

SOLO EXHIBITION BY:

VÕ TRẦN CHÂU

CO-CURATED BY:

LÊ THUẬN UYÊN & VÂN ĐỒ

*With soundscape by Nhung Nguyễn,
commissioned as a curatorial response to this exhibition*

LEAF PICKING IN THE ANCIENT FOREST

14.2 - 10.4.2020



Please scan the QR code
or follow this link:
<http://bit.ly/vo-tran-chau>
to access the full
curatorial essay

'Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest' narrates a chronicle lost in time, delicately woven by threads and fabrics, continuing Võ Trần Châu's interest in history and its legacies. By re-imagining architectural sites and cultural symbols that are predominantly forgotten - erased or lost from view - the artist contemplates the fragility of the vessels of history in their odyssey through time and space, in the dilemma of fact between personal and collective remembering, amongst the power struggle between social control and foreign influence. This exhibition also reveals Châu's persistent investigation into the depth and breadth of fabric as a medium, engaging with its particular history of circulation (its production, trade and function) while presenting myriad possibilities for artistic deployment.

Instead of using new fabric, Võ Trần Châu recycles second-hand clothing (predominantly found in abandoned containers from Cát Lái port). She then disassembles, cuts into square-sized pieces and organises them into a system of colour-coding. Merging methods of photography and textile, Châu collects digital archival photographs of historical sites and transforms them into pixel graphs, which are used as foundation for her mosaics by sewing fabric pieces together. Each of those squared fabric pieces resembling the smallest visual unit/stroke/ a patch of colour in what she describes as her abstract paintings. Interestingly, it is also her use of pixelation, that enables a different way of experiencing Chau's art - seeing, not only through the naked eye, but through a digital device. Using a camera to 'view' the work one will find the subject of the image is with a different density. This shift in perception reflects the way in which the majority of humanity today reads History. Especially now in the technological era, the popularity of text-based histories has lost its hegemonic power to the more tactile, virtual and oral approaches to historical expressions of the real, which yields other forms of knowledge.

Buddha, taking a few leaves in his hand, said to the monks: "All that I have seen and encountered are numerous, just like leaves among the grove, yet my teachings which I have revealed to you are but little, just like this handful of leaves in my palm...". Inspired by this tale, Võ Trần Châu titled her exhibition 'Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest' (also the title of a book by Minh Đức Triều Tâm Ảnh, a Buddhist monk), providing an analogy on how she chose to engage in the discursive representation of heritage preservation. Like leaves in the forest, Võ Trần Châu acknowledges that the histories featured here are not exhaustive, only just a few in the forest of historical myths and tales. A Buddhist herself, the title also reflects a philosophy of life in which impermanence, where all conditioned existence is subject to change, destruction and eventual rebirth, is at the core of her everyday perception. Many heritage sites that were once so sacred and important are now being demolished, one after another, which has caused great reaction from the public imbued with anger, regret, and sadness. Understanding that everything is impermanent, the works of Võ Trần Châu do not aim to criticise, nor call for resistance, to the wheel of change, rather her art is to observe and accept the way change comes and goes, to explore a way in which she can record history's hidden legacies. Over the course of a century, Vietnam has witnessed significant changes, economically, politically and socially. Today's world sees Vietnam advance into the ever more integrated global economic structure, instead of getting carried away by the wind of change, this exhibition is an effort by Võ Trần Châu to take a step back, to record and to ponder her own relationship with society's obsession with the 'new'.

