



GALERIE QUYNH CONTEMPORARY ART

May 24 - July 7, 2018

TRƯỜNG CÔNG TÙNG
between
fragmentation
& wholeness
curated by Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran

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Introduction

Galerie Quynh is excited to present *Between Fragmentation and Wholeness* – an exhibition of new work by Truong Cong Tung. Curated by Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran, this is Truong's first solo exhibition at the gallery and the first comprehensive show of his work in almost a decade.

Between Fragmentation and Wholeness refers to *The Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), a book authored by David Bohm, a distinguished physicist in the field of quantum theory. Influential beyond his own discipline, notably in philosophy and art, Bohm was recognized for his application of physics on the rationale of human consciousness and the universe. According to Bohm, the universe has an implicate order in which it enfolds and unfolds to extend into infinite dimensionality. Everything is connected within this unbroken wholeness and any individual element can reveal detailed information about every other element in the universe. Truong's exhibition is an analogy to Bohm's concept. It is his consciousness of the wholeness of his inner self and his surroundings that unfolds fragmented elements of the self, family, region, country and extensively the world. Truong makes sense of the nonsense, connecting the non-aligned, and entwines it through time and space to create a nonlinear wholeness.

Between Fragmentation and Wholeness invites viewers to enter Truong Cong Tung's multidimensional reality through three main axes in the gallery space: vertically – with the ruptures in urban planning and propagated doctrine; horizontally – with mystical human-altered landscapes in agrarian territories; and diagonally – with a mirage of blazing images extracted from the virtual domain. The bodies of works appear in various mediums from collaged sculptures of natural and manmade objects to video installations and layered drawings in light boxes. All contribute to a powerful language of semiotics – of self-indicated signs – which moves beyond the mimesis of nature. Departing from his own personal context of the Central Highlands and Saigon, Vietnam, Truong Cong Tung proposes an understanding of the totality of humanity where our linear modernization unfolds, mimics, adjusts and then disrupts nature – not just the natural world but also the human desire for collectivism and harmony.

About Truong Cong Tung

Born in Dak Lak, Central Highlands in 1986 into a Vietnamese agricultural family residing among various ethnic minority groups, Truong Cong Tung later moved to Saigon in his late teens. Truong has witnessed the country's rapid changes in economics, politics, and society and the impact on the environment in both rural and urban areas during its modernization process – one that pivots on the morphing of nature in the interests of human desire and demand. His artistic practice is an explication of the absurdity of human reasoning and treatment of our natural surroundings based both on his personal experience and through his research in the fields of science, cosmology and philosophy. Truong's bodies of works are often multilayered and consist of material manipulations of both natural and human origins. They appear as coherent narratives, yet are tacitly perplexing with their individual parts of manoeuvred images, information, fiction and facts.

Truong Cong Tung's work has been exhibited in prestigious institutions such as Para Site, Hong Kong; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland (July – October 2018); Kadist, San Francisco; Bildmuseet Umea University, Sweden; Osage Art Foundation, Hong Kong; Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA, USA; and Kunstverein Gottingen, Germany. Truong has also participated in art festivals and biennales such as Dhaka Art Summit 2018, Bangladesh; Tapei Biennale 2016, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan; Koganecho Bazaar 2014, Yokohama, Japan; and SeMa Biennale Media City 2014, Seoul, Korea. Truong began his career working with some of Vietnam's most important not-for-profit spaces supporting critical and experimental practice such as San Art (Ho Chi Minh City), Himiko Visual Salon (Ho Chi Minh City) and Nha San Collective (Hanoi). He is also a member of Art Labor (founded in 2012), a collective working between the visual arts, social and life sciences in order to produce alternative non-formal knowledge via artistic and cultural activities in various public contexts and locales.

About Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran

Based in Saigon, Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran is a curator, writer and member of the collective Art Labor. She is currently Curator and Director of Post Vidai – the world’s largest collection of contemporary Vietnamese art located in Geneva and Saigon. Tran was previously Assistant Curator at Sàn Art and Assistant Curator at Saigon Open City (curated by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Gridthiya Gaweewong). Her curatorial practices aim to go beyond the mere aesthetic value of art and consider art as catalyst, which uses visual language to interpret, question, and narrate multiple spheres of a topic. She focuses on collaborative labor between visual art and other disciplines, from natural and social sciences to business, design and fashion.

Tran has contributed research, texts and thoughts to various local and international publications, exhibitions and projects such as Istanbul Biennale 2015; Hugo Boss Asia Award 2015, Shanghai; *2084* (2012) with Pelin Tan and Anton Vidokle; *Digitizing the Archival Materials of Blue Space Contemporary Arts Centre* for Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong; World Biennale Forum No. 1, Gwangju, Korea; SYNAPSE – International Curators’ Network, HKW, Berlin; and several solo and group shows for young emerging artists in the region. As a member of Art Labor, Tran has participated in exhibitions and residencies at CCA-NTU Singapore, CCA Warsaw, Times Museum Guangdong, and Centre Pompidou Paris.

WORKS



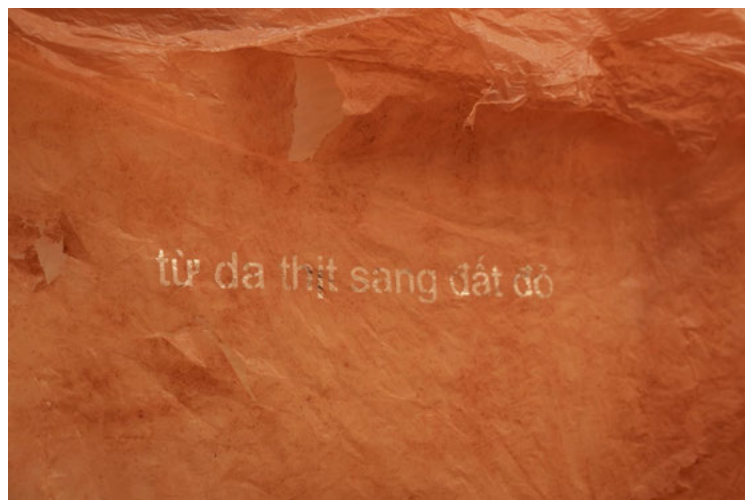
Traces of Infinity

2018 – present

plastic bags, soil, coffee tree roots, funeral flower frames, beehive, satellite dish, antenna, prayer beads, cicada shells, chandelier arm, time, weather, and other media

dimensions variable







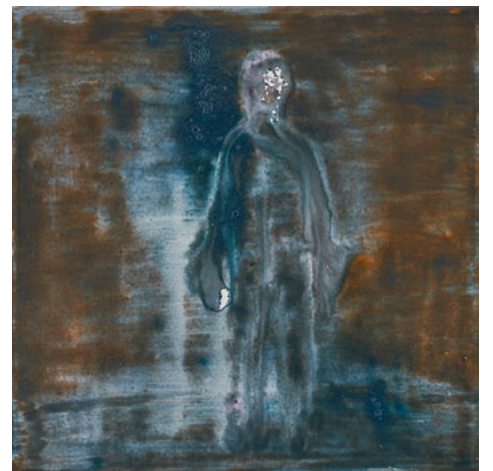


Land of Dreams

2012 - 2014

glaze on ceramic tiles

various sizes: 20 x 20 cm, 25 x 25 cm, 25 x 40 cm, 30 x 56 cm, 30 x 60 cm and 40 x 40 cm







