

Born in 1956 of Indian descent, Piti Sedthee is a self-taught artist living and working in Thailand whose expressive creations radiate purity, honesty, freedom, and directness. Embracing painting as a medium to navigate his emotions, Piti's works often feature faces from media headlines, family members, and scenes from his complex mind, even capturing fleeting moments like a child's smile at Warorot Market. Rooted in the everyday and mundane, his art offers profoundly spiritual and personal interpretations of life's realities. Piti's studio, nestled within a clothing wholesale store in Chiang Mai's local market, is a vibrant space where paintings on paper and packaging fabrics hang casually among plastic mannequins and scattered art supplies. Amidst pictures of Buddha statues, the old Thai king, and news clippings, his studio brims with acrylics, spray paints, dyes, and crayons.

Inspired by urban landscapes encountered during his extensive travels, Piti's work, from London's rainy streets to Berlin's cityscape, is a concentrated, almost abstract exploration of the otherworldly, narrating and reimagining everyday scenes through bold colors and alternative materials. We interviewed him via email, utilizing a translator since he is not currently in New York. His recent exhibition, *Piti*, was held at the YveYang Gallery in Tribeca, NYC, and recently concluded. I was fortunate to attend the opening, where I was captivated by his paintings and remarkable journey from the streets of Thailand to the dazzling art scene of New York. Below, you'll find an insightful interview about his foray into the contemporary art world.

Q: When did you start painting?

A: I began learning painting techniques while attending university in Chiang Mai. Later, in 1996, my brother and I went to the UK, and it was then that I started painting seriously, using it as a way to relax. Initially, we were just doing ordinary business, selling fabrics. I followed my brother in selling fabrics, but I had a strong desire to paint, so I started painting.

Q: What was your motivation for painting?

A: Initially, it wasn't to become an artist or sell paintings. It was purely for the love of it. When I went to the UK, everyone saw me as an artist. There's a saying in Thai, ศิลปินไร้ห้าง, that being an artist means being poor. Many people call me an artist but has no money. However, I never considered myself an artist; I was just an ordinary person who painted for the love of it.

Q: What happened to your artwork after your stay in the UK?

A: Most of them were donated to local charities. On my second visit, I painted more and left the works in the UK, thinking I'd return. However, due to visa issues, I couldn't. After a short stay in Germany, I returned to Thailand in 1997 and haven't left since.

Q: What is your painting process like?

A: My works look dynamic and spontaneous, but they are created slowly, often starting with a clear idea. Sometimes I take breaks in between. For instance, if I want to paint Prayuth, our former Prime Minister, I'll start by looking at his photo, preparing the paper, and painting. Sometimes I pause, and it may be complete then, or I may revise it. The subject is always in my mind, but I don't think while painting. I'm interested in many things, but if I have no theme today, I won't start.

Q: Do you usually complete your paintings in one day, or do they take longer?

A: Generally, I finish them in one day. Once completed, I don't revisit them.

Q: Do feedback from frequent visitors or gallery owners affect your work?

A: I don't mind feedback; I can accept it. Once, a stranger saw my paintings and suggested I should add more detail if the paintings were larger. I didn't take that advice because I prefer to express my own ideas and feelings in my paintings. I can listen to advice, but it's my decision whether to act on it or not.

Q: Where have you traveled?

A: Apart from intermittently living in the UK for two years, I've briefly stayed in Japan. I've also traveled to France, Berlin, Munich, and Vienna in Austria. I wanted to visit Düsseldorf and Hamburg in Germany but couldn't make it.

Q: Have you ever been to New York? How did you establish your connection with the YveYANG Gallery, and what emotions are you experiencing now that you have a solo show there?

A: I've never been to the US. Earlier this year, a young couple who were very fond of my paintings visited my studio. They meticulously viewed all my works and even discovered my 1990s piece "Blue Eyes" in piles of wholesale clothes. I signed all the selected pieces for them and shared the stories behind them. For example, "Blue Eyes" was inspired by a man with strikingly blue eyes I saw in the UK nearly 30 years ago. It amazed them, describing it as "the bluest lake on earth, drawing you in." They eventually took my works to the US. I'm very grateful and happy.

