

Htein Lin

Htein Lin is a Burmese artist (painting, installation, performance), curator and writer. He has also worked as a comedian and actor.

Born in 1966 in Ingapu, Ayeyarwady Region, Myanmar, he was active in the 1988 student movement at Rangoon University where he studied law until the university was closed. Going underground after the military takeover, he spent almost four years in a refugee camp on the Indian border, where he studied art with Mandalay artist Sitt Nyein Aye, and in an ABSDF (Northern Branch) student rebel camp at Pajau on the Chinese border. In Pajau, he and other students were detained for around 9 months from 1991-1992 and suffered physical abuse at the hands of other students in the most notorious episode of the opposition group's history, which he wrote about in his autobiography *Ma Pa* and appeared as a comic book (Pajau) by Wooh.

Escaping and returning to Yangon in May 1992, he worked as a comic film actor. He held two solo shows in 1996 and 1997. Arrested in 1998 and jailed on spurious accusations of opposition activity, he spent almost seven years in jail (1998-2004). During this time, he developed his artistic practice, using items available to him like bowls and cigarette lighters in the absence of brushes to make paintings and monoprints on the cotton prison uniform.

Htein Lin pioneered performance art in Burma in 1996 and continued to perform for fellow inmates while in prison. Following his release, his Rangoon street performance 'Mobile Art Gallery/Mobile Market' in May 2005 led to 5 more days of interrogation. During the period 2006-2011 he also performed in the UK and Thailand, at the US Library of Congress (2009) and at festivals and events in Finland, France, Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, and Bangladesh. Many of his performances are intended to raise awareness of the political situation in Burma. Htein Lin practises vipassana meditation daily, and a major inspiration for his work is Buddhism whose themes, stories and philosophy he incorporates in his art.

After leaving Burma for the first time in 2006, Htein Lin regularly participated in exhibitions and art festivals globally, as well as events and projects to promote freedom of speech, particularly in Burma. He is a founding member of the Burmese language arts website www.kaungkin.com to which he contributes poetry, prose, and artistic criticism. In 2010 he curated the first Burmese Arts Festival in London. In recent years he has expanded his practice to include 3D work and video.

Htein Lin moved back to Burma in July 2013, having lived in London from 2006-2013. Since returning, he has taken advantage of the new reform atmosphere to embark on a major documentary and participatory performance piece, *A Show of Hands*, capturing in plaster the arms of hundreds of Burma's many thousands of former political prisoners. In March 2015 and March 2017, he was Co-Director for the first two My Yangon My Home arts festivals which involved public art, installations and performances around Yangon, and in 2018 he curated '*Seven Decades*', a major group exhibition at the historical Secretariat building in **Yangon**, with art works to reflect 70 years of Myanmar independence. He is a Founding Member of the Association for Myanmar Contemporary Art (AMCA), founded in 2021.

Work in Museums

M+ contemporary art museum, Hong Kong; ICRC Museum, Geneva; Singapore Art Museum; Staatliche Museum Funf Kontinente, Munich. Two of Htein Lin's paintings on cloth were purchased for the US Embassy Yangon.

Work in Private Collections

Other works are in private collections in India (including a specially commissioned piece, *Night Shift*, for Lekha Poddar, 2014), Belgium, France, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Netherlands Portugal, Singapore, Spain,

Sweden, Thailand, US and UK. Other commissioned pieces are in Rosewood Hotels in Yangon and Phnom Penh. Htein Lin's works are included in the Artists' Pension Trust – Beijing collection.

Gallery

Htein Lin is represented in Yangon by River Gallery.

