

untitled

Danh Vo

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When you examine the present you must understand your past: the past that has identified your own present.

I also believe you must look into the future. That's definitely a philosophy of life that I live with and hopefully that shows in the work that I do.

"Vo Danh", an inversion of the artist Danh Vo's name with the addition of an accent, means "unnamed" or "nameless" in Vietnamese. Vo grew up in Denmark from the age of four, having arrived there with his parents in 1979 when they fled post-war Vietnam by hand-built boat and were picked up by a Maersk container ship. He spoke Vietnamese but didn't read the language so only discovered the meaning of "Vo Danh" when visiting a cemetery in Vietnam with his mother and noticed that numerous graves were inscribed with those words. In this way, the title of this exhibition - *untitled* - like every work within it, relates both to the artist's biography and to broader historical and artistic contexts, including, in this case, the ubiquitous use of 'untitled' in the naming of contemporary artworks.

In *untitled*, Vo explores how to exist within and navigate the present through a variety of working methods and across multiple spaces, from the South London Gallery's main space and three floors of the Fire Station, through to off-site projects on Pelican and Sceaux Gardens housing estates. He has engaged numerous collaborators to co-create work with him, from his father, friends, lover and professor, through to gallery technicians and a group of children from Sceaux Gardens visiting his Berlin farm. He has also incorporated works by other artists and designers into his own work, which thereby becomes an expanding and diversifying series of experiments, questioning what happens if he brings one set of elements together, then another, and another. Rather than creating a pluralist landscape for its own sake, this approach is driven by a profound desire to sift through the embedded layers that inform our present. Power, history, eroticism, personal biography, imperial dissolution and globalist expansion are all in play.

In the Main Gallery, the glow-in-the-dark paintings on mirror foil were executed by Vo's former professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Peter Bonde. As a student, Vo was advised by Bonde to abandon painting, whilst Vo objected to what he perceived to be the macho excess of his tutor's work. More recently, however, their relationship has shifted into new territory of mutual respect and creative collaboration, as expressed through Vo's decision to foreground Bonde's paintings in this show, as well as in his presentation at the current Venice Biennale. This interweaving of personal connections is continued in photographs taken by Vo's lover, the German photographer Heinz Peter Knes, of Vo's nephew and muse, Gustav; and through calligraphic renditions by Vo's father and long-time collaborator, Phung Vo. The daybed was made according to instructions in the Italian designer Enzo Mari's *Autoprogettazione* from the 1970s and is upholstered in the classic Hallingdal 65 textile by the Danish modernist Nanna Ditzel. Its base is constructed from walnut wood farmed by Craig McNamara, an environmental educationalist and son of former US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara who notoriously escalated US presence in the Vietnam



War. Past, present and biographical references are further enmeshed in Vo's sculpture combining fragments of marble Roman statues held together with newly-made brass fittings, and in *Lick me, Lick me*, 2015, comprised of a Greek marble torso of Apollo embedded in an old Nestle Carnation condensed milk crate. Carnation milk was a favourite childhood treat of Vo's and was also issued as a field ration to American soldiers during the Vietnam War.

The walls of Gallery 1 on the ground floor of the Fire Station are lined with timber from Sierra Orchards farm, purchased in 1980 by Craig McNamara who was surprised to find that the farm included an orchard of slowly maturing black walnut trees destined to be used for crafting gun stocks. Befriending Vo when the artist started to acquire and exhibit objects from the estate of his father, Craig McNamara gifted Vo the orchard and its timber to use in his work. Vo used some of the wood from the orchard to frame photographs taken by American anthropologist Dr Joseph M Carrier. Taken during his employment by RAND Corporation as a counter-insurgency specialist during the Vietnam War, they depict intimate but most likely non-romantic affection between boys and young men: squatting to eat rice, sleeping in cots, walking hand in hand. Carrier left Vietnam abruptly in 1967 upon exposure of his homosexuality, before returning in the early 1970s, employed by the Herbicide Committee. His negatives were kept in his Los Angeles basement until he met Vo in 2006. This chance encounter and the biographic resonances between the two men led to a fruitful artistic collaboration.

