

## *After the Cataclysm, Before the Storm*

### — List of Artworks —

Alvin Luong, *Conscription Pictures*, mixed media installation (acrylic, aluminum, pork, pine, salt, zinc plated clamps), dimensions variable, 2022

Alvin Luong, *Hole Story*, video, duration:16:00, 2022

Toan Doan, *Bồng Bênh (Buoyant)*, video, duration:18:35, 2022

Vicky Do, *Nothing Belongs to Us*, video, duration:19:58, 2022

### — Artist Statements —

*After the Cataclysm, Before the Storm* is the cumulative research project by Gallery TPW's 2022-2023 artist in residence, Alvin Luong:

My work with Gallery TPW intimately reflects on what happens to people when they become placeless. For me, “place” is a collective relationship between people and a social order that exists in a particular geography. The focus of my efforts is on Vietnam where history develops a rapid cadence.

Within the period of one lifetime, Vietnam has convulsed through a divisive war for liberation from French and American occupations, the country's post-war communist reunification, and economic liberalization in its contemporary capitalist era. In the future, Vietnam's most populated areas, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, as well as the regions surrounding these cities, are projected to be underwater. How people navigate placelessness from these past and upcoming upheavals is the focus of *After the Cataclysm, Before the Storm*.

To expand this conversation, I have also invited and commissioned the filmmaker Vicky Đỗ and dance choreographer Đoàn Thanh Toàn to contribute new artworks and cross-border dialogues to this project. The three of us are of a globalized generation born after the turmoil of Vietnam's recent past and before the climatic troubles of an anticipated future.

— Alvin Luong

*Nothing Belongs to Us*

I took a grief-stricken trip to Quảng Trị, my grandfather's hometown, as I dealt with his passing. Along the way, I meet local tour guides and explore different religious and political landmarks. Going beyond official narratives, I try to understand the land as it is: the pain, the traumas, faiths and the conflicts accompanied with natural landscape, as a way to understand the root of my own grief. Metaphorically, if we see a land as a body, how do traumas (re)surface on it? How do we treat the wounds and how can we heal them, individually and collectively?

— Vicky Do

*Bồng Bềnh (Buoyant)*

In the poem “taste of waters,” Vietnamese poet Nhã Thuyên sighs: “living in our waters, there is no other way but to be buoyant, several thousand kilometers of coastline, what else to do” (translation by Nguyễn Hoàng Quyên). This line comes to my mind often, as I think about the fishermen in my hometown Quảng Ngãi who are struggling against depleting fishing grounds, about the sternness of coastal people living with ruthless weather conditions that are constantly worsened by climate change. To stay afloat, I insist on sensuality and joy.

*Bồng Bềnh (Buoyant)* is aesthetically inspired by the drag community I have encountered in Sài Gòn. I am moved by their fierce assertion of femininity and queer joy against the turbulent flows of our society. I learn from Saigon drag artists the spirit of play and pleasure.

On my journey of making this film, my collaborators have been my teachers, friends and partners. This film organically came to fruition from the exchange between all of us: a movement grew into a character, an adjective grew into a soundscape. To make something out of the minimum, together, is perhaps our way of living in these waters.

— Toan Doan