

# ARTWORK 3 EARTH CHIMES

2005–2007

You moved from Thailand to Sydney in 1996. Surrounded by new skies, an unfamiliar environment, and people who don't speak your native language, everything feels both exciting and overwhelming. To make sense of it all, you turn to art to express your homesickness and search for belonging. As you paint your new surroundings, you also bring in symbols from home, like the elephant (meaning "Chang", which is yours and your father's nickname).

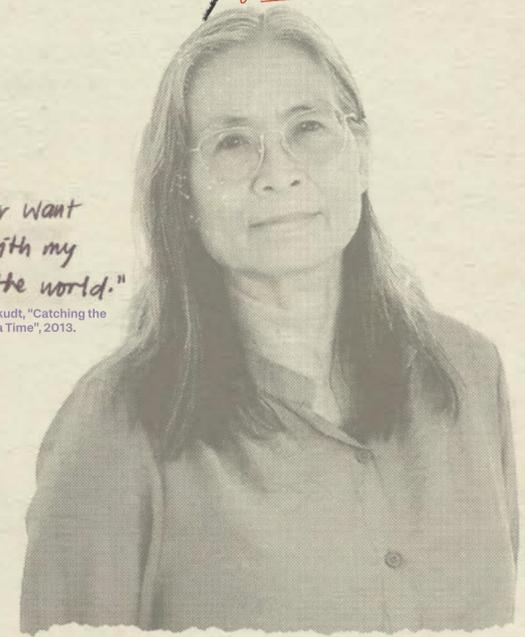


Phaptawan Suwannakudt  
Earth Chimes  
2005–2007  
Acrylic on canvas  
92 x 40 cm each  
Collection of the artist

**FEAR NO POWER**  
*fear no power*  
*women imagining otherwise*

*"I no longer want  
to work with my  
back to the world."*

Phaptawan Suwannakudt, "Catching the Moment, One Step at a Time", 2013.



## PHAPTAWAN SUWANNAKUDT

**CHOOSE YOUR ARTIST  
ROLE-PLAYING TRAIL**

This self-guided trail invites you to explore five pioneering Southeast Asian women artists who used their art to champion equality and justice. Follow their journey through their artworks as they make choices that reflect the challenges they have faced.

**1** How might a new and alien environment be painted and still feel familiar?

**2** How could art help make sense of new experiences and the environment?

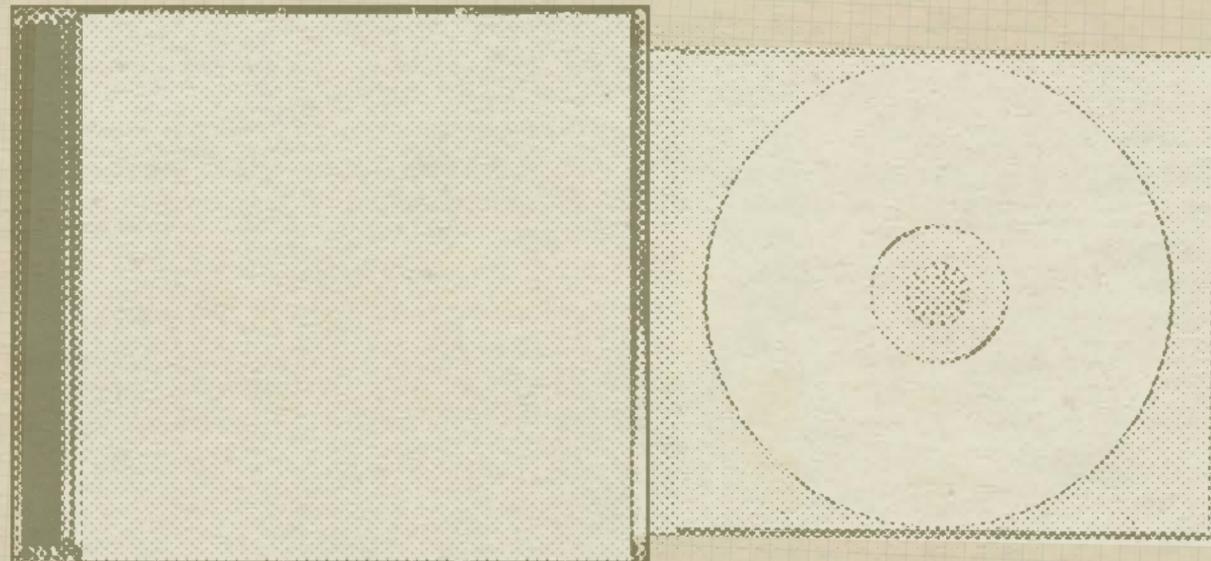
**3** What are the feelings evoked in this painting? Nostalgia, hope, loneliness, belonging?

