

Infos-Minh-Thanh—Letter-English

1999-TXT-02-Information-Minh-Thanh-Letter-English

25.06. – 18.07.1999

Gallery Artists Unlimited, Bielefeld (Germany).

"Thu' cho me - Letters to my mother".

Works by Nguyen Minh Thành

Opening of the exhibition

Greeting: Regina van Laak-Bérenger (Artists Unlimited)
Introduction of Nguyen Minh Thành: Dr. Daniel Bérenger
(Artists Unlimited)

Introduction: Veronika Radulovic, artist and since 1994
guest lecturer (DAAD) at the University of Fine Arts in
Hanoi (Vietnam)

Curators: Veronika Radulovic and Regina van
Laak-Bérenger

Nguyen Minh Thành was the 47th guest artist of the
Bielefeld artists' association Artists Unlimited. The
three-month guest fellowship lasted from April to June
1999. The exhibition was his final exhibition, all works
were created and remained in Bielefeld. The complete
exhibition became part of the van Laak and Bérenger
collection.

Exhibition, Part 1 (Gallery Space I, II, III)

Portraits with veiling (symbolic) envelopes

The portraits of the mother as a young woman, as Nguyen Minh Thành imagines her, are painted on handmade Vietnamese paper (see list of exhibits below), with a white, semi-transparent fabric (gauze) over them, reminiscent of an airmail envelope (with blue and white striped edges). With one exception, the "envelopes" are labeled with the recipient (mother) and the sender (son):

"to: Nguyen Thi Nhât / Thông Nhât - Kim Lan / Gia Lâm
- Hà Nội / VIỆT NAM //

from: Nguyen Minh Thành / August-Bebel-Str. 94 /
D-33602 Bielefeld / GERMANY"

Exhibits

01 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper (6
parts) / watercolor on gauze (6 parts), total 128 x 247
cm

02 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper (4
parts) / watercolor on gauze (1 part), total 160 x 122 cm

03 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese (4 parts) /
watercolor on gauze (1 part), total 124 x 165 cm

04 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /

watercolor on gauze (1-piece), 65 x 86 cm

05 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /
watercolor on gauze, 63 x 84 cm

06 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /
watercolor on gauze, 64 x 87 cm

07 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /
watercolor on gauze, 64 x 86 cm

08 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /
watercolor on gauze, 63 x 87 cm

09 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /
watercolor on gauze, 64 x 87 cm

10 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother",
1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper /
watercolor on gauze, 64 x 87 cm

Exhibition, Part 2 (Gallery Room IV, "Gruff")

Room installation

On the floor of the lowered room is a blanket of
light-colored sand in which bundles of incense sticks are
planted, representing a rice field. In between - in areas

left blank - are five small-scale portraits of the mother (see list of exhibits/objects below). The installation can only be viewed from one side of the room from a gallery. On the opposite wall, one sees a slide projection of 80 images of the mother's depictions - whole portraits and details - in alternation (Kodak Carousel slide projector). The center of the projection is a niche under the ceiling about 1.50 x 1.50 m in size, the projection extends beyond it. The rest of the wall is hung with sheets of gauze. A bundle of incense sticks lies - like an offering - on the floor in front of the viewer's feet. The room is sparsely lit with reddish light, enhanced by the red colored heads of the incense sticks.

Exhibits/Objects

11 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother", 1999, mixed media: acrylic and watercolor acrylic on Vietnamese paper, 38,7 x 28,1 cm

12 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother", 1999, mixed media: acrylic on Vietnamese paper, 37,5 x 27,5 cm

13 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother", 1999, mixed media: watercolor on Vietnamese paper, 40,3 x 28,3 cm

14 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother", 1999, mixed media: acrylic and watercolor on acrylic on Vietnamese paper, 38,5 x 27,0 cm

15 - untitled, from the series "Letters to my mother", 1999, mixed media: acrylic and watercolor on Vietnamese paper, 36,6 x 25,0 cm

- large number of Vietnamese incense sticks (no longer fully available)

- several cubic meters of fine sand (disposed of after the end of the exhibition)

Projection

- 80 35mm slides in color, framed (1 slide missing ...)

Exhibition, part 3

Action on the evening of the opening with the participation of the visitors with 60 "real" letters.

Minh Thành prepared 60 letters (copies of a handwritten letter to his mother in Vietnamese, supplemented by the typed German translation). He has put the letters in already labeled envelopes (with the recipient - his mother - and the sender - Minh Thanh). He distributes these letters to the exhibition visitors with the request to enclose something personal, for example a photo or a drawing, to the letters and send them to his mother in Vietnam.

Objects

- 60 copied letters, DIN A 4 sheets with Vietnamese and German letter text as well as 60 airmail envelopes. The letter is available in copy, an envelope unfortunately not.

Documents about the exhibition

- Invitation card
- Press release (with the text of the letter in German) by Regina van Laak-Bérenger (May 1999)
- Opening speech by Veronika Radulovic (written form)
- The Vietnamese handwritten version of the letter by Minh Thành as pictures (front and back)
- Copy of the letter (in German and Vietnamese)
- "New thinking, old tenderness", newspaper article by Wolf Schimmang, Neue Westfälische No. 145 from 25.06.2010
- Photo documents (preparation of the exhibition in the studio, labeling of the envelopes, hanging of the portraits in the gallery rooms, detail shots of the installation)

Daniel Bérenger, Regina van Laak-Bérenger

Bielefeld, July 2023

Translated with DeepL-Translate