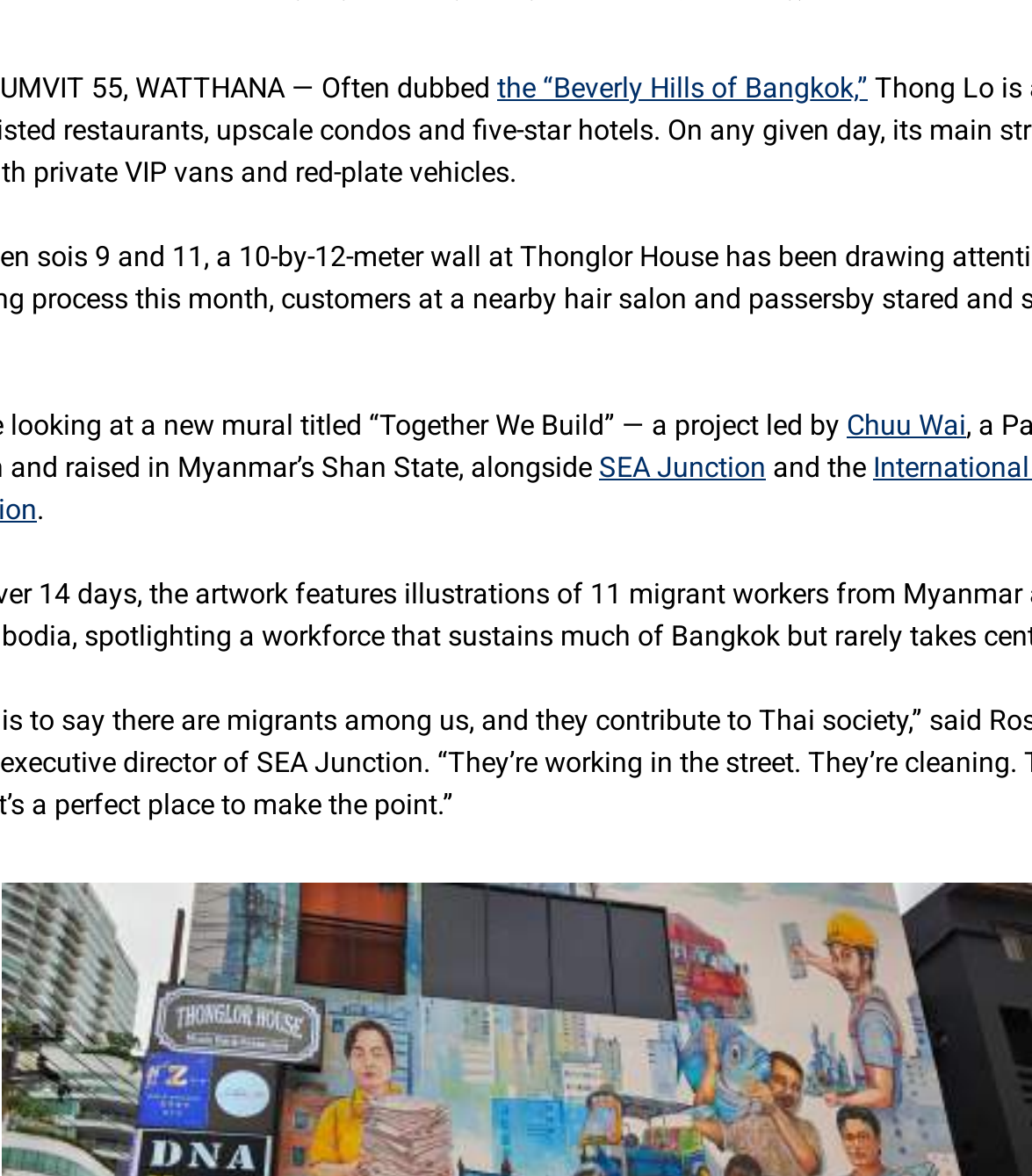




In Thong Lo, a mural puts workers behind Bangkok in full view

Led by a Myanmar artist, the "Together We Build" mural features 12 migrant workers who also help paint it

Chatwan Mongkol
May 28, 2026



Chuu Wai poses for a photo in front of the "Together We Build" mural at Thonglor House in Watthana, Bangkok, Tuesday, May 19, 2026. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)

SOI SUKHUMVIT 55, WATTANA — Often dubbed the "Beverly Hills of Bangkok," Thong Lo is a hub of Michelin-listed restaurants, upscale cafes and five-star hotels. On any given day, its main street is packed with private VIP vans and red-plate vehicles.

