

ARNDT

SVAY SARETH

Svay Sareth's works in sculpture, installation and durational performance are made using materials and processes intentionally associated with war – metals, uniforms, camouflage and actions requiring great endurance. While his critical and cathartic practice is rooted in an autobiography of war and resistance, he refuses both historical particularity and voyeurism on violence. Rather, his works traverse both present and historical moments, drawing on processes of survival and adventure, and ideas of power and futility.

Traitor and Tradition is host to Svay's latest soft-sculpture series *Ruins* (2014 -). It was initially inspired by the ruinous state of the artist's studio and garden during and after the making of his recent large-scale commission *Toy (Churning of the Sea of Milk)* for the Singapore Biennale 2013, in which multiple oversized Hindu deity figures – Asuras (The Bad) and Devas (The Good) – pose in tug-of-war. Strewn around his working spaces were molds and models of body parts, simultaneously recalling war-torn scenes of the past and the uncountable Khmer stone ruins floating around in the present – the most significant pieces of which are “rescued” and classified by dealers, auction houses and archeologists.

Ruins is a series of fragments classified in titles by character and body part. Mythical and religious identities made anonymous, dismembered – reduced to mortal human elements that created them. Their hulking presence, camouflage skin and cartoonish ornamental stitching strips romanticized notions around narratives otherwise known in elegant stone carvings. Svay's practice of resistance here is not only against past traditions of idealizing powerful figures but the ongoing catastrophes this provokes. .

Biography

Svay Sareth (1972, Battambang) is one of Cambodia's leading artists. After studying art at historic Site 2 refugee camp in the late 1980s, Svay became a co-founder of the vibrant non-governmental organization and art school Phare Ponleu Selpak in Battambang in 1994. He holds a BFA and MFA/Diplôme National Supérieur d'Études des Arts Plastiques, Caen, France (2009). Svay's recent exhibitions include *The Mirror and Monitor of Democracy in Asia*, Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju (2014), 4th Singapore Biennale (2013), *Phnom Penh Rescue Archaeology*, The Disappearance, Center for Contemporary Art, Singapore and ifa, Berlin and Stuttgart (2013). His solo exhibitions include *Traffic Circle*, SA SA BASSAC, Phnom Penh (2012) and *La Terre Ferme*, French Institute, Phnom Penh (2010). Svay was a nominee of the Signature Art Prize, Singapore (2011).