War Drawings and Posters
From The Ambassador
Dato’ N. Parameswaran
Collection

1. VIETNAM     1954 — 1975
NUS MUSEUM
INTRODUCTION
Chang Yueh Siang

FROM THE FRONTLINES:
Collecting Posters and Drawings from the Vietnam War

Conversation with Ambassador Dato’ N. Parameswaran,
Collector and Charmian Chelvam (BA Hons., NUS), Collections Manager
Edited by Chang Yueh Siang

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Propaganda Art
Vietnam 1954-1975 presents one of the largest known singular collection of drawings and posters from the Vietnam War. Assembled by Dato‘ N. Parameswaran during his appointment to Hanoi as Ambassador of Malaysia, then subsequently documented systematically and catalogued by Ms Charmian Chelvam over the years, the collection comprises artworks in different media: hand-drawn or printed propaganda posters, sketches and line drawings, watercolours and paintings. This exhibition presents a small selection from the range of media on loan to the NUS Museum for a period of three years, to prospect research and to facilitate teaching. The materials in the exhibition are organized in a chronological order, guided by a timeline of the Vietnam War, supplemented by contemporary accounts and quotes from literary sources to provide other perspectives to the events in the background of the depicted scenes. This essay introduces the background against which the works in the collection are produced, and also to indicate the presence of a diversity of materials beyond works from the North. These alternative materials give an indication to an ideological conflict that probably to some degree reflected the intensity of the military fighting. They are also a vehicle to lead us to consider the diversity of Vietnamese society in this long period of political and military fragmentation that we call “the Vietnam War.”

The conflict that we know of as the Vietnam War had its antecedents in post-war anti-colonialism, beginning in 1945 when the Ho Chi Minh-led North Vietnamese army launched an attack to drive the French out of Vietnam. The decision at the Geneva Conference to divide Vietnam at the 17th Parallel in 1954 separated Vietnam into a Soviet- and Chinese-supported North, against a Southern Republic reinforced by the United States of America. Ngo Dinh Diem, President of South Vietnam, reneged on his commitment made at Geneva to hold elections for the unification of Vietnam in 1956. This was followed by Communist infiltration of the South in 1957, with the aim of bringing down Ngo’s government. The escalation of the conflict brings the United States more deeply entrenched into Vietnamese affairs; as Ho Chi Minh articulated in a French interview in 1964, “All political and military actions in Vietnam are prepared behind the frontlines, or by ordinary civilians called to arms. Occasionally, the images are indicative of wartime experience mainly from the Northern perspective, undergone by combatants on the frontline, or by ordinary civilians called to arms. Occasionally, the images are indicative of actual events in the background, such as “Operation Rolling Thunder” in 1965. The series of posters dating to around 1968-69 reflect the ferocity of the Vietnamese led Tet Offensive; and when the Vietnamese have gained good ground by the early 1970s, the messages are directed to maintenance and self-protection. By and large, the communications present a clear anti-colonial and anti-imperial message. Naturally, some of the propaganda posters flew the flag for the Communist-North, and the propaganda strategies were likely to have been inspired by Soviet and Communist-Chinese methods. For all intents and purposes, this art had a political intention, and conforms to Ho Chi Minh’s call at the beginning of the Indochinese War for the spirit of resistance against the enemy to be the essential item in Vietnamese culture; this in term would give the war of resistance its cultural dimension.

It may be interesting to consider the imbalance of power between the belligerent factors in the Vietnam War, or simply in the Cold War. The relative wealth and development of the West meant that, while Vietnam was at War with France and America, the Soviets were preparing to exhibit the Sputnik at the 1958 Brussels International Exposition; Neil Armstrong landed on the moon in 1969; and in developed nations, the Cold War period coincided with capitalist and hyperconsumerist transformation. The chasm of wealth between Vietnam and her Western opponents was vast, and yet the Vietnamese defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu with manual logistics and strategies rather than by strength of military technology. At the end of the Second World War the USA was supporting the rebuilding of allied European nations through the Marshall Plan; not forgetting that at this time, the US had already begun giving France military and financial support for their campaign against Ho Chi Minh as well.

This collection of war posters and drawings is a reminder of that period. As Dato‘ Parameswaran recounts in the interview accompanying this exhibition, the artists that he met were not particularly nostalgic about these drawings and posters when he approached them to acquire pieces: “Who wants to remember a war?” There is nothing luxurious in these objects as a collection from the Cold War: the artworks encapsulate an aspiration, doubtless; but unlike the aspirations projected by the promise of a ‘modern lifestyle’ in the Western world, the hopes projected by these posters were the defeat of imperialist enemies and a united Vietnam.

The posters and drawings in this collection give valuable insight into the Vietnamese wartime experience mainly from the Northern perspective, undertaken by combatants on the frontline, or by ordinary civilians called to arms. Occasionally, the images are indicative of actual events in the background, such as “Operation Rolling Thunder” in 1965. The series of posters dating to around 1968-69 reflect the ferocity of the Vietnamese led Tet Offensive; and when the Vietnamese have gained good ground by the early 1970s, the messages are directed to maintenance and self-protection. By and large, the communications present a clear anti-colonial and anti-imperial message. Naturally, some of the propaganda posters flew the flag for the Communist-North, and the propaganda strategies were likely to have been inspired by Soviet and Communist-Chinese methods. For all intents and purposes, this art had a political intention, and conforms to Ho Chi Minh’s call at the beginning of the Indochinese War for the spirit of resistance against the enemy to be the essential item in Vietnamese culture; this in turn would give the war of resistance its cultural dimension.

