

Stratum Zero

THE OUTPOST

Địa Tầng Số 0

- Phan Thảo Nguyên • Trương Công Tùng • Phạm Trần Việt Nam • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Phạm Trần Việt Nam • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Trương Công Tùng • Phạm Trần Việt Nam • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Trương Công Tùng • Phạm Trần Việt Nam • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên • Điềm Phùng Thị • Võ An Khánh • Hoàng Dương Cẩm • Hà Mạnh Thắng • Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang • Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai • Phan Phi Oanh • Trần Tuấn • Trương Công Tùng • Phan Thảo Nguyên

Stratum Zero is an exhibition displaying works of Vietnamese artists in **The Outpost Collection**, seeking to shine light onto the aesthetic conditions, local context and spirit of contemporary Vietnam. The works on display present a wide range of practices, uncovering the artists' efforts to deconstruct and rethink materiality; the resilience of local culture, Eastern ways of being and ideologies; as well as personal, peripheral historical narratives.

Stratum Zero features works from different generations of artists from all over the country, who were trained both at home and abroad: Diễm Phùng Thị, Võ An Khánh, Nguyễn Huy An, Hoàng Dương Cẩm, Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang, Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai, Phạm Trần Việt Nam, Phan Thảo Nguyên, Phi Phi Oanh, Hà Mạnh Thắng, Trần Tuấn and Trương Công Tùng.

Contextualised in three thematic threads - (i) body as a landscape (ii) sacred materiality, and (iii) micro/ alternative histories - this exhibition is an attempt to imagine 'a spatial construction from temporal sediments'. The artworks of 12 artists stray away from its original display and contextualisation, facilitating a different way of looking at the works, all the while exposing the complexity of artistic processes and creations. Here, "stratum" is not only a geographical reference, but also considered as the departure point of an exploration, from which one begins to discover other stratum, formulating an overall, hidden structure.

The exhibition is produced by The Outpost's Curatorial Team.

The Outpost would like to express our deepest gratitude towards all the artists featured in this exhibition.

Identity design: Studio DUY

Exhibition production team: Dương Dương, Leminh, Mai Minh Design & Construction, Trần Tùng, Lê Đình Chung, Hải Phú, Đỗ Văn Hoàng, Tạ Lê Duy Anh and support from Adhoc Housing Architecture workshop (Nguyễn Minh Hiệp, Nguyễn Đức Mạnh, Trần Tuấn Dương, Nguyễn Thị Thơm)

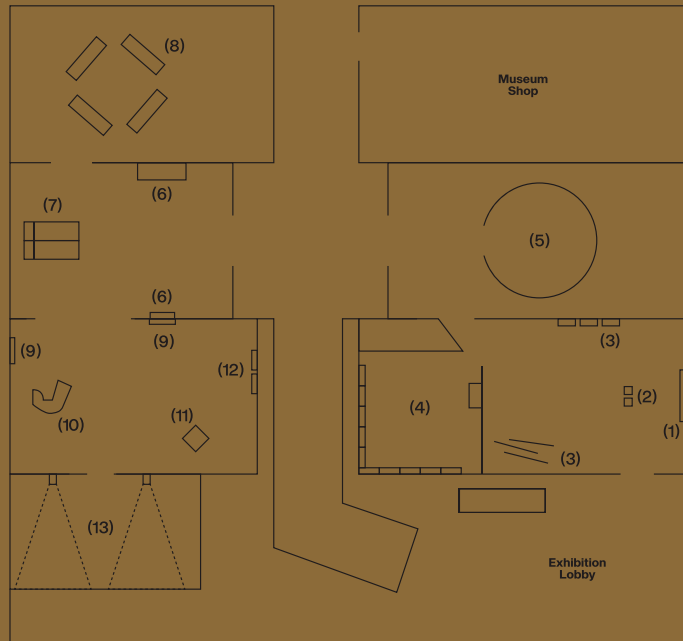
Technical partners: Museum Technik, Hexogon Vietnam, Unios

Translation support: Nguyễn Thanh Đan, Nguyễn Thanh Tâm, Nguyễn Thị Minh Ngọc

The exhibition would not have been possible without the unwavering trust and support from Founder CEO Ariel Phạm as well as the entire team at The Outpost.

