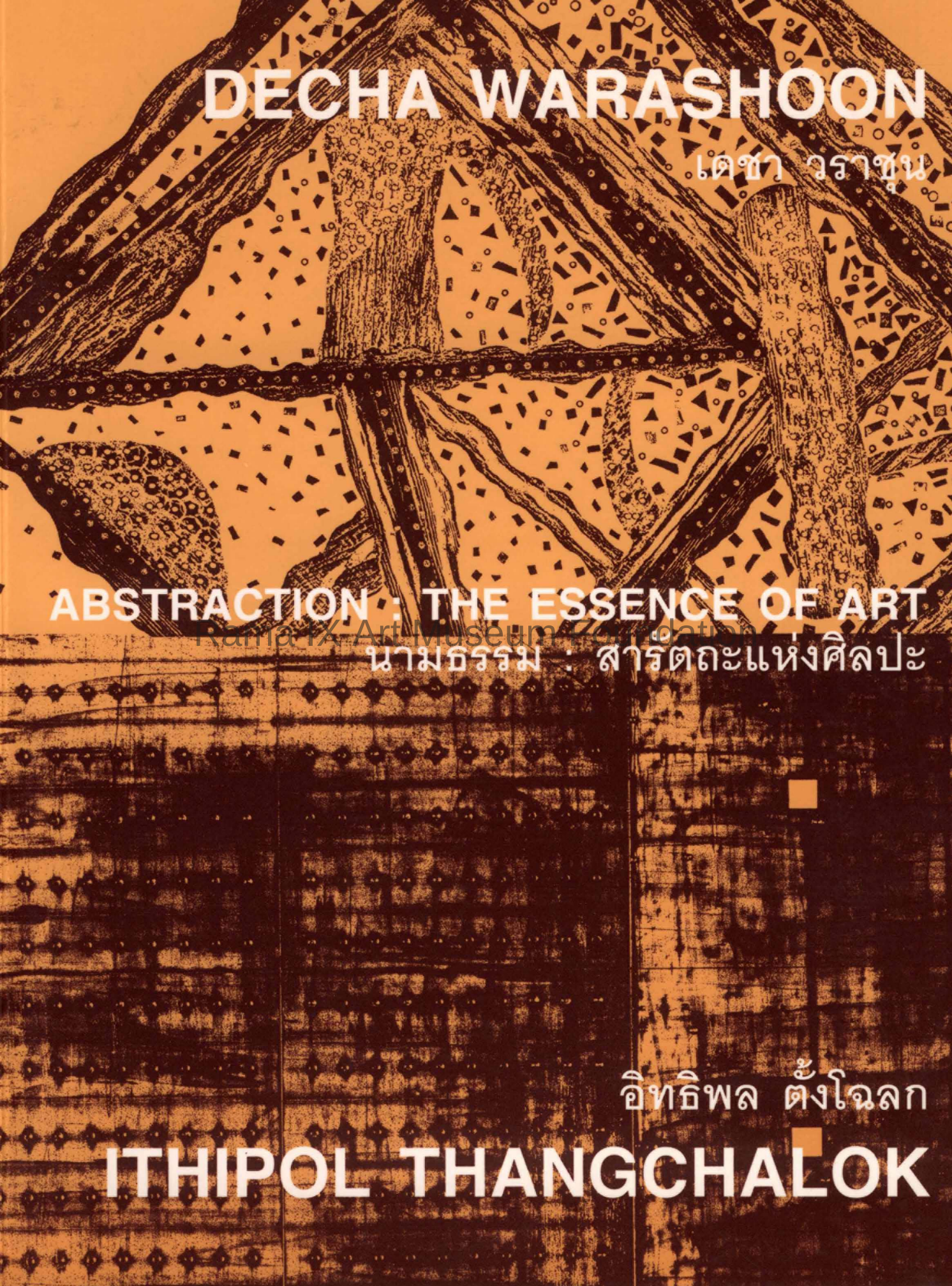




DECHA WARASHOON

เดชา วราชูน

ABSTRACTION : THE ESSENCE OF ART

นามธรรม : สารัตถะแห่งศิลปะ

อิทธิพล ตั้งโฉลก

ITHI POL THANGCHALOK

DECHA WARASHOON ITHIPOP THANGCHALOK

ABSTRACTION : THE ESSENCE OF ART Rama IX Art Museum Foundation AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS 2000 - 2002

