

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Korakrit Arunanondchai Solo Exhibition *"Image, Symbol, Prayer"* at Kukje Gallery

Press Conference: December 15 (Thurs.), 2022, 11am at Kukje Gallery K3

Exhibition Dates: December 15, 2022 – January 29, 2023

Venue: Kukje Gallery K3

"Image, Symbol, Prayer"

– Korakrit Arunanondchai

The ashes are where we pray in the space of unreality. Fire burns everything into a ground of irreducible matter. Who will remember the time when the world was on fire?

Ashes embody the anarchy of unclassifiable society, where the flame is neither quenched nor ready to be reignited again. This residue is yet to be reborn into oppositions, groups and regimes.

There is a universal time at the true center of the universe. It can be accessed when we gather to tell stories about the time before and after everything. These stories kindle the cycles of creation and decreation. This is where God exists. This is the space we pray to. This is death. What exists beyond death is a promise, one that is never fulfilled nor broken. It always leaves us with a sense of longing. Bodies of people gather under this promise.

From the fire and ashes: does a political system only become fully aware of itself as it's on the verge of disappearing? Is it only understood by the victims of history in a world ablaze? The ashes mark our defeat, scattered below monuments forged by the winners.

"The Phoenix's privilege," writes Bachelard, "is to be reborn of its own self, not of the 'ashes' of others." The Phoenix is averse to a community of and in ashes; it carries the ridiculous principle of autonomy through to its logical conclusion in death, and even beyond death. But it is precisely this community devoid of hope for another life or another fire, one where my incinerated self is mixed with the 'ashes' of others.¹

We formed our symbolic relationship to the world and to each other by making and looking into fire. As we gathered around it searching for images and symbols, the ground beneath and the sky above bore witness.

New meanings will be made along the way, in the form of a dream. Because dreams are more powerful than history. Because dreams escape death.

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *"Image, Symbol, Prayer,"* a solo exhibition of the Thai artist Korakrit

¹ Michael Marder, *Pyropolitics in the World Ablaze* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020)

Arunanondchai, on view at the gallery's K3 space from December 15, 2022, through January 29, 2023. This will be the artist's first exhibition at the gallery since the announcement of his representation in 2021. Working across a diverse range of mediums from video and performance to painting and installation, Arunanondchai interweaves an intricate codependency of forms to ask fundamental questions regarding existence and meaning, processed through the personal and the collective, life and death, and different belief systems. In this first exhibition with the gallery, Arunanondchai's *History Paintings* surround the viewer on a floor made from compressed ash and clay. A prayer text is sculpted into the floor and reads:

In the beginning there was discovery / New nightmares, to challenge sleep / The need to impose order unto chaos / We create this world through unanswered prayers. / There's a splendor beyond the upheaval / A nostalgia for unity / In the landscape of mourning / Give yourself to the air, to what you cannot hold / The ghost possesses Nothing

Above the prayer that runs along the edge of the room are *History Paintings* and *Voids (sky paintings)*. Begun in 2012, Arunanondchai's iconic series of *History Paintings* uses denim as its primary material, initially chosen because of its connection to a history of labor and Western forces of globalization. The artist bleaches and then builds upon layers of painting onto the denim, often using his body imprint and relief transfer technique that captures the texture of the earth. These surfaces become a stage for the fire to perform on and a material for it to consume. In these paintings, fire acts as both Arunanondchai's process and subject; an entanglement between form and content. When the painting is set on fire, Arunanondchai photographs the painting as it burns away. Once the fire is extinguished, remaining fragments of the paintings and their resultant ashes are assembled back together with a photographic documentation of the painting on fire, into an object that carries the image of its own making.

Intrigued by the term "medium specificity" in art and its association with spirit-mediums, Arunanondchai has long been fascinated by non-human forces and how they impact our political systems and shared reality. Related to this, fire and ash have been important materials in Arunanondchai's thinking and narrating of personal, social incidents. It is on this pyro-spiritual journey centered around ash—the remnant from the fire that burns everything into a ground of irreducible matter—that viewers are invited to survey the universal cycle of creation and de-creation.