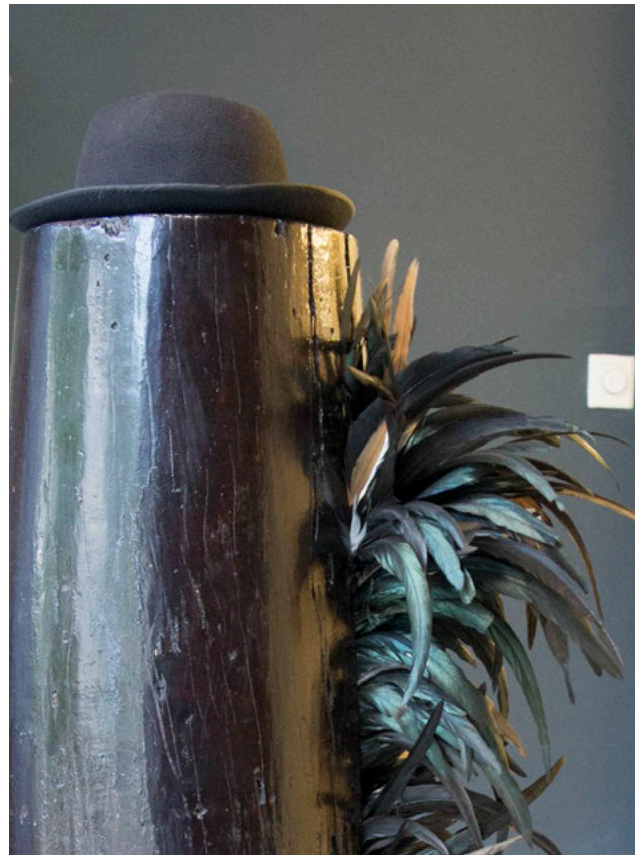


on becoming...? something is missing here #1

2018

honeycomb, glass jar, honey, branches, painted figurine, insects, time, weather
dimensions variable





on becoming...? something is missing here #2

2018

wood, gold mesh fabric, feathers, felt hat, speaker

150 x 46 x 50 cm



on becoming...? something is missing here #3

2018

wood, real money, fake money, LED lights, bells

102 x 50 x 40 cm



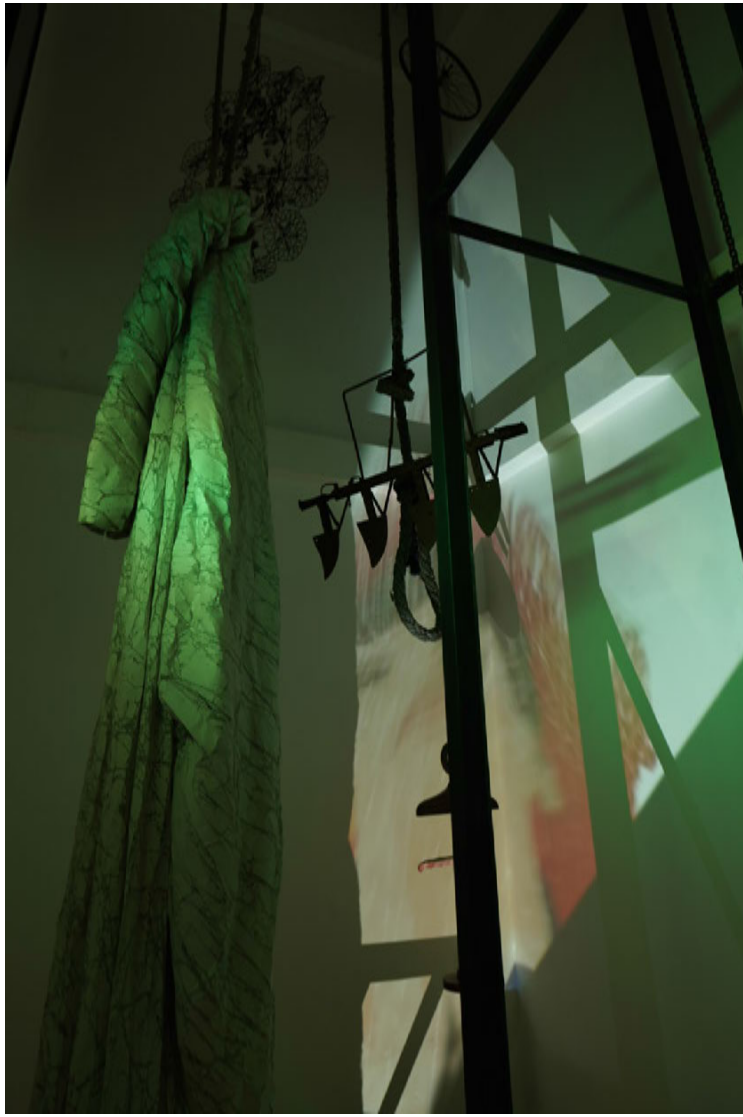


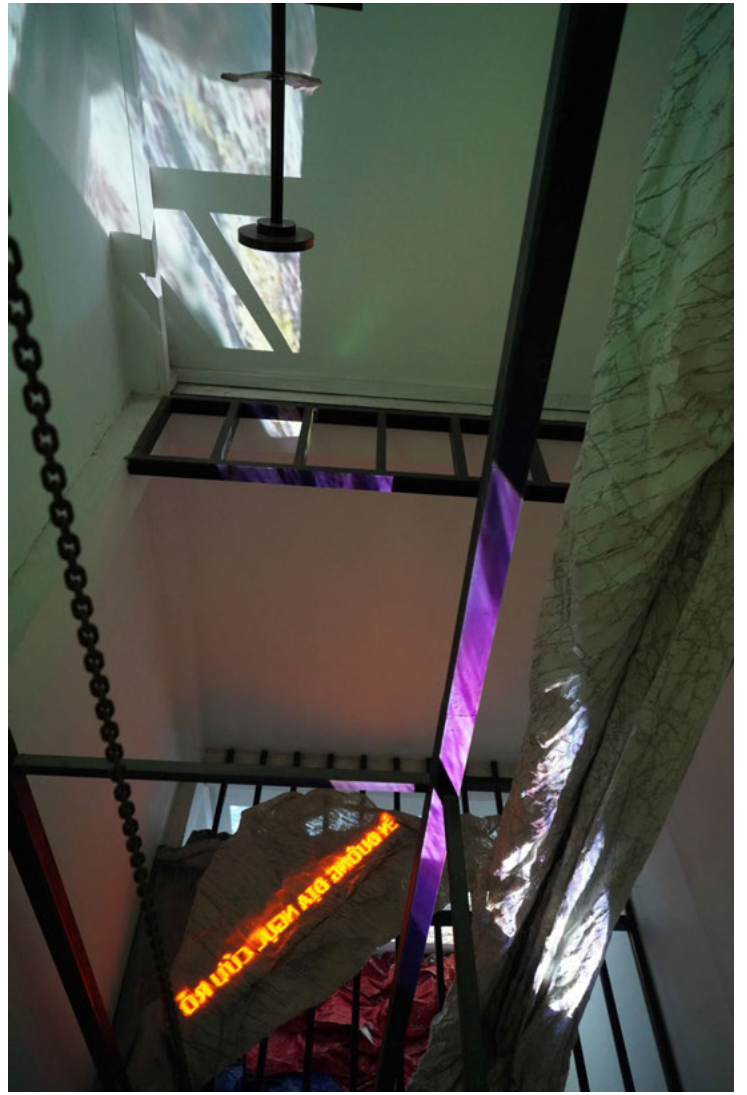
Portrait of a deformed symbol. Lost and found

