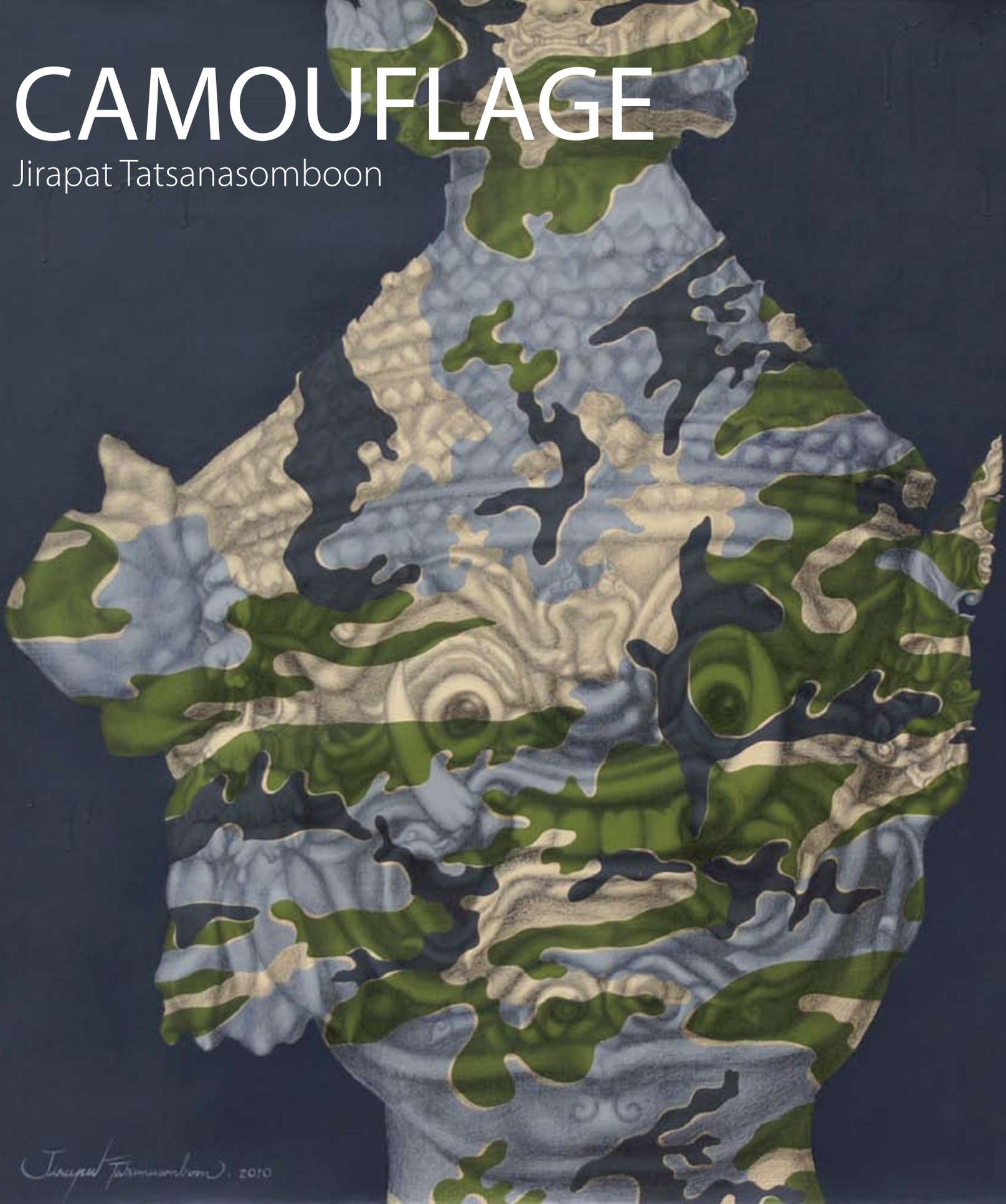


CAMOUFLAGE

Jirapat Tatsanasomboon



Jirapat Tatsanasomboon, 2010

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Solo Exhibition By
Jirapat Tatsanasomboon
18 September – 10 October, 2010



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CAMOUFLAGE

Steven Pettifor

The recent street protests that saw downtown Bangkok turned into a bloody battleground have shaken the foundations of Thai society. The familiar state and media propagated image of the populace as being unified and harmonious has been tarnished, supplanted with uncustomary introspection as people seek answers to the discord and fracturing. Within this ongoing climate, it has become increasingly difficult to express one's political and social views in an open and free forum. Censorship, accusation, and polarisation are being used to suppress opinions that do not conform to the ruling line.

