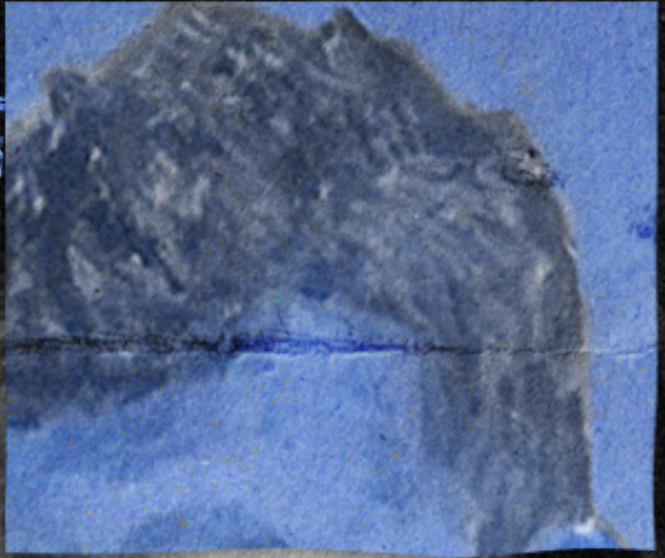
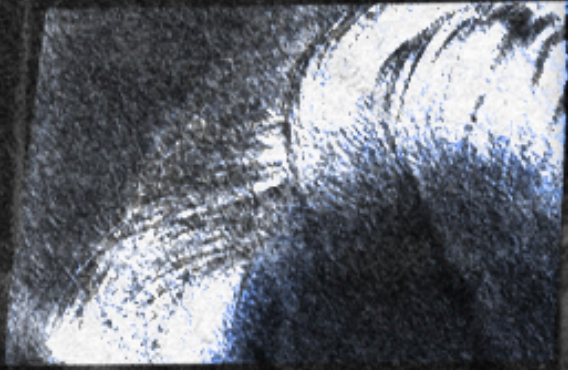


Trinh Cam Nhi  
郑锦妮



Hà Ninh Pham  
范何宁

**Biography**

**简介**





Trinh Cam Nhi (b. 1996) is a contemporary Vietnamese artist born in Hanoi. After graduating from the Accademia di Belle Arti Roma with a BFA in Fine Art in 2019, she returned to Vietnam and made her first appearance with a solo exhibition, "Garden of Unknowing", at Casa Italia, Hanoi.

Nhi's artistic practice primarily revolves around oil painting on canvas, where she delves into the intricate world of botanical forms and their subtle human allusions. Her work exudes a surreal and primitive quality, inviting viewers into an enigmatic realm. Her innocent and expressive style of painting has become a hallmark of her artistic identity.

Nhi has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including "Ask" at VCCA, Hanoi; "Virtual Private Realms" at Manzi, Hanoi; and "Swallow and Spit" at A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur. In 2023, she collaborated with sculptress Lap Phuong for the duo show "Fragment of Soul" at Centec Tower, Ho Chi Minh City. This exhibition marked a significant shift in her approach, as she experimented with grid structures to explore the interplay between rhythms of nature and human introspection. In 2024, Nhi participated in the Vietnamese Art Collection's Residency program and held her second solo exhibition "White Night". She continues to live and work as an independent artist in Hanoi.



郑锦妮于1996年出生于河内越南。2019年，她从罗马美术学院获得美术学士学位后，返回越南，并在河内的 Casa Italia 举办了她的首次个展“未知之园”。

郑的艺术实践主要集中在布面油画上，她深入探索了植物形态的复杂世界以及它们微妙的人类暗示。她的作品散发着超现实的气息，邀请观众进入一个神秘的领域。她天真而富有表现力的绘画风格已成为她艺术身份的标志。

郑参加了众多群展，包括河内VCCA 举办的“问”、河内Manzi 举办的“虚拟私人领域”以及吉隆坡 A+ Works of Art 举办的“吞咽与吐出”。2023年，她与雕塑家 Lap Phuong 合作，在胡志明市的 Centec Tower 举办了双人展“灵魂碎片”。这次展览标志着她方法的重大转变，她开始尝试使用网格结构来探索自然节奏和人类内省之间的相互作用。2024年，郑参加了VAC河内驻留项目，并举办了她的第二次个展“白夜”。她继续作为独立艺术家在河内生活和创作。





Hà Ninh Pham (b. 1991) is an artist from Hanoi, Vietnam. His work explores how we build our understanding of territories from afar. Hà Ninh Pham earned his MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2018 and his BFA from the Vietnam University of Fine Arts in 2014. His work has been featured on Hyperallergic, New American Paintings, and ArtandMarket.

