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Phare Ponleu Selpak mourns loss of influential art teacher



Cambodia's arts community is mourning the untimely death of one of its most influential art educators. [Lorkru Srey Bandaul](#) was a co-founder of Phare Ponleu Selpak, the non-profit arts school in Battambang which has nurtured generations of artists, children and young people through artistic, educational, social and outreach programmes.

Srey Bandaul was an artist and Head of Community Outreach Engagement at Phare Ponleu Selpak.

His passing has been mourned by Cambodian artists, photographers, curators, filmmakers and arts organisations, recognising his work in shaping the contemporary arts scene and community in Cambodia. His death from COVID-19 complications was reported on the Facebook page of [Phare Ponleu Selpak](#).

A [2018 interview on Cobo Social](#) by [Naima Morelli](#) explores how Srey Bandaul [Bandol] developed as an artist. As a child he spent 13 years in a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border and in 1986 he took drawing classes with the French humanitarian worker Veronique Decrop. After decades of civil war, he and other ex-students returned to Cambodia and decided to create an art school. Their aim was to start rebuilding the mangled local culture and soothe the wounded spirits of the children through self-expression. Starting from basic drawing lessons, [Phare Ponleu Selpak](#) slowly grew and began to promote a sense of Cambodian identity through art.

When asked by Morelli what is needed now for artists to grow in Cambodia, Srey Bandaul replied:

I always ask myself what is it that can be done to engage Cambodian people in contemporary art and I see education as being central to this. It is important to say that art is part of the spirit of the nation.

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