



UUDAM TRAN NGUYEN
SERPENT'S TAILS
APRIL 19 - JUNE 1, 2019

Introduction

Galerie Quynh is pleased to present the Vietnamese premiere of UuDam Tran Nguyen's acclaimed installation *Rồng Rắn Lên* (Serpents' Tails), which comprises a three-channel video, sculpture, photographs, and an immersive installation of motorbikes whose exhaust systems inflate, feed, and give flight to tubular "serpents" sewn together from disposable plastic bags. In Nguyen's metaphor, man wrestles with the by-products of his industry, which continue to wreak environmental imbalance and destruction.

Serpents' Tails has already toured esteemed venues in Singapore (Esplanade), Japan (*Body/Play/Politics* at Yokohama Museum of Art), and Australia (*Asia Pacific Triennial 8* at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art).

From Hindu and Greek mythologies to the Bible and Vietnamese nationalist stories, the inspiration for *Serpents' Tails* is manifold. The 15-minute, 3-channel video begins with the creation of homemade objects and snaking animals that are breathed into life by the toxic fumes emanating from motorcycle exhaust pipes – that which gives life can also extinguish it. In one chamber, a giant elephant inflates and bloats into form against the floor, walls, and ceilings (replicated at Galerie Quynh). Pollution, and by extension environmental disaster, is the ignored elephant in the room that has been given shape by Nguyen's plastic skins. The funny,

not-so-funny caricature inhales and nearly bursts with a poison that remains formless and invisible to the casual eye in Saigon, where motorcycles numbering 7+ million nearly match the number of its inhabitants.

In other scenes filmed on rooftops and dark fields encircled by motorcycles, these tubular serpents, which now have a wild life of their own, wrestle physically with dancers in *pas de deux* that is at once conflictive, beautiful and tragic. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the priest Laocoön warns his Trojan countrymen of the suspicious giant wooden horse gifted by the Greeks, to no avail. In retaliation, the goddess Athena sends two sea serpents to kill him and his sons. Like blatant wisdom and climate science that goes dismissed, the dancers in *Serpents' Tails* writhe and struggle to quell the beasts that ultimately come for us all, leaving nothing but carbon footprints behind.

Later, adorned in facemasks, helmets, and sun-protective clothing, 44 riders and their motorcycles move in rectangular unison, as their literally exhaustive, toxic serpents drape over, veil, and even choke them. Barely able to see their way but gracefully maneuvering through the streets on "iron beasts," the sequence is reminiscent of Thanh Giong, the legendary saint who rides on an iron horse and saves the Vietnamese kingdom from foreign invaders. A folktale common to schoolchildren in Vietnam, Nguyen's adaptation is not one of heroism over imperialism, but a cautionary tale that pleads for serious environmental action over

fictional action heroes. Composer An Ton That's jarring, industrial and alien soundscape that accompanies *Serpents' Tails* reiterates the idea that the true "space invaders" are much more difficult to recognize and the battle is even more dire.

Nguyen's encompassing framework at Galerie Quynh for *Serpents' Tails*, which is staged over 4 floors and up to the roof, alludes to the overwhelming problem faced by fast, modernizing countries like Vietnam. From level to level filled with sculptural props and objects belonging to the vast project, the spectacle of ambition and building "forever-up" is hammered home. In the video's

final sequence that harks to the hubris misguided ambition that built the Tower of Babel, numerous motorbikes and serpents festoon from ground to the roof of a tall brick building. A dark storm moves through and the serpents break free from their pipes and plastic vessels – dispersing, metamorphosing, and enveloping the environment. Ill-conceived construction ultimately begets collapse, and this apocalyptic narrative, as taught through the lived experiences of millions, is not just another serpent's tale.

