

Changing Identity

Recent Works by Women Artists from Vietnam



Nguyen Thi Chau Giang, *Love in My Heart*, 2002



Dinh Thi Tham Poong, *Mothers of Nature*, 2005
Courtesy of Raquelle Azran Vietnamese Fine Art,
www.artnet.com/razran.html



Vu Thu Hien, *Food for Thought*, 2005
Courtesy of Raquelle Azran Vietnamese Fine Art, www.artnet.com/razran.html

Changing Identity introduces the work of ten contemporary Vietnamese women artists who challenge the stereotypes and traditional roles of women in Vietnamese society. This exhibition is the first survey of women artists from Vietnam to tour the United States. Through the use of various media, subject matters, and aesthetic sensibilities, two generations of artists share views of their country and the changing status of women. Together their work provides a diverse view of Vietnam itself, reflecting a range of opinions and experiences.

Each of these women has a particular way of shaping her work and of identifying herself that is both personal and universal. Their chosen themes are meant to evoke, contest, neglect, or embrace their culture without resorting to simplistic assumptions about women.

For the past two decades, since Vietnam opened its doors to the West, a booming art business has brought economic prosperity to many artists. Much of this success, however, has been bestowed on men. Vietnamese women, long stereotyped as obedient, docile and living in the shadows of their husbands, have been virtually overlooked by the international art world. In light of economic changes sweeping over the country in the era of globalization, a younger generation of women find themselves in a position to critique prevailing norms and to question the status quo.

Changing Identity provides a chance to see Vietnam through the eyes of artists who have a particular perspective of their homeland and themselves. Not only does it bring to light a previously marginalized viewpoint of Vietnamese culture, it does so from the standpoint of the women themselves, providing a unique opportunity to experience the remarkable talent of these artists.

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Ly Tran Quynh Giang, *Giang*, 2002



Vu Thu Hien, *Shades of Here and When*, 2006
Courtesy of Raquelle Azran Vietnamese Fine Art,
www.artnet.com/razran.html



Nguyen Thi Chau Giang, *The Life*, 2002

The curator of the exhibition is Nora A. Taylor Ph.D., associate professor in the School of Global Studies at Arizona State University, Tempe. She received her doctorate from Cornell University in Art History and is the author of *Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art*, published by University of Hawaii Press, 2003.

Changing Identity is supported in part by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation and The Henry Luce Foundation. A generous grant from the Ford Foundation, Hanoi office, funds one artist and the curator to travel to each of the venues for educational programming.

Exhibition Specifications

Number of works:

47 works by ten artists including paintings, works on paper, photography, installations and video

Organized with:

Dr. Nora Taylor, associate professor, Arizona State University, Tempe

Requirements:

Moderate security;
300 linear feet plus space for 3-D works

Participation Fee:

US \$9,000 for 8-weeks

Shipping:

IA&A makes all arrangements, exhibitors pay outgoing costs within the contiguous US

Publications:

Exhibition catalogue

Bookings:

Kennesaw State University
Galleries, GA
January 2007 - February 2007
Trammell & Margaret Crow
Collection of Asian Art,
Dallas, TX
March 2007 - May 2007
Stedman Gallery, Rutgers
University, NJ
October 2007 - November 2007

Utah Museum of Fine Art,
University of Utah, UT
Sept 2008- Nov 2008
Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum,
University of Minnesota, MN
Late January 2009 - March 2009

Availability:

March 2008 - September 2008

Contact:

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Recent Works by Women Artists from Vietnam

Preliminary Artists



Dinh Thi Tham Poong, *Life's Balance*, 2003
Watercolor on paper



Dinh Thi Tham Poong, *Among the Trees*, 2004
Courtesy of Raquelle Azran Vietnamese Fine Art, www.artnet.com/razran.html

Dinh Thi Tham Poong uses haunting, repeated silhouettes of women to comment on their position in Vietnam. The decorative quality juxtaposed with the simple outlines of the faceless figures show a stereotypical view of non-individualized women. By taking ownership of these images and merging her figures with forces of nature, she engages the viewer to look at women in relation to their connection with the natural world, giving their status new meaning.

