HINTERLANDS

Sept 7th 2012 - September 29th 2012
Opening Reception Friday Sept 7th, 6pm - 8pm - Closing September 29th
Gallery Hours Wednesday - Saturday, 12 noon - 5pm, or by appointment

HINTERLANDS aims to merge faraway places. We have transported the hinterlands of Hanoi, through the art and artists that engage with Nha San Studio, Vietnam's longest running experimental arts space, to a kindred space in San Francisco - The Tenderloin National Forest / Luggage Store Gallery, where 40% of the surrounding neighborhood population is of Southeast Asian descent.

HINTERLANDS is The Luggage Store's first artistic exchange involving artists born, raised and based in Vietnam. **HINTERLANDS** constists of a three month residency project in which four artists work in collaboration. This project culminates in an exhibition of new works by two of Hanoi's most exciting young artists. Nguyen Phuong Linh and Nguyen Tran Nam join Lu Yang, a multi-media artist from Shanghai and Gabby Miller from The Bay Area.

Hanoi, which translates to "the hinterland between the rivers" is located in the Red River Delta, in the center of Northern Vietnam.

The hinterland is the uncharted areas beyond a coastal district or a river's banks. It is the part of a country where only a few people live and where the infrastructure is weak.

The hinterland is beyond what is visible and known, the back country of the mind, the not yet imagined. It is the far-a-way place.

www.luggagestoregallery.org
Graphic Design by Japheth Gonzalez

1007 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Tel. 425 255 5971

Luggage Store (top)
Nhasan Studio (bottom)

The Luggage Store - www.luggagestoregallery.org

The Luggage Store is one of San Francisco's leading nonprofit multidisciplinary arts organizations established in 1987, with three venues in downtown San Francisco; the luggage store (1007 Market Street), the luggage store annex (aka 509 Cultural Center) at 509 Ellis Street and the adjacent Tenderloin National Forest in Cohen Alley (a green community commons for for public art and social interventions). The luggage store's vital exhibition, performing arts, artist-in-residence, public arts and arts education programs are designed to broaden social and aesthetic networks by encouraging the flow of images and ideas between different cultural and economic communities.

Nhasan Studio - www.nhasan.org

Founded in 1998, Nha San Studio is the longest running experimental arts space in Vietnam. It is a Muong ethnic minority house on wooden stilts, transported piece by piece from the mountains in Hoa Binh province to the outskirts of Hanoi. Moonlighting as family home and business, Nha San circumvents the law requiring approval for any public exhibition in Vietnam by registering gatherings as private events. Nha San Studio can been understood in multiple ways as a hinterland of Vietnam – few inhabitants, distinct from but influenced by the state, and a space to go beyond the imagination.

Nguyen Phuong Linh. B. 1985, Hanoi. Self-taught. Lives and works in Hanoi.

My father collects, repairs and reconstructs traditional wooden houses, churches and temples. He shipped wood salvaged from a catholic church and the windows from a mental hospital in the countryside outside of Hanoi to Oakland for me. I am building a boat from this wood. Now I can row.

Nguyen Tran Nam. B. 1979, Hung Yen Province. 2003 BFA in Painting, Hanoi Fine Arts University. Lives and works in Hanoi.

In preparing to come to San Francisco I thought about what I should ship to America. What could the people who left Vietnam by boat bring with them? What did they expect in the new country? I decided to ship the basic elements that any human needs to survive: soil, water and earth - things that are both in the homeland and the new land.

Dất nước translates to soil and water. In Vietnamese these words together also mean country. At the end of this year my family will exhume my mother's bones for a tradition called bốc mộ - we unearth the bones in order to bury them in their final resting place. I measured my body and filled these dimensions with earth and water from San Francisco. This is how much space my body uses now. This is how much space I will use when I am buried underground.

Lu Yang B. 1984, Shanghai, China. 2007 BFA New Media, China Academy of Art. 2010 MFA New Media, China Academy of Art. Lives and works in Shanghai.

"POWER OF WILL 4.0: LAZER LEZ" was shot in a single night in Hanoi. Lu Yang directed Gabby's video performance in a set built in the porch of Phuong Linh's small apartment. Power of Will is a long term project started in 2008. Lazer Lez was made in December 2011 when I first time met charming Gabby. Caution, be careful of the shot by Gabby's charming laser!

Gabby Miller. B. 1985, Oakland. 2008 BA Anthropology, Reed College. Lives and works in The Bay Area.

Title: Logistics from Sea to Land (For Giang and Nam).
Materials: Section of a salvaged steel shipping container, one tube of oil paint from Giang's studio in Hanoi, 2012.

In 1967 the U.S. government contracted Sea-Land Service to begin sending container ships from The Port of Oakland to South Vietnam. In November of that year the 685-foot-long ship The Oakland delivered 609 thirty-five foot containers full of supplies to Vietnam. It is now estimated that 10,000 shipping containers fall into the sea every year. In these spillages a small number of containers wash ashore.

RETURN TO ROOTS

THE WORK OF A YOUNG VIETNAMESE AMERICAN ARTIST CHALLENGES THE STATUS QUO.

WORDS **DAVID LLOYD BUGLAR**

Rising artist Gabby Quynh-Anh Miller is hard to pin down. Raised in a mixed American-Vietnamese family compound in Berkeley, California, growing up she was surrounded by "more deer and skunk than contemporary art".

She first began visiting Vietnam in the early 1990s, as the single-party state began to open up to the world. In 2005, while in college, she bought a one-way ticket to Vietnam and found work in art galleries there. Later returning to school, she wrote her anthropology thesis on experimental art in Hanoi.

An important point in her artistic and personal life came when she met Nguyen Phuong Linh, one of the most important and exciting young Vietnamese artists of her generation. Since then, the pair have enjoyed a fruitful ongoing relationship – often acting as confidantes and collaborators.

She is also heavily invested in Nha San Studio in Hanoi. Established in 1998, Nha San was the first artist-led, non-profit alternative arts organisation in Vietnam. In a restrictive cultural and political environment, Nha San acts as an open space for artistic experimentation, transmission and exposure. It is positioned as an alternative to the commercial- and state-driven art realms.

With no intention of restricting herself to a signature medium (past works have been in the form of video, sculpture, painting, installation, and posters), Miller's current project sees her working with a steel shipping container. For *Logistics From Land and Sea (For Giang and Nam)*, she acquired a section of container that had been damaged at sea and painted it with oils borrowed from her friend's studio in the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi. For research, she studied the history of container cargo through field trips to Oakland Port.

