



## All That Surrounds Us New art from Cambodia

7 October–11 November 2023

Curated by Lauren Elise Barlow, Vuth Lyno,  
Chum Chanveasna and Moeng Meta





Pen Robit, *Beautiful day* 2020, oil on canvas, 155 x 120 cm. Courtesy artist & Richard Koh Fine Art

Cover: Neak Sophal, *Treasure (Dried Straw)* 2022, digital print, 67 x 100 cm

- Chea Sereyroth (b 1990)
- Eng Ritchandaneth (b 1993)
- Mao Sovanchandy (b 1998)
- Neak Sophal (b 1989)
- Pen Robit (b 1991)
- Pen Sereypagna (b 1989)
- Prak Dalin (b 1996)
- Roeun Sokhom (b 1987)
- Sao Sreymao (b 1986)
- Than Sok (b 1984)
- Thang Sothea (b 1983)
- Yim Maline (b 1982)

# Media Release

***All That Surrounds Us* will showcase works by contemporary Cambodian artists that explore their country's complex history, future and place in the broader community of southeast Asia.**

Sydney, Australia: Including work by 12 younger and mid-career artists, *All That Surrounds Us* presents new art from Cambodia to Australian audiences and provides the opportunity to learn more about the country through its art. Reflecting Cambodian art, the exhibition includes works in many media – painting, sculpture, architecture, ceramics, photography, installation, video and works on paper – and from many parts of the country.

Bisected by the Mekong River, Cambodia is surrounded by Thailand to the northwest, Laos to the north, Vietnam to the east and the Gulf of Thailand to the south. It is home to 16.8 million people, of whom 50% are under 22 years of age. 95% of the population is of ethnic Khmer origin and speaks the Khmer language. Buddhism is the official religion and is practiced by the vast majority of the population. Cambodia is classified by the UN as a “least developed country”, with a government described as a “relatively authoritarian coalition via a superficial democracy”. The annual per capita income is AUD6,000.

Perhaps due to its troubled history, Cambodia is not a major destination for Australians. But as exhibition co-curator Lauren Barlow reports, “While Cambodia has experienced events such as French colonisation, the American-backed military government of Lon Nol, the traumatic years of the Khmer Rouge Regime and the Vietnamese invasion, Cambodia is rebuilding its population and resources. Its art scene is beginning to flourish, with artists like Sopheap Pich, Vandy Rattana and Khvay Samnang taking Cambodian art to the world. In Phnom Penh, Cambodian-run artist spaces such as Sa Sa Art Projects are dedicated to experimental and critical contemporary art practices and work to foster a new generation of Cambodian contemporary artists.”

The curatorial premise of *All That Surrounds Us* is twofold: first, to explore Cambodia's rapidly changing built and natural environment, and second, to emphasize the country's deep roots in Buddhist spirituality and the non-linear relationship between past, present and future. Collectively the artists explore pertinent themes in a post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia. The more established artists examine the profound difficulties of rebuilding a society scarred by intergenerational trauma and the remarkable resilience of those involved. The younger artists unpack issues related to corruption, urban development, a growing urban/rural divide and ecological decline. Together, this new generation of artists raise critical questions around the future of Cambodia and its place in the region.

In addition to introducing Cambodian art and artists to Australian audiences, the exhibition aims to broaden the artists' exposure to Australian artists, museums, curators, academics, collectors, patrons and students. Two artists and two curators will visit Sydney for the exhibition opening, public programs and a symposium on Cambodian art. It is hoped the wider community of local curators, artists, collectors, academics and researchers will participate in this discussion – bringing all voices and experiences together.