The wallpaper in Gallery 2 on the first floor reproduces drawings of some of the 7,000 species discovered by French missionary and amateur botanist Jean-Andre Soulie before his execution in Tibet in 1905. In an echo of his own quest to convert Asia to the Roman church, many of these indigenous plants were subsequently allocated Latin names that incorporate Soulie's surname, such as *Rosa soulieana*. This echoes several works referring to the 'Vietnamese martyrs', 117 French Catholic missionaries executed during the nineteenth century for illegally proselytising across the region. A painting on silk replicates a work discovered by Vo in the Missions Etrangeres archive in Paris depicting the 1837 martyrdom of Jean-Charles Cornay in Tonkin province. An 1852 photograph from the same archive shows five young French missionaries on the brink of their dispersal to different corners of Asia. One of them is Jean-Theophile Venard, whose hand-written letter to his father on the morning of his beheading has been perfectly reproduced by Vo's own father, Phung Vo, in an unlimited edition. Phung Vo does not read French but is a skilled calligrapher, carefully creating a new copy of the letter every time one is ordered. The sculpture in Gallery 3 combines a second century marble Eros with a fragment of a sandstone eagle from the Prussian Ministry of Public Works in Berlin. The building was later used as Reich Ministry of Transport (1919-45), as an illegal party venue in the 1990s and then as an exhibition space before being demolished in 2012.

The installation in Gallery 4 on the third floor harks back to the 2013/14 travelling exhibition, *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*, for which Danh Vo was one of several co-curators. That show included works from the artist, curator

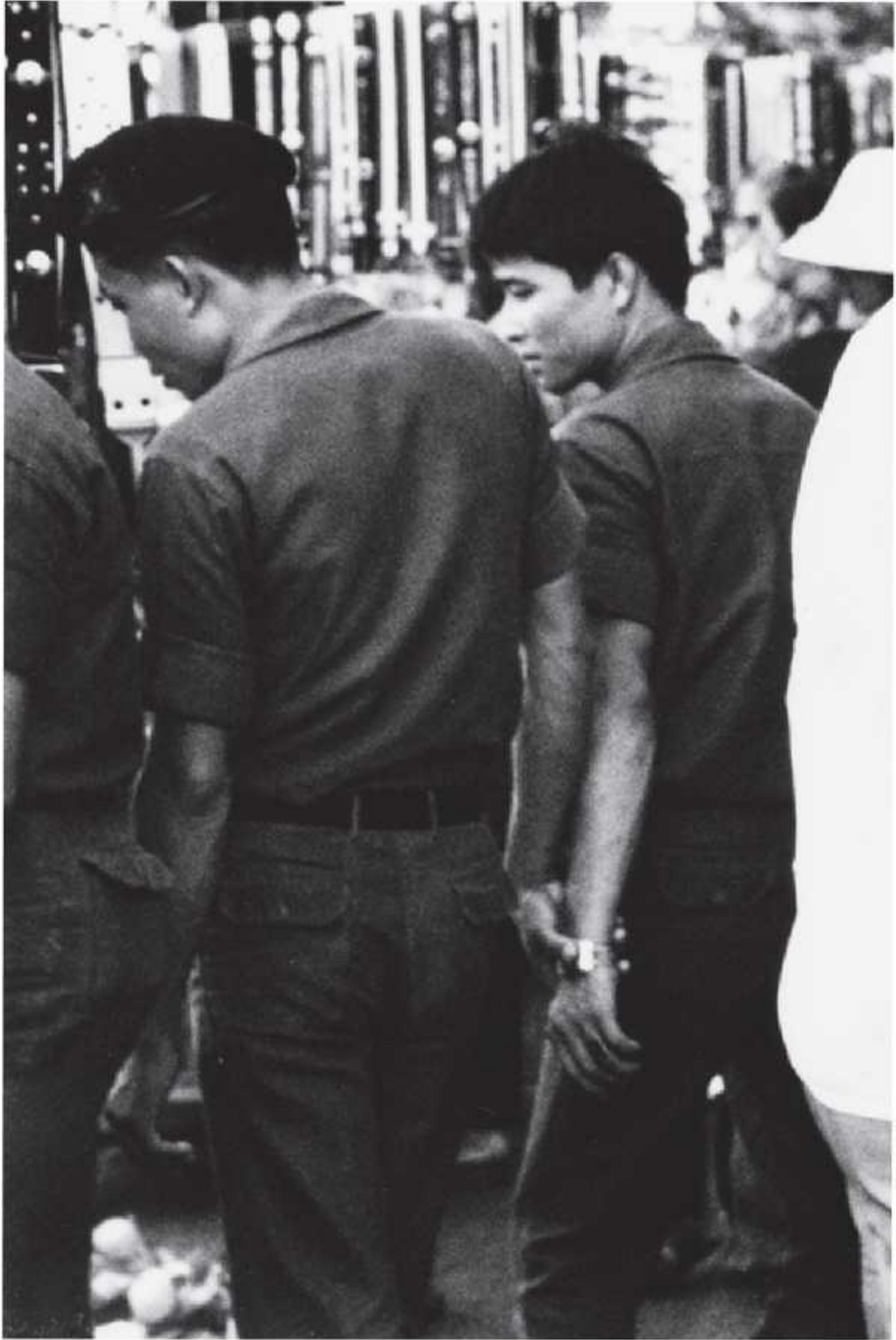
and writer Julie Ault's personal collection. This installation combines some of those works alongside others from Danh Vo's own collection. Vo met Julie Ault in 2003 when she taught a course at the Copenhagen Royal Academy and their friendship has stimulated a number of artistic, curatorial and editorial collaborations.