Notable artists residencies include the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, the Corporation of Yaddo in the United States, Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris, France, PLOP London in the United Kingdom, and the ASEAN Artists Residency Programme in Jakarta, Indonesia. Solo shows include Cheats Codes (2019) curated by Passenger Pigeon Press at FRONT Art Space, New York; Institute of Distance (2021) curated by Michael Lee at S.E.A Focus 2021, Singapore; and Recursive Fables (2022) curated by Vân Đỗ at A+ Works of Art in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Hà Ninh Pham is represented by Joshua Lim at A+ Works of Art. He is currently an Associate Lecturer in Design Studies at RMIT University Vietnam.

范何宁于1991年出生于越南河内。他的作品探索了我们如何从远处构建对领土的理解。范于2014年在越南美术学院获得艺术学士学位，并于2018年在宾夕法尼亚美术学院获得艺术硕士学位。他的作品曾在Hyperallergic、New American Paintings和ArtandMarket上展出。

范曾参加多个重要艺术家驻地项目，包括美国的Skowhegan绘画与雕塑学院、Yaddo公司、法国巴黎的国际艺术城、英国的PLOP伦敦以及印度尼西亚雅加达的东盟艺术家驻地项目。个展包括由Passenger Pigeon Press在纽约FRONT Art Space策划的《Cheats Codes》（2019）；由Michael Lee在新加坡S.E.A Focus 2021策划的《Institute of Distance》（2021）；以及由Vân Đỗ在马来西亚吉隆坡的A+ Works of Art策划的《Recursive Fables》（2022）。

范何宁目前是越南RMIT大学设计研究系的助理讲师。



**Trinh Cam Nhi**

**郑锦妮**



The Maze. Circa 2017. Oil on canvas.  
迷宫, 2017, 布面油画





Iris. Circa 2015. Oil on canvas.  
鸢尾, 2015, 布面油画.



Reflection. Circa 2019. Oil on canvas  
反思, 2019, 布面油画.





Orchid. 2019. Oil on canvas  
兰花, 2015, 布面油画..





Nostalgia. 2023. Oil on canvas  
怀旧, 2023, 布面油画



**Hà Ninh Pham**

**范何宁**



B2 [Square Hamlet], 2024. Graphite, acrylic, ink, and colored pencils on paper.

B2 [方形村庄], 2024, 铅笔、丙烯、墨水、彩铅, 纸本





[Mothermap] v3, 1.35x17m. 2022. Graphite and watercolor on paper.

[母图]v3, 1.35x17米, 2022, 铅笔、水彩, 纸本

**The Collaboration**

**合作系列**



Agree  
ment

Cam  
Nhi

✕

Ha  
Ninh

# The Agreement

## 郑锦妮和何范宁的合作协议

Trinh Cam Nhi and Pham Ha Ninh agreed to collaborate on a joint project in the following manner:

### Starting the project:

- Nhi will send the first painting to Ha Ninh via personal email on June 1, 2024. This email will have no subject, will include a photo of the painting, and will contain only the date the painting was sent (June 1, 2024).
- Ha Ninh has until midnight the next day to respond to this email with a photo of the painting and will also only include the date the email was written (June 2, 2024).
- Nhi will have until midnight the following day to respond. This process will continue in the same manner.

All artworks will be created on A5-sized paper, with the choice of materials left to the artists.

### During the creation of the project:

- The two artists will not communicate with each other about this project through any other means.
- The two artists will not share anything about the process with a third party.
- Both artists will keep a journal, assuming the other artist as the reader. Each entry will start with the day, month, and year. The content and language of the journal entries are up to the artist.

