

Anida Yoeu Ali

Artist Statement and Biography

Artist Statement

On the River is a photographic print from the interdisciplinary series *The Buddhist Bug Project* by artist Anida Yoeu Ali. Guided by a Cham Muslim woman from the local fishing village, the performance artist dressed as a bright orange “bug-like” creature and traveled on the Tonle Sap towards the juncture where the Mekong, Tonle Sap and the Bassac Rivers flow together. Part of this series of works places The Bug creature onto various modes of transportation in Cambodia whereby s/he is always traveling and moving towards an unknown destination. In this particular image, moving towards the confluence is a significant representation in diasporic themes of a returning generation of artists such as Anida Yoeu Ali.

Captured and exhibited primarily as photography, video and performance-installations. The Bug is an interdisciplinary series of performances that explore issues of displacement and belonging. The Bug is a creation inspired by two reasons (1) my personal inability to reconcile my growing interest in Buddhism with my upbringing as a Khmer Muslim woman (2) my thematic interest in hybridity, transcendence, and otherness. Through an interdisciplinary approach, my work maps new political and spiritual landscapes.

Meters and meters of textile act as skin, as a way for the surface of my body to extend into public spaces, and as a metaphoric device for stories to spread across an expanse. For me, the Bug was created from a sense of play and curiosity. Set amongst everyday people in ordinary moments, the Bug provokes obvious questions of belonging and displacement. Each scenario presents a moment of real life with the element of The Bug making each frame more surreal and provocative. The Bug is created as an assertion of paradoxes, a result of a hybrid refugee experience, embodying the fluctuating inside/outside perspective of the transnational being. The Bug continues a methodology in which personal narratives shape my art. I believe performing narratives is an act of social engagement that continues to collective healing.

Consistent throughout this series is the unique combination of humor and otherness. When discussing issues of religiosity, humor is the best way to introduce difficult issues. This fantastic orange creature (The Bug) is set amongst everyday people in ordinary moments provoking the obvious questions of identity: “Who is s/he?” and “What is s/he doing here?” The project reflects my personality, one that combines humor, performance and my love of everyday culture into moments that transcend the ordinary. The impact is about getting people to be curious enough to provoke them to think about otherness and religious tolerance.

Artist Biography

Anida Yoeu Ali Cambodia

b. 1974, Battambang

Anida Yoeu Aii (b.1974, Battambang) is an artist whose works span performance, installation, video, poetry, public encounters, and political agitation. She is a first generation Muslim Khmer woman born in Cambodia and raised in Chicago. After residing for over three decades outside of Cambodia, Ali returned to work in Phnom Penh as part of her 2011 U.S. Fulbright Fellowship. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to artmaking, her installation and performance works investigate the artistic, spiritual and political collisions of a hybrid transnational identity. Her pioneering work with the critically acclaimed group *I Was Born With Two Tongues* (1998-2003) is archived with the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program and the Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library. From the Faroe Islands to the Bronx, Copenhagen to Ho Chi Minh City, she lectures, exhibits and performs internationally. Her artistic work has been the recipient of grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, the National Endowment of the Arts and the Center for Asian American Media. Anida has been selected to exhibit in the upcoming Fukuoka 2014 Triennale. Her works have exhibited internationally including at ArtStage Singapore, Singapore International Photo Festival, Our City Festival (Phnom Penh), India International Centre (New Delhi), Karin Weber Gallery (Hong Kong), Seoul Citizens Hall (Seoul); Topaz Arts (New York) and more. She earned her B.F.A. from University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) and an M.F.A. in from School of the Art Institute Chicago. She is a collaborative partner with Studio Revolt, an independent artist run media lab in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Anida continues to make art and raise her family in Phnom Penh, a city once home to her parents.