After the exhibition opened, their friend in Chiang Mai brought me printed photos of the exhibition. They recreated my "sofa" scene from my studio, surrounded by beer bottles. It was thoughtful and delightful.

Q: How do you feel about having a solo exhibition in New York?

A: It's wonderful, although I imagine the gallery must have spent a lot to make it happen. Some people envy me; my family jokes that I'm now a famous artist. But I remain unchanged. I'm just happy that my works are reaching different parts of the world. Many visitors buy my paintings from Germany, Australia, Japan, and Singapore. I like my work to be everywhere in the world.

Q: The works on display include paintings on paper and various fabrics. Could you delve into the specific types of fabrics you use for your paintings? What is it about these fabrics that add a unique dimension to your work?

A: Many of the canvases are donated by nearby fabric stores. If I need a large canvas, I buy it. I also use a lot of acrylic paints and sometimes dye paints to color the canvas.

Q: Can you explain the process behind the painting "Hungry Tiger" (2023) on paper?

A: "Hungry Tiger" depicts Princess Sirindhorn of Thailand, the sister of the current King and daughter of the former King Bhumibol. The former King was a kind tiger, and each princess has her own representative color; Princess Sirindhorn's is purple. "Hungry Tiger" signifies hard work, passion, and tirelessness. Princess Sirindhorn sees herself as a hungry tiger. I deeply respect the Thai royal family, and Princess Sirindhorn is the one I admire the most. My work reflects my everyday thoughts, transferring them onto paper or fabric. At that time, I wanted to preserve this feeling of admiration.

Q: What are you currently working on? Any plans?

A: I have no specific plans. I come to the studio every day and think about what to paint and how to paint it. I'm always creating new works, nothing else. Sometimes, I think about what to paint the next day before I go to sleep, even if I don't end up painting it. Occasionally, I ponder who will manage my works in the future since my family isn't interested. I have no goals; if I had money, I'd donate it.

Q: How do you spend your day?

A: I wake up at six, take a shower, have tea with my mom, and feed her birds. After tea, I walk to the studio, and have drinks in between. I also play small bets on football with my family, drink beer, and go home by 8 PM. Nowadays, I try to live according to Buddhist principles, which include five precepts: 1) Not killing animals, 2) Not lying, 3) Not engaging in adultery, 4) Not stealing, and 5) Not consuming intoxicants. I can adhere to all these precepts except for not drinking alcohol, which I still enjoy, haha. Apart from that, I follow the other principles diligently.

- 分享一下你从什么时候开始就开始画画？

最早的时候我还在清迈念大学的时候，学习了一些绘画的技巧。后来在1996年时，我和哥哥去了英国，从那时起开始很认真的画画，想把画画作为一个放松的方式。刚开始的时候，我们也就是一般的做生意，就是卖布料的，跟着哥哥卖布料。然后就是想画，所以就开始画。

刚开始画画的想法不是为了当艺术家或者为了卖，只是因为喜欢才画画。我去英国的时候谁都认为我是一个艺术家。但是泰语就有一个成语，就是说当艺术家，但是没钱的那种成语。我被好多人称为是艺术家，但是没有钱。但是我从不觉得自己是一个艺术家，我只是个一般人，就是画画，为了喜欢才画的。

- 在英国之后的作品是怎么处理的？

大部分都捐赠给当地的慈善机构了。第二次去的时候画的更多，那时候留在英国了，以为会再去英国的，但后来因为签证没有拿到，就没有办法再回去。所以就去德国短暂的呆了一阵子后，回了泰国。97年之后就再也没有离开过泰国了。

- 你画画的时候什么样的？

工作室里有很多画到一半的作品，虽然看起来很有动感，像是一气呵成，但其实慢慢画的。它在开始前常常先有一个清晰的构想。有时候画了一段就停了。比如说我想画Prayuth，就是我们的以前的总理，我就会拿Prayuth的照片来看，先准备一些纸，然后开始画。但有时画了一段时间会停下，有的时候这样就好了，但有时也会有改。脑袋里一直在想这个题目/主题，但不是边画边想。我对很多东西都感兴趣，但如果说今天一点主题都没有的话，我就不动手。

