EPHEMERAL BUT ETERNAL WORDS
TRACES OF ASIA
EPHEMERAL BUT ETERNAL WORDS: TRACES OF ASIA

CHIHIRO MINATO
SAVANHDARY VONGPOOTHORN
PHAPTAWAN SUWANNAKUDT
TSUBASA KIMURA

EDITED BY FUYUBI NAKAMURA

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS AND ANU SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Pêcher avec un hameçon
Homo piscari, tentare. Vide supra.

Donner de l'argent aux prêtres des idoles.
Largiri alicui pecuniae idololatratus ad sacrilegam, praelater edulium eis donaret alicui largiri.

Sourire, souris.
Subsider, lenis risus, subridens dicitur de mulieribus.

Vis-à-vis, devant.
Cecum, ante, erga, inclinare. Vide supra (f.146).

Voix confuses.
Plurium permixti clamores, voces confusæ, vociferationes.

Extensio vocis in extatio vocis, parvulorum imprecationis.

Affligé, triste.
Mœstus, tristis, os ad rotunditatem compressum ut sibilantis. Legitur etiam T36 in eodem sensu.
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gelatin silver print on paper, 430mm x 350mm. Courtey the artists and Gallery Past Rays, Yokohama
Ephemeral but Eternal Words: Traces of Asia

6 April 2010 – 1 May 2010
ANU School of Art Gallery, Canberra

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Foreword

We have reached a moment in time in Australia when the influence of Asian and Indigenous art has gone a long way towards overturning the received canon of western art and challenged many of the preconceptions locked into a narrow conception of fine art. In the works in this exhibition we can see an avant-garde that is both global and distinctive of place, with the trajectory of regional histories woven into the mobility of individuals’ lives. There is a recognition that innovation has always been a characteristic of local cultures and regional civilizations. Words are present in all of these works and Fuyubi Nakamura provides a crucial question when she asks in her introductory essay ‘What do words do in these works?’.

Works of art are multiply determined: they are influenced by history, politics, tradition and technology and have many different points of entry. The artists in this exhibition are all conscious of the potential that history has for the processes of art and in turn the role that art can play in reflecting on historical process and influencing future trajectories. In all these works we see aesthetics as an integral part of history and with the potential to convey emotions over time; and in none of these artists do we see false distinctions between the aesthetics and semantics, knowledge, understanding and affect—form is created through thought, imagination and the knowledge of practice.

Chihiro Minato’s reflections on typography place calligraphy—in both the era of printing and in the digital age—on a trajectory to modernity. Yet it is the distinctiveness of calligraphy that creates the resonance across time. The intersections with technological change and the reference back to the hand of the artist in history are a resource for innovation. Tsubasa Kimura’s work transcends the boundaries between art practice and art history. She uses the wayō-style in order to connect calligraphy to the poem from the Heian period (AD 794-1185) that contributes to her ‘text,’ yet she brings the ‘style’ into the present in a form that envelopes the audience. In Savanhadary Vongpoothorn’s Floating Words we can see a creative process in which form and meaning are in dialogue—stretching towards a solution that can be expressed in terms of aesthetic resolution but is equally a stretching towards meaning. Her work quite literally challenges the boundaries between seeing and feeling.

In all these artists work we are conscious of a process of layering that creates a dialogue within the work and enables it to be viewed from multiple perspectives. Phaptawan Suwannakudt’s art has a presence as the work of someone who has migrated to Australia, having been deeply schooled in the tradition of Buddhist mural paintings. But as Chaitanya Sambrani shows in his essay, her work is also a critical intervention in the meta-dialogue of the avant-garde that positions art forms in historical sequences as ‘a scheme of limitation’.

I am struck in each of these artists’ work by their ability to carry the visceral nature of form forward into the age of digital reproduction. There is a conscious extension back to the hands of the artists of the past, to communicate a feeling of being present in a complex and differentiated space-time, creating continuities that transcend the duration of individuals’ lives.

Howard Morphy

Director
Research School of Humanities and the Arts
College of Arts and Social Sciences
Introduction: Ephemeral but Eternal Words

Fuyubi Nakamura

Traces of words

The physical and visual presence of writing has a special place in many Asian cultures. This exhibition, *Ephemeral but Eternal Words: Traces of Asia*, showcases the significance of words and writing through the brush and lens of four artists with connections to Asia: Tsubasa Kimura, Chihiro Minato, Phaptawan Suwannakudt and Savanhdary Vongpoothorn. Working in various media and styles—from calligraphy and painting to photography and mixed media—the ‘writing’ presented in this exhibition are physical traces of time and space, embodying what is ephemeral and what is eternal in our life. We leave traces of ourselves throughout life, be it visible or invisible. Words, whether spoken, written, imagined or visualised, are traces unique to humans. Some words disappear while others remain only in memory or leave physical traces as writing or text. These traces are the theme of this exhibition.

What do words do in these works? The artists are not necessarily trying to convey specific meanings as if they are simply texts to be read. Instead, they express words visually and materially. Word and image negotiate and coexist as one visible entity in their work. Meanings of words—their own or someone else’s—guide the artists to produce works. The materialised words in this exhibition might not be legible to us, but the presence of meaning remains vital for the making of these works. This remains the case no matter whether they are *writing* words or not. Words and self seem inseparable as these two entities work together to become creative energy. Through the eyes and hands of these artists, new types of words are created through their words' visually transformed appearance.

Why might words evoke different responses when presented differently? The same meaning can be presented in various ways, such as in print or on the computer screen. The effect of the material forms of language needs to be identified in order that we may fully understand writing.¹ The meaning of a statue carved in marble is clearly different from the same image cast in soap or carved in wood but it is more difficult to conceive of the significance of such distinctions as rendered in linguistic forms.² In written language, material attributes (that is, the material of the trace of writing) are subject to the historical conditions and processes of their production. The fact of writing in these works is intended to draw the spectator’s attention, to ponder what they mean in this visual context. Be it the semantic meaning of the words or the more perceptual element of the visual, the presence of writing opens the linguistic meaning in these works to speculation. Do we need to understand the semantic meanings of the writing in order to appreciate the art works? The exhibition explores what is underneath or is embraced by the writing in which the artists have chosen to work. The artists presented here show how the transformation of writing—a form of communication that is often looked *through* rather than *at*—into visualised and materialised words as embodied in their works.³

