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**New Museum to Present First New York Solo Exhibition by
Thai Artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul,
Winner of 2010 Cannes Festival Palme d'Or**

New York, NY...Opening to the public on May 19, 2011, "Apichatpong Weerasethakul: Primitive" will be the first New York exhibition devoted to the work of internationally acclaimed Thai artist and filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul (b. 1970, Bangkok). *Primitive*—which is having its American debut at the New Museum—is his most ambitious project to date: a new multi-platform work consisting of an installation of seven videos and related works.

Weerasethakul's films and videos are often set in the lush forests and quiet villages of the rural Isaan region of Thailand, where the artist spent his childhood. His films use inventive narrative structures to explore intersections between man and nature, rural and urban life, and personal and political memory. Surreal imagery and a sensuous, languid pace give his work a dreamlike quality. Characters shift identities and species fluidly and often reappear in subsequent films. Eschewing Western cinematic references, Weerasethakul's filmic language draws upon a range of local influences, from Thai folklore to television soap operas and movies. His most recent film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall Past Lives* won the prestigious **Palme d'or Prize at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival**. Weerasethakul's *Tropical Malady* won a jury prize at Cannes in 2004; two years earlier, his *Blissfully Yours* won the top prize in the *Un Certain Regard* program at the Festival. In 2008, he received the Fine Prize from the 55th Carnegie International, US; and in 2010 he was one of four finalists for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Award.



Apichatpong Weerasethakul, production image from *Primitive*, 2009. From the project, *Primitive*. 2 channel synchronized video, color, sound with English subtitles; 29:35 minutes. Courtesy Kick the Machine Films and Illuminations Films, 2009. Photograph by Chaisiri Jivarangsan

"Apichatpong Weerasethakul: Primitive" will be on view at the New Museum from **May 19 through July 3, 2011**. The exhibition is curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Associate Director and Director of Exhibitions at the New Museum. Weerasethakul will be in residence at the New Museum during summer 2011; details will follow this spring.

The *Primitive* project was first conceived by Weerasethakul during his research for Uncle Boonmee, the Palme d'Or-winning feature that tells the story of a dying man in a rural Thai village, being cared for by apparitions of his wife and son while he envisions his past lives. The seven interrelated videos at the core of *Primitive* focus upon the rural farming village of Nabua and the political and social history of its inhabitants. Nabua was the site of clashes between the Thai military and communist sympathizing farmers during the 1960s and '70s. Brutal repression by the military forced many of the local male farmers into hiding in surrounding forests, leaving the village inhabited primarily by women and children. In Weerasethakul's new work, parallels are drawn between this social dislocation and an ancient local legend about a widow ghost who abducts any man with the temerity to enter her empire.



Apichatpong Weerasethakul, production image from *I'm Still Breathing*, 2009. From the project, *Primitive*. Single channel video, color, sound; 11:00 minutes. Courtesy Kick the Machine Films and Illuminations Films, 2009. Photograph by Chaisiri Jiwangsan

Primitive melds documentary and fiction as it follows the activities of a group of male teenagers, descendants of and stand-ins for the lost generation of Nabua's men. The loose narrative of this work centers upon the building of a spaceship that can link the villagers to the past and future. The centerpiece of Weerasethakul's installation is a two-channel video that depicts the teenagers appropriating the spaceship as a hangout for drinking, sleeping, and socializing. Other intersecting videos map and illuminate the architecture and landscape of Nabua and capture these young men in moments of creativity, play, and remembrance. The latent history of violence and political strife that haunts *Primitive* reverberates strongly with recent tensions between the Thai military and the working class of Bangkok, many of whom hail from such rural communities as Nabua.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul was born in 1970 in Bangkok. Initially trained as an architect, he went on to study filmmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has produced six feature length films to date, including *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000), *Blissfully Yours* (2002), *Tropical Malady* (2004), and *Syndromes and a Century* (2006). In addition to his feature-length films, Weerasethakul has created a number of videos and installations for museums including *Haunted Houses* for the 2001 Istanbul Biennial, and *Primitive*, which



Apichatpong Weerasethakul, production image from *Nabua*, 2009. From the project, *Primitive*. Single channel video, color, sound with English subtitles; 9:00 minutes. Courtesy Kick the Machine Films and Illuminations Films, 2009

was exhibited at the Haus der Kunst, Munich and the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT), Liverpool in 2009. In 2008, he received the Fine Prize from the 55th Carnegie International, US; and in 2010 he was one of four finalists for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Award.

"Primitive" was commissioned by the Haus der Kunst, Munich with FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) and Animate Projects, London. Produced by Illuminations Films and Kick the Machine Films.

Exhibition Support

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About the New Museum

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum was conceived as a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding, dedicated building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of ongoing experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

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