ART PRACTICE

2022

- Solo Show, Richard Koh Fine Art, **Singapore**, February/March

2021

- Artists' Pavement, during Spring Revolution, for 10 days in February 2021 **Yangon**
- Group Show, 'Myanmar Voices': We Are Still Here', Virtual exhibition Karin Weber Gallery, **Hong Kong** July-August
- Group Show, Soutien aux artistes et aux photographes birmans, Retour de Voyage, L'Isle sur la Sorgue, **France** October/November
- Group Show, 'Love in the Dream', 20th Anniversary Exhibition, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, **Hong Kong**, 5 November – 28 January 2022
- Solo Show, Pont Arte, Maastricht, the **Netherlands** (with Tasneem Gallery) 3 December 2021 - 11 January 2022

2020

- Speaker, '[Turning Adversity into Opportunity and Beauty](#)', TedX **Yangon**, February
- Installation, Mangrove, in [Doh Gabar environment and art online show](#), **Yangon**, July
- Group Show, 'Essentialist Images' curated by Louis Ho, Richard Koh Fine Art, Gillman Barracks, **Singapore**, 17 July – 8 August
- Webinar on Htein Lin's art practice and politics, Yusuf Yusok Ishak Institute, International Centre for South East Asian Studies, **Singapore**, 25 August

2019

- *Recently Departed*, an installation included in the touring exhibition of SE Asia contemporary conceptual art 'Context, Context, Contestation', Secretariat, **Yangon**, January-February
- Solo Show, *Skirting the Issue*, 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, **Hong Kong**, January-February
- Solo Show, *A Show of Hands*, Albright-Knox Gallery, **Buffalo**, NY Feb-April
- Group Show '*Silent is Golden*', Japan Foundation, **Yangon**, May (3 prison paintings and video interview)
- Solo Show '*Skirting the Issue*', River Gallery, **Yangon**, May
- '*Found: Our Heritage, Our Future*', Aung Soe Myint and Htein Lin, Yangon Heritage Trust, **Yangon** May
- Prison paintings included in '*Sunshower*', Southeast Asia Group show at Museum of Fine Arts, **Kaohsiung, Taipei**, 4 May – 1 September
- Solo Show '*The Longyi Project*', Shinwa Gallery, Ginza, **Tokyo**, June
- *Orbit of Dhamma* was the only work by a Myanmar artist included in Leonardo da Vinci Opera Omnia, Rosewood Hotel, **Yangon** November 2019
- Group show 'Everyday Justice, Arts Films and Stories' curated by MyJustice programme/EU at Tourist Burma building, **Yangon**, November 2019 (*Justice, I C U JEST*)

2018

- Pure Gold: Upcycled! Upgraded! Group Show, curated by Volker Albus/Goethe Institute (*Dhamma Seat*), **Yangon Secretariat**, 15 December-6 January
- Performance, Zero Platform Performance Art Festival, Goethe Institute, **Yangon** 5 December 2018
- Installation (*Thabeiq-hmauq* - monks bowls) included Asia-Pacific Triennale, **Brisbane** Nov-April 2019
- Curator of '*Sound Weaving*' by Tun Win Aung/Wah Nu, National Museum, **Yangon**, August
- Curator of '*Seven Decades*', a major group exhibition at The Secretariat, **Yangon**, July

- Group Show 'Our Turn Now', Gallery de la Retour, Isle de La Sorgue, **France** (June-August)
- Group Show: *Speaking Out – 9 Myanmar Artists*, Gallery Route One, **Point Reyes**, and Abrams Claghorn Gallery, **Berkeley, CA**, April
- Mangrove, Installation in *Bearing Points*, at **Dhaka** Art Summit, February

2017

- *Htein Lin: Recovering the Past*, Yavuz Gallery, **Singapore** (January-March)
- Solo Show, Gallery de la Retour, Isle de La Sorgue, **France** (April-May)
- 'Artists Beyond Boundaries' group show, American Center, **Yangon**, June
- 'Sunshower', Southeast Asia Group show at Mori Gallery, **Tokyo** (4 July-Oct) and **Fukuoka** Art Museum (3 Nov-25 Dec)
- *After Darkness Comes the Light*, group show at Asia Society, **New York**, September-January (first overseas display of 'A Show of Hands')
- Group Show, 'Allegory', Galeri Petronas, **Kuala Lumpur**, November
- Group Show, 'Myanmar 2050', River Gallery, **Yangon**, November
- Group Show, 'Voices of Transition – Contemporary Art from Myanmar', Lunn and Sgarbossa, **London**, November
- Group Show, *10 x 10*, Article 25, **London**
- Curator, Dagon North Open Studios, **Yangon**, December