- (1) Trương Công Tùng
- (2) Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai
- (3) Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang
- (4) Nguyễn Huy An*
- (5) Phạm Trần Việt Nam
- (6) Hà Mạnh Thắng
- (7) Trương Công Tùng
- (8) Phi Phi Oanh
- (9) Hoàng Dương Cẩm
- (10) Trần Tuấn
- (11) Võ An Khánh
- (12) Điềm Phùng Thị
- (13) Phan Thảo Nguyên

* Artworks is not in The Outpost Collection.



⁽¹⁾ **Trương Công Tùng, A Portrait of Absence**

as part of “The Sap Still Runs” project (2019 - ongoing)

Printed text

Dimension dependable on specific site

By creating new context for a saying by people from the Central Highland, which was extracted from the book “Souls and Dreams” (in the series “Fantasy Land - The Mountain Peoples of Southern Indochina”) by Jacques Dournes translated by Nguyễn Ngọc; Trương Công Tùng playfully raises the question of the visible and invisible. The line reads: “I have heard people say: “My eyes deceive, I forget, I don’t know how to see the real thing” which represents the cosmological understanding of Central Highlanders on the transcendence of the soul through different material lives. The words appear obscurely on the window, submerging with the outside landscape; blending in with the streets, bushes, cars and buildings.

The work is permanently displayed in The Outpost’s space, considered as a witness of a constantly changing urban city.

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(2) **Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai, Out**

2012

Vaginal speculum, beads

21 × 12 × 4 cm, 8.5 × 15.5 × 11 cm

(This series has five artworks. The smaller work on display is not in The Outpost Collection.)

The artist used the word “out” to name the artwork made from the gynaecological speculum - a medical instrument that is used to examine the inside of a woman’s body. The title, as a counterpoint, reverses the state of the object’s original function, drawing an implicit privacy boundary between what is outside and inside the human body.

The act of encrusting beads on a gynaecological speculum, placing them on the podium, manifests a duality of pride and fragility at the same time. Once the boundary between the outside and the inside is negotiated, it leaves questions on vulnerability, domination and power.

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(3) Lý Trần Quỳnh Giang

Voice

2009
Wood carving
15 × 200 cm (3 pieces)

Inside of me

2016
Wood carving
96.5 × 73 cm

(Artworks in The Outpost Collection.)

Portrait

2010
Wood carving
100 × 68.5 cm

Where they turn to

2016
Wood carving
105 × 79 cm

This body of works lies on the border between painting and sculpture, presenting a different way of looking at wood carving - a medium that is often thought of as conventional, realistic and decorative.

The faces, eyes, gestures and movements of the hands seem to come out of the tree trunk; creating the illusion of a metamorphosis. Wood pattern becomes blood vessels. Human body parts turn into trees. The lines resulting from carving and inking reveals emotions of the artist, creating the feeling of suspension, tension, silence and hollowness. Through the traces of the bodily gestures on the wooden surface, the works lead the visitors into a world of personal reflection - a realm of silence and solitude.



(4) **Nguyễn Huy An, Exercises for the Senses***

2020-2023

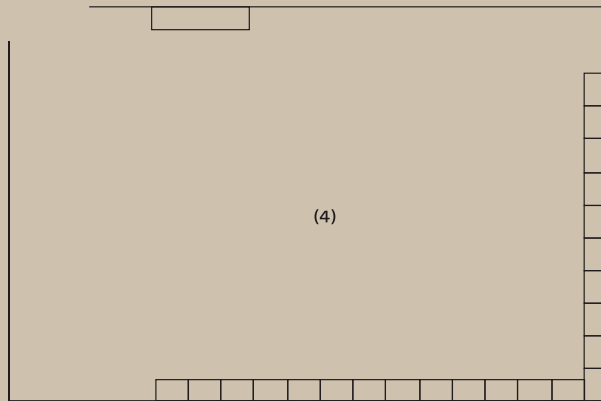
Installation, graphite on Dó paper

Dimensions variable

(This installation is specific to the exhibition space. The work is not in The Outpost Collection.)

