

Well Settled

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4 Nov → 16 Dec 2023

as part of the
British Council UK/VN Season

LUX is pleased to announce an exhibition of new commissioned works responding to the An Việt Archives presented as part of the British Council UK/Vietnam Season 2023.

In 2021, Hackney Archives and the Hackney Chinese Community Services received a grant from the National Archives, enabling them to rescue the An Việt Archives – the largest known British-Vietnamese community archive in the UK which was almost lost when their former building in Hackney was squatted. The historical documents were created by the An Viet Foundation (AVF), which was set up in Hackney in 1981 to support Vietnamese settlement in London after the Second Indochina War. It was a central hub for Vietnamese families providing support with housing, health outreach, English language, and mother-tongue classes.

'Well Settled' presents a series of commissioned works from artists in both the UK and Vietnam, proposing new models for how archives and shared heritage can be activated and made accessible. The exhibition features new works from Nhà Sàn Collective, Moi Tran, George Clark and Lưu Chử presented for the first time.

On 18 November the broadcast commission 'Amplifying Archives' by Cường Minh Bá Phạm, Trà My Hickin, Koa Phạm, Stefan Nielsen, Nic Anette Miller and Thierry Phung will be launched at our listening party and then online. These new works are part of a larger year-long project to develop new tools for accessing, activating and sharing the collection and shared heritage.

A parallel exhibition will be presented in Vietnam at The Outpost, Hanoi, 24 November - 17 December 2023.

The projects have been commissioned by An Việt Archives, supported by the British Council as part of the UK/Vietnam Season 2023 and Hackney Archives, LUX, Nhà Sàn Collective, The Outpost, Á Space and the University of Westminster.

'The Scattered Body or A World Unclouded by Dust' by George Clark

The film explores the collective labour of archives connected to the dispersed history of Vietnam. In their work to care for images, documents and fragments, collections not only preserve the past but also create new ways for places and people to be imagined. Working with a community archive in Hackney and a state film archive in Hanoi, the film explores the often invisible work involved in preserving such imaginaries.

The film draws inspiration from the short story 'The Cemetery of Chua Village' by Vietnamese writer and filmmaker Đoàn Lê. The story is told from the perspective of the dead buried in the cemetery as they await a new arrival. Embracing this perspective shift, the film seeks to locate itself away from what can be extracted from an archive to focus instead on how 'dead' archival objects themselves exist in the world, as well as the unseen labour to care for their fragmented bodies.

The film comes out of a long term collaborative project initiated in 2019 exploring experimental ways of working with collections and in the spaces that contain them. Together we sought to explore alternative means of articulating memories from the personal to collective through a series of workshops, field trips and inter-local collaborations with a growing circle of artistic collaborators including Bùi Linh Hà, Thu Uyên, Tạ Minh Đức, Nguyễn Hải Yến, Lâm Duy Phương, Cường Minh Bá Phạm and Keren Kuenberg among others.

Central to this project has been following the constitution of the An Việt Archives in London. Established from the rescued materials of the An Việt Foundation (AVF) founded by Vũ Khánh Thành and operating between 1981-2017. Mr. Vu left Vietnam in 1979 to settle in London as one of many refugees following the end of the American War in Vietnam, otherwise known as the Second Indochina War. The An Việt Foundation (AVF) was a community centre that assisted Vietnamese migrants trying to settle in the UK. On 12 May 2022 graduates from the An Việt Training For Nails course temporarily closed their shops in order to sing at the funeral for Vũ Khánh Thành who passed away on 21 April 2022 leaving behind an extensive legacy that the Archives are attempting to extend into the future. The funeral hymn 'Chúa Chăn Nuôi Tôi /The Lord Nourishes Me' written by Phanxico Nguyễn Đình Diễm is included in the film alongside original music by Bùi Linh Hà and Tobias Paramore.