## MEDIA CONTACTS

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Chea Sereyroth, *Uprooted* 2023, Acrylic on canvas, 90 x 120 cm  
Photo courtesy of the artist and Sa Sa Art Projects

## Selected Works



Eng Rithchandaneh, *101* 2015, ceramic, dimensions variable





Sao Sreymao, *Koh Pdao past and future* 2018, digital print, 60 x 90 cm



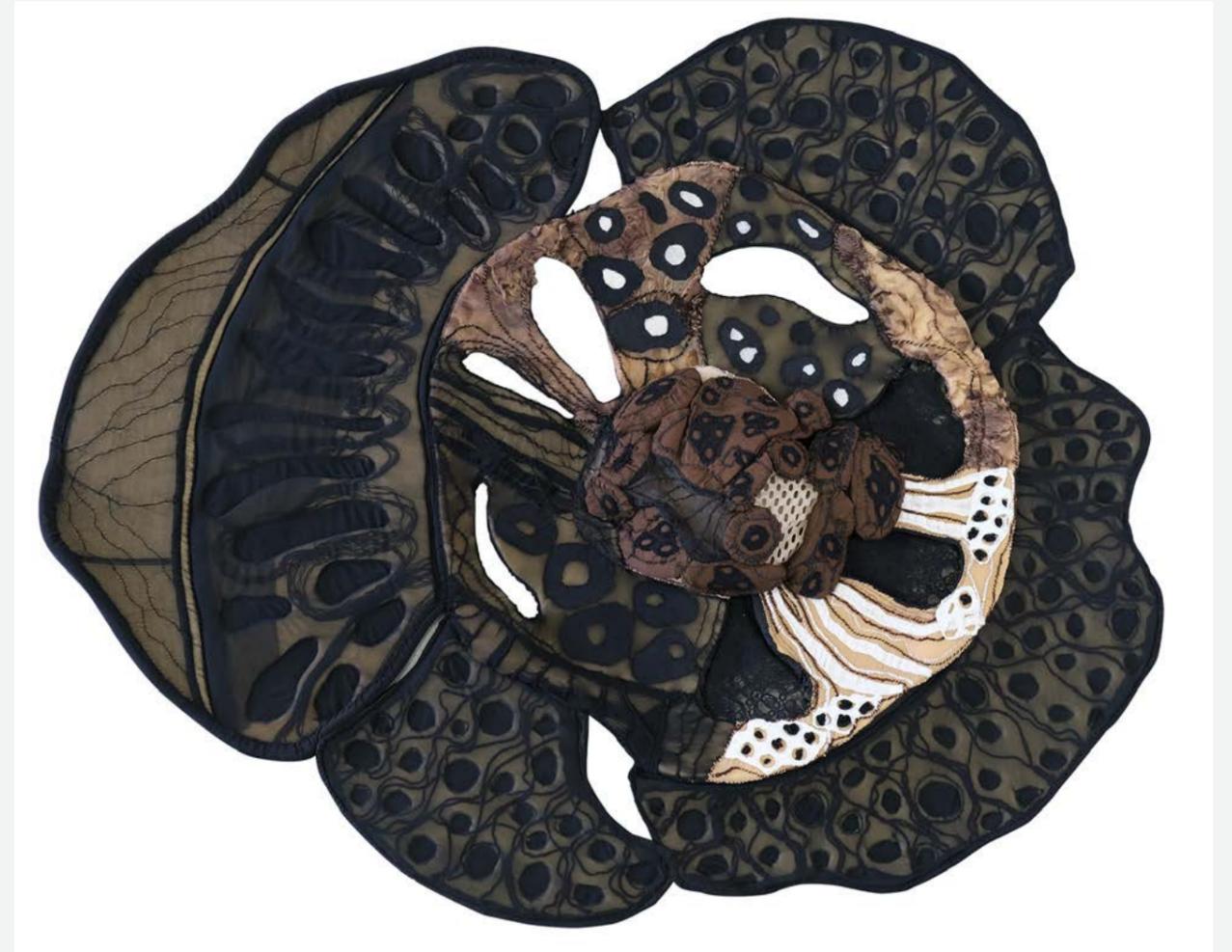
Sao Sreymao, *Tonlesap 2* 2022, digital print, 60 x 90 cm



