

TAWATCHAI SOMKONG

THE

TIME

TRAVELLER



Curated by
Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya





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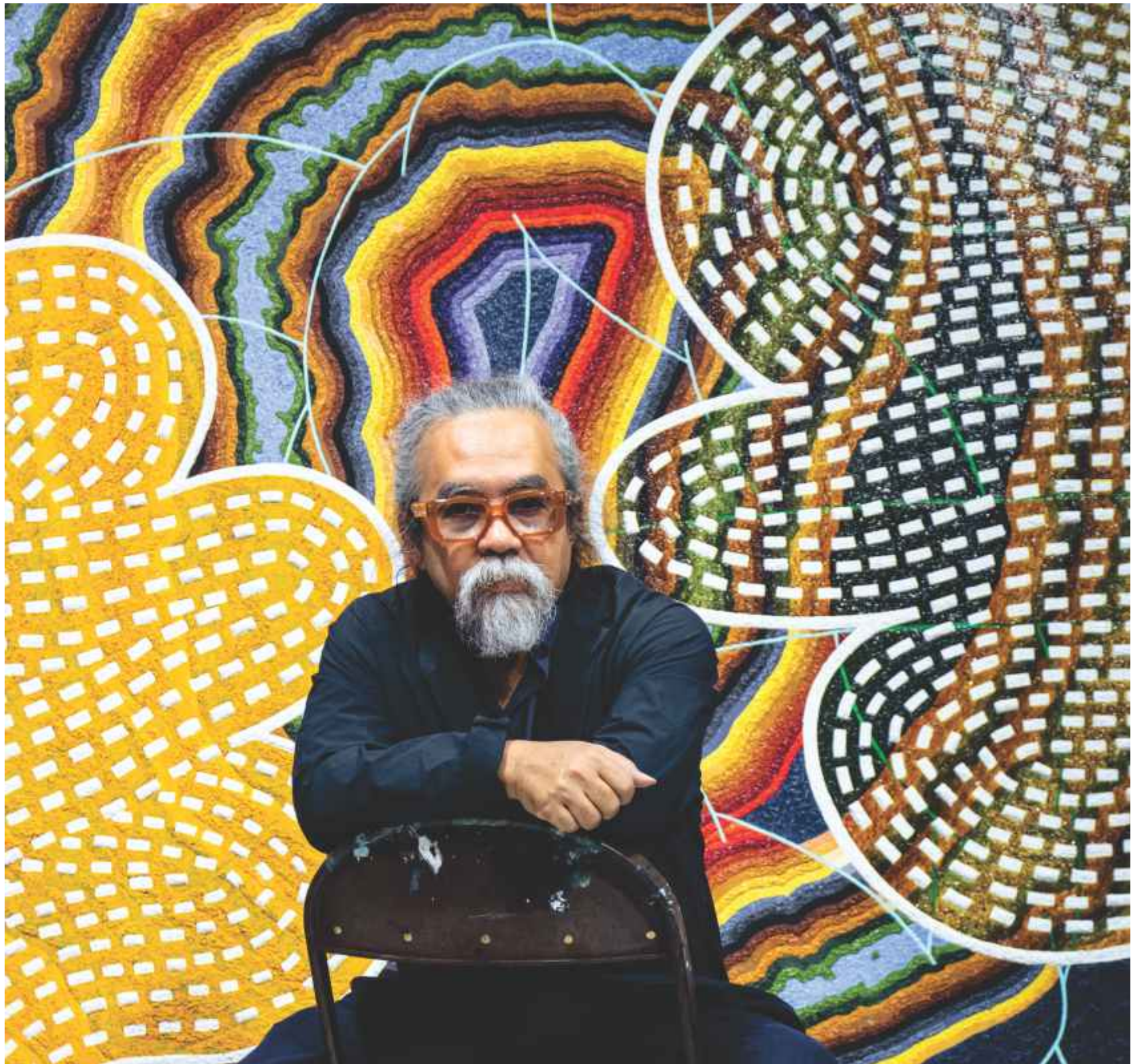
TIME

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13th -16th November 2025



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Meeting Tawatchai Somkong was as much a coincidence as any other moment that life quietly aligns for us. It was brief at first, almost incidental, but like a seed, it evolved with time. When I finally reached Thailand, that early encounter transformed into something deeper, more profound. Visiting him in his studio and at the art center he built in the heart of Bangkok opened an entirely new chapter of understanding. Within its walls, Tawatchai's vision unfolds not just through his paintings but through the atmosphere he creates around them.

