

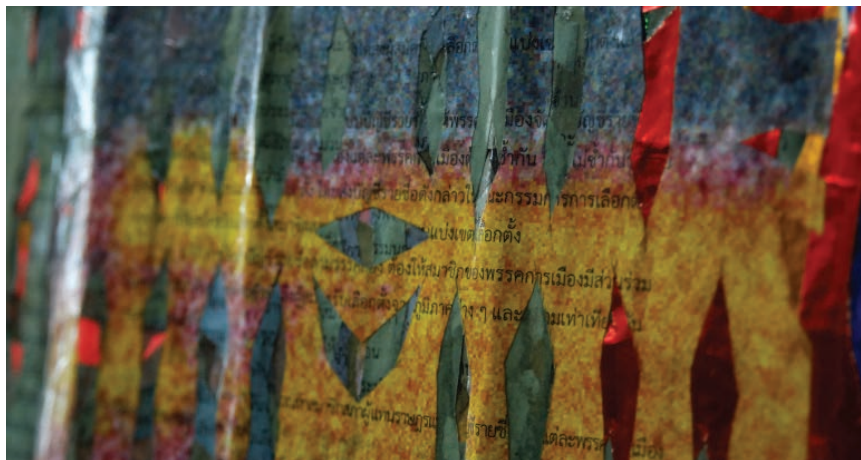
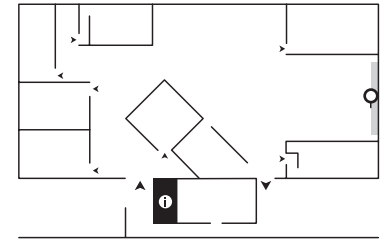
THAILAND

Thasnai Sethaseree

Untitled (Hua Lamphong)

2016
Paper collage on Buddhist monk robes
400 × 800 × 5 cm
Collection of the artist

Nominated by Gregory Galligan



ABOVE: Detail
Images courtesy of Gallery VER

Thasnai Sethaseree's massive artwork is a vibrant, tactile collage on a canvas of layered Thai Buddhist monks' robes, enfolding into its surface sheets of newspapers, images of modern architecture and political violence in Thailand, as well as printed texts of the new Thai Constitution and the 17th-century poem, "Prophetic Lament for Sri Ayutthaya". Laid over these various materials are strands of brightly-coloured paper streamers, rendered in the traditional Lanna paper cutting technique native to the region, and commonly seen in festivals in northern Thailand. The artist refers to his aesthetic here as "magical realism", one that is strongly evocative of everyday life in the kingdom. The luminous hues contribute, he remarks, "an electric frisson across the painting's foreground akin to the psychedelic neon tube lighting of a Thai temple fair."

Underlying this sense of celebration, however, are subtle references to the socio-political turmoil that Thailand has experienced in recent years, reinforcing the notion that beneath the veneer of ordinary life lies a fragile political truce. Referencing the culture of the north suggests the political division between north and south, while the allusion to the historic Hua Lamphong station in Bangkok hints at regional tensions. Built in 1916, the station became a symbol of modernisation and bureaucratic centralisation; it has attracted controversy of late over the proposal to have a high-speed rail take its place, provoking further questions about the centralisation and decentralisation of politics in Thailand.

Thasnai Sethaseree (b. 1968, Bangkok, Thailand) is best known for conceptual and relational works that are usually ephemeral, although his practice has recently turned to sculpture and painting. Recurrent themes include issues of memory, migration and the nature of knowing. Sethaseree was trained in fine art, and holds a Ph.D. in Social Sciences from Chiang Mai University. His work has been featured in group exhibitions in notable institutions abroad, such as Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, Chicago (2016); Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila (2013) and Seoul Museum of Art (2011), as well as in solo exhibitions in various art spaces in Thailand. He lives and works in Chiang Mai.