Beyond the gallery walls, at Art Block, the SLG's permanent children's art space on Sceaux Gardens housing estate, Vo has collaborated with children to create an installation using walnut timber from Craig McNamara's orchard. Vo has also sited a bright red metal *Play Sculpture* (1975-6) by the Japanese-American sculptor, Isamu Noguchi on Pelican housing estate, where the SLG has a long-established relationship with residents. Without any protective barriers, the sculpture is not only a visual joy but also an open invitation to sit, climb, rest or play: it epitomises an ideal of freedom of expression, openness and hybridity. Noguchi considered hybridity to be the core of his identity, the method and subject of his work. He strove to create something universal through bringing together the natural and the manmade. His work is a guideline throughout Vo's practice, and never more so than in the conception of this expansive exhibition.



Danh Vo

Photographs of Dr Joseph M Carrier 1962 -1973, 2010 (detail) Courtesy of the artist



MAIN GALLERY

Danh Vo, *untitled*, 2019

Oil on mirror foil paintings by Peter Bonde, chromogenic prints of photographs of Gustav by Heinz Peter Knes, marker on paper drawings by Phung Vo. Daybed in black walnut wood after Enzo Mari, Kvadrat Hallingdal upholstery fabric. Courtesy the artist.

untitled is the latest in a series of installations in which Danh Vo presents works by artists with whom he has close personal connections, and perhaps is the most intimate to date.

Vo's lover, artist Heinz Peter Knes, has taken a series of photographs of Vo's Danish-born nephew and recurrent muse, Gustav. These images flirt with the conventions of fashion photography, engaging the model as friend and collaborator to portray a confident and self-realised young adult.

The large oil on mirror foil paintings are recent works by Danish artist Peter Bonde. Formerly Vo's tutor at the Royal Danish Academy (and even ideological foe), Bonde has more recently become a close collaborator including at the 2019 Venice Biennale.

Vo frequently commissions his father to make calligraphic drawings, and here Phung Vo has rendered quotations from the film *The Exorcist* (dir. William Friedkin, 1973). These often obscene or violent phrases are spoken in the film by the character Regan, whose child's body channels the words of her demonic possessor. In an inverse reflection, the hand of Vo's father here enacts the artistic visions of his 'angelic' son.

This daybed was assembled for Vo following instructions outlined by Italian designer Enzo Mari in his 1974 *Autoprogettazione*. Intended as an 'open source' furniture manual, the book includes 19 different designs for beds, closets, tables and other items of furniture that can be assembled by anyone with access to timber, hammer and nails, thus offering everyday people access to design.

The bed is built from black walnut wood, from Sierra Orchards, owned by sustainable farming pioneer Craig McNamara. On purchasing the farm in 1980, McNamara was surprised to inherit an orchard of slowly maturing black walnut trees destined to be used for crafting gun stocks. McNamara is the only son of Robert McNamara, former United States Secretary of Defense (1961-68) and a principal architect of the Vietnam War. When Vo started to acquire and exhibit objects from his father's estate, Craig McNamara approached and befriended the artist. He subsequently gifted him the orchard and its timber for his artwork.