- 这些会当天完成，通常还是说有的可能会持续？

一般来说当天就画完了，画完了就不会再回头去画。

- 常来的游客或者是画廊的人对你的画的评价会影响你吗？

我不在意，也可以接受。以前有一个不认识的人看到他的画，那个人就跟我讲如果画变大后，需要画的再细一点。但我并没有把他说的当一回事，我还是更想表达自己的想法，传达自己对绘画的感受。我能聆听别人的建议，但是做不做的话由我决定。

- 你去过哪些地方？

除了英国断续住了两年之外，还去日本短暂住过，其它旅行的地方有法国，德国的柏林和慕尼黑，奥地利的维也纳，想去德国杜塞多夫和汉堡但是没去成，

- JM: Have you ever been to New York? How did you establish your connection with the YveYANG Gallery, and what emotions are you experiencing now that you have a solo show there? 你
去过纽约吗？你是如何与 YveYANG 画廊建立联系的，现在你在那里
举办个展，有什么感想？

没有去过美国。年初的时候有一对年轻的夫妇来我这里，很喜欢我的画。他们很认真的看了我所有的作品，还从服装成堆的仓库里翻出了我90年代在英国画的“蓝眸”。我帮他们所有选出来的作品都签上了名字，大部分作品都讲述了背后的故事，比如“蓝眸”是我在英国的时候看到一个眼睛极蓝的男人。虽然那件作品已经有近30年，他们看到以后还是很感叹，就好像“地球上最蓝的湖泊，被吸进去了”。最后就这样，他们把我的作品带去了美国，我很感谢他们，也非常开心。

展览开幕后，他们在清迈的伙伴为我带来了展览现场打印出来的照片，还复刻了我工作室的“沙发”场景，旁边堆了很多啤酒瓶。很用心也很欢乐。

- 在纽约做个展有什么感想？

我觉得很棒，尽管我想画廊应该花了不少钱去达成这件事。有些人很羡慕，家人跟我开玩笑说我现在是一个很有名的艺术家了。但我还是我，没有变化。我很开心我的作品去到世界各地。有很多游客购买我的作品，有德国的，澳大利亚的，还有日本的、新加坡的。

- JM: The works on display include paintings on paper and various fabrics. Could you delve into the specific types of fabrics you use for your paintings? What is it about these fabrics that add a unique dimension to your work?
展出的作品包括在纸上或各种织物上的绘画。您能详细介绍一下您在绘画中使用的具体织物类型吗？这些织物是如何为您的作品增添独特色彩的？

很多画布都是旁边的各种布料店赠送给我的。如果需要很大的画布，我会花钱买。也用到很多染布的颜料去给画布上色。然后也用大量的丙烯颜料。

- JM: Can you explain the process behind the painting "Hungry Tiger" (2023) on paper? 您能解释一下纸上画作 "饿虎"(2023 年)背后的创作过程吗？

"Hungry Tiger" 画的是泰国的诗琳通公主，是现国王的妹妹，前泰王普密蓬国王的女儿，老国王是一个善良的老虎。每个公主都会有自己的代表色，而诗琳通公主的颜色是紫色。"Hungry Tiger" 指的是工作非常努力、充满Passion、不知疲倦。诗琳通公主认为自己就是一个Hungry tiger。我很崇敬泰国的王室，其中诗琳通公主是我最崇敬的一位。我的创作即是我日常的随想转移到纸上或者布上，那时候我想保留下这种崇敬的感受

- 你目前正在做什么？有计划吗？

一点都没有，就是每天来工作室，想想画什么、怎么画。每天都在画新的作品而已，其他的没有。有的时候晚上睡前也会想想第二天画什么，尽管第二天不一定真的画了。偶尔也会想想将来谁来管理我的作品，因为家人并不会想要它们。没有目标，如果有钱会捐掉。

- 怎么度过一天？

六点起床，洗澡，跟妈妈喝茶、喂(妈妈养的)鸟。喝完茶之后就走路到这里(工作室)。还会和家人一起玩赌球，但是很小钱的赌球。喝啤酒，晚上8点回家。