

No Place Like Home  
A Vietnamese Exhibition) Part II  
19 April – 11 July 2023

No Place Like Home is a collaborative exhibition that explores home through the lens of Vietnamese diaspora artists. Part II is a continuation of the exploration that began in 2022 at the Canning Gallery.

Immigrant family meals are important moments of connection and storytelling. Traditional foods are deeply intertwined with notions of memory, identity, and belonging, both in the places where diasporic parents have settled and on a transnational scale as a reminder of Vietnam.

This main room showcases object-based pieces on low-rise tables and invites visitors to sit on straw mats to engage with the works. The tables' soft curved shape disrupts the traditional hard-edged administrative and patriarchal tables, allowing transmission of knowledge and experiences for voices from marginalised second-generation immigrants.

At the exhibition entrance, a striking cityscape constructed from Vietnamese plastic stools highlights the effect of the urban structure on the emotions of migrant populations. The adjacent shrine, typically placed at the front of a business or home, welcomes the visitors into the exhibition space.

The exhibited artists have a diverse range of Vietnamese diasporic backgrounds, including 1.5 and second generations, those with refugee parents, and others who grew up in Vietnam. Additionally, the group's cultural backgrounds include Chinese, French, Canadian, Algerian, and British.

We ask our audience, *which objects create a feeling of home for you?*

Artists: KV Duong, Hoa Dung Clerget, Duong Thuy Nguyen, Cường Minh Bá Phạm, Carô Gervay, Minh Lan Tran, AP Nguyen, Koa Pham.

This exhibition is supported by the Jerwood Arts New Work Fund and the Arts Council of England National Lottery Project Grant.



Please note works are not for sale; however, please contact the artists directly for queries and other available works.

Minh Lan Tran (b.1997, Hong Kong) lives and works in London. She is currently completing an MA in Painting at The Royal College of Art. Tran's practice builds on her own writing and identity-based research in calligraphy. Drawing on textual elements, Tran creates works on canvas that blend writing and paint in an iterative process of reflection and integration. Skin-like and multi-layered, Tran's compositions evolve, respond, and change through her own bodily actions. Coming from choreography and performance, she treats the canvas as a field of tension where corporeality forms and dissolves in deep incisions.

The painting presented in this exhibition focused on the question of the transformation of violence. Transforming violence into ardour, Tran explores the transformative process of painting itself, using writing as a way to generate energy and heat.



*Ardour*, 2022  
Distemper, charcoal, and oil on canvas  
150 x 200 cm

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AP Nguyen (b.1999 Hanoi, Vietnam) is a multidisciplinary artist working in the mediums of ceramic, sculpture, and video. Her practice is as driven by material and process as it is by the interrogation of images, aesthetics, and the semiotics of tourism. Interpreting the psychology of travel and movement in a post-war context, she explores the potential for world-building and myth-making in order to question clichés and learnt narratives. She currently lives and works in London.

With every cycle of the moon, whispering waves from shared oceans bring to the shore, secrets, and stories to share from lands on either ends of the water. Sometimes, nothing more than a faint greeting is whispered through the winds. Sometimes a colossal undulation of ripples crashes up against boulders implying violent consequences to come should two lands fail to communicate peacefully. A curious story that was told to me many moons ago is the story of a lonely stone island belonging to no archipelago. On this secluded island, aged but sturdy palm trees have migrated far from the beachy sands of their origin to find unlikely survival on the rocky dry terrains of mountainous slopes. They grow on improbable surfaces, soilless and soulless. It is unknown where, when, and how these tropical specimens came to exist in this way. But as the story goes, the palm trees had slowly begun to colonise the island in mysterious ways, growing awkwardly at first and then with vigour and strength, or so the waves whisper...

*Twin Whisperings* is a new piece of work that continues the artist's exploration and research into the Vietnamese practice of creating miniature landscapes known as *Hòn Non Bê*, which roughly translates to *island-mountain-panorama*. The work also reflects the artist's meditation on tourism and contemporary travel.