Against such a backdrop, Chiang Mai based artist Jirapat Tatsanasomboon has created his most socially conscious series to date. Camouflaged in a veil of cross-cultural, art historical referential interpretations, Jirapat's recent paintings take on issues of regimentation and societal order, sufficiency, class divisions, and military might.

Born in 1971 in the central province of Samut Prakarn, Tatsanasomboon completed his Masters Degree from Silapakorn University in 1999, and has since participated in several domestic art shows. Internationally he has exhibited in Korea, as well as the 2006 exhibition *Tradition and Modernity in South East Asian Art* held at New York's Galerie l'Indochine. He was also selected as one of two Thai artists for the exhibition *Vision of East Asia 2008* held at the Capital Library during the Beijing Olympic Games. His latest 2010 collection of paintings entitled *Camouflage*, are on view at Bangkok's Thavibu Gallery.

Previously, Jirapat's pictorial constructions have ostensibly evolved round simple yet effective head-to-head confrontational juxtapositions, which he typically layers with an implied narrative. Early manifestations pitched traditional figures from Thai mythology against cape-clad American comic book heroes like Wonder-Woman, Batman, Superman, and Captain America. The dramatic one-on-one bouts functioned as metaphors for the awkward jarring of the East-West axis, traditional versus modern.

Gradually his compositions have edged away from the more blatant iconography to continental polemics, becoming subtler through his post-modern appropriation of Western art referencing. Having quirkily re-contextualised paintings by Renaissance masters Michelangelo, Raphael, and Botticelli, Jirapat now moves through the canons of modernism, visiting such artists as Munch, Rousseau, Mondrian, and Matisse, along with his preferred Pop artists, Lichtenstein and Warhol. Further artistic comparatives come by way of Robert Indiana, Keith Haring, Damien Hirst, and Kara Walker.

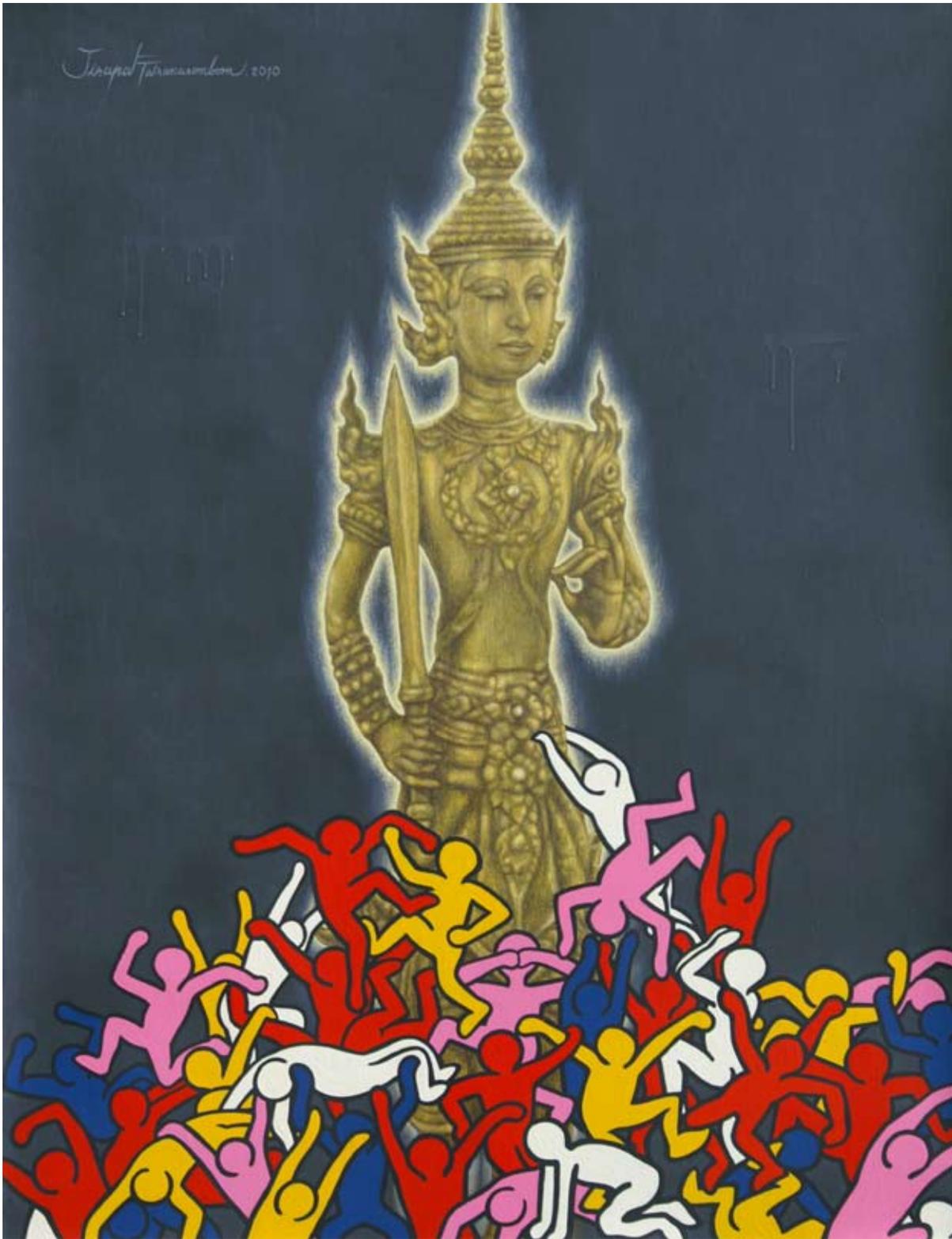
Jirapat's cast of ethnocentric characters still predominantly source from the great mythological narratives of the *Ramakien*, the Thai adaptation of the 2,000 year-old Indian Hindu Epic the *Ramanyana*. Shrouded in a Warhol camouflage pattern, the literary classic's primary antagonist, the demon king Thotsakan, provides one of the exhibition's most visually dynamic works. Known for his arsenal of weaponry, the ten-faced monster is symbolic to the nation's recent conflict, with further implications to the destabilising influence of Thailand's armed forces upon the country's political landscape.