2014 - present

2-channel video with sound, LED signs, discarded posters, found metal, soil, bones, time, weather and other media

dimensions variable, video: 4' 48"









*when the virtual becomes the actual
and the actual becomes the virtual*

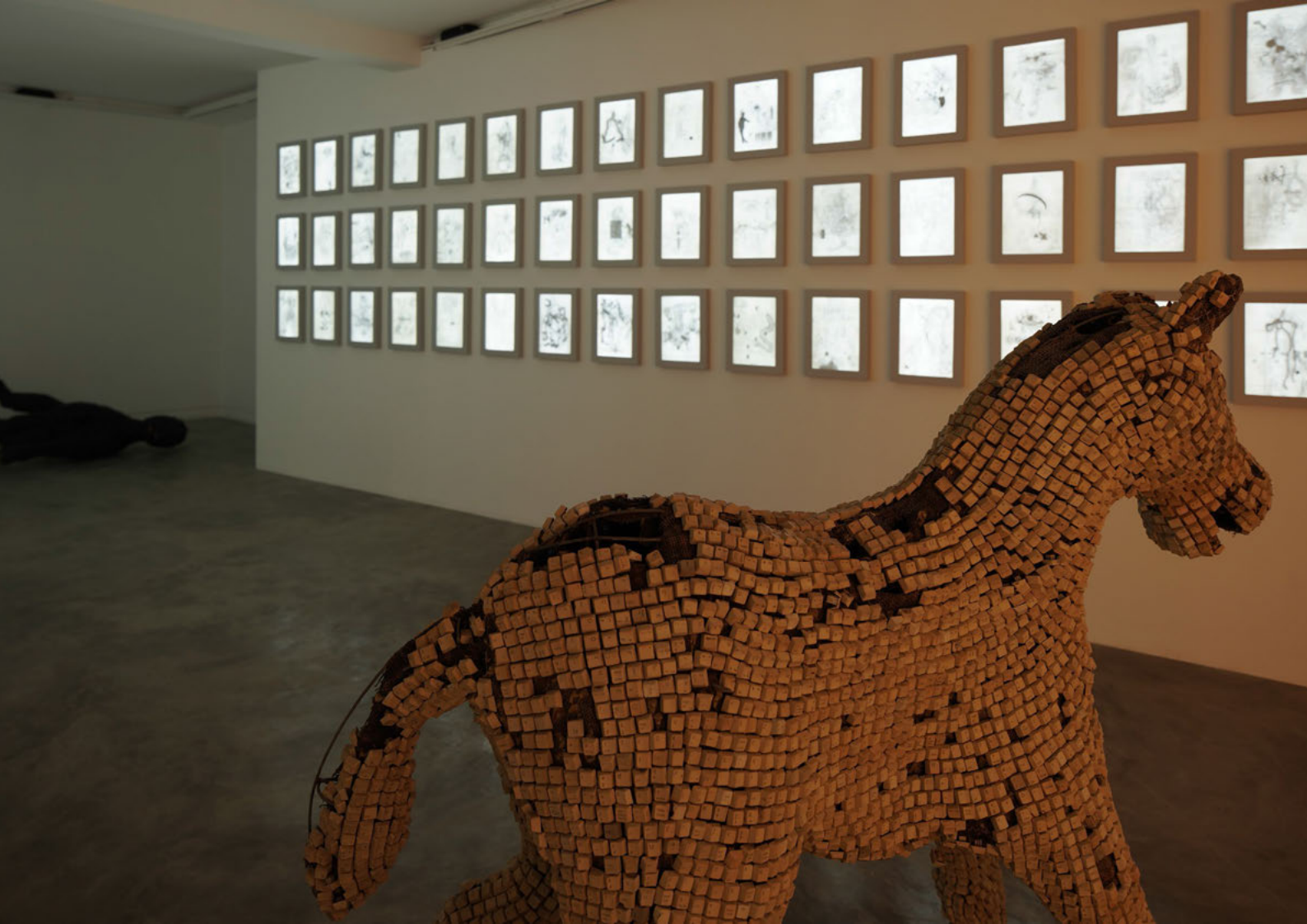
2018

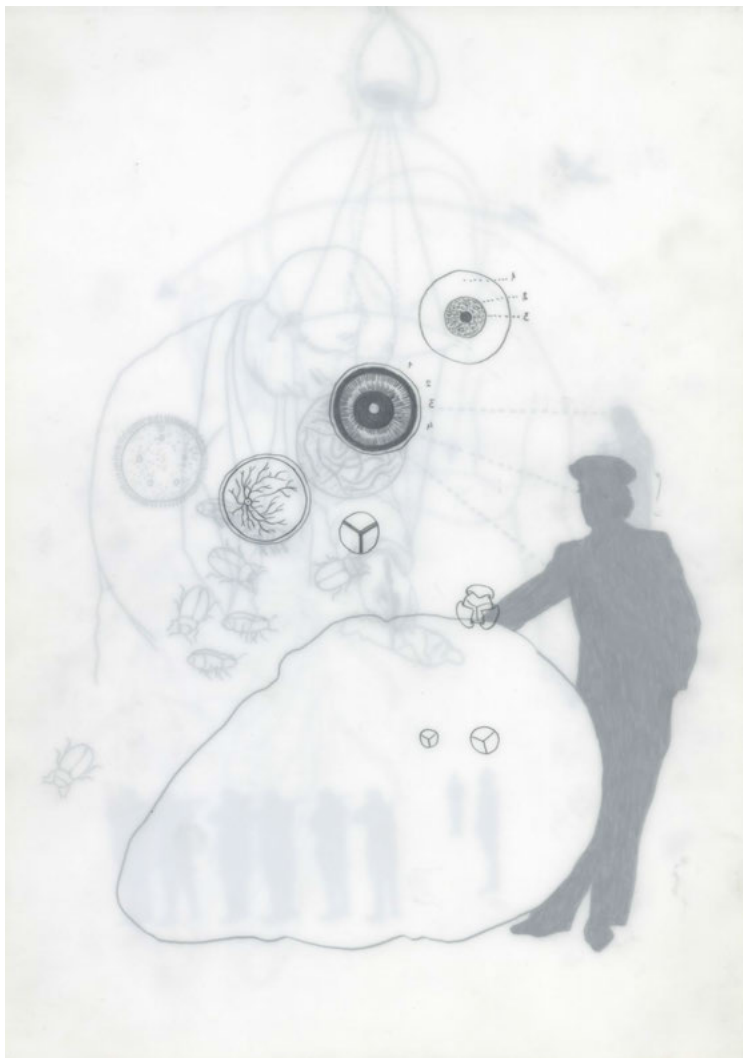
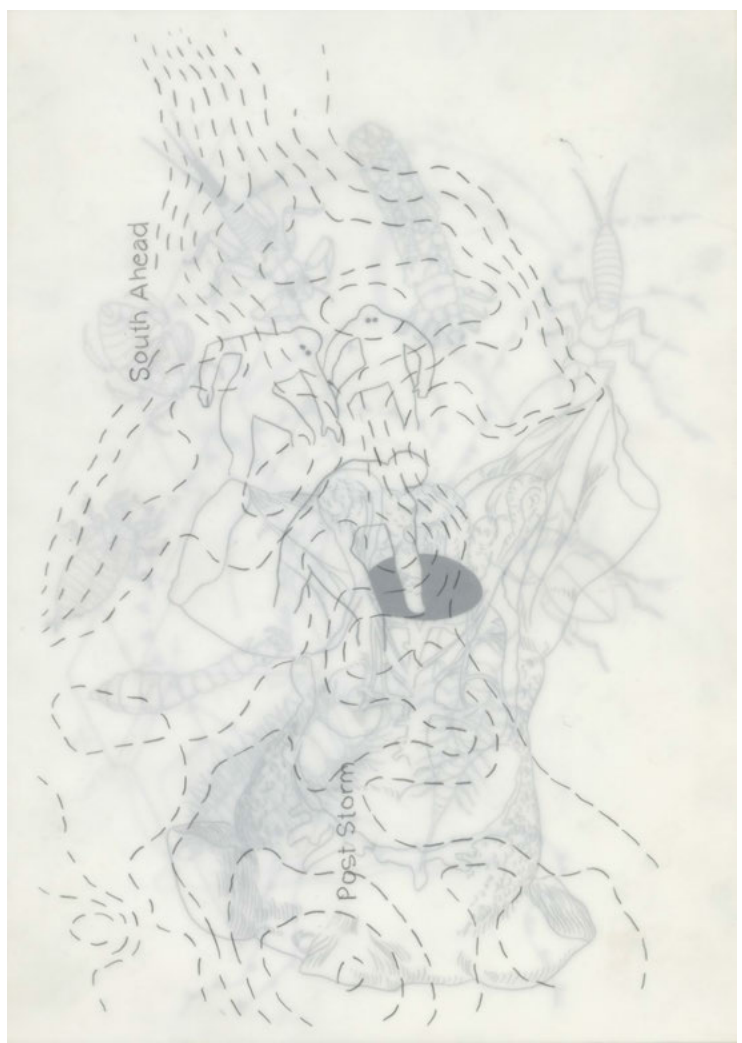
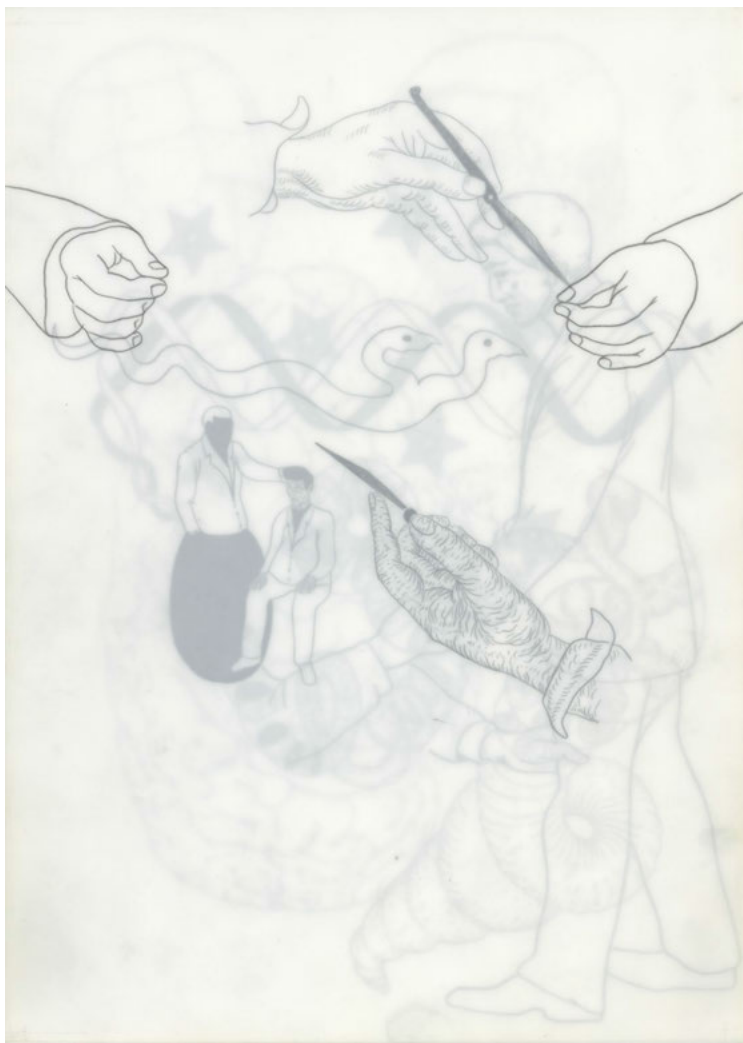
iron, keyboard keys, canvas, time, weather
approx. 130 x 150 x 40 cm each