## CREATIVE MISSION

**1** Create a playlist titled "My Life Journey" and include four to five songs.

**2** Design and draw an album cover based on your own experience in the space provided.

**3** Include a symbol, other than the elephant, that represents your journey in the design.



**REFLECTION** What symbols will remind you of who you are and where you belong?

## PHAPTAWAN SUWANNAKUDT

Phaptawan Suwannakudt (b. 1959, Thailand) was the first woman to lead a temple mural workshop in Thailand. This was usually helmed by men but she took over after her father—a well-known mural artist—had passed away. She reinterpreted temple mural painting traditions by blending them with personal stories and modern ideas. She also expanded her practice to include sculpture and installation art to explore different ways of making art.



# ARTWORK 1 NARIPHON II

1996

You are working on a temple mural project in Phayao, Thailand. One day, you learn that a young girl whom you once bought noodles from was sold off to a brothel by her parents. You feel a heaviness in your heart and decide to raise awareness that this practice should not be normalised. Adapting a myth from the Thai Buddhist tradition, you paint the mythical Nariphon tree with fruits taking the form of miniature maidens, while men attempt to pluck them with their hands.



Phaptawan Suwannakudt  
*Nariphon II*  
1996  
Acrylic and gold leaf on silk  
90.8 x 151.7 cm  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

1 How would you show the girls as "fruits" and victims?

2 How should the composition suggest it isn't just about one girl but a commonly accepted exploitation of the poor in society?

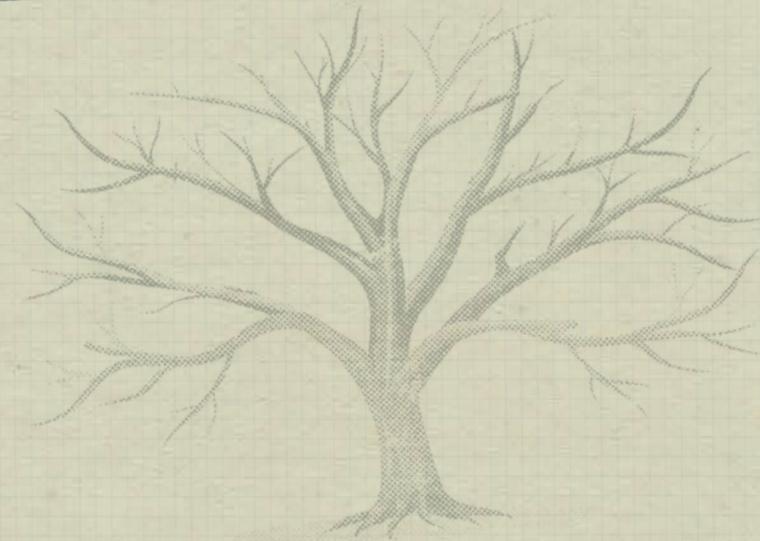
3 How does it feel to turn something unjust and painful into something visible and shared?

## CREATIVE MISSION

1 Draw or paint a symbolic or mythical tree.

2 Use a similar idea to the Nariphon tree, where you draw, on each branch, fruits that represent someone or a situation being taken advantage of.

3 Include figures or things that represent exploiters plucking the fruits.



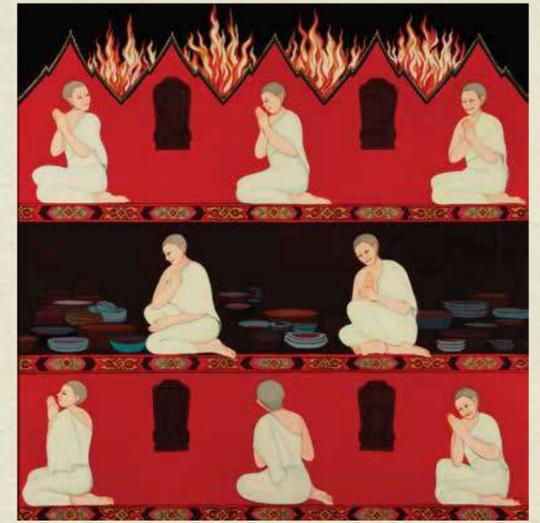
**REFLECTION** How could art make painful truths visible? Can you think of other examples?

# ARTWORK 2 MY MOTHER WAS A NUN I

1998

Being the daughter of a renowned Thai Buddhist temple mural painter, you grew up very familiar with Thai Buddhist art. One day, your mother joined a Buddhist temple as a nun. She wanted to meditate and serve her faith, but she was told to cook and clean while male monks prayed. She was disappointed and left.

Now, as an artist, you pick up your brush and adapt a traditional three-tier temple mural by replacing the gods with your mother.



Phaptawan Suwannakudt  
*My Mother was a Nun I*  
1998  
Acrylic on canvas  
121 x 120 cm  
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

1 How do the different postures show her dignity and piety?

2 What does it mean to represent women in religious visual traditions?

3 How does it feel to honour someone's efforts regardless of their gender, background and status?

## CREATIVE MISSION

1 Think of someone in your life whom you admire and who has gone unnoticed because of inequality.

2 Design a symbolic mural on a facade of a building to honour that person.

3 Think of the objects, colours or symbols that represent their story or values.

4 Sketch them in the space provided.



**REFLECTION** What ways can you create awareness of inequalities in society?