

-  Two Cultural Weeks of Art and Poetry
-  International Collaboration
-  Special Talk on Scholarships
-  Critical Connections: Forum on Cultural Studies in Asia and Beyond

Two Cultural Weeks of Art and Poetry



The Republic of Poland has of course been in the spotlight in Thailand this year as the co-host of the European Football Championship. But there is another reason for this nation in the heart of Europe to take center stage here, one that rings even closer to home: In 2012, Thailand and Poland are celebrating the 40th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. And our Faculty marked this occasion with an exhibition of the best Polish graphic art, entitled “Form and Spontaneity,” at the Learning Commons of the new Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building. The equally entertaining and erudite opening speech by co-host Dr. Jerzy Bayer, the Polish Ambassador, made sure that the opening ceremony on Friday, July 6, would turn out both appropriately formal and pleasantly spontaneous indeed—His Excellency effortlessly weaved together complex history and concerns of technique to tell the story of Polish art. Dean Assist. Prof. Dr. Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, Deputy Dean, Assoc. Prof. Surapeepan Chatraporn, Dr. Tomasz Gerlach (the primary organizers) First-Counsellor, Polish Embassy, and MC Ajarn Dr. Mattanee Palungtepin, together with many students and faculty, saw more cultural ties being strengthened and new bridges built. Undergraduates from our Faculty recited poetry by Polish romantics, Nobel Prize winners and heroes of the resistance such as Herbert and Szymborska. Thai SEA Write Awardee Zakariya Amataya answered the lyrical call with his own performance poems. Flutist Assoc. Prof. Charunee Hongcharu and violinist, her student, played Polish and Thai songs. The cultural treats even extended into the cultural realm, as the Embassy had kindly provided wine and Eastern European snacks, and offer that was received rather enthusiastically. Observers could overhear plans for further activities being made already, so we can expect to see more Thai-Polish events in the future. 





Singaporean Ambassador Pays Visit to the Faculty of Arts



The city state of Singapore might be known primarily for commerce and technology, but H.E. Chua Siew San, the Singaporean Ambassador to Thailand, takes the Arts very seriously: On Thursday, 31 May 2012, H.E. Chua Siew San, together with her political consultant, Mr. Harry Goh, paid a visit to our Faculty. They were welcomed by Assistant Professor Dr. Prapod Assavirulhakarn, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Associate Professor Surapeepan Chatraporn, Deputy Dean for International Affairs. “History” could have been the unofficial motto of the diplomats' visit, as Dean Prapod gave them an overview of the Faculty's momentous past and a tour of the Maha Chulalongkorn Building, an essential part of said past and the place where classes were held in former times.

Cuban Ambassador Says “Farewell”



A recognizable part of our more recent history has been the Cuban Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Lazaro Herrera. His Excellency has been a known friend of the Faculty and many of its members ever since he visited four years ago, when his appointment in Bangkok began. Now that his time in Thailand is coming to a close, he paid a farewell visit to Assistant Professor Dr. Prapod Assavirulhakarn, Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Also on hand were Associate Professor Surapeepan Chatraporn, Deputy Dean for International Affairs, Ajarn Chantra Pramoomsab, Head of the Spanish Language Section, and Associate Professor Dr. Sathaporn Tippayasak. Dean Prapod presented Ambassador Herrera with souvenirs from the Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Foundation, and the Ambassador left the Faculty a farewell message in the visitors' book. 



Special Talk on “Scholarships from the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC or Kor Por), Fulbright, and the Australian Government”



Studying abroad and graduate degrees are becoming more and more essential; and hardly any topic is more sought-after than scholarships. Acknowledging this need, our Faculty's International Section organized a two-hour special talk titled “Scholarships from OCSC, Fulbright, and the Australian Government,” held at 1.30 p.m. on Friday, 10 August 2012. Students were treated to information from and talks by Ms. Nuanpan Anekvanich, Human Resource Specialist from the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC), Ms. Pornnip Kanjananiyot, Fulbright Thailand Executive Director, and Mr. Chanvit Chanchaisombat, scholarship program officer from the Australian Embassy, while Associate Professor Surapeepan Chatraporn, Deputy Dean for International Affairs, was the moderator of the event. The venue of the talk was Room 301, Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Building. The speakers were warmly greeted by Assistant Professor Dr. Prapod Assavirulhakarn, Dean, who gave a short welcoming speech to the speakers and greeted all the students, setting the tone for a challenging yet useful session on overseas academic experience.

