

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition title, *LACHRIMAE*, takes inspiration from the titular song by the English composer John Dowland (1563 – 1626), who was widely known for his masterful and complex musical explorations of melancholy. Also known as *The Seven Tears*, the piece comprises seven different pavanes — a type of Elizabethan processional dance, which was used to carry the couples to the front of the court!. In each pavane, John Dowland portrays different emotional stages of tears, which range from despair, grief, and fear to sanctity, compassion, and hope². Of the famed composer's archetypical plunge into melancholy and its manifold nature, *Lachrimae* reflects the condition of his time: an in-between period as Europe transitioned from the end of the Renaissance and ushered in the beginning of the Baroque period. The period was governed by melancholy — not as a category of subjective expression, but a cultural trope that is complicated by the disjunction and the interrelation between the self and the world, the contingent and the transcendent³. Details about the song, both musical and historical, together perfectly encapsulate the spirit of Hoang Duong Cam's seventh solo show with Galerie Quynh as the artist continues his tireless personal interrogation and rumination on distance and liminal space, as well as the slippery boundary between absurdity and fact.

^{1.} Nath, Carrie. "About the Pavane | Arts in the Renaissance | PBS LearningMedia." PBS LearningMedia. Accessed November 11, 2022

^{2.} Buja, Maureen. "The Sad Music of 'Seven Teares Figured in Seven Passionate Pavans." Interlude, June 20, 2022

^{3.} DIMAKOPOULOU, Stamatina. "Remapping the Affinities between the Baroque and the Postmodern: The Folds of Melancholy & the Melancholy of the Fold." E-Rea [En Ligne], 2016

Through extensive artistic research, which is grounded in his understanding and interpretation of fine arts traditions, music, history, and literature, Hoang Duong Cam has long been interested in identifying gaps as parameters for distance and intimacy in existing structures or compositions. In the seminal *Rest Energy* (1980), the acclaimed performance duo Marina Abramovic and ULAY held a bow with their body weight with the arrow directed towards Abramovic's heart; two small microphones were placed on their hearts. The tension between the two, who were partners in art and in life, was intensified by the sound of their amplified heartbeats. Later, Abramovic described the experience, though lasting only four minutes and ten seconds, feeling like forever⁴ as she had no control over the situation, thus relying entirely on her trust in ULAY. Hoang Duong Cam has always been intrigued by how the duo examined spatial and mental distance in human relationships in their works, which to him managed to disrupt and redefine the distinction between near and far. Cam is also drawn to how musical geniuses see the gap, however small, in classical music — a genre notorious for its strict predetermined compositions. Midori Gotō is a Japanese-born American violinist — a child prodigy and celebrated musician to the world, but to Hoang Duong Cam she is someone who could deconstruct and reconfigure classical music through her body movements. When Midori performs *Chaconne* by Bach, her entire body moves in tandem with the twists and turns of the melody, thus letting her individuality infiltrate a seemingly unwavering structure.

Another area of interest to Cam is how historical landmarks have played the role of reluctant witnesses of major upheavals that caused mass migration. Decades after the Vietnam War, the once brutal, deathly battlefields such as Dong Thap Muoi, Hue, Quang Tri, Xuan Loc are now sites of peacetime and modernity. Receding to the background of these landscapes, what is left of that painful era now only exists in the form of archival war photographs, documentaries, and Hollywood productions, which for a while have been the main forms of evidence to understand the socio-political conflicts of that period. In his attempts to make sense of his own reality, Cam reimagines history by juxtaposing different timelines, sceneries, and figures against one another — a tedious experiment that helps

^{4.} Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present. "Marina Abramović and ULAY. Rest Energy. 1980." Accessed November 11, 2022

ease his own cynicism for the linearity of official history. Another prominent inspiration in this series of paintings is *Sunlight in the Garden* (1938), a short story written by Vietnamese author Thach Lam, which revolves around a young love that eventually ends in separation and regret. The way Thach Lam likens the couple's naivety and their inevitable parting to how pure and natural sunlight drapes the garden in its beautiful glory prompts Hoang Duong Cam to adopt a palette of well-measured colours. While not as dramatic and vivid as in his previous works, the colours he uses now have mellowed out, yet still retain a vibrancy.

