

Prince Claus Fund for
Culture and Development

MORE-THAN-HUMAN # 1: THE UNDERSTORIES

A site-specific staging by

Nguyễn Huy An - Lại Diệu Hà - Nguyễn Trần Nam - Nguyễn Văn Phúc - Nguyễn Trinh Thi - Nguyễn Văn Thủy

Open studio: 11.00 AM - 07.00 PM (Wednesday - Sunday) from 23 February until 19 March 2023

*Venues: the front yard of manzi art space - 14 Phan Huy Ích, Ba Đình, Hà Nội
& manzi exhibition space - no.2 ngõ Hàng Bún, Ba Đình, Hà Nội*

A shoe

A ladder

A lightning strike

Malevich

Hydra

The Sound

Hòn non bộ (miniature landscape art)

A fleeting outline scribbled down, that outline of a Story not yet to be fully-formed just awaiting to be unveiled, but rather of the happenings to be encountered and recorded.

Throughout over three weeks, six artists (working in different disciplines: visual arts, performance art, sound & moving images) will collaborate together in a series of "symbiotic experiments", an open studio simultaneously at two different spaces of manzi.

Provoked by an infinite conundrum about More-Than-Human World, 'The Understories' simulates a site-specific staging in which many elements/characters would be involved; they can appear suddenly or quietly withdraw, with unexpected movements and mise en scène:

*There is Light and Darkness
Sound and Silence
Natural beings and Man-made Objects
Remembrance of things past
Promise of things that just begin
There are Handcrafts along Machines
The Original and Imitation
Materiality and Dematerialization
Flesh and Spirit
Divine and Earthly
Then Decaying...*

Much as complex and multivalent 'entities' are inextricably woven in the same 'habitat', they are not thrown into chaos or disruption; instead, such heterogeneity cultivates an environment conducive to cooperation and order. Including a series of on-going installations and performances, 'The Understories' constructs a loose representation of an **ECOSYSTEM**. The displayed bodies of artworks would go further than just being beautifully finished, laying inert, playing a completely passive role of being watched, examined and questioned by the viewers. On the contrary, they are exposed as a perceptive network in a developing process; we will see, hear, and feel them breathing, growing, staying alert to their surroundings, responding to stimuli: Those 'beings' of 'The Understories' will not only interact with each other (like with their neighboring species) but also react with internal factors of the exhibition space (their living conditions), as well as with the audience - external stimuli (or invaders of their environment); not to mention that they also respond to the flow of time.

For three weeks' duration, 'The Understories' will transform through four '*Phases*' (or we can call them '*Rhythms*' as in Biology / '*Acts*' as in a Play / '*Chapters*' as in a Story). Adopting such a sequential structure with each part lasting for 4 - 5 days, the open studio is an experimentation with both space and time. Week after week, the performance of each artist, their body of works would be gradually formed - adjusted/ sustained- dissipated as if regulated by a general principle that's comparable to the 'interspecies collaboration / competition' practice in the natural ecosystem.

However, just as a draft script is still open to adaptations and improvisation, since nothing other than the main characters and overall story has been sketched out, the collaboration of six artists in 'The Understories' has a huge potential for unusual twists and spontaneous turns. Because conflict is inherent in all forms of systematization, no matter if it's a natural or social structure. In such unavoidable collisions between the dynamic parts and the static whole, between the free will of individuals and the intrinsic limits of collective action, the Climax (of this whole staging) will emerge.

Then what to be revealed in the aftermath of all those more-than-human experiences: 'Everything has a Spirit' (in theory of animism) or 'Everything is transient' (in Buddhism and Taoism). At the end of all these rhythms, what's to come: A state of rest in the perfect & eternal equilibrium? Or a point of extinction signaling an upcoming phase of post-apocalyptic rebirth?

*During the course of the open studio, there will be a series of events including film screenings, discussions and artist's talks

The event is organized by Hanoi Doclab and Manzi with support from the Prince Claus Foundation.