Nguyen Huy An's "Exercises for the Senses" can be seen as a form of visual archive documenting the gradually fading landscape of local consciousness. They can be seen as 36 mini performances, translated into written notes for memory-keeping and reflection.

The work is a collection of small drawings, created following the same visual structure, displayed one after another to form a long trail.. Each text refers to an action or gesture: starting with a verb and ending with an adjective, enabling the visitors to follow a viewing rhythm. Through the choice of text which is visually expressive and local in its sounding, the work suggest a cultural landscape that appears to be fading away.



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**(5)Phạm Trần Việt Nam, The Oration of Ten Types
of Sentient Beings #2**

2014-2015

Oil, embroidery on canvas

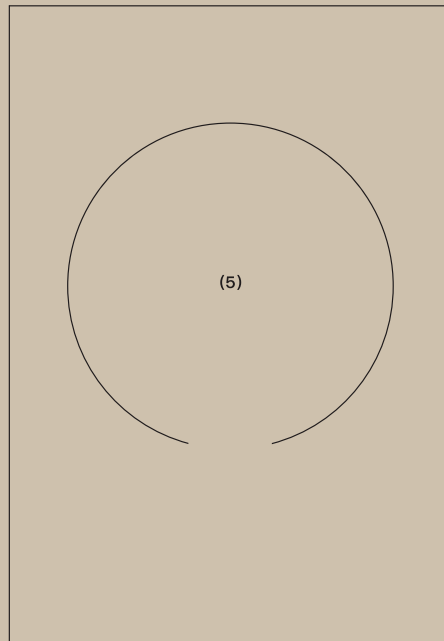
166.5 × 1719 cm

(Artworks in The Outpost Collection.)

Borrowing the title from one of the renown literary text written by Nguyễn Du, The Oration for Ten Types of Sentiment Beings #2 is Phạm Trần Việt Nam's attempt to give form to the nihility.

Employing the classic expression of oil painting on canvas, but Phạm frees himself from classical composition, from the primary rules of this form. He paints with the tip of his finger, starting at the corner of the canvas and then drawing over the entire canvas. He delves directly into depicting the subject without any base drawing steps, then chisels, cuts, perforates on the canvas, and embroiders, sews with coloured threads. In his work, all figures are submerged in a hell-like air, of no social strata. In his paintings, suffering is universally casted upon all living beings.

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Stratum Zero
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(6) Hà Mạnh Thắng

A Lotus Pedestal At Night #1

2020
Charcoal, lacquer, oil and ink
on canson paper
41.5 × 59.5 cm

Lotus Pedestal Study #9

2019
Charcoal and ink on Dó paper
38 × 57 cm

Lotus Pedestal Study #10 và #11

2020
Charcoal, lacquer and ink on
tracing paper
84 × 60 cm

(Artworks in The Outpost Collection)

Four displayed artworks in the exhibition are parts of the paintings series Lotus Pedestal Study of artist Hà Mạnh Thắng. The zeal for antiques conjured in the artist senses of materials, of colours in paintings as well as the details of time. The two Lotus Pedestal Study #10 and Lotus Pedestal Study #11 on tracing papers unveil the layers of gestures and textures: the charcoal-lined stroke, the inkstroke, the dried brushstroke. The translucent nature of the tracing paper articulates the firmness in strokes, the concentrations, categorically in each stroke's force. When drawing on a texture denser than canson paper, and using dark background gamuts like Lotus Pedestal Study #1, the surface of the paper comprises lines diving into margins, into positions. At this moment, the centre of attention shifts from the stroke to the layout to the perspective.

(#1) (#11) (#9)

(6)

(6)

(#10)

(7) Trương Công Tùng, A Mound in Exile

2000 years ago – ongoing

Earth, water, ashes, spirits,...

24 pieces, dimensions variable (transforming according to time, temperature and the environment...)

(Tác phẩm nằm trong Bộ sưu tập The Outpost.)

Once upon a time, in a country there was a mound of earth, that whenever vibrating, would radiate gold-shone lights and hum soothing lullabies tantalising everyone. One day, hearing about the rumour on this magical mound, a group of unbeknown visitors footed in. As tempted by its beauty and miracle, they decided to arrogate it and did some allocations for themselves. Using both primitive implements and modern equipment, they tried all types of tools to analyse, split and divide the mound into smaller chunks. Nevertheless, from that moment, all that is magical disappeared, the iridescence of gold soon died away, the glistening lights became a pseudo-gildening, and the mound of earth, now no longer sings... The mound is gone.