The project reflects on entangled and unfolding histories enmeshed across these spaces through practices of deep listening as means of care for fragmented and scattered histories. As Trinh T. Minh Ha reminds us "Music is life. But entering into LIFE is also entering into the DEATH process. Everyday lived is a step closer to death and every sound sent OUT is a breathing IN on silence. Music goes on permanently and hearing it is like looking at a river which does not stop running when one turns away."

George Clark is an artist, writer and curator. His work focuses on moving images in the expanded field working across film, installation and performance with an interest in inter-local collaborative practice. His projects explore non-aligned histories and geographies seeking to build new models of assembly, exhibition and moving image production. Recent projects include 'Double Ghosts', an evolving multi-part project including a trilogy of 35mm films and installations developed with the 2018 Taiwan Biennial. Through this he explored the potential of unrealised and fragmented histories from the legacy of exiled Chilean filmmaker Raúl Ruiz (1941-2011) to animist cinematic traditions in Taiwan. Over the last decade he has built transnational projects exploring new modes of exchange, collaboration and dialogue. He is founding member of the West Java West Yorkshire Cooperative Movement (2018-ongoing), a collaborative platform established with Jatiwangi art Factory (Indonesia) and Pavilion (UK). Their latest project, Mother Bank is a micro-finance initiative supported by Wysing Arts Centre, building financial autonomy for a mother collective in rural Indonesia through agriculture and pop music. His films have been exhibited at museums and festivals including New York Film Festival, Hanoi Doclab, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Taiwan Biennale, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art / MMCA, Seoul, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires and LA Film Forum among others. He is a lecturer at the University of Westminster and his work is distributed by LUX.

<https://www.georgeandclark.com/>

Night of the 30th / Đêm Ba Mươi by Nhà Sàn Collective

It's still dark in the garden when he comes.

Like in a dream, he walks.

On the rooftop they sit in silence.

The river begins to murmur.

Anh ta đi qua vườn khi trời vẫn tối.

Đi như trong giấc mộng.

Họ ngồi thình lạng trên tầng thượng.

Và dòng sông bắt đầu cất tiếng.

Nhà Sàn Collective presents a new moving image work filmed at the residence of Mr. Manh Duc, a home in close proximity to the collective and their community of artist friends for many years. In this playground, a mystical world emerges; a cinema is reenacted. As the film unfolds, a river, a garden, spirits, wooden structures, people and objects appear, dissolve and reappear, as if they were characters morphing into one another. The film draws attention to cinematic transformation of physical and immaterial beings as a process of experiencing diverse forms of archives.

Nhà Sàn Collective began operating as an independent artist collective in Hanoi in 2013, when a group of friends set up their publicly accessible space. With or without a physical base, NSC has worked with fellow companions and collaborators to organize exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, talks and other activities as a supporting platform for artists in the community. An initiative for exchanges, expansions and connections. A place that's also open toward works-in-progress and the unexpected, a just-do-it attitude which doesn't always yield answers. Some of the Collective's main projects, which have been held on numerous occasions, are 'Skylines With Flying People, IN:ACT Performance Art Festival, Queer Forever!, Emerging Artists program, among others. The name Nhà Sàn signifies the Collective's foundation which is rooted in the spirit of Nhà Sàn Studio, an artist-run space founded in 1998 in Hanoi. The original Nhà Sàn, a house on stilts, was taken in 2020. In the Ngoc Thuy area by the bank of the Red River, the artists imagine this house to become the Nhà Sàn Collective space, rebuilt, and transformed. Members of the collective and artist friends were working on this project together. <https://nhasan.org/>

'The Lost Buffalo and Sister Imposter' The reimagining of a tale' by Moi Tran

'There is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code. The practice of coding is always present in the interaction and exchange of information, essentially encoding and decoding processes are an exchange of meanings.' [1]

Moi Tran's new experiment 'The Lost Buffalo and Sister Imposter' exercises a process of analogue encoding / decoding to conjure up drawings, text, microfilm documents and visual scores for sonic improvisation in a constellation of speculative communication. The experiment is situated at the interface of communication and 'information repository systems' that is found in all sites of information storage and transmission, whether that be an archive, an image, a song, a text, a conversation, a code. Contrary to general conjecture and with a respectful nod to Saidiya Hartman's 'Wayward Lives and Beautiful Experiments', Tran cogitates that 'information repository systems' or any type of archives, exist in a constant state of incompleteness, oscillating with uncoded scenarios for the known waiting to be re-known.

