

ENGLISH VERSION

# WHITE NOISE

## TẠP ÂM TRẮNG

DAO TUNG, TRAN TUAN, NGUYEN TRAN NAM,  
NGUYEN PHUONG LINH, LAI DIEU HA, NGUYEN HUY AN,  
DINH Q. LE, CAM XANH, NGUYEN TRUNG, JEAMIN CHA

AUGUST 2023 – JANUARY 2024

EMASI NAM LONG  
147 STREET NO.8, NAM LONG RESIDENTIAL AREA,  
D.7, HCMC, VIETNAM

CURATED BY VAN DO

The exhibition is a body. Its artworks, placed next to each other in the same space, should be approached as if they are parts belonging to an intact body. These parts, however, are severed from bodies they once were a part of. The newly formed body is thus hybridized, fragmented, and spatially syncopated. As light sweeps through, this body becomes illuminated, then retreats into darkness. Light acts as a static, habitual gaze, which diligently carries out the task it has been given. Only the ant keeps crawling, while time keeps passing.

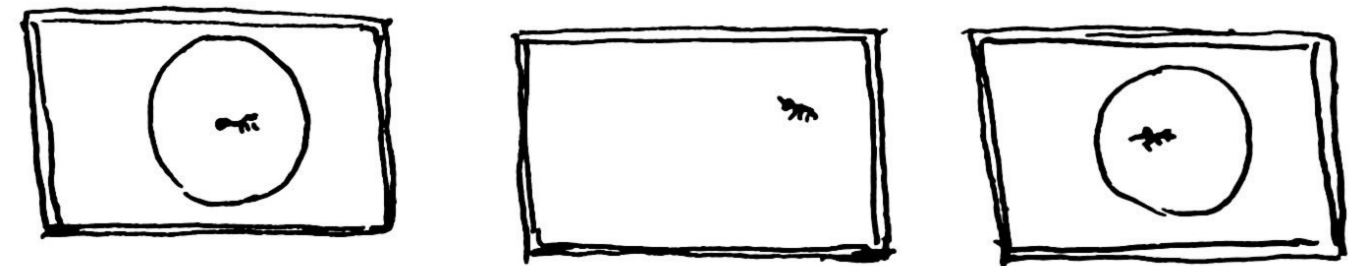
#### Curatorial notes for the exhibition

- To some extent, this exhibition is about the gaps, scales, and distances in relation to time. With time comes an inevitable re-examination. Occasionally, time in art moves in tandem with time in real life, but peels off it every now and then.
- My relationship with the practices of the participating artists of this exhibition too requires time to hone. Each artwork leads to another point of encounter and discussion, both direct and indirect. The following text in a way acts as self-reflection that is subjective and partial about these artists' practices.
- At the same time, this exhibition is an experiment and reflection on curating.

## 1 DAO TUNG *It seems to be* 2014–2015

Three-channel video, color, black and white, sound  
00:11:08

*Collection of Nguyen Art Foundation*



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Up the banyan, the ant climbs  
Alas, dead-end, futile crawl  
Up the peach tree, the ant creeps  
Broken branches, to-and-fro

– Vietnamese folk poem (Dao Tung's epilogue to *It seems to be*)

*"It seems to be* details the psychological torture of an ant. Across the three-channel video installation, the ant is seen through, and forced to stay within, a circle, be it a circle of light coming from a torch, or a circle as framed by the camera. The first channel introduces the ant, or rather it is thrown into view by an anonymous hand that quickly grabs a stick to taunt (or perhaps discipline) its victim. Attempting to crawl away, the ant is met with the power of the stick – a nonsensical authority that tries to keep it in line, though at times the stick seems to toy with the ant just for the sick pleasure of it. Anxious and distressed, the ant is again confronted in the middle channel, this time with an unrelenting torch whose light follows its every move. Prevented from hiding, resting, or sleeping, the ant's intense powerlessness is almost Kafkaesque: it is not just unable to escape, but unable to understand what is happening. In the final channel, without a hand or torch for scale, the ant now seems magnified, as if a giant insect navigating the surface of the moon. Feeling lost, the ant continues to run in circles without realizing that there is no exit." – Thái Hà

Imagine placing this artwork next to *A Game or We were born to Fail* (2021-2022), a single-channel video installation also by Dao Tung, presented as part of the exhibition *No more, not yet* at Nguyen Art Foundation earlier this year. These two artworks indeed share familiar gestures forming part of the artistic language of Tung's practice. Both plots revolve around playful childhood games (Majority Wins in *A Game or We were born to Fail*, and the toying with a poor little ant in the latter). Both employ the parameters of the camera frame as a fixed viewpoint; their structures are established through a series of simple, repetitive actions, almost untouched by any post-production (while the former is a static one-shot video, the latter is a three-channel, handheld video). Dao Tung's moving-image vernacular is distilled and unpretentious, yet immensely metaphorical, always subtly commenting on the power dynamic lurking behind make-believe situations.

In the initial proposal for *White Noise*, it was this artwork that inspired me to attempt to write a fable: What would our world be like in 1,000 years through the eyes of an ant? What would they see as they come into contact with those colossal human bodies? Does art mean anything to ants at all? Do they actually want to understand a species that always bullies and preys on them? The world through their eyes is probably similar to that of my nieces and nephews. I often like observing them, and dogs too. Through their eyes, the world must seem vast and limitless. Once, I tried holding a camera at the eye level of my four-year-old nephew; his worldview only begins from underneath a table or at the height of the hip of a grown-up. They only see half of an adult human's body, a fraction of everything. In order to see everything in its entirety, they have to look up. The act of looking up or looking around is always laden with the not-yet-understandable.

## DAO TUNG

Dao Tung (b. 1983, Vietnam) is a multidisciplinary artist whose experiments with sound, installation and video draw heavily from his practice as a composer and sound artist. A graduate of the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Tung has since worked on various experimental performances and theater productions as a visual artist, composer and director, in Vietnam, as well as Korea and the US. One of his most notable theater projects is *Erasable* (2012), a five-act performance that sought to blur the distinction between art and the quotidian. Tung is also a founding member and organizer of the art event *Nổ Cái Bùm* (Hue, 2020 and Dalat, 2022), and a co-founder of Open Room and Nest Studio. In 2021, he was chosen as one of the finalists of the prestigious Dogma Prize.

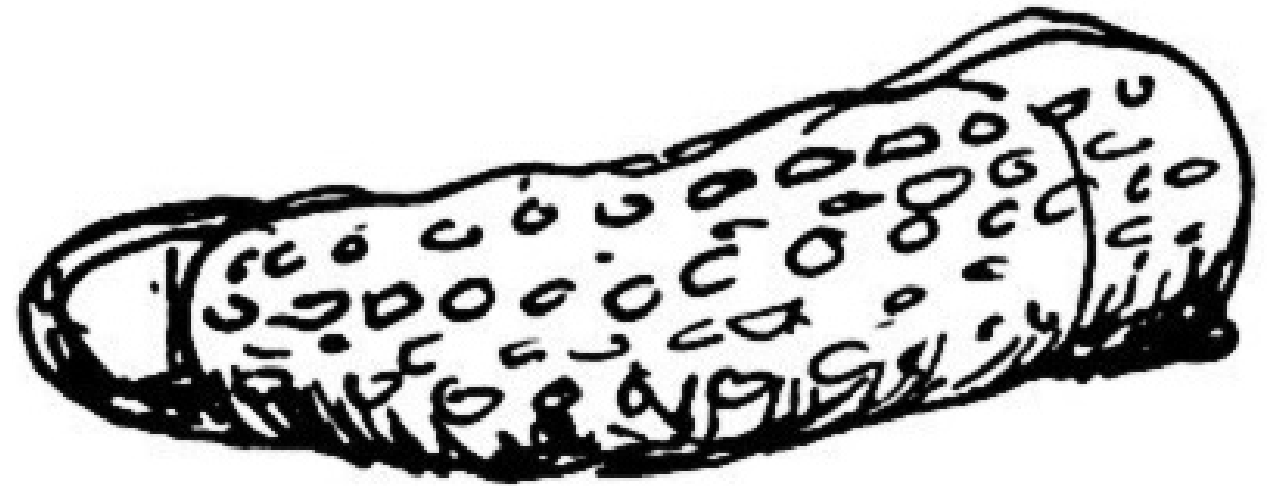
Dao Tung's works have been featured in various individual and group exhibitions, including *No more, not yet*, Nguyen Art Foundation, HCMC, Vietnam, 2023; *Edge of the Citadel*, Hue, Vietnam, 2022; *Video Box*, as part of the online SWAB Barcelona Art Fair, Barcelona, Spain, 2020; *Henosis*, Baik Art Seoul, Seoul, South Korea, 2018; *Open Room II*, Capa Studio, HCMC, Vietnam, 2016; and *howdy cowboy*, MoT+++ , HCMC, Vietnam, 2015. In 2017, he participated in the Open Studio residency at 18th Street Arts Center, Santa Monica, CA, USA.