Thang Sothea, *Disruption 2020*, natural hemp, iron, copper, wood resin, 150 x 150 cm



Yim Maline, *Rainy* 2023, secondhand fabric, secondhand cloth, thread, form, 86 x 55 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



Yim Maline, *Withered flowers* 2023, secondhand fabric, secondhand cloth, thread, form, 126 x 112 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



Mao Sovanchandy, *Sasar 2022*, concrete, glass, steel wire and Buddha tree, 120 x 20 x 10 cm

## Artist Biographies

### **Chea Sereyroth**

Chea Sereyroth studied painting at Phare Ponleu Selpak art school in 2005. In 2008, he attended a workshop with international artist Sera Ing and artist Vann Nath with the theme “The memory of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia”, led by Soko Phay-Vakalis at the Bophana Center in Phnom Penh. His painting deals with memory, history, humanity, social issues in rural communities and how his countrymen continually neglect the environment. He often paints on mats he weaves himself, using media such as sawdust and acrylic paint mixed with mud to create earth-like textures, and leaving portions of the mat unpainted to show the material and patterning.

### **Eng Rithchandaneh**

Eng Rithchandaneh attended art classes at Sa Sa Art Projects while also holding a bachelor’s degree in Design from SETEC Institute. She often works with sculpture and installation, regularly employing natural and recycled materials. Her work focuses on urbanization and development issues in the Cambodian context, questioning power structures and their relationship with the environment and nationhood.

### **Mao Sovanchandy**

Mao Sovanchandy graduated in Architecture from the Paragon International University and studied art at Sa Sa Art Projects. Using photography, video, sculpture and performance, her work explores social structures and norms from her self-reflection and experiences. She finds inspiration from the surrounding environment of the fast-growing context of Phnom Penh, in which historical and cultural values often come into conflict with newer values and urban development. She is passionate about photography and old heritage buildings. She often experiments with different conceptual photography approaches to tell stories and prompt further discussion. She believes in an art that uses imagination to create reflection and trigger thoughts that lead to potential re-imaginings from a different perspective.

### **Neak Sophal**

A graduate of the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, Neak Sophal has a growing reputation for her distinct aesthetic and ongoing thematic exploration of Cambodian society. Through composed portraiture staged collaboratively with her subjects, Sophal’s artworks often challenge social structures, illuminating the hidden memories and fear that animate people’s lives and identities. Active locally and internationally, Sophal has participated in workshops and group and solo exhibitions in France, Sweden, the United States, Japan and Australia, as well as many local and international art festivals.



Prak Dalin, *Monk 1* 2021, bricks, variable dimensions

### **Pen Robit**

Pen Robit graduated from Phare Ponleu Selpak in 2010. His art practice primarily employs painting, including occasional live painting and performance. He draws on various techniques, shuttling between figuration and abstraction, and often commenting on social realities and influences from Cambodian cultural iconography as well as ongoing societal discourses. Robit's work attempts to represent Cambodia's past, present and future socio-political fabric.