Seeing and touching words

For Chihiro Minato, photographing letters and printed texts has meant the opportunity to reflect upon his two professions as writer and photographer. Minato evocatively captures the invisible crowds of people in a series of works entitled *Moji no haha tachi*⁴ (Mothers of Letters) with a subtitle in French, *Le Voyage Typographique*, and he does so through the traces that are left behind in forms of writing. Minato’s works explore the seas of memory through the interplay between words, images and substance. His work has been documenting the disappearing print press in different parts of the world, from Paris to Taipei. Minato questions how the materiality and mechanical reproducibility of words has influenced our experience of reading and writing by focusing on a specific typeface reminiscent of handwriting.
Savanhdary Vongpoothorn in her *Floating words* presents words that can be touched literally; sensual materiality takes on semantic meaning with sheets of Braille. As she says, “the world is not just visual, verbal or aural; it is also a world of touch that is visceral.” It is the physical presence of words that is most evident in her work. She has often combined motifs and symbols from Lao textiles by using perforation “as a reference to the physical practice of weaving,” with words, texts and concepts often taken from Theravada Buddhism or *khaatha*, incantations or spells that reference Lao spiritual tradition as seen in her *Three Ways*. These elements—calligraphy, text, Braille and textiles—together express the tremendous physicality of words in her work.

As in Vongpoothorn’s work, weaving words resonate with weaving itself in the works of Phaptawan Suwannakudt. By hand weaving fabric for her work, Suwannakudt also weaves layers of meanings and memories to be found in her *Cast-off series* and *Cast-off memory*. In these works, the use of writing was, she explains, “a medium to process work as to observe wakeful moment in the practice of Buddhist meditation.” Having grown up in temples and trained in mural painting under her famed artist father Paiboon Suwannakudt, Buddhist imageries and narratives have been an important part of her work. The writing in her *Three Worlds* series refers to the text from *Traiphum Phra Ruang* (the *Three Worlds of King Ruang*), a Thai Buddhist cosmological text. Layers of writing overlaying each other and often include secular motifs in a way that resonates with her exploration, that is to connect to her artistic practice through her two home countries of Thailand and Australia.

The calligrapher Tsubasa Kimura’s delicate but provocative works combine traditional art forms with modern aesthetic sensibilities in innovative ways. The strokes and words created by her brush are traces of time and history as well as searches for the future. Kimura constantly seeks new types of revelation while employing her skills obtained through years of training in traditional calligraphy. Calling it *The Big Bang and Black Hole*, her calligraphy in this exhibition is about the eternity and transience of the universe, expressed by myriad hues of ink on fluttering sheets of the fabric woven from threads of paper.

This exhibition displays these different works experimentally to show the way in which words and writing may resonate in different fields and mediums and how they inspire creation in certain ways. It also aims to reconsider the place of words and writing in an era when the physical trace of words is often obscured by continuous waves of digital media. It is designed as a visual reflection on the themes of the “In the Image of Asia: Moving across and between locations” conference at the Humanities Research Centre in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts (13-15 April 2010), convened by Ana Dragojlović and Fuyubi Nakamura. This interdisciplinary conference explores how ‘Asia’ has been imagined, imaged, represented and transferred visually across linguistic, geopolitical and cultural boundaries. It aims to challenge established assumptions (and consumptions) of cultural products of ‘Asia’, from arts, artefacts and film to performance. Despite the constant movement of people and objects in the globalized world, ‘location’ still remains an important reference point in identifying images of/from ‘Asia’. The presence of words and writing in these exhibited works makes reference to a certain cultural location from whence these languages come. At the same time, the works have embraced Asian writing, words, material and visuality to present something different, perhaps a new language we can all share, highlighting the interaction between the meaning and substance in artistic expression.

Notes:
3. A number of contemporary Asian artists incorporate ‘writing’ in their work, notably Chinese artists such as Xu Bing and Song Dong and Iranian artist Shirin Neshat.
4. In rendering the meaning of the *moji* into a translatable English term, the term ‘character’ has often been adopted, but this English word also refers to letter, sign or any distinctive mark. The *moji* is “the character or other component of the written word that was regarded as the irreducible unit” of Japanese written language. Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years*. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001, p.75. In most cases the *moji* alone does not convey any specific meanings as if they are contained in the *moji* itself.
5. Savanhdary Vongpoothorn in this catalogue, 2010, p.17
Minato is a photographer, writer, critic, curator, filmmaker, visual anthropologist, and a traveller. He studied political science and economics at Waseda University in Tokyo. After travelling and living in South America with a scholarship from Argentina, he moved to Paris in 1985 where he started his career as a photographer and writer. He now divides his time between France and Tokyo where he works as Professor at Tama Art University. He was also one of the founding members of the Art Anthropology Institute at the University, established in 2006. As the commissioner for the Japan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2007, he curated, Is There a Future for Our Past?: The Dark Face of the Light, representing the artist Masao Okabe.

gelatin silver print on paper, 430mm x 350mm. Courtey the artists and Gallery Past Rays, Yokohama
As I have been working on the themes of printed text and printing, I believe the year 2010 will be one of those epoch-making years that would happen only every half a millennium. Backed by a line-up of several e-book readers, it will mark the beginning of the full-fledged practice of reading electronically, which is likely to put a definite end to the era of the printing press invented by Gutenberg. My photographic project, Mother of Letters started with photographing and interviewing people at work in the letterpress printing section of the French Imprimerie Nationale in Paris, one of the oldest printing institutes in the world, during its last days in 2005. The letterpress printing section at the Dai Nippon Printing in Tokyo, which I also photographed, no longer exists either. There are few other inventions, other than movable type which, despite having made huge contributions to modern civilizations, have quietly disappeared from the world, more or less around the same time.

Le Voyage Typographique - Travelling Typography
By looking at the movable types and the books printed using those types from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, a complex history of letters begins to unfold. Just as Gutenberg's invention spread immediately from a small town in Germany to all over Europe, the movable types 'travelled' from one place to another, creating different forms along the way. The familiar movable types used in Japan originated from the movable types of Chinese characters engraved in Western Europe which, transported by Christian missionaries, were used to print the Bible in Macao, Hong Kong and Shanghai. The National Library of France holds, in its collection, sets of xylographic types made during the reign of Louis XIV. Based on the books brought back by the Jesuit missionaries, the first dictionary of Chinese-Latin-French was published at the Imprimerie Nationale, using these xylographic types. During the nineteenth century, hot metal types of Chinese characters were produced independently in Germany, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. William Gamble (1830-1886), the head of the American Presbyterian Mission Press in Shanghai, developed the types of Chinese characters further from those earlier types.