Vo has upholstered this bed in Hallingdal 65, a woollen fabric designed by Danish designer Nanna Ditzel. In continuous production since 1965, the textile is celebrated

for its extreme versatility and durability, and has been deployed in contexts as diverse as hospitals, trains and luxury furniture.

Danh Vo, *Untitled*, 2018

Marble Venus Anadyomene (Roman, 1st-2nd century), marble dancing satyr (Roman, 1st-2nd century), wood, brass mount by Eric Araujo. Courtesy the artist.

Sometimes described as a ‘hunter-gatherer artist’, Vo collects the remains of sculptures from antiquity. He often combines these fragments into new objects joined by specially commissioned elaborate brass fittings.

This work includes a piece of a sculpture of Venus, the Roman Goddess of love, who emerged fully-grown out of a shell from the sea (“Anadyomene” means “born of water”); and a dancing satyr, a hedonistic goat-man. These gods and mythical creatures are relics of dead empires, yet also emblems of the survival of love and pleasure through geopolitical eras.

Danh Vo, Lick me, Lick me, 2015

White crystalline Greek marble torso of Apollo (Roman workshop, 1st-2nd century), wooden crate, nails. Courtesy the artist.

A marble torso of the Greek God Apollo is placed in a Nestle Carnation Milk wooden crate purchased by Vo on eBay. A favourite childhood treat for Vo, condensed milk was issued as a field ration to American soldiers during the Vietnam War. The title, *Lick me, Lick me*, is snarled by Regan at her mother in the film *The Exorcist*.

FIRE STATION

GALLERY ONE

This gallery is lined with panels made from black walnut wood from Craig McNamara's Sierra Orchards.

Danh Vo, Photographs of Dr. Joseph M. Carrier 1962-1973, 2010

Photogravure on paper. Courtesy the artist.

American counterinsurgency specialist Dr Joseph M Carrier took these photographs in Vietnam during his employment by RAND Corporation (1962-66) and later the Herbicide Committee (early 1970s).

The images depict men and boys in simple acts of intimacy including resting in cots, holding hands or squatting to eat street food.

Carrier approached Danh Vo in 2006 whilst the artist was on a residency in California; the two men became friends and Vo was introduced to this trove of photographs stored at the time as negatives in Carrier's basement. These candid and often voyeuristic images of young men suggested to Vo a life in Vietnam that he never had, and he has since printed and exhibited various selections of these photographs. The collaboration between Vo and Carrier acknowledges the power dynamics implicit in the images - a colonial history of sexual exploitation - but finds other complex registers of desire, longing and intimacy.

FIRE STATION GALLERY TWO

Danh Vo, *Aconitum souliei*, Inflorescence portion / *Lilium souliei*, outer and inner tepel / *Anemone coelestina* var. *souliei*, flowering plant / *Rosa soulieana*, fruit / *Aconitum souliei*, cauline leaf / *Anemone coelestina*, basal leaf / *Anemone coelestina*, carpel / *Luzula rufescens*, flowering plant / *Aconitum souliei*, upper cauline leaf / *Anemone coelestina*, basal leaf / *Anemone coelestina*, flowering plant / *Rosa soulieana*, fruiting branch / *Lilium souliei*, distal portion of flowering plant / *Nepeta souliei*, flowering plant / *Rosa soulieana*, flowering branch / *Cerasus fruticosa*, fruiting branch / *Cerasus tomentosa* var. *souliei*, fruiting branch, 2009 Wallpaper. Courtesy the artist.

This wallpaper is printed with drawings of flowers collected and catalogued by French missionary and amateur botanist Jean-Andre Soulie in Southern China and Tibet. In 1905, conflict arose between Tibet and China. Soulie was caught by Tibetan monks at Bantang trying to escape, tortured for 15 days and then shot. The edition title lists the Latin names incorporating Soulie's surname subsequently allocated to these indigenous plants.

Danh Vo, *2.2.1861*, 2009

Ink on A4 paper, calligraphy by Phung Vo. Black walnut wood frame. Courtesy the artist.

French missionary Jean-Theophane Venard sent this joyful letter to his father on the day of his execution in Vietnam in 1861. This work is an open edition by Vo in collaboration with his own father, who does not speak French but who carefully replicates this delicate calligraphy each time the work is ordered.