*Twin whisperings*, 2023  
Stoneware and crank clay, glaze, metal, aluminium, plastic, android screen  
46 x 28 x 23 cm

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Duong Thuy Nguyen (b.1991 Hanoi, Vietnam) is a London-based artist and writer with bylines in Art and Market, Ocula Magazine, and Plural Art. She is currently studying under a scholarship in Master of Fine Art and works as a Changemaker at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Duong is co-founder of An.OtherAsian, a Southeast Asian artist collective which organised and curated exhibitions at the Ugly Duck and the Koppel Project in 2022.

Duong's artistic sensibility draws on an amalgam of personal experiences, cultural histories, and the natural environment. Broaching themes particularly pertinent to the local community, she investigates questions of origin, memory, and belonging in relation to place and landscape. The domestic and the role of humans in society are also themes probed in her work. Through abstract and biomorphic forms, Duong's experimental works concurrently allude to the historic circulation of products and people, to concerns over environmental collapse, and aim to deepen understanding of her own culture in order to break down perspectives around changing habitats.

*Thân/ Family Homes, 2023*

Handbound book, Rice paper and aluminium  
21 x 32 x 8 cm



N.B: *Family Homes*, the first in a trilogy of publications. The book applies Dadaist techniques to the artist's own MA thesis paper to create instructions for the audienceless. Concepts of community took centre stage in the production of *Family Homes*. By utilising a randomness method to order the text, the artist drew from living archives, the domestic everyday lives of homes and families, as well as the artist's own journey.

By mixing aluminium, as an industrial material with rice paper, the artist created an intersectionality analytical framework that questions how aspects of a person's social and political identity combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

*Chúng ta là một thể hợp nhất/ We Are An Unmistakable Fusion, 2023*

Wood, mdf, and plaster  
35 x 50 x 40 cm



N.B. The white form of *We Are An Unmistakable Fusion* evokes the image of a Vietnamese family's tableware. The artist's memory of her family's everyday dinner is reflected in the artwork's minimalist design, achieved through the use of plaster. The dynamic shapes and colours in the piece seamlessly blend together, alluding to the complex history of sociopolitical order.

*Nước Nhà/ Pickled houses, 2023*

3D print, resin, and metal  
30 x 15 x 15 cm



N.B. *Pickled House* draws inspiration from the iconic pickled Sấu drink in Vietnam, commonly found in working-class homes. Placing these homes in a jar creates an uncanny effect that challenges viewers to reconsider their assumptions surrounding cultural values. The artwork injects urban landscapes into a drink, inviting viewers to question what cultural values are rejected and embraced.

Carô Gervay (b.1986 Paris, France) explores photography as a performative process that generates new spaces of reflection and potential for critical action. Through 'drawing with light' and 'appearing acts', she creates experiences where imagination and memory are in play. Gervay is interested in collectively expressing and responding to the needs and aspirations of diaspora communities, whilst challenging the norms of how we create with photography. She is co-director of the Gate Darkroom.

The series *Unfinished Books* responds to *No Place Like Home* by connecting narratives encountered through the artist's engagement with family archives, community organising and colonial contexts here and across the Channel. This body of work is ongoing and collaborative in nature. It reflects on some of the roles played by photography, highlighting the layers of complexity, labour and care required by these diasporic moments and relationships. Namely, this work considers a photographic practice in conversation with: the An Viet archives in Hackney, l'Union Générale des Vietnamiens de France, a 1928 French order that determined the status of mixed-race children, and the London-based Vietnamese women's group, Reframes.



*(re)Appearing Acts*, 2010 – ongoing

3 concertina books, giclée prints, watercolour. 19.5 x 13.5 cm (closed) x3

N.B. *(re)Appearing Acts* is an ongoing body of work exploring Gervay's family archive and its contexts



*Notes from l'Union Générale des Vietnamiens de France (UGVF), a photographic conversation with Nguyen Dac Minh*, 2023 – ongoing  
Handbound book.

