

# MEDIA RELEASE



## Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook *Storytellers of the Town*

Presented by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art



Image: Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Great Times Message, Storytellers of the Town, The Insane* (still) (2006).  
Image courtesy the artist and 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok.

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4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art is pleased to present *Storytellers of the Town*, a solo exhibition by Thai artist Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, one of Thailand's foremost contemporary artists, and a leading female voice in South East Asian art.

4A Director Aaron Seeto says, '*This solo exhibition at 4A spans about twenty years of Araya's practice. Araya is one of the key figures of contemporary art in Thailand who has a continuing influence on the development of visual culture and ideas in the region. This is an extraordinary opportunity to see works from this internationally acclaimed artist who has rarely been shown in Australia.*'

The exhibition has been curated by John Clark and Clare Veal, internationally respected art historians and Thai scholars, and includes works that have previously never been seen outside of Thailand, such as *Has Girl Lost Her Memory* (1994), which has been reconstructed for 4A. This work presents the artist's negotiations with traditional roles for women in Thailand, recognising the social restrictions placed on her mother and grandmother, as well as her own attempts to surpass these limitations.

Araya's practice - spanning performance, video installation, photography and text - is concerned with the fundamental aspects of life and death, collective experiences of history

and fate, and notions of the female and its constructed role within the context of contemporary Thai society.

Exhibition curators John Clark and Clare Veal say, 'Storytellers of the Town *includes works which represent the artist's intimate and confronting meditations on the limits of the mind and body, and the artist's own attempts to find a language to represent her experience as a woman; a Thai person; a daughter and granddaughter; a teacher and as an individual who has experienced extreme loss through the deaths of those close to her.*'

Having lost her mother at an early age, Araya's work also attempts to create a space for the representation of death and loss. In *The Class* (2005) the artist is shown directing a tutorial to a classroom of six corpses, which are shrouded in white sheets and arranged side-by-side on silver morgue trays. The work deals with both the diversity of cultural attitudes towards mortality, and the seeming futility of communicating with those past.

The artist, Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, will be in Sydney and available for interview from 10-22 March 2014. She will lead a public floor talk on Saturday 15 March from 2pm at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art.

*Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: Storytellers of the Town* is curated by John Clark and Clare Veal, and presented in association with *Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: The Village and Elsewhere* at the University Art Gallery, University of Sydney. *Storytellers of the Town* will tour to Canberra to the ANU Drill Hall Gallery in mid-year where it will be accompanied by a new publication on the artist.

**EXHIBITION DATES:** 14 March – 10 May 2014  
**WHERE:** 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art  
 181-187 Hay Street, Haymarket, Sydney  
**VENUE DETAILS:** 11am-6pm, Tuesday - Saturday  
 Closed public holidays  
**ARTIST TALK:** Floor talk, Saturday 15 March, 2pm  
**4A WEBSITE:** WWW.4A.COM.AU

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PROJECT SUPPORTER



*Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook: Storytellers of the Town* is produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in association with ANU Drill Hall Gallery and University of Sydney and is supported by the Commonwealth through the Australia-Thailand Institute of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Gordon Darling Foundation and 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok.



Top left: Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *The Class* (still) (2005), single-channel video installation. Image courtesy the artist and 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok.

Top right: Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Treachery of the Moon* (still) (2012), single-channel video installation. Image courtesy the artist

Bottom left: Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Great Times Message, Storytellers of the Town, The Insane* (still) (2006), three-channel video installation. Image courtesy the artist and 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok.

**Artist Biography:**

**Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook** was born in Trat, Thailand, in 1957. After earning both a BFA and an MFA in graphic arts from Silpakorn University, Bangkok, she continued her studies in Germany at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, receiving a diploma in 1990 and an MA in 1994. Radjarmrearnsook's work has been installed in solo presentations at international institutions including the National Gallery, Bangkok (1987, 1992, 1994, 1995 and 2002); Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm (2003); Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach (2012); Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (2012) and Denver Art Museum, Denver (2013). She has been included in a number of biennial and periodic exhibitions including the Biennale of Sydney (1996 and 2010), Istanbul Biennale (2003) and Documenta 13 (2012). The artist's work has also been show in group exhibitions internationally, at venues including Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (2001 an 2007); Fine Arts Museum, Berne, Switzerland (2006); National Art Gallery, Singapore (2010); National Museum of Art, Osaka (2011); Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (2012) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013). Rasdjarmrearnsook, a lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University, lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

**Curator Biographies:**

**John Clark** is a specialist on modern Japanese and Chinese art as well as several other Asian countries. He retired from Professor of Asian Art History [Personal Chair] at the University of Sydney in October 2013, and is a Fellow of the Australia Academy of Humanities. He first visited Thailand in October 1976, and has been working on modern and contemporary Thai art since 1992. He recently published the first comparative study in English of two modern Asian art cultures, *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai art of the 1980s and 1990s*, Sydney, Power Publications, 2010 with a forewords by Yin Shuangxi and Apinan Poshyananda.

**Clare Veal** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Art History & Film Studies at the University of Sydney, where she is completing her thesis on the relationship between photography and Thai identity from 1950 to 2010. She has published in *Trans Asia Photography Reviews*, *Modern Art Asia*, and the *Silpakorn Journal of Fine Arts*, and is currently working as a sub-editor for Asian art for the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Modernism*. Clare is the Global Research Associate at the Thai Art Archives, Bangkok.



## **About 4A**

4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (4A) is dedicated to the contemporary art of the Asia-Pacific region. We were established in 1996 at the outset of the international development of this field. Our exhibitions, educational workshops, residencies and support of artists positions Australia as part of a critical discussion reflective of the many shifts towards Asia that are occurring throughout all levels of society.

Our perspective is unique, it speaks globally about the cultural, economic and social transformations occurring in the region, whilst also considering Australia's unique culture, history and social make-up that has occurred through migration. 4A creates awareness of Asian and Australian culture and is used by educators around the country as an important tool to facilitate cultural literacy. Importantly we create real opportunities and pathways for Australian art in the region. We work with significant Asian artists and at the same time we support some of the youngest and emerging. Our activities are constantly developing through the research and insight of a dedicated and knowledgeable board and staff. 4A is adventurous, ambitious and relevant both nationally and internationally, through contemporary art, we tell a story that is relevant to our time.

## **HISTORY**

4A was established in 1996 by a dedicated group of artists, curators and theatre makers. This group was passionate about creating opportunities for other artists and raising the profile of Asian art and culture in Australia, while developing platforms to exhibit and to nurture critical and independent discussions.

4A was one of the first organisations in Australia to dedicate itself to encouraging, documenting and fostering contemporary Asian-Australian art activities and to seriously explore the art, culture and ideas unique to the context of Australia and the Asia-Pacific.