The connection between the adoption of containerisation as a form of transport, and the ratcheting up of the Vietnam War by the US government are narrative arcs that are personal for the multi-ethnic Miller. Planning to transport art and artwork from Hanoi to the Bay area in the United States, the artist is reversing the route of containerships full of supplies for the Vietnam War that started leaving from these exact ports in 1967. *nhasanstudio.org*

(LOGISITICS FROM LAND TO SEA) IMAGE **CORINNA KARG**, COURTESY OF **SOMARTS CULTURAL CENTER.** (DREAM OF THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN BUT SOMEDAY WILL BE) IMAGE COURTESY OF **NGUYEN MINH THANH.** (NGUYEN PHUONG LINH AND GABBY MILLER) IMAGE **LU YANG LUYANG.ASIA**

Gabby Quynh Anh Miller

No, you are not dreaming
Nhasan Studio and the Emergence of Experimental Art in Hanoi

An Introduction to Nha San studio.

The main room is stacked high with buddhas. It is as if we are sitting inside a giant alter, treasure upon treasure, balanced on top of one another. One buddha wears sunglasses. Green tea is continuously brewed and poured. There are hives hand-fashioned out of wire and mud in the corners. Video monitors glow from inside them, one loops the slow flick of a tongue through teeth. This is part of the accumulated debris of past art shows here. Wooden benches and tables are lacquered and sanded in the workshop below us. The roof is thatch. The walls are mud. The house is elevated on stilts. Welcome to Nha San Studio: Vietnam's longest running experimental arts studio; where many of the first generation of artists from reconstruction era Vietnam have been nurtured, and taken flight.

The History of Nha San: How an experimental arts space grew in a flower field.

In 1992, Nguyen Manh Duc, a former soldier, graduate of the Hanoi Fine Arts University, and a collector and reproducer of antiques by trade: bought, disassembled, transported and rebuilt a Nha San, a Muong ethnic minority house on stilts. Duc transplanted the house from the mountains to a plot of land surrounded by flower fields and graves in the outskirts of Hanoi. Within a decade, the graves and flowers were exhumed and overlaid with a dense complex of government housing blocks, and this Nha San became known as Nha San Studio, or "Duc's House on Stilts".

Initially, Nha San doubled as a showroom for Duc's antique reproduction business and the family home for Duc, his wife Le Thi Luong, and their young daughter Phuong Linh (who, twenty years later, is the curator of "Skylines without Flying People"). Duc also held concerts of traditional Vietnamese music in the house. In 1998, Nha San had its next incarnation. An artist named Tran Luong proposed opening up Nha San as an experimental arts space. Nha San fast became a nexus for international art exchange: hosting lectures, and workshops, sound, video, installation and performance art, and becoming "an underground streamline for Hanoi's contemporary art scene"[1] connecting artists to opportunities for exchange abroad; to exhibit and partake in residency programs.

Tran Luong: Going out and Coming Back

Tran Luong has been the central force in organizing venues, and developing networks for Vietnamese contemporary artists. Born in 1960 in Hanoi, Tran Luong graduated from Hanoi Fine Arts University with a degree in painting in 1983. He was a member of a group of young graduates publicly promoted as the "Gang of Five" in Hanoi galleries. In the early 1990s, the "Gang of Five" received international attention as iconic of Vietnamese art's 'melding of tradition and modernity' (an orientalist characterization that continues to be a selling point for Vietnamese art work today). Tran Luong was one of the first artists permitted to travel abroad. Tran Luong links his desire to break away from the painting style that garnered him commercial success to the

reasons he decided to focus on building up a support system for experimental forms of expression.

I was "like a soldier with a new weapon"...I came back to Vietnam, and started to concentrate more on digging into my own art, trying to create something new…life was more interesting, more complicated…We had to develop the infrastructure needed for a new kind of thinking, and community to emerge... [2]

And so, with the intention to open up a new kind of world in Hanoi, Nha San turned into an experimental arts space. Distinct from the strict pedagogy of the Hanoi Fine Arts University, away from the escalating pressures of a swelling commercial market which mainly demanded tourist dreams of village life and colonialism, and operating below the radar of government censorship of public exhibitions - Nha San grew space for the imagination in a flower field.

Art Education and Historic Roles in Vietnam

The majority of artists who have worked out of Nha San are graduates or former students of Hanoi Fine Arts University (HFA), formally the L'Ecole Des Beaux Arts D'Indochine (EBAI), established by Victor Tardieu in 1925. The college followed the 18th century curriculum of the L'École Des Beaux Arts in Paris, a five year program that taught anatomical drawing, perspective, and oil painting. Along with the strong emphasis on technical mastery, the EBAI introduced students to major European art movements of the day, such as Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism and Surrealism. Currently, HFA is the home to multiple generations of "gia dinh hoa si", the families of artists who are faculty members at the school. The pressures of kinship and a strict adherence to an academic program steeped in technique continue to define what art and artists can or should be in Vietnam.

Technique and pedagogy mediate ideologies. Nora Taylor's publication Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art provides an excellent lens for understanding how artists' roles have changed dramatically through the 20th century. Taylor situates the shifting relationships between power regimes and changing definitions of 'Vietnamese Artists' according to four basic intervals of time. Taylor delineates them as the Colonial period (1925-1945), the Revolutionary period (1945-1975), a Post-reunification period (1975-1986), and an Open Market – Doi Moi (1986-present). Her study develops the argument that each of these periods can be paired with different understandings of artistic identities and functions. These roles are loosely generalized as follows: artisans in the colonial period, workers during the revolutionary period; and with the post-reunification , and in the Doi Moi periods, comes the emergence of multiple, and competing categories of contemporary 'Vietnamese artists' in a more anonymous global community. In each of these periods, Taylor argues that artists have played a crucial role in regulating, gauging and disseminating the changing forms of nationalism, identity and of power in Vietnam. The style and content of artwork produced in each period act as mediations of the political and societal context in which they are immersed.

Doi-Moi – Open Door Policies

Doi moi, (renovation, open door, or the literal translation 'new change') is the set of economic policies set forth in 1986 at the Sixth National Communist Party congress that replaced central planning with a regulated open market. Before Doi Moi private business was illegal. Private sales existed clandestinely before Doi Moi. What the policies did was endorse and make public these economic transactions, and cultural productions. Pre-Doi Moi artists relied on state commissions through the Artists' Association[3] for daily sustenance, as well as for access to art materials. The rapid growth in the Vietnamese economy throughout the 1990s, is mirrored in the art

market, with a surge in international demand for Vietnamese artwork – making some young artists "among the first beneficiaries of the market economy"[4] with prices for their work multiplying tenfold over the course of five years.

