

Abstract

This thesis on “Construction and Negotiation of “Lanna-ness” in Contemporary Thai Painting” explores negotiation of meanings of Thainess in Thai art world through a group of Northern Thai artists. The researcher employs concepts in anthropology of art, particularly the idea of “art communities”. The ethnographic fieldwork, based mainly on interviewing with artists, was conducted between May 2009 to April 2010.

The main finding is that Thai art world is a field where various Thai ideologies such as nationalism, monarchism, and localism, are contested. In this Thai art world, many organizations and agents, including the state, the private sector, art markets, art connoisseurs, galleries, and artists, participate to negotiate for the meaning of Thainess. Artworks representing imagined Lanna-ness are a construction of Thainess selected from different aspects of ways of life. By illustrating their own local culture, the Northern Thai artists directly challenge the domination of the mainstream central Thai culture. In addition, Lanna-ness represented in contemporary Thai paintings produced by this art community is a contested identity negotiating with the global art world.