

**PRESS RELEASE**



**'Silent Intimacy'**

*A solo exhibition by Đặng Thùy Anh*

**Opening:** 6PM, 8 November, 2019

**Venue:** The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre

*The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre* is pleased to present **'Silent Intimacy'**, a solo exhibition by *Đặng Thùy Anh*, the third show in the 2019 edition of our program **'Materialize'**, aiming to provide exhibition opportunities for Vietnamese artists who have had little chance to create exhibitions for their art in Vietnam.

**'Silent Intimacy'** is *Đặng Thùy Anh's* first solo exhibition in her artistic endeavor with apple snails, contemplatively laced with the impact of urbanization on human life. In contrast with the expectations of an art object, one that is often static and pleasant-looking, this exhibition is characterized by hyperactive, mischievous apple snails, a creature in a state of flux, as its body morphs beneath its shell each day. Apple snails were originally introduced to Vietnamese farmers in the 1980s to increase nutrition in feed for domestic animals; however, due to their rapid growth, these mollusks eventually became a threat to Vietnamese agriculture, damaging crops and jeopardizing the life of native snails and farmers' crops. Intrigued by the reckless evolution and also the absurd yet lyrical presence of these snails, *Thùy Anh* finds them a perfect mirror for human beings in their voracious drive to growth, but also to death.

Whilst also a designer, *Thùy Anh* visually restructures, and in a way, transforms the upper mezzanine galleries of The Factory so that it corresponds to the visual motifs and also the

materiality of the architectural forms that design urban space (such as elevators; escalators; skyscraper street corridors). Consisting of several sculptures, photographs and video, each artwork not only references images of these snails in human-like built environments, but also embeds the actual snail egg itself into the exhibition - a show that over time will thus visually change with their growth.

This metamorphosis of the space gives shape to two mixed-media site-specific installations named '*All that is solid*', '*melts into air*' (inspired by Marshall Berman's book of the same title), occupying The Factory's mezzanines. Moving through these sites is akin to moving across an anonymous metropolis, where, in all directions, urban dwellers, as much as exhibition visitors, are besieged by repetition of unnatural parallel lines and perpendiculars made out of steel, iron, glass, concrete. In the first floor of the exhibition, we encounter an already square space even more aligned, as thousands of pocket-sized images of baby snails ('*Never Again*') take over the room walls, while on the floor, dozens of cube sculptures containing snail eggs ('*Waiting*') seriously queue in lines. It seems as if a younger generation of snails, despite their varied facades if casting a closer stare, is already in place for a military marching band, dancing to the rhythm of discipline. These architectural tendency towards minimalism and functionality resonate the spirit of Modern Architecture in early 20th century (waving the flag of 'Form over Function')—once considered an aesthetic reaction to classical architecture and a post-war movement of reconstructing devastated cities. Nowadays, these choices are anything but ashes, especially in capitalist societies (like contemporary Vietnam)—reduced to only a pragmatic, cost-effective, mass-produced formula for affordable housing with less interest in aesthetic and humanistic aims.

Seemingly gone were the days of Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur*, or folk poet Nguyễn Bảo Sinh's *bát phố* (street passers-by), losing himself not only to the fast speed of industrial, modern busyness, but also to the spatial organization of city, which prioritizes commercial labour over leisure, uniformity and order over character and identity. The identity of the burgeoning city, according to the artist, is now perhaps the absurdist condition of waiting—either waiting for the corrugated iron sheets to reveal the futuristic apartments or waiting for an unknown future, in which the power to define it does not lie in the hands of us anymore. In the artist's case, she and her family have been waiting for an official closure to the decree of the 'reconstruction' (read: replacement) of their long-standing home located in an old collective zone<sup>1</sup> (that was supposed to take place in late 2017). Such narratives also lend themselves to the materialization of *Silent Intimacy*, which is meticulously transfigured into geometrical structures, where the apple snails, from their birth to their 'adulthood', inhabit, roam and perhaps suffocate. Through an array of media encompassing site-specific installations of photography, video, and found objects, Thuỳ Anh designs—in the widest possible meaning of the word—not only the habitat for apple snails to dwell but also imagines a future shadowing us humans.

