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# Press-Telegram

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## LB exhibit shares visions of Khmer lives

**ART:** 2nd City Council show has elements from a 2008 event in the capital of Cambodia.

By Greg Mellen Staff Writer

LONG BEACH — On the walls are multimedia, photographic and painted works. In a side room is a photo collage of transgender life in Cambodia along with several books by Cambodian-American authors, including Long Beach's Navy Phim and Oni Vitandham. In the center of the main room is a traditional-looking Cambodian figure with the Superman "S" on its chest.

The 2nd City Council Arts and Performance Space is into all things Khmer with the debut of a new show called "Transformation II: Bringing Contemporary Khmer/American Art to Long Beach."

The show features Khmer and Khmer-inspired paintings, sculpture, photography, dance and performance art. There will also be documentary films and a writers' forum with published Cambodian-American writers.

The event is being presented at the 2nd City Council space at 435 Alamos Avenue.

The show builds upon a show that was presented in July, 2008, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, at the Meta House Gallery.

That show paired the work of five California and five Cambodian artists, most of whom had never been in each other's countries.

Lydia Parusol, the art manager of Meta House, described the shows as the "first dialogue in an artistic way" between artists from the two countries.

In Cambodia, where most of the population is under the age of 30, in the wake of the Killing Fields Genocide of the late 1970s, a new and vibrant artistic movement is under way and artistic expression is blooming from its ancient but often constrictive roots.



Steven Georges/Staff Photographer

Sayon Sypraseuth, left, and Tom Tor, hang photographs for the Transformation II exhibit in the 2nd City Council Gallery on Alamos Avenue in Long Beach. The photographs by Chhah Nawath are part of the Khmer exhibit that is scheduled to run through May 3.

"In Cambodia there are young artists who are trying to go from traditional sculpture to more critical thinking," Parusol said. "They are reflecting society and themselves in the present Cambodian culture."

And on the walls of the gallery, the fusions of old and new Cambodia are represented in many ways, reflecting a "bridge between traditional and modern art," according to Parusol.

Denise Scott, who splits time between the United States and Cambodia, saw the original "Transformations" show and knew she had to bring something similar to the U.S. and specifically to Long Beach because of its large Cambodian-American population.

Furthermore, she wanted to present the show over the Cambodian New Year which occurs in mid-April.

"Transformation II" includes the work from the original show, but then builds on it with performance art and plans to show 12

### Khmer art on display

**Transformation II:** Bringing Contemporary Khmer/American Art to Long Beach" will run until May 3.

**Today's events:** An artists' reception from 6 to 9 p.m. with entertainment.

**Friday, April 24:** From 6 to 9 p.m. a second reception will feature the screening of documentaries and a book signing.

documentary films that look at the vibrant emerging arts scene in Cambodia, including some major public arts projects and individual artists.

Scott says the two Transformation shows are just the beginning of what she hopes will be an ongoing exchange.

Plans are already in the works for another show at Meta House, with five to seven American artists traveling to Cambodia to not only show work, but engage in artistic exchanges and possibly working with Cambodian artists to create new works.

Scott also plans to have a return show in Long Beach next April.

At this year's Long Beach show, only one of the Cambodian artists was able to obtain travel documents.

The artists featured have studied at Cal State Long Beach, the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, the Chicago Art Institute and Brown University, among others.

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