## 2

TRAN TUAN  
**Forefinger**  
2021

Iron frame, packaging foam, burlap, rivets, stainless steel  
300 x 80 x 130 cm

*Collection of Ha An Khuong and Nguyen Van He*



"In wartime, my father and my uncles had to cut off their own forefingers so that they would be exempt from military duties. This is where the idea for this series originated. My family's experience taught me that the American war in Vietnam was not run by any one ideology, but by monetary gains and the power of surplus values. [This is why the works were created to resemble] some kind of luxurious furniture, but also the bodies of dead animals. The forefinger thus symbolizes both power and the act of killing." – Tran Tuan

Artist Nguyen Van He (also known as He Army) collects dog tags – a means of identification for American soldiers during the Vietnam War – as a keepsake, which serves as a way for him to pay tribute to those who fought in the war. In 2020, he commissioned Tuan to create a special edition of *Forefinger*, which would make use of some dozens of dog tags etched with soldiers' names in his collection, along with 4.900 blank ones. The work takes the form of a severed index finger pulling a trigger, its skin covered in nearly 5.000 metal dog tags. As Tuan recalls, the original version of the work consists of four separate fingers – all in four different gun-firing gestures – that once belonged to the bodies of his family members, whose lives were taken without any mercy.

In previous exhibitions, the work was often associated with discourses surrounding wars and conflicts, a typical, popularly sought-after "speciality" of Vietnamese art. This time, such heavy burdens are unloaded; I hope for the work to become an intersection for other kinds of encounters and most importantly, for sympathy – first, between the artist and his family; second, between the friend-colleague duo (Tuan and He), and third, between the artist and the younger generations (me, EMASI students, and Tuan's son).

## TRAN TUAN

Tran Tuan (b. 1981, Hue) works with public space, the majority of his sculptures situated in outdoor environments, inviting people to interact, and even contribute to its creation. Playing with scale where the familiar becomes near alien – where fingers, building tools, children's toys are blown up larger than life – Tuan inserts these tools onto bridges, public parks and riverbanks. Working with various communities in the realization of his art, these activities often prompted by social inequalities, desiring his art be a platform through which support, awareness and understanding can be collectively achieved. Working also with drawing, video, installation and performance, Tuan is a graduate of Information Design, Hue University; founder of Then Café and Làng Art Dorm – exhibition and residency spaces with a focus on creating exhibition and international exchange activities for contemporary artists in Hue. Tran Tuan currently lives and works in Hue.

Tran Tuan's notable exhibitions include *No more, not yet*, Nguyen Art Foundation, HCMC, Vietnam, 2023; *Edge of the Citadel*, Hue, Vietnam, 2022; *The First Lesson*, VinGallery, HCMC, Vietnam, 2018; *Mien Meo Mieng*, Bildmuseet Contemporary Art Museum, Sweden, 2015; *Singapore Biennale*, Singapore, 2013; *Emperor Mushroom*, Hue, Vietnam, 2013; *Altered Clouds*, Hue, Vietnam, 2012; and *Nang Bong Nhe Tech*, Hue, Vietnam, 2011.

## 3

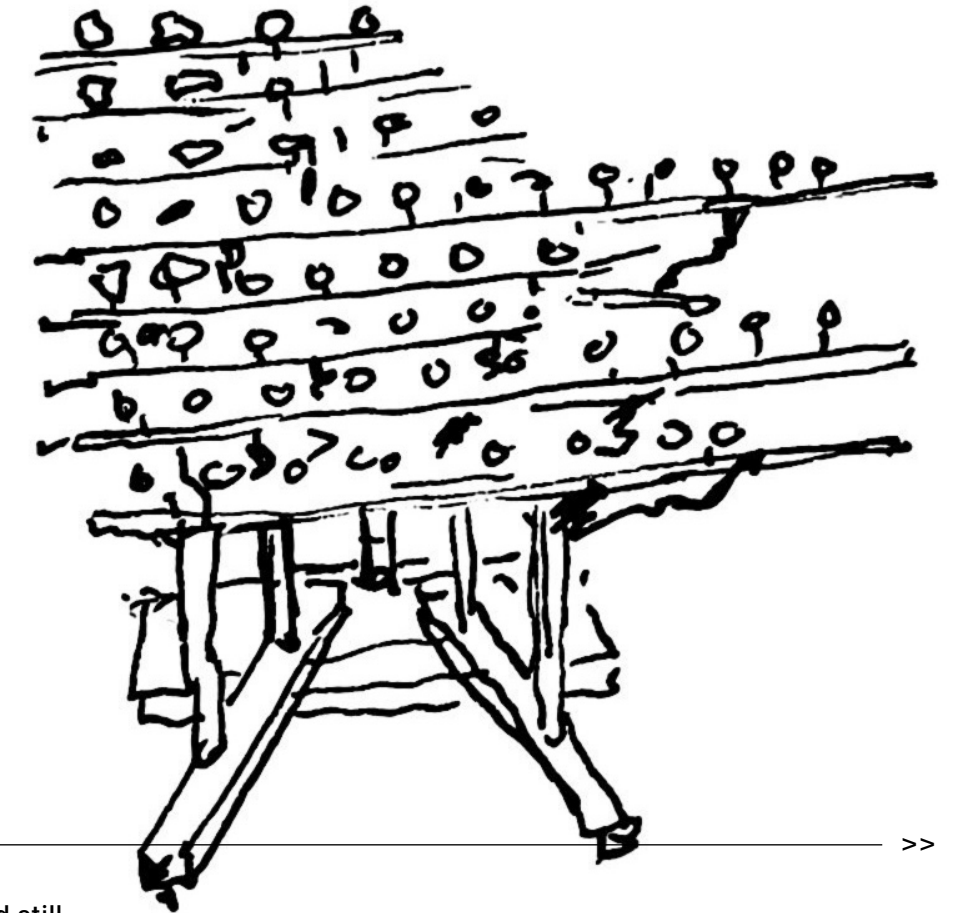
NGUYEN TRAN NAM

Untitled

2021

Animal bones found on the edge of the Hue citadel  
and metal stand  
Installation dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist



I stood still  
oh my god  
another broken piece in the marble  
I hold the marble in my hand blow it and play no more  
the ball is not round and not square  
sadly chipped in places  
I threw the marble across the bamboo grove across the street  
the rain is too heavy to hear anything  
now I'm sad, not joking

– excerpt from the poem *The legend of my marble*, Tran Vang Sao, October 1991

- "1. These bones were found by chance at the edge of the Hue citadel, along Spring 68 street.
2. Excerpt from the poem *The legend of my marble* by poet Tran Vang Sao was picked by chance.
3. The design of the metal stand is inspired by the legs of an operation table, seen online by chance.
4. Only those clean cuts [of the bones] are not accidental."

– Nguyen Tran Nam

First shown at the art festival *Nổ Cái Bùm* (Hue, 2020), the artwork *Untitled* by Nguyen Tran Nam lay dutifully in a corner on the floor of the Diem Phung Thi Art Foundation. A forgotten poem, neglected. A handful of bones, all chopped up in equal lengths, thrown away by someone unknown. A chance encounter between two poems: Tran Vang Sao's poem on the first floor (its text translated into bones by Nam), while Diem Phung Thi's red and black poems on the second, next to her altar room. Tran Vang Sao (1941-2018), a poet whose heart was heavy with love for his homeland, was exiled by war ideology and his own solitude. Diem Phung Thi (1920-2002), a female sculptor who longed to come back to her war-torn country, gifted the city of Hue with almost all of her artistic legacy. Both were intellectuals and artists from Hue. Their poems interweave, each casting its shadow onto the other, their words still echo well into the present.

On a metal stand, 62 pieces of bone are lifted from the ground, tightly secured by mechanical and cold hinges. The work has now departed from its original version, no longer spontaneous and poetic.

## NGUYEN TRAN NAM

Nguyen Tran Nam (b. 1979, Vietnam) is a visual artist currently based in Hanoi closely associated with Nha San Studio and Nha San Collective. Since graduating from the Vietnam University of Fine Art in 2003, Nam has been producing a diverse body of multimedia work. At times dark and heavy, others playful and sarcastic, his work makes visible both past and present-day social, political and historical issues of Vietnam, while highlighting the individual tales of and human relationships among people of different social groups.

