



Bangkok CityCity Gallery

Kornkrit Jianpinidnan *Thru the Straits of Demos*

At the center of Kornkrit Jianpinidnan's "Thru the Straits of Demos" sat *Winkieboy Secret Map* (2023), a reimagining in wood of a stone pedestal located in the heart of Bangkok's Lumphini Park. Across its surface, thumbnail photographs were scattered like landmarks as a clock ticked in the corner. Attempts to unearth the identity of Winkieboy led to a 2018 tweet from a now-shuttered account that claimed the moniker, in which a jogger vividly describes his encounter with a group of men masturbating in the bushes. In the orgy of responses, the then-governor of Bangkok, Aswin Kwanmuang, countered, denying even the possibility that such a thing could occur. Suddenly, the image of the park was divided and the impossibility of truth in any representation of a place surfaced in Lumphini.

The exhibition text framed Jianpinidnan's documentary photographs of everyday life in the park as an entanglement of experience and memory that may somehow present us with truth. A more interesting reading reveals the possibility of interiority etched onto a place. Jianpinidnan's map alone signals a tongue-in-cheek awareness that the routes through the underbrush are varied—the gaps in his grid-like map hinting at an alternative terrain of

memories unremembered and experiences unfelt. The images that comprise the terms of his cartography include wholesome busking school children, parasol-wielding elders, and Lumphini's historic architecture. But the images also capture near-naked men by the lake and nighttime celebrations of queer pride flowing out of the park's gazebos. Rather than any singular truth, the pins dropped in Jianpinidnan's map demonstrate how bodily navigation of space might uncover infinite permutations of the reality of a place.

Cartography is one way of reflecting a journey or a place. A poem is another. At the exhibition's core were Jianpinidnan's three latest photobooks—editions 19, 20, and 21 in his *POEM* (2016–) series. Cataloguing the artist's explorations of Lumphini Park, the beaches of Ranong, and his own home during the pandemic, these books represent the rich tapestry of intertextuality present in the exhibition. Jianpinidnan references the *Nirat Hariphunchai*—a poem of Thai antiquity driven by a cocktail of romantic longing and wanderlust. In many of the photographs selected for print, these impulses are tangible, creating avenues through which to slip from one of Jianpinidnan's internal landscapes to the next. At Bangkok CityCity Gallery the artist focused on experimental takes on the frame, a tactile approach carefully and poetically braiding his experiences together. The "frame" of *Door* (2023) shares the dimensions of the

entryway to Jianpinidnan's home, the barrier that kept the artist at a distance from the world during months of lockdown. At eye level, a triptych of photographs invites viewers to peer "out" at a yearnful scene: a shirtless adolescent looking through a peephole; a road winding through the mountains; and a man running on a beach, arms open to embrace the wind.

Jianpinidnan leans into the intertextual permeability of his memories and corroborates it with the exhibition title. "Thru the Straits of Demos" is a line borrowed from poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti's collection *A Coney Island of the Mind* (1958), itself lifted from Henry Miller's poem "Into the Night Life" (1947). Both are faithful to the interior journeys of their authors rather than any location they might suggest. To invoke these literary references as another whimsical act of framing implicates these photographs in an atlas of interior landscapes, relieving them of the burden of representative truth. And adamantly positioning his work within this chain of references reiterates the possibility of inroads between them. Veer off of the "Straits of Demos," and rather than wind up in Ferlinghetti's grotesque, conflicted America, we may find ourselves instead on the beaches of Ranong or the banks of Lumphini Lake, monitor lizards and all. It is a journey that in turn allows each of these places to be more expansively felt. In his own poem, Jianpinidnan speaks to the constitutive rather than representative power of remembrance, of "the memory that is not the compilation of original facts; it is the reconstruction of the last time we remember it." Indeed, "Thru the Straits of Demos" mapped coordinates that point eagerly to landscapes and truths all of the artist's own.

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KORNKRIT JIANPINIDNAN, *Door*, 2023, layout of photographs, digital print on super paper, 28.5 × 58.5 cm. Courtesy the artist and Bangkok CityCity Gallery.