

Bangkok is enigmatic. There is nothing existing that adequately explains it to me, so I keep returning to it in my mind. What it is, where it came from, how to delve into its essence? It is everything and nothing, a sensory experience in which taste, scent, sound and touch- the heat- all come before sight.

My life over the years drew me towards the outer limits of the city, the places that people drive past, and never look at- and increasingly I felt these deadlands were a key of sorts to understanding Bangkok, and modern Thailand.

I started to create a series of photographs that would speak about the improbable hinterland of the capital city; its industry and residential zones cheek by jowl with the primordial landscape of the river delta; tell of its highways, mansions, shacks and shrines.

I named it Ruam Mitr, a fictional place- after something culinary, that encapsulated sensorial and conceptual dualities.

These diptychs therefore present the mundane alongside the spectral- things remembered, wished for, and attained and discarded, and at the same time iterate a binary quality in their material form- medium format film photographs are paired with mixed film and digital collages.

Ruam Mitr is a Thai dessert. It means “medley”, a mixture of things that are sweet and colourful, crunchy and soft, washed over with coconut milk and cooled by shaved ice. It is something that exists in combination.

Ruam Mitr is also the name of a place, a gated community that is nowhere but in the mind of the viewer, composed of images assembled from times and places on the edges of Bangkok. Its inhabitants live suspended in their dreams, accompanied by the hum of the air-conditioning and the fading luxuries of their homes.

They are guarded against the waters that surround, the factories and the people who live beyond the walls of the compound.

Ruam Mitr was built in the swamp of the great delta. A century ago this was the domain of wild animals, and small communities of outcasts joined by muddy canals. Now the zone is cut through with highways, golf courses, manicured gardens, and large houses: order- ever on the brink of ruin.

This suburb is like a movie set, filled with props, for dramas acted against the encroaching waters and the patchwork wilderness. When the stories cease, when these enactments of loss, violence, lust, duty, redemption are done- the swamp will return, for Ruam Mitr is a fragile proposition.