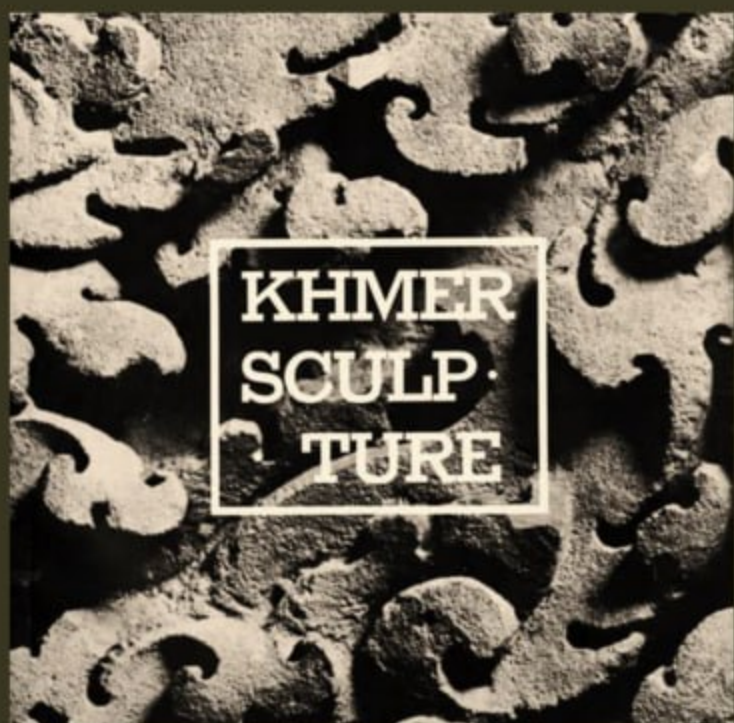


Ad Reinhardt និងចម្លាក់ខ្មែរ៖ យកការរិះគន់នៃបូព៌ាវិទូ
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Abstraction, Assemblage and the Orientalist Gaze:

Ad Reinhardt and Khmer Sculpture

ដោយ / by Mey Adeena (in English and Khmer)



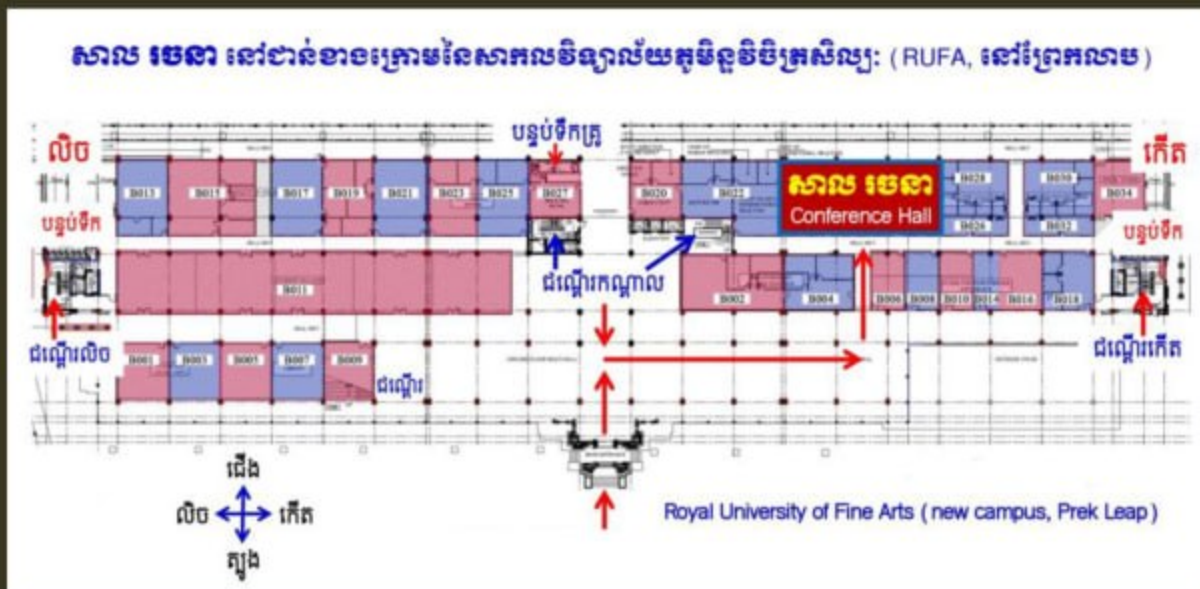
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Thursday, July 9th, 2026

