



**Nesting - Cavities: A Duo Exhibition by Nicholas Mangan and Pratchaya Phinthong**

4 February - 2 April 2023

Curated by Mary Pansanga

STORAGE is pleased to present a duo exhibition *Nesting - Cavities* by Nicholas Mangan and Pratchaya Phinthong. For the first time, the two artists unfold the formal and conceptual relations between their respective practices. The exhibition takes its cue from the characteristics of the venue, by thinking of STORAGE as a hybrid architecture where body and space intertwine.

The relationship between nature and the human faculty of consciousness has been explored through the metaphor of hollowness. *Nesting - Cavities* features Mangan's acclaimed project *Termite Economies*, a major series of works produced between 2018 - 2020, from which the sculpture 'Phase 3' *Neural Nest (slice)*, 2019 will be presented along with a work on paper, *Termite Economies (pheromonal transits)*, 2021. Pratchaya will present a new piece, *Sacrifice depth for breadth* (2023), produced specially for the exhibition and in conversation with Mangan.

The works of both artists are inspired by the transformation process by which elements in an underlying structure are altered, allowing us to recognize and understand similarities, but in different forms.

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*Sacrifice depth for breadth*, 2023 by Pratchaya Phinthong consists of two central related elements which exist in a different chamber, a transfigured nest standing free in a STORAGE exhibition space and a series of videos which have been stored in the Youtube Channel. In the exhibition space, what we see in front of us is a deformed wasps nest constructed through the process of handmade paper making. The transformation approach emerges together with a curiosity to search and look through the negative space, the unseen, the concealed substances. Pratchaya used an Endoscope camera, a tiny video recorder camera that's attached to a long, flexible cable. This cable allows you to manoeuvre the camera inside inaccessible places, to look deep into the body. Pratchaya slowly inserted the camera to view and record, this process then destroyed the nest itself while the camera moved through the internal empty space. The fragmented pieces of nest were gathered and sent to the paper maker to be processed by hand in the traditional manner. The depth of the nest was recast into a breadth entity. A series of recorded videos of the internal space of a wasps nest, taken with an Endoscope camera, were uploaded to the Youtube Channel where a QR code has been provided for accessibility in the exhibition space. Pratchaya adopted this online platform where the possibility of the audience has been widened and it also allows his videos to merge and mingle among others. The transferred depth of the nest is now embedded in the air space, creating another dimension to perceive its form and meanings.

*Neural Nest (slice)*, 2019 by Nicholas Mangan is part of the last iteration 'Phase 3' of a two-year project, *Termite Economies*, in which constructed systems, based on termite behaviours show connections between labour, consumption and digestion. Nicholas developed this project in three Phases with specific methods to explore these phenomena formally, spatially, and through moving images. 'Phase 3 used the human brain as a working model in the same way that the underground Gold Mine was used for Phase 1 sites of activity, places to start digging in order to think about labour, consumption, digestion and spit; the underground mine as a stomach - a bad metabolism and its rifts. In Phase 3, the human brain becomes the central form to ponder connectivity, collectivity and metabolic shifts. As a model-diagram, it is useful not only for building new neural pathways, but also perhaps as a kind of hypertrophy that re-routes/re-assembles larger social systems which view the individual human brain as just one node of a larger network. Phase 3 references the logic of endocasting through the use of 3D parametric modelling software. I worked with an architect to script an algorithmic code that would create forms based on the most efficient interpretation of ant-swarming logic.' \_ Excerpt from the book 'TERMITE ECONOMIES' (2021) by Nicholas Mangan

The airbrush works on paper by Nicholas Mangan evolved as a happy accident in the studio while painting the 3D printed forms that make up the sculptural forms for *Termite Economies* (phase 2) in 2019. While lifting up the forms after they were sprayed, Mangan discovered a whole other set of possibilities for mapping the forms and further architectural potentials, this enabled something more haptic within a project that was otherwise highly considered and planned through computer modelling and mechanised production. The forms that are left on the page as traces are spectral records of the computer generated sculptural forms produced using software in which we deployed stigmergic algorithms, which are themselves modelled and coded translations of pheromone or chemical cement trails of termites. The drawings evolved as by tracing around the forms, like x-ray's or scans also suggestive of the tracks and traces that termites themselves leave behind as they forage and build their habitats around themselves. The drawings also evoked a reference to the pheromone or chemical signals that enable communication within their colonies, the spray paint also evoked a chemical impregnated dirt concentration and dispersion. *Termite Economies (pheromonal transits)*, 2021 shown here was from Mangan's early development of a public art work commission to design for a new underground station in Melbourne Australia. In thinking about the tunnelling of termites and trains as mechanical insects, Mangan wanted to use this technique of tracing 3D printed forms to try to overlay pheromone traces of the architectural plan drawings of the tunnel platform area to think of stigmergy as graffiti, non verbal languages and more than human networks.

# S T O R A G E

## About the artists

Nicholas Mangan's practice is driven by the desire to make sense of the world by unpacking the histories and possible narratives that surround specific contested sites and objects. This investigation explores the unstable relationship between culture and nature. A tropical mine in a conflicted state whose local inhabitants used coconuts as fuel in their resistance, a strip-mined island nation in bankruptcy that took refugees in return for payment from the Australian Government, and a geological sample of the earth's oldest crust have each lent material to this process of dissection and reconfiguration. By rerouting each of these stories, new forms and latent narratives are unearthed.

Born 1979 Geelong, Victoria, Australia. Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.

Pratchaya Phinthong creates situations as an invitation made to the visitor to share an experience with him. His projects (without any specific or pre-defined forms) suggest a crack in which the spectators are invited to fill the gaps. He builds a set, a fiction, or a process where he can test our perceptions. He proposes to his audience a story with multiple paths. A trip down memory lane combined with subjective perceptions. His projects are often constructed in a dialogue between the artist and the others, making the artist's movements glide towards the social field. Beyond any artistic or formal experience, the artist is looking to find his place and his identity playing on the economic representations and cultural existences.

Born 1974 Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand. Lives and works in Bangkok, Thailand.

## **STORAGE**

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Opening Hours:

14:00 - 19:00 (Thursday - Sunday)

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