JUNE 6 - JULY 9, 2002, SURAPON GALLERY, BANGKOK

เดชา วราชูน และ อิทธิพล ตั้งโฉลก

นามธรรม : สวรรค์แห่งศิลปะ นิทรรศการจิตรกรรม 2543 - 2545

6 มิถุนายน - 9 กรกฎาคม 2545 สุรพล แกลเลอรี กรุงเทพฯ

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

Abstraction : The Essence of Art

Decha Warashoon and Ithipol Thangchalok are good friends with one year difference in age, and Decha was a year ahead during their student days studying graphic arts at the Faculty of Painting Sculpture and Graphic Arts, Silpakorn University. They worked in the same studio, and both were very determined, disciplined and diligent students - as can be seen from their prolific works which all involved a lot of experimentation, study and creativity, with each possessing their own identity. This led them to their quick rise to fame by obtaining the highest awards at the National Exhibition of Art while they were still students, and from which each was later accorded the title Artist of Distinction.

At the time Decha and Ithipol were studying, abstract art was beginning to make its presence in Thailand; and by the time they were in their 4th and 5th years, it was rising to its height. The success of the two artists was not merely due to their abilities and determination, but also the change in the Faculty's curriculum and its teaching system at the time when a new department - the Department of Graphic Arts was set up by Professor Chalood Nimsamer who was the then dean. Decha was in the new department's 2nd class of students and Ithipol was in the 3rd. Its syllabus was different from Painting and Sculpture in that the latter two retained the teaching style of the "Academic" tradition whereby students were told what to do; and although they had the freedom to express their ideas and feelings in their works according to their own technical styles, they were not able to reach the level of abstraction. Graphic Arts on the other hand, gave students more freedom to produce "creative" works with the only condition being that they must be produced according to the technique involved in the printmaking process. Opening the Graphic Arts department thus, was in line with art movement of the time. It provided students with opportunities to fully utilize their potentials and allowed developments in printmaking to make significantly rapid progress. It can be said that at present, printmaking in Thailand is at the foremost amongst ASEAN countries and second only to Japan in the whole of Asia.

The outcomes of the new syllabus were many; and one of the most important aspects that taught Decha and Ithipol to learn to develop their own style up to this day, was the requirement for students to do printmaking under four different processes within two years, plus they also had to do paintings to the point of it almost being a second major. So it was not just a matter of learning the four different printmaking processes and then choose a preferable one to produce art works as it is according to the current curriculum, but four techniques plus painting, meant five possible means for producing works, each with its own potentials, were at the disposal of the artists. Both Decha and Ithipol as well as most of the students during their time, discovered for themselves by studying the works of other artists had observing from the experiences of their seniors, that printmaking techniques were not merely just means to an end, but actually formed a part of the concepts in connection with the end as a whole, and cannot be considered separately. In other words, each technique has its own particular

qualities in producing certain aesthetic appeals; at the same time, each also has its own limitations. Thus Decha and Ithipol would do their printmaking and painting in 5 series, using 5 techniques, under 5 concepts, and in 5 styles. Some series would be led by concepts alone, and some would in turn rely on technique to guide the concepts. From the point of view of Modernism, this may seem strange and improper that an artist should work in such diverse manner. But from the Postmodernism point of view, it is the opposite and considered as the way that it should be and is also in line with the trend.

The important point here is that both Decha and Ithipol managed to grasp the essence of creativity by believing that there is no fixed or permanent theory. Creating a work of art does not necessarily have to come from an inspiration nor does it have to be guided by a concept all the time. Sometimes, new techniques and new materials may actually provide inspiration that leads to new concepts, or may itself turn out to be the subject; changing its role from being “medium” to become “matter” as in the doctrine of Process Art. From present day point of view, “technique before concept” or “technique becomes concept” is a common thing because as a matter of fact, in order to create a quality work of art, 3 factors - content, style and technique, must be so well integrated that it would be impossible to view them apart. Thus the 3 must be considered together from the start and not rely on just one (same old) “instrument” to serve every kind of task or to satisfy every concept imaginable.

