Charting Thoughts
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Published by National Gallery Singapore

Flores, Patrick and Sze Wee Low.
Charting Thoughts: Essays on Art in Southeast Asia.

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The Transition of Thai Traditional Art to Modern Art in the 1950s and 1960s
Somporn Rodboon

People have long misunderstood that the dominance of Western art caused the decline of traditional Thai art. To clarify the situation, this essay will explain how modern Thai art began, and how traditional art was revived and developed in parallel to modern art during the late 1940s to the 1960s in Thailand.

Traditional Thai art did experience an initial decline, however. This began with the opening of the Thai Kingdom to Western influences in the reign of King Rama IV or King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868) and his successor King Rama V, also known as King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910). Modernisation policies and the adoption of Western culture brought about the decline; consequently, Thai art gradually transitioned from traditional to modern. But even though traditional art declined, it was included in the curriculum of Thailand’s first art school (founded in the 1930s), along with Western academic training.

### The Rise of Western Influence in Traditional Art

Western influence in Thai art can be seen in paintings by Khrua In Khong, the most celebrated monk in Thailand and court painter of King Mongkut. Khrua In Khong was actually a traditional painter who had been exposed to Western prints and photographs, and started to incorporate Western elements such as three-dimensional perspective techniques and chiaroscuro rendering in his mural paintings. Elements of Thai traditional paintings can also be found in his works, for instance the use of two-dimensional space, parallel perspective, Thai ornament and sharp contour lines to delineate different motifs. In addition, Khrua In Khong also applied gold leaf to his works. Combining Western and traditional Thai painting techniques, Khrua In Khong became the first painter to break away from tradition to paint in a new way. At the time, painters who executed their paintings in the same manner were said to belong to the Khrua In Khong School of Painting. Through their approach to painting, Khrua In Khong and his followers contributed to the evolution of Thai art in the 19th century.

Western culture became more influential during the reign of King Chulalongkorn because foreign painters and architects were increasingly commissioned for royal projects. During this period, various colonial powers were establishing territories in Southeast Asia. To save Thailand from the same fate, King Chulalongkorn tried to modernise the country...
as a show to the West that Thailand was not a primitive and uncivilised country. The King modelled Thailand after Western countries and developed public welfare infrastructure by building hospitals and schools, constructing roads and railways as well as installing electricity and water systems. In addition, he also employed architects and artists to work on architectural projects, mural paintings and royal portraits in Western techniques and styles. These foreign artists and architects were only employed to design and create works that had never existed in a traditional Thai context, such as monuments, statues, portraits and medals.

In 1904, the first court painter from Europe, Cesare Ferro, an Italian, was commissioned to paint the King’s portrait. Subsequently, more painters, sculptors and architects from Italy were brought to Thailand under the King’s patronage, resulting in clear affinities between the art of Thailand and Italy. Art from the European academic tradition and realism, for instance, were highly influential in Thailand; notably, Phra Soralaklikhit (1875–1958), who was well known for his academic-style portraits of the royal families, became the first Thai painter to train in Italy in the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

During the reign of King Vajiravudh (r. 1910–1925), it was realised that traditional Thai art needed to be revived to build a national identity. Thai culture had seemed to be in decline in the preceding period of King Chulalongkorn, and this concerned King Vajiravudh. As a result, the Fine Arts Department as well as the Arts and Crafts School were founded in 1912 and 1913 respectively, to train artisans in traditional arts and crafts to serve the royal projects as well as to preserve Thai national uniqueness. King Vajiravudh was so supportive of the arts that he sponsored annual arts and crafts exhibitions. The King also wanted to revive the use of traditional architecture in designing educational institutions, and appointed Somdet Chaofa Krom Phraya Naruwat Wittiwong, also known as Prince Naris, as the royal chief architect of Vajiravudh College and Chulalongkorn University. The prince’s architecture projects include the Royal Institute building and the Assembly Hall of Wat Benchamabophit (The Marble Temple). Interestingly, however, public and private buildings were built in a Western style as a result of the country’s policy of modernisation.