The first time I entered what he calls his "Black Room," I felt a sudden transport, as though I had been carried across time and geography to Santiniketan. There, in the dark serenity of that space, I sensed the presence of Mani da, as K. G. Subramanyan was affectionately known. Even the lingering footsteps of Rabindranath Tagore wandering through the groves of Santiniketan in the early dawns





of another century. The walls of Tawatchai's Black Room seem to breathe with the same contemplative energy as his visual narrative becomes a meditation on time, memory, and the evolution of artistic thought. It is less a room and more an experience of continuity, a bridge between Bengal's humanist legacy and Bangkok's modern pulse.

Each painting in this exhibition, too, begins with this same spirit of continuity. None starts on a blank canvas. Instead, he begins with an existing artwork, a forgotten oil painting, a portrait or landscape once created by anonymous hands. These works, once mere commodities painted on commission, have long lost their authorship and their audience. In Tawatchai's hands, however, they were rediscovered and reborn. He describes the process as a kind of rescue mission, retrieving the paintings from the dust-laden corners of old shops and giving them a new purpose in the

contemporary world. His selection process is instinctive yet deeply reflective. Tawatchai does not choose arbitrarily. Each work he finds, seems to call out to him for its story, its technique, or its emotional resonance. Some pieces captivate him through their mastery of composition, others through their quiet, forgotten beauty. Yet all share a common quality: the potential for immortality. In his eyes, these paintings are not finished; they are waiting for his conversation and intervention. He sees in them a dormant energy, a history paused mid-breath, ready to awaken through his contemporary imagination.

Once he begins painting over them, Tawatchai treats the originals with both reverence and curiosity. His brush does not seek to erase but to engage. Each stroke becomes a line of dialogue between the past and the present, between one artist's hand and another's mind. His modern additions, at times playful, at times subversive, create a field where multiple temporalities coexist. Classical portraits might find themselves disrupted by geometric forms, abstract symbols, or a digital icon. In serene pastoral scenes, he might add a solitary cloud or a series of dots and dashes mark that speak not of intrusion but of meditation. These gestures reflect themes of change and uncertainty, existence and extinction, awakening and awareness.



Through this visual dialogue, Tawatchai constructs a temporal layering, a palimpsest of centuries. The experience of viewing his paintings is both unsettling and mesmerising. One shifts constantly between familiarity and strangeness, between recognition and reimagining. The old and the new do not cancel each other out; they sustain each other in a delicate tension. Tawatchai reminds us that meaning in art is never static; it is rewritten endlessly through each generation's sensibility. What was once sacred may now become ironic, and what once seemed decorative may now hold philosophical weight.

His practice stands as a testament to a rare balance; it is both respectful and rebellious. Tawatchai acknowledges the weight of history, yet he refuses to be bound by it. His layered canvases suggest that art is not an artefact but a living conversation, a continuum that transcends time, authorship, and tradition. By transforming forgotten works into new visions, Tawatchai Somkong asserts that creativity does not end with completion. It is perpetual, flowing across generations, awaiting the next artist who dares to listen, intervene, and imagine anew.

- Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya





From century-old paintings of various origins to contemporary gallery exhibitions, Tawatchai Somkong's artistic practice has breathed new life into long-forgotten, anonymous painters—restoring their place in the modern world.

In 2014, Tawatchai conceived a new project using old paintings he had spent years collecting. Each piece had been carefully

selected based on his personal artistic interests—whether due to the compelling stories they depicted, the mastery of technique, or the striking composition. Yet, beyond these individual qualities, all the paintings shared a common trait: the potential to spark new ideas that he could build upon. In Tawatchai's view, it was as if these works were waiting for him to intervene—to do something that would bring them into a new artistic dialogue. The diverse approaches Tawatchai employed to modify old paintings resulted in distinctly different outcomes, which can be categorised into two groups.

The first group consists of “old paintings that remain old.” Without close inspection, viewers might struggle to notice any alterations at all. A prime example is a series from his early phase, in which he seamlessly painted self-portraits into existing compositions, blending himself into the artwork so naturally that his presence appeared as if it had always been there.

In contrast, the second group demonstrates a far more pronounced intervention. Here, Tawatchai pushed the boundaries further, transforming old paintings into new ones by introducing stark visual contradictions. He did this by incorporating his signature symbols—elements frequently found in his work—or by applying contemporary colour palettes that had never existed in the original era of the paintings. Through these deliberate disruptions, he redefined the relationship between past and present, allowing historical artworks to take on an entirely new life.

The second group of works, rich in technical diversity, reflects a shift in Tawatchai's artistic approach from his earlier phase. Initially, he sought to insert new narratives into old paintings while preserving as much of their original atmosphere as possible. However, his later works demonstrate a deeper engagement with the structure of these historical pieces—reinterpreting their composition, painting techniques, and storytelling methods before modifying them to create something entirely new.



