



Koh Samui Herman Zhou Art Hub

Artist-in-Residence 2025

1 July - 4 August

Artist: Puvamin Indee, Hou Lam Tsui

Curated by Szewan Leung

PARADISE ISLAND

เกาะสวรรค์ หาดสวรรค์

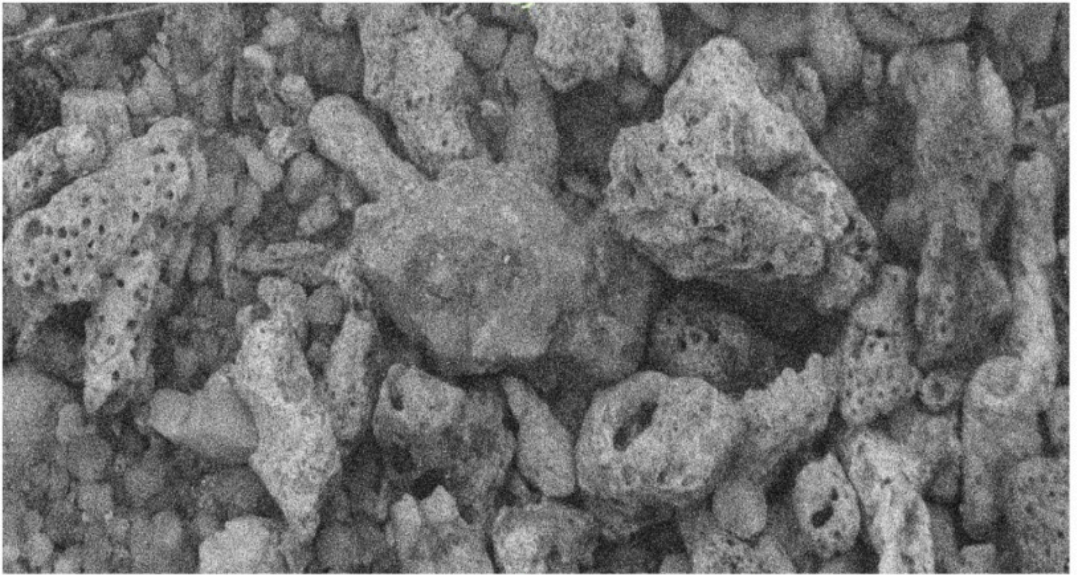
Puvamin Indee Houlam Tsui

Artist-in-Residence Exhibition

1-20 August 2025

Herman Zhou Art Hub

12/9, Moo5, Tambon Ang Thong Koh Samui, Thailand



Continuing the format introduced in 2024, this year's Artist-in-Residence (AiR) programme was shaped by invitation. However, this edition introduced a new dimension: two artists from different cultural and geographical backgrounds were invited to join simultaneously, to foster collaboration and cultural exchange. The selection criteria emphasized representation, ensuring one artist comes from Thailand and the other from Hong Kong. This summer, we were delighted to welcome Puvamin Indee and Hou Lam Tsui to Koh Samui. Neither artist had visited the island before — in fact, it was Hou Lam Tsui's first time in Thailand — which made their discoveries and interactions with the island's communities particularly fresh and interesting in contrast.

A Constellation of Memories

For Thai artist Puvamin Indee, who comes from the north of mainland Thailand, Koh Samui, - a small southern island - felt simultaneously familiar and foreign. To truly understand the island and its people would be best delving into their past through their own words and eyes.

The inspiration for his residency project emerged almost immediately upon his arrival. Encountering the privately run archive centre Nathon Historical Samui, owned by a prominent local figure Dr Rames, became a catalyst for his practice, leading to the development of *Photographic Memories Survey Project of Paradise Island*—a multi-layered exploration of Koh Samui's cultural memory. With

a background in social activism and documentary filmmaking, Puvamin approached his residency with a meticulous, community-focused lens. The project culminated in two interrelated components: a documentary film titled *Memories on the Paradise Island* and three photo collages—*Memories from People in Na Muang*, *Memories from People in Nathon*, and *Memories from People in Chaweng*—created through image-transfer workshops conducted as part of The Lab initiative.