NOTE FOR VISITORS:

- Due to the fragility of the installation and the complexity of the set up, we can only accommodate max 7 persons for each slot.
 - The event is not appropriate for children under 12
 - Visitors are required not to go beyond the ladder in the exhibition room
 - No photo and filming are allowed during the event (it's too dark anyway)
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ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

NGUYỄN HUY AN

Born in 1982 in Hanoi and graduated from the Vietnam Fine Art University in 2008, Nguyen Huy An is considered one of the most dynamic and innovative artists of his generation. Huy An's work has been a process of trying to dig into the darkness of psychology. Most of his projects have been underpinned by an obsession with memory and the complexities of a pessimistic perspective. From installations, performance art to paintings and sculptures, Huy An's works are highly acclaimed by international art critics and curators for their introspective, simple and strong concepts.

Huy An has participated in a number of exhibitions and performance art festivals including solo exhibitions 'The Four Subjects', Manzi Art Space, Vietnam (2022); 'Âm Sáng', Galerie Quynh, Vietnam (2019); Calculus Exercise #6/5, Manzi Art Space, Vietnam (2018); 78 Rhythms, Galerie Quynh, Vietnam (2014); Disrupted Choreographies, Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nimes, France (2014); If The World Changed, Singapore Biennale (2013); Sounds of Dust (somniloquy), 943 Studio Kunming, China (2011) among others.

LẠI DIỆU HÀ

Lại Diệu Hà graduated from Hanoi Fine Arts University in 2005. Specialized in performance art: performing the inner self, the urgency of finding self's origin and everything it clashed into, Dieu Ha usually used her body for experiment and practice, as a test and a question of which answers are but confusions.

Developing the media to now encompass photography, painting, sculpture, installation, and video, Dieu Ha still employs the psychological blurriness to form and articulate her artistic voice. Lai Dieu Ha's last notable exhibitions include 'Psychodrama Therapy' , Rapid Pulse International Performance Art Festival, Chicago, USA, 2014; 'Mind, Flesh, Matter'. Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, 2014. In 2015 she hold the first solo show 'Conservation of vitality' with Cuc Gallery, Hanoi, Vietnam.

NGUYỄN TRẦN NAM

Born in 1979, Nguyen Tran Nam is considered one of the second-wave contemporary artists in Hanoi closely associated with Nha San Studio and Nha San Collective – one of the first artist-led experimental art spaces of Northern Vietnam.

Since graduating from the Vietnam University of Fine art in 2003, Nam has been producing a diverse body of multimedia work. At times dark and heavy, others playful and sarcastic, his work makes visible both past

and present-day social, political and historical issues of Vietnam, while highlighting the individual tales of and human relationships among people of different social groups.

Selected exhibitions include: 'Through the Looking Glass', Manzi Art Space, Hanoi (2022); 'Undone', Manzi Art Space, Hà Nội (2017); 'Reunification-1 Journey'; 'Mise-en-scene', Nha San Collective, Hanoi (2016), 'Broken Chapters', Manzi Art Space, Hanoi (2013), 'Hinterland', Luggage Store Gallery, San Francisco (2012); 'Gap', Nhasan Studio, Hanoi, Vietnam (2010); 'Indefinitely', Ryllega Gallery, Hanoi, Vietnam (2008).

NGUYỄN TRINH THI

Based in Hanoi, Nguyễn Trinh Thi is a filmmaker and artist. Traversing boundaries between film, documentary, video art, installation, and performance, her practice currently explores the potential of sound and listening, and the multiple relations between the image, sound, and space with ongoing interests in history, memory, ecology, representation, and the unknown.

Recent exhibitions include installations at documenta 15, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, the 21st Biennale of Sydney, and the 13th Lyon Contemporary Art Biennale. In 2009, Nguyễn founded Hanoi DOCLAB, an independent center for documentary film and moving image in Hanoi.

NGUYỄN VĂN PHÚC

Born in 1978, graduated from Hanoi Fine Art University in 2003, Nguyễn Văn Phúc belongs to the 3rd generation of contemporary artists of Hanoi.

Known for his vibrant colour paintings where he depicts his own world of psychological struggles with social changes and contexts of Vietnam in the new era, however, recently Phúc has extended his practice to multi-media work including installation and video art. His latest solo exhibition was held in 2022 at Manzi Art Space.

NGUYỄN VĂN THỦY

Born in 1982, Nguyen Van Thuy graduated from Open University, Hanoi, majoring in graphic design. In his activities, Thuy is often interested in the cultural life of the Northern rural areas. Selected group exhibitions include: Emerging Artists V (Nha San Collective, 2017); Skylines with flying people 4 (King's Storage, 2020); Open studio 'Please don't be real' (Babau AIR, 2022)..