



Xuân Hạ, *Fragmentation of Memory*, 2019
still from 3-channel video installation: colour, sound, 26 minutes

PRESS RELEASE

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familiar, the term paradoxically conveying both something you know well, but also something you can't quite pinpoint, explores the endless possibilities of the body as a source and site of culture and memory. Though the body is an ever-present "vessel" integral to our being-in-the-world, we are nevertheless poorly attuned to it – a legacy of Cartesian thought that separates intellect and body, and mistrusts embodied ways of knowing. Yet the body is constantly creating, learning, and remembering (one thinks of what comes naturally to the body without the need for conscious effort: moving to music, performing rituals, or fitting back into the family dynamic after having been away). Featuring the works of Trong Gia Nguyen, Nadège David, and Xuân Hạ, *familiar* thus surveys the bodily experience, and its vital yet largely overlooked role in mediating, as well as expressing perception, memory, and culture.

In rendering the body and its parts as amorphous forms, Nadège David conveys the necessity of re-acquainting oneself with one's own body, though focusing on the *sensorial experience*, rather than the medical understanding, of "body". Delicate yet visceral, her works re-interpret flesh using not its scientific forms, but through the perception of how our organs and parts *feel* as they sit within the body. As David delves deeper into how we inhabit our bodies, the figure of



the body is, perversely (or perhaps inevitably), no longer discernible. Head, torso and legs now mutate into quasi-Rorschach abstractions that seem to unceasingly twist and bend and grow and morph. The artist's kitsch-pink shapes blend with the green of nature as the body opens onto the world, collapsing the distinction between itself and its environment.

As David deconstructs the physical body and re-imagines how it interacts with its surroundings, Trong Gia Nguyen instead uses his body as a method to process memory. Though drawing from the rare family stories and photographs that have remained, Nguyen's works are far more than just recollections rendered as paintings. As the artist manipulates the canvas he embodies those memories – placing his physical and mental self in an imagined space and time, and reconstructing the past through his personal distortions. Indeed, the artist's choice of medium is deliberately performative: the act of drawing in oil pastel suggests a reversion to childhood, where one's first artistic expressions are done in bright crayon. In a manner both self-aware and trying to signal that he is self-aware, Nguyen acknowledges that memory does not belong to the past, but exists very much in the present as an embodied interaction between the story and storyteller. To remember is to acknowledge that one cannot remove the body from oneself, or more accurately oneself from oneself.

In further exploring the possibilities of the body, Xuân Hạ's video performance treats the body as a literal site of memory. Re-enacting her own and many other mothers who do housework sitting on a tiny stool, the artist relentlessly grates bars of soap – the filings replaced detergent, which was not widely available in the 90s of her childhood. When taken out of context, this humble and thankless task becomes absurdly theatrical. Despite performing the chore in its usual locations – the bathroom, the kitchen, the laundry room – the artist strips the task of its functionality: she grates soap not to use the end product, but merely to document the process. Xuân Hạ places the action centre stage as if to contend that to mimic her mother is to remember her mother (even if her thoughts have trailed off elsewhere).

The varied works of Nadège David, Trong Gia Nguyen, and Xuân Hạ are less a spotlighting than a quiet reminder that the body is a locus of knowledge and creativity, mediating our interactions and storing our experiences. It is through the body, in all its abstractions and biases and theatricalities, that we engage the world.

– *Thái Hà, Assistant Curator*



Notes on the exhibition

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| Participating artists: | Trong Gia Nguyen, Nadège David, and Xuân Hạ |
| Exhibition title: | <i>familiar</i> |
| Exhibition dates: | March 11 – April 10, 2021 |
| Venue: | Galerie Quynh 118 Nguyen Van Thu, Dakao, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City |
| Contact: | Thái Hà – ha.vu@galeriequynh.com |
| Telephone: | +84 28 3822 7218 |
| Hours: | 10am – 7pm, Tuesday – Saturday, and by appointment |

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Trong Gia Nguyen is a multi-disciplinary artist, working between a wide range of media, from iPhone applications and web-based performance actions to installation, sculpture, film, and painting. His work examines structures of power in their myriad forms, and scrutinises the soft foundation upon which contemporary life plays out, often behind the façade of fairness, sincerity, security, tradition, and civility. Often employing humour while at other times engaging sober reflection, Nguyen's methods question the status quo through subtle modes of subversion and interruption.

Nguyen received his MFA in Painting at the University of South Florida, and has exhibited widely over two decades in the US and abroad, with recent solo shows including *This House Is Falling Upwards through a Hole in (do) China*, La Patinoire Royale/Galerie Valerie Bach, Brussels, Belgium; *The Last State*, Richard Koh Projects, Bangkok, Thailand; and *My Myopia*, Cornell Museum of Fine Arts, Orlando, FL, USA. Notable group exhibitions include *Where the Sea Remembers*, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles, CA, USA; *There'll Never Be a Door. You are Inside: Works from the Teixeira de Freitas Collection*, curated by Luiza Teixeira de Freitas, Santander Art Gallery, Madrid, Spain; *Gun Shy*, Artspace1616, Sacramento, CA, USA; *Dogg Days*, Jacki Headley University Art Gallery, Chico, CA, USA; *2017 California Pacific Triennial: Building As Ever*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, USA; *The All Florida Show*, Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, FL, USA; *Eye on the Storm*, Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport, CT; *The Book Lovers*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp, Belgium; *ART STAYS 2012*, 10th Festival of Contemporary Art, Ptuj, Slovenia; *Telefone Sem Fio: Word-Things of Augusto de Campos Revisited*, EFA Project Space, New York, NY, USA; *The Sixth Borough*, curated by No Longer Empty, Governors Island, New York, NY, USA; *Satellites in the Night*, Freies Museum Berlin, Berlin, Germany; *Power to the Brand*, curated by Bosko Boskovic, Museum of



Contemporary Art of Republic Srpska, Banja Luka, Republic Srpska; *Once Upon a Time*, curated by Chen Tamir and Jean Barberis, ISE Foundation, New York, NY, USA; *Sequences Real Time Festival*, Dwarf Gallery, Reykjavik, Iceland; *9th Havana Biennial*, Fortress of the Three Kings, Havana, Cuba; *Float*, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY, USA; and *Waterways*, a collateral project of the 2005 Istanbul Biennial, curated by Renee Vara, Istanbul, Turkey.

