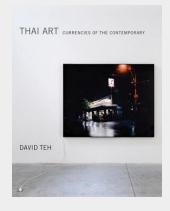
## Thai Art: Currencies of the Contemporary

The interplay of the local and the global in contemporary Thai art, as artists strive for international recognition and a new meaning of the national. Since the 1990s, Thai contemporary art has achieved international recognition, circulating globally by way of biennials, museums, and commercial galleries. Many Thai artists have shed identification with their nation; but "Thainess" remains an interpretive crutch for understanding their work. In this book, the curator and critic David Teh examines the tension between the global and the local in Thai contemporary art. Writing the first serious study of Thai art since 1992 (and noting that art history and criticism have lagged behind the market in recognizing it), he describes the competing claims to contemporaneity, as staked in Thailand and on behalf of Thai art elsewhere. He shows how the values of the global art world are exchanged with local ones, how they do and don't correspond, and how these discrepancies have been exploited. How can we make sense of globally circulating art without forgoing the interpretive resources of the local, national, or regional context? Teh examines the work of artists who straddle the local and the global, becoming willing agents of assimilation yet resisting homogenization. He describes the transition from an artistic subjectivity couched in terms of national community to a more qualified, postnational one, against the backdrop of the singular but waning sovereignty of the Thai monarchy and sustained political and economic turmoil. Among the national currencies of Thai art that Teh identifies are an agricultural symbology, a Siamese poetics of distance and itinerancy, and Hindu-Buddhist conceptions of charismatic power. Each of these currencies has been converted to a legal tender in global art—signifying sustainability, utopia, the conceptual, and the relational—but what is lost, and what may be gained, in such exchanges?



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