

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

Press release

Danh Vo

September 17 – November 7, 2021

Hauptraum

Preview for the press: Thursday, September 16, 2021, 11 a.m.

Opening: Thursday, September 16, 2021, 7 p.m.–9 p.m.

First day of the exhibition: Friday, September 17, 2021, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

In August 2020, my colleague Hans Weinberger and I made a short trip to Güldenhof, an old farm in Brandenburg that artist Danh Vo has turned into a multipurpose space and studio. Over the past couple of years, he has transformed former barns and outhouses into wood and ceramics workshops, storage spaces, and a greenhouse. He's laid out a "wild" garden with a variety of flowers and vegetables. He's also built a central farm building, with a variety of bedrooms and sleeping places, and a large utilitarian kitchen with a giant long table for eating, talking and playing games. This farm has become a creative retreat for the artist — a place to try out new things, to produce and to connect with visiting artists, artisans, students, and curators. In addition to these ephemeral encounters there are Vo's regular collaborators who are present often on a daily basis. These include Vo's studio manager Marta Lusena; the photographer Nick Ash; cabinet maker Fred Fischer; and gardener Christine Schulz. She laid out the garden and comes every morning to take care of it, while she keeps on experimenting with plants, cultivating seeds and thus expanding her knowledge.

From Berlin, we took the one-hour ride by train north to Stechlin where Marta picked us up in the late afternoon. We drove through the countryside scattered with small sparsely populated villages and several lakes. It was Hans's first visit to Güldenhof and his first official business trip abroad as one of Secession's technical managers. Vo's installations are thoughtful, often innovative. He has leaned heavily on the expertise and intuition of exhibition crews over the years. In working with Secession, Vo had requested that I together with a technical person visit the farm in order to create a mutual understanding. We were excited and happy to be there. We found the artist and some others sitting outside the wood workshop on simply made stools, or pieces of wood that would serve easily as such. We joined them and drank a beer. They were discussing the day's work and plans for the next. Danh asked, "Hans, can you handle a chain saw to cut down a tree?" The idea was to clear up a patch where two silos stand and several trees and bushes grow. Fred and studio assistant Nicolas were going to make it easier to enter the wood workshop through a French window on the back side of the building.

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I had been to Güldenhof exactly one year before. At the time, Vo was working on two exhibitions, both to open on the same day in September in London. He had received a generous amount of black walnut wood from the US which would be used for new work or could be presented as raw material (as at Marian Goodman's London gallery). Smallish walnut stars were stacked around the workshop, and next to the entrance of a spacious barn leaned an American flag with charred wooden boards. As with much of the work of Danh Vo, the wood's provenance gave it added meaning. It was a gift from Sierra Orchards, the wood farm owned by Craig McNamara son to Robert McNamara who as US minister for defense had been one of the architects of the American War in Vietnam. Some years earlier Vo had presented objects purchased from McNamara's estate as the basis for an exhibition. Impressed by the complexity of Vo's vision, Craig approached the artist and they became friends. So, this farm in Güldenhof owned by a Danish Vietnamese artist, is home to an enormous collection of wood from the McNamara family. Rather than become mired in (post) colonial reprisals, Vo's clear minded historicism together with his delight in intimacy creates something provocative in the aesthetic and social realm.

Güldenhof has a number of buildings circling a large open courtyard full of timber, plants and giant marble slabs. At one end of the open space is the main house with its black façade and metal roof, and at the other a former barn converted to a greenhouse. At its entrance, a ping-pong table with 'Morgen ist die Frage' (Tomorrow is the Question) by Rirkrit Tiravanija written in large letters, placed on it some books, garden tools and watering cans. All sorts of vegetables grow: eggplant, Asian runner beans, bitter cucumber, courgettes, and several varieties of tomatoes. Amidst the greens climbing up poles and stretching towards the light, we discover antique Madonnas leaning against the wall or strapped to a beam to keep them from falling over. Amputated Christ sculptures cut to fit in boxes are here placed on a stool or left lying about seemingly at random. Nasturtium plants (as they are commonly called) with flowers in different shades of orange, yellow and red grow everywhere. Vo is fascinated by this plant, its history and varied connotations, and has included it in a number of installations. The plant is a native of the Americas, and was named *Tropaeolum Majus* in 1753 by Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. He saw the leaves as shields, and the flowers as bloodied helmets and named it for an ancient Greek triumphalist war monument. Linnaeus militarized the flowers imbuing them with meaning arrived at through his colonialist perspective. Back in Vienna we would plant a number of nasturtiums (and vegetables and other plants) to be part of the exhibition. In building the plant boxes and raised beds for the garden, Hans was influenced by Vo's admiration for Italian designer Enzo Mari's ideas for self-made furniture published in his 1974 manual *Autoprogettazione*. Nature and the gardens are essential to Güldenhof, and we decided that creating a garden at Secession would help establish a long-term connection between the artist's studio and the institution.