### After the project is completed:

- The two artists have set June 30 as the day the final letter will be sent.
- The results of the project will be displayed as an inseparable work of art.
- The name of each painting will be the date it was created.
- The two artists will jointly decide on the pricing and display of the artwork.

Trinh Cam Nhi 和 Pham Ha Ninh 同意以下方式进行合作项目：

### 项目开启前期：

- Nhi 将于2024年6月1日通过个人电子邮件向Ha Ninh发送第一幅画作。这封邮件没有主题行，会附上画作的照片，只包含画作发送日期（2024年6月1日）。
- Ha Ninh 有一整天（到24:00）的时间用新创作的画作来回复这封邮件，同样只包含该画作照片及邮件撰写日期（2024年6月2日）。
- Nhi 有一整天（到24:00）的时间用新创作的画作来回复这封邮件。整个艺术创作过程将以上述相同的循环的方式进行。

所有作品都是在A5大小的纸上创作，材料的选择权留给两位艺术家。

### 项目创作期间：

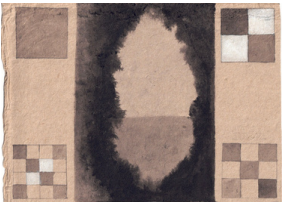
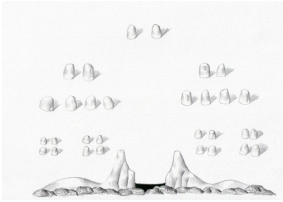
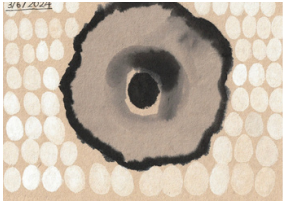
- 这两位艺术家不会通过其他任何方式就这个项目相互沟通。
- 这两位艺术家不会与第三方分享关于创作过程的信息。
- 两位艺术家都需坚持写日记，假设对方是读者，每条记录都以日、月、年开始。日记的内容和语言由艺术家自行决定。

### 项目完成后：

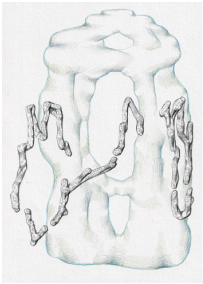
- 两位艺术家将6月30日定为发送最终信件的日子。
- 所有项目成果将被展示为一件不可分割的艺术作品。
- 每一幅画作的名称是它被创作的日期。
- 这两位艺术家将共同决定这件艺术作品的定价和展示方式。

Week 1  
第一周

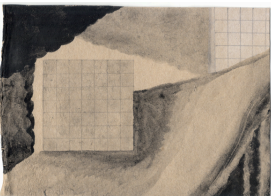
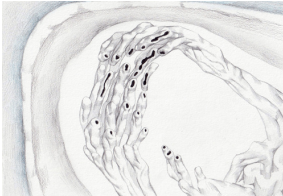
Week 2  
第二周



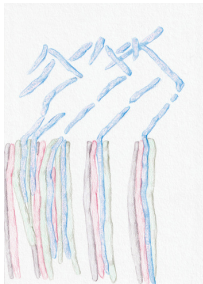
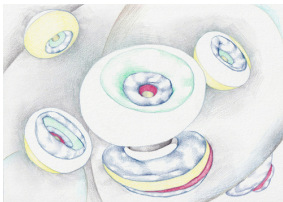
Week 3  
第三周