Artworks from The Lab programme



Memories from People in Chaweng

Image transfer collages on acrylic board

35 x 45 cm 2025

Memories from People in Na Muang

Image transfer collages on acrylic board

35 x 45 cm 2025

Memories from People in Nathon

Image transfer collages on acrylic board

35 x 45 cm 2025

The workshops were staged across three significant community spaces: Bang Kao Kru Kwan Shop (Na Muang), a privately run archive centre Nathon Historical-Samui, and Sewang Arom Temple (Bo Phut). Seventeen participants, spanning multiple generations—from young shop owners to a 91-year-old grandpa, all Samui residents and largely Samui natives—shared personal photographs, stories, and newly captured images. Each workshop was like a mini theatre where the past and present were brought alive by the participants. The resulting photo collages present an intimate yet collective portrait of people of Koh Samui, rooted in personal histories but resonating with the broader fabric of the island's culture.

Memories from People in Chaweng workshop



Materials gathered from Puvamin's workshops are an important source for his documentary *Memories on the Paradise Island* but also encapsulated the ethos of The Lab programme: fostering community engagement through collaborative art-making. His thoughtful approach extended beyond artistic outcomes, creating moments of shared reflection and connection. What I found to be a rather poignant moment was an elderly lady from Na Muang, who brought a portrait of herself and her husband when they were young to the workshop. Through the image-transfer process, she was able to create a collage combining their portraits. Her joy and nostalgia were shared with all of us. Another participant, an elderly gentleman, had his first-ever portrait taken and printed out—with his pet

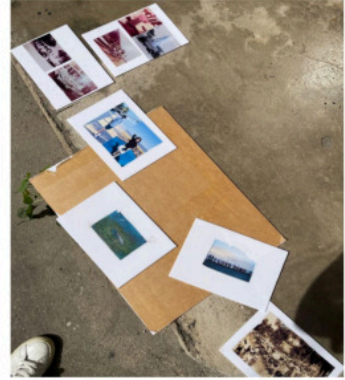
rooster—as a part of the project. We felt the sense of satisfaction as the two of them when they were looking at the photos together.

Memories from People in Na Muang workshop



The workshop in Nathon Historical-Samui, in Nathon which is the island's first commercial center and home to a vibrant Thai-Chinese community, had the most participants, it became a gathering point for them to share stories and photos. Many attendees brought not only family images but also historical photographs of the town, creating a collage artwork *Memories from People in Nathon* that resembles "Nathon family album." This artwork has now been donated to the archive centre Nathon Historical-Samui where everyone can go and enjoy it.

"Memories from People in Nathon" workshop



At the heart of Puvamin's residency project is his 17:20-minute documentary, *Memories on the Paradise Island*, its title borrowed from a 1960s rom-com set on Koh Samui. The documentary intricately weaves together interviews with local residents—many of whom participated in his workshops—recounting their personal memories of an island once known as the “coconut island.” These reflections are juxtaposed with montages of iconic imagery: waterfall, golden sand beaches, spectacular sunsets and even buffalos etc, carry deep symbolic meaning for Samui locals but are often viewed by tourists as mere attractions. The film also contrasts old family album photographs with contemporary images that embody the island's transformation over time.



Memories on the Paradise

Single channel video with sound, 17.20 minutes, 2025

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/1115528037/05aca2bdbd?fl=pl&fe=sh>

Featured in the film is a small Hainan temple, tucked away on a street in Nathon, with an archway (*Paifang*) inscribed with the words “德及南邦,” meaning “(Chinese) Virtue Reaches the Southern Country.” The temple not only houses statues of Chinese deities but also serves as an archive, preserving historical photos of significant events on the island, including festive celebrations and ceremonies centered around Nathon’s Thai-Chinese community. One of these photos was a Chinese New Year lion dance scene which features Mr. Thatree Chokkhanaphithak, now over 90 years old and is the last surviving member of the lion dance team. He recalls the days when his team was frequently called upon to perform at various Chinese festivals and ceremonies. Today, while the lion dance continues to be performed, it is now less common. Dr Rames recounts how, as a child, it would take two days to greet every relative whenever his mother brought him back to the island after time away. Now, many of Nathon’s old wooden houses, built in the Hainanese style, stand vacant

with their doors closed. Once the commercial hub of Koh Samui, Nathon has grown quieter over the years.