The work is a composition of 24 pieces resembling the torn flesh chunks of a body made of earth, dust, ashes, turmeric powder... 24 is also the number of times, of day and night, of light and darkness, of awakes and slumbers, of sanity and madness, of reality and illusion...

Written by Trương Đồi.

(7)



(8) Phi Phi Oanh, Black Box series

Artworks placement in order:

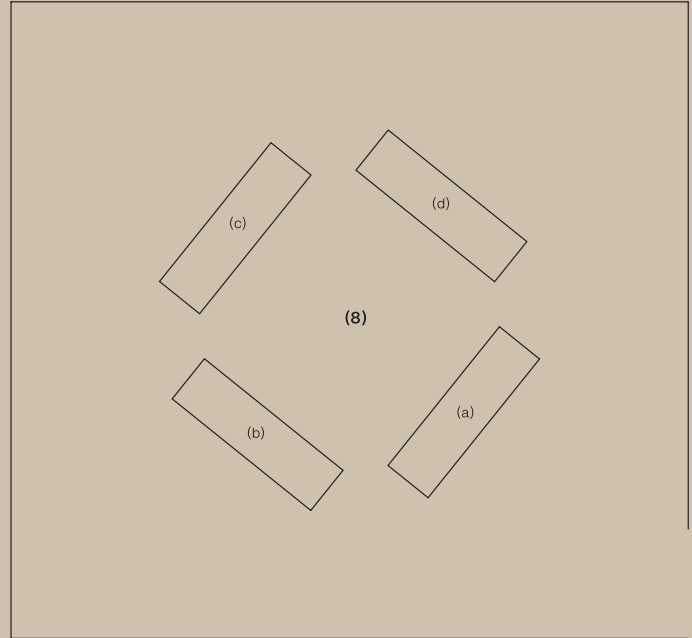
The News (a) - Electric Moon (b) - Slow Fuse(c) - Grotto Hierarchs (d)
2005-2007

Vietnamese natural lacquer (sơn ta) on wood, with gold, silver, aluminium metals and stone pigments
190 × 60 × 60 cm (4 pieces)

(Artworks in The Outpost Collection.)

“Black Box” stages familiar scenes such as the moon rising over the foliage at night, loudspeakers hanging on electric poles, watermelons falling to the floor,... It is a walk through humble and repetitive imageries that are often lost in everyday life. Yet, over time, it is the amalgamation of those disparate pieces that form a collective impression of an experience: a place, a culture, a lifetime. Using the mysterious and subtle language of lacquer, the everyday scenes are frozen in time like fossils.

“Black Box” is a series that shows the dialogue between Phi Phi Oanh and lacquer - as a medium that stores memories. These large boxes are like treasure chests containing objects that lies between distant past and present.