[1] Hall, Stuart, Encoding/Decoding Ch. 10 in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (eds), Culture, Media, Language (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 128-38; an edited extract from S. Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', cccs stencilled paper no. 7 (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973).

Derived from a tale spoken to Tran 'The Lost 'Buffalo and Sister Imposter' begins as a subjective, non-grammatical, reimagining exercise in the milieu of Georges Perec, Mark Dunn and Raymond Queneau. Tran's purposeful disruption of this text borrows ideas from Stuart Hall's seminal essay 'Encoded/Decoded' as a departure point. Transposing some of Hall's thinking to her experiments, the artist asserts that 'information repository systems', or what Hall refers to as 'external symbolic storage systems' [2], must give way to the phenomena of encoded messages as a form of meaningful discourse.

[2] Ibid.

In the realm of communications and information processing, a code represents a set of guidelines to transform information, which may encompass letters, words, sounds, images, or gestures, into an alternate format. This transformation may involve compression or encryption, enabling communication through a transmission channel or preservation within a storage medium, occasionally with the aim of confidentiality. Encoding is the process of transforming source information into symbols suitable for communication or storage. In contrast, decoding serves as the reverse operation, where code symbols are converted back into a format intelligible to the recipient.

The multiplicitous nature of this work aims to experiment with the potential of employing code to instigate an entropic process within an information repository system, consequently yielding anomalous states of sensing information anew. The application of Tran's rudimentary code paradigm and inventions, presents an immediate, playful, analogue code system in the communication ecology of information. Tran introduces ideas of entropy and disintegration to imagine alternative routes to information, which she terms 'other-sense'— information that requires other types of thinking on assumed narratives contained in repositories and communication processes with its own conditions of existence.

Conceived and created by
Moi Tran

Sound Collaboration
Percussion Improvisation
– Aidan Marsden

Production and sound effects
– Sasha Ilyukevich

Moi Tran is a Vietnamese multi-disciplinary artist, cultural worker, designer, and educator. Through research, theatre, text, sound, installation, video, and performance, her work examines theorisations on emotional intelligence embedded in information repositories, the politics of audition and encounters of witness in events of fugitive performativity. Her recent interests in communication theory and analogue encoding/decoding have produced experiments in information repository systems for imagining alternative narratives.

Collaboration and examinations of a common emotional vocabulary underpin her work, she regularly works with performers including sound makers, dancers, actors, community-performers from diverse groups to challenge conventional performance making and the performer/viewer exchange, using improvisation and duration to investigate alternative ideas of protest and resistance.

She has presented and performed her work nationally and internationally, including 'Civic Sound Archive' PEER (UK); 'Reshaping the collectible' Tate Modern (UK); Sign Chorus National Archives (Da Nang, Vietnam); 'Sonic Signalling in Reverse' (GIBCA Sweden); 'The Bolero Effect' (VCCA Hanoi, Vietnam); 'The Circuit' (Prague Quadrennial Festival, Czech Republic); 'I love a broad margin to my life' (Yeo Workshop, Singapore); Shy God Chapter Mot (Chisenhale Dance) 'Shy God – A Chorus' (SPILL International Festival UK); and 'SLEEP' (Live Art Development Agency/Royal Court Theatre UK); Landing 1.2.3 (Mark Rothko Centre Latvia).

