



continued - compelled - comforted

PINAREE SANPITAK

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continued - compelled - comforted

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

20 May - 8 July 2000

Atelier FRANK & LEE

continued-compelled-comforted

it's still raining outside. finally the rain has arrived. once again.

wet. damp. lush.

the rain before your eyes. blurs. but somehow the mind becomes clearer.

for the past 6 months i have been drawing, painting, sculpting, de-stitching,
printing, dreaming these images.

the breast transformed.

the body - vessel opens up.

subtle vibes.

strange energy.

.....

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the breast candles are lit.

life. another phase

enter, feel, explore, discover, let go, or just simply enjoy.

pinaree sanpitak

april, 2000

'on time and the sublime: PINAREE SANPITAK'

The art of Pinaree Sanpitak invites us to consider many things. These works are more than their surface, more than their image, more than their appearance. It is difficult to speak *about* these works, I have chosen to talk *around* them through three ideas – that of the Sublime, that of the lover's discourse, and that of the need to draw and draw again.

the sublime

In his essay 'The Sublime and the Avant-garde', Lyotard does not so much comment on Barnett Newman's art, but speaks around his titles. Titles such as 'The Sublime is Now' (an essay) and *Not There – Here* (a painting) bring to light Newman's concerns about the Sublime as something close to notions of time, to 'the now'.

Newman wrote that he was not concerned with a manipulation of space or of image in his paintings, but with a sensation of time. He added that by this he did not mean the kind of time laden with nostalgia, or drama, or references and history – the usual subjects of painting. 1.

But Newman did not go on to explain *his* version of time. Similarly, Pinaree is subtly evasive. Her art is not so much concerned with the trappings of the symbolic image, the specifics of narrative or cluttered references. She is concerned more with the sensations of *time* – or more specifically, the sensations of the now – the *now* of her *making*, and the now of our *looking*.

'The Sublime' has lingered in western thought for quite a while. 'On the Sublime', attributed to the Classical Greek scholar Longinus, was written twenty centuries ago. This literary treatise resurfaced as a strong influence on 18th century writings on beauty, aesthetics and taste, particularly on Edmund Burke in his 1757 text 2. which in turn influenced Immanuel Kant's writings a decade or two later 3. Longinus linked the Sublime to an overpowering form of beauty – something nearing perfection – and therefore nearing the faraway realm of 'Heaven' and 'the Divine'. Burke however distinguished between the Sublime and 'the Beautiful'. He associated the Beautiful with the pleasure of 'attraction', while the Sublime was identified as a much stronger emotion associated with 'repulsion' – the Sublime being aroused at the contemplation of a terrifying, disturbing or dangerous situation (natural, artistic or intellectual). For Burke, the Sublime is more an intensification of feeling than an elevation of the soul – more about *being alive* than being *lifted aloft*. The Sublime then, according to Burke and Kant, is the shimmer of being human, or as Lyotard notes, resting somewhere between the contradictory feelings of 'pleasure and pain, joy and anxiety, exaltation and depression'. 4.

Kant went on to divide the Sublime into three categories – 'the terrifying' (epitomised by great depths), 'the noble' (great heights) and 'the splendid' (great buildings). He differed from Burke in his emphasis on the Sublime as the *human* response to an encounter, rather than as something inherent in the *thing encountered*.

Perhaps the Sublime in Pinaree's art aligns with all three views. These works are a demonstration of something nearing the presence of 'the Divine'; they also suggest the noble, the splendid and the void; and they give the Sublime back to us (the viewer) in terms of our experience of looking, *our* time of now.

a singular discourse

In the preface to 'A Lover's Discourse', Roland Barthes explains why this book needed to be written,

...the lover's discourse is today of an extreme solitude. This discourse is spoken, perhaps, by thousands of subjects (who knows?), but warranted by no one; it is completely forsaken by the surrounding languages; ignored, disparaged, or derided by them, severed not only from authority but also from the mechanisms of authority (sciences, techniques, arts). Once a discourse is thus driven by its own momentum into the backwater of the 'unreal', exiled from all gregariousity, it has no recourse but to become the site, however exiguous, of an affirmation. That affirmation is, in short, the subject of the book ... 5.

