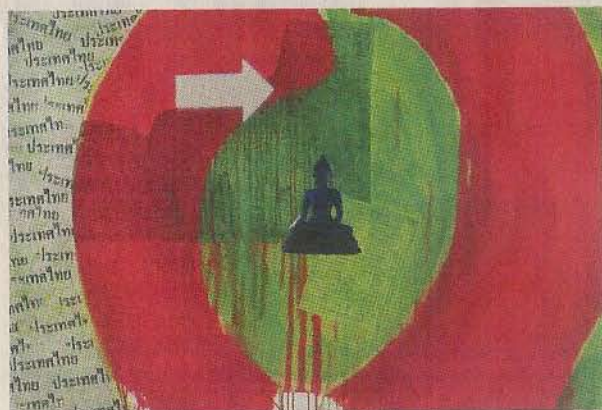


THAILAND THROUGH FRESH EYES

Story by CAMILLA RUSSELL



Works by Steve Perkins as part of the 'Thailand: L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)' exhibition. The painter Steve Perkins hopes to show how beautiful Thailand can be to a foreigner.

Artistry, in its simplest terms, is a saturation of experiences incarcerated on a canvas; an amalgamation of memories and thoughts transformed into a pictorial display of colour and shape.

"I think that the medium of painting blends itself to first become a person's interpretation, and secondly to become an abstraction," said US artist Steve P. Perkins.

"It goes hand in hand, because in the end it is my interpretation that is the abstraction."

Travel and foreign destinations are the primary inspirations found throughout Perkins' paintings, collages, videos and watercolours. Just as an outsider observes and tentatively interacts with a new environment, Perkins' artwork — particularly his latest exhibition, "Thailand: L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)", currently on show at Teo+Namfah Gallery — is a reflection of his memories as a tourist. "What was my inspiration? This particular work was inspired by my first trip to Thailand back in November 2006." Along with his friend, photographer James A. Menges, Perkins visited Koh Samet, Bangkok and Saraburi province last year, taking in a variety of Thai environments.

Menges's photographs of the trip can be seen at the exhibition as well, for Perkins frequently couples his paintings with images shot by his friend.

The result is a refreshing dialogue of contrasting mediums that help express the artist's

recollections of a foreign country.

"I was taken to the sights that triggered emotional experiences. In this particular case I saw things, but I didn't want to recreate exactly the same feelings or colours. I just remembered that there are things that had me feel a certain way, and those experiences became filtered through my emotions," explained the New York-based artist.

"The vibes are very different. The sensations are very different, too. So are the colours and experiences in each place," he said, speaking on the ability of each painting to represent a different moment from his travels.

Perkins has collected many images and motifs that repeat themselves in his artwork. The Thai alphabet is one of the recurring features found in Thailand: L.A.P.

"To me they are a very beautiful thing, but to a Thai person it may just be letters. However, for me they become letter forms like graphics and shapes," he explained.

"I don't speak Thai, and I come from a place where, to see letters that are different from mine ... I find it all very beautiful."

Perkins admitted that, due to his past experiences in media, including advertising and graphic design, he has developed a powerful respect for the aesthetics of font.

"I was just really thinking about the shape of the Thai letters and, to me, many of them are elephant trunk-like with the way they sweep over themselves," he said, referring to his painting entitled *Tears of an Elephant*. The painting presents black-and-white portraits of elephants on a blue and orange canvas. In the top corner random Thai letters

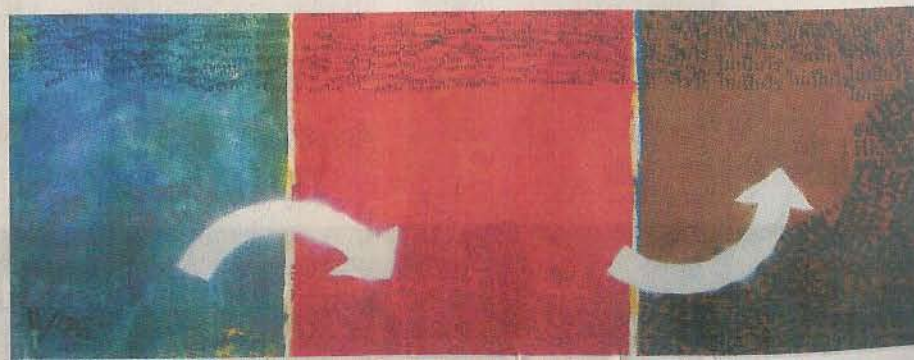
fill in an empty space.

Perkins also pointed out the painting *Lifestyle*. Divided into three separate panels of blue, orange and brownish yellow, the painting was unified by two white arrows and a spread of Thai letters that crowd the artwork.

"This painting, for example, epitomised those three modes, colours and sensations," said Perkins. The panel to the left is the water, tropical vibe. The orange panel is the Bangkok heat and sunset, and the panel on the right is the rural environment with farmers and rice fields. Of course around the gallery these vibes are represented in different forms of expression in each painting.

In regards to the Thai public's reaction to the exhibition, Perkins hopes that his role as an outsider will bring light to the subtle beauty that can be found in ordinary objects around the country.

"Well, what I would hope is that by giving my perspective, my voice and my eyes to things that are all around Thailand, I might provide a different perspective on things that are everyday and that people take for granted."



'Thailand: L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)' is now on show at Teo+Namfah Gallery, which is located on the 2nd floor of the Ozono Complex on Sukhumvit Soi 39. For more information please contact info@teonamfahgallery.com or call 02-259-6117.