boards, with Bangkok University opening its art gallery in 1995, around the same time that Suan Dusit Teachers College began exhibitions. Poh Chang Arts and Crafts college today holds a 'poor cousin' status, in relation to the more senior institution of Silpakorn University. More than five universities in the country now offer a bachelors

degree in art, but in 1992 Silpakorn was the only institution to offer a masters degree in fine art.

Most art graduates dream to be freelance artists earning a living from their own art, but many cannot survive from this alone and must supplement their incomes with other work, such as commercial jobs or teaching. This was also the case 50 years ago, when Silpa Bhirasri wrote, 'the majority go into teaching, commercial work or government service. . . not possible as a professional artist' (Bhirasri, 1961: 80).

In Thailand, it is common for teachers at an institution to have graduated from that same institution. This compounds the emotional, family-type bond (art) students make with the institution where they have studied. A combination of traditional respect for seniority and for the family means teachers in Thailand are usually well-respected, if not well-paid. Silpa Bhirasri is known today as the "Father of Thai Art," in recognition of his contribution to modern art in Thailand. When the Manager magazine printed a picture of Silpa Bhirasri with a "50% Discount" sign on its cover, the staff and students at Silpakorn protested and emotional barbs were exchanged. The teacher-student relationship is historically one of unquestioned authority, with students reluctant to challenge their teachers with questions, for fear of causing the teacher to 'lose face.' The traditional learning pattern, taken from early days of temple education, is one of imitation of the master, copying of the model and rote-learning. Teaching art or undertaking commercial work takes time

and energy which the artist may wish to invest in his/her own artwork, but teaching also keeps the artist in the network and in touch with art events and upcoming scholarships and study/travel grants. The number of artist-in-residence and student exchange programmes available to Thai artists/art teachers/students is increasing due to institutions establishing wider international ties. These programmes take the artist abroad and many return with new ideas. Some have chosen to live and work abroad, eg. Kamol Tassananchalee who founded the Thai Art Council in Los Angeles, Chavalit Sermprungsuk in Amsterdam, and Somboon Homtienthong in Munich. These artists return to Thailand occasionally and exhibit their works to Thai viewers. One of the most internationally-famous Thai artists, Rirkrit Tiravanija, was born abroad and has spent comparatively little time in Thailand.

As well as art education, it seems increasingly important for the artist to acquire self-promotional social skills, and to be able to discuss the conceptual background of the artwork. A potential buyer may like a piece of art, but a sale often requires further explanation of the work. Ability to speak a foreign language, English in particular, enables the artist talk about his/her work to a wider audience and to travel and study abroad.

At present, there are no courses in Arts Administration available in Thailand, hence a lack of skilled art management. A gallery manager who chose to study an M. A. Arts Administration course at the School

of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1995 returned to Thailand to find that "most of the training does not apply to Thailand.. the infrastructure, the mentality of the people and many things are different." (Interview with Gridthiya Gaweewong, 5 October 1997). Project 304's workshop on February 28, 1998, aimed to provide artists with skills in preparing portfolios and proposals, and to generally gear them towards managing their careers as full-time artists. A valuable investment at 200 baht.

A seminar run by Chulalongkorn University in May 1996 titled *Art Galleries in Thailand: Various Perspectives* attempted to bring groups together for discussion of their roles. Speakers included Damrong Wong-uparaj, Preecha Orachunka, Viboon Leesuan, Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda, Kraissak Choonhavan and Sombat Wattanathai. Discussions in March 1998 among European Union and ASEAN cultural officers are intended to lead to an M. A. degree course in Cultural Management becoming available at Silpakorn University in 1999. Questions regarding the cultural mission of the European organisers have been raised and along with the *Touring East and Southeast Asian Arts in Europe: Exploring Cooperation* exhibition being planned to coincide with the ASEM II meeting in London in 1998, it appears the western world is looking to improve ties with Asia, with art and culture being used as a channel.

One result of the *Golden Jubilee Art* exhibition in December 1996 was the compilation by the BMA of a list of 3000 artists in Thailand. This is a small number within a national population of more than 60 million.

Among these artists, groups form. These groups tend to enlist artists following similar stylistic paths, those who have attended the same educational institution, or those from the same regional/ethnic background. However, collaboration among Thai artists is often a casual arrangement and, with exceptions, often not sustained for long due to personal differences. Rivalry and factionalism are common. According to Anne Kirker, Queensland Art Gallery curator, "rivalries between artists happen when there's a fickleness in the market. When an art industry is established and confident that things will be buoyant and galleries will survive, there's much more goodwill." (Article by Jennifer Gampell, *Manager* magazine, July 1995). This was also the case with early artist groups in the sixties and seventies, such as the Young Artists and the Contemporary Artists, led by Damrong Wong-uparaj, and the Art for Life and Art for Art's Sake movements which are known to have engaged in heated exchanges. One of the first groups, League of Artists (*Chakrawat Sinlapin*) formed to discuss and sponsor art exhibitions and to protect artists' interests and rights from unfair dealers (Apinan, 1992). Artists generally strive to make themselves (and their art) different, to be individual, to stand out. This diversity does not facilitate group dynamics, though mutual support and encouragement is valued and practised by attendance of exhibition openings. Collaboration on a less overt but mutually beneficial level may occur when an artist invites others to contribute some art to his/her exhibition catalogue, such as the catalogue of

Chatchai Puipia's most recent exhibition (*Paradise Perhaps*, December 1997) which featured photos by Manit Sriwanichpoom and a drawing by Montien Boonma on the cover. Since the closure of the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA) (1974-89), which is fondly remembered as a popular, active and neutral meeting place, artists groups have remained somewhat disorganised and factional. As expected, connections are important; networking is an integral part of establishment and progression of any career. The recognition and respect for seniority mentioned above is a traditional, fundamental mechanism in Thai society and this can be observed in the art social circles where artists do seem to care about this vertical orientation and are aware of positions (Interview with Pinaree Sanpitak, 3 October, 1997).

Most art events take place in Bangkok, indicating the centralisation policy promoted by past Thai governments is still a challenge for the Thai art world (and other fields) to overcome. In order for the country, as a whole, to progress, dissemination of ideas, information, education and funding to the provinces is necessary. The eighties and nineties have seen an increasing number of exhibitions by regional groups, and a seeming growth in ethnic (and national) pride. Famous Lanna (northern) artists Tawan Duchanee and Chalermchai Kositpipat have proudly and actively promoted their northern backgrounds and wear traditional simple farmers' attire (*mor hom*), sometimes adorned with teeth, bones and other natural 'man-of-the-land' materials, as symbols of their rural base. In the urban setting of the capital,

this has raised criticism of 'pretentious attention-grabbing' behaviour. Nevertheless, these Lanna Group exhibitions which began in 1978 in Chiang Mai have usually been held in five-star hotels such as the Dusit Thani and the Queens Park Imperial, accompanied by a traditional Lanna feast and dancing. In one news-making incident in December 1994 at the Oriental Hotel opening of the *Ha Salaa Lanna (Five Northern Artists)* exhibition featuring works by Tawan, Chalermchai, Wancharoen Japrahkhang, Withi Phanichphan and Surasit Saokhong, a young northern artist, Mitr Jai-In handed out leaflets and accused veteran Tawan of exploitation and profiteering from Lanna culture. Costing 600,000 baht and attended by more than 500 elite guests including P.M. Chuan Leekpai, the *Ha Salaa Lanna* exhibition was aimed to raise funds for the Young Northern Women's Development Fund, an organisation providing vocational training to keep women from becoming prostitutes. All proceeds from an auction were to go to this cause, plus 30 percent of the proceeds from the sale of other works, leaving 70 percent for the artist. The high prices of the works at this exhibition are noted; Surasit Saowakhong's Tranquility commanded top price at 1.5 million baht (US\$60,000) (The Nation, December 17, 1994). During the same incident, Tawan was also criticised for making art solely for commercial purposes, with reference to a promotion for Volvo in which the artist offered to create works of art for the first 30 people who ordered the latest model of Volvo, and for involvement in the controversial August 1993 installation of new paintings

at Government House. For this project, then Deputy P.M. Annuay Viravan chose outright his close friend Chalermchai, along with Tawan, Pratuang Emjaroen, Uab Sanasen, Chakrabhand Posayakrit, Angkarn Kalayanapongse and Nontivat Chantanapalin to contribute artworks. Other artists who were overlooked, including Damrong Wong-Paraj and Viboon Leesuan protested at the unfairness of this selection process. After an exchange of letters, this project was cancelled. A later exhibition in December, 1997, also titled *Five Northern Artists*, featured works by Wancharoen Japakang, Prasong Leumuang, Tawatchai Somkong, Srijai Kuntawang, and Alongkorn Lauwatana, along with Wancharoen's daughter Sriprapa as invited guest. Atmospheric traditional northern Thai music played continuously in the background in the Bangkok Bank's Pan Fah gallery, and Wancharoen, also wearing the mor hom farmers' clothes, professionally and individually greeted visitors and explained the works.

Frequently the source of discriminatory jokes, the impoverished Esarn (northeast) region of Thailand has also been distinguished and promoted by artists from this region wishing to exert a specific Esarn identity. The Esarn Group began exhibiting together in 1983. An exhibition by eight Esarn Artists was held at the Imperial Queens Park hotel in 1994. Esarn artists Teerawat Kanama from Mahasarakham, Vorasan Supap from Srisaket and Netikorn Chinyo from Kalisin collaborated to display their *Soul of the Siamese 1997* exhibition at the Siam City Hotel Gallery. Their works portrayed traditional Thai scenes of spirit houses, boats, lotus

and rice fields and were priced 18,000-90,000 baht. A watercolour exhibition by Boontan Chetsurat in October 1997 was advertised by Akko Gallery with an introduction, "Please come and enjoy the living life of Esarn through the eyes of a native artist." An exhibition of Northeastern folk paintings collected over 25 years by designer Illa Scholla were on display at the newly opened Nature's Touch Studio in February 1997. This rise of regional artist groups may be considered in the light of the core-periphery development model presented in Chapter 2. It may be interpreted as a reaction to the dominance and hegemony of Bangkok at the centre of the country.

Groups which use Buddhist philosophy as a source of inspiration for their neo-traditional art, such as the Dhamma group, which was founded by Prateung Emjaroen in 1975, and the Thai Art 23 Group which began in 1980, have continued to exhibit images of balance and harmony, struggle and peace, the power of nature, and the circle of life among other themes. The Tan Koot Group of mural painters, led by three of Paiboon Suwannakoot's (also known as Tan Koot, 1925-1982, one of Silpa Bhirasri's first students) children, Phaptawan, Khabkaew and Nakhimit, has been actively creating murals for hotels, offices and temples, since their first exhibition in 1985 at the Montien Hotel. Their commissions include the lobby of the Montien Hotel, the lobby of the Regent Hotel, the ballroom of the Regent Hotel, the Westin Hotel, the ballroom of the Montien Riverside Bangkok Hotel, and the lobby of the Century Park Bangkok Hotel, along with

temples in Phayao, Chonburi, Angthong, Uthai Thani and Khon Kaen. The group exhibited in Paris in 1989.

Other groups which have exhibited over a period of time include the White Group which began in 1982 and includes Prinya Tantisuk, Montien Boonma, Siriwan Janehuttakankit, and Somsak Chaothadaphong, the Cobalt Blue Group of Silpakorn graduates, Plankled Group, and the more radical Ukabat Group. The White Group is an example of government art teachers going outside the institution to exhibit, not as a challenge but as an alternative. The Sen Tang Group in Nakhon Pathom started activities in 1985 and was financially self-supporting in its endeavours to bring art to the provinces. However their children's art contests and workshops eventually folded due to lack of funding. See Lae Saeng (Colour and Light) from Poh Chang and the Hers Group (seven women graduated from Silpakorn University) are recent formations, with the Hers Group being a 'first' for the Thai art scene. The *Womanifesto* exhibitions and performances organised by Concrete House and held in three sites in Bangkok in March 1997 was another first for women's art in Thailand.

Recently, a number of groups have chosen to donate part of the proceeds from their art exhibitions to social and environmental causes, such as hospitals, wildlife and orphans. The *Artists Help Hornbill Project* exhibition at the Siam Discovery Centre (a new shopping mall) involved Pratuang Emjaroen, Vasan Sitthiket, Chumpol Apisuk, and contributed to the Hornbill Research Foundation; the *Ten Thai Artists* exhibition in January

1998 raised funds for the Foundation for Slum Children Care; exhibitions by the Buddha Monthon group at the Windsor Palace Hotel in January 1998 and at the Pratumwan Princess Hotel collected some funding for the Red Cross and the (WAR) Wild Animal Rescue Foundation of Thailand. To raise awareness about bird protection, the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand organised a *Birds in Art* exhibition at Silpakorn in February 1997, with over 50 artists showing different kinds of birds in their works. These contributions by artists to worthy causes shines a philanthropic light on art production, and we can see how artists can use their positions and reputations to draw attention to needy areas and issues.

