

CANAL PROJECTS

KORAKRIT
ARUNANONDCHAI
& ALEX GVOJIC

“PRAY”

9/29-12/17/2022

PRAY

September 29–December 17, 2022

Korakrit Arunanondchai & Alex Gvojjic: *PRAY* features *Songs for living* and *Songs for dying* (2021). This multimedia installation is built around a series of songs that speak to the poetics of radical consciousness, collectivity, and memory, as these emerge at the liminal space between living and dying, transformation and decay, individuality and community.

Max Weber's diagnosis that modernity is characterized by the "progressive disenchantment of the world," has led many to pursue individuality and human power outside of their spiritual and ancestral roots. Conversely, *PRAY* invokes the power of enchantment. Through heterogeneous temporalities, non-linear images, and mystical sounds, *PRAY* returns viewers to an engagement with the animate world. For this, each of the videos is narrated by the voice of the "ghost" that speaks for dead spirits, political regimes, family members, and animals, all of which are entwined together and transform into one another. In the videos, ghosts, shamans, and a dying sea turtle are, therefore, not simply metaphors but the mediums through which processes of becoming and decomposition must pass.

Songs for living is a reflection projected through a wishing pond. On the brink, a cast of Arunanondchai's grandfather's hands plays the surface of the water like a musical instrument.

The film cites excerpts from Simone Weil's *Gravity and Grace*, Édouard Glissant's *Sun of Consciousness*, and "On Prayer," a poem by the Polish-

American poet, Czesław Miłosz. While belonging to distant times and places these writers sought spiritual clarity to survive under conditions of oppression, and through the provocation of their art, they refused to partake in the games of power. Instead, they turned songs, prayers, and poetic enunciations into alternative routes to express possibilities of creating worlds outside those dictated by the chronologies of domination.

In *PRAY*, a reclining blue bird symbolizes defiance against political regimes that while proclaiming democracy in actuality institute authoritarian rule and exceptionalism. Four charred spirit houses also accompany the installation. Made in collaboration with Arunanondchai's mother, the spirit houses constitute portals that help us communicate between the material and immaterial, between the form and the formless.

Installed in the lower-level galleries, *Songs for dying* departs from the passing of Arunanondchai's grandfather and unfolds stories of loss, resistance, and familial love. Memories of Arunanondchai's last moments with his grandfather flow through the roots of the forest. At the start of the video, the mystical figure claims: "follow my voice." This call reassures the viewer that the path invoked is one of safety and comfort, as what follows is not an ending, but the transformation of human matter into presence, which as Simone Weill underscores, is the same as turning gravity into grace.

Images of personal mourning are interlaced with footage of the 1948

South Korean Jeju Massacre and more recent anti-government protests in Thailand –events that evince the repercussions of US interventionism in Southeast and East Asia since the Cold War period. In *Songs for dying*, the sequencing between personal and collective memory resists the political instrumentalization of oblivion.

Partially filmed in the summer of 2021 around lower Manhattan, *Songs for living* addresses the re-emergence of a radicalized sense of mutuality, especially after COVID-19 heightened our collective vulnerabilities and individuation. Presented for the first time in New York, *PRAY* constitutes an invitation to come together, honor our ancestors, and remember our shared pasts in a moment of seemingly multiplying catastrophes.

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Installation and production supported by: Andrew Lee, Glen Fogel and Duckunit, Matthew Li, Aaron Wrinkle, Atlantic Fine Art Services. See the full list of collaborators for *Songs for living and Songs for dying* at canalprojects.org/pray.

About the artists

A visual artist and filmmaker, Bangkok and New York-based **Korakrit Arunanondchai** tells stories embedded in the formation of collectivity and higher power. His highly experimental works provide the public with immersive and participatory experiences of political and ritualistic nature. As a multidisciplinary artist, Arunanondchai creates videos, performances, and sound pieces in collaboration with artists, filmmakers, musicians, and writers. Arunanondchai earned his BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009 and his MFA from Columbia University in 2012. His works have been featured in major solo and group exhibitions including Moderna Museet in Sweden (2022); Art Sonje Center in Seoul (2022); Bangkok CityCity Gallery (2022); Singapore Art Museum (2022); and Kunsthall Trondheim in Norway (2021).