Nguyen Bach Dan creates lyrical landscapes in black-and-white ink that draw the viewer into spaces inhabited by nature. Unlike the traditional idealized images historically depicted by this method, there is a romantic and eerie quality that seems to bring to light the isolation encountered by women in a traditional, patriarchal society. By working in a traditionally male-dominated medium, Nguyen can tackle prevailing norms and misrepresentation and depict Vietnam through her own eyes.



Nguyen Bach Dan, *Sunlight through the Forest*, 2002
Chinese ink on Xuyen Chi paper

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Vu Thu Hien, *Three Worlds*, 2003

Courtesy of Raquelle Azran Vietnamese Fine Art, www.artnet.com/razran.html

Vu Thu Hien, a graduate of the Hanoi Academy of Fine Arts, possesses a solid grounding in classical Western art, which, when melded with Vietnamese artistic sensibilities, imbues her work with a rich texture of East and West, past and present, spiritual and mundane. The direct simplicity of Vu Thu Hien's style evokes the essence of Vietnamese spiritual life. Many of her paintings refer to the soul, to spirits, and to the afterlife. Hien's paintings celebrate the invisible forces that make up the Vietnamese imaginary world. Hien's women, swathed in ceremonial colors and robes, address the spirit world while performing ancient rites. Whether portrayals of individual figures or narratives of figures in groupings, her figures are embodiments of the spirits that influence human lives. They are reflective, lyrical and poetic, omnipresent but not oppressive. They also reflect Hien's lifestyle and her manner of painting. She paints on *Do* paper, a bark paper made from mulberry trees, utilizing watercolors for infinite delicacy and shading of palette.



Ly Hoang Ly, *Pushing through Borders*, 2003

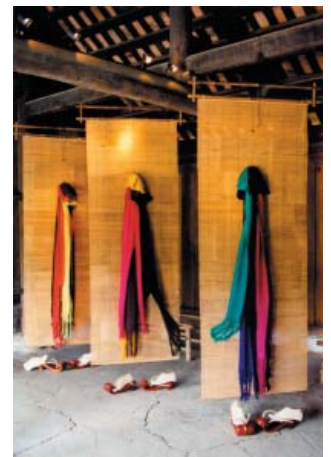
Video still of a performance piece

Ly Hoang Ly is a video artist who explores themes of spirituality, loss, and reclaiming womanhood in her work. Through performance and reenactments of traditional rituals, Ly explores the struggle women face to create a synthesis between the confining limitations of the woman's "role" or "purpose" in society and the infinite possibilities she can imagine. Ly metaphorically depicts the modern woman in Vietnam by showing her willful and rebellious spirit alongside traditional tendencies to simply "accept" the world around her. She challenges and praises the daily activities of Vietnamese women by describing their sensibilities and perseverance while elaborating on the importance and validity of their inner desires and dreams.

Dang Thi Khue is a painter who also creates multi-media installations using feminine objects. These elements, such as scarves, clogs, and earthen bowls, are representations of the losses women have encountered during the decades of war and fighting. By leaving traces of the everyday objects once used in peace time, she subtly commemorates the loss of womanhood associated with working and fighting for a nation at war. Her images are imbued with a ghostly power that reminds the viewer of the contributions of women in the home and for the nation.



Dang Thi Khue, *Bowls*, 1997
Oil on canvas



Dang Thi Khue, *Soul*, 1996
Bamboo, wood, cloth

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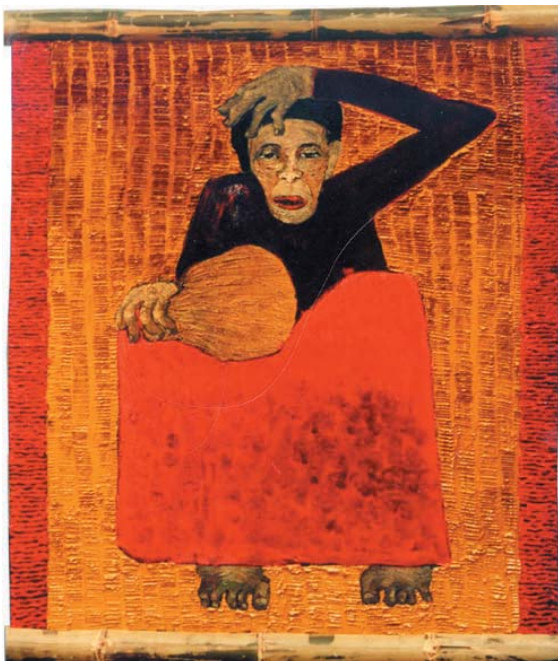