The Chiang Mai Social Installation, an innovative international cultural festival begun in 1992, is organised by art instructors and students at CMU and focuses on contemporary issues by setting work in public spaces. Portraying Chiang Mai as an alternative rural and 'exotic' escape from boring Bangkok, the event attracts a certain kind of artist from Thailand and abroad, predominantly Germany. For this large group project, artists sought funding from sponsors themselves and initial support was generous. However, in 1997 the widely criticised disorganisation was explained as a function of a lack of budget and assistants, although support was given by the Department of Fine Arts, the Japan Foundation, and private corporations (SITCA Co., Toshiba (Thailand) Ltd., and Bang Jak Co. Ltd). The *Deserted and Embraced* one-day project of installations and performances set in an abandoned hotel in Chiang Mai was

curated by Helen Michaelsen from Germany and featured work by Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Navin Rawanchaikul and Kosit Juntaratip.

A group of twelve socially-critical Thai artists including Vasan Sitthiket, Chatchai Puipia, Paisan Plienbangchang, Sompong Tawee, Jittima Polsavek and Manit Sriwanichpoom organised an exhibition entitled *Never My Land* to satirise the *Amazing Thailand 98-99* tourism campaign. Promotion for the February 1998 opening at the Sunday Gallery advertised jokingly, "only dollars accepted." The exhibition was visited by a member of the extreme right-wing group 'Apirak Chakri' checking on the politically-provocative and controversial artworks.

The Asia-Pacific Artist Solidarity (A-Pas) group, formed in 1996 by Indonesian artist, Arahmaiani, held its first exhibition entitled "Plastic (& other) Waste at the Chulalongkorn University Art Gallery in Bangkok in April, 1998. With around 100 international members, this network aims to support and facilitate the exchange of ideas and art in the region, opening opportunities for artists to participate in and to initiate projects.

More informally, groups of amateur painters may meet and form as a result of attendance at art classes, including numbers of 'high-society' women taking painting classes and summer school art classes for children.

Show and Sell: The Business of Art

-competitions, exhibitions, commissions, collections, sales and auctions

Art can happen anywhere and artists, needing to show, want their work to be experienced, acknowledged, and appreciated. In the eighties and nineties in Thailand, art has found new spaces and new customers, along with an increase in awareness and interest. Few artists can make a living from their art alone; most supplement their income from art sales by teaching at schools and universities or undertaking commercial art work, such as advertising graphics. Well-established and high selling Thai artists such as Tawan Duchanee, Chalermchai Kositpipat, Pratuang Emjaroen, and other self-employed artists including Chatchai Puipia, Pinaree Sanpitak, and Vasan Sitthiket have built their positions over a period of time through consistent effort. In order to reach this level of full-time and independent artist, public recognition must first be won and, this usually (though not always) begins by sending artworks to national competitions for acceptance to show and then hopefully to win prizes and awards.

Art competitions began during Silpa Bhirasri's period, with the first *National Art Exhibition* in 1949 organised by the Fine Arts Department (FAD) and Silpakorn University. Early winners such as Khien Yimsiri in 1949 and 1950 (see Figs. 11 and 12), Sawasdi Tantisuk in 1954 (see Fig. 13), and Chalood Nimsamer in 1956 (Fig. 14) incorporated traditional Thai subjects and elements in their works, and Sawasdi and Chalood have gone onto play major roles in the judging of other art competitions. Other early national prize-winning works including Tawee

Nandakwang's Lotus (Fig. 15), Damrong Wong-Uparaj's Fishing Village (Fig. 17), Manit Poo-Aree's Takraw (Fig. 18) and Prapat Jothaprasert's Festival No.2 (Fig. 19) reflect the popularity of Thai life scenes in competitions. Since 1964, the exhibition has been the sole responsibility of Silpakorn and categorised into sections of painting, sculpture and graphic arts. A mixed media category was added in 1976. This somewhat restrictive arrangement discounts alternative art forms like video, computer, installation and photography. (Rattanakosin Art, 1997: 66). Now sponsored by petroleum giant Esso Standard of Thailand, the *National Art Exhibition* attracts mainly art students and young artists seeking to make their names and is largely ignored by established Thai artists, partly due to the comparatively low cash prizes compared to other handsomely-rewarded competitions run by the Bangkok Bank and the Thai Farmers Bank. Esso presented Silpakorn with a cheque for 700,000 baht in June 1997 to cover prizes and organisation of the 43rd National Exhibition. Held at the National Art Gallery and Silpakorn University, the *National Art Exhibition* judging committee is made up of mainly Silpakorn teachers and graduates. Prizewinners, who receive medals and money, are often Silpakorn students or graduates of the university, causing complaints of 'insider trading' from the greater art circle. Winners of three gold medals, or two golds and a silver, are conferred the title "Artist of Distinction."

As an adjunct to the National Art Exhibition in 1984, Silpakorn organised the *First Exhibition of*

Contemporary Art by Young Artists (16-25 years) and there were 87 entrants. By 1996, this had grown to 239, indicating substantial interest in the competition, possibly due to the observation that prize winners later do well in artistic careers.

Along with the *National Art Exhibition*, the Bangkok Bank *Bua Luang* and the Thai Farmers Bank (TFB) *Contemporary Art Exhibition* are the largest annual art events in Thailand. In 1974, the then President of the Bangkok Bank, Boonchu Rochanasathien, an associate of Princess Chumbot Panthip and later Deputy P.M. in the Chuan government, was persuaded to run the first Bangkok Bank *Bua Luang* (*Great Lotus*) art competition. Initially divided into two categories of Contemporary and Traditional art, a third category of Semi-Traditional was added later. Following the *National Art Exhibition* format, winners receive medals and cash (no travel or study scholarships are included).

Bangkok Bank *Bua Luang* prizes are as follows:

Table 5.1 Bangkok Bank Bua Luang Prizes

	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	TOTAL
1974	15,000	10,000	5,000	70,000
1979	25,000	20,000	10,000	170,000
1991	70,000	40,000	30,000	510,000
1995	100,000	70,000	50,000	660,000

Substantial inflation of the prize purses (300% for first prize, from 25,000 baht in 1979 to 100,000 baht

in 1995) indicates the influence of the boom times and a greater financial involvement by the bank. Special themes have also been incorporated into the Bangkok Bank *Bua Luang* competitions to mark national celebrations. These include:

1987 - 11th: *The Majesty of the Reign*

1990 - 14th: *Celebration of the 90th Anniversary of H.R.H. the Princess Mother*

1992 - 16th: *In Honour of H.M. Queen Sirikit's 60th Anniversary*

1994 - 18th: *Nature and Environment*

(Bangkok Bank's 50th Anniversary)

In 1997, the Bangkok Bank published Collection of Prize Winning Paintings from the 1st to the 19th Bua Luang Painting competitions to mark the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of H.M. the King's Accession to the Throne, which has been distributed free to schools and art and culture institutions in Thailand.

The panel of judges for the Bangkok Bank art competitions includes a head judge of the royal family, Prince M.C. Karavik Chakrabhand, and notable artists and art critics, depending on availability. Judges for the 21st *Bua Luang* in 1997 were: Pratuang Emjaroen, Chalood Nimsamer, Tawan Duchanee, Preecha Thaothong, Wiroon Tangcharoen, Sawasdi Tantisuk, Chulatat Payakranom, Kamchorn Sunpongsiri, Sumreung Pontusanit, and Apinan Poshyananda. Eight of these eleven judges have been on the committee since 1989 and eight of them have graduated from or on the staff at Silpakorn University. (See Table

5.2 in Appendix). The bank policy is to give a free hand to judges because they are considered to have good taste but in the last two years a certain bank official has insisted on including pieces of 'beautiful' art which he personally liked (Anonymous bank source, 7 January, 1998). Prayong Kachalai, Assistant Vice President of the Bangkok Bank, explained that the aim of the *Bua Luang* competitions was to develop art and culture in Thailand, to encourage Thai artists to work in traditional materials and themes and to help "nurture" Thai society. He described how the judges come and go and each must have a reputation, not just as a teacher but as an active artist, and that a "balance" of judges is important for fairness. *Bua Luang* judges have told bank heads that their sponsorship is having a positive effect on Thai art, and has led to a revival in interest in traditional Thai painting.

However, one contrasting view is held by winner of the 1979 *Bua Luang*, Panya Vijinthanasarn, who now sees art competitions as being "incompatible with the nature of art" and suggests that instead the sponsors should invite artists to visit schools, sponsor art programmes on T. V. and do more for art education (Interview with the artist, 18 October, 1995). The Bangkok Bank buys first, second and third prize-winning artworks in the *Bua Luang* exhibition for their own collection, which is dispersed among the bank's branches around the country and it does not intend to sell these works. The Hong Kong and Taiwan Bangkok Bank branches have large art

collections on display which may provide international exposure for Thai artists.

A young student and second-prize winner in the Traditional section of the 1995 *Bua Luang*, Montien Chusawang, described his large class of students majoring in traditional art at Poh Chang college and his plans to work freelance from his art in the future, confident that he can earn a good living this way (Interview with the artist, 10 January, 1996). Prize-winning works by Somyot Traiseni (see Fig. 33), Prasong Leumuang (see Fig. 35) and Tongchai Srisukprasert (see Fig. 38) show traditional scenes, rural folk elements and traditional Thai motifs employed. These movements could be interpreted as a dominant Chinese-owned financial institution promoting Thai connections and identity in their corporate strategy.

Other banks and corporations have followed the Bangkok Bank example. The Thai Farmers Bank (TFB), owned by the Lamsam family (bank Chairmen include Kasem Lamsam, 1948-62, Bancha Lamsam, 1962-92, and Banyong Lamsam 1992-present), started sponsoring a *Contemporary Art Competition* in 1979, following pressure by artist Misiem Yipintsoi, a cousin of the Lamsams. Initially held at the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA), the annual competition now shows at the National Art Gallery and is supported by the Fine Arts Department (FAD) and the International Art Association of Thailand. The aims of the TFB competition are to promote local modern art in particular, rather than traditional, yet a brief survey of prize-winning works such as the first competition

prizewinner Preecha Thaothong's Interior with Light (1979) (see Fig. 27), Surasit Saowakong's Serenity 2 (1982) (see Fig. 30), and Prinya Tantisuk's abstract Three Gems and Pilgrimage (1993) (see Fig. 44) reveals traditional Thai themes, motifs and concepts. Adul Booncham's Imagination from Rural Spirit (1991) (see Fig. 47) is a prize-winning installation inspired by Thai country life. For the Rattanakosin (Bangkok) Bicentennial in 1982, the TFB organised a *Golden Brush* exhibition which set a precedent for other banks and organisations to establish their own themes for exhibitions and competitions, and has resulted in specially tailored creations by artists to meet a particular theme. Hatai Bunnag's Palace Garden (1982) (see Fig. 31) won this first competition with a traditional work. Paralleling the Bangkok Bank's special art competitions to mark the significant national events in 1987 (see Figs. 33 and 34), 1990 and 1992 (see Fig. 41), the TFB extended its range to include other royal and religious occasions such as the H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirinthorn's 36th birthday (third cycle) in 1991, and the Supreme Patriarch's 80th in 1993, with Teerawat Kanama winning both competitions (see Figs. 36 and 42). In 1997, the 15 judges for the Contemporary Art Competition included Prince M.C. Karavik Chakrabhand, Tawan Duchanee, Sawasdi Tantisuk, Chalood Nimsamer, Ittipol Tangchalok, Preecha Thaothong, Surasit Saowakong, Nopphong Sajaviso, Pisanu Supanimitr, Jamnongsri Ratanin, Rirkrit Kaowichien, Decha Warachun, Vibhavadee Patanaphonpibul, Rujiraporn Wanglee and Montien Boonma. Four of these judges also serve on

the Bangkok Bank *Bua Luang* committee, and eight are closely associated with Silpakorn University through study or work. (See Table 5.3 in Appendix). One Grand Prize and ten awards of excellence are granted annually and these totalled 780,000 baht in 1994. Since its 50th anniversary in 1995, TFB has added two extra Grand Prizes of 120,000 baht grants, plus airfares and one-month scholarships to the Royal College of Art in London. The TFB London branch contacted the College to arrange tailor-made course and to take care of the Thai artists. In the future this may change to scholarships to the USA, due to a connection with Silpakorn and Kamol Tassachanalee in California (Interview with Daranee Tanchaiswasd, TFB First Vice President, 7 October 1997). Each year the TFB buys 10-15 pieces from the exhibition for its collection, and donates one piece to the National Art Gallery. When winners of TFB competitions later have their own solo or group exhibitions, they may invite the TFB Chairman to open it, or to visit and buy. Requests by TFB competitors for support to print catalogues may secure grants of 10,000 baht, and artists who have never entered the TFB competition may also receive some financial help, with recommendation from Silpakorn University. The TFB now has 486 pieces of art in its collection which decorates two buildings, in Ratburana and Paholyothin. Of these, 251 are competition award winners, 206 are purchases, 19 are commissions, and 10 are environmental works on permanent public exhibition. TFB buys well-known artists for its collections. In 1996, it bought five pieces from Pratuang Emjaroen, though they

state that their main aim is to support and promote young Thai artists.