Alongside Doi Moi policies came the gradual loosening of cultural restrictions on exhibiting work with styles and content that had been publicly banned. In 1992 the first national exhibition of abstract works took place in Ho Chi Minh City. The first exhibition of nudes also took place around this time. Salon Natashe opened in 1990 as the first post-Doi Moi gallery in Hanoi. Russian expatriate Natashe Kraeskaia and her visionary artist husband Vu Dan Tan, hosted exhibitions, installations and performances in their home and atelier. In 1994 German artist Veronika Radulovic received funding from the German government to teach courses at HFA. In her small drop-in class, she held discussions, and screened VHS tapes she brought along in her suitcase. These young students soon became the core members of a group conducting the first experiments with installation, video and performance at Salon Natashe and other private studios, and eventually making their headquarters at Nha San Studio.

Artist Nguyen Minh Thanh attributes his changing idea of what art could be to increased contact with people, and the practices they brought from other parts of the world. He stresses the influence of his teacher at HFA, Truong Tan. Born in 1963, Tan graduated from HFA in 1989. He took up a post as a lecturer at the University from 1989 until 1998. When controversy surrounding his artwork ended his job, he took off to France to escape the repressive environment in his home country. Tan has since returned, and now lives between Paris and Hanoi.

Truong Tan: Testing and Teaching

Truong Tan has consistently pushed the edge of acceptability and expression in Vietnam. Vietnam's first openly gay artist, Tan has been described as a "hero", and "the fountainhead of Vietnamese contemporary art" by younger artists. In the early to mid-1990s Truong Tan did his first performances in a private studio shared by his students. Nguyen Minh Thanh explains that the way he conceptualized art was fundamentally changed when, in 1995, Truong Tan's exhibition was dismantled by the police before it opened to the public. Truong Tan had planned to show his paintings that depicted men having sex with men, and talking penises spewing profanities and semen.

The show, originally named "Cultural Collision" is known in Hanoi art circles more commonly as "Xin Loi" (Vietnamese for "I am Sorry"). "Xin Loi" references Truong Tan's reaction to the censorship of his works. Nguyen Minh Thanh explained "Xin Loi" in a 2007 article protesting another instance where Truong Tan's work was taken down from exhibition. [5]

In place of the pictures he was not allowed to display, Truong Tan hung large pieces of classical Vietnamese dó paper with the words "I am sorry" written on them in Vietnamese, French, and English…these apology-paintings became powerful works of art…Indeed the words, "I am sorry", were written at a time when Vietnamese society was yearning to relearn how to apologize, an element of Vietnamese culture which had all but disappeared after years of fanaticism and hatred, of teaching people only to worship victory and heroism. For those of us involved in the arts (particularly those of us who were students of his at the time) Truong Tan's "I am sorry" was a deeply moving and inspiring gesture on many levels. Indeed it was a gesture that seeped into our souls and changed the way we saw the world. It also helped us begin to understand what art was. [6]

With “Xin Loi” Truong Tan apologized directly to the audience, in effect creating a new audience that was separate from the arts association, from the cultural police, and “the traditional national aesthetic”. The original artwork could not be exhibited, but like Tran Dan’s poem “Skylines without Flying People”, the evidence of its absence was a powerful statement in and of itself: proof of what was missing, and what could be. Like Tran Dan, Truong Tan, and the band of artists in this exhibition are pushing the limits of expression in Hanoi, are opening up space for the for the imagination, in the present day and in the future.

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1 Nguyen Minh Thanh “Digging for Roots” NY Arts Magazine. 2005.

2 Interview with the author. December 2007, Hanoi.

3 Founded in 1957, the Arts Association provides artist with a support system. Commissioning work, supplying art materials, organizing and promoting art national art exhibitions. Structured like a governing body, the association has an executive committee acting “as supervisors of the art community, holding meetings every five years to decide the directives and goal of art production nationwide…The association became equated with officialdom, almost to the point that an artist who was not a member was virtually not considered an artist.” (Taylor, Nora. Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 2004.)

4 Larimer, Tim. Simple Pleasures. Times International, August 26. 1996.

5 Hayton, Bill. Nappy art work gets Vietnam Ban. BBC News, January 26, 2007. < http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6303101.stm>

6 Nguyen Minh Thanh Artistic Freedom and the Official Suppression of Truong Tan’s Sculpture Diaper. Unpublished document. 2007.

GALERIE QUYNH CONTEMPORARY ART

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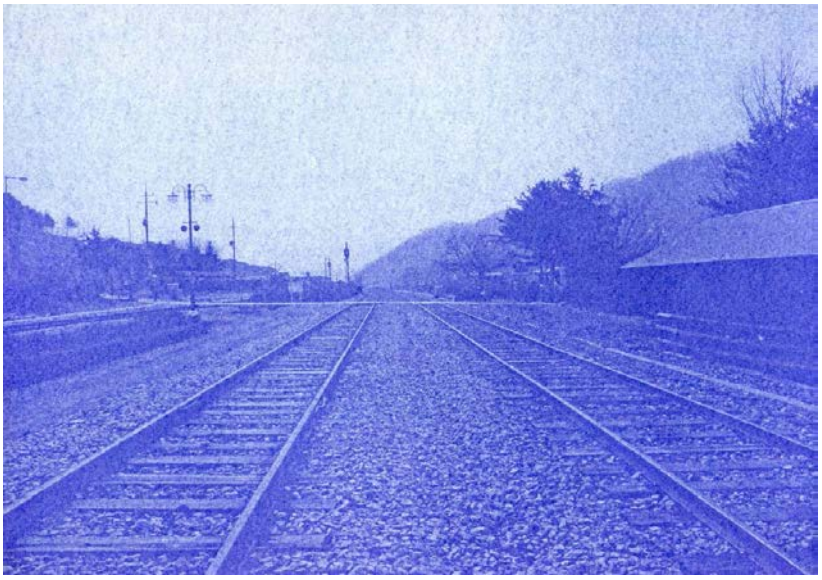
June 14, 2012



***The Dust Project*, blueprint of Dorasan Station near the Korean DMZ**

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam – Galerie Quynh is pleased to present *Dust*, Nguyen Phuong Linh's second solo exhibition in the gallery's Emerging Artist Program. Initiated in 2009 to encourage young Vietnamese artists making experimental work, the program not only provides the artists with a platform to show their work, but also supports education and discourse through talks and publications. *Salt* (2009) was Phuong Linh's first solo exhibition in the Emerging Artist Program.