Art education in those days was at its turning point with big changes taking place. After Professor Silpa Bhirasri had passed away, the new Graphic Arts syllabus was introduced and the Academic tradition was gradually transforming into encouraging the search for individual style; and the entire curriculum was being restructured into the credits system whereby marks were replaced by grades A B C D, taking after the American education system. There were no serious art critiques or analyses then, nor was there the subject Art Thesis. However in Ithipol's final year, the students had to write an essay about their knowledge of art and explain about the concepts behind their works. This paved way for students in the following year to do Art Thesis. There were no questionings about concepts or aim of the students in the works they produced; no criticism or analysis. Therefore students had to learn by themselves to be analytical so that can develop in the right direction by relying on the knowledge and understanding they managed to pick up from studying and looking at great works to the point that they can “see” the value of beauty, truth, and virtue in works of art. Decent text books on art were limited and almost nothing existed in the Thai language. Learning to observe and understand the “language of visual art” was the means towards achieving success. Unlike today, students had to work hard in their studios without the guidance of a tutor or instructor if they were to achieve something.

As mentioned earlier, the time when Decha and Ithipol were in their 4th and 5th years respectively, abstract art was at its height. Students and artists alike, were in search of ways towards abstractionism. As for Decha and Ithipol, they had already begun experimenting before that; not because they just wanted to “follow the trend” to appear “trendy”, but because they believed, and their faith has constantly proven this over the past 30 years,

that **abstractionism** is the **essence** of art. According to the meaning, “abstract” includes everything that is intangible and cannot be seen such as the mind, thoughts, feelings and emotions; compared to non abstract or “physical” which can be seen; such as art objects, appearance, lines, colors, tone and textures. Thus it can be said that all works of art regardless of category, classification of ideology, possess as its core, an element abstractness. This is so even in Realist Art, which the artists believe that beauty exists in the outside world, and their work was to convey that beauty as accurately as possible in accordance with context of the **situation**. The reason is because creating realist work of art involves choosing a subject, place, angle, light, shade, time and mood; but in the actual working process, some things would inevitably have to be altered, included and/or excluded - even the content, forms, lines, contours, colors, and lighting, depending on the ideas and inner feelings that has to do with the **self** of the artist in any case.

Abstract artists on the other hand, believe that beauty and reality, are in the mind, thoughts and inner feelings of each individual’s self. Therefore their works expresses beauty and reality according to what they perceive. In other words they have abstracted the true essence of nature and express it by simplifying or discarding the surface appearance which is just the shell, and leaving only the visual elements of lines, colors, tone and texture that form the language of visual art - a language that is pure and universal. Like the language of music, it is not restricted to any race, place, or time, and can be used quite adequately to convey thoughts and feelings between the artist and the viewer.

Decha and Ithipol did their abstract works based on belief and principles as with other artist in this direction. The two were born, bred, and have always lived in Bangkok. Therefore most of their works reflected life, experiences, and material environment of the big city. This is the foremost common characteristic that they share, and can be seen clearly from their use of lines and geometric forms which always figure prominently in their compositions. The other important common aspect, is the technique and media that each one uses in their own different ways to represent “objects” in each series of work that changes with time according to their concepts and intentions. This is an important factor which gives identity to their works and reflect each individual’s own personality.

Decha is highly proficient in technical skills and uses them with great versatility. His works therefore usually involve a combination of different techniques, materials and media. He began working with metal in his student days, and recently returned to using it again. His “metal art” has a striking quality that clearly reveals his own character in the same way as his silk-screen works which earned him gold and silver medal awards at several National Exhibitions of Art in the early years. From an overall perspective of his works, we can see that he enjoys a quiet simple and fixed way of life. In the past 2 years, he once again moved away from metal art as can be seen from the absence of geometric forms which were replaced by organic ones, and wood was used instead of metal. This was due to the fact that he was building his art studio on the outskirts of the city and he had the chance to be living closer to nature once again.

Ithipol on the other hand, in the past 2 years, returned to the time of his paintings that were objects in the series “Matter of the Mind” following his “The Colors of Light” series which was inspired by trees, leaves, water and nature. In “Matter of the Mind” however, he did not depict urban life and environment as in his past works but created the series from the idea of making a painting into an object that was real in itself without imitating or alluding to any particular object of this world. It has no actual physical function, and its only purpose is for the viewers to experience it with their eyes, heart and mind. The idea in creating it was to reduce and simplify meanings and eliminate complex worldly emotions by using the minimum of compositional elements, namely dots and lines which under normal circumstances are just visual elements without any meaning or significance. In this series however, they have become the subject matter, form, meaning and media in themselves which lead to plain, simple, pure and peaceful state of mind.

