

Final Report —Activity Report—

Title. “Fabric”

Project “Fabric” report on activity results and the circumstances of stage production in Thua Thien Hue, Phnom Penh, Dawei province, Yangon and Gunma Prefecture

Main Text.

The project “Fabric” is an artistic research in field of arts and culture. The project is relevant to the importance of textile and apparel industry in globalized economic concerning cheap labour in mainland Southeast Asia countries. I initiated and executed this project in Southeast Asia countries where became top of outsourcing destination for the past decades because its low labour cost.

I focus on garment and apparel industry as it is one of the oldest industries in the world which must rely on labour-intensive. The industry is also major provider of jobs and foreign currency in many countries.

Over 5 months, I had spent my days conducting artistic research over several countries in Southeast Asia including Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar where I observed of garment workers carefully in Industrial Zones and Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

Additional, apart from Southeast Asia countries, I also spent a short time in Japan for research about a history of the workers’ struggles in a mill during Meiji Era in order to pass on the ongoing story but differ in time and place.

Besides the research and photo documentations, I have been created collaborative artworks with local workers in each sites in Southeast Asia; consisting of patchworks and a video documentary.

1. Activity Overview

Thua Thien-Hue province, Vietnam

My first location research during June 1- 30, 2017 is *Thua Thien-Hue province* in Vietnam. Thua Thien-Hue is a province in the Central of Vietnam. It is located next to Quang Tri province to the north, Danang to the south, and Quang Nam province to the south-west. Thua Thien-Hue province leans up against the Truong Son mountain range and it washed by the East Sea, along its 120km seashore. It is about 700 km south of the national capital of Hanoi and about 1100 km north of Ho Chi Minh City.

Thua Thien-Hue Province is a national center for culture and tourism. Hue city in Thua Thien-Hue province is a tourist destination city. As its historic monuments, Hue city has earned it a place in UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites.

However, Thua Thien-Hue province has been pushing forward to be a center for trade, service, international transaction and one of the transportation clues of Central of Vietnam. It has been specified to be an industrial estate area in the near future. The central Thua Thien-Hue province plans to spend more than VND 6.6 trillion (US\$295 million) on transforming itself into a textile and garment hub in the country's central region.

During the research in Thua Thien-Hue, I had visited Hue Textile Garment Joint Stock Company, Phu Bai Industrial Zone and Chan May Port. In Thua Thien-Hue province, there is an oldest and biggest sportswear factory, *Hue Textile Garment Joint Stock Company* where is located in Huong Thuy district. There are hundreds of Vietnamese labour working in the factory. The factory will be relocated soon to *Phu Bai Industrial Zone*.



Hue Textile Garment Joint Stock Company in Thua Thien-Hue province, Vietnam

Phu Bai Industrial Zone is located in Huong Thuy district near Phu Bai airport, providing jobs in many industries for thousands of employees. Due to the high success of the industrial zone, many textile and garment companies located in the zone had expressed their willingness to expand their factories.



Phu Bai Industrial Zone in Thua Thien-Hue province, Vietnam



Nowadays, the current minimum wage in Thua Thien-Hue province is approximately VND 3,100,000 per month (approximately \$154 USD).

In addition, the government of Vietnam has planned to push a mega-project in Thua Thien-Hue province in 2025. The mega-project of *Chan May – Lang Co Economic Zone* will be situated around Chan May Bay. Chan May Bay is about 90 km of Hue city, 36 km from Phu Bai International Airport and 32 km from Danang International Airport.

Website Chan May — Lang Co Economic Zone: <http://chanmaylangco.com.vn/Homepage>



Chan May Port at Chan May Bay in Vietnam has been expanding



Master plan of Chan May – Lang Co Economic Zone to 2025

After researching, I went to *Cho Dong Ba market* in Hue city to find local sewers and employed them to create textile patchworks from fabric remnants which I brought from the garment factories in Thailand. Regarding this part, I let the local sewers create patchworks as their styles without directing.



At Cho Dong Ba market in Hue city, Vietnam



Collaborative art making with local sewers in Vietnam

In my point of view, even the cost of living in Thua Thien-Hue province, Vietnam is inexpensive; however, it seems that the living wage of factory workers here is not enough. In addition, Thua Thien-Hue province will have a mega-project of *Chan May – Lang Co Economic Zone* around Chan May Bay in 2025. Personally, apart from the exploitation

of wage-labor, I also concern about the environmental effect associated with economic zone. Like many other Southeast Asian countries, there is no strict environmental legislation in Vietnam.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

My second location research during July 1- September 30, 2017 is *Phnom Penh* and some surrounding districts.