In her latest body of work, Phuong Linh examines the traces of personal and collective memories and histories. Tied to the history of a given object or place, dust often collects on forgotten and disused objects; the accumulation of dust is a natural index of the passage of time. Phuong's Linh's minimalistic, yet sensuous artworks allude to the past, blurring deeply personal memories and national histories.

The Dust Project, originally shown at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum during Nguyen Phuong Linh's residency in 2011, includes over 100 images on blueprint paper and an array of tiny, delicate vials containing dust collected from various objects and sites in Vietnam, Japan and Korea. Documented through muted blueprints – a printing method that is becoming obsolete with new technologies – the images include a relative's altar, a portrait of Ho Chi Minh, bridges the artist has crossed, cracks in destroyed homes, grave sites of soldiers, churches and numerous other sites that have been ruined or forgotten. A book created by Phuong Linh of text and images of these sites complements the dust and the ethereal blueprints. Like the dust Xu Bing collected from New York's streets following 9/11, the dust in Phuong Linh's vials are specific to the sites where it was gathered; each vial contains unique dust of varying hues. Through the simple act of collecting dust, Phuong Linh reflects on the importance of revisiting history, retelling stories and renewing hope when all appears lost.

Comprising two tons of white limestone powder, *Whitescape* resembles a stark, ethereal landscape of fine white dust that has the lightness of powdered sugar. The white limestone powder is manipulated by Nguyen Phuong Linh to form soft peaks and valleys that seem to disappear into the surrounding white walls. Limestone, formed by the skeletons of billions of marine animals over millions of years, is mined throughout the world for construction and agricultural purposes. Bringing to mind mortality, destruction, renewal and change, *Whitescape* will slowly morph and erode throughout the course of the exhibition.

In *Rubber, Soap, Tobacco* Nguyen Phuong Linh examines the intersection between personal memory and collective history by using these common products as the raw materials for her work. The work consists of three compressed cubes of each of these widely consumed goods by both the Vietnamese working- and middle-classes. Inspired by the familiar, intoxicating aromas from Yellow Star Rubber Factory, Hanoi Soap Factory and Thang Long Tobacco Factory – three prominent companies established in the 50s and 60s in Hanoi that proudly marked Vietnam's ability to produce light industrial products for the first time – each dense cube sits on its own iron pedestal and stands strong and stoic like totems of economic power. Despite their minimalistic shape and reference to industrial production, the cubes have a distinctly domestic quality, representing materials commonly found in homes in Vietnam.

Born in 1985 in Hanoi where she is also based, Nguyen Phuong Linh is one of Vietnam's most promising young artists. She has exhibited in numerous exhibitions with recent solo shows at 3147966 cm3 mobile gallery in Thailand, Nha San Studio in Vietnam and Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in Japan. Phuong Linh has also held many international artist residencies with organizations such as Seoul Art Space, Korea, Kaman Art Foundation, Rajasthan, India and The Luggage Store, San Francisco, California, USA.

Dust is generously supported by the Danish Embassy in Hanoi's Cultural Development and Exchange Fund (CDEF).

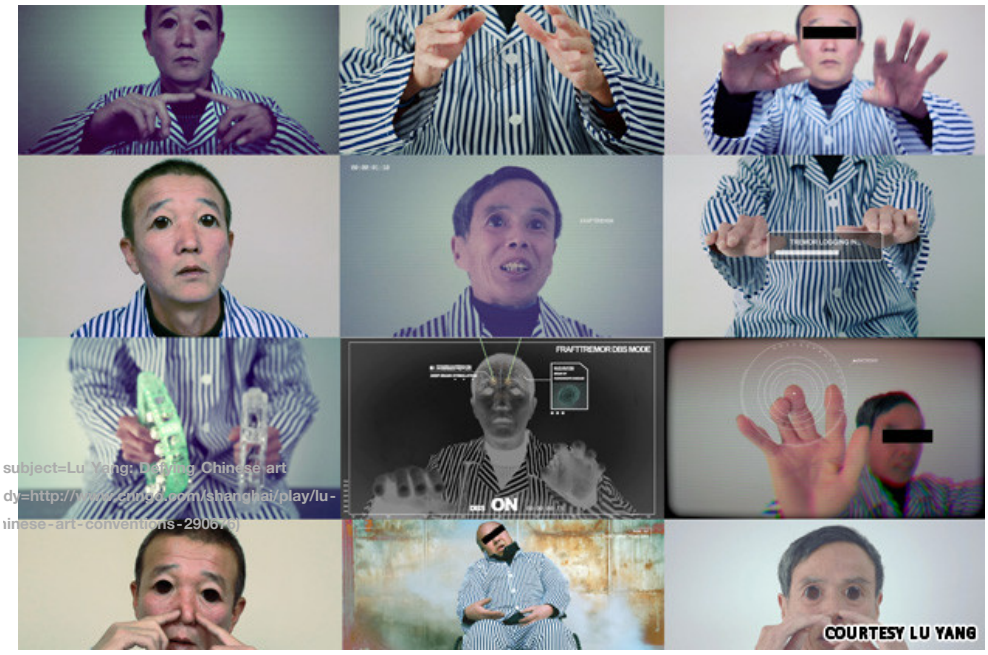
Exhibition dates:	June 22 – July 5, 2012
Opening reception:	Friday, the 22nd of June from 6 – 8 PM
Gallery hours:	10 AM – 6 PM, Tuesday – Saturday Closed on Sundays and Mondays
Contact:	Ms. Lisa Boulet (English and French); Mr. Mai Tung (Vietnamese) tel/fax: +84 8 3836 8019 info@galeriequynh.com

– end –

Lu Yang: Defying Chinese art conventions

Ahead of her new show in Shanghai, controversial graphic and new media artist Lu Yang talks about art, life, death and Parkinson's disease

By Casey Hall (/node/111052) 27 April, 2011



Images from Lu Yang's series "KRAFTTREMOR," which deals with Parkinson's disease.

The most surprising thing you first notice about Chinese artist Lu Yang when you meet her is the energy that emanates, almost audibly buzzing, from her small frame.

