

BINH DANH: *Ancestral Altars*
September 7 – October 14, 2006

RECEPTION FOR THE ARTIST:

Thursday, September 7, 2006: 5.30 – 7.30 pm

SAN FRANCISCO – Haines Gallery is pleased to announce our second solo exhibition with California artist Binh Danh. While Danh's work to date has focused heavily on images of the Vietnam-American War, this exhibition exclusively utilizes portraits of prisoners from Tuol Sleng in Cambodia. The prison at Tuol Sleng was in operation from 1975 to 1979, during which time it is estimated as many as 20,000 prisoners were tortured and executed on this site. In 1980 the prison was turned into the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum of which several rooms are lined, floor to ceiling, with black and white photographs of prisoners. These photographs are the primary source material for this body of work.



The objects created from these found images remind one of old ghost-like photographs that have faded away over time yet retain the striking contrasts of the original form. Haunting portraits merge with organic forms representing our co-existence with nature through all cycles of life. Danh creates these works using his trademark technique referred to by the artist as “chlorophyll prints”. The leaves, still living, are pressed between glass plates with a negative or positive and exposed to sunlight anywhere from a week to several months. The fragile works are encapsulated and made permanent through casting them in solid blocks of resin. Danh has added an additional element to many of the works in the exhibition - a preserved butterfly specimen.

Danh speaks of his use of the butterfly alongside the Tuol Sleng images as follows: “For me butterflies are symbols of transmigration or metamorphism, a process that we are all a part of and from a Buddhist perspective the Khmer Rouge victims are part of this cyclical process (karmic cycle). After their violent death they return to the cosmos where there is no end or beginning of life but just a cycle.” These objects are direct memorials to the spirit of the Cambodian people and their stories. Danh believes history is a continuous part of life and that the retelling of stories is key to our continual understanding. He states, “History is alive and is not a past event. It is happening right now. Everyone’s history is our history. And history is in our blood stream and in the veins of plants. I am using the tools of science to help me articulate these complex concepts. Science for me is truth and knowledge, and history is about preservation. Art is the medium I use to express and to visualize my ideas.”

Binh Danh has been selected for inclusion in this year’s *California Biennial* opening October 1, 2006 at the Orange County Museum of Art. Danh is also currently included in the touring exhibition *The Missing Peace: The Dalai Lama Portrait Project*, now showing at the UCLA

Continued on back...

Fowler Museum of Cultural History. This exhibition will travel on to the Loyola University Museum of Art in Chicago (Oct 28, 2006 – Jan 15, 2007) and the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City (Mar 3 – Sep 4, 2007). Other upcoming exhibitions include *One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now*, opening at the Asia Society Museum in New York on September 8, 2006; *The Genius of Place* opening at the Art Museum of Western Virginia on September 22, 2006; and the 13th *International Noorderlicht Photofestival: Another Asia* opening September 9, 2006 at the Fries Museum in Leeuwarden, Netherlands.

A full color catalog with an introduction by Alison Nordström, Curator of Photographs at the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, accompanies this exhibition.

Images available upon request. For more information please visit www.hainesgallery.com.