Institutionalisation of Modern Thai Art

The aim of the Arts and Crafts School (Rongrien Poh Chang), presently known as Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin (Poh Chang Campus) was to train students in design and traditional craft techniques to keep these practices alive as well as to groom them to be the next generation of teachers. The subjects taught were, for example, traditional painting, inlaying and embossing, niello, and wood and ivory carving.

One of Thailand’s most distinguished artists, Jitr Buabusaya (1911–2010), contributed a great deal to the Arts and Crafts School. He introduced modern methods of teaching, drew up a new curriculum for painting and sculpture, and raised the standard of art education. In 1947, the school held its first art exhibition under Jitr’s supervision, and in the following year, a group of art instructors formed the Thai Fine Art Association. The association successfully held the first exhibition of oil paintings in Thailand and continued thereafter to organise biennial exhibitions of artworks by their members.

According to Piriya Krairiksh, the transfer of power from the monarchy to the state after the revolution of 24 June 1932 resulted in the state assuming the role of patron of the arts. As a result, the Fine Arts Department, which came under the Ratchabanbirtsabha (The Office of the Royal Society) and was later renamed as Silpakorn Sathan, was transferred to the Ministry of Education in 1933 under the directorship of Luang Wichit Wathakan.
In 1923, an Italian sculptor from Florence, Corrado Feroci (1892–1962), was employed by the Thai government as an official sculptor of the Fine Arts Department to undertake commissioned works. His first works include a bust of King Vajiravudh, which he made by referring to photographs, and later, a bust of Prince Naris that was sculpted from life. He also executed remarkable portraits and monuments of important figures such as members of the royal family. After Feroci became a Thai citizen in 1944, he adopted the Thai name Silpa Bhirasri; he was also known as the father of Thai modern art.

Establishment of the School of Fine Arts

The founding of the School of Fine Arts in 1934 by the Fine Arts Department gave Bhirasri a chance to introduce teaching methods and curricula that were used in most European art academies to the Thai art education system. The school offered a four-year course, taught by Bhirasri himself, Phra Prom Pichitr and Phra Soralaklikhit. For the first two years, students received academic training in fine arts, which was divided into two sections: painting and sculpture. Later, industrial art and music were added to its programme. Bhirasri was in charge of the fine arts curriculum, which included painting, sculpture, drawing, theory of composition, perspective and shadow, human anatomy, art history, art criticism, geometry and English. Under Bhirasri’s academic training, the students also painted and sculpted from nature and life, and as a result, the style of the graduates was generally described as realist. The School of Fine Arts gave its students a sound foundation in art practice.

The first class of students in the School of Fine Arts graduated in 1937; some of whom have since become well-known artists, such as painter Fua Haribhitak and sculptors Piman Mulpramuk and Sitthidet Sanghiran. In 1938, Thailand replaced the European artists who had until then worked on official projects, with its first group of local painters and sculptors. According to Bhirasri, the first group of students who had graduated from the School of Fine Arts were employed as painters and sculptors at the Fine Arts Department and as art teachers. Many of them modelled figures for the Victory Monument of 1941 with Silpa Bhirasri.

Impact of Political Change on Thai Art and the Establishment of Silpakorn University

It is worth noting that an annual Constitutional Fair supported by the Thai government was first held in 1937 to promote cultural nationalism and modernisation. It was also held in celebration of the Thai national day, on 24 October, when a revolution in 1932 successfully overthrew the absolute monarchy and installed a constitutional one instead. It was then that the country’s name was changed from Siam to Thailand. The fair was organised annually until 1941, when it was interrupted by the Japanese invasion of Thailand.

The art exhibitions and competitions organised by various cultural institutions in conjunction with the fair featured artworks of different forms. Most of the entries were submitted by the students and staff of the School of Fine Arts and the Arts and Crafts School. Notably, the Constitutional Fair brought modern art to the public and could have been the first time the public saw Thai traditional art alongside new artistic expressions that were influenced by the West.