At that time, Gamble's advanced techniques of printing Chinese characters were well known and he was invited to Nagasaki in Japan in 1869. Motoki Shōzō learnt the skills of type founding from him while also actively learning Western industrial know-hows following the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The history of Japanese typography began when Motoki's disciples, who had inherited the printing house in Nagasaki from Motoki, ventured to Tsukiji in Tokyo. The printing types familiar to the Japanese had their origins in their typographic activities. The sheer number of fonts used for Japanese typography makes the printing process far more complicated than Roman alphabet typography. It was customary for any newspaper firms to have at least 2,500 different kanji fonts in order to compose a text in Japanese. Printing firms in Japan generally had more than 12,000 kanji fonts in stock. The handling of an overwhelming number of kanji fonts—that were designed and then engraved so as to maintain a balanced impression of the text as a whole—was such a tedious task. However, Motoki and his disciples understood that the success of handling these typefaces would be a basis for modernization.

The Wonders of Minchōtai
The object of the exhibited works is the typeface known as Shūeitai, an original typeface design developed by Shueisha, the predecessor of Dai Nippon Printing. Along with Tsukijitai, Shūeitai makes up the two original Japanese typefaces, which have been in use for printing Japanese for 130 years. Various changes made from the ones initially used in Shanghai, which later influenced the development of Shūeitai are reflected in the typeface we use today. They both belong to the Minchōtai (Ming-style) typeface family, which is known as Song-style typeface in China. These typefaces are commonly used not only for printing but also for word-processing. The Minchōtai typeface is characterized by thin horizontal strokes and bold vertical strokes of
characters. The ends of strokes, *hane* (swift, upward strokes) and *harai* (sweeping strokes), tend to be thin and small triangular shaped protrusions that are often placed at the beginning and the end of single, horizontal lines. These characteristics are reminiscent of the traces of early writing incised on the surface of hard materials such as stone or wood, which were first drafted by a brush. The Chinese characters have their origins in these marks carved on turtle shells and scapulae of animals such as deer, which were later incised on wood, stone and metals such as bronze. The typeface in each period was influenced by the characteristics of available natural materials, which were passed onto this day and survive in the form we still use.

During the Heian period (794 to 1185) a phonetic syllabary, *kana*, was developed based on the Chinese characters in Japan. However, the *kana* typeface is completely different from the Chinese typeface. Take one horizontal line in the *kana* typeface, for instance. It is not straight or geometrical like the Chinese typeface. Additionally, Japanese has another syllabary, *katakana*, which is usually used to write foreign loan words and it is not uncommon to find Roman alphabets printed within the same text, along with Japanese scripts. The Roman alphabet types were introduced in Japan also, during the early Meiji period, along with the Chinese types. However, the history of these two types varies a lot. Japan is unique in the way in which it mixes these different scripts to write and print in one typeset together. This makes me wonder how the French endeavoured to produce the Chinese typefaces for the first time. This would look good in a design, along with Western typefaces they had been using. The famous serif typeface, Garamond, maintains the beautiful calligraphic styles reminiscent of the time when the manuscripts were hand-copied. Likewise, *hane* and *harai* strokes in Shūeitai are reminders of handwriting. The Minchōtai typeface used in Japan was born in the *kanji* cultural sphere in Asia and, due to the characteristic of the Japanese language, later absorbed all sorts of other elements. Furthermore, the Minchōtai typeface has transformed itself through its adoption of drastic technical developments in typing and printing. I would say that Minchōtai is a unique, mysterious typeface.

**The Future of Kanji Typeface**

In Japan, we call a group of regions and countries around China—including Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Viet Nam, which have shared the use of Chinese characters—‘*kanji bunka ken*’ (*kanji* cultural sphere). During the twentieth century, big changes happened to the linguistic environment in these places, which use different spoken languages but share the use of the same written characters. In Korea, as a result of no longer teaching Chinese characters and promoting the use of Hangul, the indigenous Korean alphabet, younger generations who cannot read Chinese characters are on the rise. Roughly speaking, there are three variations of written Chinese characters: simplified Chinese characters used in mainland China, traditional Chinese characters used in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and *kanji*, the simplified version of traditional Chinese characters used in Japan. In all these places, the hot metal types are fast disappearing.

When the Chinese version of *Mothers of Letters* was published in Taiwan, Rixing Typography, the only letterpress printing firm remaining in Taiwan, printed the inside cover of my photographic book using movable types. This firm used to cast metal types and has kept the matrices of various, fine Chinese typefaces in their collection. Mr Zhang, the president of the firm told me, “the important thing is to keep using beautiful letters”. He got interested in the content of my photographic book, precisely because he is keen on reviving the sets of orthodox *kaishu* (or regular script) style typefaces he has preserved in the time of digital font. This typeface, he believes, is a kind of original typeface or the ‘mother’ of printed letters, which was created using metal types for Chinese. Here, there is an internal correlation between form and meaning, substance and memory. I am preparing new works using these ‘mothers of letters’. There is no end to the typographic journey.

(Translated from Japanese by Fuyubi Nakamura)

Notes:
1. *Kanji* are the Chinese characters used in the Japanese writing system, which also uses two other syllabaries, *hiragana* and *katakana*.
2. Japanese names in this essay follow indigenous order, whereby the family name is given first followed by the given name.
gelatin silver print on paper, 430mm x 350mm. Courtesy the artists and Gallery Past Rays, Yokohama
gelatin silver print on paper, 430mm x 350mm. Courtesy the artists and Gallery Past Rays, Yokohama

A pair of metal print block and printed paper, 260mm x 300mm. Courtesy the artists and 1839 Contemporary Gallery, Taipei.
SAVANHDARY VONGPOOTHORN

Born in Laos in 1971, Vongpoothorn arrived in Australia in 1979. She now lives and works in Canberra. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts from University of Western Sydney (1992) and a Master of Art in Visual Arts from University of New South Wales (College of Fine Arts)(1993). Her work shows layers of various influences from Lao textiles, calligraphy and Australian landscape to Aboriginal art. Since her first show in Sydney in 1992, she has exhibited across Australia and internationally. She has also held numerous artist residencies in Australia and overseas.

