

The Womanifesto Way Anthology: Introduction

Editorial Collective

Womanifesto is a women-centred arts collective that began in Thailand in 1995. Three decades of inclusive projects and creative reinventions have seen Womanifesto work with more than 150 collaborators from 45 countries.

The ethos of this diverse and dispersed group of artists, sometimes called the Womanifesto way, celebrates hospitality, communal activity and togetherness, focusing on the position of women and the wealth of women's knowledge. Womanifesto aims to strengthen connections between artists internationally and engage local communities while promoting new and emerging forms of artistic expression.

Through exhibitions, workshops, artists' residencies, and other in-person and online programmes, Womanifesto links practitioners from Thailand with regional and international artists, highlighting shared cultures and establishing fresh exchanges. Many voices, and many ways of making and knowing are cherished and championed.

This publication aims to share and reflect the Womanifesto way. It intends to document and discuss Womanifesto's past activities, while also suggesting possibilities for ongoing and future creative collaborations.

Consistent with Womanifesto's ethos of inclusiveness and hospitality, this publication features a wide variety of contributions, far exceeding those found in a typical monograph or scholarly volume. Conventional, scholarly essays appear alongside more experimental and unconventional texts, as well as images,

and audiovisual contributions. English, Thai, and other languages commingle.

Many of these contributions come from the artists who co-founded Womanifesto, or from artists, curators, and scholars who have been close to the collective over a sustained period of time. These insider insights reflect the deep bonds that Womanifesto has engendered between a diverse range of practitioners and researchers over many years. Despite the heterogeneity of the contributors, a comprehensive introduction to all of the 150+ contributors who have worked with Womanifesto over the past 30+ years would of course be impossible in a project of any scale. Glimpses of this rich and widely dispersed network can be found in the many visual, textual, and audiovisual archival materials which this publication cites and makes readily accessible using hyperlinks.

This publication represents a unique experiment in collaborative digital publishing, the forms and approaches of which are inspired in large part by the Womanifesto way. Rather than following traditional academic models, the editorial collective has worked together to create content that emerges from and serves the Womanifesto community itself. The process has been as important as the outcome—workshops, conversations, and collaborative exchanges have shaped not only what stories are told, but how they are presented. This approach ensures that a wide range of the many voices within Womanifesto's network are not just represented but actively involved in shaping their own histories and narratives.

This is particularly important because for many years Womanifesto was largely ignored by mainstream institutions in Thailand and beyond. Documentation here thus carries reparative weight: while male-led collectives and projects active contemporaneously with Womanifesto from the mid-1990s onwards were credited with important contributions to the ecosystem of artistic practice in the region, Womanifesto's role was greatly overlooked.

This began to change with a remarkable flourishing of scholarly, curatorial, and archival engagements celebrating the collective, beginning around 2019, with symposia as well as exhibitions of archives and artworks in Sydney and Bangkok. Following this, Asia Art Archive (AAA) in Hong Kong took on the ambitious project of digitising over 700 items, and making these available online as the Womanifesto Archive. These reparative projects honoured the long-term commitment of the Womanifesto founders and many collaborators, while also introducing the collective to new networks and partnerships. This publication builds on and continues that reparative work.

A presentation at AAA in 2020 was followed by invitations for Womanifesto to participate in numerous high-profile exhibitions internationally, including biennales in Bangkok, Lahore, Sharjah, and beyond, as well as a large-scale collectively curated survey exhibition at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre in 2023. These projects continued Womanifesto's longstanding focus on women-centred community participation. The group's turn to producing collectively conceived collaborative artworks, however, also marked a new phase in Womanifesto's activities. For more than three decades, the collective has continually shifted its practice to adapt to changing needs, preferences, and contexts. The creation of this anthology also reflects Womanifesto's remarkable ability to adapt and evolve. From the original biennial exhibitions in Bangkok and farm-based workshops, to groundbreaking digital collaborations in the early 2000s and during more recent global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Womanifesto has consistently found new ways to maintain meaningful connections across distances and differences. This publication continues that tradition of creative adaptation, using digital tools not simply to display archival materials, but to reveal them among their networks of relations, creating new possibilities for encounter, reflection, and ongoing collaboration. The Womanifesto Way stands

as both a documentation of past achievements and a platform for future creative exchanges.

In this publication, personal and critical reflections on Womanifesto's activities are shared alongside curated links to Womanifesto's archive of 738 materials, digitised by AAA. Our intention here is to enable readers and users of this publication to plot their own paths through the many stories shared here, discovering the threads between the people ('makers'), their projects ('makings'), and the formation of their histories ('musings'). Moreover, while the publication includes several responses to aspects of Womanifesto's work, the inclusion of many links to archival materials allows readers and users to actively draw their own conclusions about the strengths and limitations, significance and possibilities—past and future—of Womanifesto.

Womanifesto's practice has always exceeded narrow definitions of what counts as art, encompassing hospitality, knowledge exchange and community as modes of making and knowing in their own right. This anthology extends that same expansiveness. In this respect, this publication differs in form and ethos from a conventional edited volume, which privileges a select few interpretations of historical materials. Our aim here is not only to present analyses and responses to Womanifesto's work authored by invited contributors, but also to enable readers and users to access the primary sources—visual, textual, and audiovisual archives—and develop their own creative and critical perspectives.

To facilitate exploration of this rich material, this publication presents a network of content that can be navigated in several ways:

- A nodal interface allows you to interact with the Womanifesto network as a whole. Each point on this node map corresponds to a different maker, making or musing, the related page

presenting information and materials, as well links to related nodes.

- A facet and filter panel enables you to create subsets of nodes by content types as well as other categories such as media types, languages, dates, and tags.
- An index page presents this same information not as a network, but as a set of pages, organised into three categories.
- A selection of the material presented digitally in this publication can also be compiled printable and saveable PDFs.

This publication has been produced by an Editorial Collective comprising the founding members of Womanifesto as well as several other collaborators, listed below:

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