As the 26-year-old talks of her life and work, her voice is staccato-paced, but not unpleasantly so, her words tumbling in quick succession from her mouth with the urgency of someone who has an important point to impart to her audience.

Sitting across from this diminutive talent, it's difficult not to admire the intrinsic confidence she carries through both her personal style and her work.

A unique perspective

After leaving home to pursue her artistic dreams at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou (http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/eat/best-places-get-hangbang-cai-hangzhou-231156) , one of the country's most prestigious art schools, Lu Yang focused her studies on new media and studied under Zhang Peili

It will be shocking to people. But any reaction is OK because it's much better than people just

looking and walking away. I just want any reaction.
— Lu Yang, Chinese artist

(http://www.artspeakchina.org/mediawiki/index.php/Zhang_Peili_%E5%BC%A0%E5%9F%B9%E5%8A%9B) -- commonly known as the father of video art in China.

Zhang's spirit has influenced his charge, because while much of the work by young artists, and indeed, new media artists in China today tends to err on the conservative side, Lu Yang's exuberant embrace of her own unique brand of bioart (art which is concerned with scientific practices, biotechnology and living organisms) is anything but.

“So many works of mine are from ideas about biology and death and life and living things,” says Lu Yang.

“These kind of ideas people can understand. People might have different culture and different experience, but they have the same kind of biological feeling, all living things can feel this.”

Reaction time

Despite, or perhaps because of, the confrontational nature of her work, Lu Yang has been embraced by critics both at home and abroad, who have labeled her Chinese art's “next big thing.”

Martin Kemble (http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/none/shanghai-hot-list-20-people-watch-165740) is the Director of Art Labor 2.0, which has represented Lu Yang since he first came across her work when she was a student.

In terms of the reaction from the art world and the public, Kemble says Lu Yang has created a “phenomenal level of interest, and more inquiries than any other artist we have ever worked with.”

Shanghainese artist Lu Yang is coming home for her next show.

In terms of talent, Kemble is unequivocal in his praise.

“She is without peer,” he says. “An artist like this comes along once in a generation.”

Given the fact that Lu Yang's graphic and new media works include subject matter such as dissected frogs, sexual fetishism and even, on occasion, torture, it's fair to say that it's not for everybody. But that, according to the artist, is the point.

“It's very important [that people have a visceral reaction to art], especially in this kind of society where we have different stimulation from things like television and movies,” says Lu Yang.

"People always have so many messages and they don't feel or care about anything. I must have some way to catch their heart, so they can understand and really think about something.”

Sweating the big stuff

Big ideas seem to consume Lu Yang, even though they lead both herself and her audience to some pretty uncomfortable places -- science and religion are both favorite topics for the Shanghai native (http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/play/shanghai-art-scene-takes-center-stage-683322), who was raised Buddhist.

“I want to shock everybody and if they will think about things more, it's good -- and if they think it's horrible or if they get angry at me, it's OK,” Lu Yang explains.

“In my experience, asking questions about science and religion does not bring a result; these are just questions, but the questions are still important.”

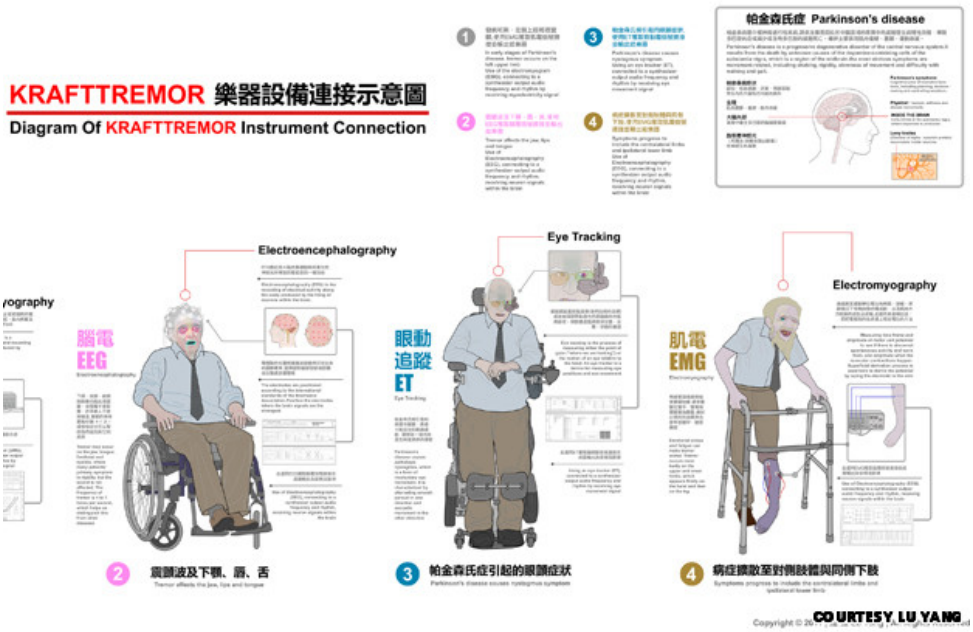
- ***More on CNNGo:*** ***How to buy Chinese art for less*** *(http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/shop/8-tips-how-buy-chinese-art-less-636029)*

Speaking of her one of her most controversial works, “Dictator E,” in which amphibious creatures are shocked by electric currents, Lu Yang is obviously troubled by the fracture between her beliefs and artistic sensibilities.

“Buddhists believe it's not good to hurt any living things, but in my works I really do that,” Lu Yang says.

“Maybe in my mind I'm a devil. So the art makes me a devil. I want to do this kind of work because of the art. The art is the most important thing. I don't really want to hurt animals, I just use this idea to stimulate people's thinking.”

A matter of control



A diagram that's part of Lu Yang's series "KRAFTTREMOR." It details the instrument connection for treatment of Parkinson's disease.

According to Lu Yang, the use of electricity combined with biology in many of her works comes from an obsession with the idea of control -- another theme that is prevalent throughout her art.

“Electricity is a miracle,” she exclaims. “If you put electrical currents through your body, you can't control your body. It's very natural, a natural condition. It's not controlled by man, it's controlled by nature.”

- ***More on CNNGo:*** ***What does feminism have to do with Chinese art?*** *(http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/play/what-does-feminism-have-do-chinese-art-856778)*

This theme carries through to her latest series of works, “KRAFTTREMOR,” which deals with Parkinson's disease, a degenerative condition that affects the central nervous system, causing tremors and loss of motor skills.

