



MEDIA RELEASE

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES: *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II* FEATURES WORKS THAT DELVE INTO THE LGBTQ CREATIVE HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Full artist list and highlight works of Asia's largest LGBTQ-themed exhibition revealed



Newly-commissioned works by Balbir Krishan

[Left] *Before: Section 377 - Don't Love, Don't Breathe, Don't Live*, 2019, Collection of Sunpride Foundation

[Right] *After: Section 377 - Love Equally, Love Freely, Love Proudly*, 2019, Collection of Sunpride Foundation

- BACC and Sunpride Foundation reveal the full artist list for the group exhibition *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*, which includes 59 artists from 15 countries and territories.
- Highlight artworks include specially-commissioned multidisciplinary works by established artists Balbir Krishan, Arin Rungjang, Anne Samat and Jakkai Siributr, as well as important works by Ren Hang, Dinh Q. Lê, David Medalla, Danh Võ and more.

Bangkok/Hong Kong, 5 September 2019 – The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC) and Sunpride Foundation reveal the full artist list of 59 artists as well as artwork highlights of the group exhibition *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II – Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia*. Opening to the public at the BACC on 23 November 2019, the exhibition will be the largest-ever survey of regional contemporary art that explores lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer creative history in Southeast Asia and beyond. *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II* is the second stop of Sunpride Foundation's touring exhibition following the



success of its acclaimed *SPECTROSYNTHESIS – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now* that was presented in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei in Taiwan in 2017.

Differing sexual preferences and gender identities can cause tension in societies. In *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*, the curatorial team, led by Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, has selected a strong line-up of artists to create a dialogue around this issue, highlighting how boundaries are shifting, social frameworks are opening and established norms and values are being called into question. Featuring artists from Southeast Asia, alongside artists of Indian and Chinese descent whose cultural influence and migration have helped shape the region, the exhibition provides a context in which the acceptance of LGBTQ communities has emerged, reflecting the region's unique melting pot of cultural and religious traditions. Exhibiting artists include Christopher Cheung (Hong Kong), Jes Fan (Hong Kong), Balbir Krishan (India), Dinh Q. Lê (Vietnam), David Medalla (Philippines), Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran (Sri Lanka), Arin Rungjang (Thailand), Anne Samat (Malaysia), Jakkai Siributr (Thailand), Hui-Yu Su (Taiwan), Danh Võ (Vietnam) and Lyno Vuth (Cambodia).

“In *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*, the artistic dialogue is focused on tolerance and acceptance of sexual and gender diversity, yet the pertinence of this conversation moves beyond the LGBTQ community,” explains Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, lead curator of *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*. “What makes this show so powerful and critical is the fact that most artists are personally involved or can identify with the issue. More crucially, the dialogue is about the freedom that art offers: the expression of the individual struggles for gender recognition and normalisation; the battles fought for human rights; and winning respect amongst peers.”

Patrick Sun, Executive Director of Sunpride Foundation, expresses: “We are very honoured to have Chatvichai Promadhattavedi and his team onboard; they have been working tirelessly to put together such a strong line-up of artists and curation of artworks for *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*. I look forward to seeing how the exhibition will encourage greater discussion and foster a more equitable world for the LGBTQ community and their allies.”

New Commissions

A hotchpotch of cultures, ethnicities and cultural beliefs, the degree of tolerance in Southeast Asia varies across cities and territories. In Thailand, where social acceptance of the LGBTQ community is considered high in Asia and is currently moving towards legalising same-sex civil unions, it may come as a surprise that exclusionary practices and rules are not unheard-of, yet these biases are becoming increasingly exposed. In response to this, Thai artist Jakkai Siributr will create an installation of three new large-scale textile works, each measuring two metres, to immortalise the pain of pubescence. The geometric motifs of

Quilt Project (2019) are a play on the pink triangles once used by the Nazi party to identify and shame homosexuals – now reclaimed by the gay community as a symbol of pride.

Arin Rungjang, who represented Thailand in the 55th Venice Biennale, will create a new five-channel video installation, titled *Welcome to My World* (2019). Informed by his childhood fascination of a transsexual acquaintance, his work will bring issues concerning diversity and social acceptance to the fore.

Malaysian artist Anne Samat, a pioneer of woven art, will present her commissioned work *Conundrum Ka Sorga (To Heaven)* (2019), a culmination of the artist's acclaimed assemblage series. Samat's trademark androgynous sculpture, a three-metre-long rainbow-coloured train made of woven materials, will reveal the artist's preoccupation with the 'ideal form' as well as her desire for the community to rise from the ashes like a phoenix. Indian artist Balbir Krishan, who once received backlash and prejudice from his artworks about the gay community, will also present two paintings portraying the differences before and after the repeal of section 377 of the Indian penal code that criminalised sex between men.

