

CHAI SIRIS *METEORITE GARDEN, 2014*

11.01.14 – 22.02.2014
Opening Saturday 11th 2014
4pm – 9pm

Chai Siris is currently in residence at the Palais de Tokyo's Pavillon and as such will be the subject of an exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo in June 2014. He has recently received recognition for his participation in the 2013 Sharjah Biennale as well as for his collaboration with Apichatpong Weerasethakul at the 2012 Kassel Documenta. His films have been selected in numerous international festivals such as Lisbon, Rotterdam, Bangkok and Venice (in competition at the 67th Venice International Film Festival).

Born in Bangkok in 1983, Chai Siris has been developing, since 2007, a body of work comprising photographs, films and videos, conceived for the cinema or the exhibition space, most often reconstructing personal and social stories. A son of pharmacists from the capital's suburbs, Chai Siris says he noticed in his parents' often poor, immigrant, and working class clients a pain more emotional than physical, the result of lives marked by economic imperatives, repressed memories and stories cut short. Seeing his works as remedies, Chai Siris conceives silent or sleepy spaces, majestic or reflexive, always inviting recollection. Rather than flat documentary, his practice is regularly informed by the accidents and gaps of the memory, allowing him to circumnavigate realism and enter into fiction. Often born from the images and stories collected during his travels, which become the source for future works and the starting point for collaborative strategies, his subjects are called upon to make things up, play or sing rather than to testify or recount: fortune tellers and photo lab technicians tracing lives and portraits according to a series of clues, at the whim of their intuition. In the act of "rememoration" alternatives tales are invented that can just as easily illuminate the past as shape the present.

Chai Siris's first solo exhibition in France, *Meteorite Garden* presents itself in the exploded form of an installation of works equivocal in their individual natures and interrelationships: an old portrait of a woman with the aura of an actress, a page from a script snatched from its context, sumptuous urns sliced in two, photos of an unidentified dwelling, a video documenting what first looks like an audition and then funeral rites. These different elements suggest preparatory pieces for a nonexistent film. One can speculate on the form this film, here reduced to a group of relics, would take, but this manner of presentation is perhaps as accidental as it is necessary. Those who remember Apichatpong Weerasthakul's installation *Primitive* or his feature film *Uncle Boonmee* will perhaps recognize the adolescents Chai Siris has called together for a photo shoot, as well as the landscape of Nabua, a northeastern city on the Laos border whose communist inhabitants were persecuted and hunted by the Thai army. Or one may recall that Ho Chi Minh – whose portrait and home, as austere as his garden is cultivated, appear and who may also lurk in the script, behind the Uncle who served on a French ship while dreaming of Vietnam – lived in the same region at the end of the 1920's, for a period of time that sources disagree on, after having fled Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist coup in China. This film is, if not impossible to make, perhaps doomed to remain in the form of an investigation, its actors to wander like jungle ghosts, cultivating their trees away from prying eyes, waiting for their descendents to finally learn to pick their fruits.

Antoine Thirion

Antoine Thirion is a film critic, for Cahiers du cinema from 2001 to 2009 and for the review Independencia.fr, which he founded with Eugenio Renzi, from 2009 to 2013. In 2009, he curated the James Benning retrospective at Jeu de Paume. He is currently advisor and artistic director for Independencia's publishing division.