Lưu Chữ is a Vietnamese Typography Collective based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. As the only design studio focused on the history of Vietnamese typography in the world, they have developed digital tools to seek and preserve this endangered field of knowledge, including open source software which can document Vietnamese multilingual typography. The studio produces open source resources documenting and archiving Vietnamese design. With this project, Lưu Chữ intends to work with the An Viet Archives and share their experiences of developing collaborative and communal approach to heritage. This project will be the first opportunity for Lưu Chữ to work with partners in the UK exploring the importance of vernacular design for ESEA and migrant communities tracing linkages and connections across the diaspora.
<https://LưuChữ.com/>

An Việt Archives: Founded in 2020 to safeguard the An Viet Foundation, the An Việt Archives is a voluntary group made up of community campaigners, artists, writers, cultural workers and academics. They work with Hackney Chinese Community Services and Hackney Archives to help oversee the care and future of the An Viet Foundation collection. Members include: Toan Vu, Cataloguing Archivist, ACME artist studios, Dr. Tamsin Barber, Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Migration & Refugees Network Lead, Oxford Brookes University, Georgina Quach, journalist and editor, Financial Times, Trà My Hickin, writer and historian, Cường Phạm is an artist, community activist and curator, George Clark, Lecturer University of Westminster, artist, curator.

Launching on 18 November:

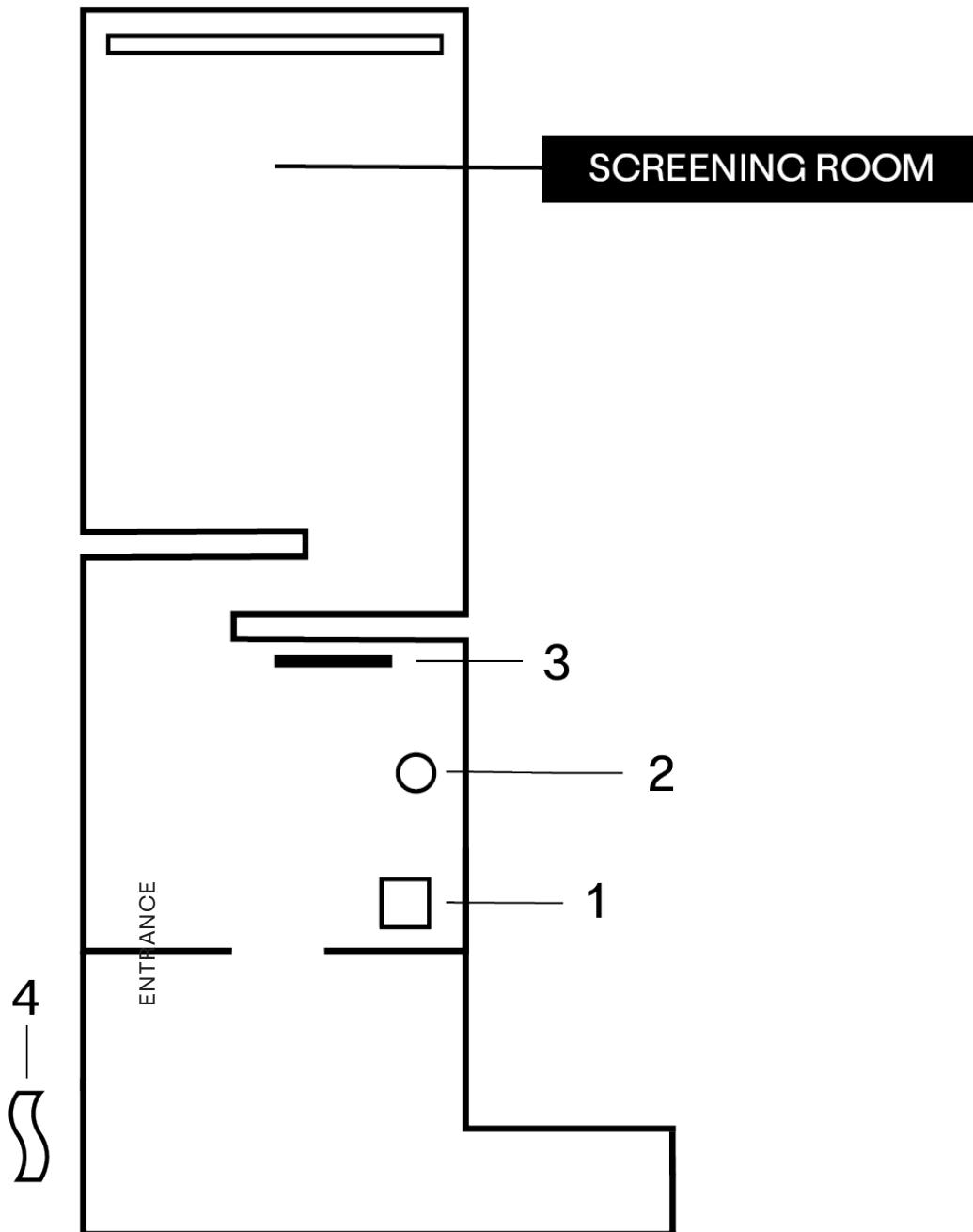
'Amplifying Archives' by Cường Minh Bá Phạm,
Trà My Hickin, Koa Phạm, Stefan Nielsen,
Nic Anette Miller, and Thierry Phung

