15 September, 2016

Dear Editors and Writers,

We are writing collectively as the 2016 Prudential Eye Award Winners. We are thankful and honored as winners of the award in our respective categories, announced at the awards ceremony in Singapore on 19th January 2016. Since that time, we have each faced unexpected and disrespectful treatment from the Prudential/START representatives in the following ways outlined in this letter.

Firstly, we have each tried numerous times by email to receive our cash award, which are listed below naming artist, award, and cash prize amount. We have all been repeatedly ignored and/or lied to regarding our payments. Details of these correspondences are available upon request. While some of us have received a new date of “mid-September”, we doubt this claim – for some of us this would be the eighth promised time-frame that will pass without even an email to indicate payment was not made! To date, only Svay Sareth, has been paid half of his award. The payment to Svay was made in early August under pressure in light of the other aspect of Svay’s award for Best Overall Emerging Artist in Asia, which is the solo exhibition at Saatchi Gallery, London, during START Art Fair from September 15-18, 2016.

A primary concern alongside not receiving award payments was that Svay had not yet received a contract for this project, after repeated attempts since February. A Prudential Eye Award Jury Member was informed of this and was also very concerned. Prudential/START representatives, Svay and his curatorial team have been in an ongoing email conversation, from December 2015 to today. Details of these efforts to secure a contract are available upon request.

After repeated attempts to secure an invitation letter, one was offered in early August from Prudential/START for the sole purpose of Sareth’s UK visa processes, for which the artist was asked to pay his own visa and insurance costs. In light of still not having a contract by end of August, the Prudential/START representative asked the artist to refer to a contract Svay and all award finalists signed before the Prudential Awards had even taken place, and further pointed to a few points in an email outlining a project budget that was lowered over 70% from previous emails and face-to-face meeting stating “up to 20,000USD”. While additional hotel nights were promised in light of Svay’s project outline briefly below, efforts to secure airfare and hotel reservations were unsuccessful. Following a successful UK Visa application in late August, Swayne’s exhibition was canceled officially on September 7, which is 2 days before he was due to fly to London. The Prudential/START representative noted that the Prudential Eye Awards founders suggested postponement of the project to the 2017 edition of the fair. Further details of the cancelation/postponement emails are available upon request.

Needless to say, this news comes after an exceptional amount of work by the artist with a curatorial team in London and Phnom Penh, planning a site specific project Warning House (London), for which the artist collects found materials from the city streets and the exhibition venue to create a likeness of his family’s former refugee home. The project was a collaboration with London-based students focusing on precarious architecture and questions at the heart of projects’ histories and our world’s present and pressing concerns.

Lastly, we are concerned about the unreturned exhibited work, namely that of Huang Po Chih, from the Prudential Eye Finalist Award Exhibition in Art Science Museum Singapore, which closed on 27 March 2016. After repeated attempts, some of us have not received our work and cannot get any answer from the organizers.

Thank you for your attention. We hope you might help to bring this challenging situation to light, especially with hopes that next year’s winners do not face the same situation. Please feel free to email us collectively or individually. We ask that you do not reprint this letter but inquire with us around the aspects that interest you.

Sincerely,

Prudential Eye Award Winners 2016
Huang Po Chih / bogeahuang@gmail.com
Nguyen Trinh Thi / thidoclub@gmail.com
Manish Nai / manishnai3feb@gmail.com*
Shumon Ahmed / shumon.dhk@gmail.com*
Svay Sareth / sareth555@yahoo.com

*Prudential/START representatives did not respond to emails or phone calls from any of us.

Details of these efforts are available upon request.
Details of Prudential Eye Award 2016

Huang Po Chih
Best Emerging Artist in Asia using Installation
20,000USD

Nguyen Trinh Thi
Best Emerging Artist in Asia using Digital/Video
20,000USD

Manish Nai
Best Emerging Artist in Asia using Painting
20,000USD

Shumon Ahmed
Best Emerging Artist in Asia using Photography
20,000USD

Svay Sareth
Best Emerging Artist in Asia using Sculpture
20,000USD

Svay Sareth
Best Overall Emerging Artist in Asia
30,000USD