3:30pm at

Royal University of Fine Arts
(new campus, Prek Leap)

សូមអញ្ជើញចូលរួមដោយមេត្រី



“Abstraction, Assemblage and the Orientalist Gaze: Ad Reinhardt and Khmer Sculpture”

« Ad Reinhardt និងចម្លាក់ខ្មែរ ៖

យកការរិះគន់នៃបូព៌ាវិទូអំពីភាពងាយយល់និងពិបាកយល់មកផ្គុំគ្នា »

ដោយ/By Adeena Mey

Thursday, July 9th, 2026

Abstract

In the catalogue for the exhibition Khmer Sculpture, held at the Asia House Gallery in New York in 1961, American artist Ad Reinhardt published the essay ‘An Assemblage of Comments on the Mystery and Clarity of Khmer Art’. Best known for his Black Paintings and for articulating the hard-line modernist position of ‘Art as Art,’ Reinhardt’s interest in the ‘Art of the Orient’ or ‘Art of Asia’ – the title of his classes at Hunter College – remains little known. The first book in English on the Khmer arts of the Angkorian period appeared a decade earlier, written by the American diplomat Lawrence Palmer Briggs in 1951. Reinhardt himself travelled to Cambodia in 1958, producing notes and photographs that later informed his teaching on the classical arts of East and Southeast Asia. His 1961 essay thus stands as one of the earliest contributions to US scholarship on the subject. While the essay was criticised by specialists in Southeast Asian art history and archaeology, Reinhardt’s engagement with Asian aesthetic thought and art has generally been read positively by commentators on his work, often in relation to how these ideas were synthesised and to how they operated in his paintings. This attempt to articulate the ancient into the modern is paralleled with Reinhardt’s writing itself which uses the language of post-War Western art criticism and theory to engage with Khmer sculpture, making ‘An Assemblage of Comments on the Mystery and Clarity of Khmer Art’ an oddity within Asian art historical discourse.

This talk retraces Reinhardt’s project, situating it both within the artist’s adaptation of Asian aesthetics into his own artistic system and within the growing interest in Cambodian culture in the US at the time. In doing so, Adeena will also read Reinhardt’s engagement with Cambodia as part of a broader history of the politics of American philanthropy and of its gaze towards the Southeast Asian nation, outlining the potential of mainland Southeast Asian epistemologies for critically addressing Reinhardt and the modernist paradigm.



Adeena Mey, PhD, is a researcher, editor and curator. Engaging with contemporary art and the history of exhibitions, the main strands of his research are artists' film and video, practices from the Global Majority, especially East and Southeast Asia, cosmotechnical thought, and their interactions. His writing has been published in *Afterall*, *e-flux*, and *post* (MoMA) and he is the co-editor of several anthologies on artists' film, video, and exhibition histories,

including *Exhibiting the Moving Image: History Revisited* and *Cinema in the Expanded Field* (both JRP Editions, 2015).

Since 2021, he has co-convoked the workshop series 'Writing and Publishing Art in Southeast Asia', supported by the British Academy, and in 2021–22 was Principal Investigator of the digital research project 'Black Atlantic Museum' funded by the Paul Mellon Centre. He is Editor of *Afterall* journal and a Research Fellow at the *Afterall* Research Centre (Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London), and is currently Archive Fellow at Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.