The conference room was filled with over one hundred and twenty students who were looking for opportunities to find out about scholarships to study abroad. By word of mouth, the event had been publicized and eagerly anticipated far beyond our Faculty, so that apart from Arts students, members from the Engineering, Fine and Applied Arts, Architecture and Political Science Faculties showed up as well. The audience was given detailed information concerning the different types of scholarships available, the nature of each type of scholarship, the application procedures, the necessary documents, and, particularly, tips for securing scholarships. The students also learned for the first time that OCSC provides funding for fourth-year students with a commitment to work for one year after graduation at a certain Government Office: they will be given scholarships to study abroad in the fields specified. As for the Australian Government, the audience learned that they offer a great variety of scholarship programs for students as well as working people in the region. Students can choose scholarship programs to suit their potential and interests. As for the Fulbright scholarships, the Fulbright Thailand Executive Director gave a very lively and dynamic presentation on all aspects of the scholarships complete with information and strategies to win a scholarship, proving that vital information can go together with a good sense of humor. She also brought along one of this year's Fulbright scholarship recipients to share his experience with the audience. The Director ended her talk emphasizing the prestige of the name Fulbright as well as awareness of community service and national contribution upon completion of the grants.

During the Q&A session students came up with lots of questions and queries which, though specific to their interests, shed more light on the overall issues as well. The speakers entertained the audience with answers and some more advice pertinent to their individual differences. The event proved to be a great success, judging from the rave reviews from the audience. 



BALAC Trip and Community Service



The fourth annual BALAC Trip to welcome new students into the Faculty's international program was recently held to great acclaim from 28 July to 1 August. Over 200 students, new and old, and members of the BALAC faculty and staff journeyed to the Ravindra Resort at Jomtien Beach, Chonburi for three days of cultural events and team-bonding exercises.

The Camp got off to an early start on the morning of 28 July as an impressive convoy of brightly coloured coaches pulled out from Chulalongkorn to ferry the excited participants to their destination in Chonburi. The first stop was the Royal Thai Navy Base at Sattahip where students were treated to a tour of the Navy's largest aircraft carrier, the HTMS Chakri Naruebet. A further tour followed of the adjacent Sattahip Turtle Conservation Centre where students enjoyed an informative talk about the centre's important work and had an opportunity to witness it first-hand with a visit to the turtle breeding centre and nursery ponds.

Following lunch, the group moved on to an afternoon of community service at the Wat Na Jomtien School, a public school for local children from pre-school levels through to Pratom 6. The dedicated teachers and fresh-faced young pupils of the school extended a very warm welcome to their visitors with kind speeches and refreshing drinks. In return, the BALAC team donated a collection of musical instruments to the school and then treated the young children to an afternoon of organized lessons and games. It was a most rewarding experience for all concerned.

The group then made its way to their final destination at the Ravindra Resort where the first evening was given over to a series of activities in the hotel's ballroom. The BALAC Director, Associate Professor Surapeepan Chatraporn opened proceedings with an engaging welcome speech to the new students. This was followed by an equally entertaining presentation from Assistant Professor Sankavat Pradithpongse, the Deputy Dean for Student Affairs. Afterwards, students were treated to a screening of *The Secret of Kells*, a 2009 Irish animated film, introduced by Ajarn Dr. Brett Farmer, one of the two BALAC Deputy Directors.

Day 2 of the trip was taken up with student-led activities as the BALAC sophomores, juniors and seniors initiated the new 'freshers' into the BALAC student community. Groups of students could be seen all over the resort's extensive grounds playing, singing, dancing and generally having a fun-filled time, often to the bemusement of the resort's other international guests. In the evening, the students put on a series of performances for their younger peers, displaying an impressive range of performing talents and an often keen sense of humour. The evening culminated in a moving 'bai sii su khwan' ceremony where, ushered into a hushed, candle-lit room, new students received the blessings and best wishes of their seniors and BALAC faculty and staff.

Following a late breakfast, the group assembled one last time in the lobby to board the waiting buses for the journey back to Bangkok, bleary-eyed but very happy. All agreed that the trip had been a great success and had served well to make the new students feel a welcome part of the BALAC family and the Faculty of Arts. Above all, the students have learned how to give and to share with the less fortunate children in a rural school. 