About UuDam Tran Nguyen

UuDam Tran Nguyen (born 1971, Saigon, Vietnam) earned his MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York (2005) and BA from UCLA (2002). He also attended the University of Fine Art in Ho Chi Minh City for three years prior to his studies in the U.S. His various projects engage with geopolitics, the environment, and issues of security and collaboration. Employing traditional media as well as crowdsourcing apps and other new technologies, Nguyen's distinctive body of work bridges the east-west, local-global divide in a way that confronts the pressing issues and complexities of broad, modern life in Southeast Asia and beyond. Nguyen has been included in prestigious exhibitions internationally such as *UuDam Tran Nguyen: TIME BOOMERANG California Edition – From S.E.A. Sea Atolls to the Next Dead Stars*, Orange County Museum of Art, Santa Ana, CA, USA (2019); *Shanghai Biennale*, Power Station of Art, China (2019); *So Far So Right*, Kuandu Fine Art Museum, Taipei,

Taiwan (2018); *Sunshower*, Mori Art Museum and The National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan (2017); *Aichi Triennale: A Rainbow Caravan*, Aichi Art Center, Japan (2016); *Body/Play/Politics*, Yokohama Art Museum, Japan (2016); *Fiesta Mobile*, The High Line, New York, USA (2015); *Mien Meo Mieng Contemporary Art from Vietnam*, Bildmuseet, Umea University, Sweden (2015); *Asia Pacific Triennial 8*, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (2015); *Waltz of the Machine Equestrians*, Asia Society, New York, USA (2014); and *Singapore Biennale*, Singapore Art Museum (2013). His works are in the collections of Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane, Australia); Kadist Art Foundation (Paris, France / San Francisco, CA, USA); Asia Society (New York, NY, USA); and MAMM Museum of Contemporary Art (Chiang Mai, Thailand).

INSTALLATION VIEWS















WORKS



Serpents' Tails

2018 - 2019

working motorbikes, beat-up motorbike parts, inflatable plastic tubes, air pumps

dimensions variable





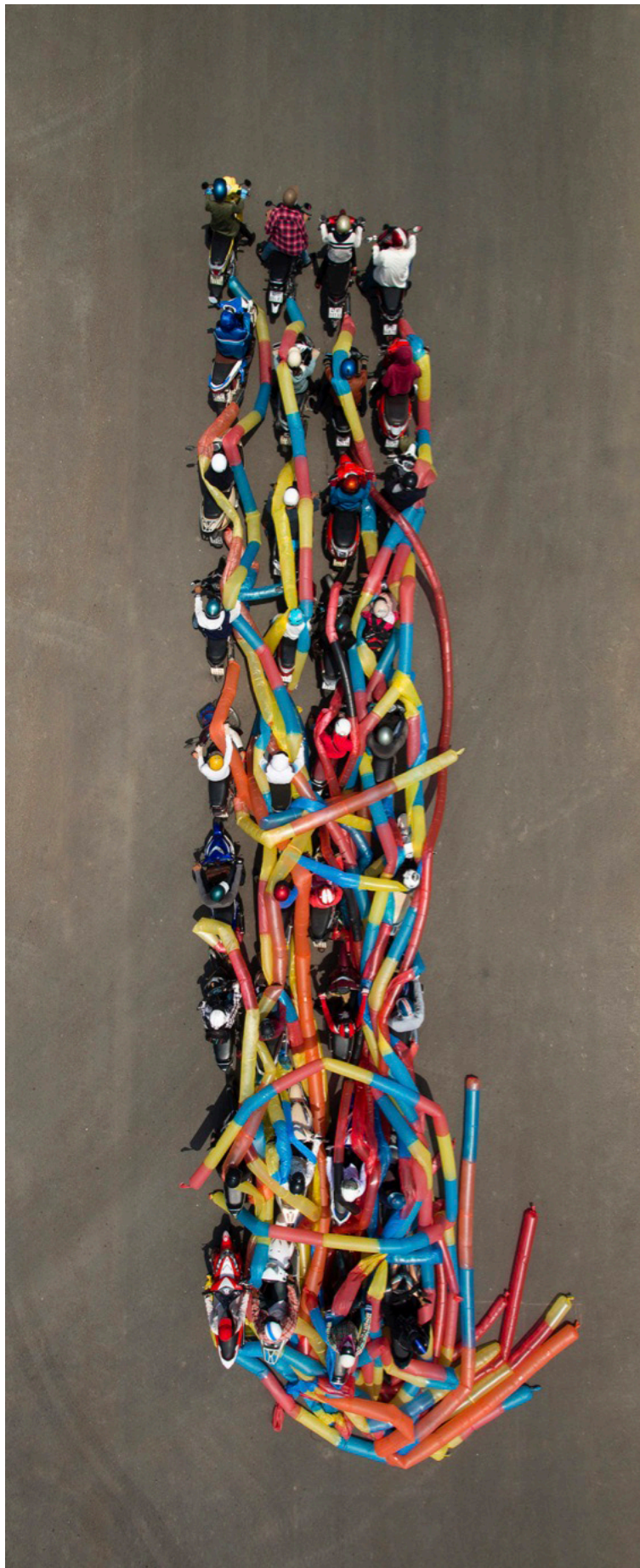
I love you forever

2010

UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

60 x 80 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



The long serpents

2014

UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

300 x 123 cm

edition 2 of 5 + 2 AP



wings of "freedom"

