



## MEDIA RELEASE

### ASIA'S LARGEST LGBTQ-THEMED ART EXHIBITION OPENS IN BANGKOK

*SPECTROSYNTHESIS II – Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia delves into the rich, creative history of the region and features newly-commissioned and important works by over 50 artists*



*View of the exhibition. Courtesy of the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre.*

- *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II – Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia* opens at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre with an engaging performance by Ming Wong and five other artists
- Newly-commissioned artworks by Samak Kosem and Sornrapat Patharakorn, Balbir Krishan, David Medalla, Arin Rungjang, Anne Samat, Jakkai Siributr and Chov Theanly make their debut
- Other highlight artworks include important works by Ren Hang, Dinh Q. Lê, David Medalla, Danh Vō and more

**Bangkok, 22 November 2019** – The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC) and Sunpride Foundation are pleased to announce the official opening of *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II – Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia*. Opening to the public at the BACC on 23 November 2019, the exhibition features works by more than 50 artists, marking 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



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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.

“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 excited to officially open the second iteration of our *SPECTROSYNTHESIS* touring exhibition. We are very honoured to have worked with Chatvichai Promadhattavedi and his team for this; they worked 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 has created 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.



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

Malaysian artist Anne Samat, a pioneer of woven art, also presents a newly-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, reveals 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, debuts two paintings portraying the differences before and after the repeal of section 377 of the Indian penal code that criminalised sex between men.

For his commissioned installation *A Stitch in Time*, Filipino 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. Adding to this landmark exhibition, a number of participating artists will come together and participate by stitching a piece of fabric to this work – similar to 1972 when artists Joseph Beuys, David Hockey, Marcel Duchamp, Gilbert and George and Yoko Ono participated in a version of the work at documenta 5 – creating a harmonious narrative woven together that further underlines *SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*'s mission in bringing different people and communities together.

### **Selected Highlights**

*SPECTROSYNTHESIS II* also features 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 presents 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 hangs 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.



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Vietnamese artist Danh Vō's sculptural work *We The People (detail)* (2011–2016) is an exact copy of the Statue of Liberty – a symbol for freedom – deconstructed into over 300 distinct fragments scattered 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 talks, workshops and a Waack & Vogue dance battle, *Spectro Dance Battle* on 18 January 2020.

On the opening day of the exhibition, two forums led by Chatvichai Promadhattavedi will take place and feature exhibiting artists: Lyno Vuth, Yoppy Pieter, Cindy Aquino, Christina Ramilo, Adam Hague, Rita Khin and more. The artists will discuss topics surrounding the theme of LGBTQ, including social impact as well as personal experiences. The event is free and open to the public.

Throughout the exhibition, guided tours will be available for visitors to receive an in-depth understanding of the artworks on display. An exhibition catalogue – featuring essays by Sunpride Foundation's founder, Patrick Sun; Patrick Flores, Artistic Director of the Singapore Biennale 2019; and Doryun Chong, Chief Curator of M+ in Hong Kong – is also available for purchase at BACC.

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: 22 November 2019, 3pm

Exhibition dates: 23 November 2019 – 1 March 2020

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

Venue: Main Gallery, 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 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/>.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sunpridefoundation/>

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