Cambodia's garment industry continues to grow rapidly so far. This is can be attributed to the country's open economic policy which has drawn in large amounts of foreign investment into this sector of the economy.

According to the facts, the garment industry represents the largest portion of Cambodia's manufacturing Garment industry is one of the key drivers of Cambodia's growth. The primary export product is apparel, which account for more than 80% of total exports.

Apart from being the vibrant capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh is also the center of industry in the country. There are many factories, industrial zones and industrial parks in some areas where are not far from Phnom Penh city such as *Stung Meanchey* area on Veng Sreng Blvd., *Chak Ang-re* area on National Road No.2, etc.

In *Stung Meanchey* area on Veng Sreng Blvd., there are two Industrial Parks including *Vattanac Industrial Park* and *Canadia Industrial Park*. Many workers live near factories areas and many of them live in suburb for saving their rents. As a matter of fact, most of their dormitories are very crowded. For example, room for 4 people; they lived for 8-10 people.

In *Chak Ang-re* area on National Road No.2, there are many fragment garment factories on both sides of the main street with some small markets. Workers live just off the main street inside the alley.



Vattanac Industrial Park in Stung Meanchey area, Cambodia



Canadia Industrial Park in Chak Ang-re area, Cambodia

In addition, amongst 34 special economic zones in Cambodia, there is *Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone (PPSEZ)* where is located on National Road No.4 in *Khan Posenchey*, suburb of Phnom Penh. PPSEZ is invested and run by Japanese investors since 2006. Regarding the information via their website, there are more than 10 garment, textile and apparel factories in PPSEZ.



A factory in PPSEZ, Cambodia



A factory in PPSEZ, Cambodia



Worker dormitories near PPSEZ, Cambodia



Worker dormitory near PPSEZ, Cambodia

In Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone (PPSEZ), many workers especially single women live in worker dormitories where are situated in the factories, and many of them especially workers who are couples or have families live near the area.

From my point of view, in general, the living of workers in Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone (PPSEZ) seems look better than the living of workers in *Chak Ang-re area* and *Stung Meanchey area*.

In 2017, Cambodian garment worker's wage has been increase to \$153 USD per month; excluded OT or other benefits. Nowadays minimum monthly wages in Cambodia is lowest in South East Asian countries, and almost lowest in Asia inferior to Bangladesh.

After researching, I looked for local home-based sewers and tailors to collaborate with this project. Regarding my artistic practice, I brought some fabric remnants that I collected from garment factories in Vietnam to Cambodia and then I employed local home-based sewers and tailors to create pieces of textile artworks.

Regarding this part, I let the local home-based sewer and tailors created patchworks from the fabric remnants that I brought from Vietnam without directing. I let them to create the patchworks as their styles.



Working with local home-based sewer in Phnom Penh



Working with local tailor in Phnom Penh

I have also been made the experimental video documentary by collaboration with a local freelance photographer and Cambodian garment workers.

Regarding the experimental video documentary, I visited a garment factory in Phnom Penh and filmed garment workers during they were working. In this part, I collaborated with the local freelance photographer, *Lim Sokchanlina*. I asked him to film the garment workers during their working time and atmosphere surrounding as his style without directing.



Shooting the documentary video in the garment factory in Cambodia



Shooting the documentary video in the garment factory in Cambodia



Garment workers working in the factory in Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Garment workers working in the factory in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Moreover, I also asked some garment workers who work and live in Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone (PPSEZ) to collaborate with this project. In this part, I asked the garment workers to film video clips about their ordinary lives outside factories from their smart phones. As usual, I just told them what I want and after that I let them to film video clips as they style without directing.



With some garment workers in PPSEZ, Cambodia



Hanging out with some workers in PPSEZ, Cambodia

In my perspective, the garment and apparel industry exemplifies the challenge associated with global manufacturing. There are many home-based garment workers who engage in the lower skilled work of ready-made garment production, low wages, “flexible” contracts and bad condition.

Dawei Province & Yangon, Myanmar

My third location research and creation artwork during September 1-30, 2017 is *Dawei province* and *Yangon* in Myanmar.

