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SPORE

Jakrawal Nilthamrong & Kaensan Rattanasomrerk

29. January - 23. March 2025

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Spore, a duo exhibition of Thai artists Jakrawal Nilthamrong and Kaensan Rattanasomrerk, consists of newly produced collaborative films, video installations, and ephemeral biosculptures.

Working with moving images and installation, the artists share an interest in experimenting with cinematic languages and exchanging knowledge. Their artworks often address issues of collective trauma and Thailand's history in a wider geopolitical context. In the exhibition at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, their collaborative and individual works revolve around each other, feeding into and reflecting on one another's thought processes. Nilthamrong and Rattanasomrerk's new project, *Spore*, is a research-based, site-specific art project exploring the possibility of a future where mushrooms act as powerful guides.

"We are concerned so heavily on the overground, we are literally missing half the picture," says Toby Kiers, an evolutionary biologist specialized in underground fungi, organisms whose influence was very important in organizing the exhibition.

In the artists' words: "The relation between life above and below ground becomes a focal point for us to employ as an artistic tool to investigate and provoke this overlooked connection. Working on the *Spore* project began as an obsession and an attempt to comprehend this relationship via mycology, and we broadened our mycological interests by expanding on the history of the focus area and its link with people."

During their residency in Oldenburg, Germany, Nilthamrong and Rattanasomrerk worked on films that follow Thai immigrant workers searching for mushrooms in the forest as a metaphor for spirituality, immigration, transformation, and homesickness. The resulting artworks examine wounds from the past and illustrate these scars' ongoing existence.

The mushroom can only grow from decay. For the

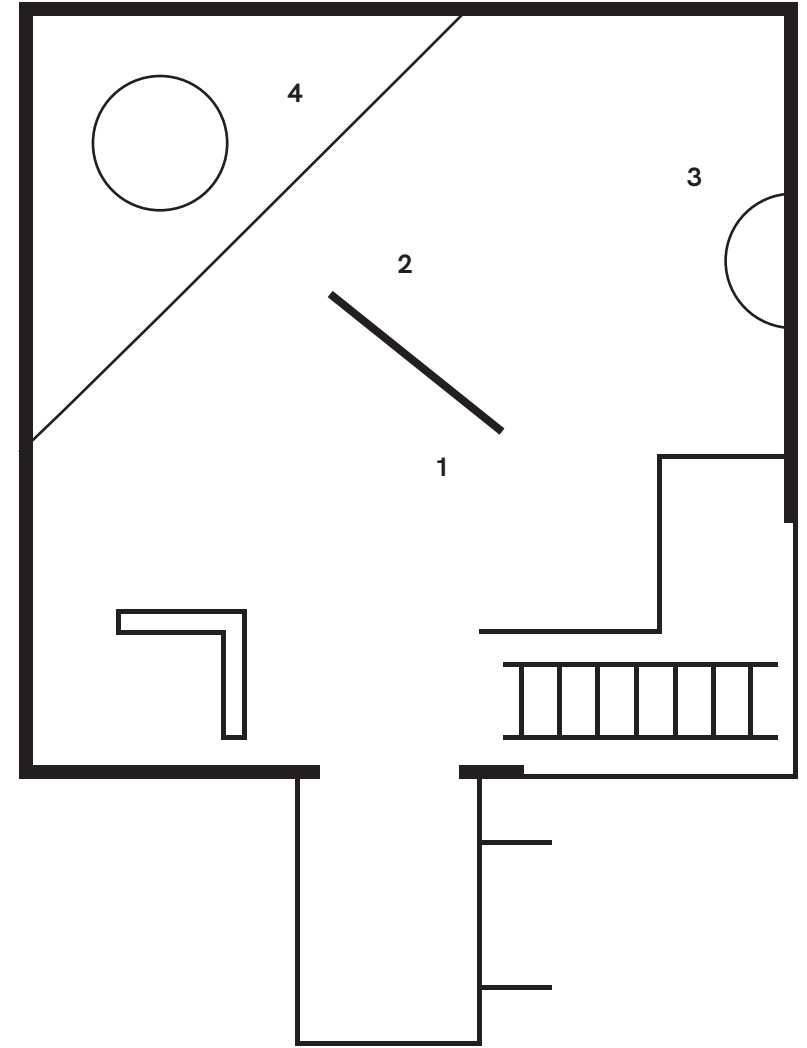
artists, it functions as a metaphor for how humans may reinhabit the space of the wounded, making it the very foundation of human existence. The question the exhibition provokes for them is: How might we interpret exposure as a form of political critique and action, rather than as a manifestation of victimhood?