In August 1997, a TFB exhibition of part of their collection was advertised as "60 Masterpieces by 10 Thai Masters" and included works by Sawasdi Tantisuk, Chalood Nimsameur, and Preecha Thaothong. The opening was attended by 300-400 people, but subsequently few people came to see the exhibition due to the TFB Head Office being in an isolated location in Ratburana. Students were invited and a TFB bus was sent to transport groups of more than 40. In 1996, more than 1000 students came to see the TFB collection under this arrangement. The TFB's art sponsorship is part of their Social Contribution project which has an annual budget of 50 million baht. Of this, the annual budget for art sponsorship is one million baht. TFB sponsorship began as the personal project of the then Chairman and a desire to improve staff morale. Today it is more like an established culture than a policy, and supports the bank's aim to 'conserve national treasure and play a part in writing the history of the arts in Thailand.' The bank staff respond to the art around them in the buildings, and are proud of it (Interview with Daranee Tanchaiswasd, 7 October, 1997). The TFB also sponsors music and education, as well as restoration projects in Sukhothai, Ayudhya, and the murals at Wat Kalayamitr in Bangkok. The TFB have certainly developed close links with Silpakorn University. Silpakorn instructors advise TFB on competitions, study grants and purchases, an image of Prof. Bhirasri is printed on the annual exhibition

catalogue cover, and the TFB sponsored a video of Bhirasri's life in the Bhirasri museum at the Silpakorn Wang Tha Phra campus in Bangkok.

The Siam Commercial Bank organised an art competition in 1995 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of H.M. King Bhumibol's reign. Wijit Apichatkriengkrai won first prize with Under His Majesty's Shelter (see Fig. 50). Another exhibition, entitled *Art to Divine*, was organised in April 1997 by this bank to mark the special occasion and was a collaboration by five well-known Thai artists: Tawan Duchanee, Ithipol Thangchalok, Preecha Thaonthong, Chalermchai Kositpipat and Panya Vijinthanasarn. With part of the proceeds donated to the Chaipattana Foundation (H.M. the King's charity), the exhibition was extended two days due to popular demand. A visit to the new Head Office building in Rachadapisek Road on the second last day of the exhibition saw crowds of people viewing the works and many (approximately 40 in half an hour) purchasing the 1000-baht prints which were being signed by Chalermchai with special personalised messages in a separate merchandising room. Large video screens showed reruns of TV appearances by the artists, and Chalermchai's animated and verbose TV persona came across much like a game show host. The artist's work Phra Piamlonduaymetta (see Fig. 54) shows H.M. King Bhumibhol riding a garuda, the mythical beast and vehicle of the Hindu god Vishnu/Indra, in the heavens, suggesting the traditional 'god-king' concept of the monarch promoted during the Ayudhya period outlined in Chapter 3. The catalogue accompanying the exhibition is wrapped in gold

covers, suggesting the precious and valuable nature of the event, and the wealth and taste of the establishment. The Siam Commercial Bank has also sponsored a T.V. programme about temple murals, featuring artists from Silpakorn discussing their work, shown on Channel 9 and broadcast regionally in February 1998.

The central Bank of Thailand (BOT) is noted in art circles for the extensive and beautiful restoration of Bang Khun Phrom palace, beside the bank's Head Office. Governor of the Bank of Thailand (BOT) during the 1960s and 1970s, Dr Puey Ungphakorn, was a keen art enthusiast and helped to raise funding for the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA) in 1974. This established the BOT's involvement with Thai art. In 1996, the bank allocated an annual budget of one million baht towards projects which encourage the development of art and Thai culture. On the occasion of the BOT's 50th anniversary in January 1993, an exhibition of over 100 works by 41 painters and sculptors was shown at the Thailand Cultural Centre and some at Bang Khun Phrom. Works by H.R.H Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, P.M. Chuan Leekpai, and Deputy P.M. Supachai Panitchpakdi were also included. Tawan Duchanee was given special reception and asking prices reached 7 million baht (for a piece by Uab Sanasen). At a time when banking and the BOT's reputation was at a peak, BOT governor Rerngchai Marakanond used this occasion to openly purchase many works of art in the exhibition at high prices for the BOT's collection, in a display of wealth and power. In relation to the theory outlined in Chapter 2, it may be noted that this dominance of financial

institutions in the field of art and culture reflects the centralised powers at work, and the impact of corporate taste and status reflecting economic and ideological interests.

Aside from the major banks, many corporations began to sponsor art competitions during the 1980s and 1990s. The Toshiba *Bring Good Things to Life Competition* has run annually since 1989 at Silpakorn. Prize winners receive a one-month study tour of art museums in Europe. In 1991, Prinya Tantisuk, also winner of the 1993 *TFB Contemporary Art Competition*, won first prize with Dialogue of Wisdom (see Fig. 43). Toshiba is also known among artists for its generous support in providing lump sums of 20,000-30,000 baht to cover costs of materials and preparations for solo/group exhibitions and catalogues. (Interview with Pinaree Sanpitak, 3 Oct 1997). Sponsored by Toshiba, in cooperation with Silpakorn, the third national art symposium on *New Decade: Art and National Development* (4-6 March 1998) was a three-day event which attempted to gather the various parties involved in art education, education, production and distribution, including artists, art administrators, gallery owners, government officials, art scholars etc. for useful, meaningful discussions. Opened by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, the seminar topics included "Art and National Development" by Finance Minister Tarrin Nimmanahaeminda, "Art and Education" by Dr Sippanondha Ketudat and "Status and Role of Artists" by a group of artists including Somsak Chaothadapong, Somboon Hontientong, Chalermchai Kositpipat and Araya

Rasdjarmrearnsook. Political commentator Theerayuth Boonmee and international artist Montien Boonmee presented papers on future directions of Thai art, and one discussion period was dominated by debate regarding the conflicting approaches to art production by neo-traditional and avant-garde artists. Popular neo-traditionalist Chalermchai attacked the conceptual work by Rirkrit (one piece involves the artist preparing Thai food) for its lack of technique and also the exploitation of Thai culture by an artist who does not live in Thailand. The first seminar of this type run by Toshiba in 1995 was entitled *Vision in Visual Arts*.

The Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) held its 12th annual exhibition entitled *The Power of Thais to Preserve the Environment* in 1997. With four categories covering all age groups (less than 8 years, 8-13 years, 13-17 years, and general public), the cash prizes total 400,000 baht. In the general public category, first prize is worth 100,000 baht, followed by a second prize of 80,000 baht, and a third prize of 60,000 baht. Children's section prizes range between 5,000-10,000 baht. Silpakorn University and PTT select the judges and the competition is usually displayed at the Silpakorn Art Gallery, but in 1997 the National Gallery was the venue, due to renovations at the university. PTT explained that it feels the culture of Thailand is important and that it wants to be a representative for conservation of the environment in Thailand (Interview with Rayong Yimsaard, PTT Corporate Relations, 14 October 1997). Ironically, in 1997-8, PTT is facing fierce opposition from both local

and national conservation groups to the Yadana gas pipeline which is planned to pass through 105 rai of land in Kanchanaburi's Sai Yok National Park, in Western Thailand. It is claimed the billion baht project will affect rare indigenous fauna including the Royal Crab and the Kitti's Hog-Nosed Bat. The controversial gas pipeline project through dwindling forest involves a deal with the Burmese junta to supply energy for Thailand's industrial development, making it a debatable political and environmental project which is receiving much attention from the media. Similarly, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), also a party in the Yadana gas pipeline project as the recipient of the gas, sponsored a painting contest in Loei province entitled *Rak Pa Rak Loke (Love the Forest, Love the World)* in October 1997. Given EGAT's other contentious environmentally-destructive projects, such as the unpopular construction of large of hydro dams and projected nuclear energy plants, we are led to question how the sponsorship of art can be manipulated and exploited by the public relations departments of large powerful organisations to negate image problems. It is suggested that the sponsorship of art competitions and exhibitions with 'enviro-friendly' themes, such as *The Power of Thais to Preserve the Environment* and *Love the Forest, Love the World* by agencies involved in devastation of the country's forests and environment are attempts to absolve guilt and to counter negative public opinion of company operations.



In the same vein, tobacco manufacturer Philip Morris sponsors national and regional art competitions. The First Thailand Art Awards in 1994 were organised by Philip Morris, Silpakorn University, the FAD, the White Group and Art and Culture magazine. Five winners received 125,000 baht each and a chance to enter the regional competition. Complaints are regularly voiced that the three judges (Sawasdi Tantisuk and Prayat Pongdam and Nonthivat Chandhanaphalin) and are all from Silpakorn, but Philip Morris feel they must rely on the most famous names. The widely publicised boycott by some Thai universities of the 1997 competition, on the grounds of the negative health implications of tobacco and smoking, indicates Thai artists are becoming increasingly aware of the relationships between environmental and health issues and art, and the politics of art patronage which can be viewed as a function of money, power and control. Alcohol manufacturers Kloster Brewery and Boonrawd Brewery have also joined in the sponsorship of art in Thailand in the eighties and nineties, running art competitions and attaching their names to plaques on Rachadamnoen Avenue acknowledging their contribution to the extensive decorations on the street to mark H.M. the King's Golden Jubilee. In celebration of its 60th anniversary, Boonrawd Brewery is holding an art contest *A Look at Singha's 65 Years Through Art* for students and the public. The works are required to convey the importance of Thai arts and follow traditional Thai art forms. The subject must deal with Boonrawd's contribution to society over the past 65 years and project Singha's image as the Thai product for

Thais (*italics in original advertisement*). Student prizes are 70,000, 50,000 and 30,000 baht, while the public prizes are 100,000, 50,000 and 30,000 baht.

These examples of businesses that deal in negative health products (alcohol and tobacco) sponsoring art competitions follow the environmental model outlined above and are similar efforts to balance public image via publicity for cultural exercises. Other corporate-sponsored art competitions in Thailand include the *Panasonic Contemporary Art Competition* (see Fig. 46) and the Sahaviriya OA Ltd's *SVOA Contemporary Art Competition* (see Fig. 48) which both began in 1995. Philips Electronics (Thailand) Ltd. ran its 15th Children and Youth Art Competition in 1997 entitled *No Drugs for a Better Life*. Aimed at children aged eight to sixteen, the competition supported the Philips' corporate philosophy of "*Let's Make Things Better*" and aims to encourage children to express their responsibility to Thai society.

Thailand Investment and Securities Public Company Limited (TISCO) started building their now significant art collection in the 1970s. The second *TISCO Contemporary Art Competition* was held in 1977, with a third in 1981 and another in 1986. In a controversial incident ten years ago, TISCO's advisor Sivaporn Dardarananda bought three paintings by Preecha Thaotong, Sawasdi Tantisuk and Thaiwjit Phungkasem and without consulting the artists used these works in a television advertisement to promote TISCO activities in relation to Thai culture and life. Preecha's shade and light on a temple wall was transformed into a shot of a real temple,

Sawasdi's flying birds became real birds, and Thaiwijit's work of water took on natural form. Disturbed at the adulteration of his work without permission, Preecha phoned and wrote to Sivaporn complaining about the abuse of copyright (*gotmai likisit*), asserting that an artist has copyright over his/her work even after sale. Sensing that the issue at hand was money rather than principle, Sivaporn rejected the claims, and today this dispute remains unresolved (Interview with Preecha Thaothong 16 March 1998). In 1996, TISCO sponsored the Siam Society's publication of Sodchuen Chaiprasathna's research on *Surrealism in Thai Art*, but a TISCO representative complained to the Siam Society that due to some shocking pictures the book was "unsuitable for a gift." Sivaporn is presently playing a key role in the Thai artworld as organiser of the Rama IX Art Museum. TISCO was joined by Mitr Phol Sugar Corp Ltd (Sivaporn is associated both organisations) as a major sponsor of the large 50th Jubilee Art Exhibition at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre (QSNCC) in 1997. Other corporates involved in art sponsorship include Siam Cement which has a substantial collection and Hitachi which in 1995 ran a contest titled *Technology for Humans* at the World Trade Center, a large shopping centre owned by the Techapaibul family.