Her work is included in important private and public collections, including the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
Floating Words

Savanhdary Vongpoothorn

The terms for Braille in both Lao and Vietnamese are ‘floating words’. In Vietnam, Hanoi is where the Braille magazines get printed and from where they are distributed throughout the country. I like to think that the Braille magazines were migrating and floating, the way language migrates and floats from place to place, from one translation to another and across cultures.

On reflection, this work is both political and aesthetic for me. On the one hand, I approached it as a painter, trying to add to what was already a beautiful and mysterious object (the Braille) without taking away its integrity. On the other, for conceptual reasons, I was trying to work with texts that were not at all mysterious, nor very attractive, and trying to use them as part of one integrated aesthetic. I found at moments I had to let go of ideas and concepts to find the ideal aesthetic. Amongst the many layers of this work is the fact that Braille is exotic to us (the sighted) but to the visually impaired it is not. In making this work, I am keenly aware that how we understand life and the world is not just visual, verbal or aural; it is also a world of touch that is visceral.

Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, Floating Words, 2005-2006
coloured pencils, acrylic on Vietnamese Braille. pile of Braille sheets. 20cm x 26.5cm x 12cm. Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.
Savanhdary Vongpoothorn: Words across Worlds
Chaitanya Sambrani

Narrative One: Savanhdary Vongpoothorn is a Laotian-born Australian artist. Coming to Australia at the age of eight, she has experienced what it means to be a migrant, to be ethnically different, to be seen as Asian and to be expected to perform accordingly. She has been to art school in Australia and has obtained degrees from the University of Western Sydney and University of New South Wales (College of Fine Arts); she has also learned from the company of her Australian peers the ins-and-outs of painting after modernism, especially in the tradition of abstraction. Her work is characterised by its detailed attention to colour, tone, sensuousness and texture.

Narrative Two: Savanhdary Vongpoothorn is a Lao woman living in Australia. Despite spending her adolescent and adult life in Australia, she has a strong connection with her Lao identity and culture. She is also an artist. Her work as a painter continues to be based on Lao themes including textile traditions and Buddhist philosophical precedents. Chants and spells, repetitive sounds of meditation, of healing and spell-binding are among her repertoire of references. Her work is characterised by its detailed attention to colour, tone, sensuousness and texture.

From the start, Lao cultural references have always been there in my work, interwoven with Australian and other cultural influences. These have been...often read as “traditional”...For me these Lao cultural references have never been about a standing still sense of tradition or an objectified sense of “culture”. Rather they come from my experience of living and breathing in Lao cultural, family and religious worlds while growing up in Laos and Australia.¹

Home for me is not nostalgia for a geographical place. Rather, it is more about my connection with my family in Australia, and especially my relationship with my parents—and through them, my (re)connection to the country of my birth, Laos.

When I hear the sound of the Khaen, I know that I am Lao.²

There is an abiding sense in which Savanhdary Vongpoothorn’s work makes use of what I’d call strategic estrangement as a way of affirming her connections to the “third space” of migrant and post-colonial histories in her dual claim to home, in Laos and in Australia. For her older contemporary and close friend Phaptawan Suwannakudt (also in this exhibition), having spent most of her life in the country of her birth, Thailand, a sense of place is always-already linked to displacement. For Vongpoothorn, it has been necessary to continually defer the discussion beyond a simple assertion of identity or difference for its own sake. Her sense of belonging in a Lao or more generally Southeast Asian context is partly anchored in familial ties, childhood memories and dreams, and partly a painstakingly constructed project of adulthood. Having migrated to Australia as an eight year old in 1979, she made her first trip back to her ancestral homeland in 1996. The exhibition Holy Threads: Lao Tradition and Inspiration (1998) marks to my mind the first complete realization of this process of construction and re-connection. The exhibition featured a selection of Lao textiles from ritual and everyday contexts juxtaposed with Vongpoothorn’s now trademark perforated canvases with geometric structures in subtle striations of yellows, pinks, greens, ochres and blues, recalling both the weave of traditional textiles from many parts of Asia, and the colours of the Australian bush. Writing in the accompanying catalogue, Benjamin Genocchio declared her work free of “the angst of dislocation and attenuating nostalgia...[or] the soap-box morality of a postcolonial critique.”³ He noted the eschewing of representation in favour of “faint approximations of moods, feelings and experiences ... a shadowing of things, analogous perhaps to the loss of meaning inherent in the act of writing.”⁴
The slippage between meaning and its written manifestation is amplified several-fold in Vongpoothorn’s *Floating Words* (2005-06). This assemblage of paper marked a departure in her work at formal as well as symbolic levels as I will seek to show in this essay. The process of making the work started serendipitously with a gift from her partner, anthropologist Ashley Carruthers, who brought back a bunch of Braille magazines from a field trip to Saigon and Danang in Vietnam. Highly attuned to texture and pattern in her painted works, Vongpoothorn found a tremendous seduction in the compelling but impenetrable texture of the Braille pages. Intended for blind readers, the pages were printed on rough paper of varying tones of white. During a process of arranging them in a grid form, Vongpoothorn painted the sheets in a range of tones ranging from pale pinks and washed-out yellow-ochres to blues and greys. It was almost as though in this haphazard selection of rough-cut and unpolished paper sheets, Vongpoothorn found resonances with her (then) recent experiments with paintings that incorporated Lao-Pali script (transcribed from script written out by her father Mungsamai Vongpoothorn (b. 1942), an ordained monk as well as poet, musician and Vongpoothorn’s “studio assistant“). Her 2005 solo exhibition *Incantation* featured widespread use of khaaatha: incantations or magic spells. These mantra-like pronouncements had themselves made a journey from Pali (the liturgical language of *Theravada*: literally, the argument/way of the elders; the primary form of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia) into Thai-Pali, and further into Lao-Pali through the agency of Vongpoothorn’s father. Vongpoothorn copied out her father’s writing onto her canvases. The incantations were thus thrice removed from the Pali original. Though completely different in intent, this body of work recalls experiments with the losses and gains of translation and transliteration performed by artists ranging from the Australian lan Fairweather (1891-1974) in the 1960s and ’70s, to the Chinese Gu Wenda (b. 1955) from the late 1980s and into the present decade. Similarly to these predecessors, however, Vongpoothorn’s claim to the legacy of *Kaathaa* is one gained through experimentation and improvisation. She has frequently flowed the Lao-Pali script of different *Khaathaa* over the texturally and tonally varied surfaces of her pierced canvases, a use of both the modernist canvas and the liturgical *Khaathaa* that would be foreign to their “original” purposes. In this experimentation and improvisation (and paternal legacy), she represents an approach to tradition that is remarkably similar to Phaptawan Suwannakudt’s, although their works appear to be so different to each other’s. Like Phaptawan Suwannakudt’s inscriptions of the accruative text of the *Traiphum*, Vongpoothorn’s use of the *Kaathaa* reflects an acknowledgement of the mobility and flexibility inherent in many Asian (and other) traditions. Similarly, it is a fact that for the majority of her (English speaking Australian) audiences, the traces of these thrice-removed enchantments remain as markers of a culture they cannot penetrate, one that obstinately refuses simple explication. This refusal is another way to think about the use of strategic estrangement as an affirmation of inalienable otherness beyond the simplistic avowal of difference for its own sake.