2019

motorbike mufflers, PVC tubes, inflatable plastic tubes

dimensions variable



The lung

2019

PVC tubes, plastic bags, air pumps
dimensions variable





Elephant in the room

2015

inflatable plastic

dimensions variable



No Vacancy

2019

7-color neon light, bronze, chrome plating

51 x 32 x 28 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



Serpents' Tails morning

2014

3-channel video, color, stereo

6' 37"

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



Serpents' Tails morning couple

2014

UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

93 x 140 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



Babel Tower

2015

UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

93 x 140 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



Night gathering (the perfect lock)

2014

UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

140 x 140 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



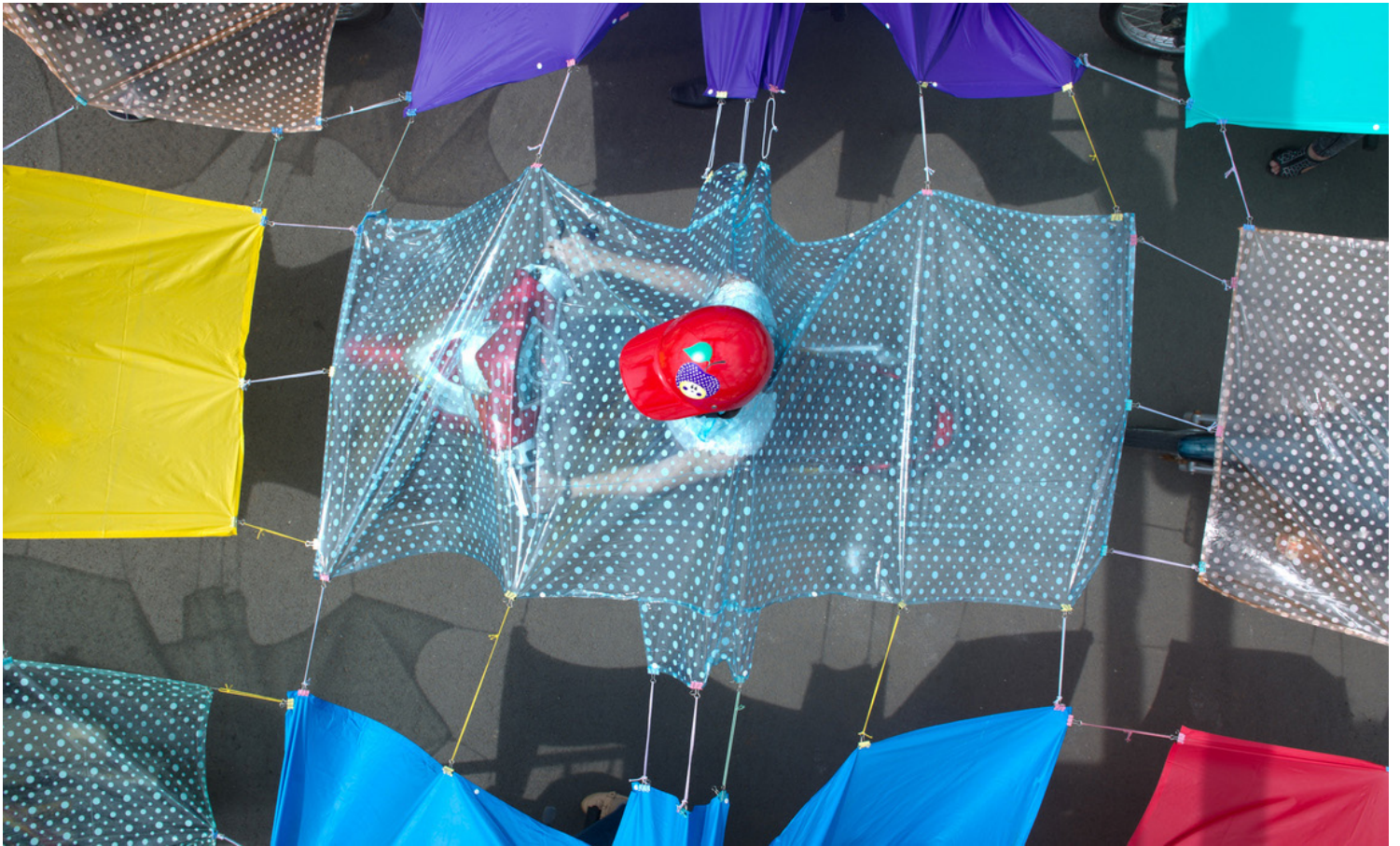
3D clouds

2015

UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

93 x 140 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



The machine equestrians (Link #1)

2012

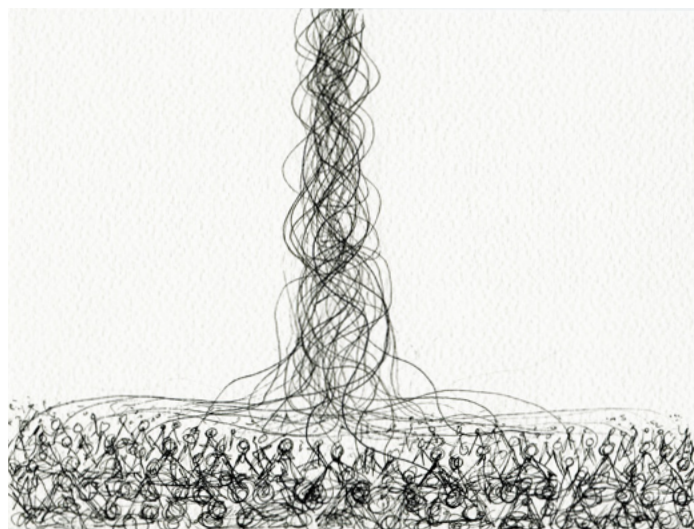
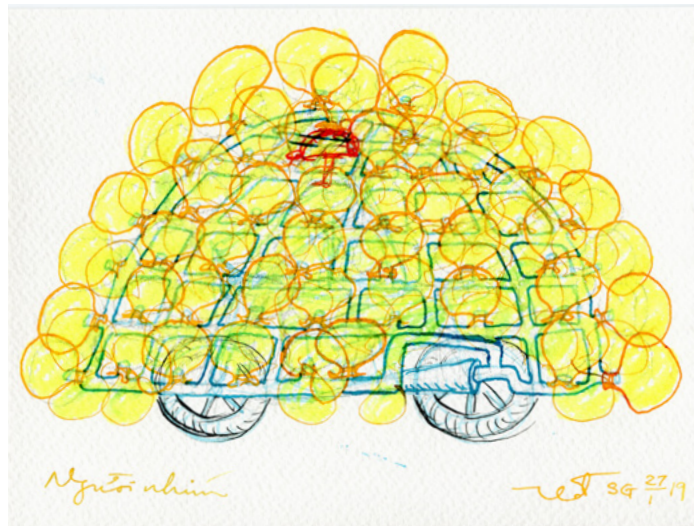
UV ink on flexible PVC, LED lights, aluminium frame

