

TOP

24
AUG

263

42

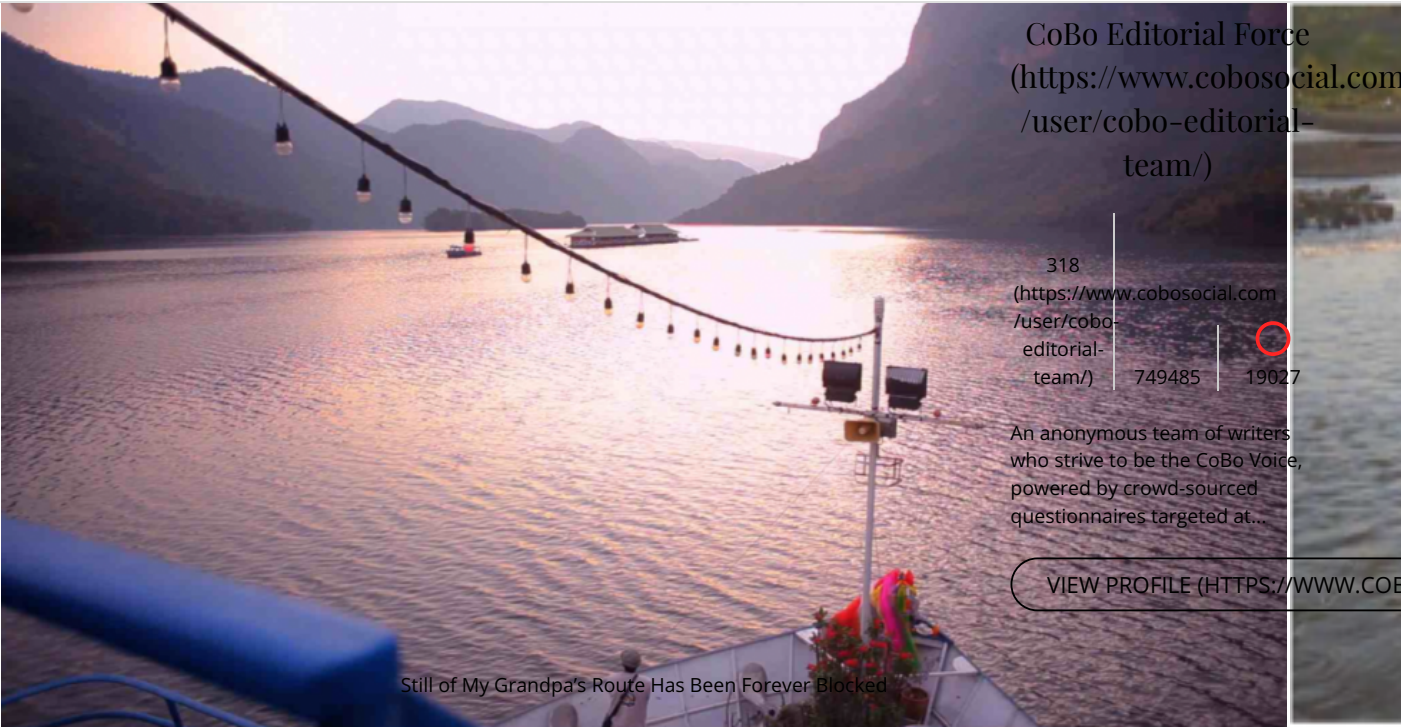
0
(https://www.cobosocial.com/)
(https://www.cobosocial.com/
/dossiers/sutthirat-supaparinya-as-
the-river-flows/#comments)

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/
/user/cobo-
editorial-
team/)

(https://www.cobosocial.com/)

Sutthirat Supaparinya: As the River Flows

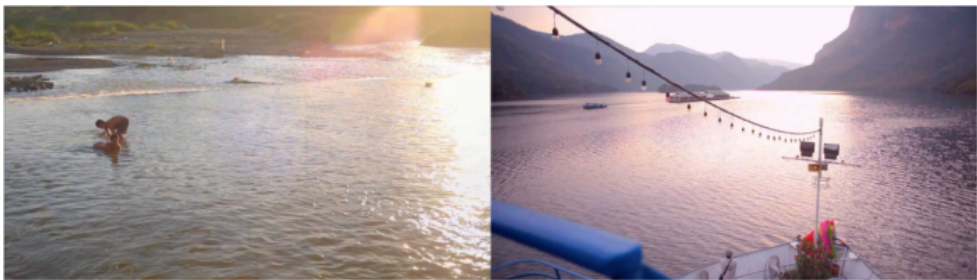


(/artinthebar/?utm_campaign=website_banner&utm_medium=banner&utm_source=website_cs&utm_content=regular_eng_banner)