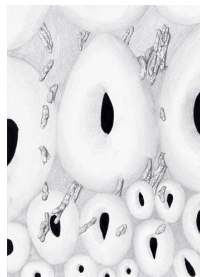
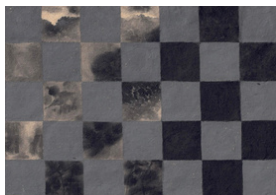
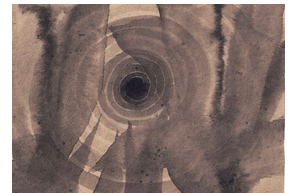
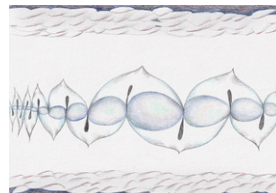
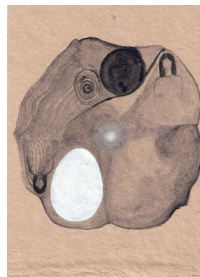
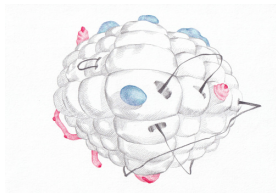
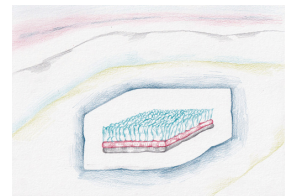
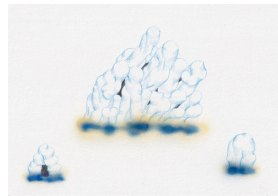
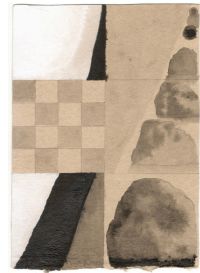
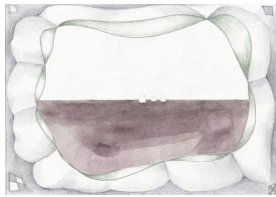
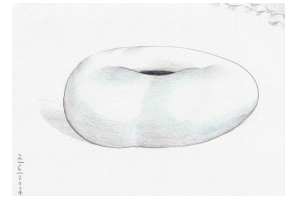


Week 4  
第四周



Week 5  
第五周







**Curriculum Vitae**

**简历**

Trinh Cam Nhi

Born in 1996, Hanoi

Currently works and lives in Hanoi

Education

2019

BFA Fine Art, Academy of Fine Art Roma, Italy

Solo and Two-Person Exhibition

2024

White Night, Vietnam Art Collection Hanoi Residency

2023

Fragment of Soul, Lap Phuong & Trinh Cam Nhi, Centec Tower, Ho Chi Minh City

2020

Garden of Unknowing, Casa Italia, Hanoi

Selected Group Exhibitions

2023

Swallow and Spit, A+ Works of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2022

Winter Solstice, MoT+++, Ho Chi Minh City

2021

Virtual Private Realms, Manzi Art Space, Hanoi

2020

Ask, VCCA, Hanoi

郑锦妮

1996年出生于越南河内  
目前居住并工作在河内。

教育背景

2019年 意大利罗马美术学院 美术学士学位

个展

2024年 白夜，越南艺术收藏河内驻地

2023年 灵魂碎片，Lap Phuong & Trinh Cam Nhi，胡志明市 Centec Tower

2020年 无知之园，Casa Italia，河内

群展

2023年 吞吐，A+ Works of Art，马来西亚 吉隆坡

2022年 冬至，MoT+++，胡志明市

2021年 虚拟私人领域，Manzi 艺术空间，河内

2020年 询问，VCCA，河内





Hà Ninh Pham

Born in 1991, Hanoi

Currently lives and works in Hanoi

#### Education

2018 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ME, United States

2018 Master of Fine Arts in Studio Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, PA, United States

2014 Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting, Vietnam University of Fine Arts, Hanoi, Vietnam

#### Solo shows

2023 Manzi Art Space, Entrusted Conjectures, Hanoi, Vietnam

2022 A+ WORKS of ART, Recursive Fables, curated by Van Do, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2021 Ngã at Tach Spaces, Tilted Archipelago, curated by Trinh Ngan Hanh, Hanoi, Vietnam

2021 S.E.A Focus 2021, represented by A+ WORKS of ART, Institute of Distance, curated by

Michael Lee, Singapore

2019 The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Necessary Fictions, a two-person show with Tammy

Nguyen, curated by Zoe Butt and Bill Nguyen, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam

2019 FRONT Art Space, Cheat Codes, curated by Passenger Pigeon Press, New York, NY, United States

#### Residencies

2022 Cité Internationale des Arts, Programme de Réciprocité 2020, Paris, France

2022 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Artists Residency Programme, Jakarta, Indonesia