2016

- Gangaw Village group show, Yangon, January 2016
- Group Show '[Silent for a While – Contemporary Art from Myanmar](#)' 3 February – 13 March, Katie de Tilly/10 Chancery Lane Gallery, **Hong Kong**.
- Group Show, 10/10 exhibition, Celebrating River Gallery's First Decade 2006 – 2016, **Yangon**, February
- Speaker, *Living Arts in Post-Conflict Contexts: Practices, Partnerships & Possibilities*, Forum organized by Cambodian Living Arts, **Phnom Penh**, March
- Asian Performing Arts Market, **Setouchi Triennale 2016**, Takamatsu/Seto inland Sea, **Japan**, July
- Nominated for Sovereign Art Prize 2016
- Ongoing additions to **A Show of Hands** (multimedia project, including public participation)
- Solo Show 'Picking up the Pieces' (installations), Goethe Villa, **Yangon**, August
- Solo Show, 'Signs of the Times', River Gallery, **Yangon** October
- The Fly (video) in 'Body Luggage' *Migration of gestures*, Kunsthau **Graz, Austria** / Space02, September
- *Rise and Pass Away* (video/installation), **SEAsia+ Triennale, Jakarta**, October-November
- *Soap Blocked*, Singapore Art Museum (SAM), **Singapore Biennale**, October 2016-Feb 2017
- Nominated by SAM for Benesse Foundation award
- 'Mangrove' (Sculpture) included in group show *Mangroves: Forests of the Tide*, **Gallery 65, Yangon**, November 2016

2015

- Group Show at 20th anniversary of **River Gallery**, Yangon, **Myanmar**, December 2015
- Htein Lin's 1999 prison soapblock carving (in the permanent collection of the ICRC museum) is currently included with pieces by inter alia Yves Klein, Ai Wei Wei, Magritte, Rauschenberg, and Dan Flavin in the exhibition '[Experiments with Trust: Gandhi and images of nonviolence](#)' at **ICRC Museum**, Geneva curated by Josef Helfenstein, now Director, Kunstmuseum Basel and at the time, the Director of the Menil Collection, Houston, where the exhibition was first shown in 2014).
- *The Storyteller*, Solo show (including premiere of 'A Show of Hands'), curated by Nathalie Johnston Goethe Villa, **Yangon** July-August
- 'Happyland' (paintings and video performance) Tasneem Gallery, **Barcelona**, July-September
- Kamarado, Group show by the Clark House Initiative, September-November 2015 [Stedelijk Museum Project Space, Amsterdam](#)

2014

- **Dhaka** Art Summit, February 'A Show of Hands' (performance courtesy of Samdani Foundation), paintings shown by Tasneem Gallery
- *Beyond the Itch*, solo show, River Gallery 2, **Yangon** March
- Rosary Bowl/Mastery of the Mind (installation) and paintings included in group show of Myanmar contemporary art at *Pagodas, Longyis and Nats* 'at the Staatliche Museum Funf Kontinente (**Munich**), **Germany** (September 2014- January 2016)
- Panellist and performance, *Contemporary Dialogues* festival organised by Fluxkit, Pun and projects and Institut Francais **Yangon**, October
- Performance 'Give us back our land', opening of exhibition 'Blank Mind' by Soe Naing, A-hla Thit gallery, **Yangon**, October
- Private group exhibition at **Art Basel 2014 Miami**, (in association with Pall Mall Art Advisors and Quintessentially), December
- *Capturing Only Merit*, installation in group show, Peoples Park, **Yangon**, December