Success in art competitions brings substantial prizes of cash and in some cases air tickets to study abroad. The attraction to enter competitions increases with the recognition that as prize winners become famous, they are more able to sell their work. Winning also helps

artists to secure support in the form of grants and fellowships and further funding for artistic efforts. With such attractions, artists often send their work to multiple competitions. The panels of judges of the many art competitions frequently comprise the same names of established artists and art teachers who often have close connections with Silpakorn University, as graduates or instructors. Similar works of art appear and the names of prize winners are duplicated in the many competitions. This arrangement has been criticised as leading to a narrowness in taste and forms and institutionalisation of art. Themes of art competitions to mark special occasions, which are usually royal functions and historical events, appear to be attempts to promote nationalism and patriotism among the Thai people. The form of art these competitions encourage often heavily emphasises traditional Thai and Buddhist symbols. Due to the now considerable number of corporate-financed art competitions (see Table 5.4), often supported by businesses which are motivated by the need for positive public faces to balance their destructive activities, further investigation is required into the effects of such dominance on the development of art in Thailand.

Commissions

As covered in Chapter 3, early Thai art was the result of royal commissions to decorate temple walls with Buddhist stories, as a means of merit-making, *Dhamma* (Buddhist teachings) dissemination and a show of regal

might. Commissions by the Thai government, the major art patron in the 1930s-1950s, included large patriotic monuments in public spaces, projecting images of a great Thai nation. Prof. Silpa Bhirasri followed government instructions regarding the construction of the Rama I statue (see Fig. 9) at Memorial Bridge, Democracy monument (see Fig. 10), and Victory monument. Though he was dissatisfied with the lack of freedom in undertaking state-commissioned work, Bhirasri realised that such work helped him gain acceptance and become known in the country (Presentation by Damrong Wong-uparaj, Italian-Thai Conference, November 20, 1997).

The commissioning of mural paintings at Wat Buddhapadipa in Wimbledon, London, by the Prem government in the early 1980s helped a group of young painters trained in traditional Thai art at Silpakorn University to develop their alternative neo-traditional styles and to establish their names. Incorporating more emotion and movement than is usually found in traditional temple murals, the team of adventurous young artists led by Chalermchai Kositpipat and Panya Vijinthanasarn (see Fig. 32) gave modern interpretations and treatments to traditional Thai themes, applying brilliant acrylic colours with airbrushes and including contemporary figures such as Ronald Reagan, Big Ben and Margaret Thatcher with a machine gun. Juxtaposed alongside traditional Buddhist images, this new approach aimed to reflect Buddhism's timelessness and universality. Although they received no fees for this major commission and it took three years longer than the one year

initially planned, the muralists considered it an honour to be part of this successful and widely publicised project, and were subsequently invited by the private sector to do more well-paid commissions. On their return to Thailand, these artists also grouped together to exhibit. Sompop Budtarad, Kittisak Nuallak, Prasas Chandrasupa, and Rerngsak Boonyavanichkul displayed their artworks at the Siam City Hotel, City Gallery in August 1996 as *Four Thai Artists*, with Chalermchai and Panya as invited guests. The exhibition was opened by then Governor of the Bank of Thailand, Rerngchai Marakanond.

Thailand's dynamic economic performance from the mid-eighties to early nineties led to an increase in the power of financial institutions and corporations who, along with sponsoring art competitions and purchasing for art collections, commissioned artworks to decorate their newly-constructed imposing office buildings. Architects, designers, and decorators became involved in negotiations between artists and private sector institutions interested in displaying art on their walls.

Long-time Thailand resident, popular American architect and art collector, Robert Boughey is influential in securing commissions for artists whose work he personally appreciates. Boughey's projects involve consultations between client, architect and artist regarding the basic concept of the artwork. The new Siam Commercial Bank Head Office on Rachadapisek Road, designed by Boughey and costing approximately 10,000 million baht, was opened in 1996. Large works by top neo-traditional artists were commissioned for

interior decoration. Panya Vijnthanasarn's design depicting the Traiphum (Buddhist universe) (see Fig. 55) was enlarged and carefully reproduced by a team of ten painters into a 27m x 6.5m mural in the main lobby. Taking more than a year, the job earned the painters, 8.5 million baht. Chalermchai Kositpipat also produced two 2.5m x 1.9m Buddhist paintings, one of which features a garuda (krut), representing the vehicle of the Hindu god Vishnu, and in Thailand is a symbol of the Thai monarchy. The Siam Commercial Bank has adopted the garuda as their own logo, raising questions about the appropriation of religious symbolism by corporations, and the placement of such in commercial settings. Veteran northern artist Tawan Duchanee is reported to have received 30 million for his paintings and sculpture of Mara (evil desire) in the boardroom. (The Nation, 5 February, 1996), while Ittipol Thangchalok's 22m x 3m mural Legend of Eternal Fire and Water, with its gold and silver statements of prosperity, decorate the VIP room. Panya, a graduate of Silpakorn and presently Vice President for Arts and Culture and an instructor in the Thai Art Department there, was later commissioned by Robert Boughey to paint the new Rolex showroom office ceiling (see Fig.56). Invited by the Thai government to decorate the Thai pavilions at the World Expos in Brisbane 1988 and Seville 1992, Panya also agreed, as a favour to a friend, to paint a traditional Thai mural around the concept of travel and food, to decorate a branch of McDonalds fast-food restaurant in the World Trade Centre in Bangkok (see Fig. 57). Thai angels can be seen floating above the Big-

Mac servery counter, while Ronald McDonald in his striped suit makes guest appearances in the 'typical' Thai scenes. In one of the four five large panels, he is seen in the crowd watching a *Muay Thai* (Thai Boxing) match, with the ubiquitous golden arches fixed to the nearby roof of a traditional rural Thai sala (rest pavillion). The artist feels setting his work in this location will bring traditional Thai art to the people and enable Thai teenagers to see their old culture (Interview with the artist, 18 October 1995). Panya's latest commission at Luang Por Sothorn Temple in Chachoengsao is part of a collaborative project by the 50 Thai artists who illustrated H.M. the King's book, Mahajanaka.

These examples of art's new spaces and new customers raise questions regarding the adoption of traditional and religious motifs by dominant commercial groups. What alternative interpretations and new meanings can be ascribed to traditional Thai art located in commercial settings? What agendas are the sponsoring agents pursuing when commissioning this work? How does the politics of location affect the art/viewer?

At the new TFB Head Office which was completed in 1995, a number of Silpakorn instructors were invited to study the landscape and present their proposals for substantial outdoor art commissions in the bank grounds. Chalood Nimsamer's Ong Sam (Three (old) Coins) (see Fig. 58) installed outside the previous Head Office building in Paholyothin Road is an interesting symbol connecting money and art, and when Chalood was again asked to contribute his ideas for the new building he produced

Insee 5 (see Fig. 59), a series of five brass and black granite stupa-shaped forms to symbolise the five virtues of Buddhist *Dhamma* (teaching): Faith, Determination, Conscience, Concentration, and Knowledge. This amalgamation of business and religion in art may be interpreted as a means to portray the bank as both a guardian of religion and a protector of art. At the same time the financial institution may build a safe and respectable corporate image, by identifying with a national 'pillar', and absolve any guilt accumulated during the course of corporate dealings. According to the TFB, Chalood's work combines art with the *Dhamma*, the environment and the symbolic Thai identity. Pisanu Supanimit and Somchai Thaothong's The Gate of Lights and Knowledge (20m x 7m) exhibits a mix of Roman, Egyptian, Khmer, and Sukhothai influences, in combination with a modern stainless steel pillar. Applying a similar concept, Ittipol Tangchalok produced The Gate of Buddhist Wisdom, from bronze and granite. The Vessel of Knowledge by Preecha Thaothong and Noppong Satjaviso, in the form of a 20-metre boat, features the symbols of the Wheel of *Dhamma* and the Buddha's Footprint. Indoors at TFB, other artists specialising in Thai classical paintings were given various commissions including royal portraits by Nirun Kraisornrat and Sompop Butaraj, tales of Sukhothai and Ayudhya by Hathai Bunnag, and TFB's idea for a series of paintings of scenes from Thai literature such as Khun Chang Khun Phaen, Inao and Busaba, Manorah and The Ramakien (Ramayana) was realised by Chakrabhand Posayakrit (see Fig. 60). This idea was followed because

at that time, TFB was opening international branches in Hamburg, London, Los Angeles and wanted to project a Thai identity. Negotiations between the TFB and the artists regarding the value of these commissions is based on 'friendly talk,' not like in the real market (Interview with Daranee Tanchaiswasd, 7 October 1997).

Chakrabhand Posayakrit was also asked by the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) to do portraits of PTT board members. For H.M. the King's 50th anniversary on the throne in 1996, PTT arranged trees of gold and silver outside its Head Office and after a royal opening ceremony, the public were invited to write goodwill messages on the backs of the gold 'leaves'. The 999,999 (to observe Rama IX) pieces of gold, silver and bronze leaf were then melted to make Buddha images, and permission was obtained to stamp the royal seal on each image. One Buddha image was presented to H.M. the King and another 200 were distributed to the PTT offices around the country.

Illustrations for His Majesty King Bhumibol's book, Mahajanaka (Royal Father), referred to earlier in this chapter, resulted in commissions for some Thai artists. His Majesty expressed his desire for the works illustrating his writings to be generally representative of art during his reign. The eight artists who were duly selected were Prayat Pongdam, Pichai Nirand, Preecha Thaonthong, Panya Vijnthanasarn, Chalermchai Kositpipat, Teerawat Kanama, Netikorn Chinyo and Jintana Piamsiri. This project, along with the construction and decoration of the Wat Rama IX Kanjanapisit temple, funded by H.M.

the King, suggests that although the earlier role of the monarch as sole formal patron of the arts has largely passed, the present King of Thailand's position is one which actively promotes the preservation of traditional Buddhist art.

Decorating and design companies such as the large P49 and Aspeke managed by Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, former Director of the BIMA, were particularly active during the boom of the late eighties and early nineties. As huge new buildings sprouted around the city, blank walls provided decorators with opportunities to install art by Thai artists in the new spaces, according to the clients' approval. When the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel was completed in the mid-eighties, it was one of the first to allocate the decorators a substantial budget for purchasing Thai artworks. It now has one of the largest collections of Thai art. Decorations may or may not involve commissions. Interior decoration of the Westin Banyan Tree Hotel, located inside the Thai Wah building on Sathorn Road, was arranged by Chatvichai of Aspeke who chose five original works by artists including Niti Wattuya and Thongchai Srisukprasert. Niti's river scenes began to incorporate gold at the end of the eighties as a statement against the materialism of modern society and his large piece decorating the lobby of the Westin ironically was chosen because its gold and purple colours coincidentally matched the decor perfectly. Thongchai's eye-catching abstract work in black, white and gold, also adorning the Westin lobby, depicts the circle of life and reflects the artist's inspiration from Buddhist

philosophy. Chatvichai explained that decorators put up art if they can, but due to the constraints of a decoration budget, sometimes artists were too expensive. Westin's budget for production and painting of headboards was two million baht. The decorator explained he has put a lot of artworks into interiors and teachers at Silpakorn are a lot richer now because of this (Interview with Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, 4 August, 1997). Northern artist Wancharoen Japakang described how he sells most of his wood carvings and repousse work through decorators but also contacts hotels directly and keenly follows up any signs of interest in his work (Interview with the artist, 7 January, 1998). Through their own network of university peers and family connections, artists may secure their own commissions. Advertising company J Walter Thompson, requested their interior designer to arrange for an installation piece that represented their activities. Pinaree Sanpitak was contacted by the designer, her friend, and produced a work which features flashing neon light. For finance company SITCA Co., Pinaree created an abstract work using iron frameworks and sa (handmade) paper (to represent graphs). SITCA's interest in sponsoring art was extended in 1994 when it commissioned Somporn Rodboon of Silpakorn to write a series of publications on the works of late great Thai artists including Fua Haripitak, Khien Yimsiri and Tawee Nandakwang. In May 1998, along with those of the other 46 closed finance houses, SITCA's assets will be auctioned. The art collections will be auctioned separately and to facilitate starting prices for bidding

the works are being valued at approximately 50 percent of purchase price.

The Loxley building in Klong Toei was recently decorated with a large piece of outdoor art by Saravuth Duangjumpa of Silpakorn entitled Time and Everyday Life. Combining technology and electronic media, flashing lights and bright colours, the artist worked with the idea that time and life are inseparable. Some of Bangkok's other new buildings have included separate art gallery spaces. The Rajanasarn building on Sathorn Road opened in December 1997 with the gallery holding an exhibition entitled *Ten Thai Artists*, led by veteran Pratuang Emjaroen. In the midst of the current serious economic crisis, a surprising number of these works had red spots to indicate 'sold', for a range of prices from 5,000 to 300,000 baht. Perhaps this system was used to indicate that the work was not for sale as the artist did not wish to part with the work, but if the sales were actually made, it raises the question of who is still buying art during this period of economic hardship?

Art Gallery Spaces

Very much a fluctuating business and directly dependent on the economic climate, art galleries blossomed in the foreign investment/aid-flowing sixties but most collapsed during or before the international oil crisis in the early seventies. By the early eighties, there were few non-commercial/non-tourist galleries for Thai art to show in, apart from the BIMA and the Goethe

Insitut. Along with the mass of newly-constructed hotel and office buildings that called for decorating during the tourist and economic boom period of the late eighties and early nineties, the number of art galleries began to multiply.