TOP
24
AUG

We met Thai artist Sutthirat Supaparinya, a.k.a. "Som", in Tokyo for her participation in the exhibition, *SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*. In her video installation, *My Grandpa's Route Has Been Forever Blocked* (2012), she explored the changes of the Ping River, waterscape. (https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/sutthirat-supaparinya-as-the-river-flows/#comments)

TEXT: CoBo Editorial
IMAGE: Courtesy of the artist



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Screen-Shot-2017-08-24-at-11.11.58-am-e1503544694288.png)

Still of My Grandpa's Route Has Been Forever Blocked

Once upon a time, 700 years before the foundation of Chiang Mai, Hariphunchai was one of the first and most powerful kingdoms in the north of Thailand. A princess from Hariphunchai travelled through the Ping River and built many temples on the way, some of which are still visible by going down along the river on a ferry.

The Thai artist Sutthirat Supaparinya (b. 1973, Chiang Mai, Thailand) did precisely that. She hopped on one of the ferries and went down this ancient trade route, which is now interrupted by a dam. What she found was that the romanticism of the past few centuries has now disappeared due to the construction of the Bhumibol Dam, which was built in 1958 and has dramatically changed the local landscape.

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

CoBo Editorial Force
(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

318
(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

749485	19027
--------	-------

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

[VIEW PROFILE \(HTTPS://WWW.COE](https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

TOP

24

AUG

She brings the viewer along on her journey in the video installation, *My Grandpa's Route Has Been Forever Blocked*. This compares the riverscape of today to what it could have looked like in her grandfather's time.

263

42

/dossiers/sutthirat-supaparinya-as-the-river-flows/#comments)

My Grandpa's Route has been forever blocked

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

CoBo Editorial Force

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

318

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

749485

19027

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

What compelled you to realise *My Grandpa's Route Has Been Forever Blocked* in 2012. Was it connected to the flood of 2011?

It was by accident that I shot it during the big flood. There was an invitation from the Goethe Institute, who invited artists to work on the rivers in Southeast Asia, and the curator of the show asked me to participate.

It was the first time that I'd thought about the river and the relationship that I have with it. It came naturally to me to reflect on it from my family's perspective, as both of my grandparents had lived on this river. One of my grandfathers used to work for a company that traded on the river. He also conducted his own trading and would leave our home and spend most of his time on the river, travelling around the different areas.

VIEW PROFILE (HTTPS://WWW.COE

TOP

24
AUG

What was the most important business at the time?

0

(https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/sutthirat-supaparinya-as-the-river-flows/#comments)

42

It was the teak wood business. A lot of European companies had been commissioned by the government to cut and export the wood from the north of Thailand. At that time, the river was the main source of transport, not only for traders, but also for most of the people who used to travel from the north of Thailand to Bangkok. My grandparents, who lived on the river, used to have many guests that stopped by and stayed at their house. Westerners and foreigners would also stop there on the way. Today, it is very different. Water transportation can no longer reach Bangkok from Chiang Mai because of the dam that was built on the river in 1958. It blocked the whole thing.

The area where they built the dam had a huge teak forest, which meant that someone had to cut the wood before the dam. They didn't really talk about it. There was no, "Sorry about that", considering that the whole area was flooded. Many districts in that area have remained underwater.



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Screen-Shot-2017-08-24-at-11.26.17-am-e1503545216700.png)

Still of My Grandpa's Route Has Been Forever Blocked

Your video work doesn't feel like a critique, as it is actually serene and peaceful. What is your position on the river developments? How do you see these changes?

I'm not really saying whether it is good or bad, I just want to show how we produce electricity and how it is

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

CoBo Editorial Force

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

318

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

749485

19027

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

VIEW PROFILE (HTTPS://WWW.COE

4 of 12

9/9/17, 20:36

TOP

24
AUG

impacting us in a visual form. When I see the dam, it brings back memories of my grandparents' story at the time. He lived in a village in the hills, and the whole village had to relocate to another area. For me, doing this work was not only about going back to the river, but also to show the environmental change that took place and how the riverscape has been changed by the electricity generation.

We live in the city and consume a lot of electricity, but we never see where it comes from or how it is produced. So, I think it is about making a relationship that exists between those who consume electricity and the source of making that electricity. This piece was the first one that related to the electricity generation issue that I was interested in.