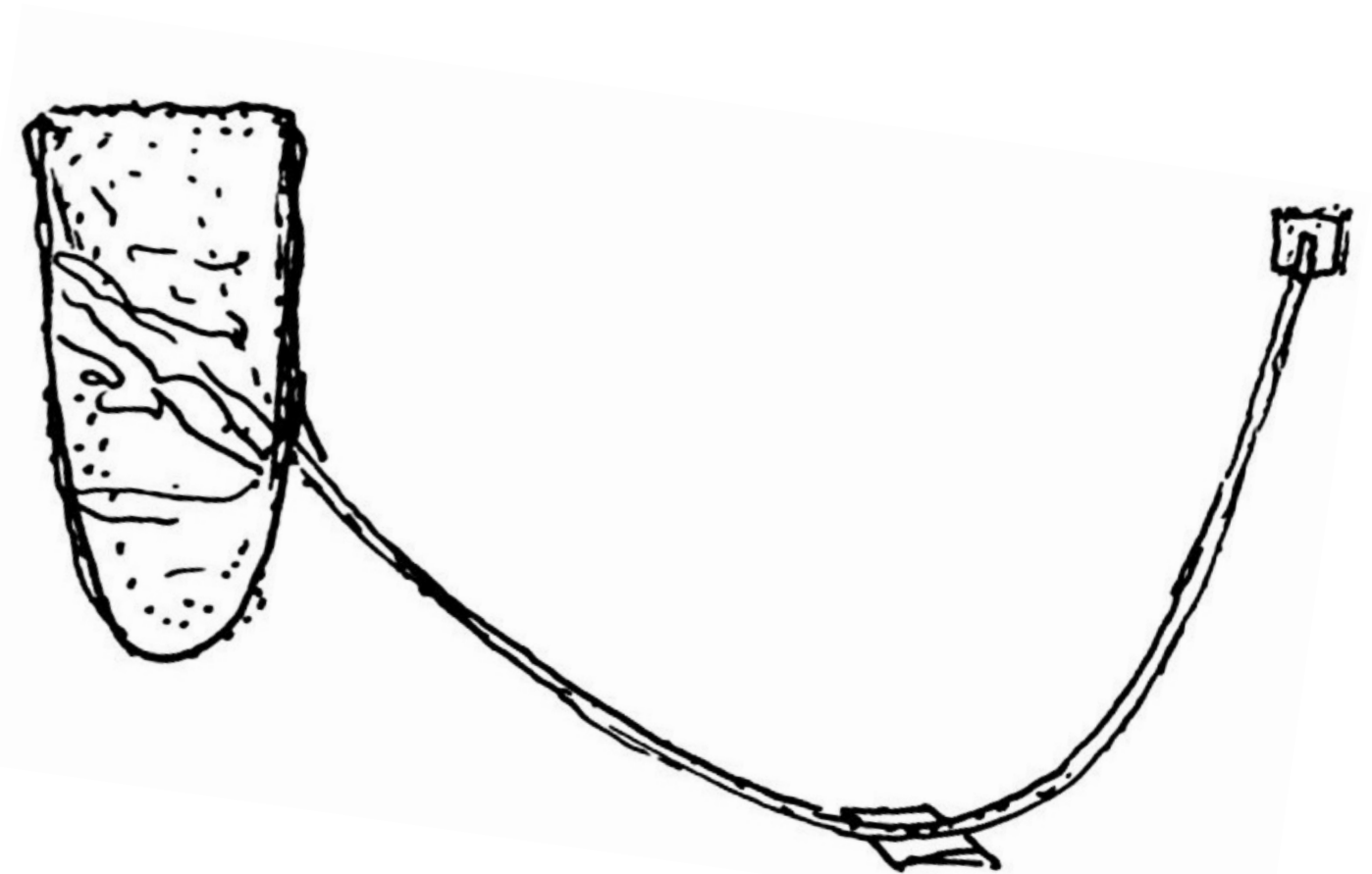
Nam's selected exhibitions include *More than humans #1: The Understories*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2023; *Through the Looking Glass*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2022; *Undone*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2017; *Mise-en-scene*, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2016; *Broken Chapters*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam 2013; *Hinterland*, Luggage Store Gallery, San Francisco, 2012; *Gap*, Nha San Studio, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2010; *Indefinitely*, Ryllega Gallery, Hanoi, Vietnam (2008) and *Skylines with flying people 1, 2, 3, 4*, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2020.

## 4

NGUYEN PHUONG LINH  
*Tongue*  
2021

PVC print, flashlight, metal  
Installation dimensions variable

*Private collection*



"Landscape forms part of the intact body. Origin evaporates through changes. Earth becomes tongue. Image becomes sculpture. Linh draws inspiration from the salt fields in Nam Dinh that she photographed in 2009. According to her, the soil used for salt farming is mixed with water and other elements, then goes through a process of crystallization. In 2020, Linh went back to the field, and saw empty land: the farmers had given up their trade. She decided to transform the image of the salt field, altering the color of the soil, turning it pink, printing it on a PVC surface to mimic artificial skin, and then cutting it into the shape of a huge tongue." – Quynh Dong

After many field trips to various salt fields across the country from North to South, Nguyen Phuong Linh held her first solo show *Salt* (Galerie Quynh, HCMC, Vietnam, 2009). In her documentation photographs of these salt fields, human figures were nowhere to be found. In most of her works, human bodies become abstract and obsolete; they turn into sculptures, form geometric blocks and shapes, dissolve into materials, light, and space. Lately, in her video works, they reappear as specific people, who are her friends and family members, with their specific faces and personal histories. At the same time, they still represent notions of time and transfiguration, as mobile sculpture and moving bodies.

This time, the tongue does not stick out from the ceiling. It sprouts from the wall, on a skeleton that runs along the tongue's spine.

## NGUYEN PHUONG LINH

Nguyen Phuong Linh (b. 1985, Vietnam) is a Hanoi-based conceptual artist with multidisciplinary practice spanning installation, sculpture and video. Phuong Linh's works are sensual, poetic, fragmented, humble and exalted. She travels, collects and transforms artefacts and found materials, creating new forms in order to offer an alternative interpretation of histories and memories. Phuong Linh was born and raised at Nha San Studio, the first alternative artist-run space for experimental art in North Vietnam (co-founded by her father and based in their family home). She has been absorbed in an artistic environment by living and working amongst many of the respected contemporary artists of the Vietnamese art scene. She has demonstrated a deep understanding and involvement in the local art community both as an artist and an organizer.

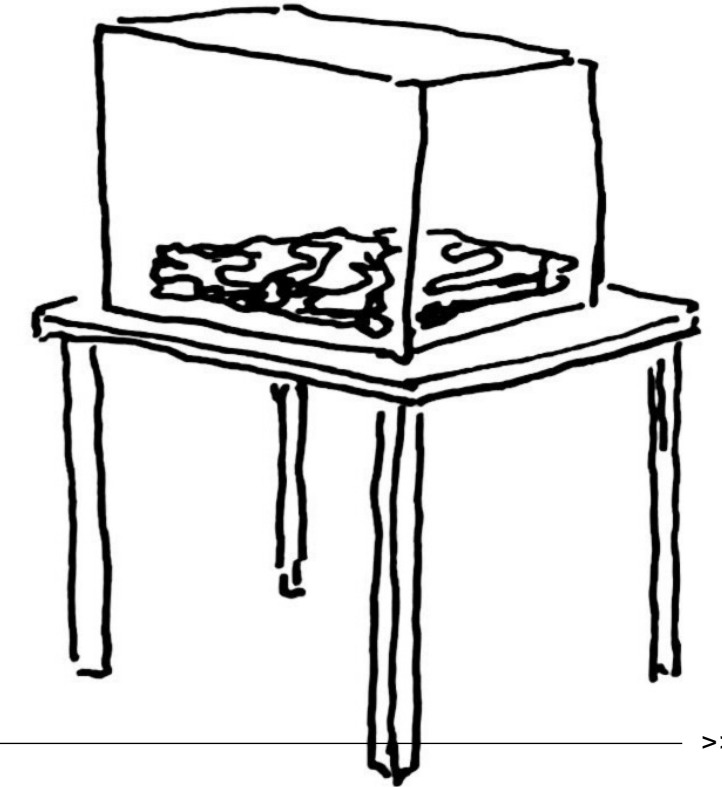
Phuong Linh has participated in various exhibitions and art projects in Vietnam, Japan, Korea, India, China, Germany, England, France and Italy. She co-founded and organized *IN:ACT*, the annual international performance art festival in Hanoi. In 2012, she initiated *Skylines with flying people* (ongoing), one of the most ambitious contemporary art events in Vietnam in the last decade with local and international artists and curators from Vietnam, Japan, Germany, US, Serbia, Shanghai and Korea at Japan Foundation, Nha San Studio, Goethe Institute, Manzi Art Space and many public sites in Hanoi. In 2013, she co-founded Nha San Collective.