LACHRIMAE embraces the identity of an intricate labyrinth that materialises as the artist weaves together his observations, compositional reappropriations, and his own hypotheses. It is a common practice to dissect an abstract painting by identifying the values of negative and positive spaces, which leads to the understanding of forms and composition. Positive space is thought to carry the creative actions and aesthetic manifestation of a painting, while its counterpart is considered as the less important background⁵. Cam's works prove otherwise as it is impossible to identify the positive from the negative. Each layer, whether having forms or free brushstrokes, represents a detail or a line of thought that is indispensable to the making of the whole painting. Packed with speculative references and anecdotes, these paintings invite viewers to keep shifting their perspectives in order to see the distance and proximity, which have haunted the artist for so long.

^{5.} Kočíb, Zdeněk. "Quasi-Negative Space in Painting." Leonardo 19, no. 2 (1986): 141-44.

BIOGRAPHY

In a career spanning over two decades, Hoang Duong Cam (b. 1974, Hanoi) dexterously alternates between painting, photography, video, installation, performance, and collaborative projects. Central to his artworks are the often humorous, sometimes absurdist explorations of the complex mechanisms that connect the self and its surroundings. The density of detail seen in much of Hoang's oeuvre stems from his extensive pool of disparate references: from the Socratic dialogues to Edo-era prints to quantum physics. Collated from history and contemporary reality, the artist's fragmented narratives revel in confusion and uncertainty, laying bare the contradictions inherent in human thought and behaviour.

Hoang's canvases, as layered with paint as they are with metaphors, are visual (re)constructions of liminal spaces, of distances irreconcilable. Though fascinated with historical and psychological boundaries, through his works the artist contends that boundaries are not a given but fluid and impermanent. When using media other than painting, Hoang often presents subtle, amusing projects that catch the viewer off-guard in their seeming straightforwardness. In juxtaposing and filtering through his eclectic interests, Hoang makes way for an unpremeditated sense of whimsy, or unease, or haunting melancholy to arise in his works.

In 2012, along with artists Quang Lam, Phan Quang, Nguyen Thanh Truc and UuDam Tran Nguyen, Hoang co-founded XEM, a publication showcasing photography-based works by its founding members and invited artists.

Hoang has been living and working in Ho Chi Minh City since 2001.

