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All the worries in the world

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Wantanee Siripattananuntakul's art installations grapple with time

Artist Wantanee Siripattananuntakul spent all of 2000 fretting over her family and career and recording every day's anguish on video. The general public had never seen the resulting account - until now. It's part of a remarkable exhibition called " (dis) continuity" at the Chulalongkorn University Art Centre.

The three-hour "366 Days of Wantanee Siripattananuntakul" video-sound-light installation packs a punch, the artist in a series of white T-shirts bearing the corresponding page of a calendar as she records moments of both happiness and sadness.

The video runs in a loop in the new show, projected from the ceiling onto a platform of white tees. Wantanee wrestles with the frustrations of a struggling young artist searching for an identity, with the woes of big-city life and with dread over her father's illness.

The exhibition is dedicated to him. He died of cancer three years ago.

"I worried for years about my father dying," says Wantanee, now 37. She cried while editing the old clips for this show.

But there are few glimpses of her dad or mum or even Wantanee in her videos. She believes that filming your loved ones brings their death closer. In the background you hear rainfall and the soft ringing of bells. The bells recall her visit to a temple with her father, the rain a memorable day with her mother at her previous home.

What's happened since those "366 Days" is updated in another sound-and-video installation also titled "(dis) continuity". The name does indeed refer to the Buddhist teaching that we must live mindfully in the present moment.

"I'm always questioning myself about past, present and future," says Wantanee. "I've found there's only a thin line between past and present, a very short moment."

Another room is equipped with a sensor that sees your approach and flashes a bright light at you, alerting you to precisely that moment, the now, the fleeting present.

The moment over, you wonder what it is that the future will bring. The door to a third room opens at a signal from another sensor. Inside it's all bright white with lonely red numerals moving on the thin strip of an electronic marquee.

Wantanee has "taken advantage" of capitalism - borrowing more than Bt400,000 to create this exhibition. (Will the future see her repay the debt?) As if probing some secret code, the numerals tally up her lecturer's salary from Silpakorn University against the cost of the show and the number of visitors expected.

Being middle class in a capitalist, urban society doesn't allow for an easy life, says Wantanee, who was one of the artists chosen for the Thai Pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale.

Being a woman in the male-dominated art world isn't easy either, she says, or being an art teacher in need of new ways of teaching - or even just being Wantanee.

It's easy to empathise - and easy to disagree. Wantanee's new exhibition casts a bright light on her talent as a conceptual artist.

ONE WEEK LEFT

See "(dis) continuity" before next Wednesday at the Art Centre on the seventh floor of Chulalongkorn University's Centre of Academic Resources.

See www.WantaneeSiri.com and www.CAR.Chula.ac.th/art.