The exhibition is on view until 19 January, 2020.

\*See further below for example images of artworks within '**Silent Intimacy**' exhibition.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://viettimes.vn/ha-noi-qiao-flc-cai-tao-xay-lai-khu-tap-the-kim-qiang-85584.html>

Image above: *Waiting*, 2019. Sculpture installation, epoxy resin, snail egg. Unique.

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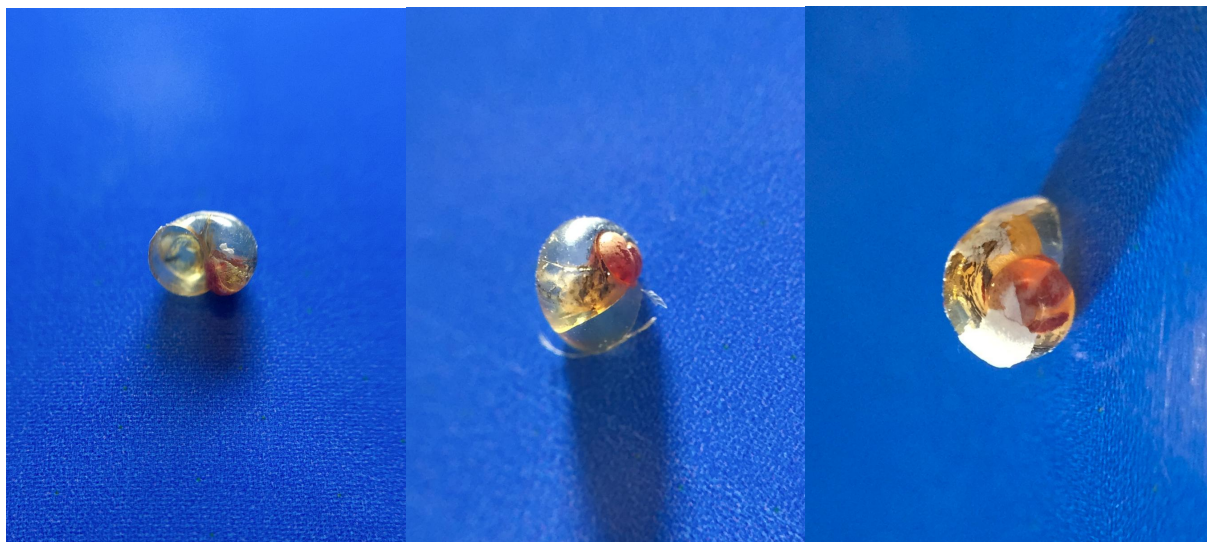
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### **Notes to the Editor:**

**Đặng Thuỳ Anh** (b. 1996, Hanoi) graduated from Vietnam University of Fine Arts in 2018, majoring in Graphic Design. Since 2017, Thuỳ Anh has engaged more frequently in experimental artistic practice through various performance art events and exploring different mediums such as installation, photography and conceptual approaches to art making. Her interest revolves around the connection between human and nature, visual motifs that are stereotypically understood and the impact of social prejudice towards the conceptualization of gender. Thuỳ Anh often uses living organisms, her own body and her personal archives as materials in her art. Selected exhibitions include: Month of Art Practice (Heritage Space, Hanoi, 2018); Open Studio I, II & III (Á Space, Hanoi, 2018); Emerging Artists 6 (Nhà Sàn Collective, Hanoi, 2018); NIPAF Festival/IN:ACT (Nhà Sàn Collective, Hanoi, 2017 and 2019).

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





*Never Again*, 2018. Installation, color photo on print. 5 Edition + 1 AP.



*Vertical Day*, 2019. 3-channel installation, video, color, HD, sound. 5 Edition + 1 AP.