## 5

LAI DIEU HA  
**Hurt in here**  
2011

Dried pork skin, plexiglass box  
70 cm x 70 cm x 35 cm

*Collection of Nguyen Art Foundation*



*"Hurt in here* is remembered for its sociality. To say 'hurt in here' is to point to where the pain still aches today. The plexiglass box is just big enough to store the dried pork skin, or the remains of the performance *Hurt in here* (Nhà Sàn Studio, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2011), which alludes to the survival of two soldiers: the artist next to her pork-skin armor. The work came about as I was being criticized by many people. It was the patience in ironing flat each piece of skin in search for reconciliation and sympathy that, in fact, helped lay bare the judgment, imposition and suppression borne from prejudice.

"At the same time, the act of ironing pushed the human and the pig (represented by its skin) to extreme exhaustion and manipulation. 'The iron burned the skin on the artist's arm turning the surface into blisters, which looked exactly like the popped pork skin when being fried. Dipping the skin into the water was a way to soothe the pain that they both were suffering from. Carrying out these scenes like a sacred ritual, the artist was determined to peel the burned skin off, and then wrap them in the pork skin. Flat ironing is the last step in the ritual to restore the balance of everything, to calm the heightening stress at the time and probably even until later.'<sup>1</sup>

"For this exhibition, pieces of pork skin are placed inside a plexiglass box, one on top of another to create a thickly-layered stack. Upon closer inspection of those slices made of protein, keratin, elastin and collagen, we are reminded that they are living entities. This artwork is meant to honor a life full of meaning, a life that deserves respect for it dares to sacrifice, a life that is freed from the bleakness of rationality, judgment and imposition." – Lai Dieu Ha

<sup>1</sup> Trung Pham. *A Journey from Performance Art to Psyper Lab*. Unpublished article.

Lai Dieu Ha is among the very few artists who remain devoted to performance art throughout her practice, while tirelessly questioning its history and expanding its characteristics. Her personal history has also formed a part of Vietnam's contemporary art history, specifically its performance art history. More than ten years ago, she performed the piece *Hurt in here* as a response to the art community's somewhat hostile reaction after Nha San Studio was forced to close down (due to many reasons; one of which was caused by another piece by Ha titled *Flying Up*, performed at IN:ACT, 2010). Pork skin as a material made its debut in this performance. As the heat exuding from the iron came in contact with the damp pork skin, it was then transferred onto the artist's own skin. Its temperature could have caused heat burns and hurt her.

Though Ha's practice is often associated with controversy, in reality it is far more multi-dimensional. Her solo exhibition entitled *Conservation of Vitality* (CUC Gallery, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2015) witnessed the resurgence of pork skin. This time, in the form of a dried, hardened, and at times scorched material, pork skin was fused into mixed media sculptures through an approach and procedure that required meticulousness, patience and skill in the maneuver of materials. As the topicality of these events cooled off, Ha too put aside her personal matters to spend time alone in her studio, shifting her interest to social contemplations that ranged from the mythification of war to existential concerns such as the conservation of organic bodies.

According to Ha, pork skin is one of the materials that she has used for the longest time. In 2016, during her residency at San Art Lab, Ha founded Psyper Lab – a collective that researches and practices psychodramatic therapy, with professional guidance from guests of the residency program, as well as therapists who practice psychodrama and their patients. This was an effort to expand the scope of performance art, and to introduce psychotherapeutic methodologies to artistic practice for non-art practitioners. In *Undefined Boundaries* (Heritage Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2017), Ha and members of Psyper Lab used unprocessed, air-dried pork skin in their collective performance. Patches of pork skin were placed on top of a metal frame wrapped in barbed wire fence; underneath it, there were two TV screens showing documentation of their private practice sessions.

## LAI DIEU HA

Lai Dieu Ha (b. 1976, Vietnam) graduated from the Vietnam University of Fine Art in 2005 and is known as one of Vietnam's most recognized performance artists. Using her own body as a site for experimentation and practice, she tests the limits of both her and the audience's physicality and mentality, always attempting to seek the self's origin and everything it clashes into. With a multimedia approach to artmaking encompassing photography, painting, sculpture, installation, and video, Dieu Ha employs the gaps and blurriness caused by the psychological and psychosocial to craft and articulate her artistic voice.

Dieu Ha's most notable exhibitions include *Psychodrama Therapy*, Rapid Pulse International Performance Art Festival, Chicago, USA, 2014 and *Mind, Flesh, Matter*, San Art, HCMC, Vietnam, 2014. In 2015 she held the first solo show *Conservation of Vitality* with CUC Gallery, Hanoi, Vietnam.

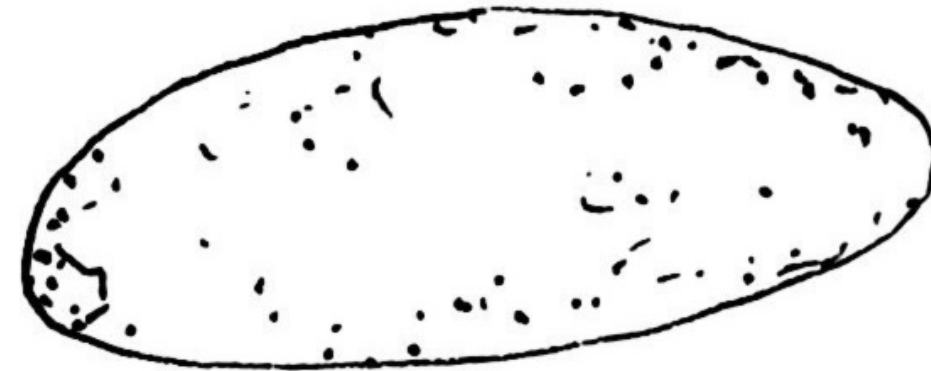
6

NGUYEN HUY AN  
Portrait – Hồ Nguyệt  
2019



Mirror, flashlight, text, digital print  
Installation dimensions variable

*Courtesy the artist*



"Mẫn Thu<sup>1</sup> gazed into this mirror to put on her makeup and became Hồ Nguyệt Cô. Hồ Nguyệt Cô gazed into the spring and saw herself turning into a fox.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Mẫn Thu, a renowned actress in Tuồng since 1959, is famous for her roles in a variety of Tuồng plays, namely *Hồ Nguyệt Cô hoá cáo*, *Đào Tam Xuân*, *Mộc Quế Anh dâng cây*, *Mị Châu – Trọng Thủy*.

<sup>2</sup> Hồ Nguyệt Cô is the titular character in the play *Hồ Nguyệt Cô hoá cáo*. She is a fox in human disguise that wields tremendous power and beauty thanks to the power of a mystical jewel. She married the young general Tiết Giao; yet the marriage ended in tragedy when Giao stole the jewel from her. Without the artifact's power, Hồ loses her magic and returns to her original form."

– Nguyen Huy An (*âm sáng* catalog, Galerie Quynh, HCMC, Vietnam, 2019)

First appearing in Nguyen Huy An's solo exhibition *âm sáng*, the work *Portrait – Hồ Nguyệt* belongs to a period when the artist attempted to "devisualize" his artistic practice, whereby the role of the visual is minimized in exchange for the expansion of the textual.

In an earlier period of his practice (from 2004 to 2015), Huy An largely focused on his own body, its physical presence and behavioral gestures. In the period that followed (from 2015 to the present), he gradually faded into the distance and only appeared in group performances. Similarly, the visual quality of his works gradually faded out, giving more space to their textual form. In these text-based works, gestures are no longer intrinsically artistic, but are instead all-encompassing: what he observes in daily life he records as text. Such gestures are largely informed by the aesthetics and conceptual syntax of ancient poetry (such as the qualities of being succinct and comprehensive, and the significance of conceptual/gestural meaning). The final artwork emerges like an afterimage; it embodies a moment of contemplation following a discovery. Text is thus *not* an additional footnote to accompany an artwork. Text and visuals become equal elements that form an artwork.

Both the *tuồng* play *Hồ Nguyệt Cô hoá cáo* and the character Ho Nguyệt Co have haunted Huy An for a long time. When he finally got to meet the actress Man Thu, Huy An asked to keep the mirror that she had used to do her makeup for the role. In real life, Man Thu looks at the mirror to turn into the character Ho Nguyệt Co. In the play, she looks at her reflection in the stream as she morphs into a fox. Throughout her career, for countless times she has turned herself into both Ho Nguyệt Co and a fox. Each time she looks into a mirror is a time she transmutes. A lifetime of transmutations. A life lived through many lives.

## NGUYEN HUY AN

Nguyen Huy An (b. 1982, Vietnam) is well-known for his performances which are almost meditative in the precision they are undertaken with. The artist measures, captures and consolidates what is intangible, formless and conceptual, using the most humble of materials: strands of hair, threads of textile, coal, ink, dust. The vividly shadowy and melancholic hue of these materials and the personal meaning Nguyen attaches to them – the hair of his mother, the textile threads of crafters from his childhood village – convey a yearning for fading times in the face of brutal modernity.