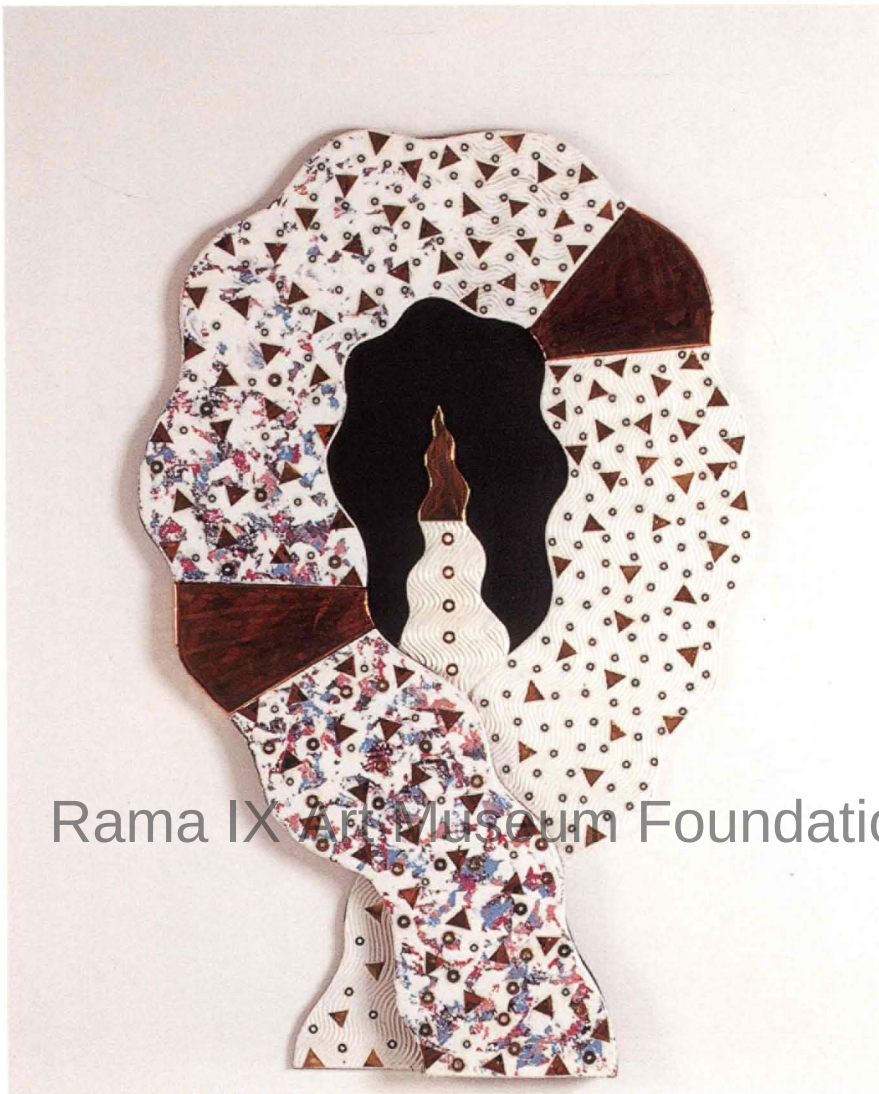
The exhibition ABSTRACTION : THE ESSENCE OF ART is the first duo exhibition of works by the two close friends after 30 years of producing art works. Both Decha and Ithipol are determined, have great faith, and devote themselves seriously to creating works of art and endeavor to search for ways to abstraction in order to convey the sense of the “spirit” more profoundly. Abstract art has been hailed as the greatest achievement of Modernism even though it might appear to be no longer in trend. But in truth, it never really disappeared; so there could be no such thing as Neo Abstract Art as there is neo - in other art doctrines.

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Ithipol Thangchalok

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DECHA WARASHOON

Image of Nature No.1, 2000

Mixed Media

105 x 70 cm.

41 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.