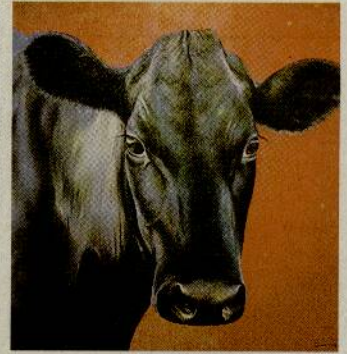


The CAMBODIA DAILY WEEKEND



THE CHILD WITHIN

Em Riem's latest exhibit features the images he missed growing up

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MONEY TALKS

Asia's hottest property market is also its most unlikely—North Korea

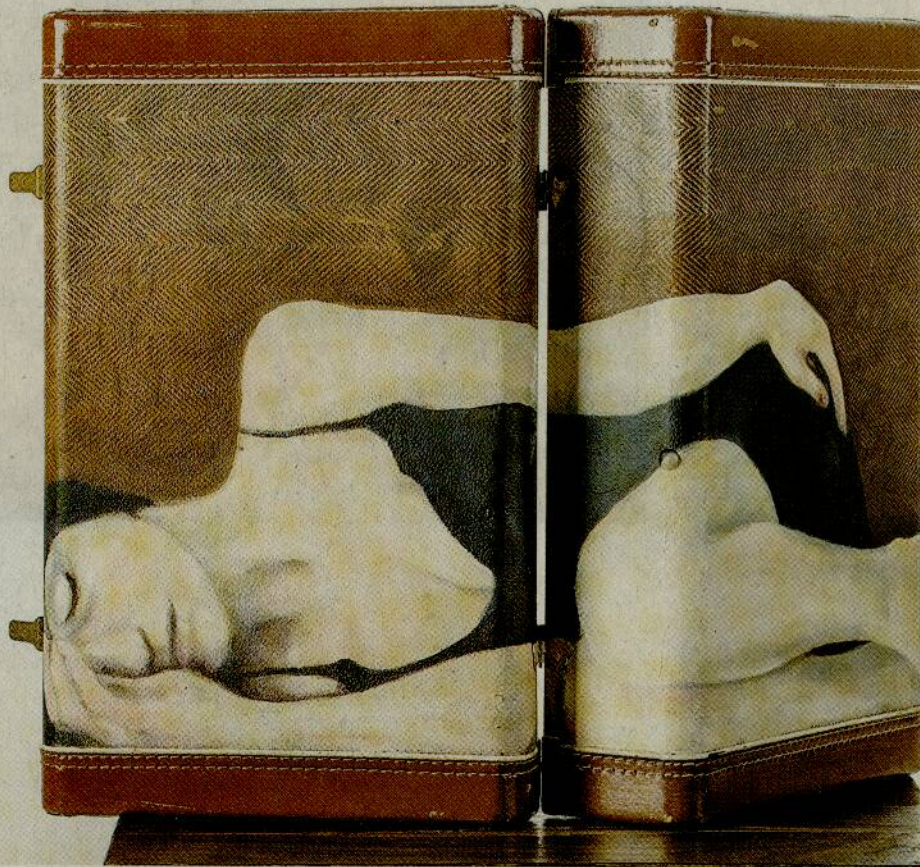
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BLUE PARADISE

Finding the treasures beneath the concrete in Tossa de Mar, Spain

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Nick Sells

Matthew Cuenca's artwork entitled 'Sylvia,' which will be among the pieces auctioned off by Christie's on Sunday.

Art Back on the Auction Block

Christie's to put Cambodian art in the global spotlight on Sunday

By MICHELLE VACHON • THE CAMBODIA DAILY

In a major boost for Cambodian art and artists, Christie's auction house will hold on Sunday its second art auction in Cambodia in two years. Lionel Gosset, a major French auctioneer, has flown in from Paris to oversee the charity auction in Phnom Penh.

A total of 46 lots from 38 Cambodian and international artists will be on auction. Works donated include Chan Dany's abstract flower made of pencil shavings, Khun Sotha's metal and glass tables, Oum Maknorith's fine porcelain tea set, Matthew Cuenca's resting woman painted on a suitcase, Phe Sophon's flowering thorax sculpture and Lim Theam's lacquer painting on wood.

The starting prices are as varied

as the works featured. On the low end, estimated prices for Sok Chan's jewelry are in the \$30 to \$65 range, while Heng Hun Sovann's "Elephant Soup Bowl" may go for \$60 to \$75. On the high end, French Cambodian artist Sera's abstract "Danseuse," or dancer, is expected to go for \$2,500 to \$3,000, and Japanese artist Takakazu Yamada's scenery "Hazy Moon" is expected to fetch well over \$5,000.