Alex Gvojjic is a New York-based artist and cinematographer. His work focuses on creating “hyper-reality” environments that blend video, light, and cinematic tropes. By the transmutation of physical spaces, Gvojjic explores the relationships between seeing and believing creating worlds that feel both familiar and foreign. His work has been presented at the Venice Biennale, Berlin Biennale, Palais de Tokyo, Biennale de l’Image en Mouvement, MoMA PS1, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art in China, the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, among others. He has collaborated with a variety of artists including Ryan Trecartin, DIS, Xavier Cha, Fatima Al Qadiri, and others.

Credits *Songs for living* (2021)

Production

Koh Tao: **Camera Operator**: Andres Gutierrez Fiskeseth, Cyrus James Khan;

Talent: child-Warin, ghosts-Senay Zahir, Asia, Taw, Joy, Sha Prad;

Production Manager: Turan Zahir, Pookie Supaya, Sirada Chaumthong;

Location Supported by: New Heaven Diving School

New York:

Bonfire:

Movement Direction: Monica Mirabile;

Performers: Jack Meriwether, Joy Norton, Kate Williams, Maxi Canion, Amanda Wallace, Ellery Burton, Sadie Carnot, Margot Roo Ells, Erika McCarthy, James Adelman, Bryant Kennedy;

Tai-Chi Dancers: Albert Chan, Yee Lai Gong, Irene H Lee, Jie Ming Dong, Sun Choi Tsang, Yun Ho Poon, Kam Lei, Zenia de la Cruz, Richard Chin, Wai Wah Ho, Margaret Yuen, Sue Seto;

Unicycle Delivery Riders: Melanie Flores, Sofya Yuditskaya, Timothy Villaluz, Veronica H Generoso;

Crew/Post: Producer & Camera B: Rory Mulhere; **Producer & Art Department**:

Cherisse Gray; **Lighting**: Michael Potvin; **Location Manager**: Todd Faulkner;

Production: Zanze Addington-White; **Production Assistant & Art Department**:

Alden Louke, Alison Peery, Emma McMillian, Meghan Smith; **Production**

Assistant: Violet Flux, Elias Riviera; **Location Manager**: Arba Hall;

Location Manager: Dylan Golden; **Color & Post Production**: Ben Federman

Sound

Storyteller: Zsela;

Composition and Mixing: Aaron David Ross;

Score: Aaron David Ross;

Music: "*Coral like bones*" originally composed by Mikey Hart and Zsela

Drums: Brian Chippendale; Guitar: Mythless;

Writing: Diane Severin Nguyen, Cherisse Elizaga Gray

Co-commissioned by Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst and Kunstverein in Hamburg with support from FACT, Liverpool. Additional support by C L E A R I N G New York/ Brussels.

Credits *Songs for dying* (2021)

Production

Bangkok: **Camera Operator**: Akapol Sudasna, Abhichon Rattanabhayon;
Huahin: **Director of Photography**: Pasit Tандаechanurat; **Camera Operator**: Parin Intarasorn, Akapol Sudasna; **Camera Assistant**: Kantidarak Chaengtin, Teethat Yimsukpaitoon; **Lighting & Grip**: Piyapong Chatuthipsakul; **Data Wrangler**: Ekkaphob Sumsiripong; **Performer**: Donruedi Chana, Note Panayanggool; **Line Producer**: Cattleya Paosrijaoen, Tanade Amornpiyalerk; **Production Assistant**: Kanich Khajohnsri, Kolap Kansorn; **Art Director**: Narong Srisophab; **Prop Master**: Wissanu Nobnorb; **Art runner**: Chavapol Petkanpoom, Wisit Sratongoil; **Van Driver**: Thanakit Sutham, Nipol Khemthong, Yutthana Suksaman;
Koh Tao: Director of Photography: Andres Gutierrez Fiskeseth;
Jeju: **Line producer and Camera A** CHE Onejoon; **Camera B** Seo Jongwook; **Camera Assistant** Yoon Kyujong; **Research** Seong Nae Kim; **Color & Post Production**: White Light

Sound

Composition and Mixing: Akritchalerm Kalayanamitr;
Music: Koichi Shimizu, Zsela, Aaron David Ross, Bonventure, Wuttipong Leetrakul, Note Panayanggool, Kawita Vatanajyankur, Jink Sridumrongruk, Praewa Chirapravati Na Ayudhya

Co-commissioned by the 13th Gwangju Biennale, Kunsthall Trondheim, and the Han Nefkens Foundation.