This artistic practice can be seen as an erasure of temporal boundaries, bringing objects from the past into the realm of contemporary art. Yet, this transformation is not solely the work of a single artist. Instead, it emerges as a collaboration between two creators—the original painter from centuries past and Tawatchai himself—bridging time through their shared artistic expression.

-Sarana Wiriyaprasit



Unknown Artist,
Unknown Title,
Oil on Canvas,
25.9" × 18.6"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Dialogue in the Living Room, Oil on Canvas, 25.9" × 18.6", 2016



T.S. Benson
Unknown Title, 1904
Oil on Canvas
19.3" × 29.6"
1904



T. S. Benson & Tawatchai Somkong, A Dog, Fisherman and Artist, Oil on Canvas, 19.3" × 29.6", 2015



Jerome Pennington DeWitt
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
39.3" x 50.1"



Jerome Pennington DeWitt & Tawatchai Somkong, The Lone Rider, Oil on Canvas, 39.3" x 50.1", 2016



Unknown Artist
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
36.6" x 23.3"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong
Everybody is Someone's God,
Oil on Canvas
36.6" x 23.3"
2015



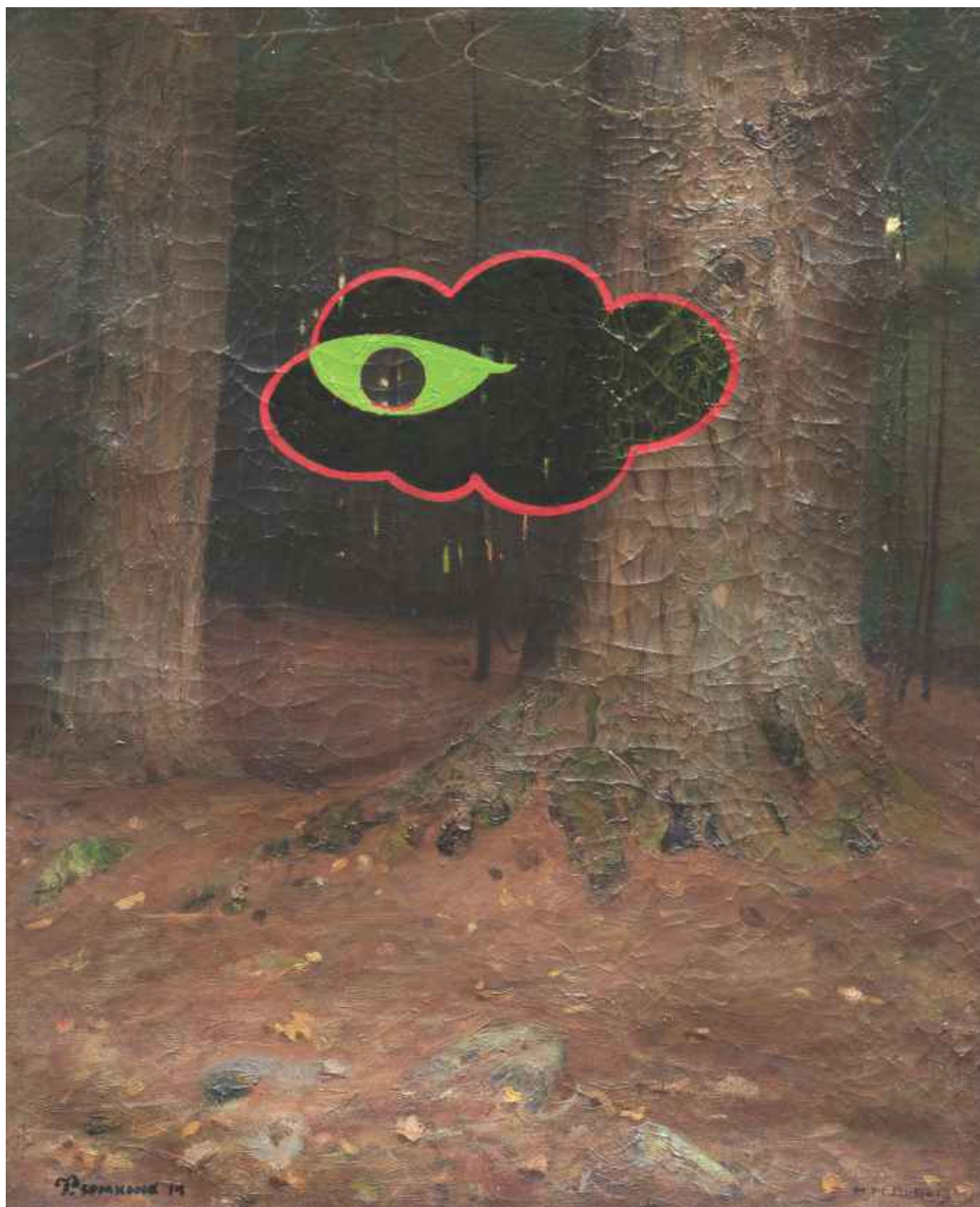
Unknown Artist
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
25.6" x 36.3"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The Wandering Eye, Oil on Canvas, 25.6" × 36.3", 2022



