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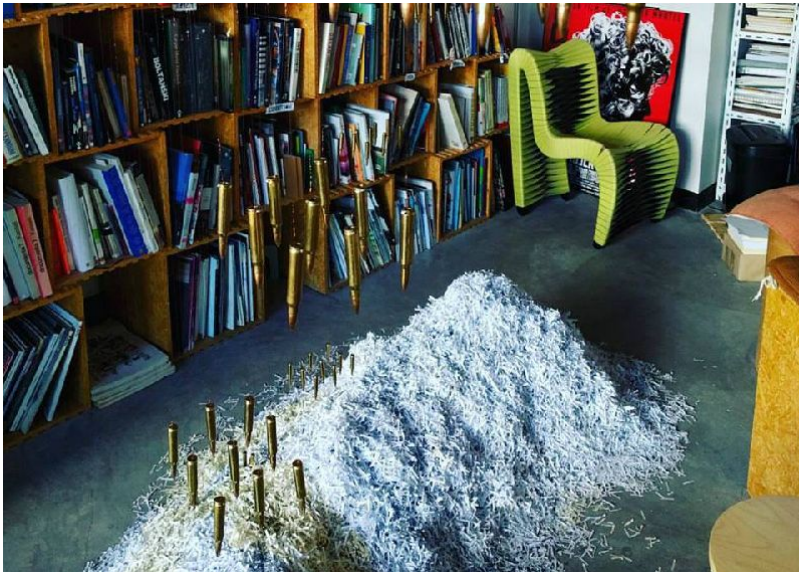
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Paradise of the Blind: Prohibited Prints Under Assault at ‘Reading Room’



Paradise of the Blind art installation on May 6 at The Reading Room. Photo: Klaikong Vaidhyakarn / Facebook

By Chayanit Itthipongmaetee
Staff Reporter

BANGKOK — For its gay penguin parents, Singapore limited access to “And Tango Makes Three.” Chinese censors originally banned Lewis Carroll’s masterwork “Alice’s Adventure in Wonderland” for representing human-animal equality

Those are among hundreds of censored books from around the world to be reinterpreted and displayed for one month at an art installation in Bangkok.

Named for a novel banned in Vietnam due to its politics, Paradise of the Blind is the title of an exhibition of censored works artist Sutthirat Supaparinya has studied since October.

Sutthirat Supaparinya, who believes that forbidding people to read something is akin to blinding them, flew from her home in Chiang Mai to Bangkok, where she spent nearly a week changing the fourth-floor library into a literary crime scene of books, shredded papers, rifle bullets and more.

“I expect many questions from audiences to ask themselves about the limitations of their right to read and access information,” Sutthirat wrote in reply to a reporter’s inquiries. Hopefully then, she said, audiences will question how things that seem harmless are banned and push against their own limitations and boundaries.

Paradise of the Blind is also the first in a series of “Sleepover” projects at The Reading Room on lower Silom Road, in which six artists take over the space for one month each to create a cultural, critical art project.

The exhibition has already gotten the attention of the military, who dispatched two soldiers to its opening last week.

Reading Room founder Narawan Pathomvat said the officers stuck around for five or six hours, asking many questions.



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She believes they were there over “The Real Face of Thai Feudalism,” a book by late Thai historian Chit Phumisak, which was briefly banned for its critical take on Thai class hierarchy.

Books in the exhibition also include Pramodya Ananta Toer’s “All That Is Gone” (banned in Indonesia) and Noam Chomsky’s “Year 501: The Conquest Continues” (blacklisted by the South Korean military).



A picture from Sutthirat Supaparinya’s solo exhibition Steal This Book late last year in Wellington, New Zealand. Photo: Sutthirat Supaparinya / Courtesy

Paradise of the Blind runs through May 29 at The Reading Room.

Following Sutthirat’s project, the space will be transformed for the month of June by a group of Southeast Asian art historians into **Southeast of Now**. Events from July through October will feature writer-illustrator Teepagorn Wutipitayamongkol, writer-director **Prabda Yoon**, and a coordination between the Thai Netizen Network, Social Technology Institute and Boonmee Lab.

The Sleepover project will close out with world-renowned indie film director Apichatpong Weerasethakul in October.

The Reading Room is located on Soi Silom 19. Home to more than 1,000 books, it is open from 1pm to 7pm, Wednesday through Sunday.



A promotional poster for The Reading Room’s Sleepover project. Photo: The Reading Room / Facebook

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