About the Artist

Born in 1986 in Bangkok, Thailand, Korakrit Arunanondchai received his BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009 and his MFA from Columbia University in 2012. He now lives and works in Bangkok and New York. Arunanondchai has exhibited widely across the globe, including solo exhibitions at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm (ongoing), Art Sonje Center, Seoul (2022), Singapore Art Museum (2022), Kunsthall Trondheim (2021), Serralves Museum, Porto (2020), Spazio Maiocchi, Milan (2019), Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki (2017), Museion, Bolzano (2016), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015), and the Museum of Modern Art PS1, New York (2014). He has also participated in various biennales including the Gwangju Biennale (2021), 16th Istanbul Biennale (2019), Whitney Biennial (2019), the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (2019), and the 20th Biennale of Sydney (2016). His works are permanently collected by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Tate Modern, London; Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo; Zabłudowicz Collection, London; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing.

Arunanondchai is also co-founder and organizer of *Ghost*, an ongoing series of art and performance festivals in Bangkok. The artist has recently joined this year's ArtReview's Power 100 roster for the first time, ranking 88 on the list of the most influential figures in the art world as announced by the British arts magazine.



Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. 1986)

You who wish to find prayers, look for it in the ashes

2022

Metallic paint and acrylic polymer on bleached denim on inkjet print on canvas

218.4 x 162.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Thappawut Parinyapariwat

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. 1986)

Who will testify to the time when the world was ablaze?

2022

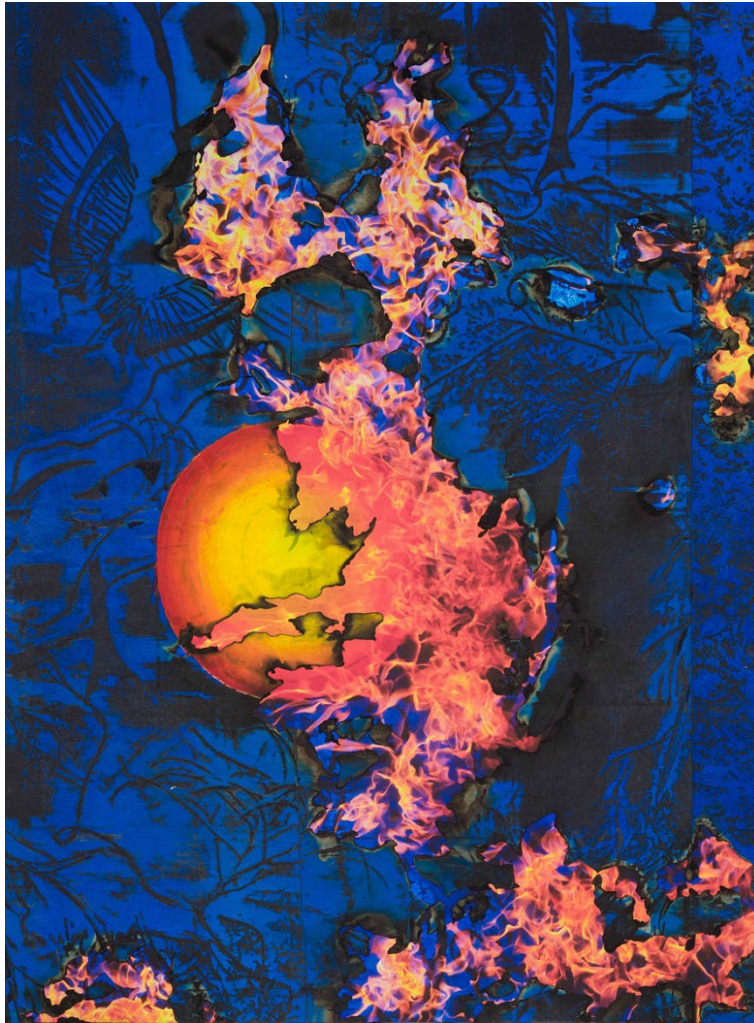
Acrylic polymer on gold foil on bleached denim on inkjet print on canvas

218.4 x 162.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Thapphawut Parinyapariwat

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. 1986)

The only thing that survives

2022

Acrylic polymer on blue foil on bleached denim on inkjet print on canvas

218.4 x 162.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Thapphawut Parinyapariwat

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. 1986)

As I lay me down to sleep, I hear you speak to me... See you again in a world where roses bloom. There the angels will always sing and everyday words will sound like a love song.

2022

Burnt bleached denim on inkjet print on canvas

218.4 x 162.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Thapphawut Parinyapariwat

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