

Every little thing she does is art (a laugh).

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The aesthetical aura of art in the age of reproducibility vanishes, because of the loss of distance, lamented Walter Benjamin. The aura of arts emanated from social ritual. Without ritual, art could be reproduced by anyone, anywhere. Every little thing everyone does can therefore be considered as art. If everything is art, there will be no art. Thus, none could distinguish the difference between an artist and a beggar.

But what are you doing here? Where are you standing right now? Art does not emerge from nothingness and void. By the time you are reading this text you may have been through the opening *ceremony*, and luckily participated in the ritual of art through eating and drinking, with or without *Pud Thai*. The genesis of art involves the festive as much as the creative process. Without ritual, there is plausibly no art. Ceremony in art still constructs its uniqueness even in the mechanical and digital age.

When this female artist asked me to write a commentary for this exhibition, the whole process from contacting, writing, etc., indicates that ritual in art seems to be inevitable. Art and ritual are always intertwined. Ritual is right here in front of you. Following the ancient Greek words *Christos*, art needs to be “christosized”, but whether it “buddhaizes” the viewers or not is another question. As ritual replenishes art, the artist is turned into the messiah but without the word of autonomy. Being more dependent on the extra-artistic activities, art loses its ideal. The ideal of artistic autonomy gives rise only to mourning, and entails melancholy. As the work of art imperatively accommodates ritual, ‘distance’ exists. The works of Wantanee Siripattananuntakul, ‘distance’ is also being intensified by laughter, which comes out loud and clear. Laughter creates the distance between the viewer and the creator.

However, to laugh at something or someone is not difficult, but to laugh at one’s own action is not that easy. For the French feminist philosopher, Julia Kristeva, laughter is possible only when the subject is not involved in the theatre of contradiction. One laughs at the other because the subject of laughter is not part of the events, so the subject can dissociate the self from the contradiction. Although Kristeva’s idea does not show an obvious form of evaluation towards laughter, the theatre of contradiction itself is underlined with the overtone of harmony and stability. One does not engage in any form of conflict nor contradiction. A person laughs at the expense of the other’s misfortunes or deformities. One enjoys the pleasure of laughter from the pain of the victim of laughter. Laughter implies that one is in a better position. One is more superior and fortunate than those one laughs at.

Wantanee Siripattananuntakul shows her fortunate life and superiority by parodying the establishment of arts as much as she is patronizing the art world. Her laugh as the weapon of the weak is the consequence of mourning and melancholy, as well as contempt and morbidity. Nevertheless, the art of parody in her works does not necessarily provide any thoughtful meanings, as once being sprinkled through Duchamp’s *Fountain*. But the ‘repetition’ of parody has been posted to elsewhere, probably in the postmodern world--where everything is possible, everything is allowed, except the existence of the subject.

Once everything is allowed in the art world, the meteorite could clash on Pope John Paul II. In Maurizio Cattelan’s *La Nona Ora*, neither the papa nor the catholic would laugh. For the devout Catholics, undoubtedly, there would be no “different layers of meanings” in Cattelan’s work; this piece of arts lacks quirkiness, depth, and profundity, even though it is worth 3 million pounds. Cattelan makes fun of the Church. Unfortunately, Wantanee Siripattananuntakul does not make any fun of highly venerated Thai institutions; otherwise the viewer would experience another kind of laugh.

Then, of whom is she making fun? What is she laughing at? Is modern art world laughable? Yes, definitely. It has been laughable throughout art history and art theory. What has to be taken into account is the object of laughter. Whilst modern artists themselves are not her object of laughter, is she, the artist, then laugh at the viewers who have also played an important role of exalting art to an established institution? In her view, are the viewers, the art critics, the curators, the art theorists, all the jokers? Or they are just ‘animals’ as appearing in the *Safari Art* of the Tate Modern. Is the viewer look funny like a penguin? Definitely, Sir Nicholas Serota would disagree. And many viewers herein this room would also disagree. On the contrary, this female artist would think otherwise. In addition, the ‘world of arts,’ according to Wantanee Siripattananuntakul, ‘should have only artists who create the best quality and valued works,’ as if she is being in this world all by herself, whereas the life of others lies elsewhere.

If the female artist is in the art world all by herself, what she is echoing is the state of narcissism as much as loneliness. Although various faces of the non-artists exist, her works of art is without the others. But the otherness still prevails in these works. Such state of narcissistic art does not need to hear the alarm of the Siren. Wantanee Siripattananuntakul seems to show her omnipotence and omnipresence. Although many of her works are under covered or being in disguised, as if her works of art had ‘*No Name*’, she does not have Nancy Grossman’s spirit of the sixties and feminism. On the contrary, her *Phaidon Book* piece shows the art of autograph, the art of her signature, whose subjectivity reclaims both authorship and authority. Such simplistic and conventional path is meant to confirm the essence and existence of the self. In this respect, she is on the opposite spectrum of Robert Morris and Donald Judd whose eradication of the artist’s name has increase the authority of the authorship. Nevertheless, her work seems to create the opposite effect.

The *Flagpole of Her Name* manifests the desire of phallocentrism, but without the corporeality of the ‘choo choo train’. Her phallocentrism is without phallus, thus castration becomes the *telos*. The possibility of being castrated inevitably leads one to the world where copulation becomes impossible. The spirit of impossibility is

transformed into the art of self-eroticism: the art for herself, by herself, with herself, and unto herself. She and her arts are, therefore, *sui generis*. Yet, only God is the true self-generated entity. Undoubtedly, John Lennon's song is very appropriate. By means of free appropriation in art, Lennon is thus converted to believe in Wantanee Siripattananuntakul much more than God. But Lennon is dead, declares God. But, Sting is still alive, though the legendary band The Police had all gone. Would Sting sing to her? If he ever would, it could be the song by the Police: "Every little thing she does is magic, every little thing she does is art". Then the dance begins, Dionysus rises. Every little thing she does is dance, but only around the totem of Art.

As the dance goes, there would be another stanza required to celebrate her work: Every little thing she does is a laugh. But laughing at whom? In the world where everything little one does is art, will she laugh at herself and her art? Only God and the artist know. However, God seems to be very lonely: immortalized loneliness without any art to transmit the sacred message of God to the members of Her Kingdom of Art.