21 x 14.8 cm

N.B. This conversation focuses on 3 images encountered in the archives of l'Union Générale des Vietnamiens de France (UGVF)



*[[Re]frames: [tái] định hình, đóng khung [lại], Carô, Hoa, Lili, Diana, Na, Hồng, Mary, Linh, Linda, Mai Anh, Giang, Châu*, 2021 – ongoing

Handbound book, hand-printed silver gelatin pinhole print, glassine paper.

14.8 x 21 cm

N.B. A bunch of London-based Vietnamese women get together. What do we share? How do we celebrate our differences? Which languages do we want to embrace to connect?



*No Place Like Home: a metastory by Carô Gervay and Cường Minh Bá Phạm*, 2016 – ongoing. Handbound book, annexe printed on recycled paper, glassine envelope.

18 x 18 cm

N.B. How did we get here? This story is embedded within this exhibition. A heads-up: it involves time travelling, participation and staying with the trouble. There is no chronological order nor conclusion.

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Hoang Dung Clerget (b.1985, France) lives and works in the UK and holds a Master in Painting from Royal College of Art. Clerget's practice is centred on the artisanal production of objects that narrate the themes of the domestic and displacement. Her works affirm their materiality through gestures borrowed from everyday life, the gestures of the women in her family and community.

Koa Pham (b.1993 Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam) works with different mediums including drawing, sculpture, and design. His work investigates the relationship between objects, humans, and space, with an emphasis on how objects affect humans and influence their decision-making. Pham holds a BA and MA in Industrial Design from Central Saint Martins.



*The Gift*, 2023

Resin, epoxy, UV gel polish - brass chain, gold leaf - embroidered message on cotton canvas  
35 x 50 x 40 cm

N.B. In the Vietnamese culture, it is common to bring food as a form of gift when invited to someone's house. The king of fruit, the durian, is the subject created by Clerget and Pham to reflect the nature of their multiple exchanges, their gift of friendship and knowledge to one another. In fact, most of the artists' works in this exhibition reflect recent discussions, which can be understood as gifts of conversations.



*Untitled (The Mask)*, 2023

Perspex, mask display stand, mdf, resin, thermoplastic, UV gel Polish, glitter for nail  
90 x 30 x 30 cm

N.B. *Untitled (the Mask)* by Clerget explores how colonialism continues to shape non-Western representations and fetishise Asian women's bodies. It is a critique of modern Western systems of control that define everything from traditional museology to the exoticism of women's bodies.

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Cường Minh Bá Phạm (b.1988 London, UK) works in/between/nearby sound, community, and archives. He is interested in learning (and at times unlearning) our understanding of history, community, movement, family, sound, language, and memory and how they inform or challenge power, knowledge and/or subjectivity. Phạm holds a Master's in Southeast Asia studies at SOAS. He is the co-founder of An Viet Archives Steering Committee.

*(Re)generative Mediations* explores the resonances, tonality, and reverberations within a communal / family setting. This work draws inspiration from the natural world, particularly the importance of sound in coral reef systems. Research suggests that the soundscape of an environment influences where young coral larvae settle for life, and that vibrant soundscapes can help regenerate degraded reefs. This body of work reimagines what various spaces (geographical, family, community) could and should sound like to encourage regeneration. The work envisions a new sonic future focused on healing and joy and encourages people to explore sound in new ways. Information Theory distinguishes between desired signal and unwanted noise. This piece invites listeners, viewers, and participants to engage in new ways of hearing beyond what we are told to listen to?



*(Re)generative Mediations, 2023*

Speaker phone, mother of pearls, shellac records, with 4 channel sound piece.

Dimensions variable

N.B. With audio contributions from KV Duong, Carô Gervay & Amit Rai, AP Nguyen, Duong Thuy Nguyen, Hoa Lê, Xuân An Phạm, a reading of *Những bức thư toàn chữ A* by Phạm Sông Hồng, field recordings from Hà Tĩnh, and distorted recordings from the Chợ Lớn records.