Dawei is a city in south-eastern Myanmar and is the capital of the *Tanintharyi Region*, formerly known as the *Tenasserim Division*. It is about 614.3 km south of Yangon on the northern bank of the Dawei River. Dawei is a port at the head of the Dawei River estuary, 30 km from the *Andaman Sea*. As result, the city is prone to flooding during the monsoon season. Nowadays, Dawei population was around 145,000. Dawei has been pushing to be the site for the mega-project *The Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ)*.

The Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ) is an infrastructure mega-project in Myanmar. Thailand’s Italian-Thai Development (ITD) initiated the project in 2008, but it eventually suspended in 2013, since ITD was unable to raise the necessary funds. However, the governments of Myanmar and Thailand have continued to promote the project.



Location in Myanmar



Dawei Township, Myanmar

Dawei SEZ purposes to transform Dawei into Myanmar's and Southeast Asia's largest industrial and trade zone. If this megaproject completed, it will be the largest industrial zone in Southeast Asia.



The Dawei deep-sea port project, Myanmar



The Dawei SEZ project, Myanmar



The Kilometer Zero in the Dawei SEZ project, Myanmar



The Dawei SEZ project, Myanmar



Sales Office in the Dawei SEZ project, Myanmar



Inside Sales Office, the Dawei SEZ project

In 2015, the Government of Japan formally became involved in the Dawei SEZ project. Japan invests through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) through a Special Purpose Vehicle that provides investment in an equal ratio to that of the Myanmar and Thai governments.

In 2010, ITD had begun the construction of roads and leveling of land in order to prepare for the construction of the road corridor and the industrial estate. Residents in one village said that the road construction suddenly took over their lands with no prior notice. Other problems are also arising in the area prepared for the SEZ such as farming and fishing communities were told to move out of the SEZ area. The new site was built, but some people were already living there that caused problems for the original residents.



Interviewing local people living in Dawei SEZ project Construction of roads for the SEZ have caused many environmental problems

Website Dawei Special Economic Zone: <http://www.daweindustrialestate.com>

After researching, I looked for local home-based sewers and tailors to participate with this project. Regarding my artistic practice, I brought some fabric remnants that I collected from garment factories in Cambodia to Myanmar and then I employed local home-based sewers and tailors to create pieces of textile artworks.

Regarding this part, I let the local home-based sewer and tailors created patchworks from the fabric remnants that I brought from Cambodia without directing. I let them to create the patchworks as their styles.



Working with local tailor in Yangon, Myanmar



Working with local tailor in Yangon, Myanmar

In my point of view, even the *Dawei SEZ* mega-project was promoted that it would be the important western gateway of the southern economic corridor that link Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand; in my perspective, we should much more concern about the living of people of Myanmar and also the environmental effect associated with economic zone. As like many other Southeast Asian countries, there is no strict environmental legislation in Myanmar.

Gunma Prefecture, Japan

My third location research and creation artwork during October 1-31, 2017 is *Gunma Prefecture* in Japan. Gunma Prefecture is a prefecture of Japan located in the northwest corner of the Kanto region on the main Honshu island. Its capital is Maebashi.

I have chosen to research in Gunma Prefecture because there is a historical site – *Tomioka Silk Mill*. Tomioka Silk Mill is the first large-scale silk-reeling factory in Japan that the Meiji government established in Gunma Prefecture in 1872 for the purpose of modernization. It was built as a model training facility in order to spread the skill of silk-reeling so that all the local silk mills would be able to mass-produce high-quality raw silk.



Tomioka Silk Mill, Gunma Prefecture, Japan



Silk-reeling Plant in Tomioka Silk Mill, Japan

The Meiji government invited French advisers to Japan as France was a superior country in reeling silk at that moment. Mill hands were also recruited from all over Japan. Eventually, other silk mills were established throughout the country after Tomioka model and some mill hands who had learned the newest silk reeling techniques at Tomioka Silk Mill played active and important roles at the silk mills in their hometowns.