INSTALLATION VIEWS

















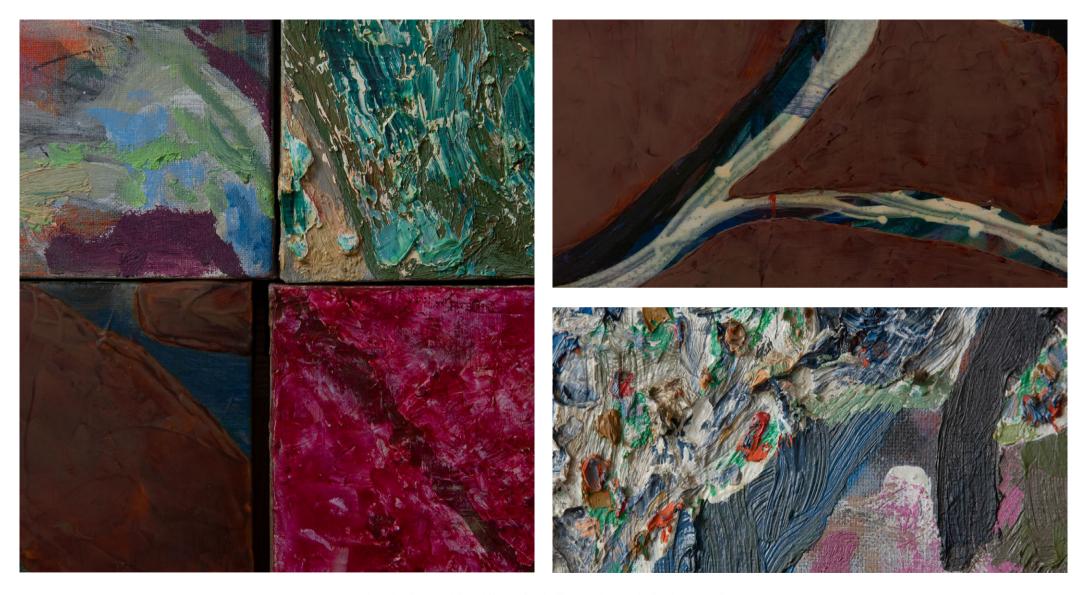


ARTWORKS

with notes from the artist



After Hiroshige's fireworks and Linebacker 2 2011 - 2021 | oil and acrylic on canvas | 235 x 186 cm



detail views: After Hiroshige's fireworks and Linebacker 2

This work belongs to an early experiment in which I view a completed painting as an object. When the painting is placed in a collage, separated from and interacting with other independent paintings or objects, it brings forth a sense of continuity, development or even transformation within itself.

The painting is inspired by Hiroshige's fireworks painting and the U.S.'s Linebacker II operation when the country bombed North Vietnam during the Christmas of 1972. New year fireworks were a popular theme in Japanese art but Hiroshige's work stands out as the artist focused on the depiction of the sky and the vast surface of water juxtaposed against a tiny crowd of sightseers. In his painting *Fireworks at Ryōgoku Bridge*, from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (1858), one sees only a descending trail of fireworks that almost reaches the end of its trajectory. It is, perhaps, how it feels to be alone amidst a bustling crowd — a muted melancholy amidst joy. This harkens back to my post-war childhood nights as I watched fireworks.

My painting is composed of four components. Using the medium of collage, I want to evoke a scene in which I am both looking up at the sky and looking down from it at the same time.



Concerto for Oboe in D minor, Adagio by A. Marcello 2021 | oil on canvas | 180 x 150 cm







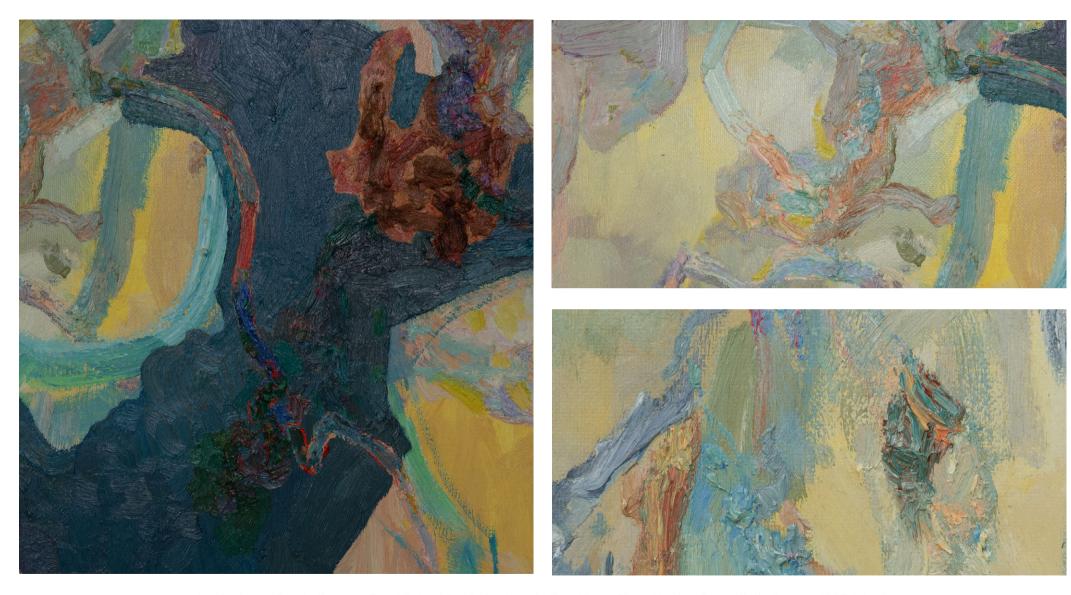
detail views:
Concerto for Oboe in
D minor, Adagio by A.
Marcello