"A slight sabre cut will separate my head from my body, like the spring flower which the Master of the Garden gathers for His pleasure. We are all flowers planted on this earth, which God plucks in His own good time, some a little sooner, some a little later."

-Jean-Theophane Venard

Danh Vo, *Bye bye*, 2010

Photogravure on paper. Courtesy the artist.

Vo found this 1852 photograph in the Missions Etrangeres archive, Paris, in 2009. It shows five French Catholic missionaries, including Jean-Theophane Venard, on the

brink of their departure from Paris to various parts of Asia. In the photograph, the eyes of one man appear white, as if rolled back in ecstasy.

Danh Vo, *Untitled*, 2017

Ink and colour on silk, painted by Hao Liang. Courtesy the artist.

In the same Paris archive, Danh Vo encountered a contemporaneous copy of a silk painting by an unknown Vietnamese artist depicting the torture and martyrdom of the first 'Vietnamese martyr', French missionary Jean-Charles Cornay, in Tonkin in 1837.

Vo subsequently commissioned a number of skilled Chinese painters to replicate the work.

FIRE STATION GALLERY

THREE

Danh Vo, *Untitled*, 2018

Marble Eros (Western Europe, 2nd century), sandstone eagle (Germany, late 19th century), brass, chromogenic print. Courtesy the artist

This fragment of a sandstone eagle was part of the Prussian Ministry of Public Works, later the Reich Ministry of Transport (1919-45). The building in Wilhelmsplatz, Berlin, was heavily damaged but not destroyed during World War II, and later during the 1990s became an illegal party venue. In the 2000s the building was used as an exhibition space, before its demolition in 2012 to build the shopping Mall of Berlin.

FIRE STATION GALLERY FOUR

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, “Untitled” (Portrait of Julie Ault), 1991

Paint on wall. Collection of Julie Ault.

In 1991, Felix Gonzalez-Torres asked his friend and frequent collaborator, the artist and curator Julie Ault, for a list of formative events and dates, from which he planned to make her portrait. Gonzalez-Torres selected and sequenced (non-chronologically) the events for the first installation of the work in her bedroom, but intended the work to be re-invented by the subject for each installation. Ault has since re-imagined her portrait a number of times, including for this exhibition.

A previous iteration of this work was included in the 2013/14 exhibition *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*. “Reflecting numerous existing relationships and histories of collaboration”, this show was organised by a group of Ault’s friends and colleagues including Danh Vo, and presented this and other works from Ault’s personal collection by artists including James Benning, Roni Horn, Corita Kent, Heinz Peter Knes, Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero, Danh Vo and Martin Wong.

Corita Kent, *now you can*, 1966

Silkscreen on paper. Collection of Danh Vo.

Julie Ault edited the 2006 monograph of the influential nun, artist and educator Corita Kent (1918-1986), *Come Alive!*

The Spirited Art Of Sister Corita (Four Corners Press).

A series of prints by Corita Kent were exhibited in *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*.

Nancy Spero, *Artaud Painting— Je suis suspendu a vos bouches*, 1970

Gouache and ink collage on paper. Collection of Rick Savinon.

American artist Nancy Spero (1926-2009) activated the words of the dramatist Antonin

Artaud to articulate her own experiences of anger and isolation as a woman. Julie Ault recognised Spero's power through "forcing a 'collaboration' with the notorious misogynist... an intense psychological connection with him in spite of sensing 'his disapproval'".

A Nancy Spero *Artaud Painting* was exhibited in *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*.

"The anger in the Artaud Paintings came from feeling that I didn't have a voice, an arena in which to conduct a dialogue; that I didn't have an identity. That's exactly why I choose to use Artaud's writing, because he screams and yells and rants and raves about his tongue being cut off, castrated ... He lashed out at everything, that is just what appealed to me."

- Nancy Spero

Andres Serrano, *Immersion (Piss Christ)*, 1987

Cibachrome, plexiglass, altarpiece wooden frame. Collection of Danh Vo.

Many of the works of American photographer and artist Andres Serrano (b. 1950), formerly the husband of Julie Ault, involve bodily fluids in some way - including blood, semen or human female milk. Perhaps his most controversial work, this red-tinged photograph is of a plastic crucifix submerged in a glass container of what is purported to be the artist's own urine.