In other words, the ultimate loss of control over one's own biological functions.

Currently, the most effective mode of treatment is deep brain stimulation (DBS), a surgical procedure that helps sufferers control their tremors, but, on the other hand, is also able to control the patient's behavior.

It's very important [that people have a visceral reaction to art], especially

The series includes a video installation, digital prints, music video and documentary materials related to the contradictory relationship between Parkinson's disease and its treatments, including diagrams and animations the artist has produced to introduce both disease and treatments.

In a fairly spectacular example of the relationship between the controlling and controlled, a music video shows elderly Parkinson's patients in pajamas having their tremors transformed into electronic rhythms.

In this kind of society where we have different stimulation from things like television and movies. People always have so many messages and they don't feel or care about anything.
— Lu Yang, Chinese artist

"The lack of control, the tremor, produces something, produces the music," explains Lu Yang. "So the lack of control is controlling the music."

You don't have to like it, but it's hard to see it and not be provoked.

"It will be shocking to people," Lu Yang says. "But any reaction is OK because it's much better than people just looking and walking away. I just want any reaction."

According to Kemble, a reaction is exactly what Lu Yang can expect, along with a future at the pinnacle of the Chinese art world.

"She is setting a new bar for the coming age in contemporary art here," he says.

+Follow, Young Artists' Exhibition with Lu Yang, April 29 - May 29, MoCA Shanghai, inside People's Park, 231 Nanjing Xi Lu, near Huangpi Bei Lu 南京西路231号, 人民公园内, 近黄陂北路, +86 21 6327 9900, www.mocashanghai.org (http://www.mocashanghai.org)

If you like Lu Yang's take on things, read more about Chinese art at "China's post-1980s artists and the one-child policy (http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/play/what-does-feminism-have-do-chinese-art-856778)" and "Shanghai needs to trust its artists (http://www.cnngo.com/shanghai/life/tell-me-about-it/hunter-braithwaite-shanghai-art-has-had-rough-year-844548)".


(/node/111052)

Casey is a city/lifestyle journalist from Melbourne, Australia, who has been based in Shanghai since 2007.

Read more about ***Casey Hall*** *(/node/111052)*

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Toi khoc nhung chan troi khong co nguoi bay
Toi lai khoc nhung nguoi bay khong co chan troi

I cry when skylines do not have flying people
I cry again when flying people do not have skylines
-Tran Dan (Written 1987/8, published 2007)

This tiny poem paints a bleak portrait of a place with no room for the imagination, a muffled lament for a landscape purged of artists. It was written in the early years of *doi moi,* the set of 'open door' economic policies that catapulted Vietnam into becoming one of the fastest growing economies in the world. At that time, Hanoi was a city 'in the dark', isolated from the world outside the communist block, impoverished, with few streetlights illuminating the night. As Tran Dan (1926-1997), the author of this poem, experienced, the cultural landscape was grim.

A former soldier-poet, Tran Dan was a central figure in the *Nhan Van-Giai Pham* movement (Humanism and Works of Beauty)[1] - a "brief flourish of dissent which burst forth in 1956"[2] Tran Dan was thrown into jail, sentenced to hard labor, expelled from the Artists Association[3], banned from publication, publicly denounced and socially ostracized. In her book "A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam" Kim Ninh makes a convincing argument that "Tran Dan became a focal point around which a number of intellectual concerns coalesced, and the state's violent reaction to him marked the moment when simmering intellectual questions burst into the open" [4] Published twenty years after scribbled into his 'dusty notebooks', our title poem is one of fifty-odd "mini poems", many of which are experimentations with sound and meaning, often attempting to create sounds that have no meaning at all. This collection, evidence that he continued to write novels and poetry under intense repression, is inspiring.

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[1] For in depth history and analysis on *Nhan Van-Giai Pham* movement, see George Boudarel's monograph "Cent Fleurs écloses dans la nuit de Vietnam: Communisme et Dissidense 1954-1956 (Paris: Editions Jacques Bertoin, 1991) , and Boudarel "Intellectual Dissidence in the 1950s: The Nhan Van Giai Pham Affair," trans. And ed. By Phi-Linh Banesth in *The Vietnam Forum,* No. 13 (1990), pp. 154-174. Also see Pete Zinoman's forthcoming publication "Nhan Van-Giai Pham and Vietnamese "Reform Communism" in the 1950s: A Revisionist Interpretation" in the Journal of Cold War Studies.

[2] Kim Ninh, *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, p 156.

[3] Founded in 1957, the Arts Association provides artist with a support system. Commissioning work, supplying art materials, organizing and promoting national art exhibitions. The Arts Association continues to exist, but artists are no longer reliant on it for sustenance. Structured like a governing body, the association has an executive committee acting "as supervisors of the art community, holding meetings every five years to decide the directives and goal of art production nationwide…The association became equated with officialdom, almost to the point that an artist who was not a member was virtually not considered an artist." From Taylor, Nora 2004 Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. 2004, p. 55.

[4] Ibid, p. 129.

In pointing to the tragedy of a world without art, Tran Dan protests it. Beneath the depressed outlook, hovers an alternative reality, a confirmation that things have not always been this way, and will not always be this way. In his radical faithfulness to portraying his own version of the world, this is a poem of hope, opening up the possibility for freedom of expression, for future people in the skylines.

Today's Flying People

Nguyen Manh Hung's fine tuned and bizarre paintings take to the air, charting out incisive portraits of Vietnam now. In his irreverence for official-dome, Hung re-commemorates the military jet plane. They become more than vehicles of war. With these surreal hybridizations, Hung creates hypnogogic images that lay bare a simultaneously combative and symbiotic relationship between government mandated Marxist-Socialism and the consumer driven market-economy, between urban and rural life. The jets become oxcarts, and literal carriers of meaning, transporting the countryside into the city, recycling, and discarding historical remnants deeply entrenched in present day Vietnam.

Nguyen Huy An guides us back down to the labyrinthine thoroughfares of Hanoi's Old Quarter – streets laid out 1,000 years ago. The city pulses now. Streaming with motorbikes, gilded in neon, rattling with the jackhammers of constant demolition and construction. Cutting beneath the flash and wildness of today's Hanoi, Huy An brings us to a standstill with his monastic approach to art making.