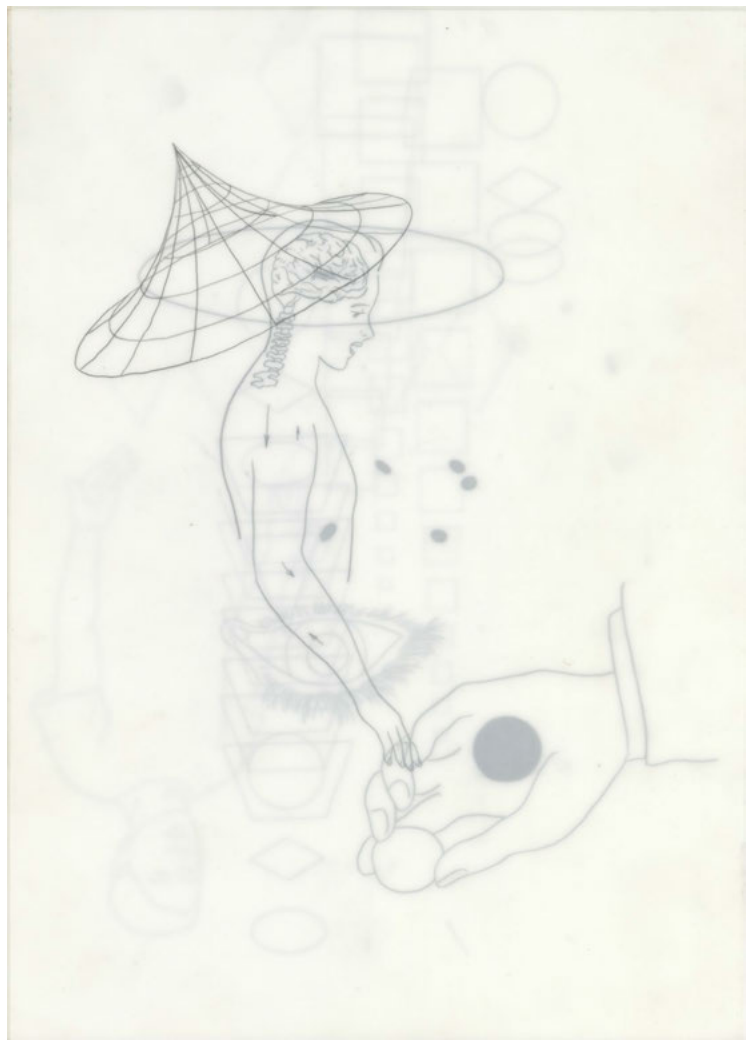
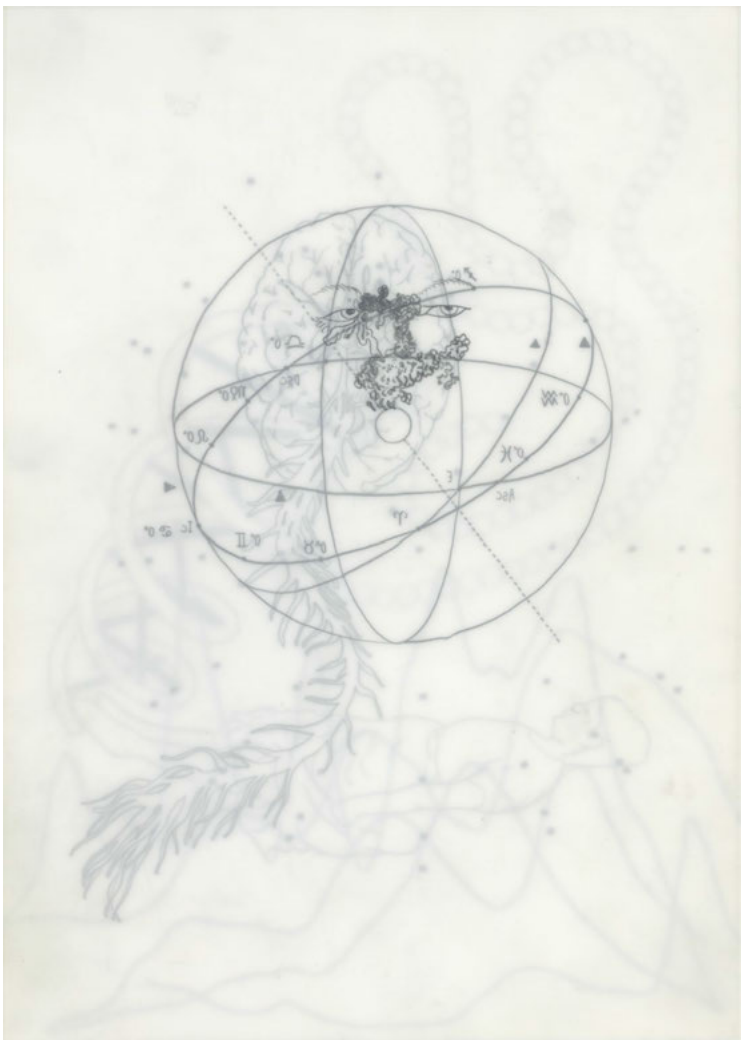
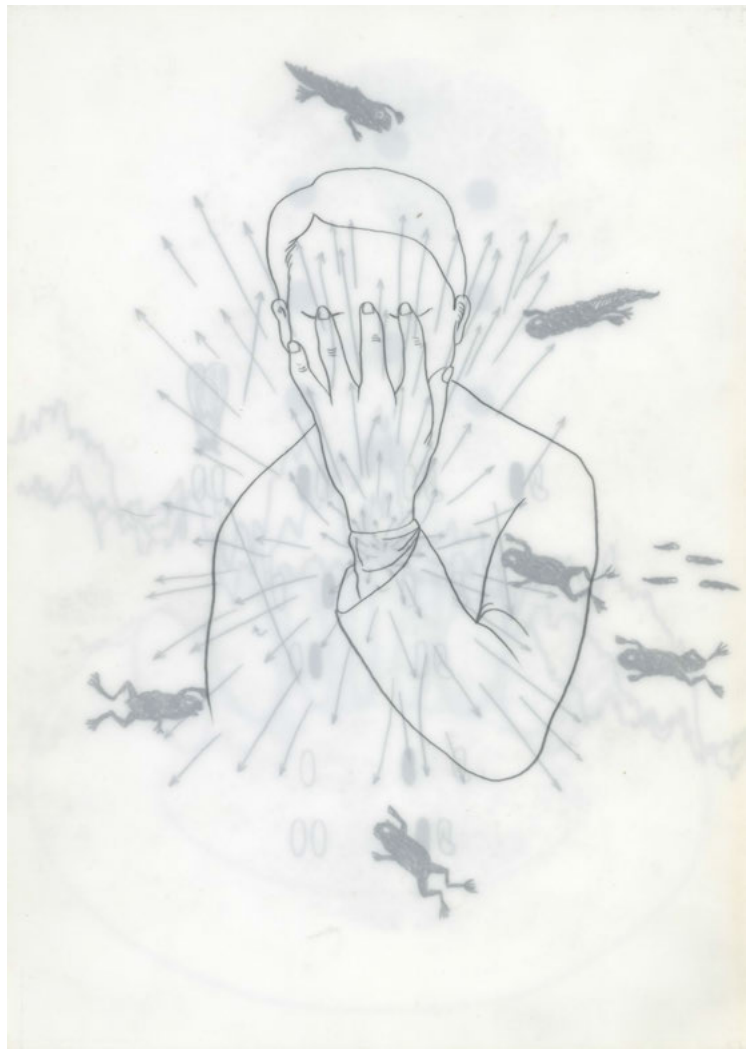




Maya within the circle of time
2015 - present
pencil and print on Mylar, light box
39 x 27 cm each (96 light boxes)