### **Pen Sereypagna**

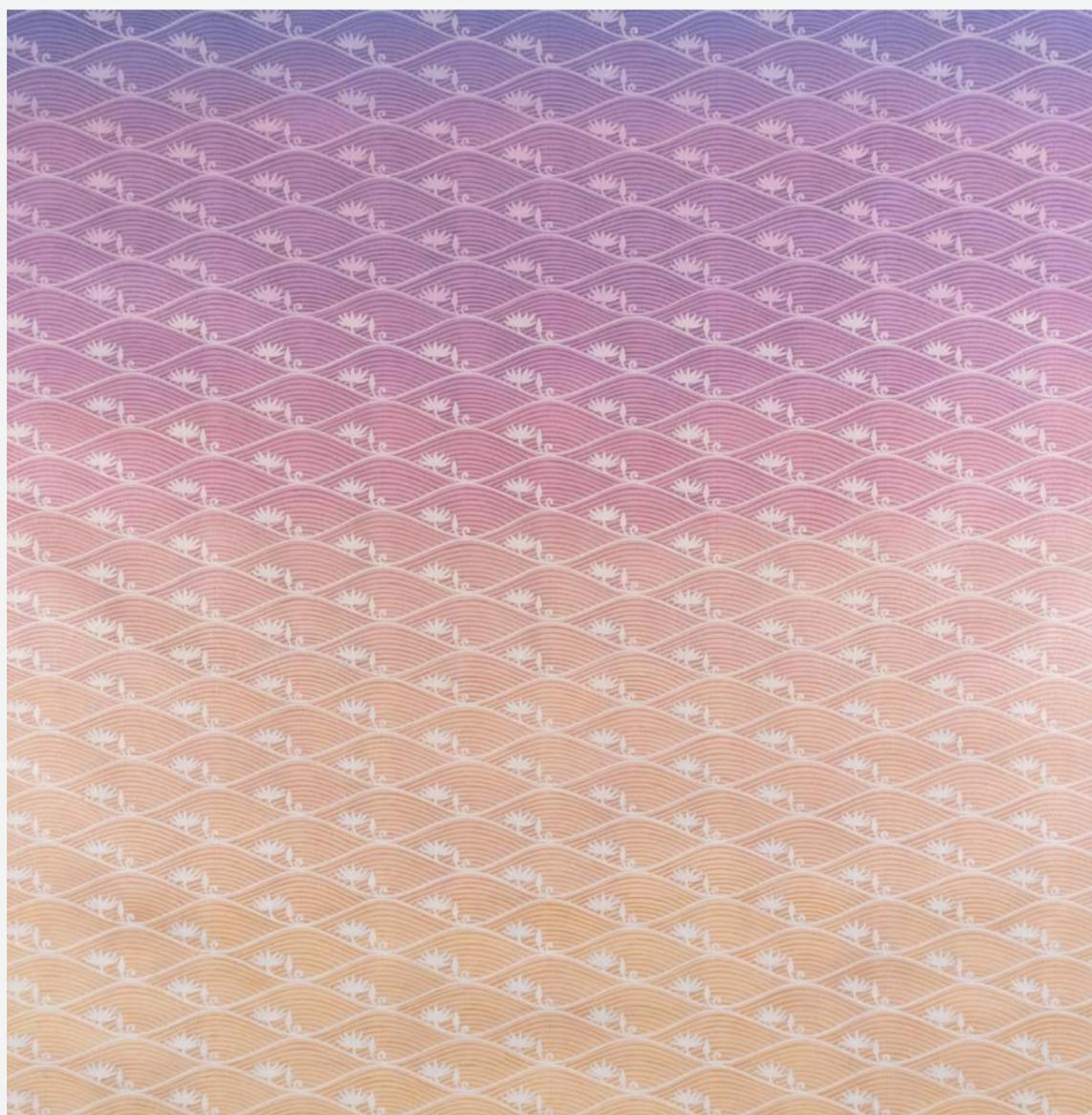
Pen Sereypagna is a PhD student in Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Hong Kong. As an urbanist, he produces artworks and research on Phnom Penh's urban form and Cambodian modernist architecture. His work has been the subject of several exhibitions and presentations in Cambodia and selected venues in southeast Asia, Australia and the United States. The Vann Molyvann Project is an international team of architects, architecture students and other researchers working in Cambodia to document the buildings and practices of Vann Molyvann and other modernist architecture.

### **Prak Dalin**

Prak Dalin graduated in architecture from Royal University of Fine Arts in 2019. As an artist and architect, she uses natural and construction materials to create sculptures and installations that take the form of architectural structures, focusing on the impact of urban development in Phnom Penh. Her artworks are inspired by nature and the process of transforming it into visual art and installations. She often experiments with different art media, focusing on unconventional aspects of each material.