Witty in its play with pictorial depth is Jirapat's interpretation of Piet Mondrian's 20th century flat linear abstractions. A simple yet effective illusionary conversion from a two-to-three dimensional composition, the wild and mischievous monkey god Hanuman stares out caged within Mondrian's disciplined order and stability, a metaphor for breaking free from the repressive rigidity of Thailand's social hierarchy.



Beyond the *Ramakien*, other reinterpretations specific to his social allegories include the class conscious *Black and White* (after Kara Walker), in which the American artist's black silhouettes to racial and gender identity are permeated by a dark-skinned figure clad in traditional Thai regalia. The artist's visualisation pertains to Thailand's southern ethnic minority, the forest dwelling *ngoh*, who are largely marginalised and looked down upon by ethnic Thais. Jirapat appropriates Walker's stereotyped racial caricatures as analogies to the recent street protests being conveniently blamed upon disparages of class.

Accessible to the average viewer, Jirapat's Pop-style paintings resonate with the Thai psyche, where appropriation and reinvention are readily assimilated. Emanating from a country that wantonly devours all things Western yet is vehemently protective of its own traditional heritage, Jirapat's art conveys some of the socio-political dilemmas embroiling his contemporary countrymen.



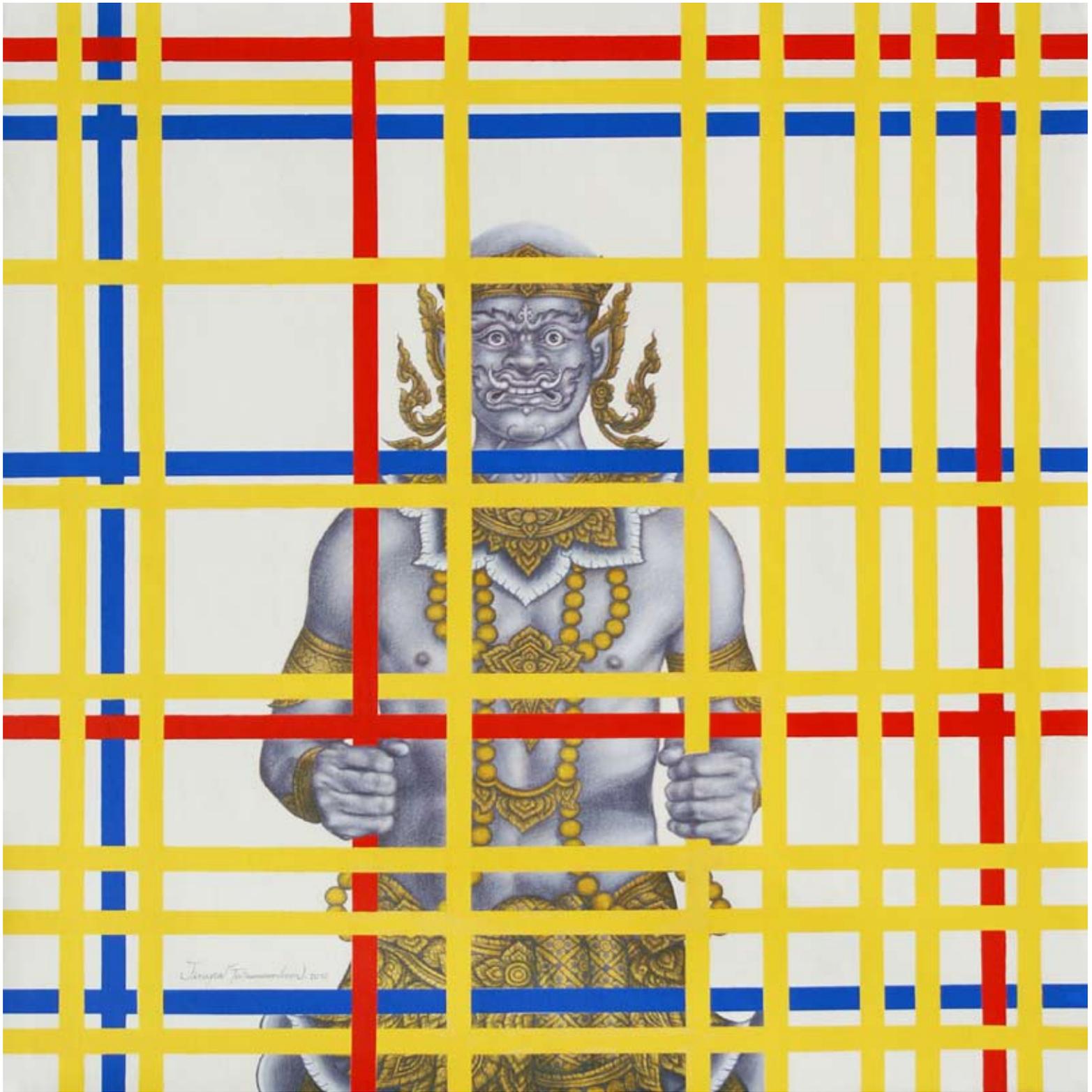
The Guardian of Siam (after K. Haring), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 100 x 130 cm



Heal the Wound (after V. van Gogh), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 120 x 150 cm



Garden of Eden? (after H. Rousseau), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 140 x 160 cm



Break Free (after P. Mondrian), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 120 x 120 cm



Camouflage (after A. Warhol), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 129 x 129 cm