Huy An has participated in a number of exhibitions and performance art festivals over the last decade including *The four subjects*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2022; *Notes on Paper*, Galerie Quynh, HCMC, Vietnam, 2022; *âm sáng*, Galerie Quynh, HCMC, Vietnam, 2019; *Calculus Exercise #6/5*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2018; *Into thin air 2*, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2018; *Looking for the Divine Beings*, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2017; *14th Istanbul Biennial – SALTWATER: A Theory of Thought Forms*, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Istanbul, Turkey, 2015; *Mien Meo Mieng/Contemporary Art from Vietnam*, Bildmuseet, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden, 2015; *Residual: Disrupted Choreographies*, Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes, France, 2014.

In 2010 Huy An co-founded with artists Vu Duc Toan and Hoang Minh Duc the performance art collective The Appendix Group (Phu Luc). The group has performed in festivals in Vietnam, Singapore and China.

DINH Q. LE  
**Adrift in Darkness**  
2017

Digital print on Awagami bamboo paper, laser cut  
and woven onto cane structure  
Installation dimensions variable

*Collection of Nguyen Art Foundation and Post Vidai*



"It takes reference from the images of people packed so tightly on a rickety old boat, floating in the middle of a dark ocean. As one who did the same to escape the harsh Vietnamese communist regime at the time, issues of this mass exodus and the fear and rejection of Europeans have been on my mind lately. I like to think that we are all sitting on a rock and floating in this dark universe. The faces are drawn from images of large group protests from all over the world. As the world's population grows larger, conflicts arise as more people cross territories. Anger and hatred abound, but we all need to step back and take a look at where we are." – Dinh Q. Le



Dinh Q. Le is known as one of the first generation *Việt kiều* artists who has garnered success both locally and internationally. I have not seen many of his works in person for he rarely exhibits them in Vietnam.

In one of my first assignments at The Factory where I used to work back in 2019, I came across his work on the Internet: the documentary film entitled *Light and Belief* (2012). This film, along with 102 war sketches by artists Huynh Phuong Dong, Vu Giang Huong, Le Lam, Quang Tho, Nguyen Thu, Nguyen Thanh Chau, Quach Phong, Nguyen Toan Thi, Truong Hieu, Phan Oanh, Duong Anh, Minh Phuong, and Kim Tien were shown at documenta 13 (Kassel, Germany, 2012). In terms of cinematography, the film is rather simple with very little editing, as if to only document and interview the aforementioned wartime artists as they are (Dinh also collects some of their works). In the documentary, all of the artists were already in their old age. When asked about their work during the war, their eyes lit up; they talked about their love for the country, some even could not hold back their tears at the mention of Uncle Ho.

I remember vividly that I was very touched when I first saw this film. This kind of experience felt like an ideological awakening for me at the time, later, along with other experiences, it reinforced and laid the foundation for my own curatorial practice. Dinh could have done more for the film in terms of editing and directing. Perhaps, he did receive similar comments. For me, what is important is what he chose *not* to do, and how he kept the work in its rawest form, with no narration or commentary from him as an artist. If we take into account his biography, this choice prompts me to think deeply about ethics in conjunction with aesthetics.

By inviting him to join this exhibition, I want to express my gratitude towards Dinh.

## DINH Q. LE

Dinh Q. Le (b. 1968, Vietnam) is an influential figure in the development of contemporary art in Vietnam; his artistic practice consistently challenges how our memories are recalled with context in contemporary life. Whether he provokes the dominance of film and media in the creation of historical legacy; the confluence of cultural tradition and contemporary tragedy in his woven photographs; the replacement of everyday urban objects into artistic wonders; or by documenting the un-chronicled stories of those who endured the first helicopter war – what all of these artistic investigations elucidate is a commitment to the artistic process as a means of excavating history, in the uncovering and revealing of alternate ideas of loss and redemption.

After returning to Vietnam and deciding to settle there permanently in 1997, in 2007, he co-founded San Art in HCMC, an artist-led platform committed to providing grassroots support for local and international artists and cultural workers. He has exhibited widely around the globe; notable solo exhibitions and major retrospectives include *Dinh Q. Le: Photographing the Thread of Memory*, Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris, France, 2022; *Projects 93: Dinh Q. Le*, MoMA, New York, NY, USA, 2010–2011; *A Tapestry of Memories: The Art of Dinh Q. Le*, Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue, WA, USA, 2007; and *Vietnam: Destination for the New Millenium – The Art of Dinh Q. Le*, Asia Society and Museum, New York, NY, USA, 2005. His works were also included in the 1st Asia Society Triennial, NY, USA, 2020-2021; *Imagined Borders*, 12th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea, 2018; documenta 13, Kassel, Germany, 2012; the 5th Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, Australia, 2006.

## 8

CAM XANH  
**Equally Blind #1**  
2018

Marker on four panes of plexiglass  
35 cm x 35 cm x 1 cm each (4 pieces total)  
\*left to right: love, absence of love,  
life, absence of life

*Collection of Nguyen Art Foundation*



“Tightly-engraved, uniform circles take on a grid-like appearance similar to that of dotted notebooks, and with some marked in white, they begin to evoke the Braille writing system. Yet meaning is rendered unattainable by the flatness of the plexiglass on which the dots emerge. In line with Cam Xanh’s practice, which has long concerned language, the work explores different modes of communication, in particular the textual systems through which we transmit knowledge, and raises issues of legibility, accessibility and misunderstanding.” – Edited from materials provided by the artist

Cam Xanh's work often pulsates between the nonchalant, minimal visual of its facade, and the anguished, emotionally-charged essence of its meanings. Despite her long commitment to art – Cam Xanh has contributed to the scene under different roles – I don't think many people really know her. That is among the reasons why I wanted to invite Cam Xanh to join the exhibition with this particular work.

## CAM XANH

Cam Xanh (b. 1977, Vietnam) is the pseudonym of conceptual artist Tran Thanh Ha. Her physical works are often based on text and poetry, or developed from previous performances by the artist herself, and branch across various media including installation, sculpture, painting, and video, often with elements activated only by audience participation. Her work is included in the collection of the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), Singapore, and in 2016, she was a speaker at the *Asia Young 36* exhibition at the Jeonbuk Museum of Art in Wanju-gun, Korea. In 2015, she founded the independent art space MoT+++ in HCMC, Vietnam. In 2018, together with San Art, she co-founded the international art residency A. Farm, supported by the Nguyen Art Foundation.

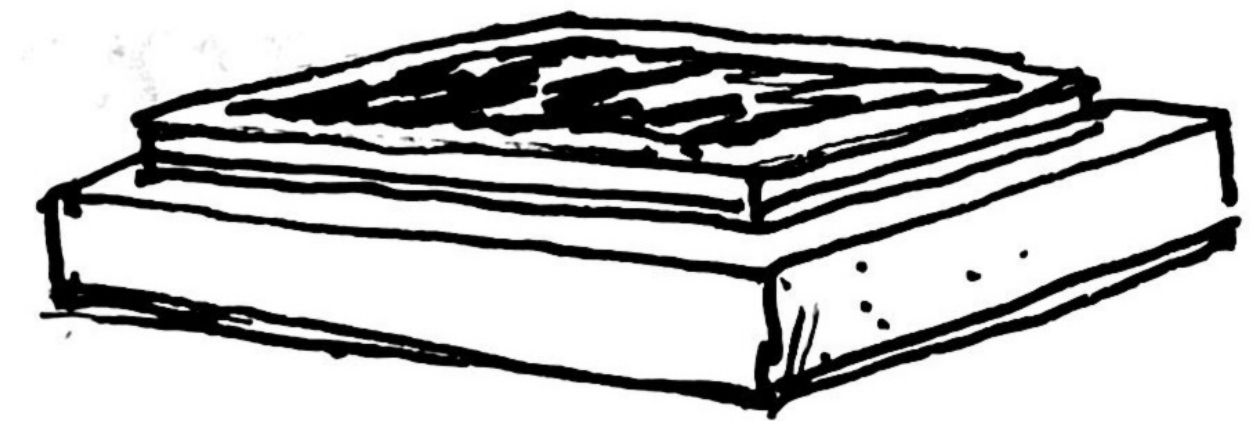
Cam Xanh's notable solo and group exhibitions include *Illuminated Curiosities*, Nguyen Art Foundation, HCMC, Vietnam, 2022; *Nổ Cái Bùm*, Hue, Vietnam, 2020; *password 0~1*, MoT+++ , HCMC, Vietnam, 2020; *MoT Doi Gia | A Beach Life*, MoT+++ , HCMC, 2019; *Affect Machine: Self-healing in the Post-Capitalist Era*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, 2018-2019; *All Animals Are Equal*, A. Farm, HCMC, Vietnam, 2018-2019; *bugs, birds... equations of the future*, MoT+++ , HCMC, Vietnam, 2017-2018.