Võ Trần Châu

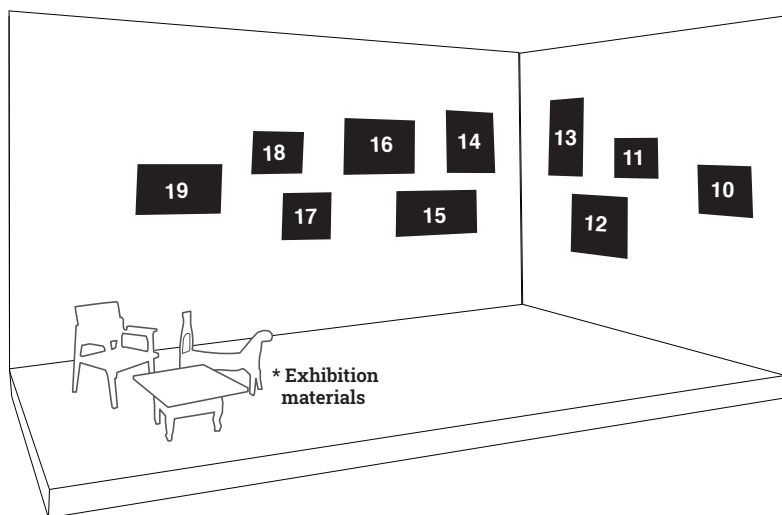
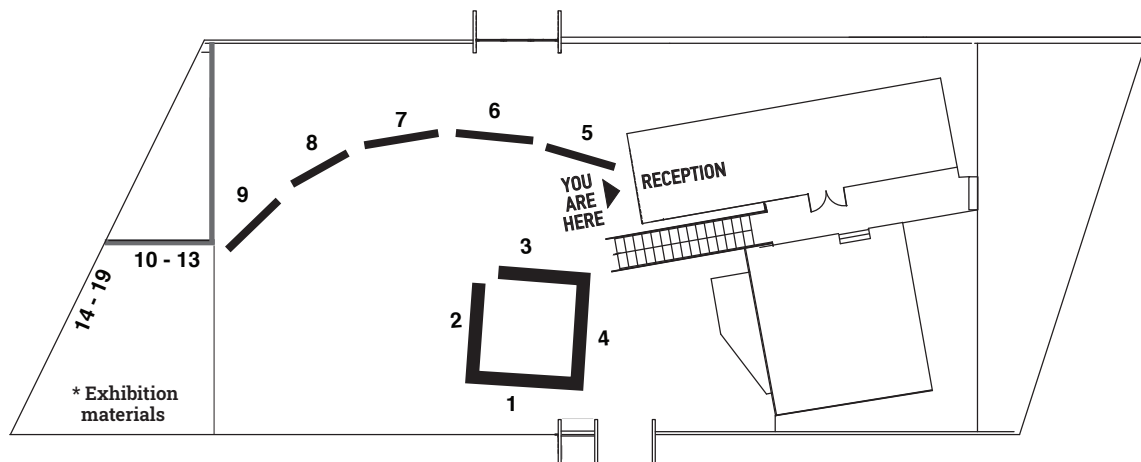
b. 1986, Bình Thuận

Born to a family of traditional embroiderers, Võ Trần Châu understands the power and materiality of threads and fabrics, and chooses textiles, particularly found fabrics and second-hand clothing, as materials for her artistic practice. By deploying these materials, imbued with their own personal stories, Vo portrays how strongly history reflects on the grand narrative of nation states and society. She delves into the social and cultural history of Vietnam to highlight issues surrounding labor, consumption and waste. Selected exhibitions include: 'Where The Sea Remembers' (The Mistake Room, Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2019); 'Unfolding: Fabric of Our Life' (Centre for Heritage, Art & Textile (CHAT)/MILL6, Hong Kong, 2019); 'Bodies Survey(ed)' (Sàn Art, HCMC, Vietnam, 2018); 'Lingering at the Peculiar Pavillon' (Manzi Art Space, Hanoi & Salon Saigon, HCMC, 2017); 'The Foliage' (VCCA, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2017); 'Still (the) Barbarians' (EVA International: Ireland's Biennial of Contemporary Art, Limerick, Ireland, 2016); 'Suzhou Documents' (Suzhou Art Museum, Suzhou, China, 2016).

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Quick fact!

Try looking at the artwork through the camera on your phone for a different experience

1
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Black & White
 2018-19
 Used clothes
 220 x 340 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

2
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Yellow
 2018-19
 Used clothes
 220 x 340 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

3
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Blue
 2018-19
 Used clothes
 220 x 340 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

4
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Red
 2018-19
 Used clothes
 220 x 340 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

5
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Trà Cổ Cathedral
 2019
 Used clothes
 154 x 244 cm, unique

6
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Gia Định Drawing School
 2019
 Used clothes
 133 x 244 cm, unique

7
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Ba Son Shipyard
 2019
 Used clothes
 120 x 210 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

8
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Saigon Tax Trade Center
 2019
 Used clothes
 154 x 244 cm, unique

9
Leaf Picking in the Ancient Forest - Saigon Tram
 2019
 Used clothes
 154 x 244 cm, unique

10
It was somebody's home 1
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 37,5 x 40 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

11
It was somebody's home 3
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 34,8 x 40,3 cm, unique

12
It was somebody's home 6
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 51 x 57 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

13
It was somebody's home 5
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 74 x 38,5 cm, unique

14
It was somebody's home 7
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 60 x 53,5 cm, unique

15
It was somebody's home 8
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 39,5 x 83,5 cm, unique

16
It was somebody's home 9
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 49 x 67 cm, unique

17
It was somebody's home 2
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 40 x 37,5 cm, unique
Courtesy of Galerie Quynh

18
It was somebody's home 10
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 34,8 x 40,3 cm, unique

19
It was somebody's home 4
 2019-2020
 Used clothes, found wooden cabinet door
 37,2 x 57 cm, unique

*** Exhibition materials**
 Contextual material sharing
 artist's research and production process