2020 RMIT University Vietnam, Digital Design & Media Residency, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam

2019 PLOP, Residency, London, United Kingdom

2019 The Corporation of Yaddo, Visual Art Residency, Saratoga Springs, NY, United States

2019 Marble House Project, Visual Artist Residency, VT, United States

2018 Wassaic Project, Winter Residency, Wassaic, NY, United States

2018 Passenger Pigeon Press, Collaborations, New York, NY, United States

2015 Heritage Space, Month of Arts Practice, Hanoi, Vietnam

#### Teaching

2020-now RMIT University Vietnam, Design Studies, Associate Lecturer, Hanoi, Vietnam

2020 Vietnam University of Fine Arts, Visiting Lecturer, Hanoi, Vietnam

2020 Monster Lab School of Design, Instructor in Study Drawing, Hanoi, Vietnam

(continued)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### INTERVIEWS AND PUBLISHED WRITINGS

2019-2020 The Painter's Studio, Artist Statements and Applications, Writing Instructor,  
Hanoi, Vietnam

2019 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Post-Baccalaureate Program, Seminar:  
Subject,

Form, Content, Visiting Critic, PA, United States

2017 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts Program,  
Advanced Painting,

Teaching Assistant, PA, United States

2013-2015 Private Drawing Tutor, Hanoi, Vietnam



范何宁

1991年出生于越南河内  
目前在河内工作和生活

### 教育经历

2018年，美国宾夕法尼亚州立美术学院，绘画工作室艺术硕士  
2014年，越南河内美术大学，绘画学士学位

### 个展

2024年，法国巴黎BAQ画廊，“处方不快乐”，策展人：黎天宝  
2023年，越南河内Manzi艺术空间，“委托推测”  
2022年，马来西亚吉隆坡A+ WORKS of ART，“递归寓言”，策展人：范多  
2021年，越南河内Tach Spaces，“倾斜群岛”，策展人：陈氏玉涵  
2021年，新加坡S.E.A Focus 2021，“虚拟距离”，代表：A+ WORKS of ART，策展人：迈克尔·李  
2019年，越南胡志明市The Factory当代艺术中心，“必要的虚构”，与谭美阮双人展，策展人：佐伊·巴特和比尔·阮  
2019年，美国纽约FRONT艺术空间，“作弊码”，策展人：Passenger Pigeon Press

### 驻地项目

2024年，越南河内越南艺术收藏馆驻地，客座艺术家  
2022年，法国巴黎Cité Internationale des Arts，2020年互惠项目  
2022年，印度尼西亚雅加达东盟秘书处，东盟艺术家驻地项目  
2020年，越南胡志明市RMIT大学，数字设计与媒体驻地  
2019年，英国伦敦PLOP驻地  
2019年，美国纽约The Corporation of Yaddo视觉艺术驻地  
2019年，美国VT Marble House Project视觉艺术家驻地  
2018年，美国纽约Wassaic Project冬季驻地  
2018年，美国纽约Passenger Pigeon Press合作项目  
2018年，美国ME Skowhegan绘画与雕塑学院  
2015年，越南河内Heritage Space，艺术实践月

### 教学经历

2020年至今，越南河内RMIT大学设计研究，助理讲师  
2020年，越南河内美术大学，客座讲师  
2020年，越南河内Monster Lab School of Design，绘画研究课程讲师  
2019-2020年，越南河内The Painter's Studio，艺术家陈述和申请写作讲师  
2019年，美国宾夕法尼亚州立美术学院，后学士学位项目，研讨会：主题、形式、内容，访问评论家  
2017年，美国宾夕法尼亚州立美术学院，学士学位项目，高级绘画，助教  
2013-2015年，越南河内，私人绘画导师

(接上页)

#### 参考文献

##### 访谈和已发表作品

2019-2020 《画家的工作室》，艺术家陈述和申请，写作导师，越南河内

2019 宾夕法尼亚艺术学院，本科后项目，研讨会：主题、形式、内容，访问批评家，美国宾夕法尼亚州

2017 宾夕法尼亚艺术学院，美术学士项目，高级绘画，助教，美国宾夕法尼亚州

2013-2015 私人绘画导师，越南河内





**Selected Press**

**报道节选**



HOME NEWS CULTURE – SOCIETY THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS OF YOUNG ARTIST TRINH CAM NHI

# The transformation process of young artist Trinh Cam Nhi

VOV VOV electronic newspaper | July 16, 2024

After many years of exposure to Italian art and graduating with a degree in Painting in this country, artist Trinh Cam Nhi returned to Vietnam and held her first solo exhibition called Garden of Eden at the Italian Cultural Center in Vietnam in 2020. Opening the "White Night" studio is Trinh Cam Nhi's recent art exhibition at Ha Noi, the works have a unique combination of Western painting and Eastern materials.



