

**Lung Neaw Visits His Neighbours**  
**An art report from Venice by Maurizio Bortolotti**  
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*Presented at the 68th Venice International Film Festival, this documentary portrait directed by Rirkrit Tiravanija invites us to experience a vibrant everyday life.*

The apparent simplicity of Rirkrit Tiravanija's work conceals great attention to passing time, an important part of our everyday experience and a fundamental element in his art. It is his raw material. Tiravanija has often created "happenings" in which people eat food prepared by him. Cooking is a way of spending time together, a form of social communication, and has become the recognized form of his work.

What interests him is the spontaneous overflow of everyday calm and this becomes his main raw material. The unfolding of daily life is certainly linked to an experience of passing time which is the element of novelty that Tiravanija reintroduced to the artistic debate starting in the 1990s.

The transition to film direction is a fairly obvious consequence of his work. Moving from producing "real" situations, where people gather to enjoy food together, to film as a means of describing reality in a simple and direct way seems an almost natural step. The two-and-a-half-hour product, Lung Neaw Visits His Neighbours, is the result of editing the approximately nine hours of film made in collaboration with Cristian Manzutto.

The main character, Lung Neaw, is sixty and has decided to retire to his native village near Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. His daily life is narrated in the film as a series of simple but essential gestures. He moves from one place to another visiting friends and acquaintances. He is seen at the market, collecting rice, praying, relaxing, listening to music and performing simple actions like eating and sleeping. "I like to watch things go on for hours without anything actually happening," Tiravanija says.

The setting chosen by the artist is the landscape of contemporary Thailand, halfway between pure nature and the influences of modernity brought by globalization. Here, Lung appears as a simple man who contains within himself the power of the gestures of daily life. The serenity of his actions continually refers to the time transpiring in the present. The moment that just passed is swallowed by the next like a representation of the pure present. It is a present of one of the world's peripheral areas far from the rhetorical narrative of modernity. But it is also the representation of the real life of most of the world's inhabitants.

"I'm not interested in the star system of the film world. I'd like to show this film in the streets. As an artist I don't need to be part of that system." The artist adds, "I'm not interested in the star system of the film world. I'd like to show this film in the streets. As an artist I don't need to be part of that system." By bringing the film to street life, it underlines, in an honest way, the extension of the experience of the happening to cinema and reiterates the artist's interest in "contamination" with film. At a certain point in the movie, Lung, wearing a kind of traditional thong, enters the river at sunset.

This image of a quiet life, despite the local and global problems whose existence he perceives through the words of people he meets, is perhaps the best image to sum up the life of a simple man, but also that of a contemporary world that can no longer be the image of frantic Western modernity. But rather the one experienced by most of the living beings on earth.