The Constitutional Fair is considered important in the history of modern Thai art because it is the first art competition in Thailand of this theme. Moreover, as the first public art exhibition and competition supported by the government, the Constitutional Fair also signified a change in Thai art. When Phibun Songkhram became Prime Minister of Thailand in 1938, he continued to use art as propaganda to promote nationalism. He was very impressed
by the progressive and modern artworks by students from the School of Fine Arts. Thus, in 1943, Phibun Songkhram raised the status of the School of Fine Arts to that of a university, and it was renamed Silpakorn University, the first university of fine arts in Thailand. Bhirasri was appointed as its first dean. At the time, there was only one faculty consisting of two departments, the Department of Painting and of Sculpture. The school offered five-year courses, in which students had to complete three years of academic training, and spend the final two years developing individual artistic expression. All of the modern subjects taken from a Western academic curriculum and taught at the school were introduced by Bhirasri.

The earliest extant record of the curriculum of Silpakorn University is a 1953 exhibition catalogue published by the university. Subjects taught then could be grouped into two categories, practical and theoretical aspects of art. Modules such as drawing, painting, modelling, introduction to architecture, Thai architecture, Thai ornamentation, research on old Thai art, composition and decorative art belonged to the first category, while the subjects in the latter category were history of art (Western and Asian art), styles of art, theory of colour, theory of composition, human and animal anatomy, geometry as well as projection and shadow. There were also compulsory courses for all students such as aesthetics, art criticism, English and literature. In addition, students who majored in painting were required to master subjects such as portraiture, figures, landscapes and seascapes, as well as art composition; whereas students who specialised in sculpture were taught portraiture, to sculpt bas-reliefs of live models and human figures in the round, medal design, copper casting, wood carving, stone carving and modern composition.

Students who majored in painting had to learn painting techniques using a variety of media, such as watercolour, tempera and oils. Bhirasri also taught fresco, which was entirely new to Thailand, let alone to these art students. These students had to practise and experiment with the medium in order to master it. Fresco was taught because Western buildings were popular in Thailand and the material featured prominently as decorative elements in Western architecture. In addition, Bhirasri was concerned about professions that the students might take up after finishing their studies. So he designed practical courses that will equip them with skills that could be pursued in their careers after they graduate.

The art curriculum of the faculty was revised after the death of Bhirasri in 1962. Khien Yimsiri (1922–1971), who was serving the Fine Arts Department as a civil servant then, was officially appointed as the faculty’s Acting Dean in 1964. The faculty at the time expanded from the Departments of Painting and Sculpture to include the Department of Drawing. Fua Haribhitak (1910–1993), Khien Yimsiri and Chalood Nimsamer (1929–2015) were in charge of these departments respectively. In 1966, the curriculum was revised yet again. This time, the Department of Drawing
was changed to the Department of Printmaking under the supervision of Chalood Nimsamer who had studied printmaking (in particular, lithography) at Pratt Graphic Art Center in the United States in 1963. After returning to Thailand to work at Silpakorn University, he set up this new field of study in which various printmaking techniques were taught.

It is known that Bhirasri was the first to introduce the method of teaching modern Western art to students at Silpakorn University. Academic training in drawing, painting and sculpture was also very important. Bhirasri emphasised drawing from nature to build a sound foundation in art. He held that students would be able to express themselves better in whatever style they liked after finishing their art training and attaining a level of technical proficiency.5

As a matter of fact, Silpa Bhirasri’s contributions to the Thai government and art institutions from the 1930s to the 1960s significantly enhanced the rise of modernism in Thai art. This phenomenon not only brought about new art styles, concepts and techniques, but also provoked questions concerning the adaptation of Western art as well as the confrontation between modernism and traditionalism. Paintings and sculptures of the period predominantly reflect the influence of Impressionism and Cubism from Europe, and abstraction from the United States. A revival of traditionalism also ran parallel with Western influence then.