Affirmations may also be seen as the subject of Pinaree's art which bears traces of a lover's singular, private voice. There are two worlds (at least) at play in these works, the first (the things we recognise) seems to recall the grand narratives – bare outlines suggesting 'bigger' things. The 'shrine' suggesting spirituality, the 'stupa' suggesting culture-bearing, architectural motifs, and the 'breast' suggesting sex. On another level, there exists an internalised conversation, a conversation that mingles memories of touch with focussed wanderings, a conversation that goes late into the

night and ends not abruptly, rests and starts again. There is no lengthy didactic from Pinaree about these works – there is a language of secrecy here – these are private gestures. Yet her talismans are given over to us on a massive scale – through making she has held them close to the skin and touched them silently as reminders, as meditations on thoughts held dear. In fact looking into these works, these spare outlines-of-image quickly fall away. She gives us just enough to recollect something, then lets it drop. These are not paintings about *things* (breasts or shrines or bellies or boats) these are paintings about the essence of things, about *why* these things are important.

Again and Again...

In the disarming 20th century fairy-tale, 'The Little Prince', the author speaks about and illustrates a particular landscape more than once.

This is to me the loveliest and saddest landscape in the world. ... I have drawn it again to impress it on your memory. It is here that the little prince appeared on Earth, and disappeared. 6.

Pinaree also repeats herself. Her images are restated patiently and methodically – forming and re-forming themselves ever-so-slightly into something else. A kind-of-a breast becomes a kind-of-a-stupa, a boat slides through, and a surprised flower (not unlike the little prince's own troublesome loved one) sneaks in rapturously. She draws her favourite images again and again. She makes hundreds of wax candles (not a few), she sews fields of saa fibre domes (not one or two) and she makes many paintings.

The centralised images are still, but their surfaces are sensitised – activated at the edges through collage – these are drawn-over drawings – painted-over paintings. Looking on, we can fall into the surface and stay there for a while – not wanting to depart too soon or before time.

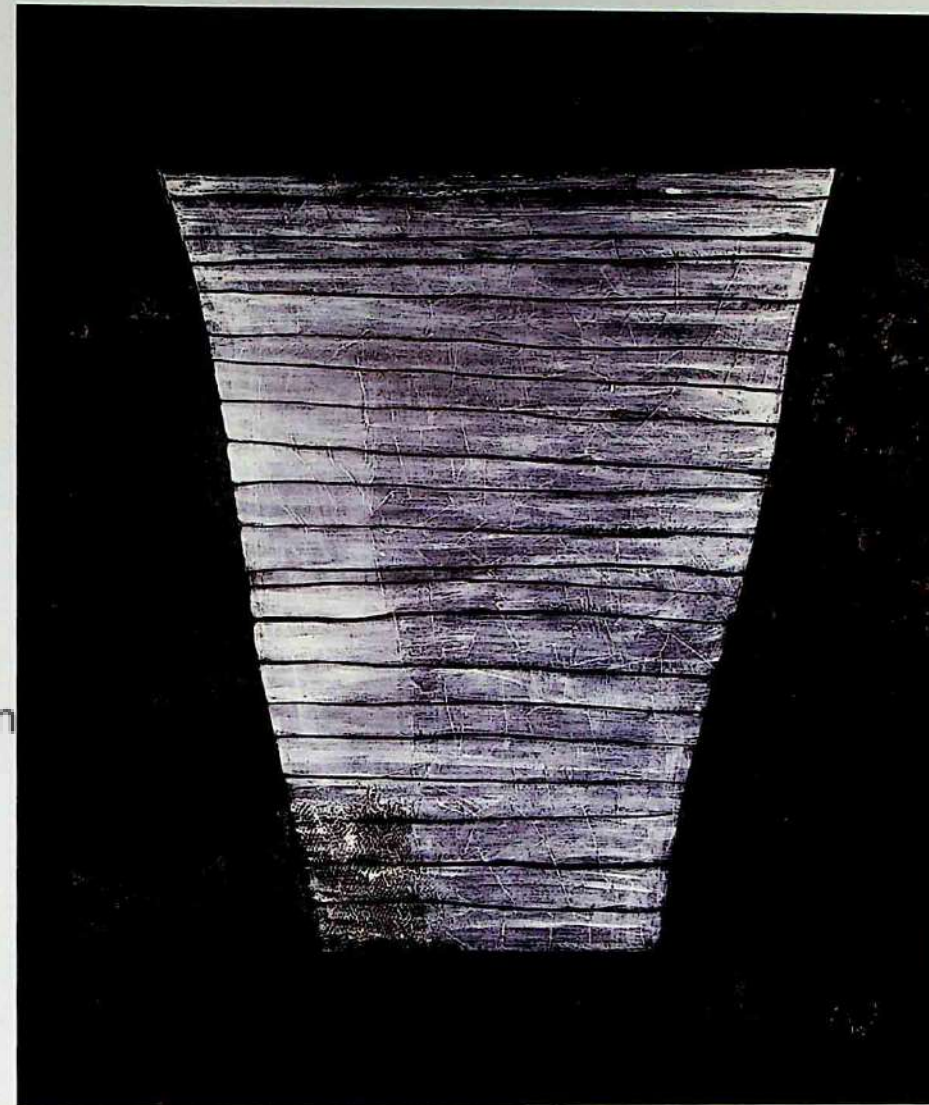
In Raymond Carver's poignant short story 'Cathedral' 7, an intriguing twist on the power of the visual occurs as a blind man, after an unsuccessful attempt to have a cathedral *described* to him by a friend, fervently *draws* a cathedral himself, using his friend's willing hand. The story ends with both men (the blind and the sighted) with closed eyes, both in awe of the image they have drawn together. It is unclear who leads the drawing – the man who cannot *describe* or the man who cannot *see*. Thus the inexpressible is expressed – not through speech but through (the unseen) image. Perhaps this is another brush with the Sublime.