The next morning we inspected the patch of land at the back of the workshop. Overgrown nettles and ivy sprawled around two silos, while poplar trees and numerous bushes grew wildly along the plot's boundary. Cleaning up the patch was hard work and also required some real decisions. The process was about reorganising and shaping – in a way it was like sculpting. We discussed what should go and what could stay, setting some basic standards that would serve as our guidelines. We fetched the tools we would need for the job: gloves, pruners and shears, a pick to loosen the ground. Hans sharpened the blades of the chain saw; Nicolas and I worked around the concrete base of a silo where someone had hung a hammock; Danh pruned a bush; Fred was in the wood workshop; and Marta was checking mail and making phone calls. Gabriel (an art student from Sweden) assisted Hans by strapping the branches of the tree helping secure them so no one would get hurt. Hans cut down the first tree, everyone paused to witness when it fell. Heaps

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of tree branches, weeds and leaves were markers of our progress. After a lunch break, Vo invited Hans and I to stand below the hollow silo, head inside, to experience its amazing acoustic qualities. This summer as the (vaccinated) world returned to some form of sociability, the artist Tarek Atoui, used the silos in a sound performance for Güldenhof's midsummer celebration. The trees had provided rhythmic visual gaps onto the horizon, as they fell views emerged of field after field of German agricultural production stretching into the distance.

We didn't have the standard curator and artist business talk. Rather, bits of information, thoughts and ideas were shared organically. Sitting on the steps Fred had just finished making in the afternoon, drinking home-made iced tea, Vo was eager to learn how the Secession is organised, and how we work together as a team. He asked about the board's role, about standard procedures and unwritten rules, resources and facilities. Vo likes to keep things simple and practical. Cultivating the small patch of land, carrying out this work together, the nature of our collaboration took shape.

In renovating Güldenhof, all newly built structures were painted black – the main house and the workshop for example – clearly distinguishing them from parts of the existing stone and brick buildings that remained untouched. The use of a material or colour follows a systematic logic for Vo, and we too would ascribe different materials to different functions in the exhibition. For example, plant boxes would be made of coated plywood; engraved 1x1 m marble slabs would mark out spaces within the exhibition space; and, timber could be used to make support structures.

While the rest of us cleared up and had a chat, Vo watered the plants and, holding the hose towards the evening sun, made rainbows. It had been scorching hot and to finish off we went for a swim in one of the nearby lakes. Upon our return, Vo had cooked a most delicious meal for us all: crispy roast pork and fish from the oven served with broth and a large bowl of salad with fresh lettuces, vegetables and herbs from the garden. It was late by the time we sat down for dinner. It had been a long productive day.

Jeanette Pacher, curator

Danh Vo was born in Bà Rịa, Vietnam, in 1975 and lives and works in Berlin and Mexico City. Since 2017, with its farm buildings and large gardens Güldenhof in Stechlin / Brandenburg serves the artist and others as studio and living environment.

The exhibition program is conceived by the board of the Secession.
Curator: Jeanette Pacher

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Artist's book**Dan Vo**

Format: 29,7 x 42 cm

Details: 2 pages, handwritten by Phụng Vo, stamped

Concept: Danh Vo

Secession 2021

Distribution: Revolver Publishing

EUR 15.00

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Exhibitions

Hauptraum

Danh Vo

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Galerie

Carlos Bunga: *Mind awake, body asleep*

September 17 – November 7, 2021

Grafisches Kabinett

Rana Hamadeh: *Standard Deviation*

September 17 – November 7, 2021

Artists' books

Danh Vo, 2 pages, handwritten by Phụng Vo, stamped, € 15,00

Carlos Bunga, hardcover, linen in three different versions (red, blue, green),
120 pages, € 26,40

Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

Beethoven – Painting and Music in cooperation with
Wiener Symphoniker

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission

Adults € 9,50; Pupils, students and senior citizens € 6,-

Press contact Secession

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Press images

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Danh Vo – works, in clockwise order

A.

untitled, 2021

Carrara marble, standard construction wood
Pencil on paper and C-print, writing by Phung Vo
20 collages, each 45 × 32 × 3.7 cm / framed