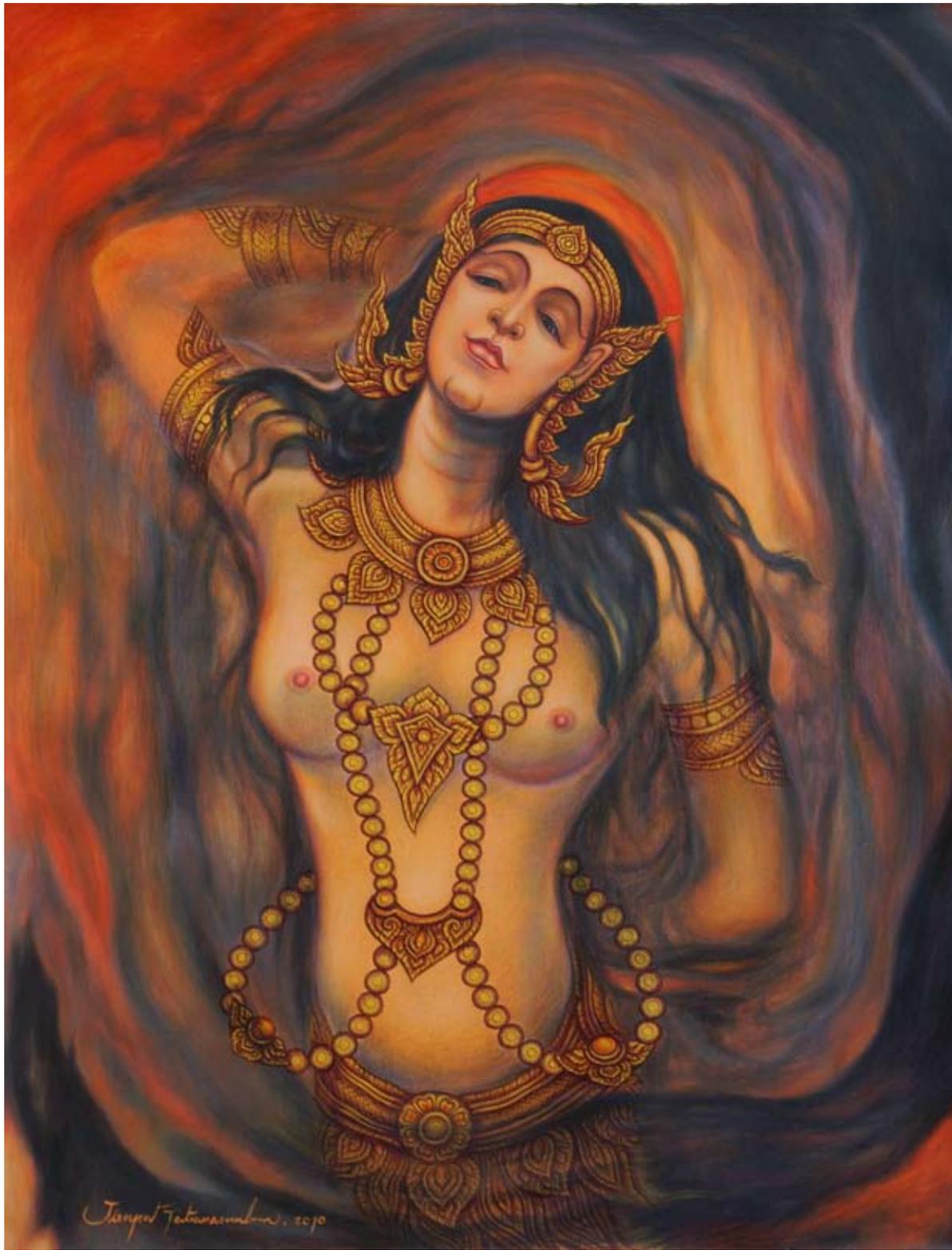
PUFF! (after A. Warhol), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 120 x 130 cm



This is Me! (after A. Warhol), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 150 x 150 cm



Defining LOVE (after R. Indiana), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 150 x 150 cm



Wiles (after E. Munch), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 100 x 130 cm



Celebrating Differences (after H. Matisse), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 120 x 150 cm