But between sois 9 and 11, a 10-by-12-meter wall at Thonglor House has been drawing attention. During the painting process this month, customers at a nearby hair salon and passersby stared and snapped photos.

They were looking at a new mural titled "Together We Build" — a project led by [Chuu Wai](#), a Paris-based artist born and raised in Myanmar's Shan State, alongside [SEA Junction](#) and the [International Labor Organization](#).

Painted over 14 days, the artwork features illustrations of 11 migrant workers from Myanmar and one from Cambodia, spotlighting a workforce that sustains much of Bangkok but rarely takes center stage.

"The idea is to say there are migrants among us, and they contribute to Thai society," said Rosalia Sciortino, executive director of SEA Junction. "They're working in the street. They're cleaning. They're building. It's a perfect place to make the point."



The "Together We Build" mural was photographed at Thonglor House in Watthana, Bangkok, Tuesday, May 19, 2026. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)

In Bangkok, [more than 600,000 migrant workers](#) are deeply woven into daily life, building towers, staffing kitchens and cleaning homes. Yet public attitudes toward them remain mixed.

A 2023 survey by the International Organization for Migration [found](#) that 78% of Bangkok residents agreed that migrant workers fill labor gaps in Thailand.

At the same time, 42% said they shouldn't receive equal pay and benefits as Thai nationals for the same job. More than two-thirds also thought cultural diversity brought by migrants threatens Thai society.

Before any paint hit the wall, Chuu Wai and SEA Junction involved between 50 and 70 artists, Thai residents and Myanmar and Cambodian workers to help shape the design.

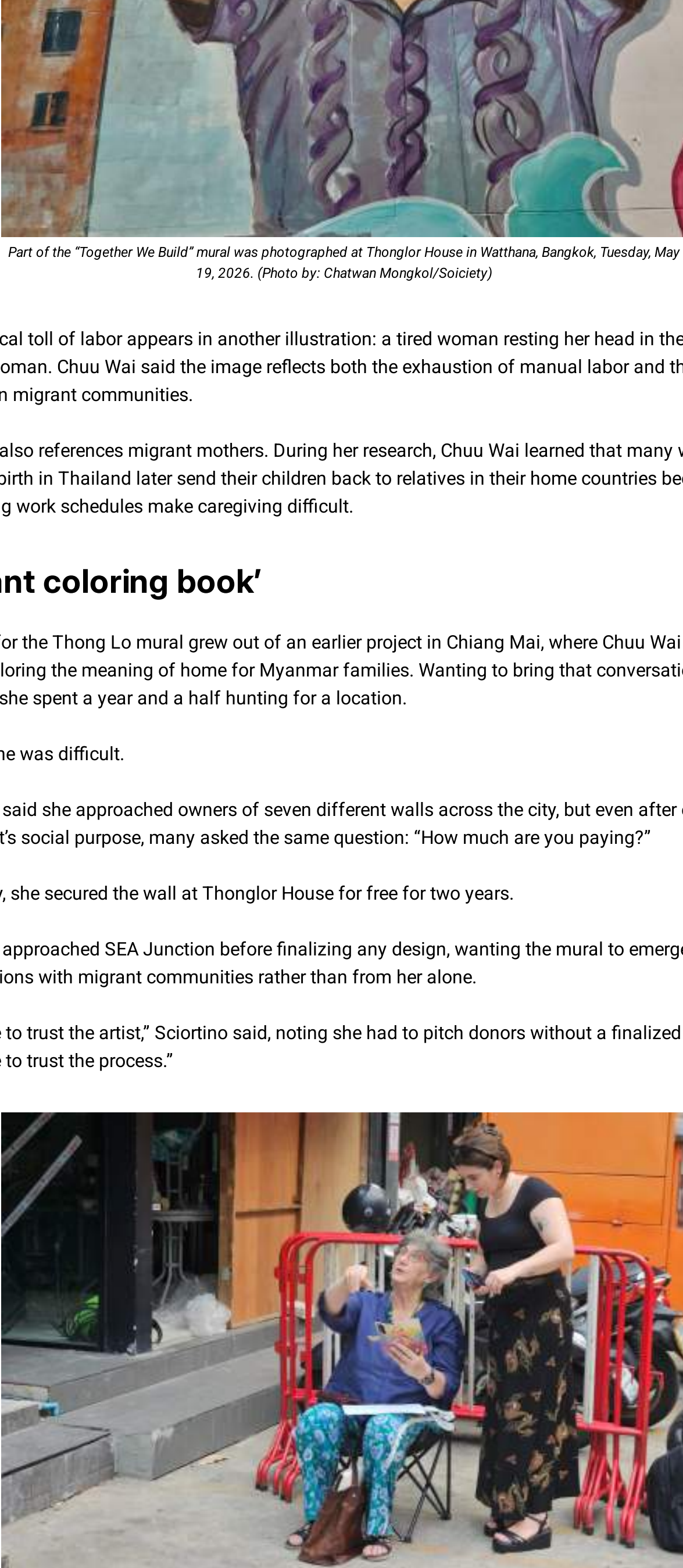
"Often, people only know migrant workers through articles," Chuu Wai said. "The researcher writes it. The social media talks about it. But not directly from them."