Director's house (Brunat house) in Tomioka Silk Mill, Japan



Female Workers' Dormitory in Tomioka Silk Mill, Japan

With other three silk industrial heritages in Gunma Prefecture, in 2014, Tomioka Silk Mill was selected to be the one of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



UNESCO added Tomioka Silk Mill to the World Heritage List

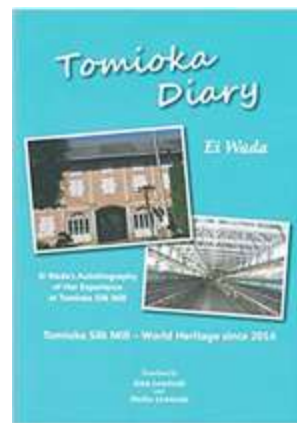


Full-scale replica of Brunat Engine

I am interested in the history of those female workers in the *Tomioka Silk Mill* during the Meiji Era. As I researched, in the beginning, there were about 400 female workers operated the machines in Tomioka Silk Mill. The lives of those female workers has been recorded in a book "*Tomioka Diary*" (*Tomioka Nikki*) by *Wasa Ei* (1857-1929). Ei Wada, the author of *Tomioka Diary*, was one of these mill hands who returned to her hometown in Nagano and helped establish Rökkosha Silk Mill.



Ei Wada (1857-1929)



Tomioka Diary by Ei Wada

In addition, from the book, "*Tomioka Diary*" (*Tomioka Nikki*) by *Ei Wada*, there were many female workers who were recruited from all over Japan, had worked in the mill. They had worked extremely hard and often long hours. After Tomioka model, other silk mills were established throughout the country. Many of these female workers returned to their hometown to teach the newest silk-reeling techniques.

As the textile industry was the lead sector in Japanese industrialization. It is not wrong to say that these female workers are a part of people who were behind the success of Modernization of Japan. However, it seems that the prefecture presents Tomioka Silk Mill only architecture and a valuable document showing how machines were first used in the silk reeling business in the beginning of the Meiji period. Even there are a Silkworm Exhibition showing some image archives of former workers and the Silk Reeling Demonstration, but it seems that they make light of former workers' history.

2. Theater Fabric's approach.

New Space Arts Foundation (Hue, Vietnam)

1-30 June, 2017

New Space Arts Foundation (NSAF) is my host organization in Vietnam during June 1-30, 2017. NSAF is an independent art space in Hue city, Vietnam. It was founded by twin artists '*Le Brothers*' (*Le Ngoc Thanh, Le Duc Hai*). Aiming to increase contemporary art appreciation amongst general public, NSAF's main activities are supporting young Vietnamese and international artists by giving them the opportunities to uninhibitedly express their ideas. During my research in Vietnam, NSAF provided me the translator and assistant in order that I could accomplish my plan. Additional, the last week of my residency in Vietnam, NSAF organized my artist talk to art students in Hue City.



New Space Arts Foundation, Hue city, Vietnam



Le Brothers

The New Space Arts Foundation

Hamlet 3, Lai The village,

Phu Thuong commune, Phu Vang district,

Hue province, Vietnam

Website: <http://www.newspacearts.com>

Sa Sa Art Projects (Phnom Penh, Cambodia)

1 July – 31 August, 2017

Sa Sa Art Projects is my host organization in Cambodia during July 1- August 31, 2017. Sa Sa Art Projects is Phnom Penh's only not-for-profit artist-run space dedicated for experimental art practices. It was founded in 2010 by the Cambodian arts collective *Stiev Selapak*. Sa Sa Art Projects aims to facilitate artistic knowledge production and sharing through experimentations and collaborations. Sa Sa Art Projects engages with Cambodian and visiting artists, creative individuals, groups and students to realize art projects and events that are accessible and enjoyable by everyday Cambodians.

Sa Sa Art Projects does these by focusing on three main areas of programming: experimental art residencies with Cambodian and visiting artists, art and media workshops and collaborative projects.



Sa Sa Art Project, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Artist talk by Piyarat Piyapongwiwat at Sa Sa Art Projects

During my research in Cambodia, Sa Sa Art Projects supported me the translator and assistant, and also provided me the needed information in order that I could achieve my goal.

The third week of the artist-in-residence program, Sa Sa Art Projects organized my artist talk to public audiences. The audiences included art students, local artists, researchers and foreigners living in Phnom Penh.

The last week of my residency, Sa Sa Art Projects organized my Open Studio to public audiences. I showed three pieces of patchworks which I collaborated with local home-based sewers and tailors, some video footages which were filmed by some garment workers who work and live in *Phnom Penh Special Economic Zone (PPSEZ)*, photo documentations and Periodic Reports.