Spore is a poetic entanglement of organic sculptural matter, filmic experiments, and geopolitical historical investigation, placing site and cultural specificity at its core.

Jakrawal Nilthamrong and Kaensan Rattanasomrerk were the 2024 recipients of the Media Art Grant from the Stiftung Niedersachsen at the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art.

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GROUND FLOOR



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1 Kaensan Rattanasomrerk WINDBORNE

2025
16mm film projection
8 min loop

The film portrays a fictional scene of Thai people living in Germany, searching for mushrooms in Oldenburg. In the metaphoric visual language of the artist they are like spores, they float through the air and land on the ground. Driven by love, the hope for a promising future, or simply the desire to escape from the past, they navigate a state of survival amid contamination. Immigration to Germany marked the beginning of a new life as they strive to blend in with their surroundings. Meanwhile, they support each other and vie for a meager substrate. The scene is supposed to be troubling, as the artist put it: "... some may be surviving, while others may not."

2 Jakrawal Nilthamrong AGENT OF DECAY

2025
16mm film projection
5 min loop

Agent of Decay is an attempt to celebrate the abstraction of moving images. The film centers around fungi, wind, contamination, and decay. It's a metaphor for traveling spores from the West Coast Pacific to bomb craters in Laos. Using 16mm expired film stock with hand-painted animation presents the paradox of randomness vs. non-persistence vision, the overwhelming speed vs. stillness, and a displaced person in a wasted landscape.

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3 Jakrawal Nilthamrong NEGATIVE SPACE

2025
Sculpture, mirror, mixed media

Using a 3D scan of a bomb crater in Laos as a mold and creating a sculpture that is indented with sawdust and fungi, the negative space of the crater is presented only in half, allowing the viewer to see the other half of the complete round in a mirror that reflects themselves at the same time. The sawdust is kept together by fungus beneath a rough surface. The proper temperature and timing are necessary for the growth of mushrooms. They can only grow from decay. Jakrawal Nilthamrong: "It's a metaphor for how humans may re-inhabit the space of the wounded, making it the very foundation of our existence. How might we interpret exposure as a form of political critique and action, rather than a manifestation of victimhood? At this point in history, these are critical concerns for the global community."

