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| Upa-in, Lawan (1935--) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Thai artist Lawan Upa-in was the first female student to be granted a Bachelor of Arts in painting at Silpakorn University — where she studied in the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts — becoming well known in a field that was, at the time, entirely dominated by men. Professor Silpa Bhirasri (born Corrado Feroci), the so-called father of Thai modern art, mentored Upa-in, who became well known for her work in portraiture. She was offered a teaching position at Silpakorn prior to her graduation, and initial commissions from the Thai royal family helped to develop her reputation as an artist. Her style is influenced by the Western art traditions taught by her mentor; however, while her portraits maintain aspects of photo-realism, other works divert from this style to include narrative elements reflecting the political turmoil in Thailand. |
| Thai artist Lawan Upa-in was the first female student to be granted a Bachelor of Arts in painting at Silpakorn University — where she studied in the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture, and Graphic Arts — becoming well known in a field that was, at the time, entirely dominated by men. Professor Silpa Bhirasri (born Corrado Feroci), the so-called father of Thai modern art, mentored Upa-in, who became well known for her work in portraiture. She was offered a teaching position at Silpakorn prior to her graduation, and initial commissions from the Thai royal family helped to develop her reputation as an artist. Her style is influenced by the Western art traditions taught by her mentor; however, while her portraits maintain aspects of photo-realism, other works divert from this style to include narrative elements reflecting the political turmoil in Thailand.  [File: Why.jpg]  Figure 1 Lawan Upa-in, *Why?,* 1993, oil on canvas, 120.5 x 101 cm, collection of the artist.  <http://rama9art.org/lawan/index.html>  After accepting a commission to paint a portrait of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn in 1973 (Thailand’s contentious military dictator from 1963-1973), Upa-in was accused of being a right-wing tyrant (Upa-in repeatedly denied these claims). In 1976, following rumours of her involvement in a performance art piece staged by Thammasat University students protesting the return of the exiled Kittikachorn, she was accused of being a communist. Days later, the protest triggered a violent massacre of students by right wing militants and government forces. Upa-in revisited the tumultuous effects of her country's political unrest in later works, including her 1993 painting, *Why?*,in which she re-examines her experience of the 1976 massacre.  Upa-in began teaching at Silpakorn prior her graduation and it was only in 2012, at the age of seventy-six, that she retired from teaching due to poor health. For over forty years Upa-in has exhibited extensively in Thailand, winning numerous prestigious national art prizes and holding a number of retrospective solo exhibitions. Recently she has held retrospectives of her work at Silpakorn University's Art Centre and The Queens Gallery in Bangkok. |
| Further reading:  (National Gallery of Thailand)  (Poshyananda)  (Rama JX Art Museum )  (Silpa Phirasri National Museum)  (Wenin) |