As in 2012, the event will be a fundraiser for the local arts scene. Two years ago, the beneficiary was Cambodian Living Arts. This time, proceeds will go to Cambodia 2000, an organization that supports arts and crafts training, and Amrita

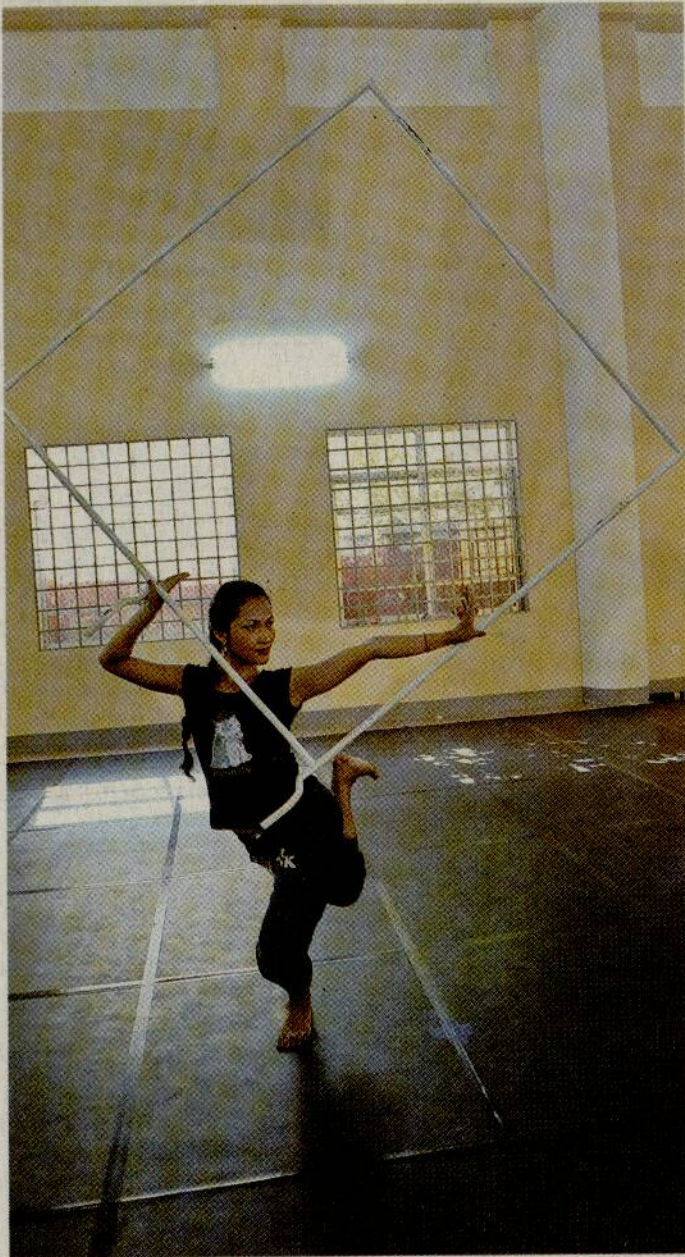
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Ceramic bowl by artist Ouk Socheathy

Matthew Cuenca

Top: Siv Channa
Center: Reuters
Bottom: Creative Commons



Siv Channa/Fonki/Chan Dany

Left, dancer/choreographer Chumvan Sodhachivy rehearses for Sunday's performance. Top right, acrylic and spray-paint work entitled 'Admiration' by artist Fonki. Below right, artist Chan Dany's work entitled 'Pka Rich Boun Srothob.'

Performing Arts. This group will stage a one-hour Cambodian contemporary-dance performance Sunday immediately after the auction.

In the hope of also attracting prospective buyers from abroad, the auction's catalogue was distributed to institutions and museums throughout the region. People outside the country can register and bid via Internet, said Madeleine de Langalerie, whose Phnom Penh organization ReCreation has managed both of Christie's auctions here.

Christie's only holds commercial auctions in its own sales rooms. The closest are in Mumbai, Shanghai and Hong Kong. As a result, the auction in Phnom Penh has to be a charity one with artists donating their works, Ms. de Langalerie

explained.

Participating in charity arts auctions has become standard practice for artists big and small. Last October, leading British and international artists donated works for a Christie's charity auction to raise funds for Gasworks, a contemporary art organization in London. In the United States, such events have become so customary that arts market analysts study how donating works to such events effect artists' profiles and price lists.

Simply being affiliated with a Christie's auction enhances an artist's profile, said Ms. de Langalerie. Plus, when Christie's holds an arts auction in a country, international arts markets temporarily shift their focus to that art scene.