Selected Highlights

SPECTROSYNTHESIS II will also feature six pieces of photography by the late Chinese artist Ren Hang, who suffered from depression before tragically ending his life in 2017 while his works were on show in Stockholm. The artist employed photography to depict spontaneity, where naked subjects, mostly the artist's friends, are seen in sexually explicit and sculptural poses. Ren's carefully constructed photography possess a distinct, Surrealist aesthetic, and yet, despite the colourful scenes of youthful bodies, his images project a sense of loneliness and suppression, mirroring his personal battle with mental illness.

Vietnamese artist Dinh Q. Lê will present three artworks, two of which are in his unique photo-weaving style that is inspired by the traditional grass mat weaving technique as well as a large-scale 50-metre-long sculptural work – an image stretched and distorted into an oversized scroll that will hang from the ceiling. Utilising photographs from a variety of sources, these works depict the artist's inner feelings whilst expressing how visual censorship shapes a biased reception and perception of a national identity.

For his installation *A Stitch in Time*, Philippine artist David Medalla was inspired by his personal memory of a chance encounter with a handkerchief that connected him to a total stranger and one of his former lovers. Audiences are encouraged to participate in the production of this playful and experimental piece that challenges the creative hierarchy as well as the notion of 'fate' – an everlasting topic in human civilisation.

Vietnamese artist Danh Võ's sculptural work *We The People (detail)* (2011–2016) is an exact copy of the Statue of Liberty – a symbol for freedom – that was deconstructed into over 300 distinct fragments scattered



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in various locations. The work challenges perception and is a reminder that everyone should be judged by the same set of the social rules, especially in regard to individual freedom and human rights.

Public Programmes

In line with BACC and Sunpride Foundation's aim to inform the public about LGBTQ issues and generate well-meaning conversations through the arts, the exhibition will feature a public programme of film screenings, talks, workshops and a series of dance battle performances.

In advance of the November opening, four LGBTQ films will be screened in September and October as part of the exhibition's screening programme *Cinema Diverse2019: GLoW!*. Guest speakers at these screenings include film scholar Narupon Duangwises, filmmaker Chookiat Sakveerakul, writer Tomorn Sookprecha and Chulalongkorn University's Associate Professor Wasana Wongsurawat. Throughout the duration of the show, a number of public talks focused on LGBTQ issues, as well as the region's broader social and cultural context, will be led by Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, as well as exhibition researchers Brian Curtin, Samak Kosem and Patticha Thitithamaporn and other key figures of the LGBTQ community. Underlining the organisers' commitment to educating the public, workshops will also be held with pupils of local schools to bring awareness to LGBTQ issues as well as associated stereotypes and bullying in school. Audiences can also look forward to *Shining Shimmering Splendid*, a dance battle performance series opening in January 2020.

Throughout the exhibition, guided tours will be available for visitors to receive an in-depth understanding of the artworks on display. A catalogue will be published to coincide with the exhibition.

Further details of participating artists and featured artworks will be released closer to the opening of the show. For more information, please visit: <http://en.bacc.or.th/> or <https://sunpride.hk/>.

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Exhibition Information

SPECTROSYNTHESIS II – Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia

Press preview and opening: 22 November 2019

Exhibition dates: 23 November 2019 – 1 March 2020

Opening hours: 10:00 – 21:00 (except Mondays)

Venue: Main Gallery, 7th – 8th floor, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC), 939 Rama 1 Road, Wangmai, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Admission is free



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About Bangkok Art and Culture Centre

The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC) is a 24,000-square-metre, 12-storey mid-town arts and cultural centre with galleries, performance spaces, a library and meeting rooms. Its aim is to give contemporary art the right physical infrastructure and to enhance the role of art in the city's cultural life. Conceived and advocated for since the 1970s by a network of artists and art lovers, the Centre has since been built by the City of Bangkok and is now independently operated by the BACC Foundation. During the full decade since its opening in 2008, it has attracted diverse groups of audiences: from traditionalist to contemporary, as well as the lifestyle crowd. With programmes that not only include visual arts but also theatre, film, music, and literature, the BACC has become a place of exchange where all can cross paths and meet and where new dialogue can emerge between artists in different media and their audiences. For more information, please visit <https://en.bacc.or.th/>.

About Sunpride Foundation

Sunpride Foundation was launched in 2014 with the mission to embrace and promote the rich creative history of the LGBTQ community. The Foundation aims to foster a stronger, healthier and more equitable world for LGBTQ people and their allies; and to encourage and inspire a generation of young artists to take action and create positive changes to the LGBTQ experience by exhibiting and preserving art that speaks to society at large. For more information, please visit <http://sunpride.hk/>.

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