This is my imagining of A. Marcello's musical interpretation of Bach's Concerto for Oboe in D minor. It is an expression of my rumination on Max Hastings' comment on some lines from The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram:

"If one day we find ourselves living amongst fragrant flowers of socialism, we shall remember this scene forever, remember the sacrifices of those who fight for collective justice." — The passages of the diary may sound as if they are repeating propagandist cliches, but in her context, she wrote with a soul full of emotions. (Max Hastings, Vietnam – An Epic Tragedy 1945–1975)



Pre-helicopter Era, Michael Rabin in the middle of Dong Thap Muoi or Bach Violin Sonata 1005 Adagio 2021 | oil on canvas | 195 x 260 cm



detail views: Pre-helicopter Era, Michael Rabin in the middle of Dong Thap Muoi or Bach Violin Sonata 1005 Adagio



Post-helicopter Era, Michael Rabin in the middle of Dong Thap Muoi or Bach Violin Sonata 1005 Largo 2021 | oil on canvas | 195 x 260 cm



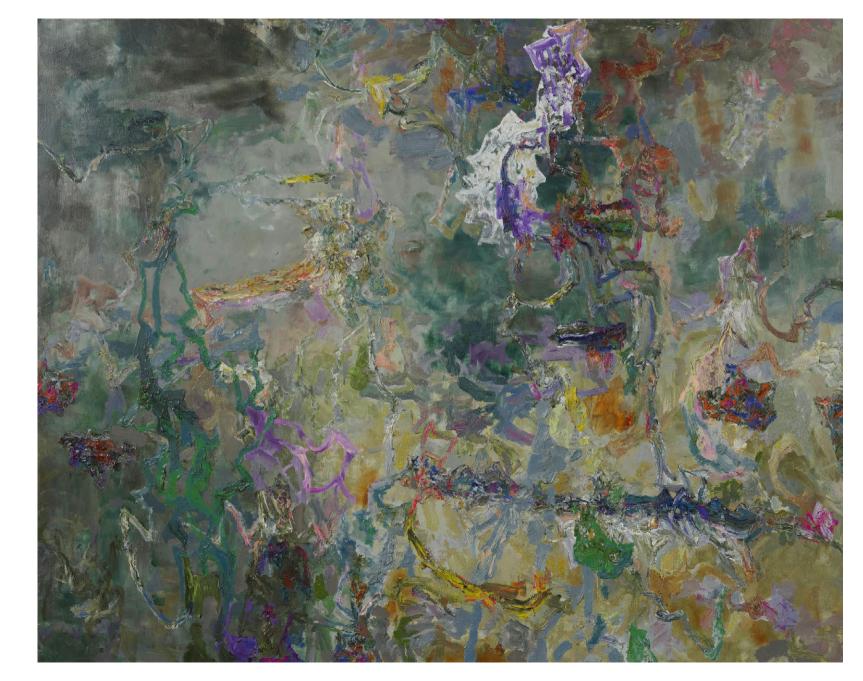
detail views: Post-helicopter Era, Michael Rabin in the middle of Dong Thap Muoi or Bach Violin Sonata 1005 Largo

The violinist Michael Rabin, whose career spanned from the 1950s to 1970s, coincided with the emergence of American post-war cultural representation, and the Indochina wars. Critics often compared Rabin's ethereal and bright music with the holy presence of God. As reflected in their autobiographies, the first-generation of U.S. soldiers joined the Vietnam War - what they had thought of as a noble mission - in high, youthful spirits and filled with eagerness.

A globally-celebrated musical genius, Michael Rabin toured around the world by airplane, which was not common for his time. This made him become a passionate fan of aeronautical technology.

The Vietnam War witnessed the beginning, and evolution of helicopter technology, with some models still in use in the present day. During his lifetime Michael Rabin had never been to Vietnam.