Pinaree too expresses the inexpressible in her work – drawing her own 'cathedrals' again and again. Her art allows the non-essential to fall away, there is enough space. These are courageous and generous works, they can breathe and they invite us to breathe into them.

Rhona Devenport

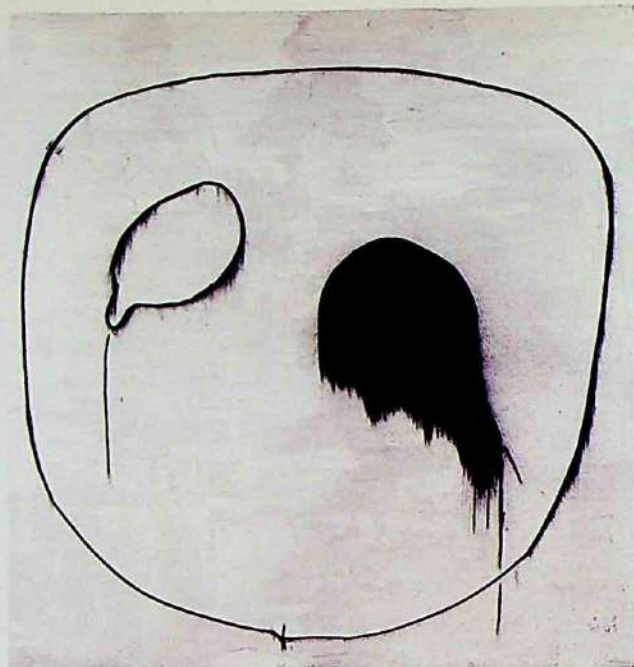
Asia-Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

1. Jean-François Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the Avantgarde' in *Artforum*, Vol. 22, no. 8 April, 1984, p. 36.
2. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. J. T. Boulton, London, 1958.
3. Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790)
4. Lyotard, *ibid*, p.37.
5. Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Penguin Books, London, 1977, p. 1.
6. Antoine De Saint-Exupery, trans. Katherine Woods, *The Little Prince*, Mammoth, London, 1945, p. 91.
7. Raymond Carver, 'Cathedral' in *Where I'm Calling From: New and Selected Stories*, Vintage Contemporaries, New York, 1986.