The Flags of Red Soil

2017 - 2018

silk, red soil, water, insects, micro-organisms, time, weather, LED tubes

dimensions variable







Across the Forest

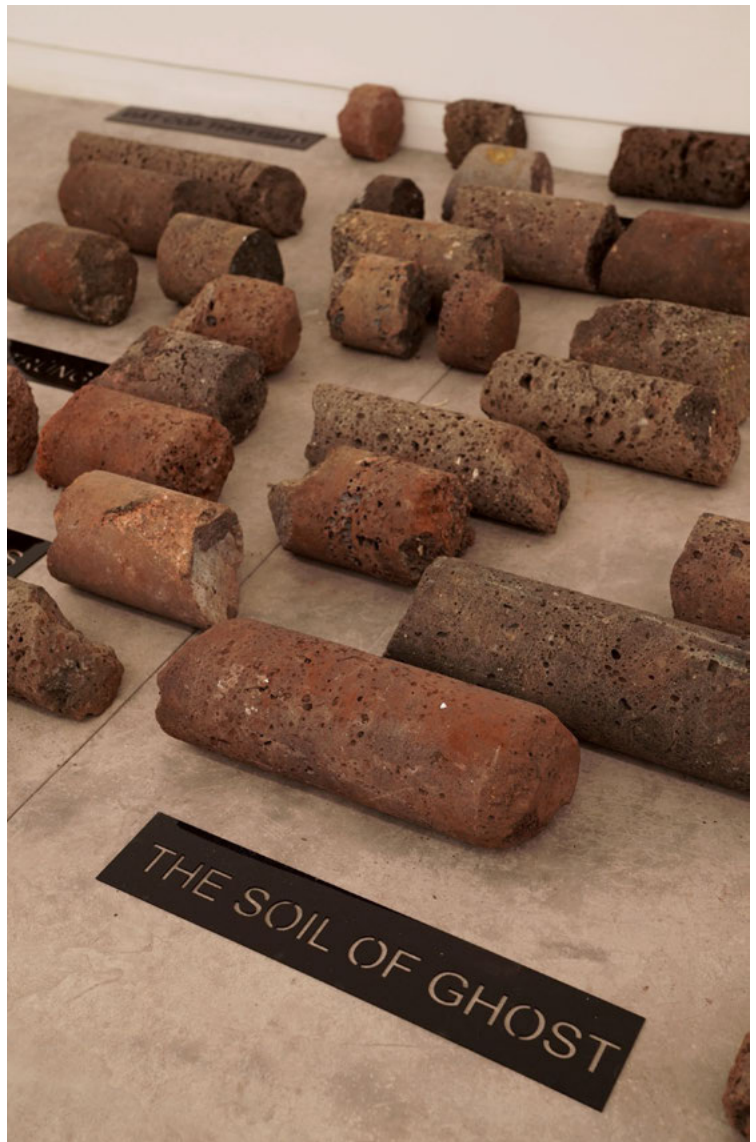
2014 - present

4-channel video with sound, soil, white turmeric powder, plexiglass stencils, cloth, LED lights, TV, wood, termite nest

dimensions variable, video: 18'









ARTS-CENTRE

Artwork Descriptions

texts by Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran

TRACES OF INFINITY (2018 – present)

'Traces of Infinity' is an impromptu of objects in the gallery space, consisting of reddish brown nylon covering the walls and a giant sculpture hanging in the air. Inspired by materials collected from the Central Highlands of Vietnam, Truong Cong Tung creates a surrealistic scenario reminiscent of this sacred land where nature blends with artificiality and order blends into chaos.

The layers of plastic were originally fertilizer packaging, left on the plantations, worn by weather and insects. Over time, they became dyed with the typical red color of the basalt soil of the Central Highlands. It is this fertile soil that nurtured the bygone forests, now replaced by a number of industrial plants. It is soil that haunts; once it clings to something, it persists. The eternal nature and soil devour and hold tightly the temporary plastic, abandoned to the environment. Plastic sheets gradually become artificial skin, grafting nature into their own body – beautiful as a painting. Rain, wind and natural temperature co-author with Truong Cong Tung to create the texture and color of this abstract series. Hidden among these 'soil skins' are the artist's golden poetic verses musing on the history and evolution of mankind. Where prehistoric people used soil to draw their history in caves, the artist now uses metallic ink to tattoo the cycle of the universe and human beings on this hybrid-soil-skin layer.

Not only the soil is hybrid – the sculpture of this installation also derives from an obscure entity: 'the hybrid ghost'. Truong Cong Tung is obsessed with the figure of the 'hybrid ghost' from an oral myth in the Central Highlands – it separates its head to go to eat at night; it eats everything non-stop because it has no stomach to feel full. The coffee root is the ghost's head. When the root was alive, it exhausted the soil of the bygone forest. After being uprooted, it swallows all the natural, household and industrial objects surrounding it: tiny LEDs, microphones, USBs, a beehive, cicadas shells, a satellite dish, funeral flower frames, etc. The sculpture is the artist's experiment in hybridizing fragmented objects to create a narrative and living whole.

LAND OF DREAMS (2012 – 2014)

Truong Cong Tung's venture into the psyche first started with abstract oil painting. Later he experimented with glaze on ceramic tile with the series 'Land of Dreams'. Ceramic painting, as a creative medium, requires the artist to predict what might happen to the glaze's chroma, strokes and surface during the firing process. Truong Cong Tung envisages the transformation during the creative process. The mental images in the artist's daydreaming mind become unpredictable shapes and forms in the final artwork. Obsessed with illusion, in this current series Cong Tung paints scenes that merge abstract and figurative images. Hazy, indefinite depictions reflect the fragmented memories of his subconscious dreams, as well as the alluring mysteries inspired by myths, folk tales, rumors and even daily newspapers.

ON BECOMING...? SOMETHING IS MISSING HERE (2018)

These three sculptures are another impromptu of Truong Cong Tung made by collecting and connecting unrelated elements of his surroundings into harmonic and logical semantics. Each sculpture is composed of old wooden tree trunks that have been cut and carved out, then stuffed with sacred or pseudo-sacred objects. They are simultaneously historical and industrially modern owing to the appearance of items such as LEDs, paper money, metal chains and a TV set. They appear mysterious and animate as if they could move and chase us.

PORTRAIT OF A DEFORMED SYMBOL. LOST AND FOUND (2014 – present)

Taking the vertical axis as a metaphor for urban architecture, this installation – part of a larger project called ‘Another Place Across The River’ – is a collection of Saigonese urban myths. Urban myths do not necessarily only come from ‘human characters’; forgotten objects also reflect a peculiar history of the land – where their life cycle retains the traces of the impact of both humanity and nature. Here, ‘material myths’ are collected primarily in District 2, where the reformation process of urban space is most apparent: from swampland to semi-urban and then back to swampland, waiting for the future megalopolis. ‘Material myth’ lies in the torn billboards with fading pictures, advertising slogans or propaganda statements, which used to be hung effulgently by the river. The plethora of scattered iron pieces were metal-detected and dug up to reveal their previous lives. Door bolts, rivets, scale weights, warheads, spears, knives, working tools, etc., count among the things that once contributed to the daily life of a community – now becoming waste to recycle. As man-made objects, they last longer than a human’s life cycle. Despite being fragmented, their bodies remain in places where even humanity cannot withstand. These anonymous and worthless objects create an animate world in a landscape lacking human beings. Their absurd world exists in parallel and in opposition to the metropolis full of the sound and movement of people on other side of the Saigon River.

WHEN THE VIRTUAL BECOMES THE ACTUAL AND THE ACTUAL BECOMES THE VIRTUAL (2018)

The white and black horses appear as characters who have strayed out of the virtual world of the drawing light boxes into reality. Their unusual flesh, made from computer keyboard keys, occasionally exposes their inner iron bones. They are fictional machines that have been injured, one standing unsteadily and the other flipping to the floor. This pair of horses is in fact two items that Truong Cong Tung found in an abandoned amusement park in Saigon, where people were immersed in the fantasy of imaginary worlds and the illusion sat adjacent to reality. Now the artist brings them here, creating another virtual scene for these two strange entertainers’ next life.