> *"This mess of thread is the result of walking and measuring each street in the Old Quarter of Hanoi…There is something unknowable hovering there – like a hidden shape: un-exposed, unclear, a veiled feeling… the thread itself is an encrypted curiosity and mystery." (Nguyen Huy An 2011)*

Huy An's creative process is a physical pilgrimage towards silence and the unknown. Shadows and traces are as much his medium as the simple materials he returns to time and again (coal, ink, thread). Huy An seems to want to become his materials – he once, in a performance, sat motionless in the umbra of street-signs throughout the night. For his project "*The Old Quarter*" Huy An collapses the city with the movements of his body, transforming a clandestine process and terrene expanse into a bare sculpture, looming and dense, but newly visible.

Nguyen Phuong Linh and **Bill Nguyen's work** emerges from the border of the city, in a partially demolished neighborhood on Hoang Hoa Tham street. Once forestland, then farmland, and until recently, a bustling neighborhood, it has been a historic borderland, where battles for control of Hanoi have been fought for centuries. In 2008, the government began a demolition project to make room for a bridge into new satellite suburbs. After three years, there is still no bridge. Unnervingly reminiscent of a bombsite, this section of the neighborhood is both inhabited and abandoned. Hoang Hoa Tham's remaining residents live in limbo, unsure of how long they can stay and where they will go. With current prices of land in the "golden areas" in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city even higher than in London, it is impossible for low-income earners, the vast majority of the population, to buy a home in their city.

Bill Nguyen's photographs abstract the environment – shells of houses, stripped of electrical wiring, windows and rebar, they have lost their function as homes. Bill records the residue of past inhabitants, the sooty wear of removed picture frames, and stairs that lead from floorless room to floorless room. Pausing at an uncertain, and uncomfortable intersection between war and rapid development, Bill condenses complex sites of memory into minimalist landscapes.

Nguyen Phuong Linh extends and transforms the temporary ruins. In "*Traveled Plants"* she collected wild shrubs from the rubble and plants abandoned in emptied houses. The salvaged garden is still growing. It will be protected and transported to safe places when the whole area is destroyed. "*City"* is constructed with broken bricks, ceramic, cutting boards, coal, ash, projected light and shadows. These unfolding projects, originally installed in the home of a family that has lived in Hoang Hoa Tham for two hundred years, eulogize what's left behind, asking us to consider soon-to-be overlooked landscapes and forgotten histories.

Tuan Mami's paintings are bursting and bright. Curious, overflowing and spare, the canvases animate a conversation on the tensions between censorship and revelation. Critiquing how authoritative structures of power force people to grow accustomed to ' camouflaging' in everyday life, Tuan lures us into a lush foliage. In these green dreamscapes danger is both hidden and latently obvious. Hungry for total liberation, his playful paintings create small pockets of clarity in the midst of tangled confusion, imagining a way out of personal and political repression.

A young *Viet Kieu* (Vietnamese overseas) living in Hanoi **Khanh Xiu Tran's** photographs mix fearlessness with timidity, pregnant with strangeness. This reality is a complex drama, one she wants to get close to, and then closer still. Xiu shoots intimately and at a distance. People seem to become a part of the patterns around them. A portion of this series was commissioned for the "Long Bien Picture Show" a collaborative photography and video project curated by **Jaime Maxtone-Graham,** and **Nguyen Trinh Thi**. By law, all artwork publicly shown in Vietnam must first be approved by a government censorship board. Xiu's cropped frames were singled out as inappropriate because they "would make Vietnamese people uncomfortable. "After an appeal, all her photographs were allowed to be shown[5]. As a discussion of origins, Xiu's work explores the conflicts and disjuncts between displacement and integration, migration and physical appearance that emerge from her feelings of isolation in her parents' native land.

Drawing upon his background in cinematography, **Jaime Maxtone-Graham** opens up a studio in the streets of Hanoi, setting up professional lights to produce an ongoing series of photographic portraits: incandescent, and nuanced. Acutely aware of the historical implications of being a Westerner settling down in Vietnam, his portraiture work is informed by colonial photographers of the late 19th and early 20th century. Husband of fellow *SWFP* artist **Nguyen Trinh Thi**, and father to their young daughter – Jaime uses his photographs to undermine the assumed roles of white men as patriarchs, and the rightful beneficiaries of power. These images portray collaborations– a temporary complication and undoing of the imbalance of power that defines photographer and subject, a trope that remains particularly persistent when visitors from 'developed' nations come bearing cameras to capture Vietnam. Committed to building a dialogue beyond the 'decisive moment', Jaime's approach de-subjugates his subjects. Opening himself up to the possibilities that uncertainty and vulnerability provide, Jaime makes room for the people he photographs to shift the dynamics of power – putting them in control of how they want to step into the light he carries along with him.

Nguyen Trinh Thi's sound and video installation "Unsubtitled" offers a haunting and defiant testament to the power and fragility of Hanoi's experimental art scene. In the original installation at Nha San Studio, luminous figures were projected onto life-size wooden cutouts in the dark. These are the digital body-doubles of the individual artists who made up Nha San Studio's social constellation in the Fall of 2010. The installation bends the dialogue surrounding an intense slew of negative media coverage and a

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[5] Jaime Maxtone-Graham. "The Long Bien Picture Show" Trans Photography Review. Ed. Sandra Matthews. Hampshire, Connecticut. University of Michigan Scholarly Publishing Office. Spring 2011. <http://tapreview.org/curated/maxtone/maxtone.html>

directive by the cultural police to "put on pause" all exhibitions at Nha San Studio. This particular clampdown was in reaction to photos of artist La Thi Dieu Ha performing in the nude. The images circulated like wildfire through the internet, making public evidence of the first instance of a female artist performing naked within the country. "Unsubtitled" opened the studio back up when the period of laying low ran its course.

Thi directed each artist to face the camera, eat an item of food, and then state their name followed by the name of the food they had just consumed. Suggesting a kind of review stand, the pseudo-interrogation sessions do not result in self-criticisms. Instead we see and hear a chorus of overlapping statements-of-the-obvious: the basic human act of eating was just committed. Examining the gap between artists and the general public, and questioning long running methods of surveillance and intimidation pervasive in Vietnam, Thi creates an ethereal portrait of this time in Hanoi, and of the flying people who inhabit it.

Los Angeles Times | WORLD

Q&A: Making art and getting in trouble in Vietnam

February 29, 2012 | 4:30 am

Gabby Quynh-Anh Miller is a Vietnamese American conceptual artist who jets from California to Vietnam, bouncing between the live-and-let-live lifestyle of the Bay Area and the strictures of a single-party state slammed by human rights groups for cracking down on peaceful bloggers and activists.

