



PRESS RELEASE

'Flat Sunlight' - a solo exhibition by Lena Bui

7 October – 24 November, 2016

The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre
15 Nguyen U Di, Thao Dien, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
www.factoryartscentre.com

'Flat Sunlight' is an exhibition that attempts to change our perception and relationship to the natural world we intrinsically rely and belong. Lena Bui asks us to think deeper of our spiritual and physical understanding of what is good and bad, useful and useless, of what is assumed natural by marketable standards versus what is natural in nature, in order to reveal the social impact of such attitude on producers and consumers.

For Bui, after half a year undertaking field research (with thanks to the Zoonotic team at the Oxford Clinical Research Unit in Ho Chi Minh City), living and observing traditional farming life in rural Vietnam, she is wary of Globalization and the effect this is having not only on the quality of the food we eat, but also its disruption of traditional farming communities where previously livestock were reared as important elements of an integrated family unit. In this exhibition she imaginatively alludes to sunlight, an energy all living things are fueled, but here it is as if light is constant, without a night and day, and thus the realm of the fake may appear to reign supreme. Thus Bui moves methodically like an earnest botanist cum ethnographer, akin to generations of artists before her who refer to the techniques of science: such as Joseph Banks who accompanied Captain Cook in his journey in the 1700s, documenting flora and fauna, as they 'discovered' the land of Brazil, Tahiti, Australia and New Zealand; or the work of contemporary artists such as Amar Kanwar, Superflex or Kader Attia whose films and installations all employ the mechanisms of ethnography, studying cause and affect.

In Bui's *'Vegetable Diary'*, she documents various response (via drawing and interview) to taste and shape dependent on the source of where these vegetables come from. In *'Carefree Grasses'*, a live collection of plants typically understood today as weeds are remembered as medicinal, 'planted' inside the exhibition space, replete with Vietnamese botanical texts. In *'Mandala of Proliferation'* and *'Sunsets and Spillages'*, Bui provides a window onto the landscape of 'flat sunlight' where a plastic paradise floats in a layer of glitter and resin, multiplying and forming colonies, resembling bacteria on a petri dish, like artificial land strips on the sea or satellites floating into space. These artificial organisms proliferate and expand, bubbling like a rash or an ulcer, as if bursting the seam of the cyclic order that contains them.

The final work in this exhibition gives us a filmic window onto the everyday life of a Vietnamese livestock farmer. From the eyes of a young girl, the niece, we catch a glimpse of the care and immense labor in rearing such animals as pigs and ducks (where antibiotic resistance is on the rise), but most significantly we witness the resilience of such farmers in catering for a commercial market that places value in the visual appeal of

livestock, rather than their quality and health. Throughout this exhibition weaves a series of texts in response to the work on view, written by local Vietnamese scientists and an emerging playwright, as scientific record and artistic inflection.

Bui states, 'This exhibition examines the theme of food and our ready consumption of its diversity (both real and artificial), examining how human's interconnected relationship with nature has, in the past, provided both spiritual and medical aid. Due to this unique opportunity to work with people from different disciplines I hope to bring a wide range of perspectives regarding our man-made and natural world into the show, to enable discussion surrounding tradition and development, consumption and the need for moderation, in order to build a healthier environment.'

Showcasing film, installation and drawing, this exhibition will also possess an interactive science corner; a public lecture series for adults; and art/science workshops for children curated by Dr. Mary Chambers and the Public Engagement team at the Oxford Clinical Research Unit.

'Flat Sunlight' is organized by the Oxford Clinical Research Unit, Ho Chi Minh City with additional funding from the AXA Research Fund, and hosted by 'The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre'.

See here for more information on this exhibition and its public program:

<http://factoryartscentre.com/event/flat-sunlight/>

For enquiries, please contact: art@factoryartscentre.com

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Notes for editor:

Lêna Bui (b.1985, Danang, Vietnam) is an emerging artist committed to the language of art as a poetic medium through which social complexities can be given alternate visualization. Having consistently worked with scientists since 2011, between Vietnam and Nepal, her art attempts to visually chart human behavior and perception as it traverses the tension between traditional and industrialized means of survival. 'Flat Sunlight' is her third project with the Oxford Clinical Research Unit in Vietnam and Nepal. Bui received her BA from Wesleyan University, Connecticut, USA, with further study in East Asian Studies from Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan. She currently lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City.

About Oxford University Clinical Research Unit (OUCRU) Viet Nam, Wellcome Trust Major Overseas Programme

OUCRU-VN was established in 1991, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, Department of Health HCMC and the Hospital for Tropical Diseases HCMC. The strategic aim of the OUCRU-VN is to have a positive and significant impact on global health and, in particular, the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases. OUCRU-VN has two main research centres based within the grounds of the Hospital for Tropical Diseases Ho Chi Minh City and the National Hospital for Tropical Diseases Hanoi. It is part of the Nuffield Department of Medicine University of Oxford and is funded by The Wellcome Trust UK. The OUCRU Public Engagement department organises creative and participatory events with the public to promote understanding of biomedical science. They partner with research communities to facilitate dialogue about science and clinical research.

