
**MATERIAL
INTELLIGENCE**

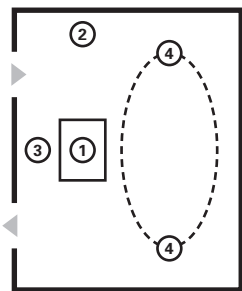
A MACHINE BOOSTING ENERGY INTO THE UNIVERSE

“HD helps us come closer to the spiritual beings we long to meet,” Korakrit Arunanondchai observes. For the artist, spirits can live through our videos and machines: phone cameras capture sightings of mythical creatures in high definition, while drones act as ghostly eyes in the sky, communicating with the beyond.

In *A Machine Boosting Energy into the Universe*, Korakrit explores the coming together of human, machine, and spirit in present day Bangkok—a city where spiritual beliefs and advanced technologies co-exist in everyday life. The exhibition centres on Korakrit’s iconic video installation, *Painting with history in a room filled with people with funny names 3* (2015–2016), from the collection of Singapore Art Museum. The montage assembles portraits of family, rap performances, and clips from the internet, merging personal and collective memory into a poetic stream of consciousness.

As an extension of the video, the gallery has been transformed into a post-apocalyptic wasteland. The cords snaking across the space evoke the chaos of the messy cables that crisscross Bangkok’s urban landscape. City inhabitants of the future take the form of cyborg sculptures, made from discarded mannequins and used electronics. Korakrit’s artistic practice involves creating an immersive experience that unfolds across film, music, performance, and design. Here, he invites us to be together, as part of a living machine connected to the energies of the digital and spirit world.

Korakrit Arunanondchai (b. 1986) is a visual artist, filmmaker, and storyteller based in New York and Bangkok. He launches *Material Intelligence*, an exhibition series that investigates how artists today connect modes of making associated with craft and industry to speculations about our ecological and technological futures.



Painting with history in a room filled with people with funny names 3
—Naga Installation

2016

- ① Naga sculpture: electrical wire tubing, ribbed plastic tubing, zip ties, plastic bones, acrylic paint, drone parts, LED lights, mounting hardware, and steel mounting plate
 - ② Vitrine: glass, metal frame, plaster, silicone cast, electric wire, plastic bones, artificial plants
 - ③ Drone mask: acrylic, nylon, and mounting hardware
- Collection of Singapore Art Museum

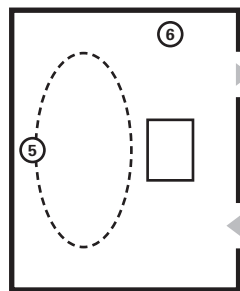
Untitled (Audience)

2016

- ④ Clothing, bleached denim, auto parts, and acrylic on mannequins
- Collection of Singapore Art Museum

In the post-apocalyptic environment of the gallery, Korakrit speculates a futuristic convergence between technology and spirits. Winding across the space is the *naga*, a mythical serpent found in Hindu-Buddhist mythologies across Thailand and Southeast Asia. Here, it is made from an assemblage of electronic waste and other forms of obsolete technology. Emerging through the wall is Chantri, the drone character from the video, who is given human-like features as a counterpart of the celestial bird *garuda*. Meanwhile, cyborgs in the form of life-like mannequins, dressed in bleached, burnt denim, football jerseys and auto parts, quietly watch the screen. Together, these figures cohabit a cosmological realm that bridges the human, spirit, and machine worlds.

While Korakrit's narratives may be fantastical, his artmaking process is rooted in the mundane. In the same way that he recycles elements of popular culture in his video, his use of salvaged mass-produced goods for the installation underscores remnants of our shared everyday experiences. Encoded in these objects are memories of friends, family, and communities that the artist has collaborated with over the years, as they work together to fashion spectacular sculptures out of ordinary materials. In a time where there is a proliferation of screens, surveillance technology, and artificial intelligence, the physical reality of Korakrit's installation poses a sobering question: how do we build a future world together, and who does it belong to?



Painting with history in a room filled with people with funny names 3

2015

- ⑤ Video, single channel, 16:9 format, colour and sound (stereo), 24 min 55 sec
- Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Untitled (History Painting)

2016

- ⑥ Acrylic on denim, and digital print on canvas
- Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Painting with history in a room filled with people with funny names 3 conjures an elastic sense of time. In this tribute to the city of Bangkok, vignettes are gathered to form a mood and atmosphere instead of a linear plot. The montage cycles between moving and static images, sprawling narrative and singular moments. Korakrit embraces the music video format as a vehicle for storytelling, channelling the energy of club culture and rap performances to create a collective experience. The video immerses us into what the narrator calls a “lake of emotions.”

But the fluid narrative always returns to a point of near stillness. The video begins and ends with a shot of the Denim Painter staring out by the riverbank, with his back facing the camera. This portrait of the artist, captured by the sentient drone character Chantri, is reproduced in *Untitled (History Painting)*. The painting has been punched through with a searing flame, animating the image in the moment of its destructive reincarnation. *Untitled (History Painting)* conveys the unstable presence of memory as it crosses over from one medium to another, between the physical and digital realm. As humans and machines become more connected in the future, how will our understanding of memory and narrative—even our sense of self—change?