In 1998, there were more than fifty art galleries (including foreign cultural centres, excluding hotel galleries) exhibiting Thai art (See Appendix 3). Government-funded art spaces include the National Art Gallery, university galleries and the Thailand Cultural Centre. Located on Chao Fa Rd, the National Art Gallery which opened in 1977 is an excellent large space with the basic requirements of natural light and ventilation. However, complaints about difficult bureaucratic management and poor public relations and publicity are common, and the rather tired, run-down atmosphere which greets visitors entering the Gallery requires attention. University galleries are usually managed by art faculty staff. Silpakorn University has three galleries; the largest located in a hundred-year-old palace building is currently undergoing renovations, the Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts Faculty shows local and international exhibitions in its gallery, and a new Gallery of Art and Design opened in 1998 as part of the Decorative Arts Faculty. The large and well-appointed Centre of Academic Resources Art Gallery at Chulalongkorn University has a reputation for quality international and Thai exhibitions. Foreign embassies often choose to show national exhibitions here because of the university's top reputation. Other government and private universities

with art galleries include Bangkok University, Suan Dusit Teachers' College, Rangsit University, Chiang Mai, Khon Khaen, Burapha, Prince of Songhla and other regional university galleries referred to in the earlier section on raising artists and educational institutes. The Thailand Cultural Centre (TCC), designed and donated by the Japanese government, operates under the government wing of the Office of the National Cultural Commission (ONCC). Opening in the late eighties, it was anticipated that the TCC would fill the gap left by the demise of the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA) (1974-89), as a community art centre. However, complaints from artists of entrenched bureaucracy and lack of organisation are frequent. Although it operates on a 40 million baht annual budget from the ONCC, the TCC has a low profile showing sporadic exhibitions often related to preserving tradition and of limited appeal. Project management skills and effective public relations/publicity are not readily apparent, visible or active. The BIMA, a private, independent, non-governmental organisation, emerged as a response to one-sided national art competitions, as a kind of "salon for rejected artists." Princess Chumbot Panthip, as outlined in Chapter 3, was a major supporter of the Institute, loaning land for the building and covering half of the 60,000 baht monthly operating costs which were always in deficit. When the BIMA was set up, the JD Rockefeller III Trust pledged \$10,000 and 300 art works by local and foreign artists were auctioned to raise nearly one million baht. The government promised half a million baht and the USIS and British Council

sponsored many events. Because the BIMA did not adhere to a profit-making focus, the art-educated and forward-looking Princess wrote about the "need for a substantial group of sponsors; not a few but a fair-sized portion of the community." For the ten years that he managed the BIMA, Chatvichai Promadhattavedi observed that elite Thais and foreigners played major roles in supporting the organisation, with little interest from 'business types'. Chatvichai commented that only after the death of the Princess and the demise of the BIMA in 1989, did businessmen really become interested in Thai art. This move also coincided with Chatchai Choonhavan assuming the premiership and the "change battlefields to marketplaces" policy of the Thai government which boosted the economic climate in Thailand. Art buyers also began to change from expatriates to Thais during this period (Interview with Chatvichai, 4 August, 1997).

Concrete House in Nontaburi, run by former BIMA assistant director Chumpol Apisuk, is a low-budget art centre which has flowered from the BIMA's demise. The new 50-million-baht Marsi Gallery building at Suan Pakkard Palace, Princess Chumbot's old residence, is another incarnation of the BIMA. The decision by the Princess' nephew and heir M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, a Democrat MP and deputy Foreign Affairs minister, to build the new Marsi Gallery rather than maintain the BIMA met much scorn from disappointed parties attached to the original organisation. Despite its central location, modern facilities and established gardens, the Marsi Gallery's

sporadic exhibitions, performances and events are not particularly well-attended.

The large exhibition space at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre (QSNCC) was the venue for the 1996 *Five Decades of Thai Art* display which marked the Golden Jubilee of the King's accession to the throne. As mentioned earlier, an auction of artwork initiated the fund-raising drive for establishing a Rama IX Museum of Modern Art. The fundraising committee, largely comprising financial managers and prominent business people, actively supported the auction by bidding boldly, and the catalogue of the exhibition referred to the 'dedication and reverence . . . deep and sincere devotion' of the participants in the project. Plans to construct this new Rama IX Art Museum have been stymied by the economic meltdown. The long-established Siam Society (under royal patronage since 1904) is also currently in dire financial straits after investing heavily in the new Chalerm Phra Kiat building which features exhibition space and opened in 1997, and the production of a "Golden Footprint" offered to H.M. the King to mark his Golden Jubilee on the throne. Actively organising tours, lectures, exhibitions, conferences, performances and publications, the Siam Society is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Thailand's cultural and artistic heritage. In 1996, the Siam Society organised two major exhibitions; one of Vietnamese Art and another of Japanese Contemporary Crafts, co-sponsored by the Japan Foundation. The *Cultural Representation in Transition: New Vietnamese Painting* exhibition curated by Chatvichai

Promadhattavedi was accompanied by twenty Vietnamese artists from Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi who toured Bangkok art spaces and held discussions with a range of people involved in the Thai art scene. A return trip by Thai artists to Vietnam is underway for June 1998. In order to realise this considerable project, the various skills of Society members were enlisted. American banker and former Vice President of the Bank of Asia, James Stent, drafted the proposal which was submitted to UNESCO (currently in their *Decade of Cultural Development* programme) and eventually received funding from the Ford Foundation and Jardine Matheson (Thailand) Ltd. A one million baht bond to Thai customs was covered by the Bank of Asia. Opened by popular former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, the exhibition made front page news on *The Nation* yet attendance was low, failing to draw more than the Siam Society elite to view the works.

Galleries often attempt to carve an individual character and tend to appeal to niche markets. In the late 1980s and 1990s, art in Thailand became a source of interest for new customers including large corporate collectors, banks and individuals whose personal incomes had increased keenly bought art as a means of expressing their new wealth. The initially small group of elite educated and travelled people interested in art were joined by collectors and speculators from the booming financial sector, architects, designers, decorators, and magazine people. New galleries targeting this 'yuppie' market, such as Tadu Contemporary Art and Seri Art Gallery, packaged their art products amongst cool jazz

and wine, sometimes extending to antiques, pottery, textiles and Buddha sculptures. Prices for artwork soared. Others, such as the Saeng-Arun Art Centre which opened in 1991 and the Pridi Banomyung Foundation, promoted the ideals of some of Thailand's respected founding fathers by taking their names and running alternative art programmes. Misiem's Sculpture Garden in Nakhon Pathom, which opened in 1981, is currently undergoing restorations after storm damage.

Several foreigners living in Thailand have opened art galleries, injecting their capital and skills into the Thai art world. The Neilson Hays Library in Surawong Road is not high profile but has been consistently exhibiting Thai and international artists since opening more than 50 years ago. The Japanese owner of Gallerie Kyoko Chirathivat established herself as the leading dealer of international art in Thailand, handling no Thai artists, before closing promptly in mid-1997 due to the financial squeeze. Carpedium Gallery seeks to bring artists from the Asia-Pacific region to exhibit their impressions of Thailand while Akko Gallery deals with Thai artists and also highlights regional art. One of the oldest surviving galleries is Visual Dhamma, run by respected Austrian art dealer Alfred Pawlin, who was instrumental in establishing the international careers of many Thai artists. By exhibiting works in his small Soi Asoke space, publishing catalogues in meaningful English to explain artists' concepts, and by introducing Thai artists to international connections, Pawlin has played a vital role in the development of Thai art. His initial

interest in Thai art which reworks traditional Thai religious motifs and ideas has, after many years, become diminished, and Pawlin no longer values much of the new work. Once achieving fame, the waves of neo-traditional Thai artists who were supported by Pawlin in the eighties did not maintain any form of loyalty to him as their agent, preferring to deal directly with interested customers and bypassing commissions. Artist Panya Vijnthanasarn, commenting on the impact of the 'economic life' in the artworld, described Visual Dhamma's small size in relation to other more powerful institutions (Interview with the artist, 13 January 1996).

Meanwhile, the Thai-owned Sombat Permpoon Gallery in Sukhumvit is today is the most commercially successful gallery in Thailand handling 100 percent Thai artists. Opened in 1980, with a large new space built in 1995, the gallery's mission statement refers to the increased interest in art and "the decorative element and as a sound investment for collectors." At its peak, Sombat Permpoon Gallery had five branches in large hotels (Dusit Thani, Royal Orchid Sheraton, River City, Siam Intercontinental and the Promenade Shopping Arcade), but closed three at the beginning of 1997, more due to a lack of good staff than to the economic downturn, according to gallery owner Sombat Wattanathai. Of the over 10,000 works accumulated by Sombat, 70 percent are by university teachers, and 30% by self-employed artists. Sombat never orders work, but if she likes a piece of work brought to her by one of the many artists she knows, she buys outright, with the artist first nominating a

price. This way she avoids commissions which are often a source of dispute between galleries and artists. The gallery owner claims she doesn't think of business when purchasing, but expects the customer to follow her, unconcerned if the piece doesn't sell. In this way she sees herself as a 'taste maker'. Some works in the Sombat gallery have remained unsold for 5-10 years (including Damrong Wong-Uparaj, Angkarn Kalayapongse, Chalood Nimsamer, and a Kid Kosalawat piece priced at 1.5 million baht). Sombat stores works by Thai 'old masters' such as Hem Wechakorn and Jumrat Kietkong which are not for sale, and she plans to open a personal art museum in the future. In 1997, customers at Sombat Permpoon Gallery were 70% Thai and 30% foreign/tourists, while eight to ten years ago this was the opposite. Sombat predicts that in the future this ratio will become 50:50. Selling approximately 60 pieces a month during the early nineties, Sombat noted that sales had been less in August 1997 than in previous periods. The cheapest artworks are priced at nine hundred baht, for small pictures which are popular for Christmas and birthday gifts. In her dealings, Sombat has observed that foreigners tend to buy small and cheap paintings, while Thais buy large and expensive pieces. She believes art sales depend 60 percent on the sales person and 40 percent on the work itself, and her most recent sales tactic is to directly approach international embassies.

The successful saleswoman is regularly invited to speak at Silpakorn University and Chulalongkorn University and is considering sponsoring a university

student from the provinces for a year of art study. In 1985, when Tanong Virakul painted a portrait of the Sultan of Brunei, Sombat took 600 pictures to Brunei and sold 80 percent of them for 600,000 baht. Her observation that 'at that time Thais were not interested in art, but now they are' supports Chatvichai's assessment and reflects the change in Thai society in the late eighties, as the Thai economy strengthened and art found more local customers and viewers (Interview with Sombat Wattanathai, 5 August 1997).

Artist-run galleries, for example Silom Art Space run by artists Pinaree Sanpitak and Chatchai Puipia, appear to have relatively short lives. Creative exhibitions and interesting decor do not suffice, and more practical marketing and management skills are needed. All the gallery curators interviewed in this study commented on the difficult nature of the job; the constant juggling of relationships and egos, and challenges to maintain quality. Artists must do consistently good work to advance in their careers. Therefore, gallery managers often find it difficult to tell an artist that the work is not up to standard, especially when their relationship is a friendly one. The smallness of the Thai art scene means people know each other, often relying on 'old school' networks to set up projects. Connections are valuable and much time is spent meeting, talking, and persuading. Seeking objective and ethical standards, curators may find it difficult to remain removed from the factionalism and politicking. Managing awkward artistic temperaments can also be

demanding, with emotional personalities and petty squabbles often occupying time and energy. Many artists appear to take gallery/curator support for granted, yet at the same time depend on it and complain about the standard. To aid understanding by the viewer and to meet a need for information, artists may be requested to explain or discuss their work, but they often can not or do not like to, and feel the gallery should give lectures to the media and visitors. Galleries usually provide information and short explanations to customers and viewers in some form of a catalogue which, along with negotiations over material and transport costs, can be a major issue in the artist-gallery deal. To some artists and galleries, the catalogue is seen as an important 'record of the event' which should reflect quality and status in the form of expensive paper and many colours. Alternatively, the catalogue may be considered a more serviceable document, primarily meeting information needs only, and therefore not something to be invested heavily in. Galleries such as Project 304 and Silom Art Space elected to minimise these costs and supply photo-copied information. Galleries and artists frequently differ on the degree of loyalty and fairness the relationship involves/requires. Some Thai artists complain that dealers don't provide professional support in representing the artist, therefore they have no qualms about switching patron or art dealer when a better offer comes along. Artists are known to invite interested buyers to their studios to purchase artworks directly at a lower commission-free price after the exhibition has

closed, leading some galleries to implement policies of holding and managing artworks for a period after the exhibition. Exhibitions can require considerable investment, in the forms of publicity, catalogue, rent, air-conditioning, opening party, food, flowers etc. Therefore, galleries lose money and feel betrayed by artists who cut them out. The percentage taken by the gallery is a significant bone of contention. Tadu Contemporary Art, for example, takes a high 40% but pays for everything including 1000 quality catalogues, transport, installation, public relations, and photography. A clause in their agreements with artists entitles the gallery to keep unsold works for 90 days after an exhibition of two months. The gallery manager explained that each exhibition costs 500,000 baht, requiring the gallery to sell 1.5 million baht of artwork to break even. Needless to say, Tadu has not managed to cover costs since it began in 1996. Backed by the Yontrakit group, dealers for BMW in Thailand, the gallery and attached restaurant were considered extra (subsidised) facets to compliment the focus on cars. Eighty percent of art buyers at Tadu are local Thai professionals and the gallery manager admitted that attendance had generally been less than expected, requiring them to concentrate more on publicity (Interview with Luckana Kunavichayanont of Tadu Gallery, 25 July 1997). For long-term survival, gallery spaces should be self-supporting. Many like Tadu are not, relying instead on funds from outside their operations. Non-profit galleries such as Project 304 and 303 Open