Several works by Serrano were exhibited in *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*.

Danh Vo, *IMUUR2*, 2012

Photogravure on paper. Courtesy the artist.

The acronym *IMUUR2* ('I am you, you are too') was inscribed on the business cards of the late artist Martin Wong (1946 -1999). Vo discovered this photograph, the only documentation of a specific installation of works from Wong's famous Rikers Island prison series, in the Martin Wong Papers at the Fales Library, New York. Having searched for the component paintings, Vo met the model for their central figure, Aaron "Sharp" Goodstone, following a talk in 2013 alongside his Hugo Boss Prize exhibition at the Guggenheim New York, also called *IMMUR2*. Goodstone had kept only a scrap of canvas from the two paintings, which he had acquired and destroyed.

An edition of this work was exhibited in *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*.

"You know, when the painting flashed on the screen at the Guggenheim during your talk with Julie Ault and Peter Broda, it was really shocking because I have not seen the painting since I destroyed it. [A]t the time, I was unable to appreciate its artistic merit

given that this was some deep dark fantasy of Martin's... it really felt like a violation at the time.

In retrospect, it is like a love letter. Perhaps unrequited love or unreciprocated love is the purest as it involves no human contact.

I realise I kept that part of the painting because this was the part that did not feature me 'in the buff,' but moreover, I suppose it was because I liked the painting so it seemed pointless to destroy the whole painting. In the end, this is part of the complex lexicon of the artist-confidant-collector-friend-relationship. " - Aaron "Sharp" Goodstone

Roni Horn, *Asphere*, 1988/1995

Stainless steel, glass shot peened.

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

American artist Roni Horn (b. 1955) considers this seemingly abstract glass sculpture to be a self-portrait. A similar 'asphere' work by Horn was exhibited in *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*.

"I look at it and I see that it has characteristics that I identify with very strongly. One of those qualities is that it's not a sphere, and it's nothing else. I can relate to that. It's not an egg or a ball. It doesn't have a name or a word that closes it off from things. In the best way, it's just floating out there without a clear identity." — Roni Horn

James Benning, number matrix, after Kaczynski, 2019

Pencil on paper. Collection of Danh Vo.

Artist James Benning meticulously copied the complex code devised by mathematician cum anti-technology radical Ted Kaczynski. Between 1978 and 1995, Kaczynski used this code in his journals to shield himself from self-incrimination while conducting his 'Unabomber' crusade from a small one-room cabin in the woods in Montana.

Julie Ault visited Benning in the mountains in 2005, where he offered her a recent reproduction of Kaczynski's code. In 2011, she and Danh Vo were able to procure the actual code system made by Kaczynski for Benning so that he could study and decipher it, in return for making a copy of the code for each of them.

Four of Benning's drawings were exhibited in *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault*.

Glossary

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was a French artist, dramatist and theatre director, whose concept of the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ radically influenced the twentieth century literary avant-garde. During his confinement in a psychiatric clinic over the last 11 years of his life, Artaud produced hundreds of fractured and obsessional drawings and “spells”: letters to his friends scarred with hieroglyphs, burns and rips.

Julie Ault (b. 1957) is an American artist, curator and editor. Ault was a co-founder of Group Material, a New York-based artists’ collaborative that has produced over fifty exhibitions and public projects exploring relationships between politics and aesthetics. She has edited monographs on the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Corita Kent. In 2003, Ault met Danh Vo whilst teaching a course at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen, and in 2013/14 he collaborated with her on the exhibition *Macho Man, Tell It To My Heart: Collected by Julie Ault* at Museum fur Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Culturgest, Lisbon, and Artists Space, New York. “Reflecting numerous existing relationships and histories of collaboration”, this show presented works from Ault’s personal connection by artists including James Benning, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Roni Horn, Corita Kent, Heinz Peter Knes, Andres Serrano, Nancy Spero, Danh Vo and Martin Wong.

James Benning (b. 1942) is an American filmmaker and artist whose works address influential moments in US history, including the 1972 Hanoi Christmas bombing, the development of ‘Unabomber’ Ted Kaczynski’s mathematical code and 11 September 2001.