In the 1950s, Bhirasri promoted Thai art not only in Thailand, but also in other countries. In 1953, he led Thailand to become a member of the International Association of Plastic Arts (IAPA) at Maison de l’UNESCO in Paris. Later, in 1954, Bhirasri participated in the IAPA conference in Venice and again in 1960, when it was held in Vienna. Fua Haribhitak and Sawasdi Tantisuk also represented Thailand at the conference in 1954. In the same year, the Thai artists Khien Yimsiri, Paitun Muangsomboon, Sitthidet Saenghiran, Sawang Songmangmee and Amnart Puangsamneang participated in the International Sculpture Competition of the Unknown Prisoners in London. Among the famous artists from different countries who submitted their works were Henry Moore, Alexander Calder, David Smith, Jean Arp and Barbara Hepworth. In 1960, Bhirasri promoted exhibitions of modern Thai art at the German Council of Art in Cologne, the 2nd International Biennale of Prints in Tokyo and the Graphic Center of the Pratt Institute in New York. Through these activities, modern Thai art and Thai artists were exposed to the outside world and received international recognition.

Publications by Silpa Bhirasri

Apart from his work in the Thai art institutions, Bhirasri’s numerous publications have been invaluable resources to art educators, students and the public. Although he wrote in English, some have been translated into Thai by Khien Yimsiri and Praya Anumanrachadhon. Among his writings are small booklets on modern art

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6 Pichai Nirand, interview with the author, 21 January 2016.
Silpa Bhirasri and Traditional Art

Bhirasri’s contributions to traditional art are often eclipsed by his greater work in the promotion of modern art in Thailand. Understanding the impact of traditional art on Bhirasri can offer insights into its revival in modern Thai art and how it came to play an important role in this area. Bhirasri first encountered traditional Thai art when he worked with Prince Naris, a well-known royal architect during the reign of King Mongkut. In order to work for the Thai government on various commissioned projects, it was necessary for foreign artists, such as Bhirasri, to understand the country’s traditional art and culture. Hence, Bhirasri studied Thai ornamentation, the decorative motifs on Thai temples and architecture under Prince Naris. Fortunately, some extant drawings and sketches of traditional art and decorative motifs by Bhirasri are now kept at the Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum in Bangkok.

As the dean of Silpakorn University, Bhirasri was responsible for repairing and restoring old monuments, on top of his teaching duties. He realised that knowing about traditional art was essential for these projects, and planned for traditional art to be revived at Silpakorn University. He introduced courses on Thai traditional art, such as Thai ornamentation, Thai architecture and research of old Thai art, to an education system largely based on the Western art system, truly reflecting his awareness of the significance of traditional art. Pichai Nirand, from a younger generation of artists after Haribhitak, explained that under Bhirasri, the intent of the research of old Thai art course was not for students to make exact copies of traditional paintings, but to study the overall structure, unique styles, subject matter and techniques of traditional paintings of different periods. Such research enabled students to understand, appreciate and get inspiration from tradition to create their own individual artworks. Artworks by Khien Yimsiri, Pichai
Nirand, Thawan Duchanee and many others are exemplary of this method of teaching and learning. Bhira'sri's expectations regarding the assimilation of traditional and modern art styles were to pave a way for the new traditional art movement.

Bhirasri also devoted himself to the study of Thai mural painting of different periods and published *The Origin and Evolution of Thai Murals* in 1959. On several occasions, Bhirasri joined the staff of the Fine Arts Department in their research on old mural paintings in temples. He was concerned about the damages to these murals; he felt that they should be conserved or copied and kept as a form of historical reference to preserve Thailand's national heritage. He was of the opinion that these reproductions would also serve as valuable and significant historical sources for Thai art. Artists who were very much involved with such research were Fua Haribhitak, Khien Yimsiri and Angkarn Kalyanapong. According to Fua Haribhitak, when he was working closely with Bhirasri while teaching at Silpakorn University, he often went to an old temple to reproduce images of old, deteriorating traditional paintings of Ayudhaya for fear that these images may disappear in the coming years.7 Recognising Haribhitak's effort and the value of his work, Bhirasri wrote to UNESCO on behalf of the Fine Arts Department, to send an expert from Europe to teach them the conservation of paintings.