I imagine how Michael Rabin would play Bach's *concerto BWV 1005* in his signature style, amidst Dong Thap Muoi paddy field as helicopters, the symbol of this conflict, circle in the sky. Combining my impression of the music with my own imagination, the three parts of the concerto *Adagio*, *Fuga* and *Largo* are envisioned as three paintings depicting rise, chaos and calm.



Chopin Sonata No. 1 -Mr. Horst Faas' drifted lens tank 2021 | oil on canvas | 120 x 150 cm





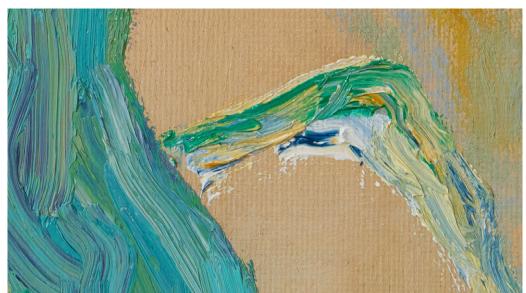


detail views: Chopin Sonata No. 1 -Mr. Horst Faas' drifted lens tank



Kubrick's Hue Scene or Midori Goto playing Bach's Chaconne 1004 2021 | oil on canvas | 200 x 195 cm







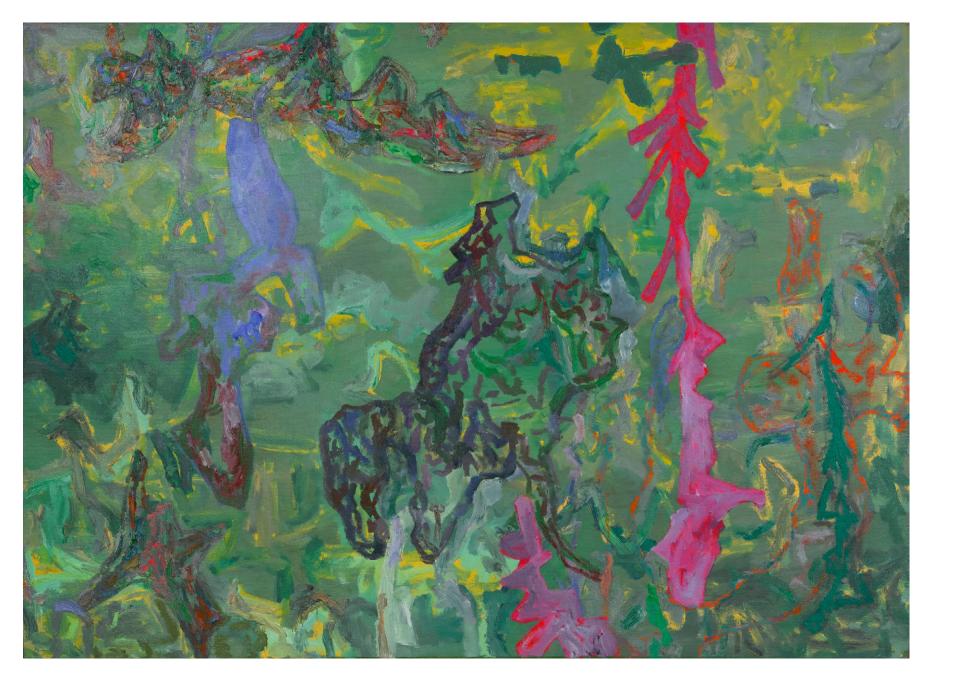
detail views: Kubrick's Hue Scene or Midori Goto playing Bach's Chaconne 1004

BWV 1004 was written for violin. The piece puts musicians to the test through which they manage to show off their unique interpretations. Written upon his wife's death, BWV 1004 is not just Bach's prayer — halfway through the piece, at its bridge, a heavenly dimension filled with love appears. Now the piece takes the form of a farewell before one moves towards the future.