## 9

NGUYEN TRUNG  
**A Touch**  
1999

Mixed media on canvas  
90 cm x 90 cm

*Collection of Nguyen Art Foundation*



"I paint with the vigor and cleverness of a laborer, but also with the pleasure and passion of a little boy who dips his hands into the sand on the beach to build his own palace. I, too, have an extremely deep longing for dipping my hands in the material I use to paint: trowel and brush are not enough for me."<sup>1</sup>

"Creativity is a grandiose mission: it is grandiose for success is never within reach. Some see artmaking as a job, others as karma. For me, it is bad karma!..."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nguyen Trung, excerpt from CUC Gallery. <https://www.cucgallery.vn/nguyen-trung>

<sup>2</sup> Nguyen Trung, interview with Lê Thiên Bảo (2019).

<https://tapchimythuat.vn/tin-my-thuat/nguyen-trung-sau-thap-ky-loay-hoay-tu-coi-troi/>

## NGUYEN TRUNG

Nguyen Trung (b. 1940, Vietnam) has a career span of more than 60 years marked by both the French colonial rule and the Vietnam Wars. He co-founded the Young Artists Association, a vanguard art group in Saigon in 1966. From 1961 to 1975, Trung devoted himself to figurative painting, mainly portraying beautiful female figures in pure, poetic and tranquil essence. His paintings of female subjects from this period are still in great demand today. There was a period of time that Nguyen Trung aspired to join the movement of subduing the artist's self to move toward building an ideal and nationalistic style that is purely Vietnamese – to be freed from any other established foreign influence. In 1990, Trung reinvented his practice and became one of Vietnam's first abstract artists. He took the daring steps to completely metamorphosize his own style to search for freedom and his inner self. During this period, along with other painters he founded the famous Group of 10, and went on to become one of the most influential figures of the local art scene. If the first period of his career was marked by dreamy and romantic beauty, his lyrical abstraction of the later period shifted towards simplicity and minimalism, in order to express his continuous concern with the existential crisis and philosophical questions of today.

Having built a fruitful legacy that has influenced generations of Vietnamese artists, Nguyen Trung has held exhibitions around the world. His works are displayed in many private and public collections such as Vietnam National Fine Art Museum, Vietnam; Ho Chi Minh City Fine Art Museum, Vietnam; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; Museo Biblioteca Archivio, Italy; and United Overseas Bank, Singapore.

In an unpublished article, curator Le Thien Bao wrote: "In our meeting back in 2016, I proposed to hold an exhibition to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Group of 10. While the other nine members happily agreed, Nguyen Trung hesitated. As someone who has gone through many ups and downs, connecting three generations of art practitioners in Vietnam, I thought he would want to look at the past in retrospect. Yet, for Nguyen Trung, concluding a period is like completing an artwork. 'It means it's already been signed off. It is old news!'.<sup>3</sup> And when the spirit is no longer there, 'we do not need to resurrect a dead body.'<sup>4</sup> Years after their disbandment, Group of 10 has now become 10 groups of 1, with each member growing in their own ways."<sup>5</sup>

In this exhibition, I want to lay Nguyen Trung's painting in parallel with and relatively close to the ground. In order to see it, viewers have to bow their heads or sit next to the painting.

<sup>3</sup> Nguyen Trung. Interview with Tran My Ha (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Nguyen Trung. As told to Le Thien Bao, quoted in the article. *Nguyễn Trung và những gạch nối liên thế hệ*. Unpublished article.

<sup>5</sup> Le Thien Bao. *Nguyễn Trung và những gạch nối liên thế hệ*. Unpublished article.

10

JEAMIN CHA  
**Crushed or Unfolded**  
2020

Carbon drawings on paper  
Dimensions variable

*4th edition, produced for the exhibition*



"Unlike other works, *Crushed or Unfolded* is a work that begins with the story of my mother who had a mental illness without a diagnosis. In particular, it originated from the experience of recording a point where my mother's symptoms were similar to Alzheimer's disease but has another pattern. Also, finding clues to help diagnose the symptoms of dementia patients in each country – especially the cases of people whose letters suddenly got bigger or smaller or patients who had difficulty drawing watches were collected – through the Internet became the process of this work as a path to approach the illness. Drawing a clock is also a method of testing cognitive abilities used in nursing homes or institutions that conduct simple dementia tests (at least in Korea). This mural work presents clock drawings by dementia patients found on the Internet that are copied with carbon paper on an empty wall, consisting of faint lines that show the strength of the grip. This is a choice to keep the patients' drawings anonymous, they cannot be sold as work, and they are temporarily presented in the exhibition hall and erased. This is also an attempt to visualize a path to understanding my mother's illness." – Jeamin Cha

Jeamin Cha and I have never met. I only knew her work by chance through a photograph that another artist took of the 2022 Singapore Biennale, and immediately I fell in love with it. The edition of the work in Singapore was in the form of a mural, which she painted by herself on a wall on the fifth floor of Tanjong Pagar Distripark. I decided to write an email to her, and though the email came from a total stranger, she replied within a few days.

She told me in our first call: In the heat and pools of sweat, working on that mural was to her a consolation.

One of the most crucial qualities of this artwork is that it cannot be bought or owned. After this exhibition, the work will be discarded. That means each edition is a unique one. The edition in this show is made for this show only. And since she could not be in Saigon physically, she had to mail the work to Vietnam.

*Bill Nguyen: “I see an interesting synergy among the last five artworks in this list, which includes: Huy An, Dinh Q. Le, Cam Xanh, Nguyen Trung and Jeamin. They all depict the artists’ visions, or rather their choices, when faced with other histories/generations/people (to which they do not belong, but yearn to connect with, possibly because of blood ties – in Jeamin’s case; a generational tie – in Nguyen Trung’s case; a tie caused by obsession – in Huy An’s or Cam Xanh’s; or an historical tie – in Dinh Q. Le’s). The same applies for you too. For it is quite clear here that we see the conceptual purpose in how you decide which works to include in the exhibition, which artists to invite, which work goes where in the space, next to what etc. Your purpose is to honor the participating artists (especially in the case of Cam Xanh, Dinh Q. Le and Nguyen Trung).*

*“I think the notion of tribute, or in other words, how we/you choose to remember other people, is a powerful way to drive home some of the points you have shared in this text. I particularly like this part about Jeamin’s work. For her work is a therapeutic treatment that is lighthearted, yet sentimental (taxing even), an attempt to make sense of that-which-can’t-be-understood. In many ways, it echoes the fact that neither you nor Jeamin have met each other; that you encountered her work through a photo someone else took in Singapore; that Jeamin herself could not come to Vietnam, and thus the work traveled on her behalf to Saigon by post. It seems that geographical distance actually can bring strangers closer: a collective sympathy for that-which-can’t-be-understood.”*

# JEAMIN CHA

Jeamin Cha (b. 1986, Korea) is an artist based in Seoul whose practice spans film, performance, installation, and writing. Cha’s work deals with the relationship between the psychological, emotional and physical. She approaches the reality of individuals through processes of field studies and notes personal interviews of hard-to-articulate experiences.

Cha as participated in numerous group exhibitions and festivals, including Singapore Biennale; Leeum Museum of Art; Asian Culture Center; Film at Lincoln Center; KADIST; Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Gwangju Biennale; Seoul Museum of Art Biennale Mediacity; Berlin International Film Festival; International Short Film Festival Oberhausen; DMZ International Documentary Film Festival; DOOSAN Gallery; KUKJE Gallery.

## \* VAN DO Automatic scan light 2023

Motion engine, stainless steel, iron, LED light ray  
1000 cm x 100 cm x 240 cm

*Curatorial intervention of the exhibition*

Produced with support from Museum Technik.  
Special thanks to Leminh and Nguyen Tran Nam.  
With inspiration from The Appendix.