This wall features depictions of real-life people like Ko Zaw, from Myanmar, who has worked across industries and volunteers with nonprofits serving the migrant community in the region.

Ko Zaw said the ILO connected him with Chuu Wai to help artists understand the realities of migrant life. When the team asked if he wanted his own face on the wall, he shrugged it off: "It's fine with me," he recalled, "You can include me if you want."

At the mural's launch last Saturday, Ko Zaw brought his friends and colleagues to the wall and bought a shirt screened with the art.

"Seeing my own face, I'm very happy," he told Society in Thai, laughing. "But some of my friends said it doesn't look like me. It's OK, it's my painting. I look this cool."



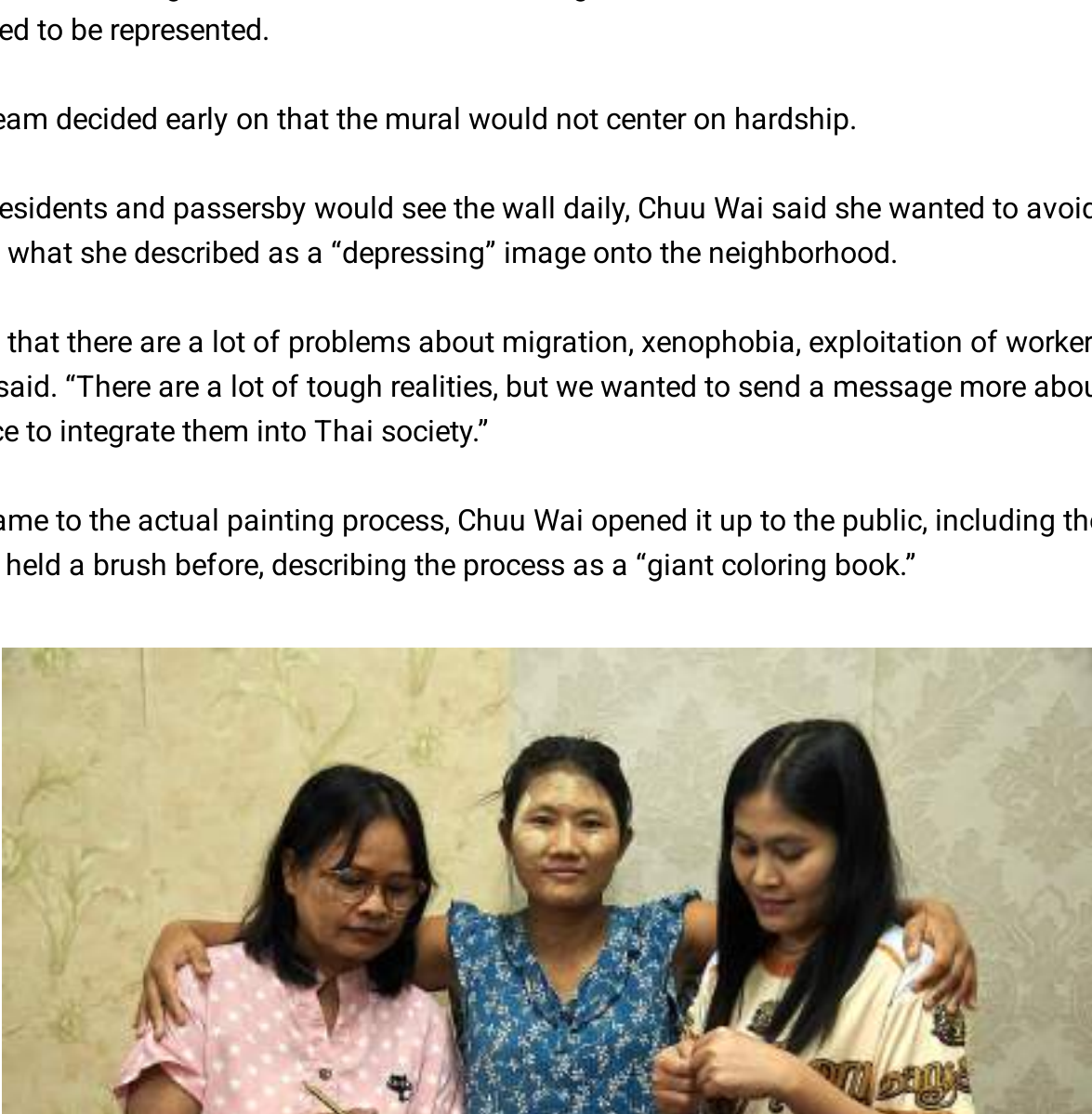
Ko Zaw poses for a photo in front of an illustration of him, the man with a fish on his shoulder, at Thonglor House in Watthana, Bangkok, Saturday, May 23, 2026. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)

