



PRESS RELEASE

'Empty Forest' by Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn

Curated by Zoe Butt

9 December 2017 – 7 February 2018 (Opening 6PM, 9 December)

The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, 15 Nguyen U Di, Thao Dien, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City

....

The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre is pleased to present 'Empty Forest' by Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn – a solo exhibition showcasing film, sculpture, photography – revealing a landscape where the industry of ailing spiritual beliefs is feeding the most wretched of human desires, to irreversible effect.

For this premiere showcase, Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn will transform the ground floor main hall of The Factory into a menagerie of animalistic forms, a kind of large-scale diorama where the voice of the endangered sits on the edge of extinction (or in particular case has already teetered into oblivion). In 'Empty Forest', Nguyễn explores the impact of traditional medicine in Vietnam on the plight of such wondrous creatures as the pangolin, rhino, turtle and deer, fascinated by the role and shape of human spiritual belief in its once interdependently respectful, yet now destructive relationship with the natural world.

Nguyễn's forest is a supernatural landscape of inanimate objects, perhaps likened as monuments to the undead, where these creatures are transmogrified into totems for the (soon to be) dismembered. The horn of the rhino; the antlers of the deer; the scales of the pangolin, the shell of the turtle – these are just a few of the deemed 'magical' elements within traditional medicine practice in China and Vietnam. Despite the fact that usage of such animal parts are scientifically proven as merely placebos, illegal poachers continue to ply the dying populations of these endangered animals knowing that they can earn an impressive sum from 'patients' endemically believing in the healing science of 'faith'. It is to the ritual of consuming these beliefs that Nguyễn is ultimately perplexed and compelled, drawn to the performativity of adoration in the handling of these near mythical creatures (ie. the snake dance; the cock-fight; the pangolin hunt).

'Empty Forest' dives into the psychological and historical realm of this supernaturalism where Nguyễn continues his signature style of fictionalized dialog inter-cut with documentary footage and 'found' landscape, taking us on a journey into the present-day 'wilderness' of Vietnam, where the wild is a

junction between the original and its copy; between the living and the extinct; between the imagined and what remains. Via sculpture and moving images we see adoration for animal life that is at once awe and lust, where their environments, for those alive or represented (ie. embalmed or enshrined) reveal long-practiced, complex human ritual.

'Empty Forest' is the second phase of an ongoing body of research and work titled 'My Ailing Beliefs Can Cure Your Wretched Desires' by Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn.

For further information, please contact: art@factoryartscentre.com | T: +84 (0) 28 3744 2589 | The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, 15 Nguyen U Di, Thao Dien, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City

ORGANIZED & SPONSORED BY:



WITH SUPPORT FROM:



OPENING EVENT SUPPORT:



PROMOTIONAL PARTNERS:



....

Notes to the Editor:

Tuấn Andrew Nguyễn (b. 1976, Saigon) graduated from the Fine Arts program of the University of California , Irvine, in 1999 and received his Masters of Fine arts from The California Institute of the Arts in 2004. His solo practice explores the body as site, exploring the metaphysical impact of social enigma and mass media on its representation and function. In his desire to re-align the power dynamics between public space and mass media, he founded 'The Propeller Group' in 2006, an art collective who position themselves as advertising company and archeologists of historical conundrums. Accolades for project of this collective include the Internationale Kurzfilmtage Wintherthur (Switzerland, 2015) and a Creative Capital award (USA, 2015). The Propeller Group has been featured in numerous international exhibitions including 'The Ungovernables' (New Museum Triennial, 2012); 'Made in LA' (Los Angeles Biennial, 2012), 'Prospect 3' (New Orleans Triennial, 2014), and the Venice Biennale 2015. Tuấn's practice has been shown in numerous exhibitions and film festivals globally, with his art in prominent public collections such as The Queensland Gallery of Modern Art (Australia), Carre d'Art (France), Museum of Modern Art (USA) and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (USA). He lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City.

The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre (The Factory) is the first purpose-built space for contemporary art in Vietnam, established April 2016. As an independent private initiative, it creates and hosts interdisciplinary activities in order to introduce and expand knowledge of art and cultural trends, both past and present, in and beyond Vietnam. As a social enterprise, The Factory also offers a publicly accessible reading room of art educational resource; workshop and co-working space; replete with café, bar and restaurant. All profit from sale of art and business on-site supports the running costs of its Arts Centre: <http://factoryartscentre.com>