2013

- Art of Transition conference, **Yangon**, March
- Htein Lin and Ernesto Leal, *El Fragmento Eliminado*, Tasneem Gallery, **Barcelona**, (April- June)
- Nominated artist, Absolut Art Award
- Returned to Yangon, and commenced A Show of Hands project
- Advisory Committee, Artraker Fund, 2013, and judge for 1st award

2012

- Video Lounge, India Art fair, courtesy Tasneem Gallery
- *Installation: The Triple Gem*, **Singapore** Fringe Festival, February
- Asia House group show, **London**, July-August
- Workshops and performances in Rangoon and Mandalay, **Burma** August
- Shanghai Contemporary Art fair (courtesy Tasneem gallery), September
- Visiting artist, **Charleston** College, South Carolina, USA, October
- Prison paintings, video (*Rises and Passes Away*) and performance, Freedom Film festival, Copenhagen, October
- Clark House Mumbai at ISCP **New York**, USA, November
- I C U Jest, collateral exhibition (installation and performance) by the Clark House Initiative at the 1st Indian Biennale, Kochi **India**, December 2012-February 2013

2011

- Burmese Group Show, Karin Weber Gallery, **Hong Kong**, April
- **Brighton** Festival, UK May
- Prison paintings, **Chimay**, Belgium, May/June
- Solo Show, North Wall Arts Centre, **Oxford**, June
- Nominated artist, Signature Art Prize. Asia-Pacific Breweries Foundation/**Singapore** Art Museum
- TAMA Tupada Performance Art Festival, **Philippines**, November,
- Exhibition of prison paintings for Human Rights Day, **Prague**, December
- ['When I was a Lousy Millionaire'](#) (translated extract from forthcoming autobiographical account of experiences of detention in the jungle)

2010

- Installation: *The Scale of Justice*, **Singapore** Fringe Festival, January
- *Let Me out of Hell*, Burmese Theatre Workshop, London and **Marseille**
- Curator, Burmese Arts Festival, Free Word Centre, **London**, October

- Thavibu Gallery (with artist Chaw Ei Thein), **Bangkok**, November-December
- ArtAsia **Miami**, Karin Weber Gallery, December
- Regular performer, ArtEvict, London

2009

- Beyond Burma II Group show, Menier Chocolate Factory, **London**, UK 9-14 Feb
- Outside In: Alternative Narratives in Contemporary Art, University Museum and Art Gallery, **Hong Kong** 9 June – 19 July 2009 (group show including prison paintings)
- Group show at Karin Weber gallery, **Hong Kong**, July 2009
- Missing Asia, Observing Europe, Tasneem Gallery, **Barcelona**, Spain, November 2009 - January 2010 (solo show)

2008

- 'Beyond Burma' Group show, Chocolate Factory, **London** 11-23 Feb
- 'Twenty Years On', Suwunnabhumi Gallery, **Chiang Mai** 13-18 March
- 'The Cell', Karin Weber Gallery, **Hong Kong**, 27 March-13 April
- 'Out of Burma', Quest Gallery, **Bath**, 13 May-5 July (solo show)
- 'Recycled', Coningsby Gallery, **London**, 17-23 August (solo show)
- 'Recovering Lives', School of Art Gallery, Australian National University, **Canberra**, Australia, Aug-Oct (group show)
- 'Crossings, Contemporary Asian Art' [Olson Gallery](#), Northern Illinois University, **DeKalb, IL**, USA 28 August – 3 October (group show)
- Museum of Resistance, Deportation, the War, Rights and Freedom, [Museo del Carcere Le Nuove](#), **Turin**, Italy 24 October – 12 November (solo show - exhibition of prison paintings)
- Featured artist, Himal magazine