Trinh Cam Nhi is considered one of the promising young faces of Vietnamese contemporary painting. Having left an impression in the hearts of audiences with the image of the human body and flowers, in recent years, artist Trinh Cam Nhi has transformed herself with a new artistic style. The chessboard layout is the foundation for each artist's work. This composition became a means for the artist to experiment with visual

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illusions, exploring form and symbolism. Alongside the squares, Cam Nhi's expressive brushstrokes create an organic form that intersects the body and the landscape, demonstrating her artistic vision that is gradually moving towards abstraction. This time, Nhi's "White Night" exhibition is the same. Nhi's compositions and thoughts are shown on a number of works with chessboard layouts, bringing a perspective that is both mysterious and unique.



Artist Trinh Cam Nhi said: "The main theme in this series of works is very much related to childhood memories. Over time it transforms, some memories grow up, some memories disappear." Go. I want to exploit the movement of memories inside each person, how it changes over time. Besides, the image of the egg also says a lot about this theme of childhood, containing many meanings, both childhood, femininity and a new beginning. I was educated in Italy and my way of thinking and creating works is heavily influenced by the West and I chose Do paper. I think this is quite an interesting combination. If a layout with such a strong Western feel was placed on Do paper, what would it look like?

The interesting point in this exhibition is that the young artist continues to transform and experiment with new materials - watercolor, ink, and acrylic on Do paper. Thanks to the rough textured surface of Do paper and the material contrast between acrylic and ink, Cam Nhi's paintings reveal spaciousness, sophistication and poetry; Her brushstrokes also gradually become direct and expressive. If previously, Cam Nhi focused on shifting the "look" through the use of chessboard layouts, now she has turned to building her own artistic vision.



Appreciating the creative process and works at the "White Night" exhibition, Ms. Sophie Huang, Art History Researcher - Director of Vietnam Art Collection VAC said: "We are so lucky to see Nhi at this pivotal moment in her artistic development. Trinh Cam Nhi's work in Opening the Workshop "White Night" demonstrates the development of her artistic practice. Over the past year, we had the opportunity to witness Nhi's creative journey. Nhi's work has transitioned from focusing on female figures to gradually incorporating more abstract elements. Her progression suggests a profound exploration of form, color and composition, going beyond mere description. Opening the workshop "White Night" provides a valuable opportunity to appreciate the diversity of Trinh Cam Nhi's compositions and the evolution of her artistic language."

In the exhibition space, works ranging from chessboard layouts to egg, circle and flower images reflect the change in the young artist's artistic style. In addition, Cam Nhi uses recurring motifs such as eggs, curtains, and whirlpools - symbols originating from childhood memories and the innocence in each person, bringing a new approach. for the art-loving public.





Viewer Luong Vi shared: "Repeated images like curtains, egg shapes, and whirlpools make me feel both real and dreamy. It is very interesting that Do paper is backed with canvas. Do paper is a traditional type of Vietnamese paper. Before, I only saw Dong Ho paintings, but today I saw a promising young artist from Vietnam bringing Western perspectives such as chessboard layouts, applying them to Do paper, this is a unique combination".

The exhibition "White Night" by artist Trinh Cam Nhi is open to the public until 31/7 this year at VAC Hanoi, 6/44/11 To Ngoc Van, Tay Ho, Hanoi. Following the successful residency of Cam Nhi, VAC will launch a residency program with the participation of two promising artists from Ho Chi Minh City, aiming to create conditions for talent development, broaden the vision of young Vietnamese artists, continuing their creative journey and professional development.