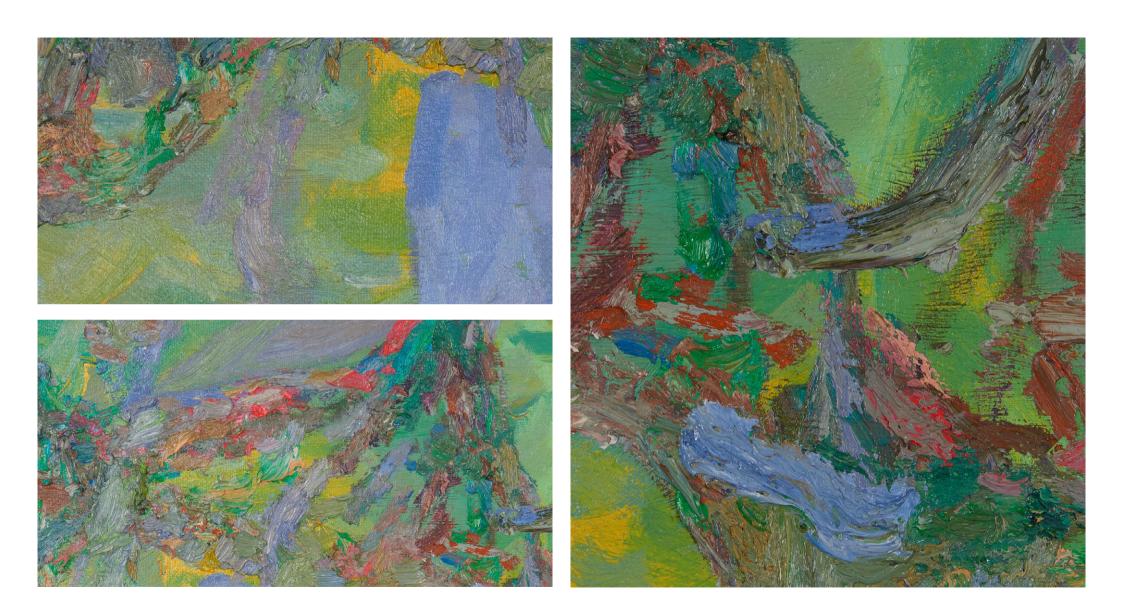
At a young age, Midori Goto moved to New York from Japan with her mother, also a violinist, who had just divorced Midori's father. She attended Juilliard under the tutelage of the renowned violinist Issac Stern. In her teens, she became a global violin phenomenon and the pride of Japan, her native country. In a documentary video in 1990, she told a 19-year-old Japanese female figure skating champion that despite everyone having their own ways to overcome obstacles, in the end, the only thing they could do is to submit to their fates.

Aside from her achievements, what her fans love is the unorthodox sound of Midori's violin. She deconstructs and restructures the rigid foundation of classical music. When she performs, her body and its movements become one with the violin.

The painting is inspired by Midori Goto's performance of Bach's *Chaconne* where emotional expressions become physically embodied with unexpected but elusive twists — like that of a Butoh dance, or the turn in the Hue montage from Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).



Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 1 -Ha Tuyen 2021 | oil on canvas 140 x 195.5 cm



detail views: Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 1 - Ha Tuyen

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 2 – Quang Tri 2021 | oil on canvas 150 x 195 cm





detail views: Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 2 – Quang Tri

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 1 – Ha Tuyen

When I was a kid, I often had to bring my challenging maths homework to the street corner near my house and ask for the solutions from my father's friend, a physics teacher. At that time, he was an unmarried middle-aged man who had just been discharged from the Sino-Vietnamese war. The uncle often spent a long time finding the answers, leaving me to explore his small room which was filled with many strange items that he brought back from his days at Xin Man fort. Sometimes, the problems might not be solved, but I would have the chance to hear him talking passionately about survival in the wild during his garrison: how to drink water, how to set simple but effective ethnic traps, and stories about the myths and superstitions of the minorities... He would end his stories with an affirmation about the wonders of life in the midst of nature.

People thought he was abnormal. His friends thought of him as a follower of Lao Tzu.

Influenced by the stories he told, my painting follows his astonishment when standing among the clouds at the top of the mountain where he randomly caught radio waves, which, at this time, were playing Prokofiev's music. I never heard him speak about fighting in the army.