Open Studio at Sa Sa Art Projects, Phnom Penh



Open Studio at Sa Sa Art Projects, Phnom Penh

Sa Sa Arts Project

#47, St 350, Sangkat Boeng Keng Kang 3 (off St 95),

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Website: <http://www.sasaart.info>

Beyond Pressure (Yangon, Myanmar)

1-30 September, 2017

Beyond Pressure is my host organization in Myanmar during September 1- 30, 2017. *Beyond Pressure* is an independent art organization created to contribute towards the expanding of Myanmar art boundaries. *Beyond Pressure* was found by *Moe Satt*, curator and performance artist. It is initiated and run by local artists who work in their communities to create projects that open up spaces for self-expression and discourse. Their foremost aim is to develop the Myanmar performance art scene by producing an annual festival where foreign and local artist can exchange ideas through workshops, symposia and performances.

During my research in Myanmar, Beyond Pressure supported me the translator and assistant in order that I could accomplish my plan.



Working with local tailor in Yangon



Working with local tailor in Yangon

Beyond Pressure

No, 223 (6 floor, left), Botataung Zay Road,
Pazundaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar

Website: <http://www.beyondpressure.org>

Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT) (Tokyo, Japan)

1-31 October, 2017

Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT) is my host organization in Japan during October 1- 31, 2017. AIT was begun by six art curators and organizers in 2001 in Tokyo, and AIT's team decided to apply for official non-profit status from The City of Tokyo in 2002. To further AIT's interests in creating discursive spaces for art in Tokyo AIT began MAD, an independent contemporary art school in 2001. This is essentially something like evening classes on weekdays, for anyone interested in contemporary art and its discourses without examination to participate. Besides the above, AIT has SPECIAL LECTURES (1-2 days) and E-MAD, on online program which covers 1. Art History since the 1900s, and 2. Latest news from the international art scene.

Moreover, AIT also began partnerships with various funding bodies in 2004 to host artists in Tokyo for three-month research-type residencies. Over the past ten years AIT has worked with many individuals and organizations both in Japan and abroad. AIT has always tried to maintain an international outlook while being located in Japan.

During my research in Japan, AIT supported and provided me the needed information for my research. The last week of my residency, AIT organized my artist talk to public audiences. The audiences included local and international artists, researchers, curator and art & cultural officers.



Artist talk by Piyarat Piyapongwiwat at AIT



Artist talk by Piyarat Piyapongwiwat at AIT

Arts Initiative Tokyo (AIT)

Twin Bldg. Daikanyama B-403,
30-8 Sarugaku-cho, Shibuya-ku,
Tokyo 150-0033 Japan

Website: <http://www.a-i-t.net/en/>

3.Fellowship activity record

During my research in Vietnam, I traveled from Hue city to *Chan May Bay* in order to surveying the area where is pushing to be the site for the upcoming mega-project *Chan May – Lang Co Economic Zone* in 2015. Chan May Bay is about 90 km of Hue city which take at least around 1hr45 to travel.

Regarding my research in Myanmar, I relocated from Yangon to Dawei province for several days in order to surveying the area where has been pushing to be the site for the mega-project *Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ)*. Dawei province is about 614.3 km south of Yangon.

Regarding my research in Japan, I traveled for a couple of times from Kanagawa Prefecture, where I stayed, to Gunma Prefecture in order to research about the Tomioka Silk Mill. The Silk Mill is located in Gunma Prefecture where is about 120 km northwest of Tokyo.

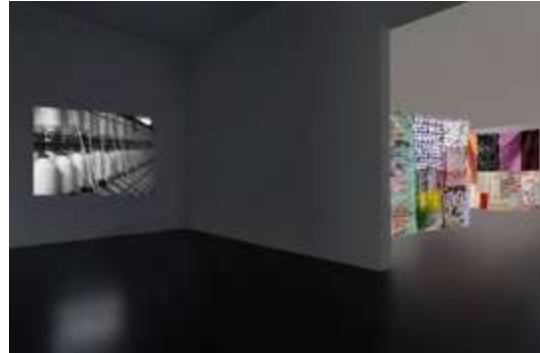
4. Future plans

After finishing the fellowship program, I plan to exhibit the final work as a solo exhibition in any country in Southeast Asia in 2018. The exhibition will consist of textiles artworks, video documentary, photo documentation and final report which included the results of my Fellowship activities.

I also plan to publish exhibition catalogues that consist of articles written by a curator and an intellectual specialized in social science. During the exhibition, I plan to organize exhibition talk by inviting a specialist in the issues in order to share and exchange ideas with general audiences.



Sketch drawing of installation view in the exhibition



Sketch drawing of installation view in the exhibition