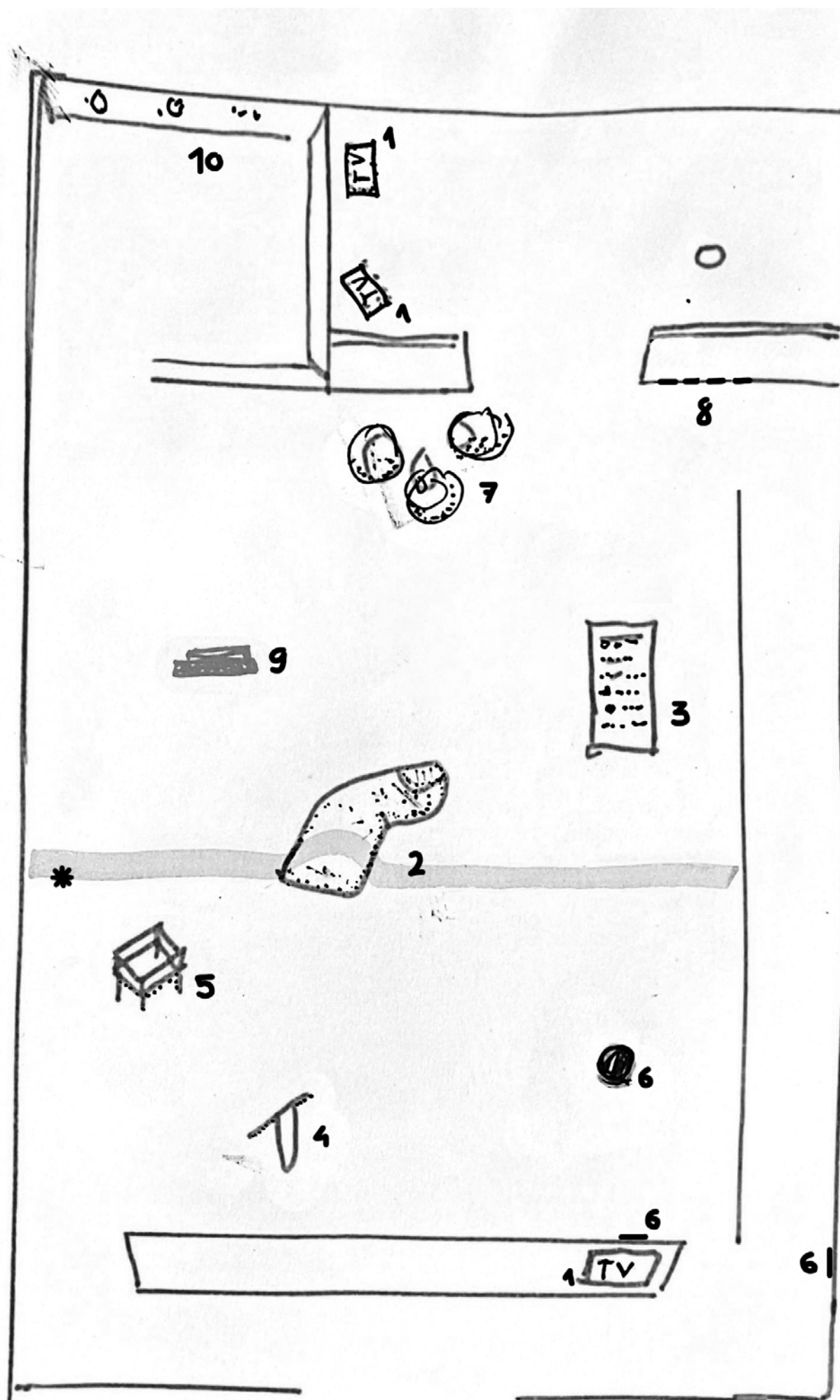
At this point, it would be fair to talk about and own up to my intervention in the mode of viewing of the artworks on display. The idea came about after I learnt that restructuring the existing architecture of Nguyen Art Foundation’s gallery space (as per my original proposal) would not be feasible nor actually complement the backbone of the curatorial framework: to re-contextualize the artworks and treat them with no direct regards to their origins, which means, to see them in a different ‘light’. My personal light, perhaps.

With the selection of these works, I was hoping to form an assemblage of body parts spreading out in space and so I felt the need to realize my vision using some spatial elements that can visually correspond to works that already come with a very strong presence, loaded, fragile, sculpturally beautiful. I was reminded of an opening scene in an Iranian movie I saw a while back called *A Separation* (2011, dir. Asghar Farhadi), in which we see up close on the screen two ID cards being scanned, as if the viewers are transported inside the scanner. I also thought about how my uncle, my grandpa, my dad were all once lying inside the MRI scanner. Their bodies laid bare, vulnerable to the impersonal scrutiny of the light that seeks to identify their illnesses.

Here, the movement of the light parallels a mode of seeing that changes with time and history, whereby all events, memories and values once considered significant are constantly scrutinized, scanned, revised, and even treated and cured against the will of all stakeholders involved. Under this light, sometimes we can see clearly; others, not. Under this light, the artworks are most visible for a moment and then drawn again back into the dark, the absent-mindedness, the forgetfulness.

Contrary to earlier concerns I had about how my light intervention would be received, it was actually welcomed with much enthusiasm from the participating artists. Some played along conceptually, some reconfigured their display mechanism, some shared with me their thoughts on further interpretative connotations I never thought about. In so many ways beyond the realization of this exhibition, I found myself lucky to be nested in the trust of my colleagues despite our differences in terms of our generation, age, experience and thus, perspective – and have arrived somewhere very profound in this artistic, curatorial journey of mine.





"We know very well that time does not exist as an object or an event, but only as something between an event and an event."

– Bernd Heinrich. *Racing the Clock: Running Across A Lifetime*. 2021. HarperCollins Publishers. Translated from Korean by Jeamin Cha.

The exhibition *White Noise* responds to the 2023 institutional theme of Nguyen Art Foundation, a Saigon-based private art collection that is now taking on the care of artworks for future generations, in a social context altered by post-pandemic conditions as much as post-human imaginaries. From a curatorial perspective that is inherently self-reflexive (etymologically, to curate means to cure or to care), the exhibition dissects the concept of "body", breaking off its parts to reveal its nuances.

Rather than displaying inanimate art objects, the exhibition is an experiment in constructing a fictional narrative through re-configurations of artworks by Dao Tung, Tran Tuan, Nguyen Phuong Linh, Lai Dieu Ha, Nguyen Huy An, Dinh Q. Le, Nguyen Tran Nam, Cam Xanh, Jeamin Cha, and Nguyen Trung – starting with an obsession: with the body in decay and with an ant's view of the world.

1. In the current collection of Nguyen Art Foundation, among the large number of artworks that propose a re-examination of history specific to a (Vietnamese) socio-political context, *It seems to be* (2014-2015) by Dao Tung stands out in its simplicity and thoughtfulness. The video work, like a haiku, is made up of three parts (channels) constructed from basic geometric shapes: a rectangle, circle, and diamond. A bare-bones strip of color – now black, now white. The color spectrum appears under stark spotlight, then plunges into darkness. One (or three?) ants dart around as if trying to escape from the frames. Hard though it tries, the glaring light and confines of the frame entrap it still.

In an artificial mise-en-scène, the ant escapes the chase down and lands onto a phantasmagorical landscape inundated with strange shapes. It takes the ant a while to fully adapt to the odd lighting in this place, which slides past in an instant, then plunges the scenery into darkness. A lot of time has probably passed since the ant's imprisonment. Outside, the day is ten times shorter than night. The space is big, but the ant cannot see very far. In the oscillating light and with its limited eyesight, the ant has no choice but to keep crawling. A landscape soon unfolds. The ant starts to tremble when it realizes what is in front of its eyes. Tongue, bones, fingers, organs. A dismembered human body. A corpse whose parts lay scattered in every which way. On the walls and

elsewhere, systems of language and signs from a far-flung land appear. Unable to read or understand, the ant feels troubled, but is curious nevertheless. Cautiously, it continues to crawl forward.

This is the first time the ant has ever encountered a human body from such a close distance. A giant tongue hangs in midair, its fleshy muscle silently bearing slits and cuts. A bone-poem attached to a medical stand that from afar seems like a blues song limping on a multi-legged crutch. A swollen finger covered in metal, its wound finally healed after some years, slowly shifting shape. A block of air-dried pork rind made from the skin of hundreds of thousands of pigs, born only to be killed the instant they reach their weight goal. A few dot-signs are the only things arranged in neat rows; like many of the most important things, they are buried under a layer of clear plastic, the flat plane making inaccessible the words that lie beneath. An opaque sphere, moon-like, emits an air of gloom; politely, it rejects the desire to seize, to grasp, to make transparent. Three tumors float aimlessly in space. A glimpse of a hand trying to make an impression on earth. Trembling and distorted clocks escape the responsibility of measuring that makes them meaningful.

From an extremely close-up point of view and with a dystopic sensibility, the works in *White Noise* evokes the body at different scales and levels of understanding. Under the artificial light of science, technology, and the medical gaze, the body is laid bare in space and time. At first glance, the works seem a direct reference to the separate parts of a physical body. They stir up affective reactions that follow acts and gestures both tender and cruel – touch, lick, chop, prise apart, dry out, place under a microscope, cut open: invasive acts that, in reality, have quite a similar impact. In another dimension, the body is rendered more abstractly through the distance of metaphor. A body in relation to the units that make it up. A body with its own biological limitations and impulses, self-reflections, inheritances that it did not choose, existing in finite time.

2. In *Philosophy of Care* (2022), critic and art historian Boris Groys takes as subject images of the human body. Modern societies, according to Groys, are marked by the omnipresence of systems of care: not only of bodies in the physical sense – being

taken care of through systems of healthcare, transportation, food, and housing – but also in a symbolic manner – when people die and the physical body decomposes, they are still cared for in archives, museums, cemeteries, and monuments. This seemingly harmless act of care, and our implied debt to the institutions that care for us, did not occur by chance. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), Michel Foucault considers the advent of medicine – a system of knowledge specializing in the human body – integral to the development of the modern state from the 19th century onwards. Along with prisons and schools, the hospital became a key institution that helped expand the state’s power to “ensure, sustain, and multiply life”, imposing the power of biopolitics onto individual bodies. Biopolitics transpire both on a personal and a collective level; it intervenes through technologies of force to manipulate and control individual bodies, as well as interferes with a whole population, understood as a social and biological unit defined by its traits and processes (for instance the birth rate, death rate, public health measures, etc.).