Peter Bonde (b. 1958) is a Danish painter. As the tutor of Danh Vo during his studies at the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, Bonde was disparaging about Vo’s work and encouraged him to abandon painting. Their formerly antagonistic relationship has since transformed to mutual admiration, with Vo exhibiting Bonde’s paintings at the 2019 Venice Biennale and in this exhibition.

Dr. Joseph M. Carrier (b. 1927) is an American anthropologist who worked in Vietnam during the war for the RAND corporation, before leaving abruptly in 1967 when knowledge of his homosexuality became public. He returned in the early 1970s to work for the Herbicide Committee to study the effects of Agent Orange. During his postings, he took numerous photographs of young Vietnamese men and boys engaging in intimate, but most likely non-romantic affection. Danh Vo met Carrier in 2006 in Los Angeles, and discovered boxes of these largely undeveloped negatives in his cellar.

Jean-Charles Cornay (1809-1837) was a French Catholic missionary who was arrested in Vietnam in 1837. Accused of being the leader of an evil sect and fomenting revolution, under decree of Emperor Minh Mang he was dismembered and beheaded. Cornay was eventually canonised in 1988 by Pope John Paul II as one of the 117 ‘Vietnamese Martyrs’.

Nanna Ditzel (1923-2005) was a Danish designer who created furniture, jewellery and textiles, including the iconic Hallingdal 65 woollen and viscose upholstery fabric.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1957-1996) was a Cuban-born American artist, known for his minimal sculptures and installations, which influentially directly addressed his own homosexuality, his grief following the death of his partner from AIDs, and his own

suffering from the illness that led to his death in 1996. In 1987 Torres joined Group Material, a New York-based artist collaborative founded by Julie Ault.

Aaron "Sharp" Goodstone (b. 1966) was a friend of and model for the painter Martin Wong. As a young graffiti artist in the 1980s, he lived with Wong in an apartment in the East Village in New York. Goodstone appeared in Wong's paintings, including *Sharp Paints a Picture* (1997-98) and *C76, Junior* (1988), where he is depicted in jail at Rikers Island. Wong supported younger graffiti artists including Goodstone by collecting their work, which he donated to Museum of the City of New York following his death in 1999 from AIDS-related illness.

Gustav is the Danish-born adolescent nephew of Danh Vo, and his sometime muse.

Roni Horn (b. 1955) is an American artist. Her work includes sculpture, photography, drawing and language, and often addresses the environment, climate and identity. Danh Vo included Horn's work in *Slip of the Tongue*, the exhibition he curated at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice in 2015.

Ted Kaczynski (b. 1942) is an American mathematician turned anarchist and domestic terrorist known as the 'Unabomber'. Following early years as a mathematics prodigy, he abandoned academia in 1969 to follow a reclusive primitive lifestyle in a cabin in Montana, in rejection of the modern technological era. From 1978 to 1995, he conducted a bombing campaign targeting individuals involved in technology, and published writings advocating an anarchist nature-centred lifestyle. During this time, he developed complex mathematical ciphers which he employed in his journals to conceal information.

Corita Kent (1918-1986) was an American nun, artist and educator. Her innovative and brightly coloured silkscreen prints carried activist messages of love and peace, and found widespread popularity during the social upheavals of the 1960s and 70s. Kent was a committed teacher of art at California's influential Immaculate Heart College, where her classes attracted avant-garde figures including Alfred Hitchcock, John Cage, Buckminster Fuller and Charles & Ray Eames. Driven by a desire to produce art for the masses, and inspired by Pop art, advertising and design, she produced thousands of vibrant works during her lifetime.

Heinz Peter Knes (b. 1969) is a Berlin-based artist, and the lover and long-term partner of Danh Vo, whom he met in 2010. Focusing on portraiture, Knes began his photographic career in the late 1990s with images that clearly project an interest in personal narratives and the biographic.

Enzo Mari (b. 1932) is an Italian modernist artist and furniture designer, who in 1974 published *Autoprogettazione*, a manual of designs for the DIY construction of furniture.

Craig McNamara is the president and owner of Sierra Orchards, a diversified farming operation producing organic walnuts and olive oil. McNamara is also the founder and president of the innovative Center for Land-Based Learning. He is the only son of the late Robert McNamara (1916-2009), the US Secretary of Defence 1961-68 best known

for his major role in the escalation of US involvement in the Vietnam War, for which he expressed regret later in life.

Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was a Japanese- American artist and landscape artist.