Her work is currently showing alongside that of other artists who are from, or trace their ancestry to, Southeast Asia. The group exhibition in New Jersey is titled "Me Love You Long Time."

The Times talked to Miller about making art in a country where speech isn't always so free.

What is the art scene like in Vietnam, and how is it different from California?

It's so different. There's a huge amount of commercial galleries that mostly cater to tourists. Then there's the fine arts university which is government-run and really based on early 20th century French teaching methods mixed with Socialist realism, mixed with advertising techniques, I guess you'd say.

Wait, let's stop for a second. What does 20th century French mixed with Socialist realism mixed with advertising look like?

Weird. You spend five years honing the craft of drawing and painting in a very classical style. And with every new regime, the art school got taken over. The communist or revolutionary government took it over and it became a production center for propaganda and Socialist realist art.

Nha San Studio, the space we're running, is separate from the commercial realm, purposefully separate, and intentionally separate from the state-run way of doing things. It opened in 1998 and it's the first and longest-running artist-run experimental space in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, you have to ask for permission from the Ministry of Culture to do any public exhibition. So that means you give documentation of your work, what it's going to be ... some kind of explanation of the work's meaning to the cultural police, and you say, "Is this OK?"

So we register every event as a family gathering to circumvent that.

Do you have a sense of what would get you shut down?

The way things in Vietnam operate, you don't really know what the repercussions are. It's at the whim of whoever is in charge at whatever gate you're trying to get through.

A lot of international businesspeople doing work in Vietnam will complain about the hoops you have to jump through to get something approved. The rumor is that you need to get something stamped 17 times -- and the implication is you maybe have to pay off 17 people.

The art world is just part of that bigger world. We've gotten in the habit of not even asking for permission because it opens you up to possibly having to pay a bribe.

How did you decide to go to Vietnam?

My mom is Vietnamese, and in 2005 I was going to college, and I didn't want to go to college anymore. So I bought a one-way ticket [to go] there and I started working in art galleries. I ended up going back to school and doing my anthropology thesis on experimental art in Hanoi. It got me hooked.

People forget that Vietnam is a police state because you can go there so freely now. There's repression of all kinds. Then you have these artists who are doing something totally strange -- experimenting with performance and doing installations -- which isn't necessarily weird in America, but in Vietnam it's definitely weird. That's inspiring for me –- people trying to express themselves despite considerable potential repercussions and lack of understanding and support. Vietnam really needs artists.

If people are worried about getting their art approved, does "weirdness" play a different role for Vietnamese artists? Is it safer to do something weird?

There's a lot of doublespeak in Vietnam. Journalists and lawyers are, on a regular basis, being silenced or taken away. Everyone knows that's happening. No one talks about it that much. So everything is pretty oblique in terms of the way that artists are trying to communicate.

They'll say, "I'm talking about my personal experience." They won't say it's about society. Or they don't want to explain their art -– because, if they put it into words, that gives [authorities] fodder for you to be chased after or hassled. Any artwork in that sort of context has a real power to it, a potency to it. You know that people are using these ways of communicating because they're not really allowed to speak freely.

There are also debates about national identity that very much have taken place in art. The debate about what is art is really a debate about what is Vietnamese.

What kinds of things do people fear are not Vietnamese?

It's not just the authorities, it's within artists' circles themselves. Two years ago, we founded this performance art symposium where we invited artists from other countries to work with artists in Hanoi for five days. More and more people came every day to watch the performances.

On the last day, we had a packed house ... and we did a string of performances. In the final one, artist La Thi Dieu Ha did a performance in which she took off all her clothes, put a live bird in her mouth and released it. Pictures of this flooded the Internet, and it sparked debate about public decency –- contending that this performance was neither Vietnamese nor art.

There were repercussions from authorities -- questioning of the artists, and the studio's permission to hold any events was put on a temporary hold. But we opened back up with a beautiful installation.

At the same time, I can see that also freaking people out in some parts of the U.S. What kinds of things are sensitive in Vietnam that might not be sensitive here?

Nudity, politics, history. ... But in the past six years, art that was taken immediately off the walls is now OK to be on the walls. The painter Ly Tran Quynh Giang submitted a painting of two women having sex to an exhibition of young artists hosted by the Fine Arts Assn. After the first day of the exhibition, the work was taken down. Now, Giang is in a book that's a canon of 12 contemporary artists in Vietnam. I would say that conversations about sexuality are changing much more rapidly and openly than conversations about politics.

Do you find the art you make in Vietnam is different than what you make in California?

I've gotten more interested in performance art -- which I don't really identify with. In Vietnam, performance has become a really potent medium because it can be economical and can take place anywhere.

For instance, [fellow artist] Phuong Linh Nguyen and I made these business cards, which are really silly, but they've become this continuous performance in our daily lives. The photos make us look like call girls. [Each has a business card with a racy photo that says they're a "personal assistant" to the other.]

We gave those out at a performance art event, joking about our relationship because we're always helping each other. And within a few hours people were calling us, saying, "How much do you cost?" We'd hang up and they'd call the other one and say, "How much do YOU cost?"

When we tried to get them printed, the little hole-in-the-wall printing press told us, "We can't print that." It's legitimate to be afraid of getting into trouble. The business card started as a joke -- but the joke reveals real issues of working as an artist, of power and sexuality.

Recently I wrote this interview for an English-language magazine based in Hanoi with MEN, a [gay] Brooklyn-based dance music group that is playing a show in Hanoi in March. I did an interview with them and sent it to the magazine and they said, "We need to change the angle because we can't have any mention of homosexuality in the article."

Within the same week, I published a very open interview about being gay in a Vietnamese-language magazine with no problem -– the editor of the magazine actually commissioned me to write it. As far as I know, there is no actual rule, but they were afraid of the consequences of broaching social taboos.

So what did you do with the article?

First I sent them back a joke version where I just blacked out all the words like “gay." Eventually I rewrote it and sent in these very handsome pictures of the band, differently gendered or just different, that alone should spark people’s interest.

I feel weird about it. I self-censored. But you have to try as many angles as possible. The band is all about visibility and gay liberation. I was trying to find a way to play a joke on the rules.

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Video: "Dream of Lakes" by Gabby Quynh-Anh Miller, a video painting shot at the Nha San Studio that was part of the In:Act performance art symposium. Credit: Gabby Quynh-Anh Miller

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