### **Roeun Sokhom**

Roeun Sokhom graduated from Phare Ponleu Selpak in 2008 and is a leading figure in Battambang's dynamic art community. His practice encompasses watercolour, oil and acrylic painting, as well as performance and installation. Sokhom founded Studio Art Battambang in 2012, the city's only artist-run space dedicated to discussion and creation, rather than exhibition. He has collaboratively organized numerous "live painting" and performance events in Battambang's streets, in an attempt to engage large audiences of local residents, such as market sellers.



Than Sok, *Kbach teuk (Water lily form)*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 80 cm  
Photo courtesy of the artist and Sa Sa Art Projects

### **Sao Sreymao**

Sao Sreymao works in multidisciplinary practice, including painting, photography, digital drawing, sculpture and performance. Her work explores personal expression and memories, as well as the changing physical and psychological landscapes of Cambodian urban and rural communities. She has also collaborated with various writers in visual storytelling and published a number of graphic novels. Sreymao is a skilled and experienced consultant working in the NGO sector and can reconfigure her work to the specific needs of the project.

### **Than Sok**

Than Sok graduated from Reyum Art School in 2005 and Reyum Workshop in 2007. He utilizes a wide range of media in creating his work, which includes sculpture, installation, video and performance. Through his work, he considers religious and spiritual beliefs, rituals, karma and merit, the social roles of monks and artists, and the power structure in a society that contains all the aforementioned.

### **Thang Sothea**

Thang Sothea is a self-taught artist who started painting in 2009. He holds an architecture and urban planning degree from Norton University in Phnom Penh. Sothea's works in sculpture and installation are made using materials and processes intentionally associated with a sense of freedom to explore architecture and art. His work allows us to animate these fields in new ways with traditional materials and natural forms, connecting with memory, history and the relationship between volume and space.

### **Yim Maline**

Yim Maline is from Battambang. She received her BA Fine Art Diplôme National Arts Plastique from École Supérieure des Beaux-arts de Caen, France in 2010, and is a graduate of Phare Ponleu Selpak, where she studied from 1995 to 2003. Maline's practice is located within the social consciousness of post-war Cambodia and is replete with references to cultural and social symbols that deal with loss and ambiguity. Through her drawings and sculpture-making, she reconstructs memory (both social and personal) as an act of commemoration and enshrinement of the natural environment lost to war and economic policies. She is one of a small (albeit growing) handful of female Khmer artists. Whilst they share a multimedia approach to art-making, Yim is the only one who uses drawing to tackle directly the changing natural environment around the world.

# Exhibition Personnel

## Lauren Elise Barlow CURATOR & ESSAY CONTRIBUTOR

Lauren Barlow completed a Masters of Curating and Cultural Leadership (With Excellence) at UNSW in 2022. Prior to that, she completed a Bachelor of Art Education at UNSW. *All That Surrounds Us: Contemporary art from Cambodia* is Lauren's curatorial debut and her involvement is informed by her upbringing as a Third Culture Kid in Phnom Penh during the post-Khmer Rouge period. Her intention as a curator and educator is to contribute to the decentralisation of the western art canon, bringing edge narratives and new perspectives to Australian audiences. Lauren has published on Australian contemporary portraiture and social culture in Allen and Unwin's *Teaching Writing* (2020). She was awarded the Good Practice Grant by Together For Humanity for her research on voicing cultural diversity in a multicultural arts ecology, and an Emerging Educator Award by the Teacher's Guild in 2017. Lauren is also a freelance educational program and resources writer for Studio A and 16albermarle Project Space.