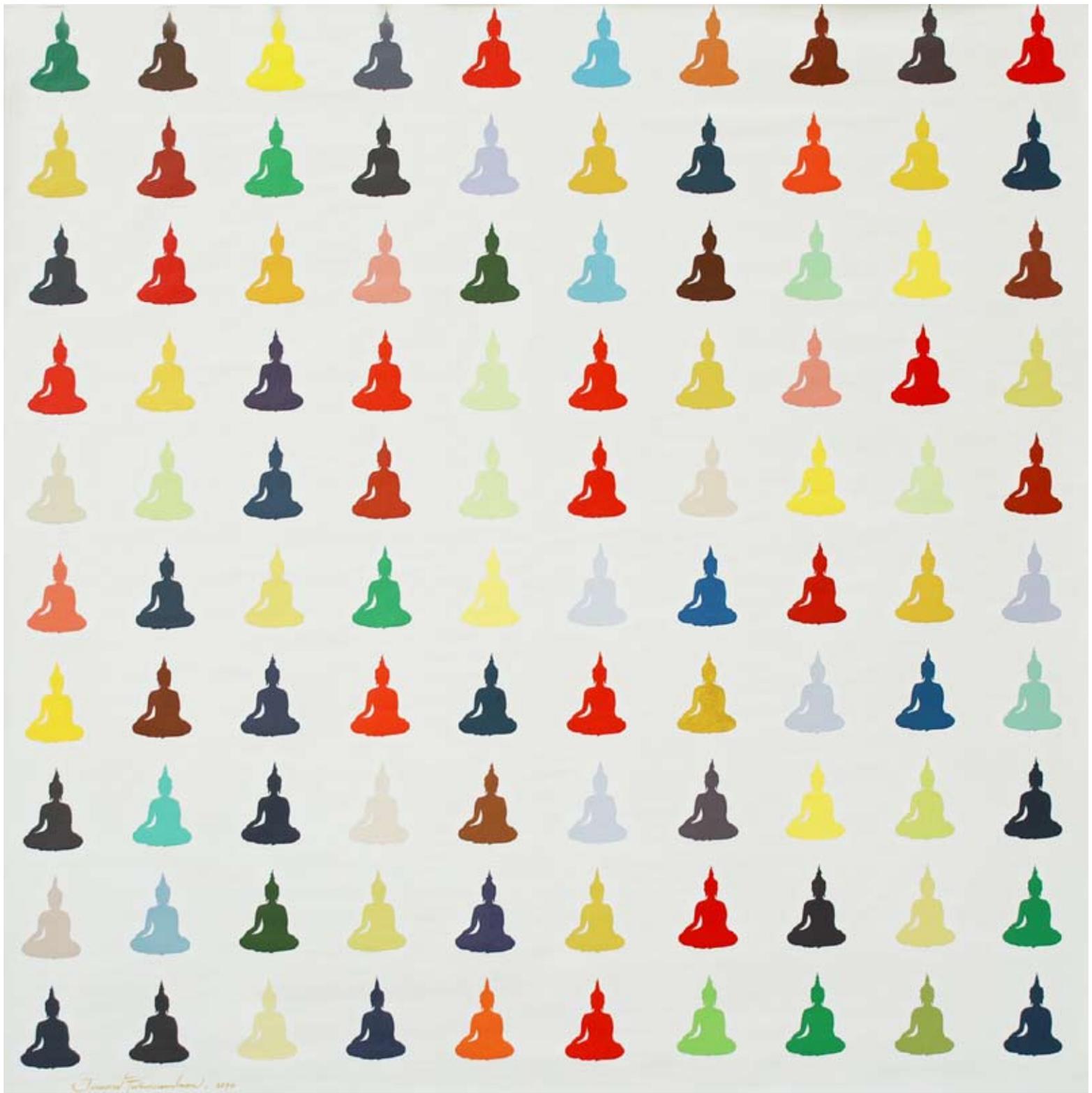
Black and White (after K. Walker), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 120 x 150 cm



Dreaming Kinaree (after H. Rousseau), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 120 x 150 cm



Rain or Shine (after R. Lichtenstein), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 100 x 130 cm



Medication for the Soul (after D. Hirst), 2010 | Acrylic on canvas | 150 x 150 cm



Jirapat Tatsanasomboon

Born 1971 in Samut Prakarn

1996: Bachelor of Fine Arts from Chiang Mai University

1999: Master of Fine Arts from Silpakorn University, Bangkok

Selected Art Exhibitions

1997: - Art Thesis Exhibition at Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University – Chiang Mai, Thailand
- ASEAN Art Awards Exhibition, Thailand

1998: - The 44th National Art Exhibition, the National Gallery – Bangkok, Thailand

1999: - Art Thesis Exhibition at Silpakorn University – Bangkok, Thailand

2000: - ASEAN Art Awards Exhibition – Bangkok, Thailand
- The 46th National Art Exhibition, the National Gallery – Bangkok, Thailand

2001: - Group Show – with Scopolamine Group – Bangkok, Thailand

