



Top
Bottom

Kong-Land 2004 Acrylic on canvas 90 x 120 cm
The Pink Forest 2004 Acrylic on canvas 90 x 120 cm

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Center
The Virgin Forest 2004 Acrylic on canvas 110 x 200 cm
Kuan River 2004 Acrylic on canvas 120 x 130 cm



Niti Wattuya
i traveled to the wooded mountain



VALENTINE
WILLIE
fine ART

Niti Wattuya lives in the beautiful, historic city of Ayutthaya. One of Thailand's most important contemporary art painters, he was born in 1944 in the Chainat Province of Thailand, an orphan growing up along the Chao Phraya River.

Unable to pursue a formal education, he is self-taught, but among contemporary artists his consistent emotional and conceptual exploration of painting is rare in its sophistication and commitment.

From early in his career, the Chao Phraya River has been a seedbed for his creative impulse. What began as conventional studies of river scenes later grew to embrace a bigger and universal meaning in the language of Niti Wattuya's paintings, becoming a "stage" for a longer discourse on man's relationship to place and environment. The figure of man, painted in gold, comes to intervene in the riverscape – the ideas of material wealth and human spirit come together in a problematic, almost tragic analogy.

Man-made ideas about nature and about his own power weigh heavy in a fragile balance with the natural world as given. In his *Wild Orchid* series (2001), exhibited at Numthong Gallery, Bangkok in 2001, the orchid becomes 'iconic' through over-enclosed representations – the artist writes that "the flower's inherent magnificence could ultimately warrant its own extinction at the hands of man". Our will to conceptualize the natural is part of a wider instinct to assert power over it. Niti Wattuya examines the imposition of a distance between man and nature and the ways we relate – our definitions of natural beauty, the nostalgic power of landscape.

In his solo exhibition, *Intervened Nature* (2000) at Galeriasia, Hong Kong, Niti uses the landscape, that is "intervened and distorted by a metallic sheen", in addressing social economic and environmental issues in his paintings.

"Here, nature is interceded by a silver light, which symbolizes the power of materialism and higher technology of our present era. Wattuya intends to reveal that people seek to attain this power while shamefully neglecting culture and tradition."¹ In 2002, he made a series of watercolours for *Countryside* at Numthong Gallery which attempt to recapture the simplicity of rural life depicted in a raw, naturalistic form outside of the sophistry of contemporary art discourse.

In the body of work made for this exhibition, landscape again takes centre stage. There is no literal human presence and the natural scene affords all the visual drama. The use of specific sites (*Kong-Land, Yum River*) intensifies the experience of landscape, pulling us almost forcibly into an emotional response to it. In the accompanying poem, Niti writes of his despair for the younger generation - the Northern Thai landscape is a metaphor for the 'old' life. Where he smells the fragrance of *Dak Seow* blossoms, hears the water in the stream trickling, and sees the glittering colourful scene of the wooded mountain, the young seem impervious to this sensual appreciation of natural life.

Human "intervention" here comes in the form of serrated hard-edged colour fields breaking in from the edges of the canvas, crashing in on the fragility of landscape. The paintings presage what could happen to the landscape at the hands of those who are custodians of the land, who would destroy where they should protect, for future generations.

Noor Mahnun Mohamed

¹ Gridthiya Gaweewong, *Intervened Nature*, Exhibition Brochure, Gallery Asia, Hong Kong, 2000

*In a month of Dok Saew blossom
I traveled to the wooded mountain in the north.
It was withered there,
But glittering with a colorful scene.*

*Even though a forest fire was smouldering,
Water in the stream was still trickling
To nourish the wooded land,
Which seemed like a scrap of cloth.*

*In the city,
Children learn everything by computer's monitor
Most people call it 'Hope',
But, for me, it is called 'Despair',
As a stream on a computer's monitor
Is not the same as a stream of fresh water in the forest
I have left the wooded mountain,
But my imagination holds it in memory.
A glowing, mild and delicate
petal of Dok Saew
has silently fallen on
the dust of the burnt forest.*

Niti Wattuya

Niti Wattuya
born 1944, Chainat Province, Thailand.