**Art Movements and Styles from the 1940s to 1960s**

In 1944, prior to the first National Art Exhibition, a group of artists from different fields of art known as the Chakrawat Sinlapin, organised an art exhibition at the Sala Chalermkrung Royal Theatre. Among the artists who participated in the exhibition were Chamras Kietkong, Jitr Buabusaya, Panom Suwanaboon and Prasong Padmanu. Apart from Jitr Buabusaya, most were former students of Bhirasri. The second exhibition organised by the group in 1945 was also held at the same venue. It was possible that their works might have made known to Thais modern Thai art and the individual expression of artists at that time.

Possibilities and alternative paths for the development of modern Thai art emerged in the 1940s. The influence of Western modernism in Thai art manifested in different ways. For instance, Impressionistic styles were very popular and widely practised in the Thai art scene from 1949 (when the first National Art Exhibition was officially held) until 1958. During this period there were no galleries or museums to exhibit these artworks, and the National Art Exhibition was the only source of evidence of the evolution of these movements.

Prominent Thai artists who had submitted Impressionist-style paintings to the National Art Exhibition between 1949 and 1958 and won awards were Misiem Yipintsoi, Chamras Kietkong, Sawasdi Tantisuk, Tawee Nandakwang, Suchao sae-Yim, Pranee Tantisuk, Prayura Uluchadha, Nopparat Livisithi and Taweesak Senanarong (1958); most painted landscapes, while others won awards for their Impressionist portraits, such as Chamras Kietkong, Fua Haribhitak (1950), Banchop Palawongs (1953, 1954) and San Sarakornborirak (1958).8

Widely regarded as one of the most significant artist in the history of Thai art, Chamras Kietkong (1916–1965) specialised in portraiture and once trained under Bhirasri during World War II. He worked mainly in oils and pastels and his works are characterised by lively strokes. The pastel drawing *Woman* (1962, fig. 11.1) shows his excellent manipulation of light and shade.

Another well-known figure who painted in the French Impressionist manner was Jitr Buabusaya, who had attended postgraduate courses at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. In the 1940s, he became influenced by the French Impres-
sionist paintings he saw in galleries and museums in Japan. He painted country landscapes, and scenes of different places such as Tokyo Fine Art University Garden (1942), Fuji Vine Arbor (1946) and Autumn Suburb in Tokyo (1942, fig. 11.2), which portray the atmosphere of the seasons in beautiful colours. It is very unfortunate that most of the artist’s works were destroyed in Japan during World War II. Only a few paintings could be brought back to Thailand.

The artists who executed their works in a realist style were largely sculptors. Piman Mulpramuk and Sitthidet Sanghiran produced mainly human figures and portraits in this vein while Paitun Muangsomboon was far more interested in modelling life-sized animal figures such as Calf (1951), Deer (1953) and Fighting Cock (1953). He also made some realistic portraits. In fact, at the onset of modern Thai art, all modern artists went through realistic and Impressionistic phases before moving on to other new art movements.

The influence of Cubism in modern Thai art began in the late 1940s, with Fua Haribhitak as the first Thai artist to paint in this manner. The style became fully developed in the 1950s, when Fua Haribhitak studied in Italy for two years on a scholarship granted by the Italian government and was inspired by the Cubist works there. One of his masterpieces in the Cubistic style is Blue-Green (fig. 11.3), painted in 1956, which clearly reflects the influence of Picasso’s early Cubist style between 1907 and 1908. During that time, Cubism became highly appreciated and grew in popularity as Thai artists turned away from Impressionistic styles to the new trend. Tawee Nandhakwang’s Ayudhaya (1948) and Sompot Upa-In’s Politicians were painted in the same manner of Analytical Cubism as seen in Haribhitak’s practice, clearly reflecting their interest in Picasso’s Cubist work. Sawasdi Tantisuk and Chalood Nimsameur also applied geometric planes in their works.

In contrast to the aforementioned artists, Prasong Padmanuja (1918–1989) was inspired by a different approach to Cubism. His sketch, Wat Phra Keo (1951, fig. 11.4), possibly reflects his interest in Synthetic Cubism, which can be seen in the use of geometric planes and bright colours, and decorative quality of the work. His use of decorative spatial concept in his paintings is stylised and far more modern as compared to his contemporaries. Although the style is modern, his subject matter focuses on Thai contexts. The work also shows that his artistic creativity could have stemmed from his background and interest in decorative art.