To make it more interesting for

the artists, the event was planned as combining a three-month exhibition with artists reserving their best work for the auction, she said. This exhibition is now taking place at the Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra. But the actual auction will take place at Raffles Hotel Le Royal.

Two years ago, 350 people bid on 40 lots, raising \$40,000 for Cambodian Living Arts. Sok Chan's jewelry went for six times the estimated price. In a few cases, bids did not meet artists' expectations or usual price ranges and some artists walked away upset.

With the exception of the occasional overseas collector, such as one who bid \$9,000 for a Sopheap Pich sculpture, most people in the audience in 2012 were based in Cambodia and un-

able to match the resources of international collectors, an artist noted.

Still, Ms. de Langalerie said: "It's not a reason for doing nothing.

"One must take risks and start somewhere," she said. "You can't wait and wait for one day the market to be ready."

"Personally, I'm rather adventurous: I like adversity, complications, launching things. This is how I launched TV5 in Asia: No one believed in it 20 years ago," said Ms. de Langalerie, referring to the French television network she helped set up in Asia in the 1990s and 2000s as a network executive.

Thang Sothea agrees with this approach. An artist as well as an architect, he donated an iron sculpture entitled "Family" for the



Dancers from Amrita Performing Arts rehearse 'Bach Cello Suites' a piece they will perform after the Christie's auction. From left clockwise: dancer/choreographer Chumvan Sodhachiv, Khen Vanthy, Yon Chantha and Kao Sithy Nita. Right, Sreang Pisey's tigerwood and mahogany sculpture entitled 'Woman with Cane.'



Siv Channa/Sreang Pisey

auction. He is taking part in the event because this will benefit fellow artists, and give him a chance to feature his work as well as gauge Cambodia's market, he said.

"More people will know about my work, and I will be able to see how they feel about it," said Mr. Sothea, whose own gallery, Top Art on Sisowath Quay, regularly exhibits the works of other Cambodian artists.

For the two organizations that the auction will benefit, this comes at a crucial time. Apart from funds that may be raised, Amrita sees the event as an opportunity to reach out to future donors, said Kang Rithisal, the organization's executive director.

"There may be a people who would, like, write a check and give it to us on the spot—We just like to dream about that," he said. "But the more practical thing is to nurture relationships with people who may say, 'Wow this is something I like. I didn't know about this dance company in Cambodia.' And hopefully they will become our potential donors."

Money raised will be used to

train emerging Cambodian choreographers, he said.

This is why Amrita will stage a full-fledged, one-hour production Sunday at 6:00 p.m. at Hotel Le Royal. Featuring Cambodian dancers, this will include an excerpt of French-Cambodian choreographer Emmanuele Phuon "Khmeropedies III" for male dancers. This was a critical and public success last year in New York City. They will also stage award-winning choreographer Peter Chin's solo "Ferocious Compassion" performed by male dancer Chy Ratana. This has been staged several times overseas including in Toronto.

There will also be the dance "Bach Cello Suites" by Cambodian choreographer Chumvan Sodhachiv, known as Belle. This will be her third version of a dance she previously presented abroad.

"The third version is special," Ms. Sodhachiv said. In the 21-minute work, the four female dancers address their own lives and their role as women in the country, she said. "All I can say is that the dance is a lot of fun but it's also complicated."

Cambodia 2000 also puts great

hopes in the fundraising event, said representative Princess Norodom Veasna Diva Sirivudh. Launched in the 1990s by Princess Norodom Vachehra—the late King Norodom Sihanouk's half-sister—to help support Khmer classical dance and other traditional art forms, the organization lost its momentum after she died last year.

Princess Veasna Diva said she hoped this Christie's auction will help revive the organization. Among other projects, Cambodia 2000 supports a school teaching the craft of leather shadow-puppet making.

Mr. Gosset, the auctioneer, flew in Friday from Paris for the event. Over the last 2 years, he has handled collections worth \$42 million for Christie's. He hopes to top the \$40,000 raised in the 2012 auction here.

"The artists were selected to reflect the range of artistic creation in Cambodia and this pays homage to this young generation of artists [involved in the building] of Cambodia's cultural image in the world," he said.

People may view artworks to be auctioned from 7 to 10 p.m. on Sat-



Nick Sells

Brass 'Banana Bud Sconce' by painter and engraver Ke Vicheth

urday night and from 9:00 a.m. on Sunday at Hotel Le Royal. The auction starts at 3:00 p.m. at Le Royal. There is an entry fee of \$10 for the auction and Amrita's performance. People may pay \$5 to attend only the concert or the auction. Student tickets are \$4 for the whole program or \$2 for each event.