Education
Self-taught

Solo Exhibitions

1979	Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, California, USA	1987	<i>Aesthetics in Honor to His Majesty the King Exhibition</i> Bangkok Bank Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
1981	<i>Chao Praya</i> Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art, Bangkok, Thailand	1988	<i>7th White Group Exhibition</i> Thailand Cultural Center, Bangkok, Thailand
1982	<i>Watercolor</i> British Council, Bangkok, Thailand		<i>ASEAN Watercolor Exhibition</i> Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1983	<i>Watercolor and Drawing</i> Vishual Dhamma Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand	1989	<i>Contemporary Thai Artists Exhibition</i> espace Pierre Cardin, Paris, France
1985	<i>Watercolor</i> Reigent Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand	1990-92	<i>Asian Watercolor</i> Hong Kong, Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan
1986	<i>Existing of Splendour</i> Gourmet Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand	1991	<i>Change and Modernism in Thai Art</i> curated by Peera Dittbanjong, Canberra
1987	<i>Ocean Symphony</i> British Council, Bangkok, Chiangmai, Thailand		<i>Contemporary Art Space, ACT, Australia</i>
1990	<i>Oriental Soul</i> Central Department Store, Bangkok, Thailand	1992	<i>Drawing Exhibition</i> Dialogue Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
1992	<i>Return of the Golden Era</i> Dialogue Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand	1996	<i>Golden Jubilee Art Exhibition: 50 Years of Thai Art</i> Queen Sirikit National Convention Center, Bangkok, Thailand
1993	<i>Golden Worms</i> Silom Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand		<i>Conversing Contemporary</i> Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
1995	<i>Chao Praya</i> Silom Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand	1997	<i>Corners Project 304</i> , Bangkok, Thailand
1997	<i>Prototype of the Dark Age</i> Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand		<i>12th Asian International Art Exhibition</i> Macau.
1998	<i>Dark Age</i> Centers for Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand	1998	<i>Self-Portrait</i> Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
1999	<i>Golden Conquest</i> Galleriasia, Hong Kong		<i>Plastic (Other) Waste Project</i> Centers for Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University Art Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
2000	<i>Intervened Nature</i> Galleriasia, Hong Kong		<i>World Artists for Tibet Project 304</i> , Bangkok, Thailand
2001	<i>Wild Orchid</i> Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand	1999	<i>Love</i> Tachikawa, Tokyo, Japan
2002	<i>The Countryside</i> Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand	2000	<i>Kwangju Biennale 2000 Man + Space</i> Kwangju, Korea
2003	<i>Ancient Voice</i> Numthong Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand		<i>Imvisible Boundary : Metamorphosed Asian Art</i> , Utsunomiya Museum of Art, Tochigi, Japan
		2001	<i>The Contemporary</i> Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
		2004	<i>Ode to the Period's Difference</i> Tang Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

Selected Group Exhibitions

1979	Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California, USA
1980	M.M. Shimo Gallery, Los Angeles, California, USA Thai Artists in the US, College of Arts and Crafts, Bangkok, Thailand
1982	Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena, California, USA <i>Art After 1932</i> Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand
1983	<i>1st White Group Exhibition</i> Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art, Bangkok, Thailand <i>Contemporary Printmaking & Drawing from Thailand</i> Nurnberg, Federal Republic of Germany
1984	<i>2nd White Group Exhibition</i> Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art, Bangkok, Thailand <i>The Asian Arts Exhibition</i> , Bangkok, Thailand
	Guest Artists, British Institute of Modern, Bangkok, Thailand

Publications

1994	<i>Loom Chao Praya</i>
1990	<i>Song of Starlight</i>
1989	<i>The Oriental Soul</i>
1985	<i>Sparks in an Era</i>