This digression into Vongpoothorn’s use of the *Khaathaa* is a necessary prelude to an understanding of her work *Floating Words*. The opacity (for the sighted reader) of the Vietnamese Braille is belied by the universal legibility among the blind of this system of dots in a rectangle of two rows and three columns, the raised and flat positions of these dots making various permutations expressing the sounds of spoken language. An unsighted reader, even though he/she may not speak Vietnamese, would still be able to sound out the words written on the pages of these magazines. Unlike languages, Braille is a cross-cultural system of transcriptive signification used by blind persons in different parts of the world. As such, Braille is a trans-linguistic system of notation that transposes phonetic expression onto textured surfaces. With the Braille magazines in Vietnamese that she came into possession of in 2005 came the desire to know what was being said in those pages of rough paper with its raised dots. On the pages of Vietnamese Braille, Vongpoothorn found not only a resonance with her perforated canvases, but a point of entry into representing the complex relationships of dominance and migration in mainland Southeast Asia, especially between Laos and Vietnam. Some of the texts turned out to be plain, propagandistic statements, while others featured poetry and fictionalised current affairs.
Being interested in the historical and contemporary relationship between Laos and Vietnam, Vongpoothorn noticed on her trip to Laos in 2005 not only an intensified Vietnamese presence on the streets of the Laotian capital city of Vientiane, but also an echo of an earlier “Vietnamese imperialism”, which stemmed from the colonial French government’s employment of Vietnamese officials in Laos. The work Floating Words features sheets of Vietnamese Braille arranged in a grid, over which are painted two historically significant texts by the “fathers” of the modern nations of Vietnam and Laos: Ho Chi Minh (uncle Ho, 1890-1969) of Vietnam, and Kaysone Phomvihane (uncle Kaysone, child of a Vietnamese father and Lao mother, 1920-1992) of Laos, dating from 1966-67. Proclaiming the unfailing brilliance and fraternity between the Lao and Vietnamese peoples, these texts provided for Vongpoothorn the perfect foil for the pages from Vietnamese Braille magazines that make up the surface of Floating Words.

The words of Uncle Ho bracket those of Uncle Kaysone, floating over the inscrutable Braille, declaring the eternal friendship and inalienable bonds between the two peoples even as events after 1945, in the context of the waning of French imperial authority, the US War in Vietnam, and the birth of new post-colonial nations, remind us of other realities, other histories in our neighbourhood.

Notes:
1 Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, artist’s statement, “Floating Words” 2007, unpublished.
2 Savanhdary Vongpoothorn (with Ashley Carruthers), artist’s statement in Christine Clark (ed.), Echoes of Home: Memory and Mobility in Recent Austral-Asian Art, Brisbane: Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane City Council, 2005, p. 84.
5 Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, artist’s statement in Echoes of Home, op. cit. “My father is my studio assistant, and has been since 1998. Now, he is not only someone who does manual labour for me, but he is also an object of inspiration, and a collaborator:” It is her father’s playing of the Khaen (a Lao pan-pipe) that she refers to in her statement quoted above.
6 Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, “Floating Words”. The history of relationships between Vietnam, Laos the US and France is extremely complex, but is far beyond the scope of this essay.
7 Ibid. Vongpoothorn found the texts on Lao-Vietnamese friendship in a Lao language primer for Vietnamese speakers.

Savanhdary Vongpoothorn, Floating Words, 2005-2006 (detail) coloured pencils, acrylic on Vietnamese Braille. Panel 6 sheets high x 8 sheets wide. Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.

coloured pencils, acrylic on Vietnamese Braille. Panel 6 sheets high x 8 sheets wide. Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.
acrylic on perforated canvas, 180cm x 150cm. Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.
Suwannakudt has worked extensively with traditional Thai mural painting and public projects during the 1980s and 1990s in Thailand. Suwannakudt graduated from Silpakorn University, Thailand with a degree in English and German and also completed an MVA degree at Sydney College of the Arts, The University of Sydney. She moved to Australia in 1996 and now lives and works in Sydney.

_The move between Thailand and Australia has created an interchange in my recent work which has moved its focus from one or more main narratives to performing and marking the moment where layers of stories inter-relate, one step at a time._

Phaptawan Suwannakudt
Phaptawan Suwannakudt
Chaitanya Sambrani

Phaptawan Suwannakudt’s large works in this exhibition are part of her series *Three Worlds*. The series takes its cue from a metaphysical perspective grounded in the spiritual traditions of Thai Buddhism. Her title references the *Traiphum Phra Ruang (Three Worlds of/according to King Ruang)*. Also known as *Triphumikatha* or *Tribhumikatha*, the story of the three worlds, or the narrative of the three planes of existence, the text is attributed to King Lithai (whose dynastic name was Ruang) who reigned from c. 1346-74 in the Sukhothai period. The *Traiphum* is an accretive text composed in the fourteenth century, and reproduced in the nationalist ferment of the early nineteenth. Now regarded as the foundation of Thai literature, the *Traiphum* deals with cosmological notions of creation, right conduct and the hope of salvation, comprising the spiritual universe for the believer. The cosmology of the *Traiphum* sees creation as being composed of three worlds: the world of desires, the world of form, and the world of the formless. As with other formulations in Buddhist philosophy, there is a progression from the entrapments of desire to a gradual awakening into enlightenment in the sequential elaboration of the *Three Worlds*, from desire to form to formlessness.

