

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Artist's reception:

Sunday, March 20, 3 - 5 pm

Talk with the Artist and book release with Green Lantern Press:

Sunday, March 20, 2 pm

About the Artist

Stephen Lapthisophon is a multimedia artist and writer whose recent work addresses questions of language, history and cultural memory. Legally blind since 1994, his practice has grown to explore the qualities of sensory perception and conceptual concerns in the broad range of media he incorporates. His sound, sculpture, drawings and installation works have been exhibited in many art institutions in Chicago including Gallery 400 at UIC, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Hyde Park Art Center, Gallery 312, N.A.M.E. and Randolph Street galleries. In other cities, his works has been shown at Artists Space (NY), the High Museum of Art (Atlanta), the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and abroad at Zagreus Projekt (Berlin) and El Escaparate (Barcelona). He received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and currently teaches art at The University of Texas at Arlington. Lapthisophon is represented by Conduit Gallery in Dallas, and has recently released a book of 6 essays *Writing Art Cinema 1988-2010*, printed by Green Lantern Press.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by 3Arts, Alphawood Foundation; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; Harper Court Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

Stephen Lapthisophon: *The Construction of a National Identity*

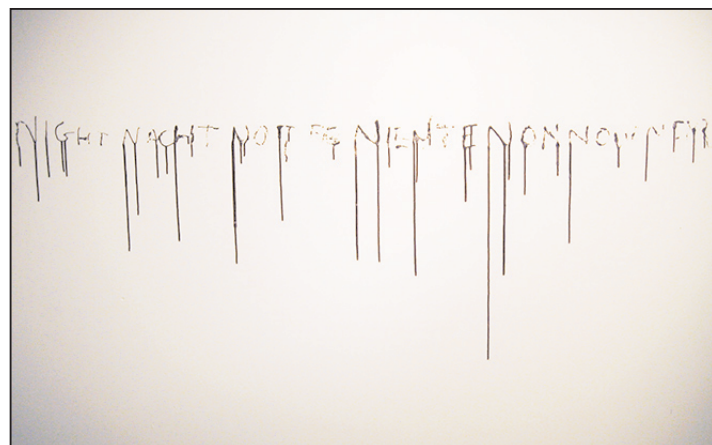


Installation image

*As form the echo holds nothing. As a gift we hunger for something to view. This is the taste of silence. Start counting here and see how long it takes. Once given it is considered a mistake to ask for it back. Some forms are simply given not taken.**

Like an open-ended experiment, the current exhibition by Stephen Lapthisophon dishes out a edited vocabulary of forms – audio and visual – as an exercise in exploring who we are and where we come from on multiple levels. Starting with the most basic and physical level, the artist repurposes the senses by asking what happens when sight is used to determine how something tastes, or touch informs the body of a sound or rhythm, and sound allows us to visualize a location. The lesson primes us for entering the conceptual space provided in the artwork where questions of individuality in a global world come into play.

The Construction of a National Identity is a site-responsive installation intended to disorient and recalibrate how we define our “place in the world”. The term is used broadly by the artist to encourage viewers to consider their physical location, place in time and world history, position in life, heritage, and all the miscellaneous components we use to identify the contemporary hybrids that we are. The works in the show are temporary



and meant to be seen as a whole. Together, the drawings, sculptures, and sounds refer to the various ways we mark our surroundings, both literally and figuratively, through the things we eat and prepare with our hands.

The found materials used to construct the 80-foot

long installation were chosen and arranged by Lapthisophon with the intention to fragment our experience of the artwork the way identity is fragmented. As we move through the hallway gallery, blocks of color on the wall create a visual rhythm and give pause to what the artist calls “events”. These events are marked by the artist’s hand through the writing of text, his signature, spray painted marks in orange and black, or hand-crafted forms like a table top or parallel lumber resting against the wall. Over the past several years, Lapthisophon has been focused on the

presence of the hand through mistakes and imperfections that classify us as human while asserting the value of the individual’s existence. Much like a cave painting or a hieroglyphic represents a visual language that contains meaning for past cultures; these common forms aim to trigger meaning in the viewer through association to lived experience, family tradition, or a cultural heritage.



For example, the rice presented in a pile on the floor is a metaphor for cultural hybridity because rice translates as a staple in the cuisine of most countries. The black words written streamline on the wall refer to an unfinished recipe for Paella, a traditional Spanish dish that is now served all over the world. Other consumable ingredients including sesame oil, olive oil, rice flour, saffron ink and coffee are also used as pigments on the wall throughout the exhibition emphasizing the analogous process of cooking to making art. Both creative acts originate from certain traditions passed through generations, and form individual practices or styles as repeated over time.

Lapthisophon is himself a cultural hybrid from Thai and Irish descent who has spent much time in Germany and Italy. Living among the language, food and music of these countries has had an effect on the artist’s aesthetic. The manner in which experiences translate from one culture to another is a major focal point in his text and sound based work. Here, Lapthisophon juxtaposes cacophonous travel sounds including language learning tapes and airplane or car sounds, with drippy handwritten text on the wall listing the word “night” broken down into various languages and referencing the deep blue wall just opposite. Although the installation may appear loose and spontaneous, with a closer look, it contains an intricate web of situations that all relate to one another to suspend place and time.

Allison Peters Quinn
Director of Exhibitions

*An excerpt from *Spelling Lessons* by Stephen Lapthisophon in *Writing Art Cinema 1988-2010*.