



WHEN IS DEATH NOT WITHIN?

Angkana Kongpetch | 15 October - 12 November, 2011

We are born to die

William Shakespeare

Thavibu Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition *When is death not within?* with new three-dimensional works and a video performance by artist Angkana Kongpetch. After staging her debut exhibition *Body Language* as a part of the year-long 2010 project, 3D @ Thavibu, the MFA graduate from Silpakorn University has recently completed an exchange programme at the prestigious École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. This is her first body of art created outside a tutored environment.

Reinterpreting previously established themes, Angkana focuses upon the human form to examine theological notions of time and mortality. Manifested through a flesh crawling colony of brass termites, the young artist contemplates the process of decay from the umbilical severing at the moment of birth. Using destructive detritivores as an analogy, Angkana considers the illusory physical preservation of a surface exterior, and how this potentially shrouds internal decomposition. Silent and unseen, she equates such systematic consumption to a state of mindfulness.

Furrowing across the skin of her human forms, the insects leave residual tracts of presence as a metaphoric parallel to human legacy and our vein attempts to make indelible imprints on history. Considering the fragile and ephemeral nature of life on this planet, the looming subject of lethality is a prevalent theme to artists, as evident in Araya Rasdjarmreansook's cadaver conversations.

In the accompanying video work Angkana renounces poisonous worldly attachment by entwining and then cutting her hair in a ritualistic manner symbolic to Buddhist ordination. Braiding her dreadlocks to 30 kilograms of copper wire that she was bound to for some 16 days, her hair performance also holds biblical connotations to the beliefs of the Judeo-Christian Nazirites, and Samson's purported loss of power after his head was shorn.

Hair as a genetic material with its intimate associations has a long history as an arts and crafts medium. In the sphere of Asian contemporary art, Chinese artist Gu Wenda utilised 420 pounds of human hair in his 2007 installation *United Nations: the green house*, while Thai artist Sakarin Krue-on incorporated 10,000 hair locks of Chinese origin for his 2007 wall hanging *Since 1958*, a commentary on China's exploitation of its workforce.

Sharing cultural commonalities with Angkana, Preeyachanok Ketsuwan's follicle focused video performances draw from local myth and generational folklore to examine traditional and contemporary female roles. And the tress abundant art of Imhathai Suwatthanasilp delicately crafts human hair into fetishistic markers to familial memory and bonding. In *When is death not within?*, Angkana attempts greater acceptance to the imminence of death and acquiescence to the present.

Steven Pettifor
Curator



Venus, 2011 >

Brass and fiber glass
60 x 95 x 41 cm



<< **Sleep, 2011**

Brass, galvanized
wire and fiber glass
120 x 120 x 155 cm
(on set)

< **Walk, 2011**

Brass and fiber glass
120 x 160 x 140 cm
(installed)



Hair, 2011 >

Frame, shallow box,
copper wire, brass and
artist's dreadlocks
125 x 150 x 165 cm
(ca 35 kg)



Feet, 2011

Brass and fiber glass
25 x 26 x 15 cm

<< **Play, 2011**

Brass and fiber glass
30 x 82 x 82 cm

When is death not within? is a follow-up exhibition to the 2010 year-long project, 3D@Thavibu, highlighting three-dimensional art in Suite 307 of Thavibu Gallery and curated by Steven Pettifor.



Angkana Kongpetch
b. 1982



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