*Three Worlds* could also suggest a rumination on geopolitics after 1945, with the division of the globe into contending spheres of influence between the capitalist imperialism of NATO and the socialist imperialism of the Soviet Bloc, with a third group of erstwhile colonies seeking to find a foothold in an essentially bipolar world order. Strangely enough, from our present position in a time of alternating triumph and crisis in the theatre of multinational capitalism, both of these earlier modes of thinking about the world—Thai Buddhist cosmology and Cold-War geopolitics—may begin to seem outdated, if not entirely irrelevant. There is perhaps an enduring irony in the way that both of these historical epistemes are rendered obsolete by something as pervasive and seemingly everyday as global capitalism in both of Phaptawan’s home countries, the troubled monarchy of Thailand and the nascent post-monarchy of Australia.

Phaptawan Suwannakudt is the inheritor of a magnificent legacy. Her university education was in Languages (English and German). In visual art, her education consisted of a twelve year (1970-81) apprenticeship with her father, the late painter, writer, poet and choreographer Paiboon Suwannakudt or Tan Kudt (1925-82). Before migrating to Australia in 1996, she was an acclaimed practitioner of the tradition of religious (Buddhist) mural painting in Thailand—a rare if not singular achievement for a woman artist. As Julie Ewington wrote in 2002, “In becoming a renowned temple painter, leading her late father’s team to fresh achievements and new audiences through the 1980s and 1990s, Phaptawan Suwannakudt became a Thai anomaly: an independent woman responsible for the interpretation of the sacred texts in public places, including liaising with clients from the communities of monks and businessmen, and directing the work of men.”**2** Ironically, the magnificence of this legacy has in some ways been limited by migration to secular Australia where she now paints on transportable canvas or paper rather than on architectural features. There have been gains and losses in this translation, as in any other. Phaptawan came to Australia knowing a way of making art that had no direct valency in the Australian gallery context. Her formidable abilities in interpreting scenes of the lives of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, and in rendering moral fables or mythological episodes for temple walls, have had to be recalibrated in the context of Australian contemporary art, a process she has sustained for more than a decade now.

Non-Western artists, especially those with experience of displacement, sometimes live all over again the trauma and dissension experienced by their early modern predecessors: debates around the nature of identity and the value of indigenous tradition
in the face of Euro-American modernity remain remarkably present and relevant to a number of Asian contemporaries. In this, Phaptawan is not alone—in their own various ways, migrant as well as non-migrant contemporaries including Savanhdary Vongpoothorn (also in this exhibition), Simryn Gill, Shahzia Sikander, Nilima Sheikh, Nalini Malani to name only a few women artists, continue to work within the interstices of “tradition”, coaxing from its tangles the threads of a contemporary practice.

Phaptawan’s particular take on The Three Worlds is of course modulated through her reflections on the current valency of this historical text: what might the text mean to a non-Thai—and presumably, non-believing—viewer in contemporary urban Australia? In several of Phaptawan’s paintings, extracts from the text appear as an overlaid narrative that floats across the surface, seemingly unperturbed by the figurative goings-on beneath it. To a Thai reader, these notations may seem to have their own flow as they cross the boundaries of individual canvases, perhaps following a logic that is different to that of the original text. But then, one realises that the original text is itself a historical palimpsest, reputedly composed with reference to numerous other sacred texts, and having absorbed as many influences and elements as the conditions and predilections of its exponents.

Phaptawan makes repeated references to the layerings that constitute tradition, and to transactions across traditions since the eighteenth century. She creates maritime worlds filled with strange commerce as cultures collide, forcing a reckoning with incommensurability as part of these interactions. A quiescent elephant—an animal that carries a great deal of symbolic freight in Thailand—lies deliciously curled up in a barge rowed by two extra-human figures; a shipload of European travellers seems lost on the swells even as it heralds the introduction into Asia of new technologies and upheaval. A milling herd of elephants parts to reveal one of their number—perhaps a reference to Erawan, Indra’s elephant. Elsewhere, details of Australian nature and architecture float in and out of the frame, interleaved with images quoted from Thai murals. As these worlds—mythological, historical, scientific—irrepressibly collide and intermingle, so do human and non-human domains. What results is a post-modern strategy of multifariousness with its insistent intermingling and palimpsesting.

A critique of avant-gardist attitudes is implicit in Phaptawan’s practice. The denouncement, and indeed, destruction of the past in the process of creating the new that is ahead of its context, is for Phaptawan, a scheme of limitation. Instead, the past rather than tamely ceding its valency to become merely a predecessor of the future, is resolutely anchored to the present that it produces. Especially in view of the recent turmoil in Thai politics, and intensive contention over the role of religious tradition in the contemporary world more generally, her invocation of the persistent and troublesome past again highlights “unfinished business”. In Phaptawan’s work, the past insinuates itself into reckonings of the present and presentiments of what is to come in a manner that is apparently seamless. On closer examination though, in experiencing Phaptawan’s work, the viewer must countenance this immanence of another time in another-place.

In late 2008, Phaptawan was one of six artists participating in the Womanifesto Residency Program in the rural community at Rai Boonbandarn in the Sisaket Province of North-East Thailand, close to the Cambodian border. The residency program invited “women artists to interact with local communities and art forms, a rural way of life, and explore the diversity and richness of the cultural ways of the community that includes Lao, Khmer, Suay, and Yao people.” The workshop theme also envisaged an investigation of the links and relationships between traditional and contemporary practices within the region. It was during the residency that Phaptawan learned to weave on a hand loom under the mentorship of Mae Pan, a local woman weaver.

The Cast-off series of small ink drawings on hand-made paper and fabric sculptures are one of the results of the residency experience. Operating on a scale entirely removed from her large canvases of the Three Worlds, the Cast-off works are in the nature of the hand-held miniature, a kind of whimsical rumination on the ineffable duality of belonging and loss. In the small paper works, Phaptawan has copied text from the Traiphum/Tribhumikatha. The words in pale grey float beneath red-ochre ink
drawings, drawn free-hand, of whatever motif came to the artist’s mind “the moment I touched my brush on paper.”4 Each drawing is accompanied by a sculptural form made from hand-woven cotton in the shape of a roof. Invoking the sense of a home, or sheltering place, these miniature roof forms are seen by the artist as “containers [that] carry the mind which observed each movement I wove each thread of fabric on the loom.”5

