



S'Art Festival Shines Spotlight on Cambodian Urban Art

By: **Meas Molika** on June 28, 2023

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S'Art Urban Arts Festival has made a successful return after a four-year hiatus, attracting 7,700 visitors to soak up the lively sights and sounds in Battambang



Phare Ponleu Selpak says the revival of the S'Art Urban Arts Festival was remarkable success. Kiripost/supplied

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foreign visitors to Battambang.

From June 12 to 17, the biennial S'Art Festival attracted thousands of visitors to celebrate the art's scene in Battambang, the city of art and a historical province that flourished with many creative cultural stories attached to its history.

Phare Ponleu Selpak announced on Wednesday the remarkable success of the revival of the S'Art Urban Arts Festival.

After the cancellation of the 2021 edition due to the pandemic, the festival returned to Battambang to introduce and celebrate urban art forms, such as graffiti, street sculpture, mural painting, digital art, hip-hop music and breakdancing, according to a press release.

The six-day festival featured artists, panelists, and performers from a wide range of countries, including Taiwan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, France, and Canada.

The week was capped off with an art parade through the old city of Battambang, including giant puppets made by students during the week and a grand finale concert featuring musicians Vanthan, Sang Sokserey, Buubee, Nunkay and others.

Osman Khawaja, Executive Director of Phare Ponleu Selpak, said the success of the S'Art Urban Arts Festival demonstrates that Battambang can rightfully claim its status as the arts and cultural hub of Cambodia.

He added, "Battambang is a city where visitors can travel to experience cultural events and meet artists and musicians, and S'Art is a great example of that dynamic in action."



project of FT Gallery and Studio in Phnom Penh, and the Giant Puppet Project based in Siem Reap.

Other important partners included the Battambang provincial government and iDEN agency, as the festival's media partner.

Ry Monisovanya, or "Fia," Festival Coordinator, said the creation of the festival is to showcase the diversity and potential of the urban arts in Cambodia.

"Thank you to everyone who performed, painted, presented, and participated. We were delighted to have you, and your energy made this festival come alive," she added after the festival finished.

Other notable events included nine different activities. These spanned a UNESCO panel on understanding shared cultural heritage across the Mekong region, with panelists from Cambodia, Thailand, and Japan, and art workshops led by a postgraduate delegation of MA Arts Pedagogy and Practice students from LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore covering zine design, blind automatic drawing, augmented reality art.

In addition, activities took in teaching the arts, pop-up art exhibits, talks on Battambang heritage arts, a panel discussion on Khmer contemporary arts, craft workshops on sticker animation, lantern painting, making maracas, and blow painting, hip-hop dance workshops, and workshops on digital art, fabric design, cyanotype prints, and building cultural unity through AI art.

"Art After Dark" street parties were other festival highlights, featuring breakdancing, street jams, henna booths, portrait drawing, street sculpture, and digital art projections

Many local Battambang businesses, despite having gone through difficult times, also stepped up to support the festival in whatever capacity they



The next edition of the S'Art Urban Arts Festival is planned for 2025, as it alternates with Tini Tinou International Circus Festival on a biennial basis.

Phare Ponleu Selpak, meaning Brightness of the Arts, is a non-profit arts school that empowers children, youth and their communities. Inspired by drawing workshops at the Site 2 refugee camp along the Thai-Cambodia border, nine evacuated students founded Phare Ponleu Selpak in 1994 on the outskirts of Battambang, Cambodia.

Today, more than 800 students participate in a multitude of daily artistic and cultural activities on the PPS campus free of charge. Classes and workshops include music, dance, visual arts, theater, circus, animation, graphic design and illustration.

Phare Ponleu Selpak changes lives through the arts by giving students the opportunities to become professional and self-sufficient artists and performers.

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