

1999-TXT-01-Press-release-Tahnh-English

"Thu, cho me. Letters to my mother" | Nguyen Minh Thành

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

we hereby ask you for publication or advance notice of the exhibition listed below.

Overview of dates and times

Title: "Thu, cho me. Letters to my mother". Works by Nguyen Minh Thành, Hanoi (Vietnam), 47th guest artist at Artists Unlimited e.V.

Opening: Friday, June 25, 1999, 7 p.m.
The artist will be present and will perform an action.

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

Duration: Friday, June 25 to Sun July 18, 1999

Opening hours: Friday, Saturday, Sunday, 17.00-20.00

Location: Gallery Artists Unlimited e.V., Viktoriastraße 24 (next to Café Milestones), 33602 Bielefeld, Germany

Press appointment: Wednesday, June 23, 1999, 5 p.m.
at the Artists Unlimited gallery. The artist speaks English
and French.

Contact person: Regina van Laak-Bérenger
phone during the day: 0521.96667-89, phone in the
evening: 0521.171461

The exhibition at the gallery Artists Unlimited

The exhibition at the Artists Unlimited gallery "Thu, cho me. Letters to my Mother" is dedicated to the artist's mother. It could be seen as a tender - but basically ineffectual attempt - to let his mother participate in his present life, which is incomprehensible to her (she is a simple country woman), and as an expression of his appreciation and gratitude towards her. The culture of letter writing, as a constant way of communicating (with us today usually replaced by telephone calls), is unknown in Vietnam.

"... My mother and I - I am very close to her, although I have the feeling that I know nothing of her, nothing personal, - no longer live in the same age. It seems to me that a whole century separates us. I am in an in-between - between times, between city and country. It's the same for a whole generation. My work as an artist is an expression of this condition ..."
(Nguyen Minh Thành in ZEITmagazin No. 2, 07.01.1999, recorded by Birgit Hussfeld).

A guest of Artists Unlimited, a guest in Bielefeld.

More than ten years after the introduction of "Doi Moi", the "New Thinking" in Vietnam, i.e. the (market-)economically necessary opening and political perestroika, Nguyen Minh Thành is after Nguyen Quang Huy (summer 1996) the second guest artist from Vietnam, whom Artists Unlimited e.V. has invited to live and work for a while in the in-house guest studio.

We can consider ourselves lucky that Thành accepted the invitation, as he is now an internationally sought-after artist. In the last six months alone he has exhibited at the Ludwig Forum for International Art in Aachen ("3 from Hanoi. Contemporary Art from Vietnam, December 1998), at the House of World Cultures in Berlin ("GAP VIET NAM/Begegnung mit Vietnam", workshop and exhibition: 30.03. - 09.05.1999), at the 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan: open workshop and exhibition, March/April 1999). In August of this year, the renowned Mizuma Gallery in Tokyo will present works by Thành for the second time ..., by the way, together with those of Nguyen Quang Huy (see above) and Nguyen Van Cuong, the third of the trio of artists dubbed by Le Monde as "la triade de Hanoi" (Le Monde, 21.03.1998). The three are friends who often perform together, but whose artistic works are clearly different from each other.

Nguyen Minh Thành - an avant-garde artist

Already during his studies Nguyen Minh Thành started to disregard the strict teaching program of the university

- which, however, was only possible outside of it - and began to develop an artistic individuality and his own artistic identity. He deals with his own Vietnamese traditions as well as with the contemporary art of Asia and the West in an open-minded and unprejudiced way and arrives at forms of expression that are Vietnamese avant-garde, but beyond that can definitely compete with the art of the West, even enrich the international art world.

Thành's approach or source is his own biography. For several years he has been dealing with childhood memories, with himself in a broader sense, and with his relationship to his family, which in Vietnam is strongly dominated by women. In the beginning there were two-dimensional works (colored drawings on rice paper), melancholic-(self-)ironic self-portraits reflecting his fears and dreams, but soon they became installations reaching into the space (first in 1996), following the tradition of picture scrolls and representations in the numerous temples, pagodas and also churches (!), in which the theme of woman and mother is the subject: "Nguyen Minh Thành deals in an unfamiliar personal and direct way with the conflicting feelings produced by strong involvement in the family unit, whose expectations often weigh very heavily on the sons in particular. His work relates to the depictions of women, mostly mothers and grandmothers, as sacrificial heroines - depersonalized, unambiguous, exemplary - that are strongly represented in Vietnamese iconography." (Birgit Hussfeld in her opening speech at Ludwig Forum, Dec. 1998).

His impressive installation "Der Weg" ("The Way"), shown in February 99 at the Goethe Institute in Hanoi,

thematizes and questions the way the Vietnamese deal with their dead, which finds expression in a pronounced, ritualized ancestor cult, ... as an outlet for their own fears of death (?). The installation is Thành's confrontation with death - it is a plea for life.

Nguyen Minh Thành - biography information

Born in 1971 in a village near Hanoi (Vietnam).

1991-1996 student at the Hanoi College of Fine Arts, graduated in 1996. Lives and works in Hanoi.

Since 1994 numerous group and solo exhibitions in Vietnam, Singapore, Germany (: Bielefeld, Frankfurt, Aachen, Berlin), France, Japan, Norway, USA and in the Netherlands.

His works are not completely unknown to the people of Bielefeld, as he has been represented in the past in two exhibitions in Bielefeld initiated and organized by Veronika Radulovic:

1995 Kunsthalle Bielefeld: "Khoang cach an toan" ("Safety Distance").

1997 ZiF Bielefeld: "seven days" ("sieben Tage")

Works in public possession: Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan

We would be very grateful if you could publish some information before the opening of the exhibition, as experience has shown that foreign artists always have a more difficult time finding an audience than local artists. Thank you very much

With kind regards

Regina van Laak-Bérenger

Enclosures

- Pictures, letter to the mother

Translated with DeepL-Translate