Decoding the wall

The mural tells three interconnected stories: the work migrant communities do, the care they offer one another and the bureaucracy they navigate to remain in Thailand.

One section depicts workers carrying fish against a backdrop of waves, referencing the seafood-processing industry. Nearby, a woman holds an anchor — a symbol, for Chuu Wai, of migration and the hope of eventually settling down.

A man carries a stack of documents, inspired by workers' frustrations during workshops about the "endless" paperwork needed to secure and maintain legal status, Chuu Wai said.



Part of the "Together We Build" mural was photographed at Thonglor House in Watthana, Bangkok, Tuesday, May 19, 2026. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)

The physical toll of labor appears in another illustration: a tired woman resting her head in the hand of another woman. Chuu Wai said the image reflects both the exhaustion of manual labor and the mutual care within migrant communities.

The pose also references migrant mothers. During her research, Chuu Wai learned that many women who give birth in Thailand later send their children back to relatives in their home countries because demanding work schedules make caregiving difficult.

A 'giant coloring book'

The idea for the Thong Lo mural grew out of an earlier project in Chiang Mai, where Chuu Wai painted a mural exploring the meaning of a home for Myanmar families. Wanting to bring that conversation to Bangkok, she spent a year and a half hunting for a location.

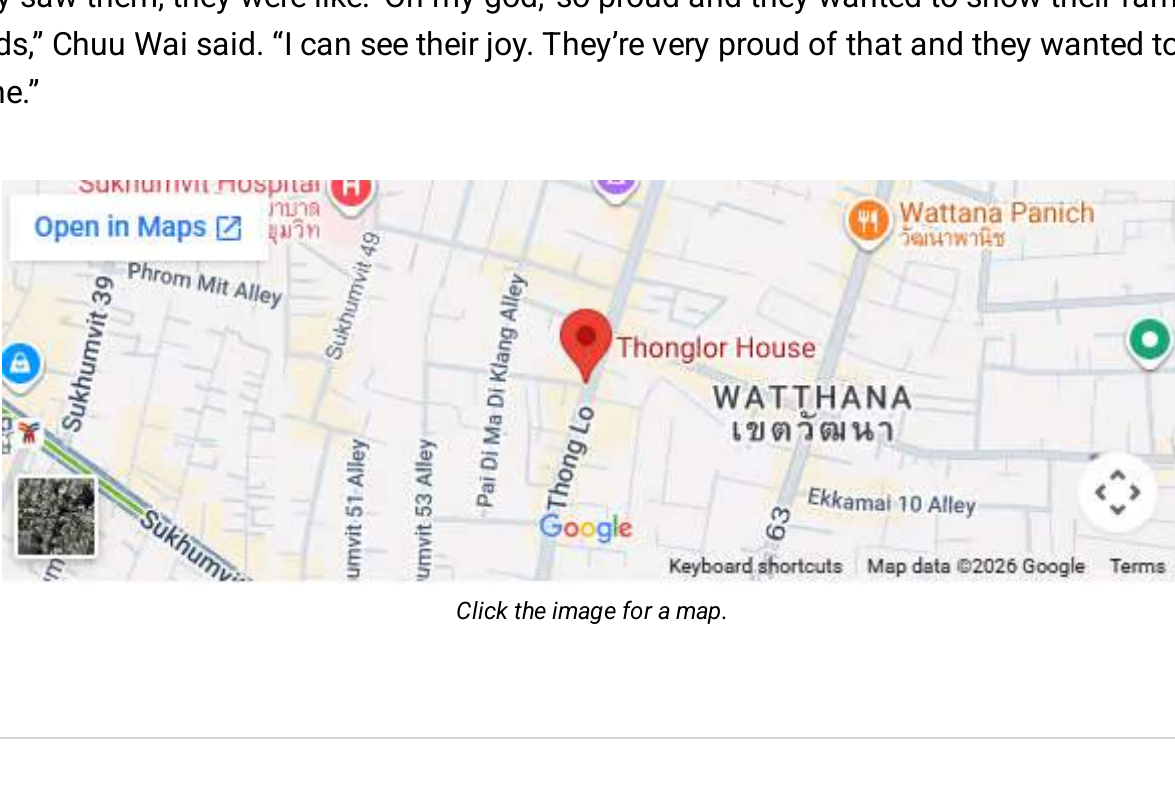
Finding one was difficult.

Chuu Wai said she approached owners of seven different walls across the city, but even after explaining the project's social purpose, many asked the same question: "How much are you paying?"

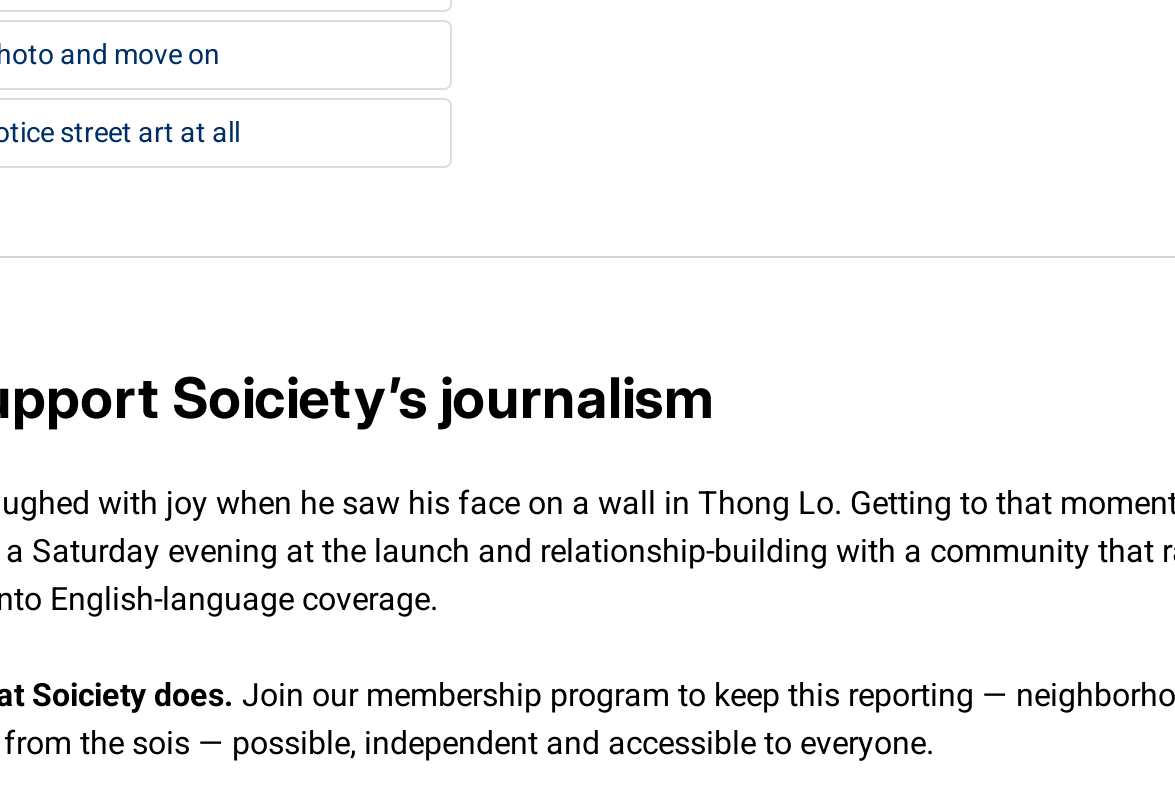
Eventually, she secured the wall at Thonglor House for free for two years.