Sources: <https://vov.vn/van-hoa/qua-trinh-chuyen-minh-cua-hoa-si-tre-trinh-cam-nhi-post1108006.vov>



## HYPERALLERGIC

ART • WEEKEND

## Out of Vietnam, Drawings of Displacement and Repression

In Hà Ninh Pham's drawings, a building could be a prison or a torture chamber, but there is nothing about the edifices that might indicate their function.

John Yau June 30, 2019



Hà Ninh Pham, "E4.1 [Institute of Depth]" (2019), graphite, acrylic, and pastel on paper, 56 x 44 inches (all images courtesy Passenger Pigeon Press / FRONT Art Space, unless otherwise noted)

One of my favorite books to dip into is *Pocket Atlas of Remote Islands* (2010) by Judith Schalansky, translated from the German by Christine Lo. Schalansky started researching and writing the book, subtitled *Fifty Islands I Have Not Visited and Never Will*, in the Berlin National Library. As she states in her introduction, "Land in Sight":

I have invented nothing. But I have discovered everything; I have found these stories and made them mine, just as the explorer makes the land he discovers his. All the text in this book has been researched; every detail has been created out of these sources.

And yet, as Schalansky well knows, a map is an interpretation. It is her interpretation that creates the stories, all of which are true.

Take, for example, the island known as Tromelin, and the moment in its history that lasts 15 years. In 1761, a ship sets sail from Bayonne, France, and picks up slaves to sell at Mauritius, its final port of call. It runs aground, however, on a strip of sand two kilometers long and barely 800 meters wide. The 122 surviving sailors build a boat from the wreckage and set sail, promising the 60 surviving slaves (out of 160) that they will return. Fifteen years later, on November 29, 1776, a ship finally arrived, but the only ones still alive were seven women and a baby not yet weaned.

Hà Ninh Pham draws maps that lead to more maps. In his first New York show, *Cheat Codes*, at FRONT Art Space (June 22 – July 3, 2019), which was organized and curated by Passenger Pigeon Press (under the direction of Tammy Nguyen), the artist presents five mixed media drawings and a wood sculpture. According to the gallery press release, the drawings are part of a long-term project *My Land*, which he started in 2017 while he was an MFA student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.



Hà Ninh Pham, "[mothermap]" (2019),  
graphite, paint marker, acrylic and pastel  
on paper, 48 x 46 inches

How the artist, who was born in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 1991, ended up studying in America is the subject, in part, of his drawings. In a conversation I had with Pham, I learned that his father was a soldier in the North Vietnamese army and fought in the Vietnam War. He was a communications expert and his primary job was to lay radio wires connecting the command posts of the various units advancing through the tunnels from the North to the South. Later, his father was instrumental in bringing the Internet to Vietnam.

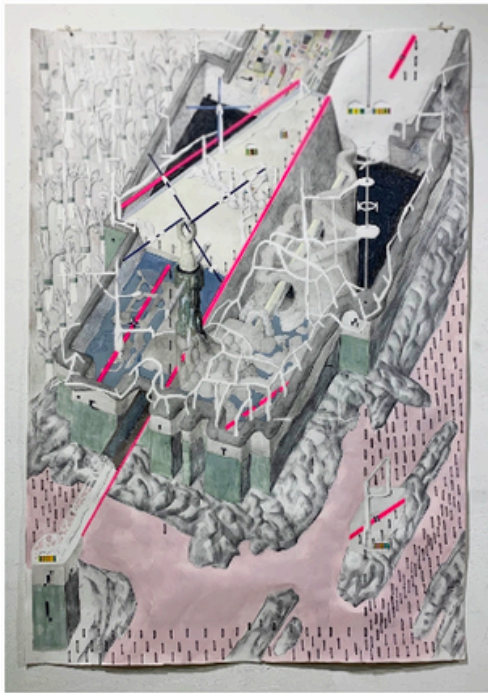
Meanwhile, Pham – whose mother died when he was young – showed an early interest in art, which his father encouraged, which led to a BFA in Painting from Vietnam University of Fine Arts. In our conversation, Pham said that his art education consisted primarily of learning how to draw from plaster casts, an outdated holdover from the Colonial era.

