

Pencil sketches reveal artist's perspective on KR tribunal **July 5, 2010**

More than 20 pencil sketches on display at the Bophana Centre in Phnom Penh explore artist Kou Dalin's personal perspective on the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

The exhibition, titled My Dreams of Justice, shows drawings by 20-year-old architecture student Kou Dalin while she attended the trial of former Khmer Rouge leader Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, over the course of nearly a year.

She said she was contacted by the Taramana Centre, a French organisation that works with poor children in Cambodia, to attend the hearings and make sketches.

"Before I was contacted by the Taramana Centre, I wasn't very interested in the past sufferings of the Cambodian people because I only heard about the Khmer Rouge regime from my mum and old people," Kou Dalin said.

"After I was contacted I started paying attention, following the hearings on television and radio, and reading books and documents about the regime even when I was busy with my high school diploma exams.

"What I was most interested in during the trial was the way Duch spoke and behaved, and the way the witnesses spoke. If I got an idea and started a draft sketch at the tribunal, I would spend two days drawing the picture."

Kou Dalin said attending the hearings had helped her gain understanding of the deep suffering of the Cambodian people under the Khmer Rouge.

She said she hoped that her drawings would raise awareness about the tribunal among young people so they could learn the truth about Cambodia's past.

“I think young people should try to learn about the regime and the tribunal because it’s an important part of our history,” she said. “We need to respect human rights and the justice system in Cambodia to avoid repeating those dark days.”

One of Kou Dalin’s pictures shows several thick books with sketches of Duch on their pages. The artwork is captioned with the words: “Have you ever read this book? Duch is like a thick, complex book. It is very difficult to read and understand about him.”

Among those who attended the exhibition’s opening last week was Moeung Mom, 45, accompanied by her husband and 10-year-old son.

“I’m old enough to remember the Khmer Rouge, but I never paid attention to the tribunal because I was always busy and didn’t want to be reminded about the cruel regime,” she said. “After seeing these sketches, I feel like I want to start telling my son about what happened during those years.”

In addition to Kou Dalin’s sketches, the exhibition also includes written and audio archival material and testimony from the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

Bophana Centre (64 Street 200) is open daily from 8am to 6pm. The Kou Dalin exhibition runs through July 30.