The residency enabled Phaptawan to revisit her ties with her ancestral home, and with the legacy of her father and teacher, the painter, writer, poet and choreographer Paiboon Suwannakudt. The work resulting from these experiments is deeply personal and imbued with ideas of habitation. At the same time, it is perhaps a way for Phaptawan to harness the stark monochrome austerity of roughly-woven fabric as a counterpoint to the irrepressible plenitude of her paintings. As she journeys across temples, suburbia, outback landscapes, elephant-strewn waterways and realms beyond the human, Phaptawan continues her search for her own “third” space. This is neither the ritual context of Thai Buddhism, nor the equally ritualised practices of suburban life in Sydney, but a place of belonging, for the moment, and in the true sense of belonging, subject to change.6

Notes:
1 For a brief biography and images of Paiboon Suwannakudt’s work, see http://www.rama9art.org/paiboon/index.html
3 Womanifesto Residency Program 2008 CD-ROM produced by the organizers Nitaya Uareeworakul and Varsha Nair. Thanks to Phaptawan Suwannakudt for sharing it with me.
5 Ibid.
6 This is a revised and enlarged version of my essay “Phaptawan Suwannakudt: Three Worlds and Some More” originally published in the exhibition catalogue: Phaptawan Suwannakudt: Three Worlds, Melbourne: Arc One Gallery, 2009.

ink and pencil on handloom-woven fabric, 220cm x 35cm. Courtesy the artists and Art One Gallery, Melbourne.
Phaptawan Suwannakudt, *Cast-off series*, 2007-2010
ink and pencil on hand made paper, 15cm x 10cm. 3D woven fabric, 3cm x 3cm x 3cm. A series has 6 sets. Courtesy the artist and Art One Gallery, Melbourne.
acrylic on canvas, 135cm x 65cm. Courtesy the artists and Arc One Gallery, Melbourne.
Having trained in traditional style calligraphy and won a number of prestigious awards, Kimura began experimenting with a variety of new calligraphic forms. She has held a number of solo and groups shows in Japan and some internationally. She majored in Buddhist studies for her BA at Ryukoku University in Kyoto and studied Bokusei, or the calligraphy of Buddhists monks during her postgraduate years at Kyoto Education University. Kimura has practised Japanese calligraphy since the age of seven. Her recent shows include a solo exhibition in the rented gallery space at the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, where she showcased a massive installation, Forest of Calligraphy and performed calligraphy live in 2008. Kimura lives in Kyoto and works in Osaka.
Tsubasa Kimura: The Infinite Possibility of Words

Fuyubi Nakamura

Though gay in hue, [the blossoms] flutter down, alas!
Who then, in this world of ours, may continue forever?
Crossing today the uttermost limits of phenomenal existence,
I shall see no more fleeting dreams, neither be any longer intoxicated.

The *iroha uta* or *iroha* poem, said to be written sometime during the late Heian period (AD 794–1185),2 is about the transitory nature of things in this fleeting world and expresses the Buddhist notion of impermanence. The *iroha* poem is a mnemonic verse, originally consisting of 47 *hiragana* syllabaries, using each syllable only once to compose the poem. It is also the older version of ordering for *hiragana*: the Japanese ABC’s. The poem is frequently used as the object of practice in Japanese calligraphy.

Tsubasa Kimura uses this well-known poem to create her pair of works, *The Big Bang and Black Hole* (2009). In doing so, Kimura raises questions about such universal themes as continuity, eternity and transience as she asks, what is eternal about our world? By exploring the Buddhist concept of impermanence, a kind of eternal sequence or reincarnation is expressed in her work4. Writing the poem in a combination of *kanji* and *hiragana*,5 Kimura’s work performs a ‘reincarnation’ of calligraphy that both speaks to and contains traces of a unique Japanese calligraphic history. In other words, the way in which Kimura’s work combines different scripts and references Chinese characters and Japanese syllabaries speak to a Japanese tradition that had originated in China but later developed its own particular style.

**Tsubasa Kimura**

Tsubasa Kimura has practised Japanese calligraphy—or what is known, in Japan, as *sho* or *shodō*—for 25 years since the age of seven. Kimura trained under a teacher who belonged to one of Japan’s most established calligraphic schools and she subsequently won a number of awards. Following on from this traditional schooling, Kimura became interested in exploring her calligraphic potential in alternative ways. She was able to do so when she attended, for four years, a private calligraphic school run by an ‘avant-garde’ style calligrapher. Even through this later development of a modern of avant-garde practice, however, Kimura explored fundamental elements of calligraphic practice by which learning is based on the reproduction of the work of old masters. In possessing and using the brush technique, the calligrapher learns how the movements of the body, hand and brush result in different kinds of ink traces. In 1998, once equipped with traditional skills—acquired through more than a decade of training—Kimura began seeking her own style.

Kimura’s oeuvre not only reproduces calligraphy it also explores that which calligraphy communicates, such as the interaction between meaning and non-meaning, the legible and illegible, the parts and the whole of characters and texts. While each character has its own form and meaning, its role in the larger whole changes its original meaning or allows it to be read in terms of new meanings. In her work, *Outline* (2007)6, columns of words mingle and overlap, giving a jittery edge, which creates a tense atmosphere. This ‘crowd of words’, as Kimura calls it, becomes a visual spectacle that fills the exhibition space in a way that threatens to overwhelm the viewer. This crowded style has been a marked characteristic of her work. Recently, however, Kimura’s work has begun to change, evincing a preoccupation with calmness and balance rather than busyness. Despite the title, *The Big Bang and Black Hole* expresses Kimura’s new interest in composure.
The title, *The Big Bang and Black Hole*, refers to the universe within Kimura herself. The beginning and the end, light and darkness, internal and external spaces are expressed through the calligrapher’s use of *sumi*, the ink used for a thousand of years in Japan. Just as the Big Bang refers to the origin of the universe, the origin of various characters/letters are connected through the splashes of *sumi*. It is as if Kimura is representing preliterate expressions in abstract forms. On the other hand, the idea of an ever-expanding black hole articulates the infinite possibilities of calligraphic expression. Instead of focusing only on black hues and in order to represent the infinite world of light towards the future, which emerges out of darkness, Kimura’s *sumi* ink has myriad hues as the work draws attention to white hues within the *sumi*. Obviously, the ink itself is not white, but white space created within the strokes of black ink, which adds another dimension to the *sumi*. Here, we can see how Kimura’s interest has shifted from creating work that fills the space to creating space within her work. This allows her to rethink the importance of *ma* (space-between) and *yohaku* (white space). *Ma* or *yohaku*, Kimura says, is the key to the compositional space and helps to create a three dimensional feel to her work.