(<https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Screen-Shot-2017-08-24-at-11.17.36-am-e1503544908351.png>)

Installation view of 10 Places in Tokyo

AUTHOR

(<https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/>)

CoBo Editorial Force
(<https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/>)

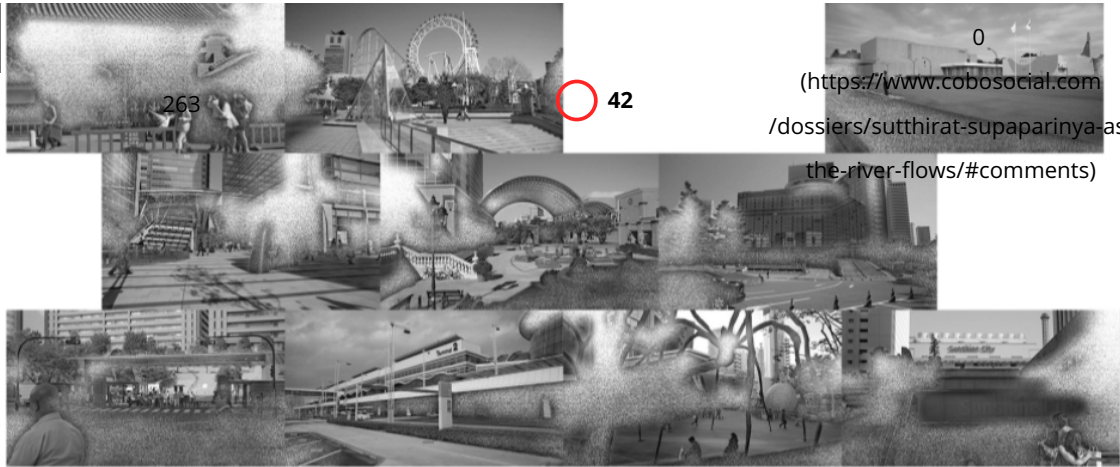
318
(<https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/>)

749485	19027
--------	-------

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

[VIEW PROFILE \(HTTPS://WWW.COE](https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

TOP
24
AUG



(<https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Screen-Shot-2017-08-24-at-11.17.54-am.png>)

Still of 10 Places in Tokyo

Another work that is related to the electricity generation, which you have shown here in Japan, is *10 Places in Tokyo* (2016), which talks about nuclear power. Can you tell us a bit about it?

For that project, I was interested in the end user of the electricity. Electricity consumption in Tokyo is linked closely to TEPCO, which is a company that produces electricity and runs Fukushima. I wanted to make a relationship between these technologies. I decided to use the effects from the explosion at Hiroshima during World War Two. I went to Hiroshima because I had a show there and had the chance to walk around the city. I went to see the museum and got a lot of inspiration from the evidence there was of the nuclear explosion.

When the bomb exploded, it was very hot and everything went white. There was a very bright light over the whole area. After the explosion, everything in black or dark colours burnt first. So, I made these videos in black and white, and played with the black colour to burn the dark areas so that they were no longer black at the end of the video. It's a ten-channel video that shows the ten places using the most electricity in Tokyo.

AUTHOR

(<https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/>)

CoBo Editorial Force
(<https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/>)

318
(<https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/>)

749485

19027

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

[VIEW PROFILE \(HTTPS://WWW.CO...](https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

TOP

24
AUG

0

(https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/sutthirat-supaparinya-as-the-river-flows/#comments)