Thai artists who worked in the new Impressionistic and Cubistic styles during this transformative period were criticised by the public for copying Western art. Bhirasri was defensive of such criticism and explained:

with reference to landscapes, remarks have been made that the painters were influenced by Western Impressionism. In such respect we would like to say that the Thai painters have a natural style, they do what they see and what they feel. If they succeed in rendering every part related to oth-

See Prof. Silpa Bhirasri and his Students, ed. Nipon Khumwilai, republished by (Bangkok: Silpa Bhirasri Research Center, Focal Image, 2008), 43. Author’s translation.
ers and the whole to space, and succeed in conveying the atmosphere and light of Thailand, then they have succeeded in their artistic aspiration. If not, the works are considered a failure, for the lack of artistic value and not because the painter imitated any foreign school.

Bhirasri went on to make an interesting remark on sculpture, saying that

a sculptor modelling a portrait has no chance to link the characteristic of his work to the past for the simple reason that in old time [sic] Thai statuary was limited to modelling Buddha images. Besides, we have also to realise that real art is an individual expression and as such it corresponds to the personal style of each artist. This style may be realistic, Impressionistic, may be that of Cubism, conventionalism or anything else.9

During this period there was also an unusual approach to Surrealism in modern Thai art, which can be detected in Pichai Nirand’s painting titled The End (1959, fig. 11.5). According to Nirand, the work expresses his subconscious and nightmares during a difficult time in his life, and is a sincere presentation of his innermost feelings.

Revival of Traditional Art and Thai Identity

In the 1940s and late 1950s, it became apparent that some Thai artists were grappling with Western influence (modernism) while maintaining their own culture and identity (revival of tradition) in their works. Around the late 1950s to 1960s, a group of artists emerged who strove to revive tradition to balance the dominant influence of Western art. Buddhist themes and philosophies and even folk life and culture counted as their inspirations. In fact, courses on Thai art at Silpakorn University encouraged the revival of tradition art, in tandem with the government’s commitment to strengthen traditional values and institutions.

Khien Yimsiri first revitalised traditional art by combining it with modern art forms, as exemplified by the bronze sculpture Musical Rhythm (fig. 11.6), which was awarded a gold medal at the first National Art Exhibition in 1949. It features a flutist in a graceful pose playing his musical instrument. According to Kanongnuj Yimsiri (the artist’s daughter), Khun Malini (Bhirasri’s wife) said that Bhirasri himself actually posed for this sculpture. Moved by the beautiful representations of the Sukhothai Buddha, Yimsiri assimilated its traditional characteristics and a simple, modern form to create the graceful pose. In the 1960s, in the field of painting, Pichai Nirand, Tha-
wan Duchanee, Angkarn Kalayanapong and Pratuang Emjaroen turned to Buddhist themes as means of expression. Pichai Nirand was the first to use Buddhist elements as symbols to convey his thoughts and spirit. This group of artists established a new movement in modern Thai art.

Damrong Wong-Uparaj’s early works, such as *Fishermen Village* (1960, fig. 11.7), portray aspects of Thai folk life. In this work, architectural structures absent of human figures are used to convey the simple and peaceful life of the village fishermen. Other artists who created works of similar subjects were: Manit Poo-Aree, Prayat Pongdam (who produced stylised woodcut prints of domestic animals) and Chalood Nimsamer (who created paintings and prints).