85 x 140 cm

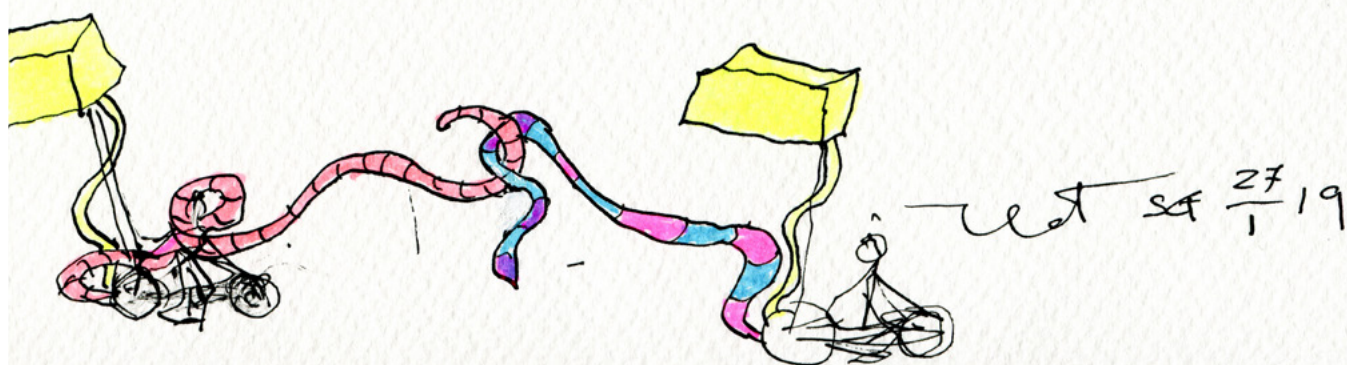
edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP

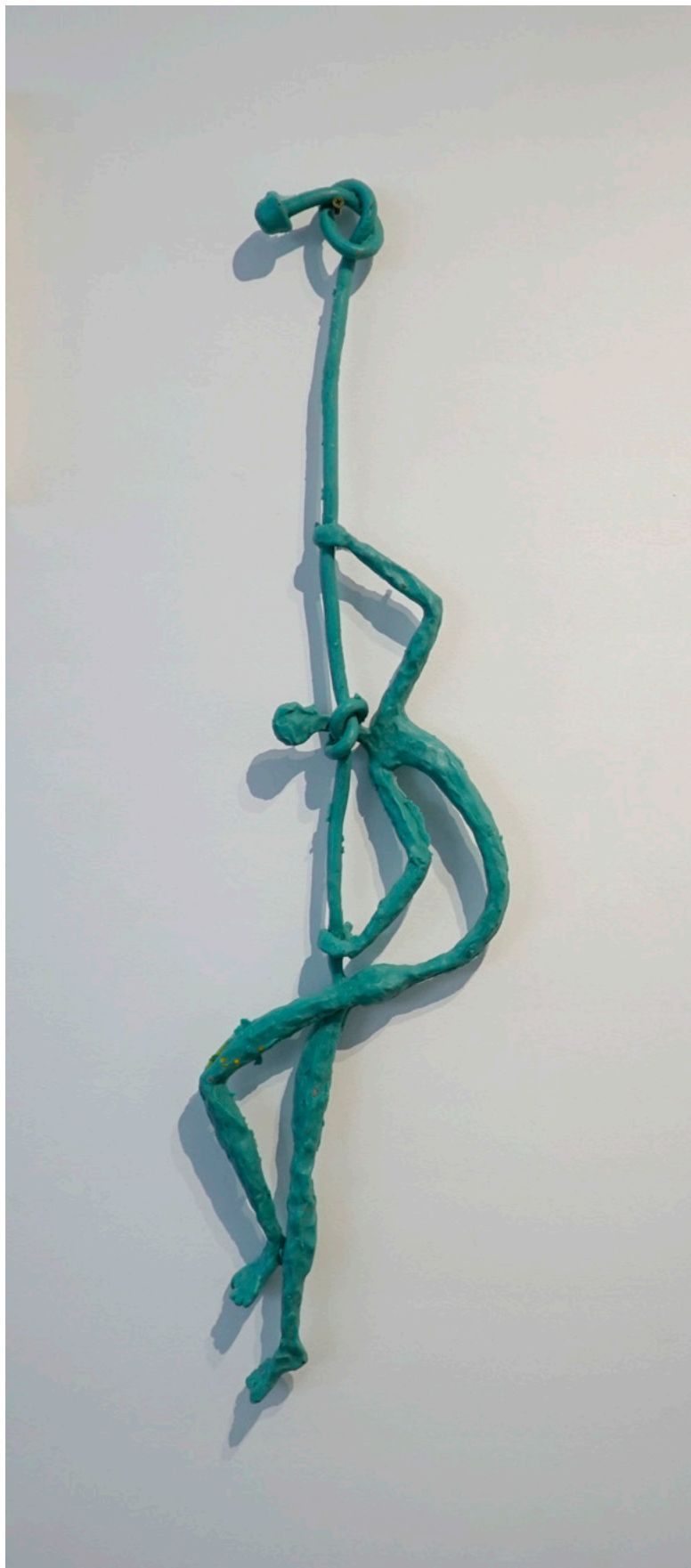


Serpents' Tails sketches and objects
 2011 - 2019
 mixed media
 various dimensions



