

10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Katie de Tilly Contemporary Artists

Press Release
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10 CHANCERY LANE GALLERY PRESENTS 4 RISING TALENTS FROM
SOUTHEAST ASIA:
KHANH CONG BUI, NGUYEN THAI TUAN, NGUYEN TRINH THI
AND NOV CHEANIK

HONG KONG, FEBRUARY 2012— 10 Chancery Lane Gallery is proud to present four rising artists from South East Asia: Vietnamese Artists Khanh Cong Bui, Nguyen Thai Tuan, Nguyen Trinh Thi, as well as young Cambodian artist Nov Cheanik.

KHANH CONG BUI

b. 1972, Danang, Vietnam. Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Khanh Cong Bui's work addresses history and contemporary society in Vietnam and the impact that global capital is having upon it. The blue-and-white porcelain vases that are both traditional and contemporary combine the dichotomy of the fast changing society of his country. Bui's vases address what he calls 'the character of the present', the sounds and sights of daily life. Traditional forms interplay with symbols of quotidian life--flip flops and coca-cola cans are encased by classic Vietnamese ornamentation; Buddha and his own self portrait are just some of the images upon his complicated narratives that embellish the vessels. The red plastic chair finds its way onto many of his works and as he states, "In Vietnam, the red plastic chair is something you find at street cafes, outside people's homes as they sit and relax, at some political meeting halls and public events. It is a common object in Vietnam. Light, cheap and easy to move. For me, the chair collectively represents a body of people, a way of thinking, an attitude. The chair is something sat on; it is a space for contemplation, productivity and decision-making. But what is the subject we are thinking? The figure that interrupts each 'scene' is me. I want to try and make people think that perhaps there is a different way of doing; perhaps there is a need to question why we are doing what we are doing. We all start with zero and try to make something from our ideas." Indeed, deeply philosophical yet reactive to the world around him, Khanh Cong Bui is one of Vietnam's most exciting young artists.

TUAN THAI NGUYEN

b. 1965, Quang Tri, Vietnam. Lives and works in Dalat. Vietnam

In this series of “Black Paintings” Nguyen Thai Tuan addresses social perceptions. By using his signature technique of creating an absence of the physical being, the viewer is invited to cast judgement on a situation. The scenes are set in a neutral backdrop isolating the character within a context, a moment, a time. Forced to peer into the painted character’s solitary world pushes us into their seclusion within the bigger world around them as well as the very moment that the artist so poignantly captures. The audience is forced to analyze the dress, the stance, the situation and cast opinions or stereotype the characters. Is the woman on the bus bench wearing a scarf a Khmer Rouge or is she a peasant? Is the man being abducted a felon or are the Police corrupt? The monotone scenes further camouflage the characters’ identity while at the same time the flowing fabrics, painted so smoothly, lend a comforting familiarity of warm Saigon that draws us into each situation. Director and Curator of San Art, Zoe Butt, states: Nguyen Thai Tuan is one of Vietnam’s most significant artists of his generation, whose artistic practice is anchored in the symmetry of fullness and absence. Where are our memories fullest? What triggers/limits our imagination to recall the facts of the past? For Nguyen Thai Tuan, space and its objects, the relationship between body and matter, is of unquestionable import.”

NGUYEN TRINH THI

b. 1973, Hanoi, Vietnam. Lives and works in Hanoi, Vietnam

‘Song to the Front’ by Vietnamese artist, Nguyen Trinh Thi takes a historical Vietnamese war film from 1973 as its central source. Re-editing ‘*Bai ca rat ran (Song to the Front)*’, produced by the Vietnam Feature Film Studio and directed by Tran Duc, Trinh Thi has turned this rarely seen black and white classic feature into a small vignette that decomposes the aesthetic and romantic elements of this social-realist melodrama. Trinh Thi extrapolates the central narrative of the film into a 5-minute abstraction, her jump cuts and use of still frames are heightened with her use of Stravinsky’s ‘The Rite of Spring’. This climactic music refers to a sacred pagan ritual in pre-Christian Russia where a young girl dances herself to death – a vision that Stravinsky claimed was to propitiate the god of Spring. For Trinh Thi, these young soldiers who gave their lives for their country are the sacrificed pagans.

Trinh Thi’s version of ‘Song to the Front’ plays with the original plot line in a deliberately ambiguous manner, desiring an imaginative space for the viewer to reinterpret what were intended to be very literal epics that enforce an ideological view.

Nguyen Trinh Thi is an artist, filmmaker and documentarian based in Hanoi, Vietnam. Her diverse practice has consistently investigated the role of memory in the necessary unveiling of hidden, displaced or misinterpreted histories, often making use of original documentary footage or undertaking extensive investigative field work. Trinh Thi is founder of DOCLAB in Hanoi (www.hanoidoclab.org), an independent centre for documentary film and video art. She is also an ‘Asian Public Intellectual’ Fellow (2011-2012), currently undertaking research in Japan and Thailand. Her work has been exhibited in film festival and exhibition across Asia, Europe and the USA. (Written by Zoe Butt, Director and Curator of San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)

NOV CHEANIK

b. 1989, Battambang, Cambodia. Lives and works in Battambang, Cambodia

In Cambodia, portraits are commonly commissioned by people seeking their representative likeness, or even an enhancement or perfection of their likeness. “Realism” is the expected and respected result, whether in the form of photography or painting. Nov Cheanick’s *Farmers* offer a dramatically different take on the purpose and potential diversity of portraiture.

Nov grew up in rural Battambang province, where he lives today, and where he finds the subjects for his paintings: subsistent rice farmers, both men and women, young and old. Nov differentiates himself from his subjects – his outlook of a bright future is connected to having finished high school and continuing his art education, while he connects the farmer’s struggle and poverty in part to their absence of formal education. It is not only a lack of education of course that sidelines farmers from their once respected position in Khmer society and culture. Although they remain one of Cambodia’s most valuable populations and resources today, they struggle from loose and changing law and land titles, land grabbing, rarity of irrigation systems or machinery or storage, and an expanding national economy that lures them to urban areas, to name but a few circumstances.

Like the farmer’s precarious, nature-dependent livelihoods, Nov’s process is also mercurial. He considers his black ink paintings on paper an emotional process -the reactive moment when the water and ink meet is a metaphor for our reaction to unpredictable circumstances in life. Removing his subjects from their original context and titling them by number only further extends this metaphor to the audience – as we “meet” these blurred and anonymous faces, we can only meet our own associations and emotions. (Written by Erin Gleeson, Director and Curator of Sa Sa Bassac, Phnom Penh, Cambodia)

About 10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Founded in 2001 by Katie de Tilly 10 Chancery Lane Gallery is a driving force in contemporary arts’ culture in Hong Kong and is one of Asia’s leading contemporary art galleries. Working from a broad range of artists of culturally diverse backgrounds the gallery is particularly interested in emerging movements in Asian art. Asia has seen a blossoming of its art over the last decade and 10 Chancery Lane Gallery is committed to play a major role in documenting the development of art within the Asia pacific region by holding more survey exhibitions by country or theme of both emerging and mid-career artists and publishing books that bring together the individual historical contexts with the arts development within Asia.

FOUR RISING TALENTS FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

KHANH CONG BUI

NGUYEN THAI TUAN

NGUYEN TRINH THI

NOV CHEANIK

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY FEBRUARY 23RD 6:30-8:00PM

EXHIBITION RUNS UNTIL APRIL 14TH