In our current neoliberal context, this form of power develops rhizomatically according to the mechanisms of the free market, infiltrating various aspects of life. On one hand, the body is objectified as a high-functioning entity, trained to increase productivity and fulfill the needs of the labor market. Gyms, salons, and therapy clinics were created to tell us that we are not good enough (compared to an invented ideal) and provide solutions to our feeling of inadequacy – solutions that can be tailored to each and every one of us. On the other hand, state control is becoming ever more subtle as social institutions assume the responsibility of care and welfare of the population, or rather the “collective flesh”. Accordingly, taking advantage of “objective”, scientifically-proven knowledge, any deviations from the standard (in health, race, or gender) must be eliminated altogether. This exclusion and control, especially during states of emergency, are accepted and normalized even when deployed through repressive and violent methods that infringe upon basic human rights. Scientific studies that sought to prove the genetic “superiority” of certain races remain one of the most unscientific endeavors that came out of this discipline. More recently, questions on how health records are collected and used by governments are still left unanswered, and there remains a lack of transparency at the international level in the control and distribution of vaccines.

For purposes varying from diagnosis and treatment to security, humans invent sophisticated and complex technologies in order to see through the human body.

3. In recent years, the local art community has witnessed a collective reconsideration of artworks that, until then, seems to have faded into a distant past. Acts of intervention and the recycling of existing materials – found objects, images from publications and archives (found online or in official records), text excerpts – are aesthetic strategies that have long been used by artists. Yet, it is only in the last five years that, for art organizations, institutions and independent curators, the focus has shifted from the production of new works. Instead, there is growing interest in efforts to record, revisit, write, and rewrite history.

From long-term projects,<sup>1</sup> produced at a relatively large scale with the participation of multiple organizations, to independent initiatives run by artists and curators,<sup>2</sup> the workload involved in not-creating-anew does not only supplement research, but also opens up countless possibilities for the artwork to have new life. On the plane between past and present, between staying true to the original and being creative with the translation, between established definitions of documentation and the archive, curatorial practices open up new dimensions and face new challenges.

Drawing inspiration from the possibility to expand the semantic spectrum of a work of art, to speak with those from past generations, and to play with established value systems, *White Noise* is an experiment in re-presenting old artworks in a light hummed anew. Physically, this lighting disturbs the visual representation of the artworks on display and challenges standard modes of viewing and exhibiting art (with express permission, and at times positive support, from the participating artists). Conceptually, this lighting seeks to mobilize disparate artworks towards an imaginary horizon. It is a given that such an act can never be neutral, though in some cases, it can don a cloak of objectivity and neutrality. And like the projects listed above, this exhibition, in lieu of substantiating existing readings and values of the artwork, hopes to re-establish and broaden the meaning of the work and its original context, and proposes a dialogue with past events and past generations, as well as with seemingly fixed value systems and schools of thought. Instead of emphasizing the artwork’s originality, the exhibition cedes ground to possibilities of inter-subjectivity and relationality between subjects.

4. In Bao Ninh’s oeuvre, there is an anthology of short stories much lesser known than his internationally acclaimed novel *The Sorrow of War* (1987). The anthology titled *Can old stories end yet?* (2009) does not comprise wartime stories, but rather

chronicles war in its peacetime aftermath. It’s a thought-provoking title that can be read multiple ways: as a lament (why do we keep talking about the past?), or as a complaint (why does the thing that seems to have ended keep bothering me?). Either way, Bao Ninh’s rhetorical question is suggestive: There’s more than one way to talk about the past. For generations to come, there is more than one way to understand what they have not experienced themselves.<sup>3</sup>

More than just remembering accurately or completely forgetting, history, hopefully, will exist in variations, copies, even mythical and paradoxical accounts. From one ear to another, from this person to the next, history will hum on forever.

...

Well, yeah, it’s incomplete, but anyway I will still tell you the story of how I gave birth to your ma during an evacuation, even if the details change every time I tell you. What’s the point in talking about my trophies, in becoming a monument? I don’t really mind if my story is told completely differently. Perhaps because I know that what matters is not what I told you, but that I had told you and that you heard me. That in itself is better than all the trophies and all the monuments.

Van Do  
Hanoi, June 2023

With special thanks to Nguyen Thanh Tam and Thái Hà for the English translation of the text

<sup>1</sup> A few projects to be listed can include *Spirit of Friendship* (2017) by The Factory; *Don’t Call It Art* (2022-2023) which includes a book and exhibition of the same name from the archive of Veronika Radulovic where she introduces and surveys the practices of artists Truong Tan, Nguyen Van Cuong, Nguyen Minh Thanh, Nguyen Quang Huy, Nguyen Minh Phuoc during the 1990s; *Like A Moon in the Night Sky* (2020, 2021, 2022), initiated and organized by The Center for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents TPD, with diverse curatorial programs ranging from screening films from the archive of the Vietnam Film Institute and other moving image works, to musical production for the live performance of animations; *Vietnam Contemporary Art Database* (2020-ongoing) initiated by Heritage Space; *Open Archive Lim Dim* (2022) stemming from artist Tran Luong’s hope to open access to the archive related to Lim Dim, often considered the first performance art festival in Vietnam, through talks and workshops on performance art.

<sup>2</sup> For example: the research project and exhibition *Gang of Five* (2017-2018) curated by Le Thuan Uyen; artist Vu Duc Toan’s re-enactment or “cover” in his words of other performances in *Morning-Noon-Afternoon-Evening* mini performance art festival (2022); the project *Skylines with Flying People 4* (2020-2021) curated by The Appendix, exhibited more than 20 existing artworks, in part or in full, at a rental storage unit at KingKho; the performative reading *Sống – Lại* by Bill Nguyen, a personal archive of works that have influenced his own practice; or the *426 Duong Buoi* exhibition, organized as part of Nha San Collective’s 20th anniversary program, including re-enactments of performances and displays that once took place at Nha San Studio (curated by Tran Duy Hung and Truong Que Chi), a personal research project by curator Le Thuan Uyen on artist Le Vu in the form of a notebook that she organized, curated, edited and designed herself, or Nguyen Hoang Quyen’s re-display of old artworks, as they were or with a new display mechanism.

<sup>3</sup> As a side note, Kazuo Ishiguro, in his Nobel Prize speech, made a remark that I find relevant for further thought here: “At Birkenau, on a wet afternoon, I stood before the rubbled remains of the gas chambers – now strangely neglected and unattended – left much as the Germans had left them after blowing them up and fleeing the Red Army. They were now just damp, broken slabs, exposed to the harsh Polish climate, deteriorating year by year. My hosts talked about their dilemma. Should these remains be protected? Should perspex domes be built to cover them over, to preserve them for the eyes of succeeding generations? Or should they be allowed, slowly and naturally, to rot away to nothing? It seemed to me a powerful metaphor for a larger dilemma. How were such memories to be preserved? Would the glass domes transform these relics of evil and suffering into tame museum exhibits? What should we choose to remember? When is it better to forget and move on?”



## VAN DO

Van Do (b. 1995, Vietnam) is a curator and writer currently based in Hanoi. From 2019 till 2021, Van was a former curator at The Factory Contemporary Arts Center (HCMC), the first purpose-built space for contemporary art in Vietnam. In 2021, Van initiated and ran several independent projects under Curatorial Xà Quần and Te Rệt to further experiment with alternative models of curating and artistic practice. Since 2022, Van was appointed as the Artistic Director of Á Space, an artist-driven independent space for experimental art practices in Hanoi, Vietnam, where she's then invested in seeking critical engagements with the artistic community, especially through intergenerational exchanges, and solidifying her artistic vision for formal and conceptual experimentations on the moving image and performance-based practices. Selected projects and exhibitions include: *Tương tương ngộ ngộ cá kho tộ, ngộ ngộ tương tương đậu kho tương*, Á Space, Hanoi, 2023; *IN:ACT 2022*, Nha San Collective & Á Space, Hanoi & Kassel, 2022; *Ha Ninh Pham: Recursive Fables*, A+ WORKS of ART, Kuala Lumpur, 2022; *Within / Between / Beneath / Upon*, The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, HCMC, 2021; *An ode to the microscopic*, Dcine, HCMC, 2020.

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Production team: Le Quang Minh, Nguyen Tran Nam, Nguyen Long Bien

Installation: Le Xuan Hong Nhung, Dinh Quoc Bao

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