

# Transcending Tourism: The Transcontinental Art of Steven P. Perkins



Close your eyes tightly. When you reopen, imagine that you are in a new land, a place far away from home, a place where both the language and customs, the sights and sounds, are mesmerizing yet enigmatic to your untrained senses. The language spoken, you do not understand, and the printed words, you cannot read. It is as if you are a child in the abstract, pre-communicative stage of life. This is how best to describe what Steven P. Perkins felt when he came to Thailand for two weeks upon request by his close friend, James A. Menges, in order to travel and make concurrent works of art based on these new experiences. Under the title *Thai L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)*, Perkins produced over fifty works on paper and canvas while visiting, an extraordinary amount representing the burst of excitement and creativity unleashed when our perception is flooded with new stimuli [shown above *Amulet* (2006) mixed media on canvas, 100cm x 150cm].



mixed media on canvas, 100cm x150cm, features several close-up black and white photographs of an elephant, figured into the overall composition. One may read this piece as having political undertones, a sympathetic reminder of endangerment and poaching. However, politics seldom infiltrate the work in this project. Instead, the viewer gets a broader sense of the spiritual. The Buddha image is another prevalent motif incorporated into the *Thai L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)*, which demonstrates Perkins's salient interest in Thailand's chief religion.



*Moment of Silence* (2006), mixed media on canvas, 80cm x100cm, speaks of this notion, a beautiful work on canvas that is notably quieter than the rest in this series. A Buddha image rests centered in the foreground between where the two background colors meet. An unrefined vertical line defines each color plane; the left side an earthy brown while the right portion is an orange-red hue. This austere geometric design, art historically speaking, is reminiscent of the “zip” in

works by the seminal color-field abstractionists, Barnett Newman. What Newman and Perkins share is a spiritual quest for the sublime, though in the case of the Thai L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project), Perkins finds sublimity in both the everyday and the extraordinary.

It is apparent in the *Thai L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)* that Steven P. Perkins is no ordinary American tourist in a foreign country. His sensitivity and deep appreciation for mindful and meaningful life experiences transcend tourism. Instead, what Perkins reminds the viewer in his *Thai L.A.P. (Lifestyle Art Project)* is that outside our door, beyond the realm of our routine activity, there is a whole wide world filled with interesting and exciting things, a world filled with chances for great creativity.

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for more information: [www.lifestyleartproject.com](http://www.lifestyleartproject.com)

and the online portfolio of Steve Perkins: [www.originalmind.com](http://www.originalmind.com)