Nguyen has participated in residencies at the Everglades, Everglades National Park, Florida; Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY; LegalArts, Miami, FL; Harvestworks Digital Media, New York, NY; and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York, NY. He has also received numerous grants and fellowships from New York organisations such as Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Puffin Foundation, Change Inc., and Bronx Museum.

Nguyen lives and works between Ho Chi Minh City and Brussels.

Nadège David explores the varied relationships that mankind has formed with animals and nature. She combines the precision of scientific drawings and the fantastical nature of mythology to produce creatures, shapes and landscapes that spontaneously take shape and evolve organically, mimicking the growth of living beings. While she does not aim to deliver moralising teachings, her haunting works communicate some of the harshest realities of human history born of the connections between Man and Nature.

Nadège David received an MA in Political Philosophy at University La Sorbonne, Paris, France and an MA in Contemporary Political Philosophy, University Paris VIII, Paris, France. She was a lecturer in Sociology at University Marne La Vallée, France between 2001 and 2005. Selected exhibitions include *Alluvium*, *Carne Vale*, *Soil-Less®*, *Onward and Upward*, *vis-à-vis*, *Mise-en-Scène*, and *Of Reveries and Obsessions*, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *Experience Sweet and Relaxing Dreams*, Mai's Gallery, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; and *Esperantopolis*, Consulate General of France, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Nadège David lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Xuân Hạ is a visual and multimedia artist who currently lives and works in Danang, and whose practice focuses on the socio-cultural changes in her home region of Central Vietnam. Her body of works stems from the oppositions between herself and the dizzying changes that occur in her surrounding environment. Through various experimentations with materials and space, the artist uses the fragments of everyday life to present unrealistic scenarios that then gradually shape their own narratives.



Xuân Hạ graduated from the University of Architecture in 2014, and has since exhibited in Vietnam and abroad, with solo shows including *The White Sand in Exile*, Old Soul Art Hub, Danang, Vietnam; *How I miss the taste of tangerine*, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *No name is a name*, Kunst(Zeug)Haus, Rapperswil-Jona, Switzerland; and *There's an ant inside my glass of water*, Chaosdowntown Cháo, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Notable group exhibitions and screenings include *Am I Superwoman*, Sàn Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *An ode to the microscopic*, Dcine, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *[Art Convention] CABCON#1*, CAB Hoian, Quang Nam, Vietnam; *Nổ Cái Bùm ART WEEK*, Hue City, Vietnam; *Vanguard Retrospective Exhibition*, Dorchester Art Project, Boston, USA; *All animals are equal #2*, A.Farm, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *Struggles, Memories, and Relationships*, Asia Culture Center, Gwangju City, Korea; *Salon du Livre d'Art des Afriques*, La Colonie, Paris, France; *Nederlands Film Festival*, HKU, Utrecht, Netherlands; *Beyond Borders, ASEAN and the Republic of Korea Collaborative Painting*, BGC, Manila, Philippines; *Future Bodies of ASIA*, Salon Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *I Me Mine*, The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; *The Editorial*, Taipei Biennial, Taipei; *In_Ur_Scr! Show*, Six Space, Hanoi, Vietnam, and Chaosdowntown Cháo, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; and *Queer Forever! Festival*, Nhà Sàn Collective, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Xuân Hạ was an artist-in-residence at Solo Marathon 2020 Residency Program, Á Space, Hanoi, Vietnam; Residency Programme for Young Artists, FUTUR Foundation, Rapperswil-Jona, Switzerland; ACC Arts Space Network Residency Program, Asia Culture Centre, Gwangju, Korea; and FAMLAB - Film, Archive and Music Lab, British Council, Gia Lai and Ninh Thuan, Vietnam. In 2015, Xuân Hạ co-founded Chaosdowntown Cháo, an art collective based in Saigon, and in 2019, she founded the a sông club – an art club exploring the identity of Quang Nam and Da Nang, including its land and its people.

ABOUT GALERIE QUYNH

Recognised as Vietnam's leading contemporary art gallery, Galerie Quynh has been promoting contemporary art practice in the country for over two decades. The gallery is known internationally for its consistently focused programming and educational initiatives. Working with a select group of emerging, mid-career and established Vietnamese artists, the gallery also exhibits the work of distinguished artists from around the world. In keeping with its mission to develop a sustainable ecosystem for the arts in Vietnam, the gallery collaborates with artists, curators, museums and art spaces locally and internationally to organise talks and lectures as well as to produce publications in English and Vietnamese. In May 2014 the gallery founded the non-profit educational initiative Sao La. Currently spearheaded by Dalat-based artists Nguyen



GALERIE QUYNH CONTEMPORARY ART

Kim To Lan and Nguyen Duc Dat, Sao La comprises a young, diverse group of passionate creatives working loosely as an independent collective.

A new chapter began in December 2017 when the gallery moved to a 600 square-meter space in Dakao, District 1. Spread over four floors, the gallery is able to produce more ambitious programming and play an even more vital role in the cultural community in Vietnam.

www.galeriequynh.com

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