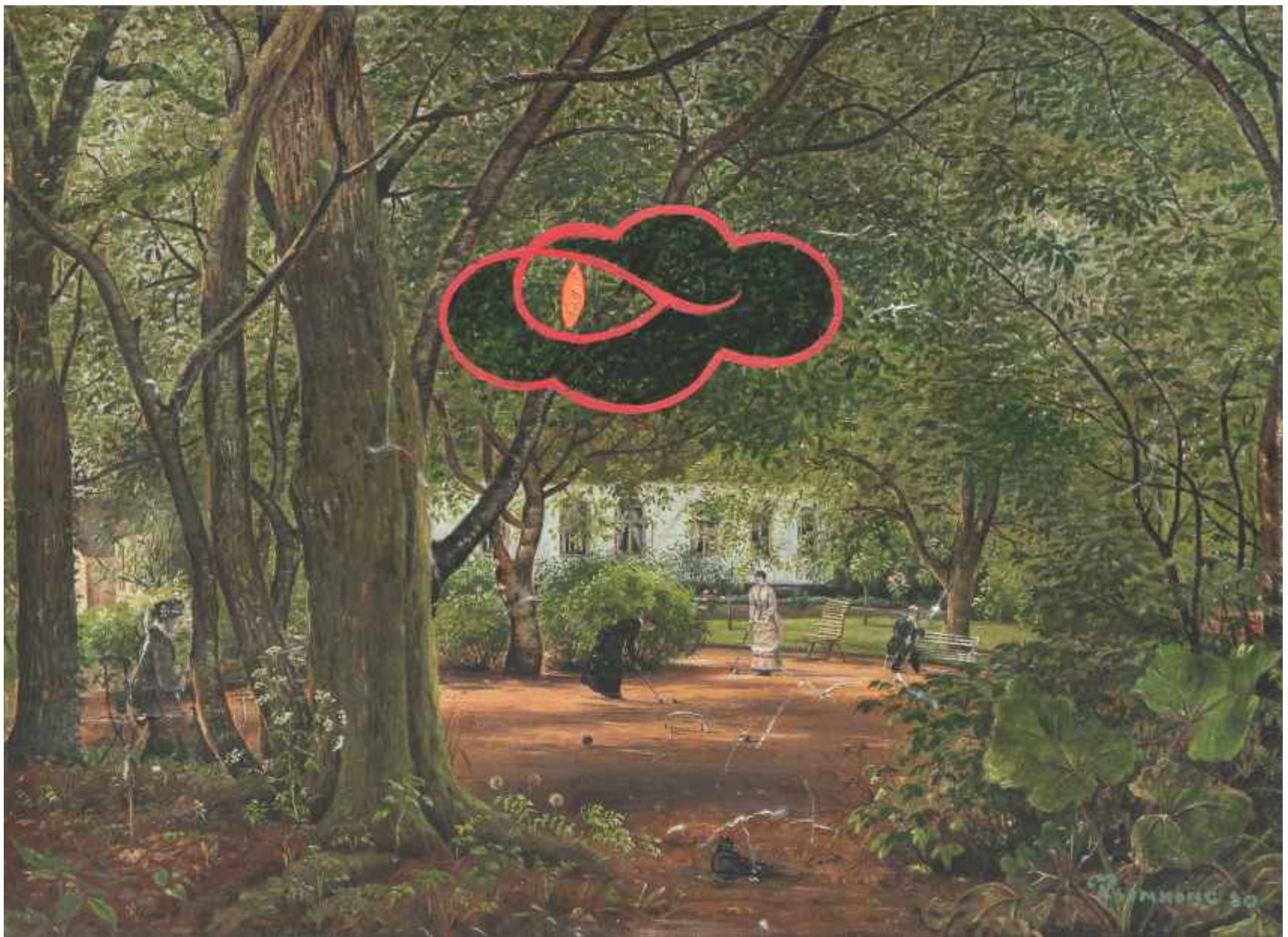
Hri Dubois
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
21.7" × 17.6"



Hri Dubois & Tawatchai Somkong, Surveilling Eye in the Trees, Oil on Canvas, 21.7" × 17.6", 2019



Unknown Artist
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
14.4" × 19.7"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Surveilling Eye in the Garden, Oil on Canvas, 14.4" × 19.7", 2020



Unknown Artist
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
26.2" × 21.1"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Pray to God,, Oil on Canvas, 26.2" × 21.1", 2015



