

VOLLA KONG

@ SHALINI GANENDRA FINE ART

2014

VOLLAK KONG

b.1983 Cambodia

Award winning artist, Vollak Kong, believes that as an artist he *"should experiment with design, drawing, sculpture, photography, performance...everything."* He studied fine art and sculpture at the Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh and has exhibited extensively in Cambodia and New York. He was awarded a 2012 ACC Grant for a residency in New York, and did a 6 week residency at SGFA during which time he developed the *Ancestral Portrait* series.

Kong has been impacted by a decade of rapid transformations in his home city of Phnom Penh, most notably, the structures of change. He has developed a distinct aesthetic profile through the depiction of urban forms, in two and three dimensional formats. The artist explains, *"the problems in the city, such as overbuilding, overcrowding, and increasing pollution and traffic, pushed me to do this work. And by doing the work, I have gained some clarity on what hierarchies should be."* This newly commissioned *Ancestral Portraits* series marries inanimate with animate, exploring the power balance between, structural and cultural development. He maintains his wonderful black and white palette, giving "strength and clarity" to image and message.

In Cambodia, Chinese minorities experienced severe repression during the Khmer Rouge. Chinese schools and enterprises were closed and they were required to carry special identity papers or be subjected to harsh taxes. However, today, the Chinese minority have regained much of their standing in society, due to economic prosperity and increased economic collaboration between China and Cambodia.

Though Kong is Khmer with no Chinese ancestry as such, he appreciates the historical footprint of Chinese culture, as embodied in the Chinese traditional ancestral portraits, immortalizing the person. He makes the figure dominant in his Ancestral Portraits, despite competition with the high-rise/ urban landscape. He says: *"People all want bigger buildings to signal strength and development. I do not want to see the building become bigger than the mountain. We are the mountain."*





Vollak Kong
Ancestral Portraits I 2015
Charcoal/black ink on silk, bamboo
78.74 x 47.24"



Vollak Kong
Ancestral Portraits II 2015
Charcoal/black ink on silk, bamboo
78.74 x 47.24"



Vollak Kong
Ancestral Portraits III 2015
Charcoal/black ink on silk, bamboo
78.74 x 47.24"



Vollak Kong
Ancestral Portraits IV 2015
Charcoal/black ink on silk, bamboo
78.74 x 47.24"



Vollak Kong
Ancestral Portraits V 2015
Charcoal/black ink on silk, bamboo
78.74 x 47.24"



Vollak Kong
Ancestral Portraits VI 2015
Charcoal/black ink on silk, bamboo
78.74 x 47.24"