Prokofiev Violin Concerto No. 2 – Quang Tri

This is my visualisation of running as informed by the tunes of *Violin Concerto No. 2* by Prokofiev. In history, there were many times when Quang Tri became the borderline between conflict zones witnessing upheavals and disturbance.



Bach 826 Courante 2021 | oil on canvas | 140 x 110 cm







detail views: Bach 826 Courante



On Soil On Water | 2018 | oil, acrylic and found objects on canvas | 154.5 x 233 cm







detail views: On Soil On Water





Lachrimae 2021 | oil on canvas | 120 x 150 cm







detail views: Lachrimae

and causes... a muted ensemble of chaos. Social distance or self-isolation reminds me of medieval sand forts, where John Dowland was situated when



Sunlight in the Garden - Xuan Loc 2020 | oil and acrylic on canvas on board | 30.5 x 40.5 cm





Sunlight in the Garden - Hue 2021 | oil and acrylic on canvas on board | 36.5 x 33.5 cm

Sunlight in the Garden - Quang Tri 2021 | oil and acrylic on canvas on board | 36.5 x 37 cm





Sunlight in the Garden - Quang Ba 2020 | oil on canvas | 35 x 25 cm

Sunlight in the Garden - Troi giat 2021 | oil and acrylic on canvas on board | 40.5 x 30.5 cm

One time at midday during the summer, while the country was still in lockdown, I recalled a similar day back in 1985. As I was browsing the book *Vietnamese Fine Art 1978* which featured *Sunlight in the Garden*, a gouache painting by artist Duc Hoa, suddenly there was an earthquake. That same year, Vietnam announced its change in currency.

Duc Hoa's Sunlight in the Garden reminded me of Thach Lam's short story of the same title — both of which gravitate towards the serenity of genesis. Under the guidance of French Post-Impressionist artist-professors at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (known as Vietnam University of Fine Arts today), modern art started to flourish in Vietnam. The school's legacy, as evidenced by its signature colour palette, has since influenced the practice of later generations.

Upon their arrival in Vietnam, these French artists were tremendously impressed by the meteorological conditions and climate of the North, as described by Jean Tardieu in his autobiography. It was only when in Indochina that the French artists would opt for their signature 'pickle water' palette in which an earthy yellow was used as the base. That style later widely influenced Vietnamese artists of the period. Not until six decades later did Nguyen Duc Hoa's *Sunlight in the Garden* strike me as a breath of fresh air, departing from the said "Indochinese" colour palette.

Along with inspirations from reading autobiographical accounts by Vietnamese authors that spur my imagination, the series is also characterised by a longing for the purity of 'sunlight in the garden'. These abstract landscape paintings were created with specific places in mind, implying the emotions and fates of people that are thought to exist as individuals but are actually connected through invisible networks.

CV

EDUCATION

1996 Graduated from the Hanoi Fine Arts University, Hanoi, Vietnam

SELECTED SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2022	Lachrimae, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2018	with a necessary dose of surrealism to go through the spaces between men, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2017	Spaces between men, Affinity Art Gallery, Hong Kong
2016	Between Two Mysteries, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2015	1972-2015: Works by Hoang Duong Cam and Trong Gia Nguyen, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	Asia Now, with Galerie Quynh, Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris, France
2013	The day before the Renaissance, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2012	Tales of Chewing Gum, Noodle Soup, and Other Stories, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2011	Ideal Fall, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	Lightning in U Minh Forest, Art Hong Kong 11, with Galerie Quynh, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong
2010	Representation in the meaning of a metaphor for a forest as endoscopy / links between locations, Project Space and Spare Room Gallery, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
2007	Projecting into the night what has gone with the dawn, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