Memories on the Paradise, still



Photographic Memories Survey Project of Paradise Island, exhibition view

'It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to

*the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent*¹

- Walter Benjamin

Puvamin's Photographic Memories Survey Project is not merely a nostalgic pursuit. Rather, it highlights Koh Samui's cultural identity by contrasting locals' memories they shared through their words and montaging old photos of the island with contemporary photos and footage from tourist gaze which often reduces the island to just a tourist attraction. The photo collage workshops invited each participant to be an agent of juxtaposing the past and present, contextualizing the archival material in the present moment.



Memories on the Paradise, still

The documentary *Memories on the Paradise Island* is a rich and textured portrait of a community in flux—a tender yet evocative visual memoir and oral history that reflects on the island's storied past with contemplation on the future. It makes visible the transformation of Koh Samui; it invites the audience to reflect with the local interviewees on what's gain and what's loss through the process.

¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999)

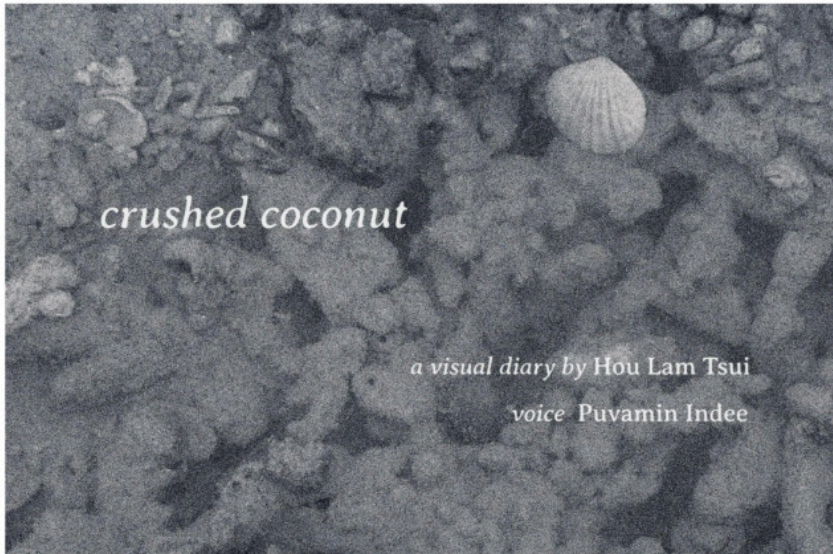
As tourism continues to evolve, bringing both opportunities and perhaps challenges, this body of works indirectly raises questions about the balance between cultural preservation and economic development. 'From January to April 2025, Koh Samui International Airport recorded 1,127,832 passenger arrivals, representing a 9% increase over the same period in 2024' - (11 June 2025 [hospitality.net](https://www.hospitality.net)). Koh Samui, an island with only 70,000 local population, with its breathtaking landscapes and rich heritage, stands at a crossroads. Will it become another cautionary tale of over-tourism, or can it chart a path toward sustainable coexistence?

The Tourist Gaze² Studium³

Hong Kong-based artist **Hou Lam Tsui** takes a stern outsider's perspective to look at Koh Samui in which she explores gender, identity, and consumerism in tourism. Drawing on her ongoing research into bodies of difference and femininity, Hou Lam developed *Crushed Coconut*, a sensory, visual journal of a holiday blending still photos, and a voiceover narration performed by fellow artist Puvamin Indee as the third person reading her journal while recalling the accounts of her encounters in the island which was mainly about her misunderstanding due to preconception. The work oscillates between dissonance, detachment and alienation.