Unknown Artist
Unknown Title
Oil on Canvas
27.9" × 35.5"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The Day That Altered Eternity, Oil on Canvas, 27.9" × 35.5", 2023



Woldemar von Reichenbach
Bacchanale
Oil on Canvas
32.3" × 63.8"
1893



Woldemar von Reichenbach & Tawatchai Somkong, Friday's Night, Oil on Wood, 32.3" × 63.8", 2018



D. Giandrone,
Unknown Title
Oil on Wood
15.4" × 19.1"



D. Giandrone & Tawatchai Somkong, Eyes of Green, Oil on Wood, 15.4" × 19.1", 2023



J Kerguen
Untitled
Oil on Wood
21.7" x 17.8"
1947



J Kerguen & Tawatchai Somkong, Untitled, Oil on Wood, 21.7" × 17.8", 2020



Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
36.4" x 26.3"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Romeo & Juliet, Oil on Canvas, 36.4" x 26.3", 2022



Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
31.49" × 38.9"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The One That Got Away, Oil on Canvas, 31.49" × 38.9", 2022



G. Drah
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
32.3" x 22.9"
1909



G. Drah & Tawatchai Somkong, Confrontation, Oil on Canvas, 32.3" × 22.9", 2018



Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
37.5" × 31.3"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, One Last Touch, Oil on Canvas, 37.5' × 31.3", 2018



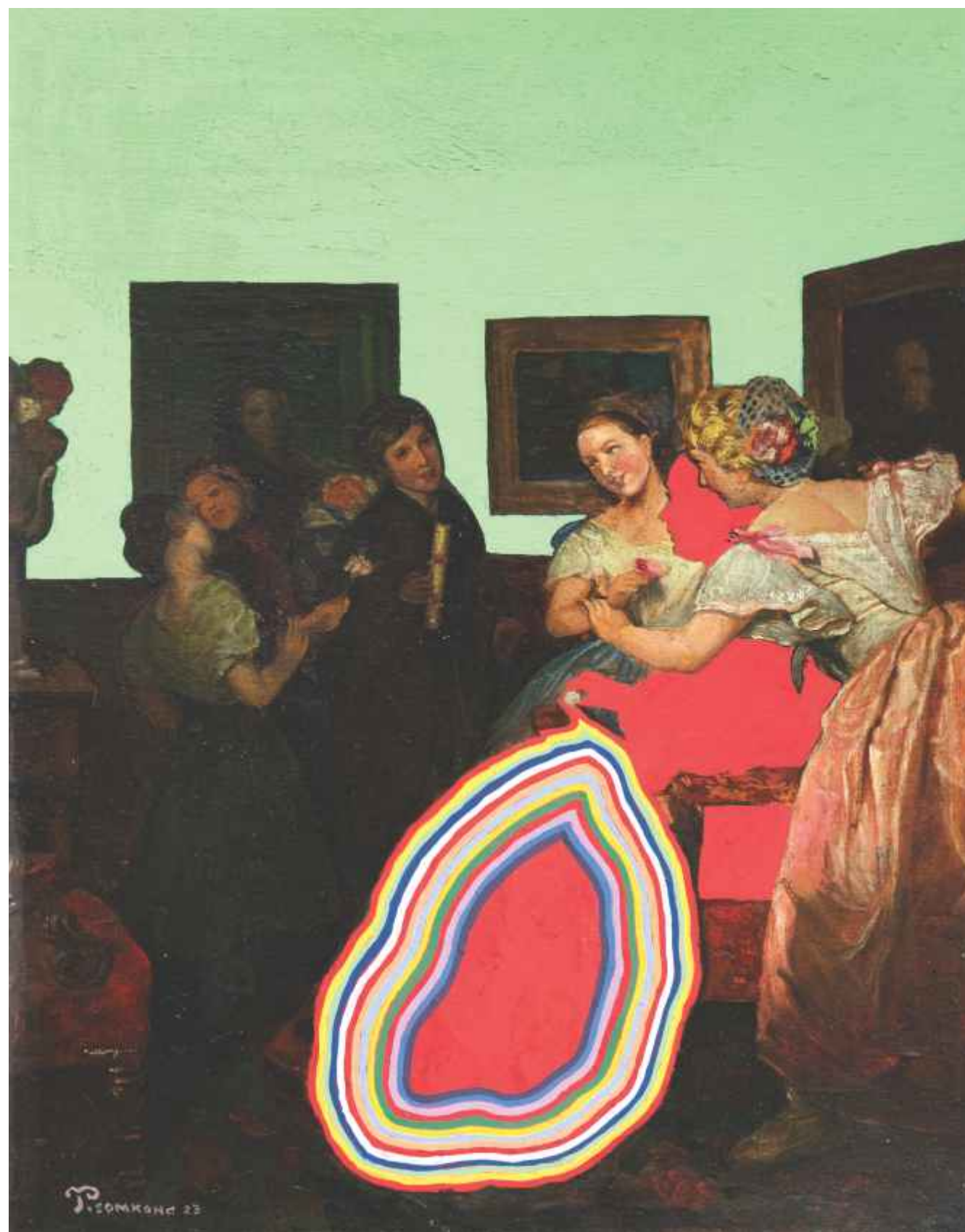
Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
37" × 27.3"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The Red Cross, Oil on Canvas, 37" × 27.3", 2022



Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Wood
19.6" × 15.3"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, In the Dressing Room, Oil on Wood, 19.6" × 15.3", 2023



Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
15.7" × 23.6"



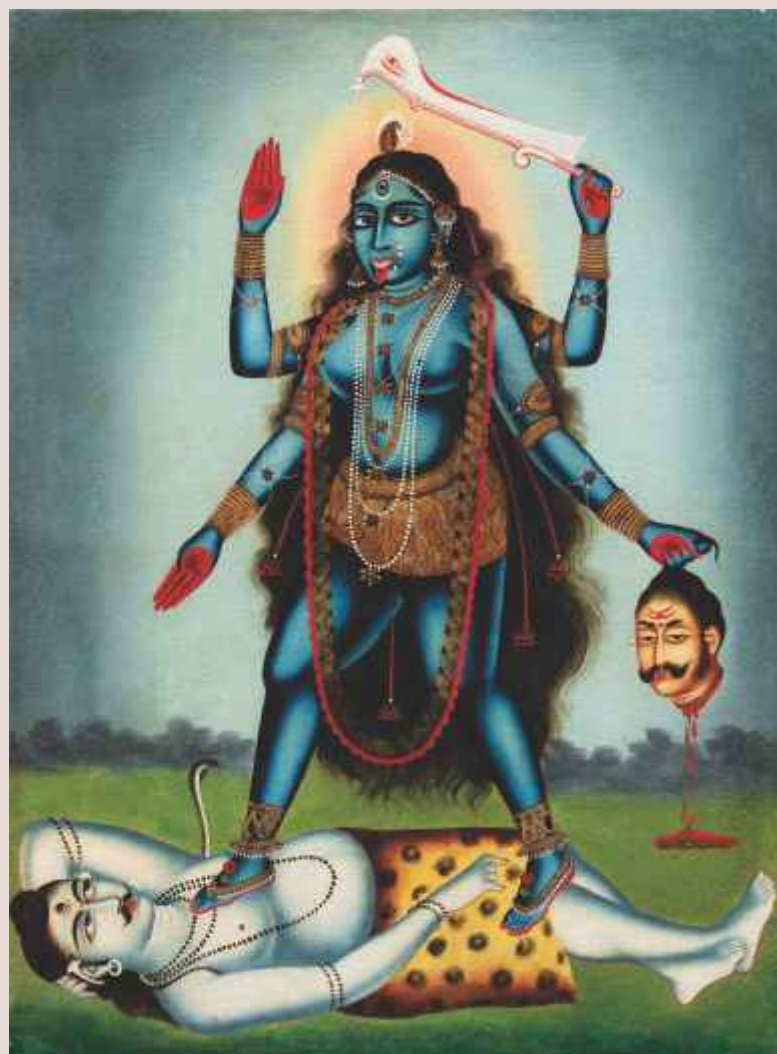
Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Still Life, Oil on Canvas, 15.7" × 23.6", 2022