Chuu Wai approached SEA Junction before finalizing any design, wanting the mural to emerge from conversations with migrant communities rather than from her alone.

"You have to trust the artist," Sciortino said, noting she had to pitch donors without a finalized design. "You have to trust the process."



Rosalia Sciortino, left, and Jade DiDonato talk next to the "Together We Build" mural at Thonglor House in Watthana, Bangkok, Tuesday, May 19, 2026. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)



Khant Win, a Myanmar tattoo artist, paints the "Together We Build" mural at Thonglor House in Watthana, Bangkok, Tuesday, May 19, 2026. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)

With support from the ILO, Chuu Wai hosted workshops at the Bangkok Art & Cultural Center and visited workers' homes in Bangkok and Samut Sakhon, asking what concerns mattered most to them and how they wanted to be represented.

Still, the team decided early on that the mural would not center on hardship.

Because residents and passersby would see the wall daily, Chuu Wai said she wanted to avoid projecting what she described as a "depressing" image onto the neighborhood.

"We know that there are a lot of problems about migration, xenophobia, exploitation of workers," Sciortino said. "There are a lot of tough realities, but we wanted to send a message more about the importance to integrate them into Thai society."

When it came to the actual painting process, Chuu Wai opened it up to the public, including those who had never held a brush before, describing the process as a "giant coloring book."



Three women from Myanmar in Samut Sakhon pose for a photograph to be a reference for the mural. (Photo by: Sayan Chuenudamsavd)

The same three women are depicted on the mural. (Photo by: Chatwan Mongkol/Society)

Another artist involved in the project, Sai Chit Min, said the finished mural felt difficult to imagine when he first saw the blank wall.

"It takes a lot of steps and a lot of group effort to get to this level," he said. "I feel very complete. I feel like I can chill now because all my mental energy has been put into this for over 10 days. Even when I'm sleeping, I almost feel like I'm painting in my dream."

Sai Chit Min, an ex-art teacher in Yangon, moved to Thailand due to the conflict in Myanmar three years ago. He said he hopes migrant workers who see the wall, especially those displaced, feel a sense of dignity.

Among the volunteer muralists were the migrant workers who traveled from Samut Sakhon to paint and see their own likenesses stretched across the wall.

Chuu Wai said many initially imagined something much smaller and were stunned by the actual 10-by-12-meter scale.

"Once they saw them, they were like: 'Oh my god,' so proud and they wanted to show their family and their friends," Chuu Wai said. "I can see their joy. They're very proud of that and they wanted to show it to everyone."

Click the image for a map.

👁️ When you come across a mural in Bangkok, what do you usually do?

- Stop and look closely
- Notice it but keep walking
- Take a photo and move on
- Rarely notice street art at all

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Ko Zaw laughed with joy when he saw his face on a wall in Thong Lo. Getting to that moment took two site visits, a Saturday evening at the launch and relationship-building with a community that rarely makes it into English-language coverage.

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