

HARITORN AKARAPAT



Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

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HARITORN AKARAPAT
Rama IX Art Museum Foundation SCULPTURE



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LAPSE OF MEMORY

"There is not other source of beauty than the wound unique, different for each person, hidden or visible, that every man keeps within, that he preserves."

A. Giacometti.

Haritorn Akarapat, Thai sculptor, has developed a strong identity exploring new ways to approach bronze and patina techniques using shapes and figures with an incomparable sense of freedom. "Lapse of Memory" presents a huge herd of busts and masks appearing as a silent and motionless crowd. Each piece is directly inspired of intimate memories of the artist, which penetrates the set of a phantasmagoric presence.

The highly sensual sculptures invite the viewer to feel with their eyes and see with their hands. The sense of touch is an invitation to surrender reality, and the sense

of sight is enhanced to open a contemplative path to the soul. Haritorn's process of simplifying his figures to the point of abstraction forms of great purity and balance could be considered as a way of meditation, a contemplation of his inner thoughts. A process in which every thought is expressed and ceased in the clay. The imprint of time in the matter not only expresses evolutionary search for pure form but it also highlights the complexity of thought that has gone into the making process, the emotional weight. The decedent and the minimal, formulate representation of mythologies that are both personal and rooted in the Buddhist tradition.

Myrtille Tibayrenc
Artistic Director Rama IX Art Foundation



Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

กลุ่มแห่งความทรงจำ

“ไม่มีสิ่งใดงดงามไปกว่า รอยตำหนิซึ่งมีเพียงหนึ่งเดียว
ความแตกต่างของแต่ละบุคคล สิ่งที่แฝงเร้น สิ่งที่มีมองเห็น
ซึ่งคนแต่ละคนได้เก็บซ่อน และรักษามันไว้ภายใน”

A. Giacometti.

Myrtille Tibayrenc
Artistic Director D'Art Foundation

[A TIME FILTER IN H A R I T O R N A K A R A P A T ' S H A N D S]

The visual aspect in art is still dominant in our cultural way of understanding a work of art. Haritorn Akarapat's sculptures are like an invitation to a totally different perception of contemporary creation and art pieces' semiotics. One should feel their unique sense and taste instead of simply watching and questioning the visual concept. This introspective feeling finds its key understanding in both sculptures' making process and Buddhist reflections. The artists knows how to trick and play with us on many occasions with the above as allies. His reflection is consequently a confrontation between the inside with his Buddhist instruction and outside as a sculptor manipulating elements.

Our investigation in Haritorn Akarapat's visions will logically start with the creative act and the time working on his sculptures. It is fundamental to work out how the story has started and how the artist is orchestrating all of it, within his own thoughts and choices. As personal style, every figures were initially made of clay and put into painted bronze as a final step.

Akarapat is very confident in clay, he loves to touch it, carve in it, engrave it, feel it, with tools and hands. This physical contact with the material is really a moment of pleasure and intense surprises. The artist is not planning anything but playing with his feelings and ideas. The demiurgic aspect in this process is very important as the artist is never destroying any of his work. Each piece has a speech in itself. It may not be intelligible in the first place but will surely get clarified in future time. The artist refuses to get rid of or destroy a sculpture that he may not like in the present time as it should have a better life later. This parallel to Buddhist cycle of rebirth is better understandable with the next step in the sculpting mechanism.

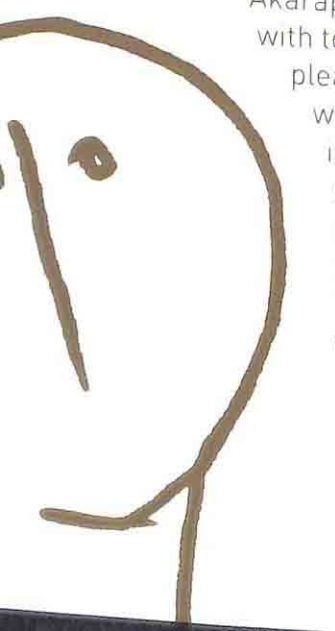
The action is to transform the temporary clay sculpture into plaster then wax to have it finally performed into a permanent bronze. Here again the final "product" is as much important as the steps to reach it. Like in a story/scenario where plot points are preparing a final outcome, the bronze sculpture is only understandable with its early work in clay. Most of the time this metamorphosis remains secret or forgotten, leaving behind by the same time the fundamental notion of factory. During the work with clay the artist is having a dialogue with the material and in some way himself. Concerning the bronze work, it is a complete factory involved in the process, especially regarding the technicality in wax casting. The artist is not only exchanging with the sculpture itself but also with craftsmen and their techniques. Hopefully here, Akarapat is well conscious of that and focusses his energy on each transformation from one material to an other. He accurately knows that a detail in clay has total different meaning when it is cast to metal for instance.