4 Kaensan Rattanasomrerk EYE CONTACT

2025
2-channel video installation
3.45 min loop, 9 min loop

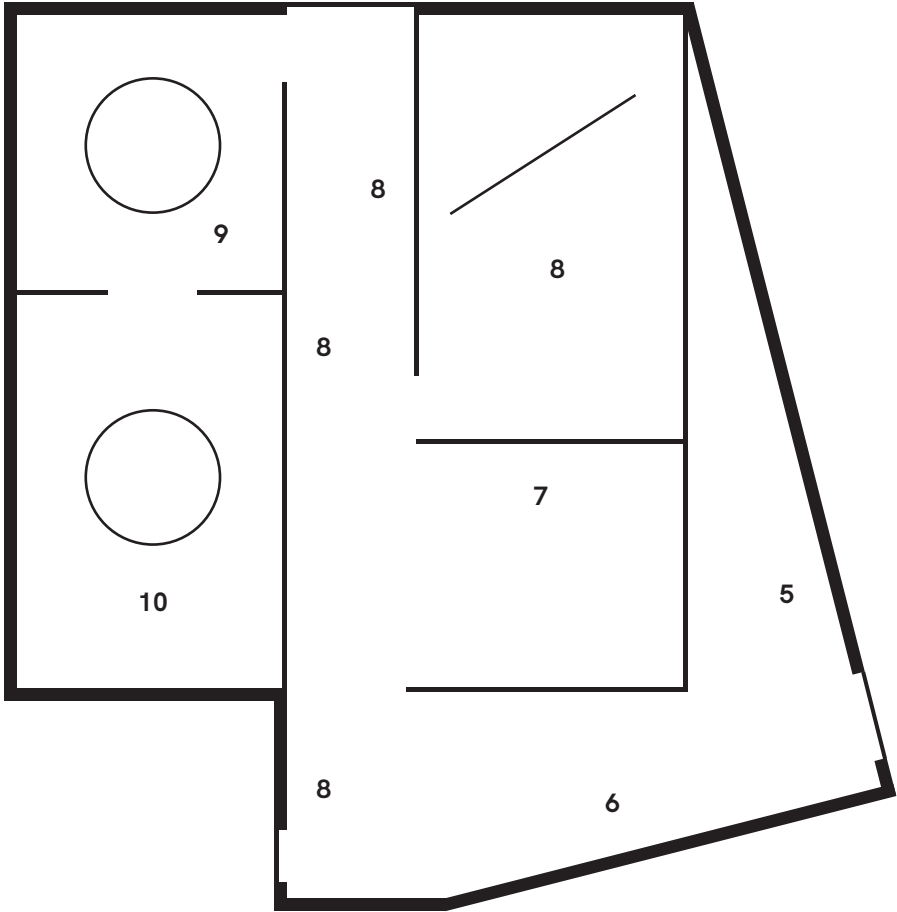
"What are aircraft bombing fighters and ground bombing defenders looking for each other? How do they fight? What are they looking for?" - Kaensan Rattanasomrerk

A 2-channel video is positioned between two floors. This piece not only connects the space above and below but also captures the perspective of a man in the sky looking down, linked to the man on the ground looking up. The aerial perspective explores the Oldenburg landscape, along the same route, while the ground perspective focuses on bombing targets and air defense priorities such as transportation hubs, urban centers, economic zones, and geographic landmarks. Inspired by a conversation between the artist and an immigrant about their perceptions of the sky during wartime, The works seeks to examine and understand the presence of contamination within geopolitical contexts.

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BASEMENT



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Kaensan Rattanasomrerk
SPORE

2025
Photographs

Spore is captured using electron beams, a technique that visualizes small objects invisible to the naked eye. Inspired by mining—a human activity that transforms landscapes—the photograph explores the effects and relationships between humans and the environment, often unfolding beyond perception. It delves into the processes where geologists and engineers survey landscapes in search of valuable minerals for mining. The photographic process simultaneously mimics and reverses the concept of mining, using small objects to magnify and create a space for artistic exploration and the crafting of images.

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6
Kaensan Rattanasomrerk
BREATH

2025
Photographs

A light-emitting phenomenon caused by chemical reactions, oxidative activity of bioluminescence mycelium, and direct exposure to silver halide crystals on 35mm film. The image was created by placing 35mm film over the mycelium. Due to the mycelium's sensitivity to the environment and contamination, every image produced weakens the mycelium—planted intentionally by the artist during the residency—until it ultimately dies.

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Jakrawal Nilthamrong
RHIZOME

2023
Video
15 min Loop

A man who lives on a raft with a sick woman and a cow in a simulated world where all terrain is water. Their rafts are constructed with garbage and a floating seaweed farm to feed the cows to produce milk, the protein that keeps the women alive. One day a group of strangers sneaked onto the raft and killed the cow. The man sets out to fetch another protein for the woman.