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

CoBo Editorial Force
(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

318
(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

749485

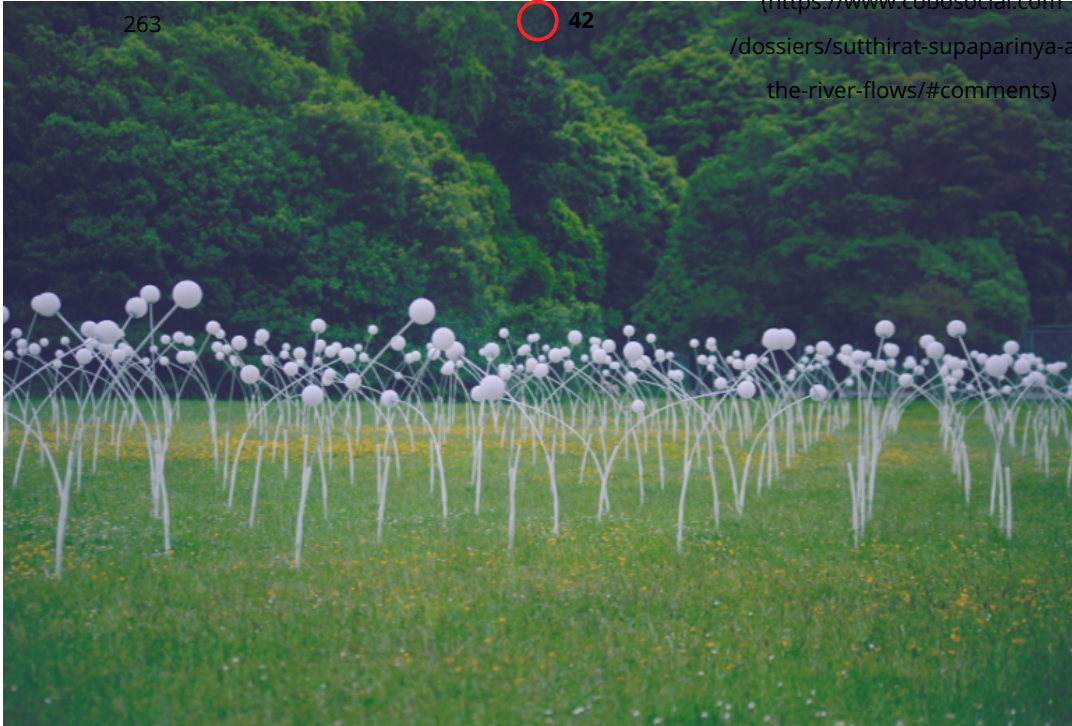
19027

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

VIEW PROFILE (HTTPS://WWW.COE

263

42



(https://www.cobosocial.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Screen-Shot-2017-08-24-at-11.27.37-am-1.png)

2016, Video installation: Dual-channel video (19 minutes and 2 minutes), Full HD , Channel 1, 1920×1080/ 16:9 and Channel 2, 1444×1080/ 4:3, sound, color, dimension vary with each installation.

Commissioned by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, Singapore, 2016. Curated by Sam I-Shan. Supported by The Asia New Zealand Foundation and the Wellington City Council. Photo & Courtesy Sutthirat Supaparinya.

The work you have made since 2016 has been mostly related to politics and what has happened in Thailand as a result of the limitation on freedom of expression. Do you think that Thai audiences have become increasingly political?

TOP

24

AUG

In Thailand, people are starting to become more concerned about what is happening in their own country. Before, people weren't really interested in politics because they didn't think it was a part of their lives. However, over the last decade, everyone has realised that it affects their existence and they need to understand it and take part in it.

Being in Chiang Mai, quite far from the capital, things are generally a little more relaxed, but some people who work in the public areas are still under pressure. We can be less strict over little things, like wearing black after the death of the king, than they are in Bangkok, where everyone wore black. You were not forced to, but people would look down on you if you didn't conform.

People today pay more attention to Southeast Asia, and particularly Thailand. Do you think the artists of your generation, who tend to be more international, experience a different reality compared to the previous generations?

I think so. There are more opportunities. People are definitely more interested in Thai artists than before, but I don't really know why. For some artists, the interest goes beyond nationality. The good part about exhibiting abroad is that you can share your own experiences with other Thai artists. You can create conversations that are more universal and go beyond only talking about one's own country.

SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now (http://sunshower2017.jp/en/index.html)
July 5 –October 23, 2017
The National Art Center, Tokyo
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

CoBo Editorial Force
(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

318

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

749485

19027

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

VIEW PROFILE (HTTPS://WWW.COE

TOP

24
AUG

About the artist:

0

AUTHOR

(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

Sutthirat Supaparinya lives and works in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Her works encompass a wide variety of mediums, such as installation, photography, video and sculpture. Through her works, she questions, interprets public information and reveals what structures affect her/us as a national/global citizen. Her recent projects focus on the impact of human activities on other humans and the landscape. Sutthirat seeks to cultivate a freedom of expression through her art practice.

As a visual artist among art community in Chiang Mai, she has participated in the founding and operation of CAC – Chiangmai Art Conversation since 2013. CAC partnered with the Japan Foundation Bangkok and Japan Foundation Asia Center Tokyo to establish Asia Culture Station (ACS) in Chiang Mai, which she has directed since August 2016. CAC aims to promote contemporary art in Chiang Mai while ACS activates Asian culture and its network. Sutthirat earned a BFA in painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Chiang Mai University and a postgraduate diploma in Media Arts from Hochschule Fuer Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig, Germany. She received a 2005 Imaging Our Mekong fellowship via Rockefeller Foundation and a 2010 Asian Cultural Council fellowship at International Studio & Curatorial Program – ISCP in New York City. She was selected to participate in the International Creator Residency Program at the Tokyo Wonder Site Aoyama in 2012, Foundation Künstlerdorf Schöppingen, NRW, Germany in 2013 and Wellington Asia Residency Exchange, New Zealand in 2015.

Her works have appeared in group and solo exhibitions, including art centres, museums and galleries in Thailand, as well as Australia, Cambodia, China, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, The Philippines, Myanmar, Romania, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, New Zealand and the United States.

318
(https://www.cobosocial.com/user/cobo-editorial-team/)

749485

19027

An anonymous team of writers who strive to be the CoBo Voice, powered by crowd-sourced questionnaires targeted at...

VIEW PROFILE (HTTPS://WWW.COE

#artist interview (https://www.cobosocial.com/tag/artist-interview/)