Idea triggers ideas
 Image triggers ideas
 Image triggers images
 Images triggers#





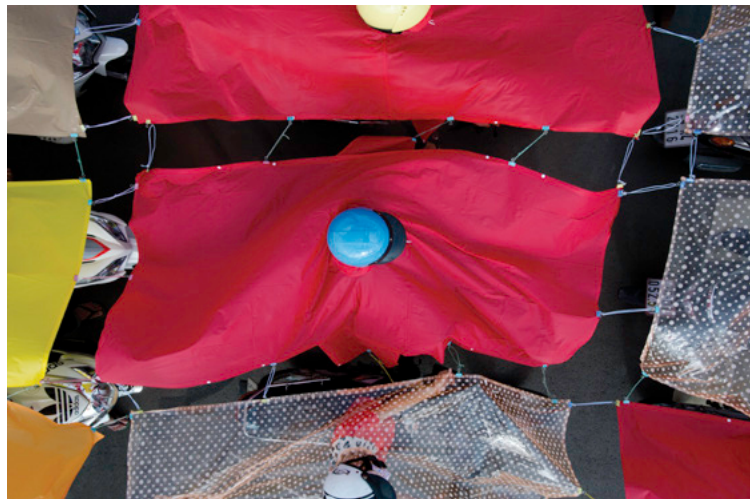
The Last Rope

2012

cast bronze (image above - wax maquette)

95.5 x 25 x 5 cm

edition 1 of 5 + 2 AP



Waltz of the machine equestrians
 2012
 single-channel video, color, stereo,
 4' 34"
 artist's proof (edition of 5 + 1 AP)



The machine equestrians canopy

2012

24 plastic raincoats, rope

dimension variable



BIOGRAPHY

UUDAM TRAN NGUYEN

Born in 1971 in Kontum, Vietnam

Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

EDUCATION

- 2005 MA, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY, USA
- 2002 BA, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 1990-1994 University of Fine Arts, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Serpents' Tails*, Galerie Quynh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- Time Boomerang - California Edition : From S.E.A. Atolls to the Next Dead Star*, Orange County Museum of Art - OCMA Expand, Santa Ana, CA, USA
- 2017 *Dream A Future Dream*, Goethe Institute, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 2009 *Natural Feelings*, Sabine Lee Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *SUNSHOWER: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Art, Taiwan
- 2018 *Proregress – Art in an Age of Historical Ambivalence*, Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China
- All animals are equal*, A. Farm, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- Subliminal City*, Esplanade Visual Arts, Singapore
- So Far So Right*, Kuandu Fine Art Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
- 2017 *Sunshower: Contemporary Arts from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*, Mori Art Museum and The National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan
- Lines, Borders, Boundaries & the In-Betweens*, Yamamoto Gendai, Tokyo, Japan
- Imaginarium: To the Ends of the Earth*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- Undefined Boundaries*, Korean Cultural Center; Heritage Space, Hanoi, Vietnam
- The Making of an Institution*, NTU CCA, Singapore
- 2016 *GOMA Turns 10*, The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia
- Vietnam Eye: Contemporary Vietnamese Art*, Casa Italia, Hanoi, Vietnam