## Chum Chanveasna CURATOR

Chum Chanveasna has been working in the arts since 2006, first as a Company Manager for Cambodia's leading independent dance company, Khmer Arts Ensemble, and later as Gallery Manager/Curatorial Assistant with Cambodia's leading contemporary art space and reading room, SA SA BASSAC. Since 2016 she has been the Project Manager to artist Khvay Samnang, one of Cambodia's leading contemporary visual artists and from 2018 Manager and Curator at Sa Sa Art Projects, a non-profit artist-run space dedicated to experimental and critical contemporary art practices. Chanveasna has participated in numerous programs for professional development, including Researcher of the IMPACT project (Peacebuilding and the Arts), Brandeis University, Boston, USA 2018; Curatorial-in-residency at Tokyo Wonder Site, Japan 2017; CuratorsLAB with Goethe-Institut, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2015-2017 and FIELDS: On Attachments and Unknowns, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh, 2017.

## Vuth Lyno CURATOR

Vuth Lyno is an artist, curator and educator based in Cambodia and interested in space, cultural history and knowledge production. His artworks often engage with micro and overlooked histories, notions of community, place-making and the production of social relations. He works across various media, often constructing architectural or spatial bodies as situations for interaction. He believes in the potency of collectivity, storytelling and the agency of cultural objects as potential pathways to reimagine our sociality. Lyno is also a member of Stiev Selapak art collective which founded and co-runs Sa Sa Art Projects, a long-term initiative committed to the development of the contemporary visual arts landscape in Cambodia.

## Moeng Meta CURATOR

Moeng Meta lives and works between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Cambodia. She is an independent curator working on contemporary art in Cambodia with an interest in creating a platform for artists, building audiences and developing art collectors. Her curatorial practice is shaped by collaboration and dialogue with artists. Through her process, she explores urban form and the complexities of urban development that reveal different methodologies, ways of looking and thinking. With Treeline Gallery in Siem Reap, Meta curates and manages new commissions with emerging artists in Cambodia. She is the founder of two experimental community spaces, dambaul (Phnom Penh, 2019), an arts resource home focusing on building the Cambodian Contemporary Art Archives, and Kon Len Khnhom (Phnom Penh, 2017), an independent art space focusing on building networks and audience development. She was previously a producer for creative generation at Java Crea(2017-2018), and Community Projects Manager at SA SA BASSAC (2013-2016).