Regarding the last Akarapat's sculptures their life in clay have been quickly transformed into plaster. They were then "forsook" for a decade. The

artist had them eroding, changing aspect with weather and time effect. After this long maturation and reflection he has decided to give them their final body.

It is quite surprising to notice what elements have passed through time and are precisely recognisable and other which have drastically disappeared living an abstract figure. For instance, noses have mainly all been destroyed but ears and prominent details, such as horn, are still proudly present. This opens a double reflection on the artist work.

First we can recognise what type of sculptures he used to present in past exhibition with heterogeneous elements. At the time those specificities were clearly in confrontation with the rest of the artwork. The colour, the shape, the size clearly showed Akarapat's choices to underline his concept. Presently the prominences are integrated to the entire artwork. They are fully part of it and, as an evolution, we have the feeling that it is not a speech from the artist anymore but from the sculpture itself. From a personal discourses it became universal.



Secondly, we have to focus on ears present on some sculptures. It is significant to see, in this case, the impact of one iconographic detail raising a perspective on Buddhist thematic. The portraits and heads are in a generic term anonymous. Hopefully the ears, sometimes very big in respect with the head proportions, are giving a clue on the interpretation. It is without any question that we are referring to the figure of Buddha. As we know, apart from their hair, the Bodhisattvas have their ears changing shape and most of the time getting bigger. The strong presence of this part of the body is a sign of time as well as of the enlightenment. Going forward we could understand that the sculptures are not only giving a message but also listening to the environment. It is a clear message to interactivity to our interrogations for instance. Presented in a group of figures, this multiple dialogue is having even more sense.

During the bronze metamorphosis some rough elements as casting junctions or marks of the liquid bronze are still present on the final sculptures. Akarapat is keeping those making-off components as being part of the object's history. Comparing with a human being who is carrying his life history on his skin, from belly button to scar and sometimes deliberate like tattoos or body piercing, the sculptures are telling us a bit about how they reach their final target. The metaphor of the wheel of reincarnation in buddhism is still valid here, we can admit that the different steps and materials are like a new body for a same soul. The tracks are evidences of previous lives.

The ultimate modification will then be the application of a patina invented by Akarapat. This patina is put with a brush and then burned with a blowtorch. The action can be associated with other previous ones as it is always a transition from liquid material crystallised through fire. The bronze transformation being logically the emblematic process. Metaphorically it is a purification with all the manipulation in religious cult. Water and fire being present in each and every ceremonies around the world. Akarapat is not basically painting the bronzes, he is mainly baptising them. The patina's application is not regular and we can feel the liquid being absorbed by the sculpture. The total integration is producing the final trick. It is with the painting that the artist is offering his final proposal : "do not trust your eyes as they may wrongly orientate your impression and reflection". The white plaster aspect is making us think that the sculptures are fragile and not strong as metal. The audience is making by a misinterpretation the finest conclusion : as the

circle of life, the story is never ending. In some way we have the impression to be in front of a plaster or clay sculpture instead of a bronze one. It is like coming back to the start of the artwork. The magic illusion is fully operating in this case.

Our analysis would not be complete if we did not mention the "mise en scène" of Haritorn Akarapat's sculptures. Even though each piece of work is independent and to be considered as such, how can we not notice the impact of having them regrouped. Comparing to a person, each sculpture is showing its own personality but it also confronted to the other, like in a society. The monologue of an artwork is switching to polyphony as a harmonic whole.

The unity, mainly represented by the patina, is also hardly created with the art pieces' shapes. The artist has made a complete group of figures as one big fellowship. Going forward we could raise the fact that all the sculptures are referring to a masculine symbol very well known in Asian culture : the linga. The rotundity as well as the position on the ground and the relative abstraction are some of the elements that can be used as a comparison.

By those sculptures the artist has created a complete cosmogony where fundamental and initial statements of time, language and respect are put together.

At last, the parallel between the last art pieces and the personal life of the artist is somehow audacious but inevitable. Element from the past recycled, patina as a unique style and obvious unity in iconography are addition of proofs to the impact of time and its cycles on human being.