2002: - Award winner in the 4th Panasonic Contemporary Paintings Art Competition – Bangkok, Thailand

2003: - ASEAN Art Awards Exhibition – Bangkok, Thailand
- *Asia Art Now* at the Korean Cultural and Arts Foundation - Seoul, **Korea**

- 2004: - *Love and Struggle* together with Sudjai Chaiyapan at Thavibu Gallery – Bangkok, Thailand
- 2005: - Fundraising Exhibition and Auction for Asian Art Archive – **Hong Kong**
- 2006: - Solo Show: *A Transformation of Icons* at Thavibu Gallery – Bangkok, Thailand
- *Tradition and Modernity in South East Asian Art* at Galerie l'Indochine – New York, **USA**
- 2008: - *Vision of East Asia 2008* at the Capital Library, Beijing for the Olympics - **China**
- *Spiritual Spaces*, Thavibu Gallery's 10th anniversary exhibition – Bangkok, Thailand
- Art Singapore 2008 – **Singapore**
- Solo Show: *LOVE and LUST* at Thavibu Gallery - Bangkok, Thailand
- 2009: - The Indian Art Summit – New Delhi, **India**
- 2010: - Art Monaco – **Monaco**
- Arteclasica'10 – Buenos Aires, **Argentina**
- Solo Show: *Camouflage* at Thavibu Gallery - Bangkok, Thailand



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