MAYA WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF TIME (2015 – present)

In his drawing light box series ‘Maya within the circle of time’, Truong Cong Tung collects thousands of pictures from the Google Image search engine through his virtual exploration into power and the supernatural, transforms them into black and white drawings on semi-transparent Mylar paper and then layers eight sheets of these drawings per light box. Cong Tung named this series after Maya – which in Sanskrit means constantly morphing illusion. Maya is a metaphor for the escape from and transcendence of the original contexts and meanings of the images, which can support multiple interpretations in our current frenzied era of media. In this installation, half of the light boxes contain layers of original drawings and the other half on the opposite wall contain prints made of scans of the original. The light boxes create a glowing world of chaotic absurdity where discrete figures and symbols entwine to remove the chasm between the sacred and the profane, between the authentic and the reproduction.

THE FLAGS OF RED SOIL (2017 – 2018)

Continuing the process of letting nature intervene with objects, Truong Cong Tung buried silk rolls in the ground of his family garden and plantation in Gia Lai Province and then abandoned them to the whims of nature for several months. Every silk thread absorbed the distinct red color of the Central Highlands. Depending on the burial spot, groundwater, ants, termites, and germinating seeds, each silk roll developed a unique identity. The installation room is a quiet place creating harmony between forms made by nature, the texture of the silk and the man-made light tubes. This scene appears like a visual poem composed of verses with an architectural structure from abstracted materials.

ACROSS THE FOREST (2014 – present)

The installation 'Across the Forest' is a complex perspective on the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Confronting the mighty nature, but not wanting to be swallowed by it, Truong Cong Tung deliberately spreads many layers of images to filter out the visual power of the landscape. Avoiding stereotypical depiction of the exotic aesthetics of this land, Tung uses the moving image as "performative archiving" – the term that art historian David Teh applies to artists, filmmakers, and other individuals using the moving image to archive an entity, yet allowing that entity to vary. The entity moves away from "stilled materialization", in other words, it is not objectified with consistent features to passively remain in the past. Specifically in this work, through four animate frames, Truong Cong Tung does not record the plateau territory with a desire to create any historical records for future nostalgia. His depictions are of fragmented scenes happening simultaneously in context: the hands gleaning rubber latex; miscellaneous things like a basin, an iron sheet, a jacket hung on a tree to scare off birds; family members watching TV, burning fields, digging, praying, sleeping. These are all incorporated into surrealistic pictures of nocturnal dreams: lightning flashes, mayflies becoming ghostly bodies of sparkling lights, or cityscape spectacles. The space is immersed in the image of unstoppable flying ants and the bizarre sounds of insects, thunder, howls, and other distorted sounds collected from documentaries about this area, musical mixes, etc. All things and happenings are present in calmness as they are inherent in the lives of people and nature here. At the same time, the ambiguity of the performative image and sound implies that the state of serenity becomes uncertain, as if this order could be disrupted. The combination of the moving images with objects including drilled soil blocks and scattered poems in the installation space creates a fictitious *mise-en-scène* that escapes from reality in order to think about reality. Perhaps because the reality has been eroded more than how we imagine the magnificent plateau.

PAST EXHIBITIONS



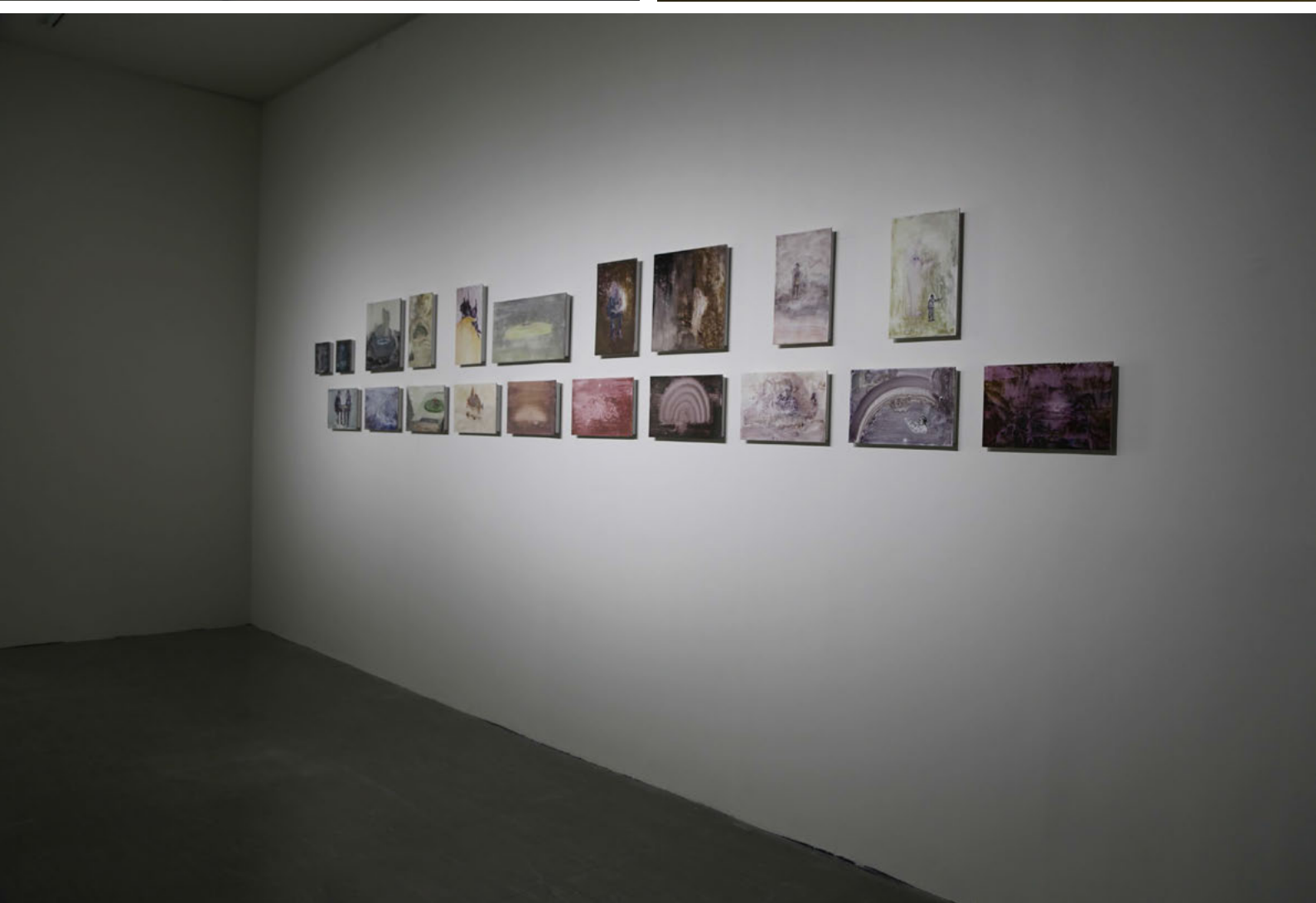
Soil and Stones, Souls and Songs
2017
Para Site, Hong Kong