Space rely on input and donations by interested volunteers and the manager admits this system is 'unsustainable'. Run as cooperatives, these galleries survive with artists paying for small expenses and a board of wealthy private patrons loaning larger sums of money. Responsibilities are shared and decisions are made by groups as opposed to a single decision-maker, as in the commercial setting. Affluent art supporters, in some cases, agree to donate to help cover running costs such as rent, air conditioning, printing and exhibition openings. Volunteers are enlisted to help with editing, cleaning and setting up (Interview with Grithaya Gaweewong of Project 304, 5 October 1997). Innovative artist Navin Rawanchaikul's 'taxi gallery' (a mobile gallery located in a taxi in Bangkok) is based on the idea that since people spend so long in vehicles, art should become an integral part of transport. Since March 1997, this alternative art space has shown six exhibitions as it travels around Bangkok, including artists from Japan, where Navin is now based. The Chiang Mai Social Installation and Huay Kwang projects, which have been organised with limited budgets, aim to take art out of traditional art settings, such as galleries, and into public spaces. Japanese artist Toshinari Sato brought his *Dust of Dream* exhibition to Bangkok and pushed a traditional Thai cart around Chinatown dispensing oxygen at 20 baht a minute, and selling colourful cotton masks.

A significant rise in the number of tourists visiting Thailand has added to the increase in interest

in Thai art. Sombat Watttanathai concluded from her seventeen years of experience in the art sales business and as owner of leased galleries at luxury tourist hotels such as the Oriental, the Hilton and the Dusit Thani, that tourists as art purchasers are drawn to peaceful scenes, especially those featuring Buddha images. Visitors from other Asian countries, Japan in particular, are substantial buyers who prefer pastel-coloured paintings which feature 'typical' Thai scenes and images such as the floating market, traditional Thai houses, flowers, and the lotus (Interview with Sombat Watttanathai, 5 August, 1997). Chivasom, a luxurious health spa in beach side Hua Hin which is frequented by predominantly foreign tourists, began in 1998 to exhibit art in its gracious surroundings. The first exhibition was a solo of Buddhist-inspired works by Apichai Piromrat, followed by a show of Chinese antiques. Other exclusive spaces where art has begun to appear include clubs like the Bangkok Club on the 29th Floor of Sathorn City Tower which is owned by the Bangkok Bank owners, the Sophonpanich family.

In addition to an increased amount of Thai art in hotel spaces, both as decoration and available in hotel galleries, large department stores and shopping centres also began to provide locations for Thai artists to exhibit their works. The River City Shopping Complex, Central Plaza, and Peninsula Plaza regularly show work which appeals to the tourist market. The new Discovery Centre in Siam Square in July 1997 advertised an art exhibition entitled *In the Colourful Style by Three*

Artists and Three Businessmen. A mixture of amateur works of largely banana leaves, cats and turtles, the exhibition occupied the foyer space for 14 days and cost the artists approximately 50,000 baht in rental, along with a small commission. In February 1998, Central Department Store launched its new "Central Workshop" programme offering a variety of weekend courses (4 hours per day for 5 days) including watercolour painting (4500 baht), and oil painting classes (6,500 baht), along with tennis and ballroom dancing!

During the period under study in this thesis, restaurants and cafes such as the Seven Seas, Na Phra Lan and About Café also appeared and began to exhibit Thai artists. Merchandising of art by an enterprising company called Vis-Art has resulted in the reproduction of works by Thai artists on cards and T-shirts. These became available in bookshops and cafes and popular as souvenirs and gifts. Prasong Luemuang's quirky folk art of village scenes, Chatchai Puipia's elephant series, and Panya Vijnthanasarn's Buddha images catch tourist eyes and sell well. (Observation at Na Phra Lan café). A recent novel product by Wjit Apichartkriengkrai entitled *Amazing Love* offered copies of Thai poet Wiphap Kanthap's love poems in a yellow and purple can. Released before Valentine's Day and distributed in Na Phra Lan and Nai In bookshop near Silpakorn University, this conceptual art in the form of a carefully designed product is an attempt by the artist to experiment with a new medium, and to expose his art to a wider audience. Due to a lack of patrons and galleries, Wjit, winner of the Golden

Jubilee Art Exhibition (see Fig. 50), feels exhibiting in galleries is not worth the effort as only a few people see the work.

Outside of Bangkok, aside from the annual Chiang Mai Social Installation which sees art displayed and performed in public areas around the city, the most well-known art space in this northern city is The Gallery, which carries paintings, sculpture, antiques and pottery, and was visited by Hillary Clinton on her trip to Thailand. Other galleries in Chiang Mai include the Kruthep Art Centre, the Chiang Mai Chofa, and artist Surasit Saokong's own gallery. On the popular tourist island of Phuket, where many small souvenir arts and craft spaces operate, The Loft Art Gallery on Talag Road manages Thai and international artists. The Kata Beach Arts Festival has been held annually since 1995 in the home of M.L. Tridhosyuth Devakul (architect of the BIMA), showcasing works by the homeowner along with other visual, performing and musical arts. Other regional galleries springing up in the nineties include the Hua Hin Arts and Crafts Centre and the Peak Restaurant and Art Collection in Sri Racha, both run by businessmen with personal art collections they wish to show. One gallery in the eastern resort town of Pattaya is busy selling only reproductions of great works of art at low prices (around 4000 baht). Demand for this type of art was so high in early 1997 the gallery could not keep up, and Seri Gallery in Bangkok was investigating this commercial success and is considering following this strategy, justifying that Thai artists who undertook this work

would be assured of an income and could do their own art in their free time. (Interview with Chaiparasarn Anakkakul, Seri Art Gallery 26 July 1997).

Following the 1994 Thai stock market decline, the art market slowed and many galleries including the Galerie Kyoko Chirathivat went out of business. Ironically, during the more recent period of greater economic crisis, several new galleries have opened in Bangkok: Thilo von Watzdorf Gallery opened in December 1997 with an exhibiton of Picasso original drawings; the Artists League of Thailand joined the launch of the Amazing Thailand campaign; 303 Open Space expanded the Project 304 and Numthong Gallery space in the Housing Co-op building; Patravadi Theatre began offering young artists a corner to display their work; Ocean 23 Gallery emerged from an extended artist studio; the Surapon Gallery attached to the new TISCO building opened its doors with an exhibition by traditional Thai artist Surasit Saokhong; and Kikkok Gallery burst onto the scene (see Appendix 3).

Regarding art values, most historically important works from the early era of modern Thai art are on display at the National Art Gallery, the Fine Arts Department, the National Gallery or the Silpa Bhirasri Memorial Museum at Silpakorn University. Others are held in private collections such as Misiem's Sculpture Garden or those of private individuals and the artists' descendants. At Sombat Permpoon Gallery, an early work by old master Tawee Nandakwang is the most expensive, priced at 'many millions' of baht. Sombat's collection of other

valuable works by artists who have passed away includes one painting by Kid Kosalawat priced at 1.2 million baht. The soaring art market in the early nineties, which was a response to the excited economy, saw individual works by living neo-traditionalists such as Chalermchai Kositpipat and Tawan Duchanee fetching high prices in the vicinity of 300,000-2 million baht. Other living Thai 'masters' such as Sawasdi Tantisuk, Pratuang Emjaroen and Chalood Nimsameur have also commanded substantial prices. Price depends on the artist's name and previous work, and aesthetic considerations may be secondary for speculators. Consistent quality and continuity of production generate higher prices. Watercolours are generally valued less than oil or acrylic paintings.

When setting up exhibitions, prices are negotiated between gallery owners and artists, but in some instances artists have been known to set their own high prices and could not be persuaded to lower. For the *Passion of Thai* exhibition in July 1997 at Seri Gallery, the artists elected to keep their prices high at 80,000-150,000 baht and none sold. Price lists are usually made available at galleries, but these are indications of value, and prices are negotiable. From his many years experience as director at the BIMA and other art-related activities, Chatvichai Promadhattavedi concludes one should never underestimate the buyer and that there is no accounting for attractions. He believes pieces speak for themselves; that the work justifies itself, as opposed to Sombat who feels the salesperson's skills are more influential in a final sale, rather than the work itself.

In 1995, Studio Xang used novelty pricing to attract buyers, with all works priced at 1995 baht. Using a similar attention-seeking pricing strategy, the Sriprapa Art Centre promoted its first anniversary in August 1997 with a sale of works by 50 artists with each piece priced 3000 baht. A further indication of the irrational art market, two artists commented that they were selling more than ever during the difficult economic times. Works in Pinaree Sanpitak's latest exhibition were bought for what the artist considered good prices by local and international museums, presumably with pre-set budgets (the Yipintsoi Sculpture Park in Nakon Pathom, Singapore Art Gallery and Tokyo Museum reserved pieces for \$4000 each) (Interview with the artist, 3 October 1997).

Many young financial managers like Chongrux Chuntaworrasut became interested in collecting art during the economic heyday. Persuaded by his boss at a large finance house who also owned the Dialogue Gallery, in 1993 Chongrux began collecting pieces by well-respected Thai artists and now has one of the best collections of contemporary Thai art. When Chongrux made his first purchase, a piece by Montien Boonma, he admits he didn't understand it and didn't put it up. Most of his collection, on which the collector estimates he has spent several millions of baht, are big pieces, priced between 40,000 baht to 300,000 baht, and are in storage. Brought up in a Chinese family, Chongrux says he was given no choice other than to study and work in the financial sector, but he is interested to learn about another world so he keeps his eyes and ears open, and pays attention to

what people say about new artists i.e. 'the word.' The owner of Siamese Smile by Chatchai Puipia (see Fig. 61), which featured on the cover of the catalogue of the *Traditions/Tensions: Asian Contemporary Art* exhibition in New York in 1996, Chongrux also dreams of having his own gallery. Although art purchases are not part of his regular personal budget, he says he is serious about collecting art. If there is money 'left over,' he buys. In October 1997, Chongrux was not buying. Chongrux's collection has made him famous locally, with many requests to view his collection as well as interviews and articles appearing in magazines (Interview with Chongrux Chuntaworrasut, 2 October, 1997).

The Word : media and publications

Along with new spaces, new customers and new prices in the nineties, art in Thailand has found a new position in terms of increased media awareness. Gallery showings and art events are advertised in Thai and English newspapers daily, with weekly full page sections on Thai and international art in *The Nation* on Mondays, and in the *Bangkok Post* on Wednesdays. Television shows invite artists for guest appearances and numerous magazines in Thailand, for example *Metro* (English), and *Dichan*, *Expression*, *Variety*, and *Art4D* (Thai) have regular art columns which feature interviews with artists or collectors, new gallery details and exhibition reviews. In order for art to develop, it is necessary that critics give valuable feedback and analysis of

artists' work. In Thai society, negative criticism is not handled directly in a confrontational manner, due to an Asian consideration for 'saving face' (for both parties). For this reason, many articles written about Thai art lack analysis and do not address shortcomings in the work. Requests for the training of Thai art critics were encountered frequently during this research. International magazines such as *Australian Art* and *Asia Pacific* have added to information about Thai art. A special issue on Thailand in 1995 included essays on Montien Boonma, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Chatchai Puipia, Vasan Sitthiket, Damrong Wong-Uparaj, Chalermchai Kositpipat and Panya Vijnthanasarn by foreign and Thai writers.