Summary Report

Critical Connections: Forum on Cultural Studies in Asia and Beyond



"Critical Connections: Forum on Cultural Studies in Asia and Beyond" was a special one-day conference on Asian cultural studies hosted on 16 March, 2012 by the Section of International Affairs, Faculty of Arts and cosponsored by Chulalongkorn University's Asia Research Center and Master of Arts in Cultural Management Program, with special funding from the Chula Global Network. The "Critical Connections" conference aimed to provide both a brief snapshot of cultural studies scholarship in the region, as well as an international forum of dialogue for researchers with a common interest in Asian cultural studies in all its multiple forms.



On 16 March 2012, more than one hundred delegates congregated at Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Arts for "Critical Connections: Forum on Cultural Studies in Asian and Beyond". Some thirty presentations were given by scholars representing universities and research institutes in Thailand, Singapore, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia and the United States. The result was a dynamic showcase of cutting-edge cultural studies scholarship and a rare opportunity for scholars, students, professionals and interested lay people to hear about, learn, and discuss the latest developments in the interdisciplinary fields of Asian cultural studies.

The Conference enjoyed an unofficial kick-off with a welcome pre-event dinner for select international speakers and guests at Ruen Urai Thai restaurant on the evening of 15 March. In a casual environment, over twenty key conference delegates were able to get to know each other better, forging new professional friendships and/or reestablishing existing ones.



The Conference proper got underway the following morning of 16 March at 8:30am with warm welcomes from Assistant Professor Dr. Prapod Assavirulhakarn, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Professor Dr. Pirom Kamolratanakul, President of Chulalongkorn University.

The first of the Conference's two keynote addresses was then delivered by His Excellency M.R. Chakrabort Chitrabongs, Distinguished Scholar of Chulalongkorn University and Former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture. Khunchai Chakrabort mused on his own experiences as a young man educated across two cultures to consider the significance of cultural heritage in a rapidly globalizing world. This was followed by a paper from the Conference's Keynote Scholar, Professor Chua Beng Huat of the National University of Singapore. Under the title of "Conceptualization and Referencing in Cultural Studies in Asia," Professor Chua assessed the important advances made in the fields of Asian cultural studies but also stressed the need for greater local conceptual specificity and intra-regional dialogue. It was a critically-rich presentation that set a productive tone for ensuing discussions throughout the day.

Summary Report

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There then followed a busy schedule of twenty-eight papers delivered across parallel sessions in three different rooms throughout the remainder of the morning and afternoon. These papers were organized into thematically-clustered panels that addressed many of the major areas of contemporary Asian cultural studies such as: Southeast Asian Connections; Education and Cultural Development; Popular Culture and Politics; Asian Cinematic Transnationalisms; Mediating Religious Cultures; Traditions and Rituals; Asian Queer Cultures; Tourism and Cultural Management; and Cultural Geographies. Within this dynamic context delegates were treated to papers on topics as diverse as Lanna music, Chinese martial arts films, Taiwanese queer theatre, Japanese heavy metal rock bands, Indonesian housing estates, Tibetan literary representations, Thai soap operas, Yunnanese cultural tourism, Hong Kong pet cultures, and much more. It was an exciting line-up of papers that was very well-received by conference delegates and that generated animated discussion in question time at the end of each session, as well as in the breaks afterwards.

The day concluded with a closing Conference Dinner that was held in the Montientip Room at the Montien Hotel. Here almost one hundred conference participants and guests were able to consolidate the day's professional networking through further discussion over a sumptuous Thai-Chinese meal. They were also treated to entertainment in the form of a brief pre-dinner performance by the Faculty of Arts Student Choir, followed by a further musical performance during the meal from a talented Faculty of Arts student playing classical Thai compositions on the kim. It was a perfect close to a fruitful day of scholarly presentations and dialogue. 

We are at Your Service.

The Committee Members of the Section of International Affairs, which comprises Deputy Dean Surapeepan Chatraporn, Dr. Brett Farmer, Dr. Ingo Peters, Assoc. Prof. Charunee Hongcharu, Dr. Duantem Krisdathanont, Donald Scott Humphries, Dr. Julispong Chularatana, Dr. Nurida Hayiyakoh, Pawit Mahasarinand, Dr. Piriya-dit Mani, Dr. Saseporn Petcharpiruch, Dr. Sirivan Chulakorn, Dr. Mattanee Palungtepin, Assist Prof. Wipada Petcharak, and Kankanok Singharerg as secretary, welcome advice and suggestions concerning any plans and activities. We aim to encourage a fully internationalized environment and to promote increased networking with overseas institutions and scholars. If you would like to talk to us, you can contact any of the committee members. We would be very happy to hear from you and cooperate closely with you.