² In John Urry's book of the same title *The Tourist Gaze* he argues that the tourist's gaze is characterised by a modern, superficial and aesthetic view of the world, subjected to the process of globalisation and standardisation Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze* "The Sage Publication Ltd 1990

³ The studium is of the order of *liking*, not of loving; it mobilizes a half desire, a demi-volition; it is the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds "all right." - Barthes, Roland. "Studium" in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* translated by Richard Howard, Vintage Books 2000, page 27



Crushed Coconut

Single channel moving image with sound, 6:41mins, UHD, 2025

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/1113681998/9809306e6e?share=copy>

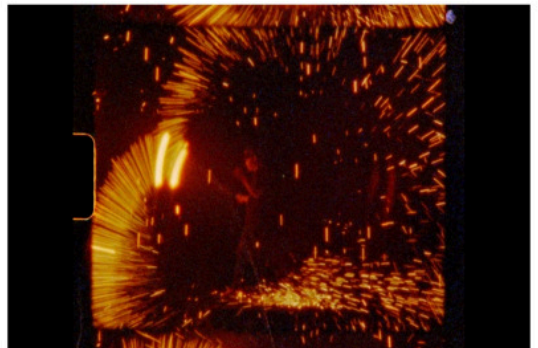
The journal, presented in slide show format, opens with stark black-and-white images of beaches littered with coral and shells, accompanied by a soundscape of unseen creatures. It transitions into colorful yet disorienting imagery: drag shows juxtaposed with religious figures statues, fire performances, massage parlor windows, and portraits of local life. These oversaturated and often out-of-focus images mimic the banal tourist snapshots while simultaneously amplifying the sensory overload of the island's spectacle. The work corresponds to her Super 8 short film *Sunburn*, which captures the dazzling yet performative energy of fire dancers and drag performers striving to meet the expectations of tourist audiences.



Crushed Coconut, exhibition view



Sunburn (left), *Khūn Khāṛāokea* (right),
exhibition view



Sunburn

single channel with sound, 2:38mins, UHD, 2025

Watch:

<https://vimeo.com/1113673805/f610d385cf?share=copy>

Similar to The Lab community engagement programme in 2024, the artist and I developed the project concept entirely from scratch on the island, collaboratively structuring and executing the project. However, what set this year apart with Hou Lam Tsui was that the community participants were not preselected by me prior to the residency. Instead, we met them serendipitously during a karaoke party at the beach hosted by Dr. Rames.

By the time we entered the second half of the residency, Hou Lam was still reflecting on her Lab project. I proposed reenacting the karaoke night for it left a lasting impression on me because of how music connected people from vastly different cultural backgrounds, and she embraced the idea. For instance, Tsui Hou Lam and I, as the only Hong Kong Chinese participants among local Thais and some European expats, were naturally expected to sing a Chinese song. The group's selection was “月亮代表我的心” (*The Moon Represents My Heart*), a hugely popular Chinese song from the 1980s performed by the late Teresa Teng, an iconic and influential singer. I realized that Teresa's music had served as a channel for them to 'experience' modern Greater Chinese culture from afar at the era. It immediately became our common language.



Khūn Khārāxokea The Lab workshop



Khūn Khārāxokea

Single channel moving image with sound, UHD, 4:37mins, 2025

Artwork from The Lab programme

<https://vimeo.com/1113678375/a1376479fe?share=copy>

With the help of Puvamin, we organized a karaoke night at the residence, inviting the same group of beach karaoke participants along with their friends. Hou Lam filmed the event, turning it into an MTV-style video titled *Khūn Khārāxokea*. During the potluck gathering, thirteen community members performed songs of personal and cultural significance. The resulting footage captures collective singing, often mismatched with the music playing, and body movements during dancing—sometimes filmed in slow motion. These subtle moments reveal the distance between the artist and her subjects,

emphasizing her role as a close yet detached spectator, quietly observing in proximity the interplay of connection and cultural expression.

