

**Pinaree Sanpitak**  
Breast Stupa Topiary

YAVUZ GALLERY

## ABOUT THE ARTIST



Pinaree Sanpitak

Pinaree Sanpitak (b. 1961, Thailand) is widely regarded as one of Southeast Asia's most important contemporary artists. In the 1990s, her ground-breaking exhibition *Breast Works* marked the start of the artist's reference to an emergent and defining iconography: the female breast, which Sanpitak has become renowned for. The recurring breast motif is distilled into the basic form of vessel and mound, which she relates to imagery of the Buddhist stupa (shrine) and offering bowl. Sanpitak correlates it to primal and sacred forms in nature, Thai tradition and culture, and Buddhist architecture and practices.

Over the years, Sanpitak has redefined notions surrounding the human body (transcending the female breast), looking at the bodily form as a vessel of experience and perception, and the sense of the body in space and the perceived iconographic and conceptual associations they may trigger.

Her sensorial inquiries also reveal a keen sensitivity towards a range of materials, and she has produced an expansive and compelling body of work across diverse media and techniques including painting, collage, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, installation and performance. Underpinning Sanpitak's

practice is an abiding fascination with the potentiality of the body, her own body as sensate space, her lived experience of the bodily as a woman and, more recently, the charged and often convivial space between and among bodies that her participatory works create.

Sanpitak's works have been shown in numerous museum and biennales. Her recent site-specific installations include: *The Bangkok Art Biennale* (2022); *The Black and The Red House*, Setouchi Triennale, Japan (2019); *The Roof*, commissioned by Arts Brookfield, Brookfield Place Winter Garden, New York, USA (2017); and *Breast Stupa Topiary*, Jim Thompson Farm, Thailand (2018).

An overview of her work from 1995-2013 was showcased in a solo exhibition, *Collection +: Pinaree Sanpitak*, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, Australia (2014). The artist presented *Hanging by a Thread* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2013), a solo exhibition featuring her large-scale installation of the same title, which was subsequently acquired by said institution. Another large-scale installation, *Temporary Insanity*, was exhibited at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, USA (2012) and subsequently at The Contemporary Austin in Austin, Texas, USA (2013). At the 18th Biennale of Sydney (2012) she showcased a large-scale installation, *Anything Can Break*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.

She has also exhibited her works at Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem (The Netherlands), National Gallery Singapore, Singapore Art Museum, ILHAM Gallery (Malaysia), Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (Australia), Museum of Modern Art Tokyo (Japan), MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum (Thailand) amongst many others. In 2007, she received the Silpathorn Award from the Thai Ministry of Culture, one of the top honours for artists in the country.

Sanpitak's works are included in the collections of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (Japan), Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (Australia), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (USA), Asian Art Museum San Francisco (USA), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (USA), Nasher Museum of Art (USA), Museum of Modern Art Tokyo (Japan), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), Arter-Vehbi Koç Foundation (Turkey), and M+ (Hong Kong).



*Breast Stupa Topiary*, 2013  
Stainless steel (Grade 304)  
Dimensions variable  
Edition of 3 + 1AP

#### **Description**

A series of free-standing stainless steel sculptures, Sanpitak's "Breast Stupa Topiary" is inspired by both the female body, and the stupa, a conical Buddhist funerary structure commonly found in Thailand and throughout Buddhist areas of South and Southeast Asia. Placed in a garden, the structures will support and shape the growth of plants, and indeed, these futuristic trellis-like objects were originally exhibited outdoors, in a snowy Dutch garden during the European winter of 2013.

Sanpitak's "breast stupa" form combines and complicates the mystery of its parts: the at once sexual and nurturing qualities of the breast, as well as the simultaneously memorializing and celebrating functions of the stupa. The shape of the stupa, while regionally specific, is also universally familiar. Sanpitak agrees that a stupa resembles not only countless organic forms observed in nature, but also the shape of many human-made structures: including the domes of mosques and the pyramids found across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Yet in dwelling on and merging these forms, the artist's "breast stupa" resists the narrowing of interpretations to gender, cultural or regional frames, calling instead for an open and expanding view, an embodied reading that registers and values ambiguity and play. Manufactured to exacting standards in industrial stainless steel by a Bangkok furniture company, just one of Sanpitak's numerous collaborations, the Breast Stupa Topiary works encourage—and even necessitate—our bodily interaction. The artist hopes that children and adults alike will stoop low to the ground and crawl between the "legs" of these structures. The mirror-like sheen of the topiaries' perfectly finished surfaces invites us to follow our shifting reflections. Crafted from virtually indestructible stainless steel, these are artworks we are permitted—and welcomed—to touch. Crawling between the legs of the structures or catching sight of our reflection in their highly polished surfaces, we enact another kind of activating alliance in this project.

#### **Provenance**

**Collection:** Arter - Vehbi Koç Foundation; Asian Art Museum San Francisco; dib museum and foundation; Ilham Gallery

#### **Exhibitions**

"Cold Cuts", Yavuz Gallery Singapore, 2014



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**B1**

100 x 150 x 150cm



**B4**

250 x 210 x 210cm

**B1 and B4 set, Edition 2 of 3 + 1AP**

## GALLERY INFORMATION

### **SINGAPORE**

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