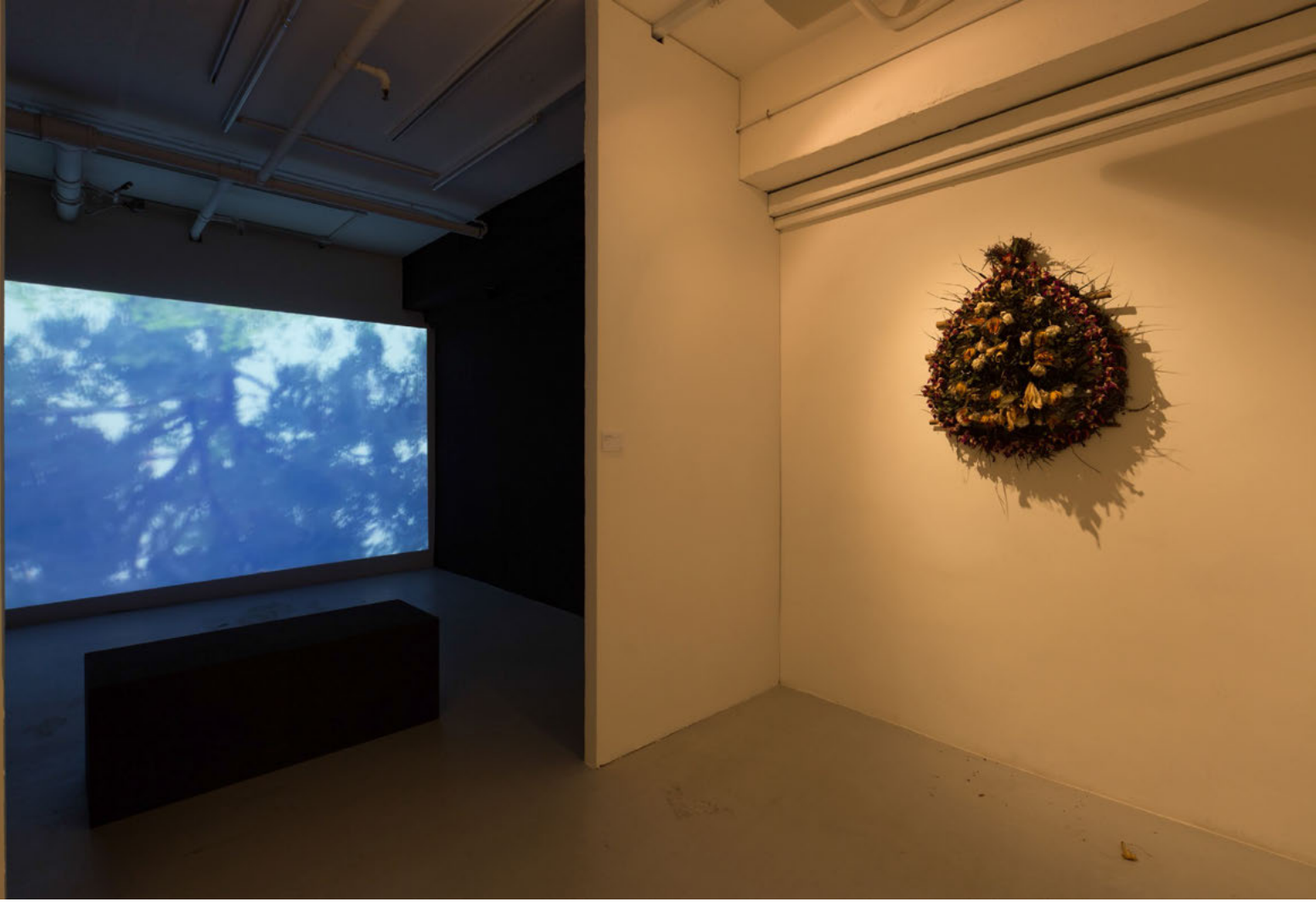


Taipei Biennale

2016

Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan





South by Southeast

2015

Osage Art Foundation, Hong Kong





SeMA Biennale Media City

2014

Seoul, Korea



BIOGRAPHY

TRUONG CONG TUNG

Born in 1986 in Dak Lak, Vietnam

Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City

EDUCATION

2010 BA Fine Arts, major in Lacquer Painting, Ho Chi Minh University of Fine Arts, Vietnam

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Between Fragmentation & Wholeness*, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

2016 *Across the Forest*, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam

2011 *Above The Sky, Under the Sea*, San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

2008 *The Scratch*, Himiko Visual Salon, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS / FILM FESTIVALS

2018 *A beast, a god, and a line*, curated by Cosmin Costinas, traveling exhibition. Presented at Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh; Para Site, Hong Kong; and Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland

Spirit of Friendship, The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

2016 - 2017 *Soil and Stones, Souls and Songs*, curated by Cosmin Costinas and Inti Guerrero, traveling exhibition presented with KADIST, Paris/San Francisco. Presented at Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila, Philippines; Para Site, Hong Kong; and Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok, Thailand

2016 *Taipei Biennale*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan

2015 *Mien Meo Mieng/ Contemporary Art from Vietnam*, curated by Tran Luong, Bildmuseet Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

South by Southeast, curated by Patrick Flores and Anca Verona Mihulet, Osage Art Foundation, Hong Kong

Magic Mountain, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA, USA

2014 *Ghosts – Spies – Grandmothers*, curated by Park Chan Kyong, SeMA Biennale Media City, Seoul, Korea

Haunted Thresholds: Spirituality in Contemporary Southeast Asia, curated by Lauren Reid, Kunstverein Gottingen, Germany

- Fictive Communities Asia*, curated by Shingo Yamano and Makiko Hara, Koganecho Bazaar, Yokohama, Japan
- 2013 *The Festival of Independents*, Charlie Dutton Gallery, London, England
Destruo, Nha San Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 2012 *South Country, South of Country*, curated by Nhu Huy, Zerostation, Vietnam and Outsiders Factory, Taiwan
- 2011 *Art Swap 1207*, 1207 Temporary Art Space, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Books Set Sail, in collaboration with Thao Nguyen Phan, Asia Art Archive and San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2010 *My Older Sister*, curated by Zoe Butt and Tammy Nguyen, San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Bolero, curated by Nhu Huy, Zero Station, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Giao Chi, Gallery of Applied Arts, HCM University of Fine Arts, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Naptime noise, curated by Tammy Nguyen, L'usine, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
169.7, 169.7, Apartment Gallery, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2009 *Young Painters*, HCM Fine Arts Association, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

AWARDS / FELLOWSHIPS / RESIDENCIES

- 2012 San Art Laboratory, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2014 Koganecho Bazaar, Yokohama, Japan

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

KADIST, Paris, France / San Francisco, CA, USA

Post-Vidai Collection, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam / Geneva, Switzerland