

Abstract

This study consists of five chapters. The first one presents the introduction of European Surrealism in Thailand, before 1964. Situated so far from France, Thailand had no direct contact with the original movement and therefore perceived Surrealism later, from art history courses and imported books and magazines.

Chapter II is about Thai publications on Surrealism which influenced many artists and writers; techniques and forms of expression have been welcomed. However, we point out how Thai comprehension and reception is often far from the realities of the European movement.

Chapter III analyses paintings by Thai artists from 1964 to 1984, in parallel with what we have considered to be their Western models. It is interesting that of all Dali's paintings, the one that has given the most profound inspiration to Thai artists, *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (1951), was accomplished after Dali had been "excommunicated" from the Surrealist institution and actually anti-Surrealist in ideology.

Chapter IV describes the few literary works during the same years that are inspired by Surrealist creations and paintings. Most Thai poets/writers are artists or have artistic backgrounds.

The last chapter examines the influence of Surrealism on Thai visual and literary works from 1984 to the present.

It can be concluded that Thai artists are influenced only by the visual forms of European Surrealist works. Salvador Dali is favorite among many prominent Thai artists. The artist's superior techniques and striking images are praised, and in many cases, readily borrowed or adapted. They ignore however Surrealist philosophy or doctrine because relevant data and sources are often not accurately referenced, leading to misinterpretations of the essence of Surrealism that Surrealist creations (with the irrationality and the juxtaposition of incongruous and dissonant elements) relate to miraculous happenings and characters in religious myths and classical Thai literature. Consequently some Thai contemporary artists have been inspired to reinvestigate their cultural heritage, in particular, old Thai mural paintings. They borrow selective Surrealist techniques and styles in order to express personal experiences, to comment on social events or to modernize Thai traditional art. Thai artists generally do not favour the automatic or spontaneous approach to art propre to the Surrealists. The forms of expression - provocative, oniric or erotico - freudian, seem strange for them due to the dissemblance of the cultural context.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge that Surrealism has certainly had an impact on Thai creativity during the four decades studied in this research. Many Thai artists and writers have clearly adopted and adapted these influences while developing their own identities.