The project consists of four auditory essays that explore the role of sound in archives and shared heritage. The project invites you to listen to what lies just out of reach of hearing, what has been systematically unheard, and what lies waiting in silence. These works will expand upon the role of sound in connecting to the past in Transnational-Vietnamese contexts.

'Amplifying Archives' considers how a focus on heritage might challenge, augment, or complement existing understandings of Vietnamese migration along the following three themes: cố cư (former home), di cư (movements), and an cư (well-settled).

'Amplifying Archives' will be launched on the 18th of November 2023 via the Listening Party at LUX. There will be a one-off, delineated/dearranged live presentation of the component parts of the broadcast commissions. The 'Amplifying Archives' commissions will then be available for listening in the gallery as well as accessible to online listeners via LUX website.

Floorplan



SCREENING ROOM

'The Scattered Body or A World Unclouded by Dust' (2023)

by George Clark

Film. Duration: 48 minutes.

'Night of the 30th' (2023)

by Nhà Sàn Collective

Film. Duration: 24 minutes.

'The Lost Buffalo and Sister Imposter III' (2023) by Moi Tran

in collaboration with Aidan Marsden and Sasha Ilyukevich

Audio Visual Work. Duration: 13 minutes

- 1 — 'The Lost Buffalo and Sister Imposter I' (2023)
by Moi Tran
Microfilm -Visual Scores and Encoded Text

- 2 — Books from the South East Asian Research Centre,
An Viet Library by George Clark
Film. Duration: 11 minutes

- 3 — 'The Lost Buffalo and Sister Imposter II' (2023)
by Moi Tran
Encoded Text Paintings

- 4 — An Việt banner by Lưu Chữ

Related Events

Opening event:

Sat 4 November 2023 2-4pm
with a live performance by
Aidan Marsden

Listening party:

Sat 18 November 2023 2-4pm

Talk:

Sat 9 December 2023 2-4pm

Auditory/Visual Access:

We have hearing loops, a large print guide and magnifying glasses available in the space. The video works in the black box space have open captions. (Please check the screening schedule).

Sensory Access:

Please note that the exhibition space is very dark, and the sound/noise volume is adjusted to a higher level. Let us know in advance if you require the room to be brighter or lower volume environment.

LUX is the UK organisation for the support and promotion of artists working with the moving image based in London and Glasgow. Originally founded in 1966 as the London Filmmakers Co-operative, it represents an over 50 year history of artists' engagement with the moving image in the UK. As well as organising exhibitions, education programmes, commissioning, artists professional development and research LUX represents Europe's largest collection of films and videos made by visual artists.

www.lux.org.uk



LUX, Waterlow Park
Centre Dartmouth
Park Hill, N19 5JF