

Name: *Reyum, the Institute of Arts and Culture (Phnom Penh)*

Country: *Cambodia*

Artistic Medium: *Visual Arts*

Source:

Ly Daravuth and Ingrid Muan

“Recasting Reconciliation through Culture and the Arts”

The Slifka Program in Inter-communal Coexistence, Brandeis University

Website:

http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/BIF_Papers/Djanie.pdf

http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/bif/bif_2003/Daravuth_cover.html

http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/BIF_Papers/Muan.pdf

Abstract:

“For the past five years, we have been working together on a series of art and research projects which culminate in exhibitions and publications. The institutional frame for our work is Reyum, the Institute of Arts and Culture that we established in downtown Phnom Penh in late 1998. In this storefront space, we offer images and texts that we hope open a modest public forum in which those who wish to participate can look, think, discuss, and create. By doing so, we feel that we contribute towards coexistence – if not reconciliation – in Cambodia. We would like to continue this work over the next two years, inspired and perhaps unsettled by discussions of the two Institutes.” Reyum also sponsors an Art School for disadvantaged children, who are encouraged to deal with their past and not simply forget it, and created an exhibition called ‘The Legacy of Absence’ in which artists were asked to consider how an artist could ‘talk’ about the Khmer Rouge Period. The exhibition “stimulated those who came to see it to talk, remember and then talk further.”

In his paper, Ly Daravuth examines the religious-social-cultural ceremony of Pchum Ben which honors the dead and allows their souls to enter a peaceful journey of life and death. This annual event gives us an insight into the methods of collective mourning and perhaps reconciliation in Cambodia. There is an important interplay between the individual and the collective as a rice ball is formed in the hand of each participant and its subsequent gathering marks the consolidation of all that is scattered; souls and communities. In another paper he examines whether reconciliation has been achieved between Cambodia and her neighbor countries Thailand and Vietnam because of their rocky past relationships.

Ingrid Muan describes her work with students in Phnom Penh in a project entitled “The Goodness of Lives” at the Reyum Institute of Arts and Culture in Phnom Penh. The project focuses on the last lives of the Buddha prior to his enlightenment. Each story exhibits a quality: generosity, honesty, equanimity, tolerance, compassion, self-determination, diligence that she hopes will change the attitudes of the children in their post-Khmer Rouge lives by teaching them in unconventional ways that forces them to reflect on its meaning more deeply. She came against quite a number of hurdles in this project, mainly from school officials who disagreed on traditional religious grounds.