12inch Chợ Lớn records from the pre-1975 South Vietnam era. Chợ Lớn is now a district in Hồ Chí Minh City, with a large Chinese diaspora. These records are bootlegged versions of originals.

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KV Duong (b.1980 Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam) is a London-based artist who examines the complexities of the Vietnamese queer identity through painting, performance, sculpture, and installation. Duong grew up in Canada to Vietnamese Chinese parents displaced by the Vietnam War. His work explores themes of migration and cultural assimilation through the lens of personal and familial history.

The body of work presented in this exhibition expands on Duong's sculptural practice, examining his childhood memories of growing up in an immigrant household, as well as the broader themes of Vietnam's Chinese colonial history and impact of the Vietnam War on the exodus of Vietnamese people. By employing found objects and materials of personal significance, historic documentation, and his own family photos, Duong constructs imagined landscapes that offer a glimpse into his personal heritage. He retells a history that has been distorted through media censorship and displaced through passed-on experiences, and in so doing suggests a new psychological reality.



*Family Heirloom, 2023*  
Acrylic and transfer on clay  
20 x 20 x 20 cm

N.B. Moon shaped vase from Ming dynasty (the last dynasty to rule Vietnam). Duong's family portrait from 1986 (Ho Chi Minh) mirrored and replicated

What objects have passed on through your family generations?



*Birthday Cake to My Younger Self, 2023*  
Acrylic on clay and concrete grout, wire, used nails and staples, found wax candles, aluminium  
18 x 22 x 22 cm

N.B. Duong's first recollection of having a birthday cake was when he turned 7 in Canada, a few months after his family immigrated.



What would you tell your younger self?



*Geneva Accords 1954*

N.B. The first 20 pages of the 1954 Geneva Accords are overlaid on top of each other, rendering the text and context illegible. The outcome of this convention divided Vietnam into the Northern and Southern halves, signifying the start of the Vietnam War. This documentation is apart of the Pentagon Papers which was declassified in 2011.



*Lotus Flower (Steel), 2023*

Acrylic, nail polish, and transfer on rusted steel plate  
24 x 18 cm

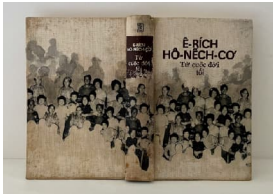
N.B. Background is the Geneva Accords pages titled. The lotus flower is the national flower of Vietnam and is a symbol of purity and rebirth.



*Lotus Flower (Quan Âm's Vase), 2023*

Vase: acrylic and transfer on clay  
Flower: wire, acrylic, nail polish  
27 x 10 x 10 cm

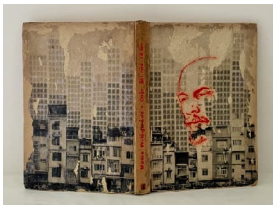
N.B. Quan Âm is the Goddess of mercy. They are typically depicted sitting on a lotus flower while holding a thin white vase. Quan Âm was originally a male Buddhist deity and later became a female resembling Goddess.



*Erich Honecker, 2023*

Acrylic and transfer on found hardcover book  
20 x 28 x 3 cm

N.B. Book was published in 1984 and acquired by the artist in 2022. Erich Honecker (German; 1912 – 1994) was a German communist politician who led the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) from 1971 until shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.



*Lenin, 2023*

Acrylic and transfer on found hardcover book  
25 x 36 x 3 cm

N.B. Book was published in 1980 in Vietnam and acquired by the artist in 2022. Foreground is of the tube houses in Hanoi with the Geneva Accords tiled above.



*Displaced Shelving, 2023*

Quan Âm's portrait, incense burner from Bát Tràng village, store bought offerings, spray paint, acrylic box, IKEA shelves  
Dimensions variable

Displaced shelving, placed within the historic context of the Museum, questions the meaning and experience of home for an immigrant family. Where is home for us and our ancestors, particularly in cases where family members perished at sea or displaced during the war?

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