When Pham was trying to decide whether to open a coffee shop in Hanoi or continue studying art, his father offered to pay his tuition as long as the school was in the United States, the very country he spent many years fighting.



This is how he ended up in Philadelphia, which is more than 8000 miles from Hanoi. I mention these details because I think that the information enters into his drawings, but not in any literal way. There is nothing overtly autobiographical about his work, but I get the feeling that it is all grounded in experience.

Done on a squarish sheet of paper, the drawing “[mothermap]” (2019) is divided into an eight-by-eight grid, with the vertical row numbered 1 through 8, while the horizontal row receives the alphabetical designations of A through H.



Hà Ninh Pham, “A6 [Pink headquarter]” (2019), graphite, paint marker, acrylic and charcoal on paper, 51 x 36 inches

This iteration of “[mothermap],” in which Pham depicts an aerial view of various architectural structures in a hilly terrain, is the third version of the generating source for the drawings that follow.

When I asked Pham about the impetus behind the “[mothermap],” he said that it enabled him to bring together competing ideologies. I don’t think that these ideologies have only to do with growing up in Vietnam, a communist country, and studying in the US, the bastion of capitalism, though that is there.

They have to do with his education – from drawing plaster casts to earning an MFA and spending a summer at Skowhegan. They

have to do with competing languages, such as the graphic markings often found in maps – topographical signs, symbols, and other visual indicators. Given Pham’s biography, we get the sense that his drawings have to do with feelings of displacement and disruption – and that drawing a map can give him a sense of control.

Pham’s topographical drawing has its roots in his education, but clearly set to a different purpose. With “A6 [pink headquarter]” (2019), the ambiguity suggested in the title is really one of the strengths of the work.

This particular structure seems to have been inspired by medieval fortresses and science fiction movies, as well as the work of Paul Noble and his multi-year drawing project creating a fictional city, *Nobson Newtown*. The difference is that Pham’s *My Land* feels sinister, a sensation that was confirmed when I asked the artist about two of the buildings in “[mothermap].” One, he said was a “prison”

and the other was used for “torture.” And yet, there is nothing about the edifices or even the titles the artist gives his drawings to indicate their function.

What adds to these works – gives them further power – is their resistance to complete interpretation; we can only partially read them. Why is the soil pink in “A6 [Pink headquarter]”? What are the rows of vertical marks meant to represent? Pham has opened a space – or perhaps it is more accurate to say, place – that is his alone: he both discovers and creates it. And it seems that it can remain open for a long time, becoming a diary of his discoveries.



Hà Ninh Pham, “B5.1 T [theodolite]” (2018), tracing paper and painted pine wood, 9 x 30 x 8 inches (image courtesy of the artist)

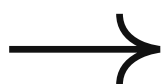
At the same time, in the sculpture, “B5. 1 [theodolite]” (2018), which Pham made while he was in Skowhegan, the title offers a clue as to what is on his mind. According to Wikipedia, “A theodolite is a precision optical instrument for measuring angles between designated visible points in the horizontal and vertical planes.” It is a surveying tool, which is necessary to determine the relationship between the structures and the landscape they are set

into. Pham’s sculpture is DIY theodolite, which he sees as being similar to a camera obscura. There is a compartment for a lens and a space where the image can be projected, along with a protractor and a stick to measure the direction of the sun.

Instead of relying on a factory-produced theodolite, Pham has made one that does not rely on the conventions of measurement found in its commercial counterpart, reflecting his innate distrust of standard devices as well as his need to create an alternative world.

There is a visionary impulse running through Pham’s undertaking that has more to do with conflict and repression, at least as suggested by “prison” and “torture,” than with the utopianism more often associated with the drawings of visionary architects such as Claude-Nicolas Ledoux. In a world stricken by competing ideologies constantly jockeying for the upper hand, Pham’s fantastical structures – at once inviting and off-putting – strike a chord.

*Hà Ninh Pham: Cheat Codes continues at FRONT Art Space (118 Chambers Street, #2, TriBeCa, Manhattan) through July 3. The exhibition is organized and curated by Passenger Pigeon Press, under the direction of Tammy Nguyen.*



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