*Shifu* or the fabric woven from traditional Japanese *washi* paper threads—specially made for this work—also helps create a spatial dimension to her calligraphy. These sheets of calligraphy hang in a 3D space. Here Kimura inverts traditional understandings of space as she emphasises the role of the art-object as an agent, one which looks at and embraces the viewer rather than the other way round. It is a space where one feels as if one is facing something huge and enigmatic or where one feels overwhelmed by great natural scenery. The latter is the case in her *Forest of Calligraphy* (2008). The spacing within characters themselves, which draws attention to the movement between one stroke and the next, adds another spatial element to the calligraphic work. Only calligraphic strokes, she believes, make such an expression possible.

Because she writes the poem from the Heian period, Kimura consciously adopted the traditional wayō or ‘Japanese style’. In this way, *Black Hole* is similar to many other major works of contemporary Japanese calligraphy, which include ‘literal’ components regardless of their legibility. Other works, like *The Big Bang*, are more abstract. In order to maintain the integrity of calligraphic works as calligraphy or *sho*, calligraphers need to obey certain rules or traditions. The tradition in calligraphy demands, not a purely abstract picture detached from its precedents, but an adherence to the content (i.e. words) which “dictate the movements of the brush”. Even avant-garde calligraphic works, therefore, tend to stay within the accepted canons of calligraphy, as contemporary
calligraphers continue, in many ways, to follow traditional methods. Kimura says, “In order for sho to be sho, the calligraphic methods need to be consciously employed”. In this way, she feels she connects to the ancestors who created these characters as the calligraphy that had taken place before her is re-animated through writing.

Unlike lines in paintings or drawings, calligraphic brush strokes or lines also have a certain rhythm. They follow a notation or ordering of strokes in order to compose a character. To write the character meaning ‘one’ or —, for instance, the line has to start from the left and finish on the right. To calligraphise this character, the conventional brush stroke method or sansetsu-hō, where the calligrapher writes in three rhythmic brush movements, is usually adopted. There is a sequence of kihitsu (starting a stroke), sōhitsu (pulling the stroke), and shūhitsu (ending the stroke) to create this line, thus incorporating some sort of action in the process, rather than merely producing lines visually. In Kimura’s view, working within calligraphic conventions paradoxically offers infinite possibilities for new expression. When she works on calligraphy, Kimura loses herself as she becomes completely immersed in the process of writing. Like a Buddhist monk, she writes as if to reach a kind of self-extinction, as practising calligraphy becomes a way of reaching a state of enlightenment. When she achieves this, Kimura believes her lines will become unwaveringly strong, as the rhythmic movement becomes part of calligraphy. Just as “the musical phrase is an expressive gesture shaped in sound” and the physical trace is “an almost incidental by-product”, the calligraphic lines are expressive gestures that are shaped as traces on paper. It is “the movement of forming these words that counts”.

In calligraphic performance, both ephemeral and eternal aspects of calligraphy are embodied (see the image on the cover). It is often the process that matters rather than its outcome. Works created as performance are not usually preserved. No permanent traces of the work remain, after its execution. Kimura’s calligraphic performance thus points to another direction in the fate of contemporary calligraphy—a time in which calligraphy has lost its primacy as a medium of writing. The sho she produces has, however, acquired new meanings, especially as art that can be showcased. Kimura remains determined to be a custodian of this age-old tradition as well as a creator of novel practice. In this way, Kimura’s work carries sho into the twenty-first century.

The author would like to thank the calligrapher Tsubasa Kimura for her generous help in preparing this essay.

Notes:
2 Iroha uta is often attributed to the Buddhist monk Kukai (AD774-835), but the use of certain syllables suggests it was composed after 950. See Christopher Seeley, A history of writing in Japan. Leiden & New York: E. J. Brill, 1991, p.106.
3 Kimura uses the later modern version of the iroha uta, which has forty-eight syllabaries for this work.
4 Kimura majored in Buddhist studies for her BA at Ryukoku University in Kyoto (a Buddhist university) and studied Bokusei, or the calligraphy of Buddhists monks during her postgraduate years at Kyoto Education University. While her practice at private schools did not necessarily focus on Buddhism inspired calligraphy, her calligraphy teacher for many years is himself a Buddhist monk.
5 Kanji refers to the Chinese characters used, in addition to the syllabaries (hiragana and katakana), in the Japanese language.
8 Personal communication with Kimura, 2 February 2010.

*sumi* ink on *shifu* (fabric woven from paper threads), 100cm x 264cm x 60 sheets. Courtesy the artist and Accent Gallery, Osaka.
sumi ink on *shifu* (fabric woven from paper threads), 100cm x 264cm x 60 sheets. Courtesy the artist and Accent Gallery, Osaka.
EXHIBITION LIST OF WORKS

CHIHIRO MINATO

Mothers of Letters
2005-2009, series of 20 black and white photographs
gelatin silver print on paper, 430mm x 350mm

Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Past Rays, Yokohama

Mothers of Letters
2009, a pair of metal print blocks and printed papers
lead, paper, 260mm x 300mm

Courtesy of the artist and and 1839 Contemporary
Gallery, Taipei.

SAVANHDARY VONGPOOTHORN

Floating words
2005-06, coloured pencils, acrylic on Vietnamese Braille
5 panels, each panel 6 sheets high x 8 sheets wide.
156cm x 810cm.

Three Ways
2008, acrylic on perforated canvas, 180 x 150 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne.

PHAPTAWAN SUWANNAKUDT

The Three Worlds 1
2008, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 65cm

The Three Worlds 4
2009, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 65cm

The Three Worlds 6
2009, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 65cm

The Three Worlds 7
2009, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 65cm

The Three Worlds 8
2009, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 65cm

The Three Worlds 9
2009, acrylic on canvas, 135 x 65cm

Cast-off Memory, 2009
ink on handloom-woven fabric, 220 x 35cm

Cast-off series 1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7
2007-2010, ink and pencil on hand made paper 15x10cm
3D woven fabric, 3x3x3 cm. Each series has 6 sets.

Courtesy of the artist and Arc One Gallery, Melbourne.

TSUBASA KIMURA

The Big Bang & Black Hole
2009, sumi ink on shifu (fabric woven from paper threads)
100 cm x264 cm x 60 sheets

Courtesy of the artist and Accent Gallery, Osaka.
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LENDERS

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Fuyubi Nakamura

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IN THE IMAGE OF ASIA CONFERENCE CONVENORS

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RESEARCH SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

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