



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

UNESCO Bangkok
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
Regional Unit for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific
Regional Adviser for Culture in Asia and the Pacific

PRESS RELEASE

APRIL 2007

Calling for applications: Award of Excellence safeguards traditional skills in Southeast Asia

Bangkok, April 2008 – Applications are now open for the 2008 UNESCO “Award of Excellence for Handicrafts” in Southeast Asia. Established to encourage craft-workers to use traditional skills and materials, the Award of Excellence programme (formerly known as the ‘SEAL’) aims to ensure the continuation of traditional knowledge and skills and the preservation of cultural diversity in the region.

“The handicraft sector is a mirror of our cultural identity. It is an important part of our heritage rooted in local traditions and culture whilst open to innovations.” says the Regional Adviser for Culture, UNESCO Bangkok, Richard Engelhardt. “In addition, it is a major contributor to sustainable economic development and poverty reduction in local economies. The ‘Award’ is granted to products that meet high standards of quality, cultural authenticity, as well as social and environmentally responsible production, and as such plays an important role in promoting handicrafts to capture consumer confidence and interest in high quality products.”

The ‘Award’ originated in Southeast Asia through a partnership between the ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (AHPADA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The successful implementation of the ‘Award’ in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam has prompted further expansion throughout the rest of Asia, as well as in Latin America and Africa.

A panel of experts in design and handicraft production and promotion will meet in September at the Support Arts and Crafts International Center of Thailand (SACICT) to review submissions across a variety of craft categories; from household decorations to jewelry, musical instruments and fashion accessories.

Surapee Rojanavongse, Honorary President of AHPADA, remarked that “the rigorous standards set by the programme assist in the promotion, while the focus on innovation ensures that the crafts remain relevant, valuable and marketable in modern life. The achievements of the programme are reflected in the success encountered by awarded products in international exhibitions and trade fairs.”

Craftspeople granted with the ‘Award’ will be presented with certificates in October and gain access to support and advice from UNESCO, AHPADA and SACICT on capacity-building and promotional opportunities including national and international trade fairs.

Some awarded products will be exhibited at the Amarin Plaza from 24 April to 5 May 2008 during the celebrations of the 30th Anniversary of Thai Handicraft Trade Promotion Association. A workshop on product self-assessment for Thai artisans will also be conducted.

Applications close on the 30 June 2008. All interested artisans and craft producers are encouraged to visit the website or contact their partner organization to obtain an application form and further information: www.unescobkk.org/culture/craftseal.



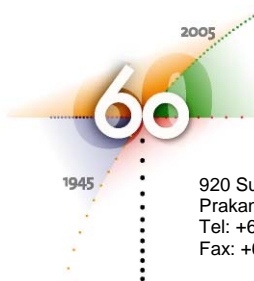
ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (AHPADA), Bangkok
Tel. (66-2) 02-656-1929 Fax: (66-2) 02-253-9889
Email: ahpadabkk@ahpada.com Web: www.ahpada.com

Office of the Regional Adviser for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok
Tel: +66-2-391-0577 ext 509 Fax: +66-2-391-0866
Email: culture@unescobkk.org Web: www.unescobkk.org

Support Arts and Crafts International Center of Thailand
59 Moo 4 Chang-Yai Sub District Bangsai Ayutthaya Province 13290
Tel: +66-35-367-054-9, Fax: +66-35-367-051
Web: <http://www.sacict.net>

1945

920 Sukhumvit Road,
Prakanong, Bangkok 10110
Tel: +66(0)2 391 0577
Fax: +66(0)2 391 0866



2007 Award of Excellence for Handicrafts
(2 examples among the 23 awardees)



Hammered bowls
Thailand

A bronze bowl lined with pure gold that gives a sense of eggshell with a sculptural texture. The jury commended the quality of the metal work and the magnificent design. The gold leaves would reflect candle's light perfectly and create a subdued atmosphere.



Natural-dye handpainted batik shawl
Malaysia

The expert panel was impressed with the high quality of the work and intensity of the natural dyes as well as with the originality of the petroglyph-inspired pattern. The contrast created by the transparent border makes it a very appealing product for international markets."

All awarded products can be viewed on the UNESCO website www.unescobkk.org/culture/craftseal