Despite the increased coverage of Thai art by the media, there remains a shortage of in-depth publications. Apinan Poshyananda's Modern Art in Thailand, published in 1992, was the first comprehensive account of the development of modern art in Thailand. Earlier writing by Silpa Bhirasri (1954, 1961), Jean Boisselier (1975), Klaus Wenk (1975, 1981), Alfred Pawlin (1984) and John Hoskins (1984) covered traditional Thai art more thoroughly with little reference to alternative modern styles and forms. Piriya Krairksh and Paothong Thongchua's Art Since 1932 (1982) was published to commemorate the Bicentennial of Bangkok (Rattanakosin) and briefly covers the major movements up to 1982. John Clark's Modernity in Asian Art (1993) contains two essays on Thai art but more recently, with the increased interest in Asian art, two large glossy coffee table

books, Southeast Asian Art Today (1996) and Southeast Asian Art: A New Spirit (1997) have been published. These tomes attempt to explain artistic developments in Southeast Asian countries, giving readers a greater understanding of new themes being addressed by some artists in the region and the new forms of art emerging as Southeast Asian artists finish their art training in Western institutes, and then struggle to reconcile their own identity and the two worlds in their art. Southeast Asian Art Today covers art from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, and contributing author Apinan Poshyananda was selected to write about Wijit Apichatkriengkrai, Montien Boonma, Kamol Phaosavasdi, Chatchai Puipia, Pinaree Sanpitak, Vasana Sitthiket, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, and Panya Vijnthanasarn. The criteria for inclusion is stated in the introduction as judged on popularity, integrity, innovative ideas and influence on future generations. This raises the questions of objectivity and politics of inclusion in such international publications, along with the power of the curators, editors, and critics in making and shaping artists' careers. Southeast Asian Art: A New Spirit extends the coverage to include the nine ASEAN countries: Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and is sponsored by the Far East Organisation, Shell Companies in Singapore, the Phillip Morris Group of Companies, with Singapore Telecom. The introduction by Project Director George Yeo, Singaporean Minister for Information and Arts, refers to the links between the countries and a

loosely united ASEAN spirit which "reflects the diversity and unity which defines Southeast Asia." In this volume, for the Thailand section, curator and critic Apinan Poshyananda included Prateung Emjaroen, Damrong Wong-Paraj, Niti Wattuya, Ittipol Thangchalok, Kanya Chareonsupkul, Somboon Hormtientong, Vichoke Mukdamanee, Panya Vijinthanasarn, Nayana Chotisuk, and Tongchai Srisukprasert (Yeo, 1997). Also available in 1998 is the large Silpakorn publication of Rattanakosin Art: The Reign of King Rama IX, the first of a two-part series covering Thai art during the Chakri dynasty (since 1782).

Art Flows Out/In

Thongchai Winichakul suggests that since the early days of World Fairs Thailand has set out to project a 'civilised' image to the world via large expositions and exhibitions of art, crafts and culture. These expensive events, which were initially royally-sponsored and are now covered by the Thai government, included the World Fair in 1876 in Philadelphia, Paris in 1888 and 1900, and the World Colombian Exposition in Chicago 1893, and the Louisiana Purchase World Fair at St. Louis in 1904. Thongchai also observes similarities in the way the Siamese elite coped with changing circumstances at the turn of the century and the way the Thai elite today deal with the changing world; "scrambling for a desirable identity, measured by relation to criteria including wealth, acquired or purchased items of nostalgia, and other trappings of the new rich, or else by showing that

they are people who 'have culture'" (Presentation by Tongchai Winichakul at the "Europe & Siam Under King Chulalongkorn: Opportunity, Conflict and Change" conference, December 19, 1997).

Modern displays of art, craft and culture, such as the Thai Pavillians at the World Expo '88 in Brisbane, Australia and Expo '92 in Seville, Spain, decorated with traditional Thai murals, and the lavish floats at the Roses Parades in Pasadena, California indicate that this strategy of national projection still appeals. Thailand continues to win awards at these world fairs, as it did a hundred years ago, with its displays of technically excellent handiwork and 'exotic' themes. This leads us to question how these images are interpreted by the world at large? At the 109th Tournament of Roses Parade in January 1998, the Thai entry sponsored by Thai Airways International upheld the government's "Amazing Thailand 1998-99" campaign with a float which reportedly 'mesmerised the crowd.' Bejewelled Thai classical dancers, floral sculptures of the mythological birds known as garuda, and huge guardian giants (yaks) created out of 70,000 orchid stems and 50,000 roses won the craftsman award for outstanding showmanship and dramatic impact. Thai entries have won at Pasadena for the last three years.

When the 1980s world recession began affecting Europe and the U.S., Western art dealers became more aggressive and picked up on the energy of the booming Eastern economies and the possibilities of potential sponsorship. They touted Asian/Oriental art as the 'next

big thing', encouraging a surge in demand for art from the East.

As well as travelling abroad on more study scholarships during the eighties and nineties, Thai artists entered more Asian and international exhibitions. These include:

- 1980 *Asian Art Show*, Fukuoka, Japan
- 1981 *Asian Art Exhibition*, Bangladesh
- 1983 *World Print*, San Francisco, USA
- 1984 *Art World Exhibition*, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 1984 *British International Print Biennale*, Bradford
- 1985 2nd *Asian Art Show*, Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan
- 1986 5th *Seoul International Print Biennale*, Korea
- 1986 *Contemporary Asian Art Show*, Seoul
- 1986 *Inter Grafix*, Berlin, Germany
- 1987 *Intergrafix '87*, Berlin
- 1987 16th *Biennale Ljubljana*, Yugoslavia
- 1987 *VIII Biennale de Arte Valparaiso*, Chile
- 1988 *International Contemporary Painting*, Korea
- 1988 *Asean Watercolour Exhibition*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1989 9th *Norwegian International Print Triennale*, Norway
- 1989 6th *Asian Square Sculpture*, The Philippines
- 1989 18th *Biennale of Graphic Arts*, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia
- 1990 8th *Biennale of Sydney*, Australia
- 1990 (and 92) *Fifth Busan Biennale*, Korea
- 1990 *Baghdad International Festival of Art*
- 1990 *Contemporary Art Asia: Think Future, Act Now*, Japan
- 1990 *International Osaka Triennale of Painting*, Japan
- 1990 *Asean Travelling Exhibition*
- 1991 *International Print Biennale*, Seoul, Korea

- 1991 *Singapore Art Fair*
- 1991 *The 5th Biennial Print Exhibition*, Taipei, Taiwan
- 1991 *Biennale of Graphic Arts*, Yugoslavia
- 1992 *Asean Selection*, Singapore
- 1992 *The New Art from Southeast Asia*, Tokyo
- 1992 *Arte Amazonas*, Rio de Janeiro
- 1993 *Graphica Creativa '93*, Alvar Aalto Museum, Finland
- 1993 *Premio Biella Perl'Incisione*, Biella, Italy
- 1993 *First Asia-Pacific Triennale*, Queensland, Australia
- 1993 *Prospect 93: Exhibition of Actual Art*, Frankfurt
- 1993 *Venice Biennale*, Italy
- 1993 *Confess and Conceal*, Perth, Australia
- 1993 *Asian Heart and Form*, Horoshima, Japan
- 1994 *Kwanju Biennale*, Korea
- 1994 *Whitney*, U.K.
- 1994 *Havana Biennale*, Cuba
- 1995 *Tenth International Asian Art Exhibition*, Singapore
- 1995 *4th International Istanbul Biennale*, Turkey
- 1995 *Osaka Triennial*, Japan
- 1995 *10th Asian International Art Exhibition*, Singapore
- 1995 *Asian Modernism*, Tokyo, Bangkok, Manila, Jakarta
- 1996 *11th Triennale of Graphic Art*, Frechen, Germany
- 1996 *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*,
Queensland, Australia
- 1996 *Island: Contemporary Art From America, Asia, Europe,*
Australia
- 1996 *Traditions/Tensions, Contemporary Art in Asia*, Asia
Society, N.Y.
- 1997 *Being Minorities*, Hong Kong Art Centre
- 1997 *River Project*, Taipei

- 1997 *Die Anderen Modernen: Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika*
 1997 *In Between the Void, Johannesburg Biennale, S.Africa*
 1997 *10th Documenta, Kassel, Germany*
 1997 *The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists
 and Movements*

Thai artists also began winning prizes in prestigious international competitions. In 1995 Tawatchai Pantusawat won the Osaka Grand Prix for sculpture (worth 2.4 million baht).

Solo exhibitons were held by Thai artists including Tawan Duchanee, Damrong Wong-Uparaj, Somboon Hormtientong, Vichoke Mukdanamee and Montien Boonma in U.S.A, Japan, Germany and France. Thai art was included in private and public international collections at the Fukuoka Art Museum, Singapore Art Museum, Pacific Asia Museum Pasadena, USA, Australia National Gallery in Canberra, Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, the Queensland Art Gallery, Galleria Numero in Florence, and the Museum of International Contemporary Art, Fredrikstad.

Group exhibitions of Thai art that travelled abroad since 1980 included:

- 1980 *Contemporary Thai Artists, Shinno Gallery, L.A.
 U.S.A.*
 1982 *Contemporary Art of Thailand, Pasadena, U.S.A.*
 1982 *Thai Exhibition, Hong Kong Art Centre, Hong Kong*
 1983 *Contemporary Graphic Arts from Thailand, Nurenberg,
 Germany*
 1983 *Thai Contemporary Art Exhibition, University of
 Rochester, New York, USA*

- 1983 9 *Thai Artists*, Los Angeles, USA
- 1985 *Contemporary Thai Prints*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1985 25 *Contemporary Thai Artists*, Los Angeles, USA
- 1986 *Contemporary Thai Arts*, Heidelberg, Germany
- 1986 *Thai Art Exhibition*, Beijing, The Republic of China
- 1987 *Thai Art Exhibition*, Wat Buddhapadipa, London
- 1987 *Thai Arts by Young Thai Artists*, Le Meridien, London
- 1988 *Thai Pavillion Expo*, Brisbane, Australia
- 1989 *Les Peintres Thailandais Traditionnels et
Contemporains*, L'Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris, France
- 1989 *The Spirit of Thai Modern Art*, San Francisco, USA
- 1990 *Change and Modernism in Thai Art*, Canberra,
Australia
- 1992 *Bangkok-Nagoya 92*, Silpakorn University, Bangkok
- 1991-93 *The Integrative Art of Modern Thailand*, U.S.A.
- 1995 *Kradaad: Contemporary Thai Works on Paper*, Texas,
U.S.A.

Thai curators Somporn Rodboon of Silpakorn University and Apinan Poshyananda had opportunities to present their visions of Thai/Asian contemporary art to the region/world. Sponsored by the Japan Foundation, the 1995 *Asian Modernism* exhibition aimed to show new artworks from Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia and was first displayed in Japan, followed by each of the contributing countries. Vasan Sitthiket, whose provocative art is popular in Japan, caused some controversy with his I Love Thai Culture (see Fig. 62) series but was eventually included in the list of Thai artists to exhibit. In 1997, Somporn handled the Thailand section of *The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia*:

Artists and Movements exhibition which was initiated and funded by the Fukuoka Art Museum. Artworks from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam covering development of art up to the 1960's toured four art museums around Japan. Subsequently, Somporn has been requested by the Fukuoka Art Museum to manage the Thailand section of the First Fukuoka Triennale in March 1999. Apinan Poshyananda of Chulalongkorn University was invited to curate the *Traditions/Tensions, Contemporary Art in Asia* exhibition at the Asia Society in New York in 1996. His next international project is preparing the Asian section for the Sao Paulo Biennale in October 1998.

Despite previous reservations about being involved in the exhibition of Thai art outside Thailand (referring to the Siamese Twins travelling show of the 19th century) and expressing a preference for Thai art to be viewed in context in Thailand, in December 1997, young gallery manager Grithaya Gaweewong of Project 304 was invited by the Tourism Authority of Macau to curate an exhibition of Thai artists which included Montien Boonma, Chatchai Puipia, Pinaree Sanpitak, Vasan Sitthiket, Niti Wattuya, Tanes Awsinsiri, Chitti Kasemkitvattana, Songsak Tang, and Warangtad Pasurapak. For this exhibition, the Macau organisers requested paintings only, which raises questions about the physical constraints on art for international reception (i.e. the creation of work which is easily and cheaply transported.) Currently preparing for an exhibition in Japan, Kamol Phaosavasdi, is giving serious consideration to weight/freight costs and plans

to produce artwork that is easily transported (e.g. video) (Discussion with the artist, 8 November 1997). Expatriate Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija frequently exhibits internationally and chooses to use local materials for his art, eliminating any freight costs.

The nineties has also been a period of aggressive marketing in the field of international education with tertiary institutions seeking more global characters. One of the first products of an educational exchange agreement signed between CalPoly, San Luis Obispo, California and Silpakorn University, was the travelling of an exhibition by instructors at Silpakorn entitled *Thai Vision I* to California in October 1997. A three-way consortium agreement signed between Silpakorn University, Hangzhou University (China) and University of Western Sydney, Napean (Australia) aims to facilitate art and cultural interchange with undergraduate students spending a year in each country studying basic courses. Another recently-signed agreement between Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris and Silpakorn University plans to accommodate the exchange of art students, staff, and art exhibitions between Thailand and France. Scholarships from large international organisations including UNESCO, Rockefeller, Fullbright, Ford Foundation enable Thai art students, teachers and exhibitions to travel internationally and some enterprising artists apply directly to foreign universities for their scholarships. After years of art study in Germany supported by the German government, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook is taking up a

scholarship she has been awarded from Texas University in November 1998.