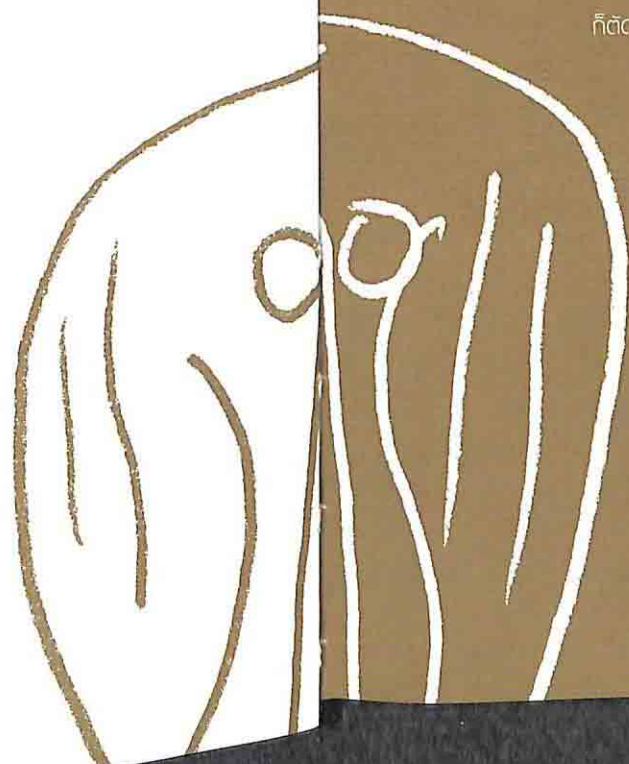
Lets hope that Haritorn Akarapat's rebirth after years of silence will be as sensitive as clay and as strong as bronze.

Julien LOMBARD
Art critic
Brussels, January 2009



[ห้วงแห่งกาลเวลา ผ่านสองมือของ หริธ อัครพัฒน์]

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation



สามารถเข้าใจได้โดยรูปร่างในอดีตที่เป็นดินเหนียว
ตลอดเวลา รูปทรงก็เปลี่ยนแปลงเหล่านี้
จะอ้างถึงความลับ หรืออาจถูกสืบเสาะไป หรือ
ไว้เพียงเพิ่มฐานความนึกคิดที่คลุมเครือของเหตุ
และปัจจัย ในระหว่างที่ทำงานกับดินเหนียว
ศิลปินได้สนทนากับวัตถุ และในบางทีก็ กับตัวเขาเอง
ส่วนในการทำงานกับบรอนซ์ ทุกกระบวนการนั้นเกิดขึ้น
ในโรงงาน โดยเฉพาะเทคนิคในการหล่อซึ่ง ซึ่งในขณะนี้
ศิลปินไม่เพียงสนทนากับชิ้นงาน หากมีการแลกเปลี่ยน
กับนายช่าง และเทคนิคของพวกเขาอีกด้วย
ด้วยความหวัง หริธทุ่มเทจิตใจ สมาธิ และพลังงาน
ทั้งหมดของเขาลงในขั้นตอนในการเปลี่ยนแปลงรูป
ร่าง จากวัสดุหนึ่ง สู่อีกรูปหนึ่ง โดยรู้เป้าหมายว่า
รายละเอียดบนดินเหนียวนั้น จะให้ความหมายที่แตกต่าง
จากเดิมโดยสิ้นเชิง เมื่อถูกหล่อออกมาเป็นบรอนซ์แล้ว

เกี่ยวกับผลงานประติมากรรมชุดล่าสุดของ
หริธ «ช่วงชีวิต» ในระหว่างที่เป็นดินเหนียวนั้นแล
สับ และถูกเปลี่ยนเป็นพลาสติก และหลังจากนั้นก็ถูก
«ถอดทิ้ง» เป็นลึบที่ศิลปินปล่อยให้กาลเวลา ถัดกร่อน
และละทิ้งร่องรอยของของฤดูกาลที่เปลี่ยนแปลงวันเป็น
ปี เมื่อผ่านกระบวนการนี้เพาะมาเป็นงาน ในที่สุด หริธ
ก็ตัดสินใจที่จะมอบร่างสุดท้าย ให้แก่ผลงานเหล่านั้น

เป็นเรื่องน่าประหลาดใจ
ที่เราสามารถสังเกตเห็น ความเปลี่ยนแปลง
และร่องรอยของกาลเวลา ปรากฏ
แจ่มชัดอยู่บนชิ้นงาน อีกทั้งบางองค์ประกอบ
ที่ถูกซ่อนหายไป หรือไว้เพียงรูปทรงนามธรรม
อย่างเช่นจมูก ที่ถูกทำลายลงแทบทั้งหมด
ตรงข้ามกับหูและ รายละเอียดที่เด่นๆ อื่นๆ
เช่น เขา ซึ่งยังคงแสดงตนอย่างสง่างาม
และสิ่งเหล่านั้นเองก็เสริมคุณค่าในงาน
ของเขา