2007

- Artist in Residence, www.rimbundahan.org nr **Kuala Lumpur**, Malaysia 2006/7.
- Paintings completed secretly while in prison on cotton cloth using a variety of media and techniques were exhibited in a solo show '**Burma: Inside Out**' at **Asia House, London July-Oct 2007** (see www.hteinlin.com for media coverage including Economist, Int. Herald Tribune/NY Times, Sunday Times, BBC, CNN, C4 News).
- **Venice Biennale 2007** collateral event: Migration Addicts group show (curated by DDM warehouse Shanghai)
- **Asian Attitudes**, **Poznan** National Museum, **Poland**, July 2007 (group show)

2006

- Artist in Residence, Rimbun Dahan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- B-S-urma Event. Galleria Vällivuosi, **Helsinki**, Finland
- Nippon Performing Arts Festival, **Japan**, July
- **Come Rain or Shine**, 4th Solo Show, River Gallery, Yangon, June
- Performance Art: 'Escape'. In collaboration with Finnish sound/installation/video artists Jari Haapera and Mirka Flander, Gitameit, Yangon, Myanmar

2005

- Performance Art: 'Artist's Life'. With Chaw Ei Thein at Hnin-ka-gyo, Mandalay, Myanmar
- Recycled, 3rd Solo show, Lokanat Gallery, Yangon, December
- 00235, one day exhibition of prison paintings, North Okkalapa, Yangon, June
- Mobile Gallery, Mobile Market, Street performance with Chaw Ei Thein, Yangon, 6 May

May 1998- November 2004

- Various performances in Insein, Mandalay and Myaungmya Jails

OTHER ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING CURATION AND WRITING

In Myanmar

- Founder, Association for Myanmar Contemporary Art (AMCA), 2021
- Curator of **'Seven Decades'** Group show, July 2018, Secretariat building Pyinsa-ratha Artspace, Yangon
- Co-director, **"My Yangon My Home " Yangon Art and Heritage Festival**, a festival of community art projects to explore heritage, culture and art in Yangon, 2015 and 2017
- **Autobiography: 'Ma-Pa – the ABSDF Northern Branch Affair'**, Yangon, 2017 and 2nd edition 2019 (published in Burmese - see online 'When I was a Lousy Millionaire' (2012) for English taster)
- Curator, **Bo Aung Kyaw Centenary** event and book, Mezaligon, February 2016
- Judge, 2015, 2016 **Yangon Film School-Goethe Institut Documentary** Competition
- Juror, **Yangon Human Rights film festival**, June 2014; group performance at opening
- Contributes articles, radio dramas, poetry, short stories and illustrations for magazines in Burma, Burmese vernacular radio stations and international media
- Meditation discipline guide for warders and prisoners, Insein Jail, December 2013

Elsewhere

- Advisory Committee, INDEX on Censorship (2012-2018)
- Judge, Murals, Koestler Trust Prison Art prize (UK) 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014
- Selection Panellist for the first Artventure/Article 19 'Freedom to Create' prize, 2008
- Consultant, 'This Prison Where I Live' (about Burmese actor and political prisoner Zargana), Rex Entertainment Films, 2010
- Participated in NYU seminar: Imagining the Future: New Worlds, New Arts, New Models, co-curators Anna Deavere Smith and Gideon Lester, Abu Dhabi, April 2011
- Established kaungkin.com to showcase the best of Burmese writing and art (in Burmese) live and online, in Burma and in London
- Adviser to Writers and Scholars Education Trust on arts capacity strengthening in Burma, 2012/2013, including convenor of the 'Art in Transition' seminar in Yangon, March 2013
- Founding member of Burmese Theatre Workshop, a London-based drama co-operative performing original plays in English (2008/9)
- Coach to young Burmese actors and comedians. Judge for awards to graduates of documentary and short film courses in Burma
- Regular contributor on the arts to Sone-Nan-Tha magazine (2013-4)
- Awareness raising work with Amnesty and other human rights groups
- Educational work with primary and secondary schools, exploring themes of capture and imprisonment, and using printing techniques with found objects.

<https://www.facebook.com/artisthteinlin>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/artisthteinlin>