- Body/Play/Politics*, Yokohama Art Museum, Yokohama, Japan
- Onsite Art Fest 2016*, Taipei Expo Park Expo Dome, Taipei, Taiwan
- Public Spirits*, Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland
- Aichi Triennale 2016: A Rainbow Caravan*, Aichi Art Center (Nayoga) - PLAT (Toyohashi) - Okazaki, Japan
- Blind Side*, Screen Series, Melbourne, Australia
- Fiesta Mobile*, The High Line, New York, NY, USA
- EMAP 2016 - S.O.S. Save our souls: Art for a Time of Emergencies*, Seoul, Korea
- TechNoPhobe*, The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- Sights & Sounds: Highlights*, The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, USA
- Seismograph: Sensing the City – Art in the Urban Age*, Art Stage Singapore, Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre, Singapore
- 2015 *Asia Pacific Triennial 8*, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia
- Asian Arts Space Network*, Asia Culture Center, Korea - Taiwan
- ASEAN – ROK “City, Remembrance and Reimagining,”* Edwin’s Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- “Unfamiliar Asia” The Second Beijing Photo Biennial*, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, China
- Mien Meo Mieng - Contemporary Art from Vietnam*, Bildmuseet - Umea University, Umea, Sweden
- Missing Links*, Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok, Thailand
- Open Sea*, Musee d’Art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, France
- Sights and Sounds: Global Film and Video*, The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, USA
- 2014 *Artists’ Film International*, Ballroom Marfa, Texas, USA
- License 2 Draw – World Tour in One Place – Los Angeles in Yokohama*, Koganecho Bazaar, Yokohama, Japan
- Artists’ Film International*, White Chapel Gallery, London, England
- Summer Show*, RISD Museum, Providence, RI, USA
- Waltz of the Machine Equestrians*, Asia Society, New York, NY, USA
- Canvas International Art – Vietnam now: Changing Society*, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2013 *Singapore Biennale 2013*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- XEM 03*, San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- Freedom is the Motorbike*, LBCC Art Gallery, Long Beach, CA, USA
- 2012 *Poetic Politic*, Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 21st Century SEX - Artists exploring Contemporary sexuality*, Bleicher Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- Global Hybrid II*, Meta House, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- Raw Ideas project*, Zero Station, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2011 *South Bay Focus*, Torrance Art Museum, CA, USA
- Global Hybrid 1+2*, Meta House – German Cambodian Cultural Center, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- 2009 *The Longest Day of Summer, One Lucky Day*, S1F gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Let There Be Light, Phantom Gallery, Long Beach, CA, USA
F.O.B. II: Art Speaks, VAALA Center for the Arts, Santa Ana, CA, USA
- 2008 *Let's Make Out*, Pocko Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2007 *Humor Us*, LA Municipal Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2006 *Free Frisbee*, Circus of Books Gallery, West Hollywood, CA, USA
High Desert Test Sites 5, Joshua Tree, CA, USA
- 2005 Howl Festival, New York, NY, USA
Die Prof. Winkler Kunst - und Literaturtage Los Angeles, Circus of Books, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Fearless Vampire Killers, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- 2004 *On the Façade*, Locust Projects, Miami, FL, USA
Strange Animals, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Emerging NYC, Pool Art Center of Drury University, Springfield, MO, USA
Scope, London, Lyons Wier Gallery, London, UK
Fine Arts Work Center Invitational, Hudson D. Walker Gallery, Provincetown, CA, USA
- 2003 *Fresh Track 003*, George J. Doizaki Gallery, JACCC, Los Angeles, CA, USA
- 2001 *Self-Retrospective*, Westminster, CA, USA

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2016 Residency, NTU CCA, Singapore
- 2014 Jury Selection, Japan Media Arts Festival 2014, Tokyo, Japan

ARTIST TALKS / LECTURES

- 2019 Artist's talk & screening, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, USA
- 2018 Time Boomerang performance, Phase #4, A. Farm, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
 Sa Sa Art Project Artist's talk, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
 Artist's Talk at Esplanade Visual Arts, Singapore
- 2017 Screening NTU CCA: The Making of an Institution, Singapore
 Artist's Talk, Taiwan Center for Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan
 Artist's Talk, Heritage Space, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2016 Artist's Talk, NTU CCA, Singapore
 Artist's Talk, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan

- Guest speaker, Innovation Week, Indochina Art Project & Ihub, Hanoi, Vietnam
- Floor Artist's Talk, Aichi Triennale, Aichi, Japan
- Artist's Talk, The Factory Contemporary Art Center, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2015 Performance, Time Boomerang Phase #2 part 2, Brisbane, Australia
- Performance, Time Boomerang Phase #2 part 2, Umea, Sweden
- Artist's Talk, Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2014 San Art Laboratory Talking Partner, Session #4, San Art, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 2011 Artist's Talk, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, CA, USA