ในตอนแรก เรายังพอนึกออก ว่าประติมากรรม
รูปแบบใด ที่เขาเคยนำมาแสดงในนิทรรศการครั้งก่อน
ด้วยองค์ประกอบที่แตกต่างกับ ในบางครั้ง
ลักษณะจำเพาะเหล่านั้นก็แสดงการเผชิญหน้า
อย่างชัดเจน กับผลงานอื่นๆ ทั้งสี รูปทรง และขนาด
ต่างก็แสดงถึงจุดยืนของหริธ ที่จะชัดเจนแนบยาในแนวคิด
ของเขา และในผลงานชุดนี้ จุดเด่นเหล่านั้น ได้ถูกล้อมรอบ
สอดประสานลงไปในงานทั้งหมด กลายเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของงาน
สะท้อนให้เห็นพัฒนาการในตัวเอง จนเรารู้สึกได้ว่า
ขณะนี้ ไม่เพียงมีผลงานจากศิลปินส่งผ่านออกมาเท่านั้น
หากแต่ตัวชิ้นงานเอง ก็เปล่งเสียงของตัวเองออกมาด้วย
และจากบทสนทนาส่วนตัว ก็กลายเป็นคำปราศรัยสู่สากล

ต่อมา เราควรจะเพิ่มความสนใจไปที่ ใบหูที่
ของประติมากรรม ซึ่งแสดงให้เห็นถึงนัยยะสำคัญ
อันแฝงไว้ในรายละเอียด เกี่ยวกับเรื่องคติทางพุทธศาสนา
รูปเหมือนทั้งหลายนั้น ดูนิรนาม กล่าวคือไม่มีลักษณะ
เฉพาะที่จะชี้ได้ว่าใครเป็นใคร หากแต่มีใบหู
ซึ่งบางครั้ง ดูแล้วมีขนาดใหญ่เมื่อเทียบกับขนาดของ
ศีรษะ และจากส่วนนี้เอง ที่พอจะสืบเสาะให้ถึงความได้
ว่าบางทีรูปเหมือนเหล่านี้ อาจจะเป็นพระพุทธรูปก็ได้
เพราะอย่างที่รู้กันว่า สำหรับพระโพธิสัตว์ปางต่างๆ
นั้น นอกจากทรงผมแล้ว รูปทรงและขนาดของใบหู
ก็เปลี่ยนไป ก็เป็นจุดให้สังเกตได้ว่าเป็นพระโพธิสัตว์ปาง
ใดดังนั้น อาจกล่าวได้ว่า ลักษณะของใบหูที่ปรากฏ
ให้เห็นในงานนั้น นอกจากจะสะท้อนร่องรอยของกาล
เวลาแล้ว ยังเป็นดังสัญลักษณ์ของแสงสว่างแห่งการ
ตื่นรู้ด้วย นอกจากนี้ อาจพินิจถึงรูปประติมากรรมเหล่านี้
ไม่เพียงส่งเสียงออกมา หากยังรับสารจากสิ่งต่างๆ
รอบกายไปในขณะเดียวกัน ทั้งสนทนา และโต้ถาม
และเมื่ออยู่รวมกันเป็นกลุ่มก้อน ก็ยิ่งให้ความรู้สึกที่
รุนแรงยิ่งขึ้น

[WILD RESONANCES]

Haritorn Akarapat's sculptures are unconventional busts. Humanoid rather than human, their presence has little to do with representation. Instead these robust and tactile sculptural forms have a ritualistic quality, suggesting engagement or some type of use. Displayed as a group, the works could be artifacts from an unknown culture. A sense of the animistic is pervasive. Moreover, some seem worn by time and therefore encode references to history and change.

When the human body is stripped of markers of identity it comes to stand for a universal figure. Akarapat plays with abstraction to compel our projections of meaning. However, the format of the bust and their grouping does broadly frame these artworks. The bust traditionally signifies authority and prestige, while Akarapat's grouping of the artworks differentially suggests the symbolism of a crowd or the display of artifacts for examination. At issue is how we identify ourselves with these forms. The cerebral implication of the heads and shoulders is off-set by the visceral quality of the modeling and surfaces. These artworks invite both contemplation and touch.

Akarapat collapses distinctions: the individual and the population; the representational and the experiential; the coded and the sensational; the culturally specific and the universal; the primordial and the modern; and the contemporary and the historic. The implications are wide. We are living through an era of tensions about the assimilating tendencies of global culture. 'Difference' in any form can seem benign for the currency of international art practices. Akarapat's great strength as an artist is his ability to tap into wildly different resonances. Yet all the while a fundamental concern with tracing the significance of what it means to be human is evident. This fundamental concern brings together a sense of the iconic with instinctive, less mediated, expression.

The human body could never be defined by representation, but representation plays such a large role in our understanding of the body. Artists may attempt to access some truth of the human body that exists beyond representation but the paradox inevitably renders the results as naïve. Conversely, a definitive concern with representation often reproduces the values that reduce the body to its images. Akarapat resists either possibility by recognizing and working across the limits of both. His recognition should dovetail with our own: the limits become anything but.

Brian Curtin
Art writer and curator

[ก้องกระซิบ]

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ไบรอัน เคอร์ติส เขียน เทกิง พัตตนอพาส แปล

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Be Takerng Pattanopas
Assistant professor, Chulalongkorn University and artist