In a playful yet critical gesture, Hou Lam's installation *Summer Body* presents an assemblage of seashells collected from Lipa Noi beach. Coated in scented soap and paired with cocktail stirrers, these objects are encased in a glass cabinet, transforming ephemeral souvenirs into artifacts of a constructed tropical fantasy.



Summer Body

Seashells, coral, cocktail sticks, soap, 2025

Through their distinct artistic practices, Puvamin Indee and Hou Lam Tsui fostered meaningful connections with the island's residents, creating projects that celebrate collaboration, exchange, and shared experience. Their differences in background, Puvamin Indee is from Thailand while Hou Lam Tsui is from Hong Kong, and artistic focus, their projects emerge from perspectives positioned at opposite ends of the creative spectrum. This contrast makes this joint exhibition particularly engaging and intellectually resonant.

This year's AiR programme reflects our enduring commitment to community engagement and to supporting emerging artists practice development. We succeeded in collaborating with a much wider audience in the island compared with last year. Having the chance to make genuine connections with

the communities was most rewarding. I am particularly moved by the locals like Dr Rames's passion in preserving their culture and history. They are an inspiration.

We are profoundly grateful to Koh Samui's residents, whose warmth, generosity, and enthusiasm made this year's residency a resounding success.

– Szewan Leung,

13th October, 2025

Contact: Szewan Leung, Programme Director info@hermanzhouarthub.com

Puvamin Indee



Puvamin (b. 1996) was born in Lampang and graduated from Faculty of Fine Art of Chiangmai University in 2020. He currently works and lives in Lampang.

Puvamin explores the political-environmental issues, the clash between structural power, capitalism, and local narratives, as well as the consequences that occur to nature and people's way of life. He often encounters objects that testify to each specific site's circumstances. His research draws from the forestry concessions issue in northern Thailand to the construction of the Mekong dams in Isaan.

Puvamin participated in festivals and group exhibitions such as *When Floods High As Skies*, *Kish Feast On The Stars* (Bangkok 2025, Khon Kaen 2024), *Kenduri Seni Patani 2024* (Pattani, 2024) MAIIAM Pavillion- *Point of No Concern: Return to the Rhizomatic State* (Thailand Biennale Chiang Rai, Chiang Rai, 2023, S.O.E 2023 *We Trade Everything* (Khon Kaen, 2023), and *ART FOR AIR* (Chiang Mai, 2022). His work *Lost Forest* has been collected by MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum, Chiangmai, Thailand

Hou Lam Tsui



Hou Lam Tsui (b. 1997) is an artist who works across moving image, sculpture, installation, and text. Her practice centres around personal experience, affect, gender politics, and peripheral storytelling. Tsui rethinks how femininity and queerness are imagined within cultures, critically exploring how media and consumer desires shape emotions, our notion of love, femininity, and identities by drawing inspiration from pop culture, advertisement, anime, literature and beyond.

Her work has been previously exhibited and screened at ACMI (Australia), Art Basel Films (Hong Kong), Beijing International Short Film Festival (China), Guangdong Times Museum (China), Para Site (Hong Kong), Tai Kwun Contemporary (Hong Kong), Videoex Festival (Switzerland), among others. Selected recent exhibitions include *Follow the Feeling* (Guangdong Times Museum, 2024), *One is not born a woman* (Square Street Gallery, 2023), *Post-Human Narratives—In the Name of Scientific Witchery* (Para Site; Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences, 2022). She is a recipient of the WMA Graduate Award (2024), the Liu Shiming Art Foundation Scholarship (2024), and Para Site's 2046 Fermentation + Fellowships (2022).

Tsui lives and works in Hong Kong. She received a BA in Fine Art and History of Art from the University of Leeds in 2018 and later obtained an MFA from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2024.

Hope you had a nice summer