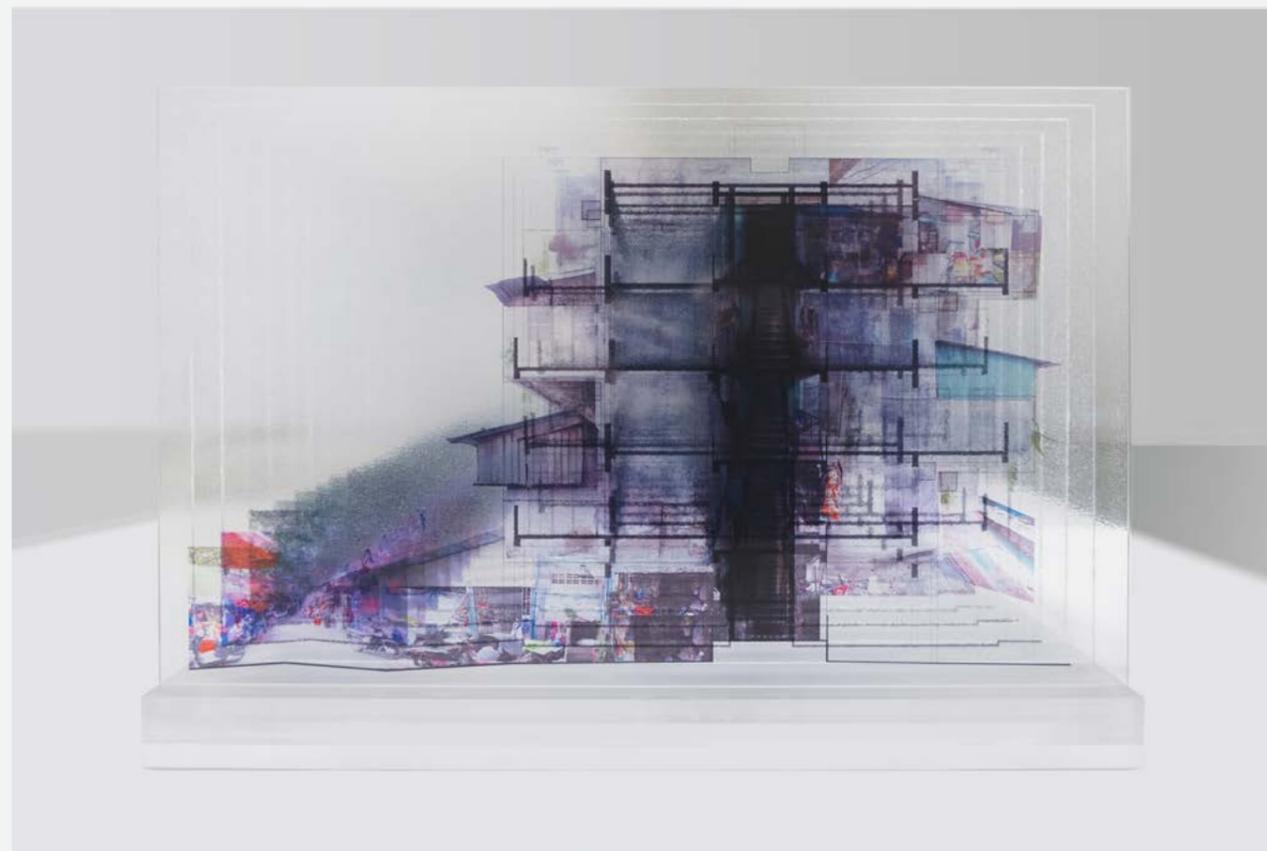
# Exhibition Partners

## 16albermarle Project Space Australia

Established in October 2019 by Australian art adviser/collector/curator John Cruthers, 16albermarle presents contemporary southeast Asian in an intimate space in inner-city Sydney. Its aim is to connect Australian audiences to southeast Asia through art and encourage their deeper engagement with the countries of the region. Alongside this cultural agenda, the space also promotes the artists it shows and sells the artworks to return funds to the artists, most of whom live from the sale of their work. 16albermarle has staged 14 exhibitions to date, with artists and artworks from Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines and Singapore. Its focus is on younger and mid-career artists with established practices and reputations in their home countries whose work has not been widely seen in Australia. Exhibitions are accompanied by public programs, catalogues and educational materials for HSC and IB students. School visits are encouraged. Artworks are available to view on our website and all catalogues can be downloaded for free. 16albermarle also stages art study tours to important art events in countries of the region.

## Sa Sa Art Projects Cambodia

Sa Sa Art Projects is the only ongoing Cambodian-run contemporary art space in Phnom Penh with a committed programming for experimental and critical contemporary art practices. Founded by Stiev Selapak art collective in 2010, Sa Sa Art Projects facilitates a growing and critically conscious art community in Cambodia by responding to the gaps in art education, art engagement and space for creative and free expression. Our vision is to see a healthy art community and ecology in Cambodia. This means to see a pluralist society of diverse artists, collectives, peer-support economy and shared spaces/resources that bond and stimulate the art community. For such a small art community as Cambodia, one crucial mechanism to its development is that artists can rely on/support/share among themselves and each other.



Pen Sereypagna, *White building's schizoanalysis* 2023, printing on sticker, mounting on plexiglass, 42.5 x 66 x 28 cm  
Photo courtesy of the artist and Sa Sa Art Projects



Roeun Sokhom, *Old building at Street 1* 2023, watercolor on paper, 37.5 x 55.5 cm  
Photo courtesy of the artist and Sa Sa Art Projects

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Vuth Lyno and Moeng Meta

**16albermarle Project Space**

16 Albermarle Street  
Newtown NSW 2042

Thu - Sat, 11am - 5pm,  
or by appointment