The Beginning of Abstraction

In the early 1960s, figuration gave way to the influence of non-representational art and Abstract Expressionism in Thai modern painting and sculpture, as young Thai artists who had furthered their studies in the United States and were influenced by the Abstract art movements there, returned to Thailand. In 1965, Chamruang Vichienkhet, widely regarded as the pioneer of abstract sculpture, produced his first abstract piece titled *Group* (fig. 11.8), in which elongated human figures merge into one beautiful abstract form. According to the artist, the work portrays a group of people coming together in an expression of unity and goodness of spirit and mankind. Many Thai abstract painters at the time such as Panom Suwannat, Anan Panin and Prawat Laochareon were inspired by the works of the New York School. Pricha Arajunka and Pira Pathanapiradej (fig. 11.9) also painted non-figurative art. In an interview, Pira Pathanapiradej recalled that the first exhibition of non-objective art had greatly inspired him and other abstract painters then. It was held at Bangkapi Gallery in 1962 and featured works by prominent architect Dr Sumeth Chumsai, Pratuang Emjaroen and Tang Chang (Chang sae-Tang) who also experimented with abstraction. While most painters were following Western approaches to abstraction, Tang Chang derived his style of abstraction from his own Chinese roots, namely, through philosophy and poetry. His work was closely related to Taoism, and Chinese and Zen Buddhism. Evidently, Tang Chang’s abstract paintings were powerful and truly expressed his emotions and the depth of his inner feelings (fig. 11.10).

Art galleries (both commercial and non-profit) and new venues that could be used for exhibitions proliferated in this new artistic era. Founded in 1962, Bangkapi Gallery was the first art gallery in Thailand. Unfortunately, the public was not ready for modern art at the time. Only foreigners who were living in Thailand and foreign institutions in Bangkok, like the British Council, Goethe Institute, Alliance Francaise, and the United States Information Service, supported this new art, and also provided their premises for exhibitions. Through these exhibitions, artists were able to sell their works. In fact, many artists at the time made a living by selling their works.

Conclusion

Historical evidence clearly shows that modern Thai art evolved during the 1940s to 1960s along two trajectories. Firstly, it drew inspiration from traditional cultures in Thailand, which promoted a revival of traditional art. Secondly, it incorporated new expressions of art from the West, mainly from Italy and the United States, without losing touch with Thai subject matter and spirit. As a result, a third avenue emerged, through the overlapping of both trajectories, paving the way for new individual expression and artistic styles. Presently, art in Thailand is still progressively developed along these three paths.
11.1 Chamras Kietkong
_Woman_
1962
Pastel on paper
53 x 32 cm
Collection of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial
National Museum
Image courtesy of Silpa Bhirasri
Memorial National Museum

11.2 Jitr (Prakit) Buabusaya
_Autumn Suburb in Tokyo_
1942
Oil on canvas
30 x 40 cm
Collection of Thai Art Council,
California, USA
Image courtesy of Jitr (Prakit)
Buabusaya Foundation
11.3 Fua Haribhitak  
*Blue-Green*  
1956  
Oil on canvas  
66 x 90 cm  
Collection of Silpa Bhirasri  
Memorial National Museum  
Image courtesy of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum

11.4 Prasong Padmanuja  
Wat Phra Keo (sketch)  
1951  
Tempera on paper  
28 x 21 cm  
Collection of Chuleerat Pipitpakdee  
Image courtesy of Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

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11.5 Pichai Nirand  
*The End*  
1960  
Oil on hard board  
61 x 102 cm  
Collection of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum  
Image courtesy of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum

11.6 Khien Yimsiri  
*Musical Rhythm*  
1949  
Bronze  
55 x 38 x 38 cm  
Collection of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum  
Image courtesy of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum

11.7 Damrong Wong-Uparaj  
*Fishermen Village*  
1960  
Tempera on cloth  
89 x 110 cm  
Collection of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum  
Image courtesy of Silpa Bhirasri Memorial National Museum

The Transition of Thai Traditional Art to Modern Art in the 1950s and 1960s
11.8 Chamruang Vichienkhet

*Group*
1965
Bronze
143 x 33.5 cm
Collection of the artist
Image courtesy of the artist

11.9 Pira Pathanapiradej

*The Conquerer*
1965–1966
Oil on canvas
65 x 145 cm
Collection of the Bhirasri Institute of Modern Art Foundation
Image courtesy of Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

11.10 Tang Chang (also known as Chang sae-Tang)

*Untitled*
1965
Oil on canvas
210 x 250 cm
Collection of Thip sae-Tang
Image courtesy of Thip sae-Tang
The Transition of Thai Traditional Art to Modern Art in the 1950s and 1960s