"Jakrawal Nilthamrong is interested in contamination as a component in the creation process of living environment for organisms, not only humans. An organism alters the living environment of others through adulteration, infiltration or replacement in each process. *Rhizome* is a simulated world created during the ecological crisis which urges humans to transcend human-centered knowledge boundaries and pay attention to non-humans, both living and non-living. Besides, it connects histories of non-humans like 'rhizomes' that connect, transplant and adapt in accordance with inertia in order to find possibilities of future creation from our depleting resources." Bangkok Biennale 2022

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Kaensan Rattanasomrerk
HEAVY METAL

2023
Video
12 min loop
Sculpture, photos, mixed media
Stereo

The project comprises a video, a sculpture, and a set of photos. The video documents the process of location scouting to find suitable filming spots in an area affected by chemical leaks, as well as the process of extracting gold from electronic waste. The gold is extracted from central processing units using strong acid and melting glass, leaving noxious. The photo set showcases residues containing various heavy metals and toxic substances, visualizing the invisible state of contamination. It also illustrates how the hierarchy of toxicity, originating from different parts of the world, affected sequence, is imprinted underground.

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**Kaensan Rattanasomrerk
EYE CONTACT II**

2025

2-channel video installation

see number 4

This is the second part of the video installation on the ground floor titled Eye Contact positioned exactly above this projection

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**Jakrawal Nilthamrong &
Kaensan Rattanasomrerk
FOXFIRE**

2025

Spatial installation, mixed media

Medium: Bioluminescent Mushroom

with Sound

The installation represents the process of becoming. The artist uses the installation to create a setting in which the audience becomes an active producer. When in the dark, the optic nerve adjusts to the darkness, and when the viewer's visual senses adjust to the suitable condition, their eyes function like the shutter B on a camera. Then they can see the Foxfire. Foxfire is a nickname of luminous light caused by certain fungus in decomposing wood. This beautiful phenomena is most seen at night in the woods, when the lighting mushrooms cast an eerie blue-green light. Foxfire has been a part of mythology and tradition for centuries.

As the viewer's sight slowly shifts, they hear conversations in Laos and soft melodies captured from inside the Plain of Jar, which is a collection of mystery stone jars spread throughout the middle plain of Laos' Xiangkhoang plateau.

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Jakrawal Nilthamrong (b. 1977) is an artist and filmmaker. He obtained his BFA at Silpakorn University, Bangkok (2000) and MFA at the School of Art Institute of Chicago, USA (2006). In 2007-08 he was an artist in residence at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Jakrawal's work spans from short films, documentary films to video installations and feature films. The themes of his work often relate to Eastern philosophy in contemporary context. His work was shown in international film festivals and art exhibitions including Yamagata Documentary Film Festival, Taipei Biennial 2012, Berlin Film Festival (Forum Expanded), SeMA Biennale Mediacity Seoul 2014, Toronto Film Festival and many others. His feature film "Vanishing Point" (2015) premiered at the 44th International Film Festival Rotterdam and won the festival top prize, Hivos Tiger Award. His most recent film "Anatomy of Time" (2021) premiered at the 78th Venice Film Festival. He is also a full-time lecturer on film subjects at Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Kaensan Rattanasomrerk (b. 1989) was born and lives in Bangkok. He graduated from Thammasat University with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication, Film Department. He later pursued a Master of Arts in Visual Arts from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Chiang Mai University. His artworks mainly stem from collaborations between moving images and other fields of study.

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EVENTS

EXHIBITION WALK

**Tuesday, 11 March,
5 p.m.**

with Edit Molnár – director Haus für Medienkunst (in English language)

**Tuesday, 18 March,
5 p.m.**

with Marcel Schwierin – director Haus für Medienkunst (in German language)

GUIDED TOURS

Every Sunday during the exhibition at 3 p.m. (Attendance free, regular entrance).

Group tours on request.

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OPENING HOURS

Tuesday till Friday
2 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday
11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Monday closed

ADMISSION

2,50 Euro / 1,50 Euro

Free admission on
22 February and 22 March 2025

Admission is free for school children, visitors up
to and including the age of 17 and students at
Oldenburg universities.

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