Ly Tran Quynh Giang, *The Winter*, 2003
Oil on canvas

Ly Tran Quynh Giang is a painter who studied the violin since she was a child. Her work explores the feelings of melancholy often associated with music. Her portraits analyze the sentiments of loneliness that women feel when faced with the larger questions of life, children and work. She recently won a prestigious painting prize issued by the French government to study painting in France.



Ly Tran Quynh Giang, *Giang*, 2002
Oil on canvas



Nguyen Thi Chau Giang, *Village Talk*, 1999
Oil on canvas



Nguyen Thi Chau Giang, *He Is Inside of Me*, 2002
Oil on canvas



Nguyen Thi Chau Giang, *Woman holding an oil lamp*, 1999
Oil on canvas

Nguyen Thi Chau Giang is a writer and painter who incorporates a variety of media on her canvases. She often uses self-portraiture at the core of her work. She is fascinated by the idea of a "woman's beauty," and wishes to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of a woman's spirit through her artistic exploration.

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Self in Street Hanoi, Phuong Do, 1998, Gelatin Silver



Self in La Chu Grandma's Visit to Her



Self in Noisiel, France with Grandma,

Dinh Y Nhi is a painter who made a name for herself ten years ago when she first exhibited a series of black-and-white paintings entitled *girls*. The paintings represented women as child-like stick figures with circles for breasts and spindly arms and legs. She chose to depict her figures this way to challenge the stereotypical ways in which feminine beauty is portrayed in Vietnamese society. In statements about her work, she says that colors have specific cultural connotations in Vietnam. Red for example pertains to love, purple to fidelity, yellow to piety. Beauty is often defined by the shape of a woman's figure, the size of her breasts, the contours of her lips. In denying her figures a womanly form, she is actively rebelling against the standards imposed on women in Vietnamese society. In her new series entitled *The Secret World of Dinh Y Nhi*, the artist looks deeply into her own soul and spirit as a mother, a daughter, and a woman in today's Vietnam. Her paintings are playful and eccentric but they also reveal a deep anxiety about the conditions of women and how their image is portrayed in the media and in art.

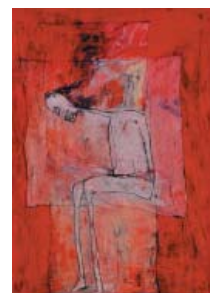
Phuong Do is a photographic artist who was born in Vietnam but grew up in the United States. Through her photographs, she explores her own identity and her relationship to her native land. By taking portraits of herself in various settings, she establishes a marked contrast between herself and her environment. In her pictures, she faces the camera with the cord that controls the shutter still in her hand. It is a metaphor for as an umbilical cord linking her to her family members, herself to her homeland. The people surrounding her watch her or the camera and the viewer is often torn between looking at what is being photographed and the photographer herself. Her photographs reveal the ambiguous nature of Vietnamese American identity. Strangers both in Vietnam and in the US, Vietnamese Americans have difficulty identifying their "home." Phuong Do's photographs reveal this ambivalence felt by many overseas and transnational Vietnamese. In her photographs, she is neither inside nor outside the picture, neither inside nor outside of Vietnam, or both.



The Inner World of Dinh Y Nhi III, Dinh Y Nhi, 2003, Oil on canvas



The Inner World of Dinh Y Nhi VI, Dinh Y Nhi, 2003
Oil on canvas



The Inner World of Dinh Y Nhi XIX, Dinh Y Nhi, 2003
Oil on canvas



The Inner World of Dinh Y Nhi IX, Dinh Y Nhi, 2003
Oil on canvas