⁽⁹⁾ Hoàng Dương Cẩm

Ceremony in the dawn

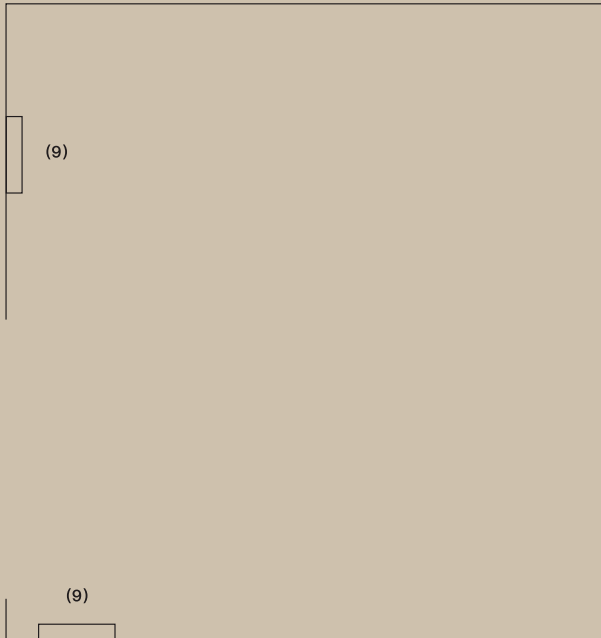
2015
Oil on canvas
145 × 115 cm

Lab in the jungle

2015
Oil, acrylic on canvas
100 × 70 cm
(Artworks in The Outpost Collection.)

Ceremony in the dawn and Lab in the jungle are part of a pinhole painting series* by artist Hoàng Dương Cẩm. In this series of paintings, the artist used a pinhole camera to capture images he encountered during his research on family history. The resulting image becomes suggestible to the painting composition. Though painted with a very thin layer of colour, the visual is accentuated to a certain level of depth. Another layer of colour is placed over the figure layer, like foils embracing past images, telltales of both personal history's connotations and historical overview of a period.

*The title of the painting series is named by the artist. Pinhole camera is a simple photographic device without a lens.



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(10) **Trần Tuấn, Forefinger**

2015-2023

Steel, packaging foam, copper sheets, snail

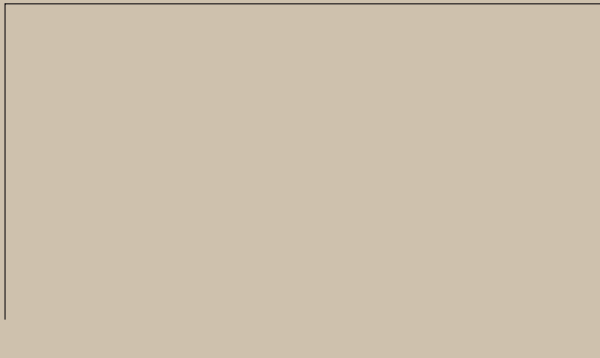
140 × 140 × 90 cm

(Artwork in The Outpost Collection,)

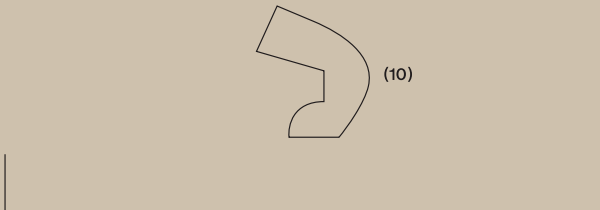
The ideas underpinning the artwork *Forefinger* originates from a story in the artist's family, when neither his dad nor uncles had lost their forefingers.

From a family's history, the artist enlarges the anatomy of a forefinger into a sculpture whose size attempts an appropriation to the real human body. At first glance, the artwork looks like luxury decor, as well as animal carcass. The amputation of one's body part is now rebirthed, simultaneously, a reminder of the past.

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(11) Võ An Khánh

Music and dance class organised by the Southwestern Region's Propaganda Department in U-Minh Forest

1970-71, 30 × 45 cm

Extra-curriculum politics class for 50 officers working undercover in enemy territory - Năm Căn mangrove forest

1972, 56 × 40 cm

Mobile military clinic during the period of enemy defoliation in U Minh Forest

1970, 59 × 40 cm

Mobile military clinic during the period of enemy defoliation in U Minh Forest

1970, 60 × 60 cm

The Southwestern region's music and dance troupe in rehearsal

1974, 60 × 60 cm

(In order, top to bottom. Digital print on Archival paper. Re-printed in 2022.)

A landscape of the past in Võ An Khánh's photographs series is akin to a tempo that slips away from the generic discourses of the Vietnam War. Five works showcased in the exhibition transcribe the lives of the military nursing units, the entertainment units, the revolutionary cadre, the Mekong Delta. The photographs exude a weirdly still and stifled air, differing from other commonly seen scenes in wartime photography journalism.

These photographs once laid dusted in the personal collection of Võ An Khánh, until the photography journalist Dough Niven, by the end of the 1990s, stumbled across, hence which, galvanised for these works wider attention.

(11)



(12) **Điểm Phùng Thị**

Điện Biên Phủ on air

1972

Collage and ink on paper

110 × 75 cm

(Artwork in The Outpost Collection.)