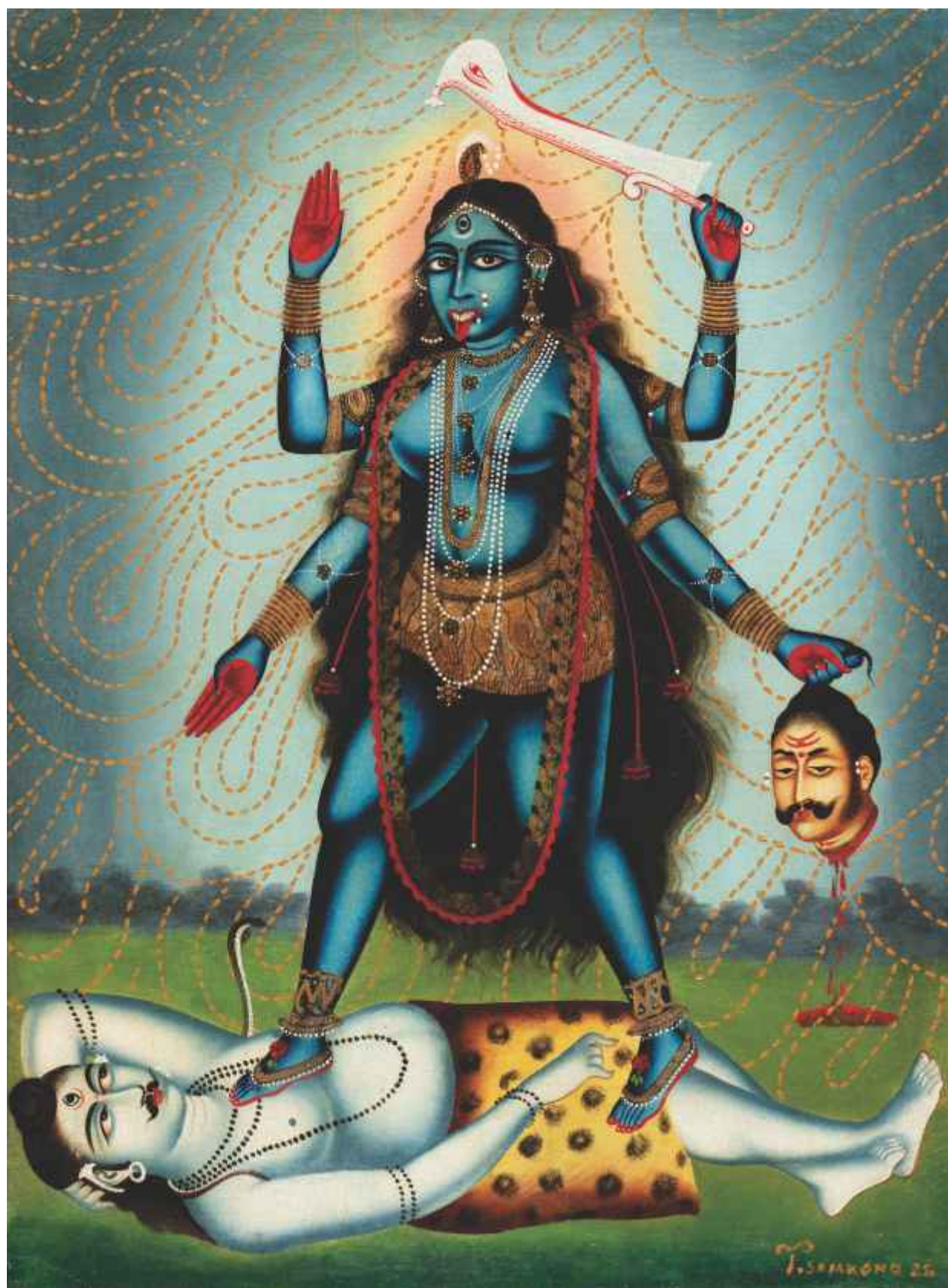
Unidentified Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
21.9" × 25.7"
1949



Unidentified Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The Gleaming Breeze, Oil on Canvas, 21.9" × 25.7", 2022



Unknown Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
23.6" × 17.7"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The Mystery of Miracles, Oil on Canvas, 23.6" × 17.7", 2025



Unidentified Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
21.3" × 28.8"
1905



Unidentified Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Back Home, Oil on Canvas, 21.3" × 28.8", 2025



Unidentified Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
11.8" × 16"



Unidentified Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Dotted Lines in the Sky, Oil on Canvas, 11.8" × 16", 2022



Unidentified Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas
11.8" x 16"
1900



Unidentified Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, 19 February, Before Nightfall, Oil on Canvas, 11.8" × 16", 2023