womanly echo

1998 - acrylic, pastel, collage on canvas - 200/170 cm

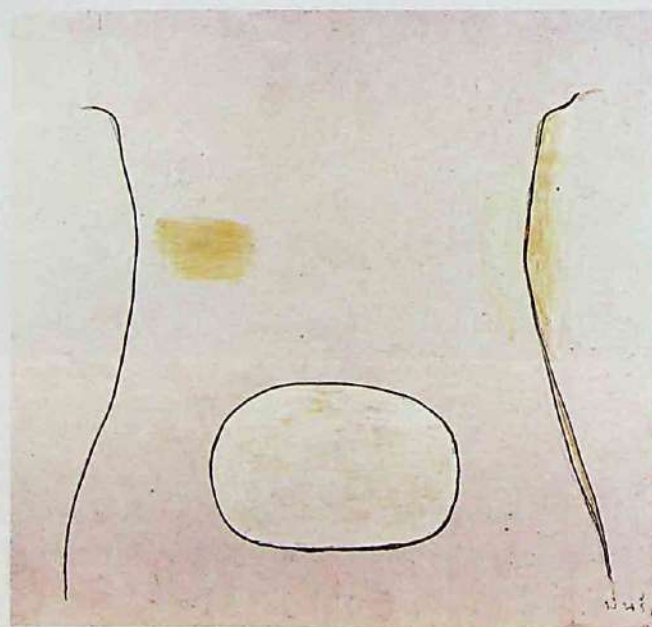


the black, the white and the body
1995 - acrylic, charcoal on canvas - 200/200 cm

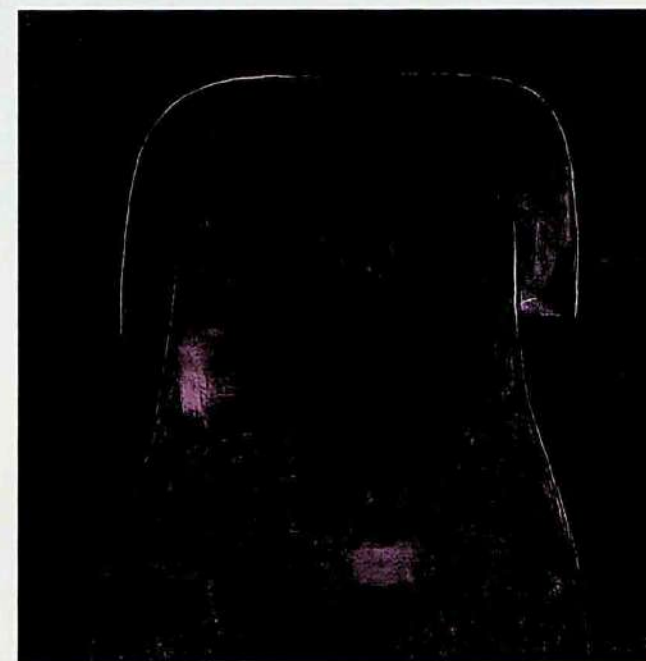


two hanging breasts
1995 - acrylic, pastel on canvas - 200/150 cm

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the egg
1997 - acrylic, charcoal, pastel on canvas - 200/210 cm



on your own
1997 - charcoal, pastel, saa paper on canvas - 220/200 cm



merit memory muse
1999 - acrylic, oil pastel, silver leaves on canvas - 200/80 cm

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the vessel of truth

The lines waver. The surface is textured. The color shimmers. These are paintings by Pinaree Sanpitak. When asked to describe her work, the artist demurely suggests that perhaps it is best to come by the studio and see the work itself. She hesitates to put words in my mouth, so I attempt to fill the void.