B52 under the sky of Vietnam

1972

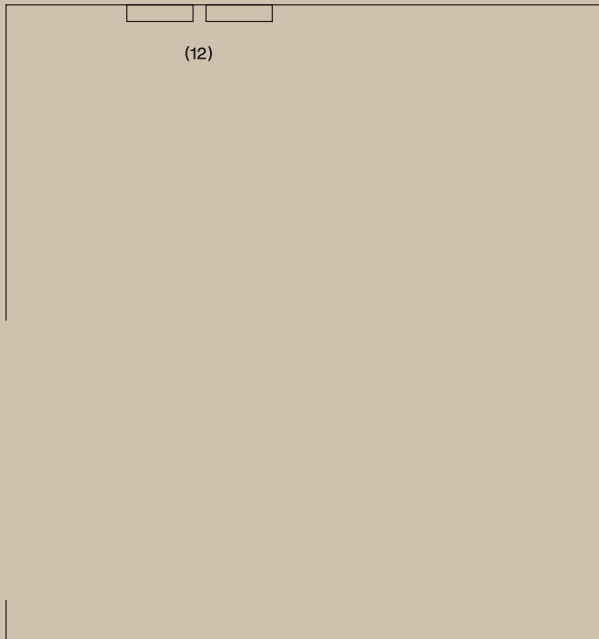
Ink on paper

104 × 74 cm

(Artwork on loan from Mr. Phan Đình Hối.)

Điểm Phùng Thị (b. 1920, Vietnam; d. 2002, Vietnam) is a renowned sculptor, known for her system of seven modules (letters) that are both minimal and ingenious, allowing endless formations. They can transform to create sculptures and paintings.

The artist's paintings on paper were created in 1972, when she was still living in France. The works are her response toward the historical event in her country, when the "Điện Biên Phủ on air campaign" (also known as Operation Linebacker II) turned all eyes to Vietnam. This battle on air marked an important milestone, changing the face of the war and contributing to peace effort.



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(13) **Phan Thảo Nguyên, Tropical Siesta**

2017

Two-channel video installation, synchronised

HD, colour, sound

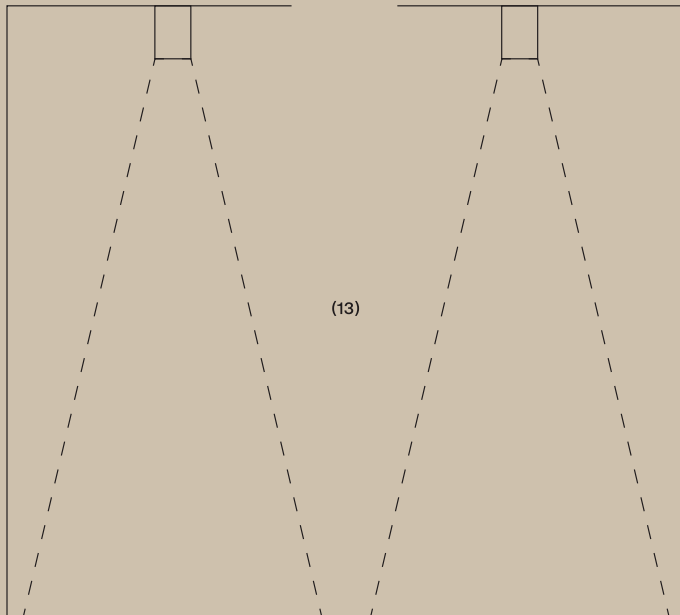
13:41 min, ratio 16:9

(Artwork in The Outpost Collection)

(The content in this room features fictional images that can be considered unpleasant for some visitors. The artist has consensual support from the parents of all minor characters. Please kindly pay attention to this notice.)

Tropical Siesta is a moving image work by Phan Thảo Nguyên that tells an imaginary tale of a rural Vietnam populated only by children. Set in an agricultural community, they re-enact the observations recorded by French Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes (considered the father of the romanised Vietnamese script) as he travelled across Vietnam in the 17th century.

The two channel work can be seen as an extension of the artist's painterly language, rethinking the border between history and fiction. Metaphorical and poetic images seem to 'freeze' geographical and linear temporal formations, bringing viewers into a region where they can wander in their own reflections on the past and present. in.



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