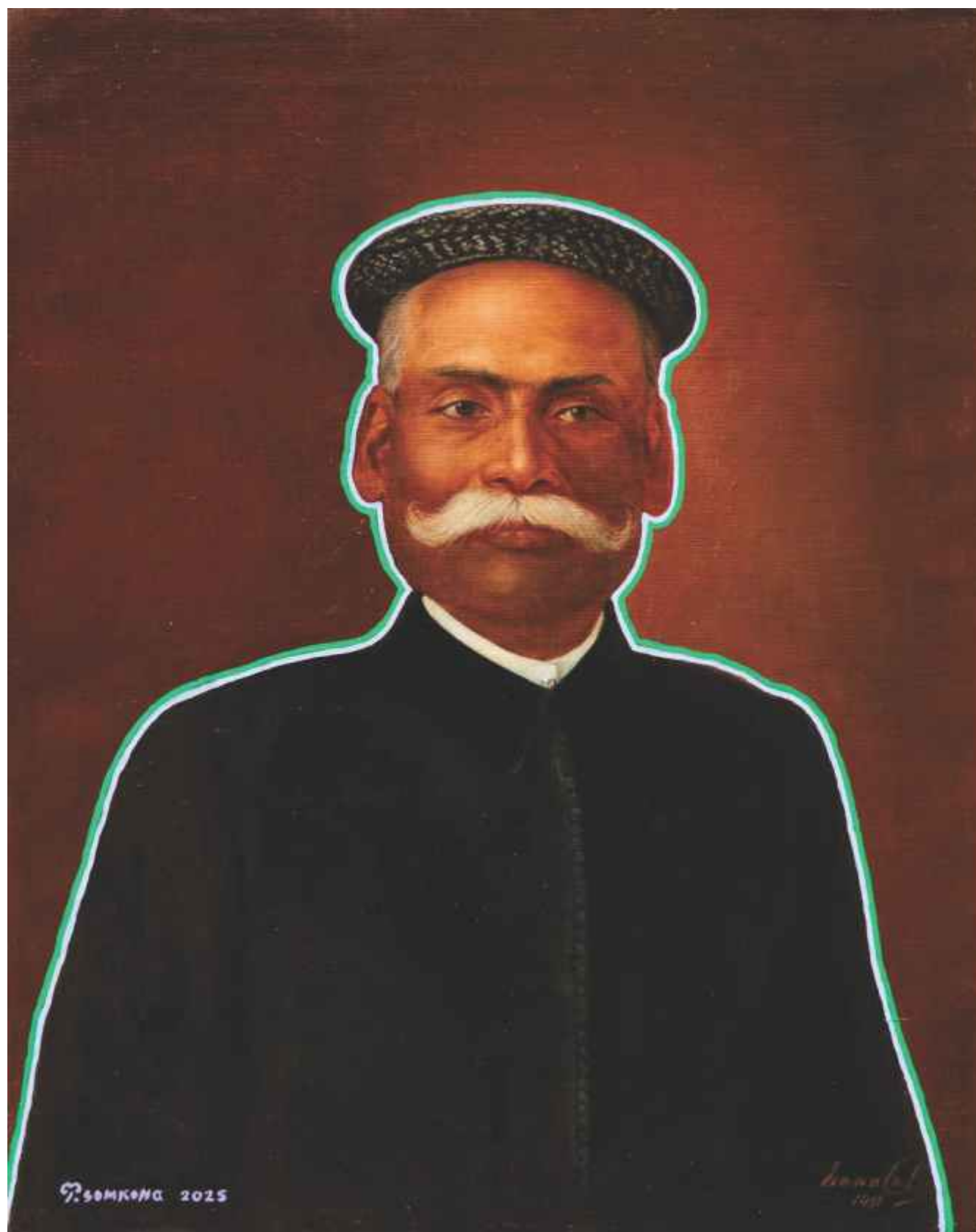
Unknown Artist
Untitled
Opaque Water Based Pigments
with Gold on Wasli
11.2" x 8"



Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Thursday Afternoon, Silver Marker on Paper, 11.2" x 8", 2025



Unidentified Artist
Untitled
Oil on Canvas,
30.1" x 24.2"
1931



Unidentified Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Two line, Oil on Canvas, 30.1" × 24.2", 2025



Art Magnum's vision and mission is to showcase South Asian art in its austere authenticity and magnificence on a global platform. Since its inception in 1986, it has been nurturing both the emerging and noted artists to further the cause of championing and patronizing South Asian art. Its founder Lt. Shri Prakash Chand Singhvi was a visionary whose passion and enthusiasm was the driving force behind the gallery. Presently, Art Magnum's enterprising director, Saurabh Singhvi, is skilfully taking his legacy forward. The gallery has been proudly presenting different mediums of artistic expression ranging from the traditional to the modern, and the contemporary and the experimental. Housed at a contemporary space with ultramodern infrastructure located in the heart of South Delhi, the gallery attempts to give voice to the novel and noteworthy talents through a roster of shows that present the news makers of contemporary genre and also the old masters and marvels of Indian art from the pre and post-independence era.

Art Magnum has innovatively kept striving towards new paradigms reroute to its journey, and has achieved multiple milestones and mammoth goals. The firm has successfully organised elite art events at art capitals across the globe including at New Delhi, Dubai, Singapore, etc and has received critical and popular acclaim for the same. The collection of the gallery includes works of M F Husain, S H Raza, F N Souza, Somnath Hore, Suhas Roy, K G Subramanyan, Paresh Maity, T Vaikuntam amongst the others. Going forward, Art Magnum shall act as a catalyst for the talented young artists striving for creative excellence and shall keep inspiring the art aficionado by showcasing the contemporary and the classic path breakers of South Asian art.

Saurabh Singhvi

Director, Art Magnum

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Front Cover: Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, Everybody is Someone's God, Oil on canvas, 36.6 × 23 inches, 2015
Back Cover: Unknown Artist & Tawatchai Somkong, The Mystery of Miracles, Oil on canvas, 24 × 18 inches, 2025



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