Throughout his career, he designed playground landscapes and objects, including the celebrated 1976 Atlanta *Playscapes*, which included biomorphic sculptures inviting children to respond creatively through play.

Jean-Andre Soulie (1858-1905) was a French Catholic missionary and amateur botanist who collected over 7,000 species of plants during his time working for the Paris Foreign Missions Society in Tibet. Many of these species were subsequently attributed Latin names derived from Soulie's surname. He gained some popularity by practicing medicine with local people, before being captured and shot by lamas during the Tibetan revolution.

Nancy Spero (1926-2009) was an American artist known as one of the first artists to foreground "woman as protagonist" in ancient and contemporary societies. Her vivid, radical works contain both apocalyptic violence and ecstatic rebirth. Her series of 'Scrolls' from the early 1970s channel the disturbed fragmentary words of French Existentialist artist Antonin Artaud to express her selfdescribed "loss of tongue" as a women in a male-dominated art world.

Jean-Theophane Venard (1829-61) was a French Catholic missionary to Indo-China, who was captured and tried before a mandarin for illegally proletysing, imprisoned in a cage and finally beheaded in West Tonkin (northern Vietnam). His head was recovered and is revered by Christians in the region. Venard was canonised in 1988 by Pope John Paul II as one of the 117 'Vietnamese Martyrs'.

Phung Vo is the father of *Danh Vo*. In 1979, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, he worked with friends to build the boat in which in 1979 he and his family left Vietnam. Picked up by a Maersk freighter, they eventually settled in Denmark. He is a skilled calligrapher and has collaborated with his son on numerous works.

Martin Wong (1946-1999) was a Chinese- American artist born in San Francisco's Chinatown. Wong's realist paintings exploring immigrant and queer identities were influential in the 1980s and 90s New York downtown scene, before his death in 1999 from AIDs- related illness.

Florence Wong Fie is the mother of artist *Martin Wong*. Throughout her son's life, they together amassed an extraordinary collection of figurines, keepsakes and antiques in their San Francisco home. These included Disney figurines, salt and paper shakers, cookie jars, stuffed animals: a panoply of American popular culture. *Danh Vo* met *Wong Fie* following his purchase of one of her son's paintings, and when *Vo* won the Hugo Boss Prize in 2012 he purchased the *Wongs'* extraordinary collection and exhibited it at the Guggenheim Museum, New York. This work is now in the collection of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA.

Back Matter

SLG

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Opening Hours

Tuesday - Sunday, 11am - 6pm

Late Opening

Every Wednesday and last Friday of the month until 9pm

Free entry, everyone welcome

Danh Vo: untitled is on display at the South London Gallery 19 September - 24 November 2019

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PELICAN ESTATE

Isamu Noguchi,
Play Sculpture, 1975-6

Steel, edition produced in 2018 by Danh Vo as authorised by Noguchi estate. Collection of Danh Vo.

Japanese-American artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-88) designed the large biomorphic *Play Sculpture* for his utopian 'Playscape' landscapes for children and adults. Danh Vo recommissioned the work in 2018, fabricated from six large sewage elbow pipes connected into an undulating loop and sprayed bright red. For his 2019 *Open Plan* commission, Vo has sited the work on the Pelican Estate behind the SLG Fire Station, and invites residents to sit, climb, rest or play on it.

This sculpture is sited next to the Pelican Estate playground. Turn left out of the SLG Fire Station, and take the first left up Talfourd Road, then left along Talfourd Place. The grassy area with the sculpture is on your left.

Open Plan is the SLG's long term public art and education project with residents living on neighbouring Elmington, Pelican and Sceaux Gardens housing estates. Open Plan is supported by the Freelands Foundation, with additional funds from Southwark Council's Youth and Play Grant Programme, the National Lottery Community Fund, and other donors.

Isamu Noguchi, *Play Sculpture*, 1975-6 at Danh Vo Studio Guldenhof Photograph: Nick Ash



A critique of his ideas & actions.



Danh Vo
untitled

southlondongallery.org

”Julie Ault visited Benning in the mountains in 2005, where he offered her a recent reproduction of Kaczynski’s code. In 2011, she and Danh Vo were able to procure the actual code system made by Kaczynski for Benning so that he could study and decipher it, in return for making a copy of the code for each of them.”

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