2.2.1861, 2009

Ink on A4 paper, writing by Phung Vo
29.7 × 21 cm

untitled (Safe), 2008

Safe

100 x 50 x 40 cm

Josef Dalle Nogare Collection

B.

untitled, 2021

Carrara marble, fragment of a Roman marble torso of an Athlete wearing his chlamys over his shoulder, I-II century CE; standard construction wood and tropaeolum majus plant
dimensions variable

C.

untitled, 2021

Carrara marble, portrait of a young man, Roman marble, I century CE; bronze cast of the lower legs and feet of Vo's partner, the artist Heinz Peter Knes, with feet crossed and toenails painted, refrigerator, standard construction wood; dimensions variable

The hairstyle of this Roman head links to a corpus of portraits of young slave boys known as *paedagogiani* or *delicati*, meaning delicate, delicious, attractive or pleasant in Latin. They were boys recognised for their great beauty and exquisite features, who were taught to help run the household. They were sometimes designated as companions for the family's sons. Their masters also reserved them for their personal use, from waiting on them at the table to sexual services to assisting during religious processions.

D.

untitled, 2021

Carrara marble, 18th century wooden torso of Christ and Nestle condensed milk wooden crate
dimensions variable

E.

untitled, 2021

Carrara marble, bronze, standard construction wood and tropaeolum majus plant
dimensions variable

We The People (detail)

2011 – 2016

Copper

All the works are courtesy of the artist.

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Biografie / Biography Danh Vo

1975 geboren / born in Vietnam, lebt und arbeitet / lives and works in Mexiko-Stadt / Mexico City und / and Berlin.

Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) / Solo exhibitions (selection)

Danh Vo, National Gallery of Osaka, Japan (2020); *Danh Vo*, South London Gallery, London (2019); *Danh Vo: The Mudam Collection and Pinault Collection in Dialogue*, Mudam Luxembourg (2019); *Noguchi for Danh Vo: Counterpoint, M+*, Hong Kong (2018); *Danh Vo: Garden with Pigeons in Flight*, Casa Luis Barragán, Mexico City (2018); *Danh Vo*, CAPC, Bordeaux (2018); *Danh Vo: Take My Breath Away*, Guggenheim Museum, New York and SMK, Copenhagen, (2018); *Ng Teng Fong Roof Garden Commission series: Danh Vo*, National Gallery Singapore (2016-17); *Banish the Faceless / Reward your Grace*, Palacio de Cristal del Retiro, Madrid (2015); *Ydob eht ni mraw si ti*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2015); *Danh Vo: Wād alḥayāra*, Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2014/2015); *Danh Vo: We The People (detail)*, Faurschou Foundation, Beijing (2014); *We The People*, commissioned by Public Art Fund for the Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York (2014); *I M U U R 2* (Hugo Boss Prize), Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013); *Chung ga opla*, Villa Medici, Rome (2013); *Fabulous Muscles*, Museion, Bolzano (2013); *Go Mo Ni Ma Da*, Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2013); *We The People (detail) 2010-2013*, Art Institute of Chicago (2012); *Vō Danh*, Kunsthau Bregenz (2012); *JULY, IV, MDCCLXXVI*, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel (2011); *Hip Hip Hurra*, SMK, Copenhagen (2010); *Les fleurs d'intérieur*, KADIST, Paris (2009); *Danh Vo: Where the Lions Are*, Kunsthalle Basel (2009); *Package Tour*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008).

Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) / Group exhibitions (selection)

Neon Foundation, Athens (2021); Triennale di Milano, Milan (2020); MOCA, Montpellier (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018); National Museum of Art, Osaka (2018); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2017); Frank F. Yang Art and Education Foundation | YOU Space, Shenzhen (2017); Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (2017); Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden (2017); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2016); Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2016); The Menil Collection, Houston (2015); Barbican Centre, London (2015); Kunstmuseum Basel (2013); New Museum, New York, (2012); Kunsthau Bregenz (2011); Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin (2011); Kunsthalle Basel (2010); Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2009); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2009); Kunstverein, Munich (2008); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008); CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2007), among others

Danh Vo nahm an der Internationalen Kunstausstellung auf der 55. Biennale von Venedig (2013) und der 58. Biennale von Venedig (2019) teil und vertrat Dänemark auf der 56. Biennale von Venedig (2015) mit der Ausstellung *Mothertongue*. / Danh Vo participated in the International Art Exhibition at the 55th Venice Biennial (2013), 58th Venice Biennial (2019) and represented Denmark at the 56th Venice Biennial (2015) with the exhibition *Mothertongue*.