2006	Fat-free Museum, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2005	Filename.disan, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2001	Square Eggs and Under the Covers, Goethe-Institut, Hanoi, Vietnam
1999	The Wedding, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020	NO RAIN WITHOUT CLOUDS: Preserving Vietnamese Arts for the future, Vietnam Women's Museum, Hanoi, Vietnam
2019	in between days, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2018	The Cloud Atlas, François Schneider Foundation, Wattwiller, France
	Alluvium, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	LINES, Affinity Art Gallery, Hong Kong
2017	Sunshower: Contemporary Arts from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now, Mori Art Museum and The National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan
2016	Mirror-writing, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
2015	olio. v2, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	Eagles Fly, Sheep Flock: Biographical Imprints - Artistic Practices in Southeast Asia, curated by Khim Ong for Art Stage Singapore: Southeast Asia Platforms, Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore
2014	Being Present, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	in the shadow of appearances, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

	Freedom is the motorbike, Long Beach City College Art Gallery, Long Beach, CA, USA
	Vietnam Now: Changing Society, Canvas International Art, Amsterdam, Netherlands
2013	Electronic Pacific, SOMArts, San Francisco, CA, USA
2012	REVEALED CONCEALED: ALTERED ICONS, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	To Bring the World into the World, curated by Biljana Ciric, Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada
	Subject Shall Remain Anonymous, curated by Jason Wee, Give Art Space, Singapore
	Art Hong Kong 12, with Galerie Quynh, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong
2011	vis-à-vis, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	36 Reasons Why We Still Need Superman, Casa Tres Patios, Medellín, Colombia and Instituto Superior de Arte, Havana, Cuba.
2010	<i>VideoZone 5</i> , the 5 th International Video Art Biennial, various galleries, Israel, Daegu Photo Biennial, Daegu, South Korea
	Connect: Art Scene Vietnam, ifa gallery, Stuttgart, Germany
	On Each Milestone, Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange, Hanoi, Vietnam
	Arts and Cities, Aichi Triennale 2010, Nagoya, Japan
2009	Connect: Art Scene Vietnam, ifa gallery, Berlin, Germany
	MAX ART FEST 2009, Manifest of Oblivion, Zagreb, Croatia
	Intersection Vietnam: New Works from North and South, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore
	Magnetic Power, ASEAN - Korea Contemporary Photography & Media Art Exhibition, Coreana Museum of Art and Gallery Jijihyang, Seoul, Korea

2008	Post-Doi Moi: Vietnamese Art After 1990, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
	Intrude: Art & Life 366, Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China
	Strategies from Within - an Exhibition of Vietnamese and Cambodian Contemporary Art Practices, Ke Center for the Contemporary Arts, Shanghai, China
	The Third Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
2007	Migration Addicts (a collateral event of the 52 nd Venice Biennale), Rokovoko by Mogas Station, Caffè Aurora, Piazza San Marco, Venice, Italy
	Thermocline of Art. New Asian Waves, ZKM I Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, Germany
	Rokovoko (Mogas Station), City of Expiration and Regeneration, 2007 Shenzhen - Hong Kong Biennale, Shenzhen, China
2006	Liberation - 1st chapter of Saigon Open City, Ho Chi Minh City Fine Art Museum, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	Belief, Singapore Biennale 2006, AART publication and installation by Mogas Station, Singapore
2005	Out of Context, Huntington Beach Art Center, Huntington Beach, CA, USA
	600 Images/60 Artists/6 Curators/6 Cities, simultaneous exhibitions in venues in Bangkok, Berlin, Los Angeles, London, Manila and Ho Chi Minh City
2004	Best Regards and Be Resolved to Win (2002), Asia Now, Gyeonggi Arts Center, Suwon City, Korea
2002	The Wedding (1999), ConversAsian, National Gallery, Grand Cayman Island
2000	God Creates Elephants, God Creates Grass, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam
1999	Dialogue, Centro Cultural General San Martin, Buenos Aires, Argentina

MISCELLANY

2012 - present	Founding member of Xem publication
2006 - 2008	Member of Mogas Station, a Vietnam-based artists' collective
	Editor of A.ART magazine on contemporary art and culture
2002 - 2005	Co-founder of Vietnam Visual Arts, a non-profit information website on contemporary art worldwide

COLLECTIONS

Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

Post Vidai, Geneva, Switzerland and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

RMIT University Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, Vietnam



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