



Performance component of
New Fashion Order: Dissolution,
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CLOAKED IN TIME

The living cloaks of Thai artist Montri Toemsombat provoke questions about fashion, art and the forces of nature.

Montri Toemsombat, who turns 30 this year, has already exhibited in several European and Asian countries, the United States and now Australia. Early career highlights include his selection in the first Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial in 1999, and in 2003 he represented Thailand at the 50th Venice Biennale. If such triumphs in the art world aren't enough, Montri has also attracted accolades from the fashion world. In 1999 he won the Young Designer Award at the Bangkok International Fashion Fair and since then he has pursued a hybrid practice, employing elements of both 'industries' to critique and parody their very structures.

His 1999 work *Cocoon: The Renaissance* included a catwalk show of fleeces patched together from discarded silkworm shells. Shown in the context of fashion and its assumed indifference to waste and excess, Montri's recycling of the refuse of silk production draws stark attention to capricious consumption. Other 'garments' are more grown than produced. In *New Fashion Order: Dissolution*, exhibited this year at RMIT University's Project Space, Montri's cloaks of live rice seedlings evolved during the two-week showing. Two furry green, then brown, tufted shrouds enveloped oversized mannequins that stood frozenly facing each other, oblivious to the cycle of life and death playing out on their bodies. Less crafted than cultivated, his practice questions the role of the maker's hand. And, while these cloaks decay faster than fashion, Montri's work speaks of the timelessness of natural forces and the impermanence of culture. ■■■■

www.rmit.edu.au/creativemedia/projectspace

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Montri Toemsombat's exhibition *New Fashion Order: Dissolution* was exhibited at Project Space and Spare Room, RMIT University, as part of the L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival, 14 March – 1 April 2005.