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY / ARTICLES / INTERVIEWS

- 2018 Robinson, Paul, "Singapore Art Week: The Last Word," *Artlyst*, January 2018
- "Time Boomerang," Place.Labour.Capital, *NTU CCA Press*, January 2018
- 2017 Li, Vivian, "Sunshower: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now," *The Brooklyn Rail*, November 2017
- 2016 Urso, Alex, "Vento Asiatico a Varsavia. Tra poetica, politica e forme del sociale," *Artribune*, December 2016
- Gawkowski, Jakub, "Przemoc Schowana W Stawie," *Political Critique*, December 2016
- C.X. Mai, Ardia, "AIA Vietnam Eye: Vietnamese contemporary artists in focus in pictures," *Art Radar*, December 2016
- "APT8 interview video: Serpents' Tails," *QAGOMA*, November 2016
- "Curator Eriko Kimura on Body/Play/Politics," Yokohama Art Museum, October 2016
- Nozoki, Yumi, "Face the world as an artist, not activist," Yokohama, September 2016
- Valentine, Ben, "In Phnom Penh, an Artist Confronts the City's Deadly Traffic," *Hyperallergic*, August 2016
- Rudzitsky, Zelda, "Technology has officially entered Saigon's Art Scene," *Saigoneer*, April 2016
- Dao, Trang, "Need to create a context for full of life art scene," *Nhan Dan*, March 2016
- Moodie, Georgia, "Fostering Vietnamese Contemporary Art," *ABC Australia Radio*, February 2016
- Sanchez-Kozyreva, Cristina, "Stage and Screens: Singapore," *Artforum*, January 2016
- "Vietnamese Artist UuDam Tran Nguyen at Art Stage Singapore 2016," *Hanoi Grapevine*, January 2016
- "Aichi Triennale 2016: A Rainbow Caravan," 2016
- 2015 Wilson, Claire, "8 highlights from the 8th APT," *Art Radar*, November 2015
- C.X. Mai, Ardia, "Mien Meo Mieng: Vietnamese contemporary art in Sweden in pictures," *Art Radar*, July 2015
- Pongpipat, Kaona, "Examining Urbanity," *Bangkok Post*, June 2015
- Hsin Kuo, Pai, "Your Tool, My Toy," *Digital Art Center Taipei*, March 2015
- 2014 Tran, Luong, "Biennale: Visual Feast," *Heritage-Inflight Magazine*, November 2014
- Rudzitsky, Zelda, "License 2 Draw: UuDam Tran Nguyen Brings Robotic Art To Vietnam," *Saigoneer*, August 2014

- Nguyen, Huong, "Vietnam Artist Join Art Festival in Yokohama," *Vietnam News*, August 2014
- Brown, A. Will, "Interview with artist UuDam Tran Nguyen," *RISD Museum*, July 2014
- Heritage – Vietnam Inflight Magazine*, February 2014
- 2013 Hue, Tran, "Talk with curator Tran Luong at Singapore Biennale 2103," *Hanoi Grapevine*, October 2013
- Singapore Biennale 2013: If the World Changed*, exhibition catalogue, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- Patrick, Stephan, "Waltz of the Machine Equestrians feature video," *Flash Art International*, October 2013
- Dulaney, Josh, "LBCC gallery features Vietnamese Artist," *Press Telegram*, September 2013
- 2012 Malick, Courtney, "Poetic Politic," *Artforum*, October 2012
- Jennifer Zhao, Helen, "Artist's 'Fuck Buttons' Explore the Various Forms of Sex in the 21st Century," *Galo Magazine*, August 2012
- Rolnick, Daniel, "Bloody Nuns, Men in Heels, and Other Taboo Topics at 21st Century Sex Art show," *LA Weekly*, July 2012
- Naji, Cassandra, "The Meaning of Life," *The Advisor*, July 2012
- 2011 Meas, Roth, "Global Hybrid Art Show crosses all boundaries," *The Phnom Penh Post*, July 2011
- 2007 "Humor Us at the Municipal Art Gallery," *Marshall Astor*, September 2007

MISCELLANY

2012 – current Founding member of *Xem* publication

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

MAIIAM Museum of Contemporary Art, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia

Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France / San Francisco, CA, USA

Asia Society Museum, New York, NY, USA



Tân Định. District 1.
HCM City. Việt Nam

+84 966 775 471
uudamstudio@gmail.com
www.uudamstudio.com