Corporate sponsorship of international art exhibitions and competitions has grown during the period under study in this thesis. As introduced in the section on Thai sponsorship, many large businesses involved in health and environment-damaging activities (e.g. tobacco and alcohol), such as Philip Morris, Johnnie Walker, Guinness, and Remi Martin, choose to sponsor international art events. The *Philip Morris ASEAN Art Awards* which began in 1993 is the only regional art competition and it offers attractive cash prizes of \$10,000 for first and four runners-up of \$5,000. Seven ASEAN countries send five pieces of artwork, and each country nominates their most respected artist to join the judging panel. Sawasdi Tantisuk, veteran Thai artist and student of Silpa Bhirasri at Silpakorn, has been the Thai judge on the panel since the competition began. According to the organisers, the objective of this competition is to show Asian identity, and they predict that for Asian artists to build the 'real Asian' art it will take about ten years. (Telephone interview with Chaiyan Setapaisan, Spindler PR for Philip Morris, 10 October 1997). In 1995, all the Thai entries in this competition won prizes, however in 1997, Thailand did not win anything. This failing has been attributed to a lack of experimentation with new media. It may, however, have something to do with the vociferous boycott of the competition by some Thai artists in response to the concurrent flight attendants lawsuit on second-hand smoke in which four

large tobacco companies including Philip Morris eventually agreed to pay settlement for US\$368 billion to help states in the U.S.A. recoup tax money spent treating smokers who were ill, and the acknowledged impact of cancerous second-hand smoke on non-smokers. Thai artist Santi Thongsook won the *Philip Morris ASEAN Art Award* in 1994 with a piece titled The Breath of the City (see Fig. 63) showing a woman giving birth in a crowded street. His latest exhibition at the Amari Atrium hotel entitled Fight, Fight Thailand again featured mostly scenes of violent angry crowds. By the last day of the exhibition, only three pieces has sold; these were the only images in the exhibition of villagers on their knees paying respect (wai-ing). This suggests that works by prize-winning artists do not necessarily sell well, that not all work by 'good' artists is 'good', and that art buyers in tourist hotel settings are not interested in radical, socially-critical works.

Without leaving Thailand, the *Four Great Rattanakosin Artists* exhibition reached an elite international audience. On display at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in 1991 at the same time as the World Bank Conference, works by Angkarn Kalayanapongse, Chalermchai Kositpipat, Tawan Duchanee and Pratuang Emjaroen were viewed by the world's visiting finance ministers and their entourages. Angkarn registered his disapproval of such commercial events and stated "Thai artists should have more pride and not behave like prostitutes," but was eventually persuaded to take part. The Thailand Festival of the Arts which began

in 1996 as the brainchild of long-term Bangkok resident and classical guitarist Hucky Eichelemann, gathers international and Thai performance artists and musicians. Sponsored by Volvo, Schweppes, Erricsson, Carrier, and a range of airlines, hotels, radio and TV stations, this well-organised event draws full audiences.

International cultural institutions have, since the sixties and seventies, given considerable support to Thai art by introducing exhibitions of foreign art to Thailand, arranging workshops and exchanges, and facilitating scholarships and grants. During the seventies, the BIMA received much foreign assistance enabling it to show exhibitions of world-renown artists before it folded. During the period covered by this study, Australia and Japan have been dominant in the Thai art scene.

Supporting its agenda to become part of Asia, Australia has invested heavily in the Mekhong development projects such as the building of the Friendship Bridge between Thailand and Laos. At the same time, art from Thailand and Southeast Asia has received additional focus from Australian funding bodies. Curators of large international art events such as the *Sydney Biennale* (Montien Boonma exhibited in 1990, while Vasan Sitthiket, Kamol Phaosawasdi and Kamin Lertchaiprasert participated in 1991) and the *Asia-Pacific Triennale* in Queensland (Montien Boonma, Araya Rasdjarmrearmsook, Vasan Sitthiket, Kamol Phaosawasdi, and Prasong Leumuang presented works in 1993) invited Thai artists to participate. *Artists' Regional Exchange (ARX)* workshops

began in Perth in 1992, and Thai artists including Kamol Phaosawasdi, Vichoke Mukdamanee and Chumpol Apisuk have attended. The *Confess and Conceal* exhibition in 1993 was a collaboration between Australian and Southeast Asian artists, and the 1994 *Thai-Australian Cultural Space* joint project was displayed in both Thailand and Australia. Artists-in-Residence programmes are arranged with Silpakorn and Chiang Mai Universities. As well, galleries around Australia have been actively collecting Thai artworks: Australia National Gallery in Canberra bought two prints by Kamin Lertchiprasert, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, bought two prints by Wijit Apichatkriengkrai, the Queensland Art Gallery purchased an installation by Montien Boonma and some drawings by Pinaree Sanpitak (Somporn, 1995: 250). In 1997 a group of four Australian artists was brought to Bangkok by Carpedium Gallery and the Australian Embassy showed an exhibition of Australian artists. During her study at Silpakorn University in 1997-8, Australian exchange student Josie Cavallaro presented an exhibition entitled *Harness at Project 304*, sponsored by Toshiba and the Australian Embassy.

Post-war development in Japan has had a significant effect on the Southeast Asian and global economies. The Japan Cultural Institute sponsored its first art competition in Thailand in 1943 and particularly since the opening of the Japan Foundation in the 1970s, Japanese governmental arms and private corporations such as Toshiba and Hitachi have been active in the sponsorship of art events in Thailand. In 1990,

Tawan Duchane was invited to hold a solo exhibition at the Fukuoka Museum which has since purchased and commissioned many contemporary Thai artists for its substantial collection, including works by Pinaree Sanpitak who studied in Japan for six years on a Japanese government scholarship. As mentioned, the Japan Foundation sponsored the 1995 *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand* exhibition and, aiming to educate the Japanese, the Fukuoka Art Museum instigated the *Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists and Movements* exhibition which toured Japan in 1997. Japanese curator Shimizu Toshio was recently invited to Silpakorn for four days of lectures and demonstrations on curatorship, sponsored by the Japan Foundation.

The Goethe Institut has long been appreciated as a supportive art space. Before 1988, the Goethe Institut was located in Phra Athit Rd with ample space for art exhibitions. The move to Soi Attakarn Prasit, presupposed that the nearby BIMA would continue providing space for large art exhibitions. The unfortunate demise of the BIMA in 1989 left the Goethe with inadequate facilities for art exhibitions. However, smaller-scale pieces by Montien Boonma and Prasong Leumuang have been shown in the garden and stairway. In 1989, at the Goethe Institut in San Francisco, an exhibition entitled *Contemporary Spiritual Space in Thailand* was organised displaying the collection of the Deputy Consul-General who had been posted in Bangkok. Works by Tawan Duchanee, Chalermchai Kositpipat, Pichai Nirand and Panya Vijinthanasarn were shown (Piriya

and Tongchua, 1983). The Goethe Institut is most active in arranging concerts, as well as bringing German films and experts to lecture. The *International Performance Art Workshop* in Thailand in 1997 was attended by a large contingent of German artists who performed in Chiang Mai and Bangkok and the 1997 *Deserted and Embraced* one-day event in Chiang Mai curated by Helen Michaelsen from Germany was later replayed at the Goethe in Bangkok. Many Thai artists have studied in Germany during the nineties on German government scholarships including Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, Jakapan Vilasineekul, Kosit Juntaratip, Surasit Kulsawong and Vasan Sittikhet.

British Council scholarships have enabled Thai students like Panya Vijnthanasan to study in England at the Slade School of Art (1982-84). Although spatially limited until the move to a larger new building in 1996, the Council regularly shows exhibitions of artwork by international and Thai artists. Solo exhibitions by Tawan Duchanee, Pratuang Emjaroen, Damrong Wong-Uparaj and Prasong Leumuang have been sponsored by the British Council. A Thai Ministry of Education scholarship enabled sculptor Khien Yimsiri to study under Henry Moore at the Chelsea School of Art in London, back in 1950.

The French Embassy and the cultural/educational arm of the Alliance Francaise are actively involved in art activities, handling grants, fellowships, and arranging visiting exhibitions and Artist-in-Residence exchanges. Top Thai artist Montien Boonma studied in France at the Nationale Superieure des Beaux Arts in the mid-eighties, and was recently sponsored by French

gallery Beurdeley & Cie to hold a solo exhibition in Paris. On a three-month exchange, Nitaya Ueareeworakul traveled to France in 1996, with the assistance of Thai Airways, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Alliance Francaise and Air France. Well-respected senior French painter Olivier Debre was brought to Thailand in 1997 to show his retrospective of fifty years work and to speak about his art. For the exhibition, *International Art Promotion-France '97*, work by a hundred French artists was on display at the Alliance Francaise in December, 1997. French and other European and Asean cultural management specialists are running training seminars in 1998 with a view to opening degree courses in Cultural Management at Silpakorn University in 1999.

Italians working in Thailand in the early twentieth century have left an enormous artistic and architectural legacy. The First Italian-Thai conference in November 1997 coincided with the centenary celebrations of the King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn) visit to Europe and included exhibitions of early artworks, seminars and presentations. There is a permanent exhibition in Turin of 100 works from Siam and the island of Elba has a collection of Buddhist works in an alternative arts space. Many senior Thai artists including Fua Haripitak, Sawasdi Tantisuk, Chalood Nimsamer, Prayat Pongdam, Manit Poo-Aree, Vira Jothaprasert, Preecha Thaothong, Pongsak Arayakoon and Nonthivat Chandhanaphalin have studied in Italy on Italian government scholarships.

The United States Information Service (USIS) was very supportive to the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art (BIMA) during the seventies and eighties, bringing artwork and donating funds. In 1986 it sponsored the exhibition of *Thai Reflections on American Experience* at the BIMA, In the exhibition catalogue, Piriya Krairksh wrote that Thai art had yet to distinguish an identity of its own, which upset many Thai artists. The *Integrative Art of Modern Thailand* exhibition put together by anthropologist Herbert Phillips toured U.S.A in 1992.

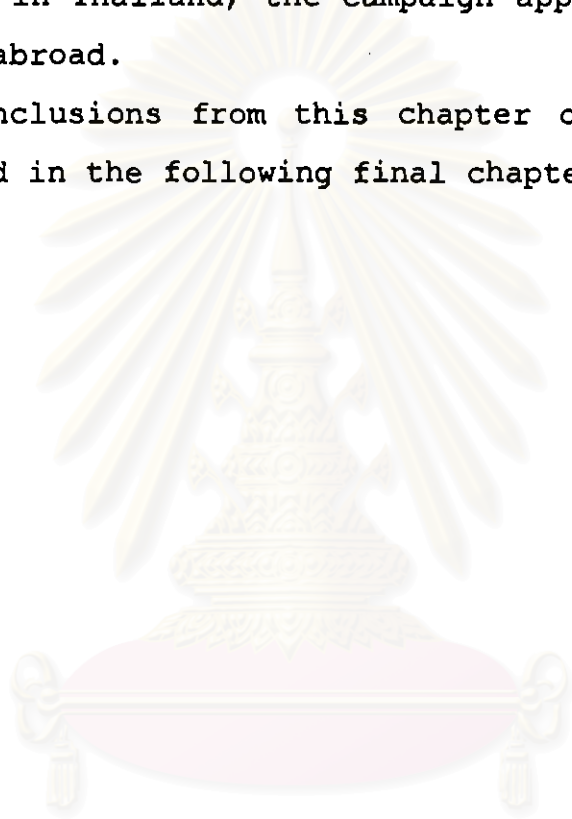
Other embassies and cultural institutes in Thailand appear to focus more on furthering their agendas to promote their national identities to Thailand than supporting the production, distribution or reception of Thai art.

In February 1998, UNESCO and the International Foundation for the Promotion of Culture offered scholarships (16 for visual arts, 7 for dance, 6 for performing arts) to Thais for studying non-degree courses at foreign institutes, reflecting an increase in support from outside for art in Thailand.

Most recently, to balance the political and business focus at the second Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM II) of representatives from fifteen European and ten Asian countries in London in April, 1998, a large exhibition of art and culture from participating countries entitled *Touring East and Southeast Asian Arts in Europe*, was organised. Citing the economic squeeze, the Thai government elected to limit its contribution to a poetry reading and some traditional Thai dancing. This

loss of representation at an opportune international gathering would seem to be a serious oversight, particularly when extensive efforts are being made to draw more visitors to the country with the *Amazing Thailand 1998-99* campaign. While widely promoted and recognised in Thailand, the campaign apparently faces low awareness abroad.

Conclusions from this chapter of extensive data are covered in the following final chapter.



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