Someone once asked me what I would answer if confronted with the question, "What is the shape of the vessel of truth?" To me, at the time, the actual shape of the vessel wasn't so much a concern as the idea that somebody would want to restrain truth inside a receptacle of some sort. However, if I had to choose a shape I imagine it would be something similar to those created by Sanpitak. Specific forms constantly reappear in her work whether the medium is painting or sculptural installation. These forms and shapes are explored again and again and yet, like individuals, each piece is unique. Sanpitak's earlier works depict the egg shape and the breast; individually or together these are two life-giving/nurturing forms—not a bad state, I think, in which to house "truth". Truth should support the activity of life and to contain it in such a shape would not be impertinent. Occasionally inverted the breast form in Sanpitak's work has been associated to that of the "chedi" or stupa, a sacred structure that is typically located on Buddhist temple grounds. Other paintings by Sanpitak are interpreted as the tapered waist of the body but not just any body; "her" body—a woman's body. One may argue that this too is a sacred form. Lately, another image has crept into Sanpitak's work, a bowl with a narrow body and a wide rim. Imagine two hands cupped together, the insides close together; the top part open to receive but also to liberate, thus, providing easy access to its contents, potentially the truth.

Egg, breast, stupa, body, bowl—each object is perceived as a container. The essence of each form is captured. Minute details are unnecessary. These forms stand for something. We are given the bare forms layered on top of a canvas that feels as if it can tell a story or is about to reveal some deeper meaning if we are open to receive it.

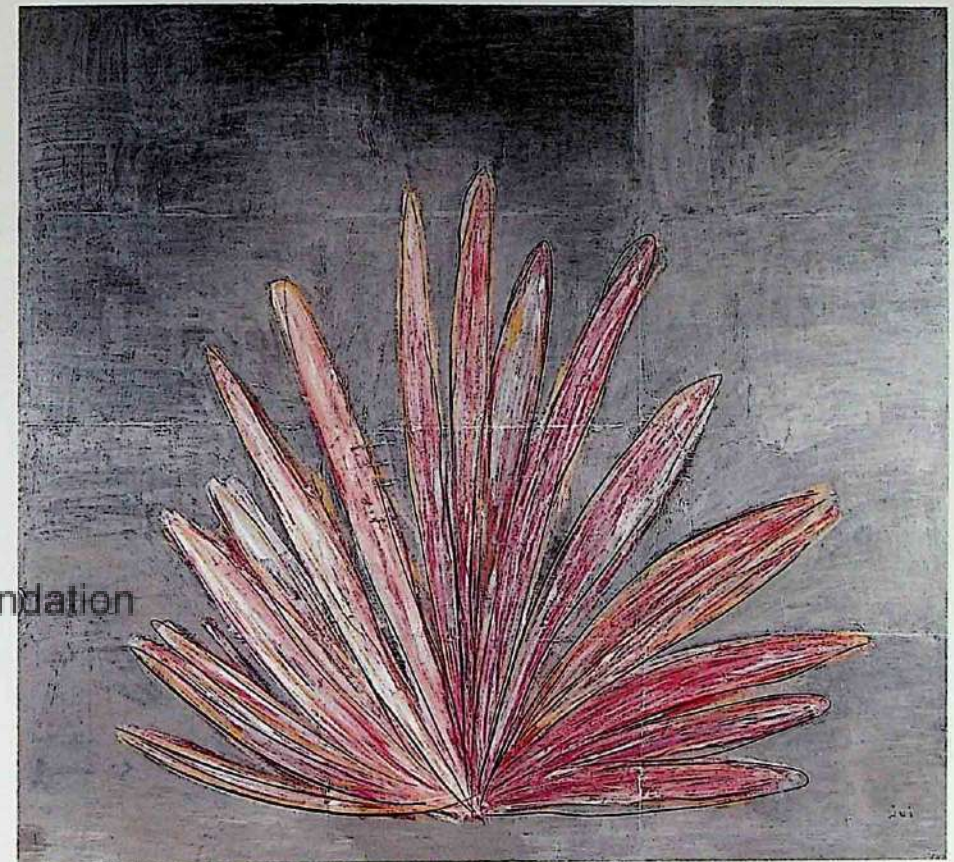
The connection between the lines on the canvas and the link to the body is only semi-abstract. Abstract in the sense that this is work that is not figurative. It is, however, clear in its symbolic relationship to femininity and, in my opinion, its relationship to containment. These paintings deal with issues of containment and release. They rouse one's curiosity of what's inside—is it good or bad—a dilemma stemming from Pandora's box. (Another container that according to ancient Greek mythology unleashed the evils into the world but also left us with hope.)

Sanpitak's painted forms floating in the center of the canvas are confident, strong, and solid. Truth is like that.

naomi urabe

Curator
About Art Related Activities (AARA)
Bangkok, Thailand 2000

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

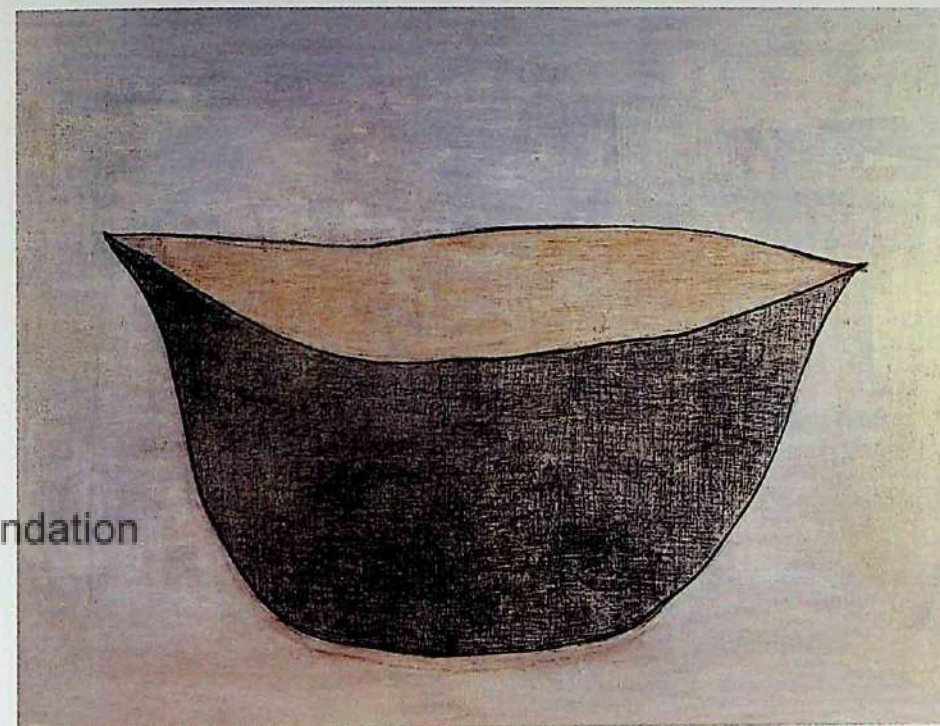


ephemeral

1999 - acrylic, charcoal, handmade paper on canvas - 210/229 cm



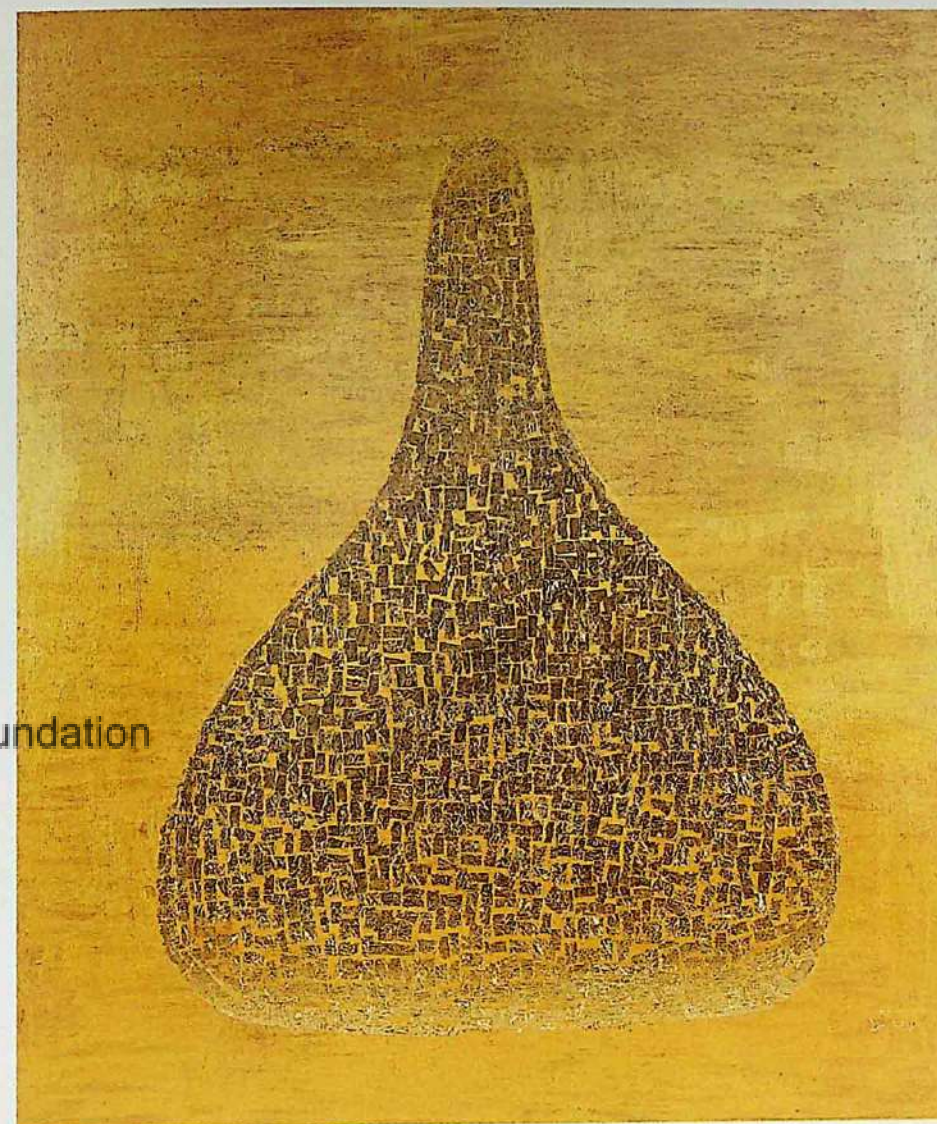
transpired
1999 - acrylic, oil pastel on canvas - 200/150 cm



lingering hours
2000 - acrylic, pastel, pencil, charcoal on canvas - 150/200 cm



matters of consequence
2000 - acrylic, modeling paste, pastel on canvas - 210/230 cm



golden muse
1999 - acrylic, sand, gold leaves on canvas - 200/170 cm

PINAREE SANPITAK

Born 1961, Bangkok, Thailand
Education 1986 BFA Visual Arts and Communication Design
School of Fine Arts and Design, University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan

selected solo exhibitions

- 2000 **continued-compelled-comforted**
Atelier Frank & Lee, Singapore
- 1999 **WOMANLY ABSTRACT**
About Studio/About Cafe, Bangkok, Thailand
- 1997 **eggs, breasts, bodies, I, etcetera**
The Art Center, Centers of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University
- 1994 **BREASTS WORKS**
Silom Art Space, Bangkok, Thailand

selected group exhibitions

- 2000 **DIOBOK - OBOK - Continuities and Contingencies - SE Asian Art Today**
Singapore Art Museum Touring Exhibition
- OPUS 2**
Grenoble, France
- GLOCAL SCENTS OF THAILAND**
Edsvik Konst & Kultur (EKK), Sweden
- 1999 **WOMEN IMAGING WOMEN: HOME, BODY, MEMORY**
Main Gallery, Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), Manila, Philippines
- FESTIVAL DER GEISTER / ASIAN SPIRIT AND GHOST FESTIVAL**
Kunsthau Tacheles, Berlin, Germany
- THE THIRD ASIA- PACIFIC TRIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART**
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
- 1997 **GLIMPSES INTO THE FUTURE - ART IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 1997**
Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan
Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art

residency programs

- 2000 **AFAA: Association Française d'Action Artistique, Artist - in - residence at Cité des Arts, Paris**
IASPIS : International Artists' Studio Program in Sweden
- 1999 **Printmaking Workshop - Northern Editions**
Northern Territory University (NTU), Darwin, Australia



to be

continued, compelled, comforted...