In Ho Chi Minh’s conception of the culture of New Vietnam (he is credited as the founder of the principles of new Vietnamese culture in a 1943 Thesis on Vietnamese Culture), art and cultural development would stimulate the intellectual and artistic creativity of the people: “Culture is seen as a powerful motor of development, and cultural identity as a constant in the harmonious development of society and the individual.” This new Cultural identity must search from within Vietnamese tradition and creativity of the people: “Culture is seen as a powerful motor of development, and cultural identity as a constant in the harmonious development of society and the individual.” This new Cultural identity must search from within Vietnamese tradition and
ordinary Vietnamese combatants, truly self-determined and independent of colonial or imperialist influences, providing the Vietnamese people with Vietnamese examples of courage and liberty. Therefore beyond the propaganda posters, drawings and paintings of life on the battle fronts depicting the daily activities of soldiers and other personnel were just as important visual materials to cultivate the individual and society in Vietnam.

Only a small number of the propaganda posters on loan have been included in the exhibition, in part due to space considerations; nevertheless they are crucial to the story. While the French came to concede defeat after Dien Bien Phu, and the Americans were increasingly questioning the extent they should be involved in the Vietnam War, the Communist-led Vietnamese armies were in no doubt that this was a total war for independence. From the images, the message presents one united Vietnam against the enemy. This was the intended effect of the propaganda posters, to unite the people in one common purpose against the enemy.

“No allusions to the suffering of the Vietnamese people were made unless they referred to that inflicted by American soldiers. No sadness was expressed. … Images such as makeshift barracks of the maquis made by the artists of the Resistance Class are, in ‘Since cameras were scarce, sketches of the battlefield and the soldiers’ lives in the makeshift barracks of the maquis made by the artists of the Resistance Class are, in...
Correspondingly, then, the hoa response to the Fall of Saigon was more ambivalent about politics than it was about the sense of emptiness.

These voices, contemporary to the war, are then further complicated by post-war reminiscences, such as published in Bao Ninh’s novel, The Sorrows of War (translated to English in 1990), which cast doubt on the unchallenged portrayal of victory presented by war drawings depicting the ‘liberation’ of Saigon.

In later years, when he heard stories of V-Day or watched the scenes of the Fall of Saigon on film, with cheering, flags, flowers, triumphant soldiers and joyful people, he would ache with sadness and envy. He and his mates had not felt that soaring, brilliant happiness he saw on film. True, in the days following 30 April he had experienced unforgettable joys after the victory. But on the night itself they’d had that suffocating feeling at the airport. And why not? They’d just stepped out of the ruins.

The excerpts quoted above now find their place in the specific genre of war-time literature: it is so easy to forget that the authors cited here were themselves soldiers or literature: it is so easy to forget that the authors cited here were themselves soldiers or


3. The United States disbursed around $13 billion (approximately $120 billion in current dollar value) in economic support to help rebuild European economies after the end of World War II.

4. Operation Rolling Thunder was the name given to a sustained aerial campaign conducted against North Vietnam and North Vietnamese forces between 1965 and 1968.


9. Nguyen Toan Thi, quoted in Mekong Diaries, p. 39


12. Quach Phong’s reminiscences, in Mekong Diaries, p.141


14. Mekong Diaries, p.136
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19. Van Cg, American Prisoner-of-War Joe Delong, 83 (1967), Marker pen on paper, 21 x 32.5cm


22. Ibid., p.82; translated by curator.

23. Ibid., p.125; translated by curator


15. Nguyen Thoan Thi, Malang Diaries, pg.39

16. Nguyen Van Thuc, Malang Diaries, p.135

17. Quach Phong, Malang Diaries, p.147


CHANG YUEH SIANG (CYS): What was the period you were stationed in Vietnam?

DATO’ PARAMESWARAN (DP): I was Ambassador of Malaysia to Vietnam from June 1990 till mid-1993, a period of 3 years. I was stationed in Hanoi (North Vietnam). In the early part of my posting, Malaysia opened a Consulate-General in 1991, in Ho Chi Minh City (renamed from Saigon, South Vietnam, in 1976), and that office too came under my purview. Malaysia was also involved in a big economic project in Danang (Central Vietnam) and this took me to Danang nearly 14 times in 3 years. So, I did travel quite a lot during my tour of duty in Vietnam and did get to personally meet many Vietnamese artists.

CYS: And how long had Malaysia established diplomatic relations with Vietnam at this point?

We know that Singapore’s foreign policy was very conservative with regards to Vietnam, because of the Domino Theory, what was Malaysia’s foreign policy towards Vietnam’s independence from 1975?

DATO’ PARAMESWARAN (DP): Malaysia already had diplomatic relations with the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in 1959. It had an Embassy in Saigon, That Embassy closed and all its staff were evacuated out of Saigon on 28 April 1975, two days before the fall of Saigon (30 April 1975). Meanwhile, Malaysia had also formally established diplomatic relations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) on 30 March 1973, following the signing of the Paris Accords on 27 January 1973 (which led to US withdrawal from Vietnam). With the unification of Vietnam in 1975, Malaysia established an embassy in Hanoi in 1976. So it’s been a long time already. Malaysia was very non-aligned from the beginning. I was stationed in New York between 1973-76. From the way to New York, I stopped in Saigon. I stayed with my friend who was the head of the Malaysian Embassy. In Saigon, at night, I saw the MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam.) You saw sand bags, you saw everything at night, bombing and all that. That time was January 1973, the Americans were pulling out already. I remember landing in Tan Son Nhat, there were a lot of military aircraft. But I stayed a few days in Saigon. Singapore had its own policies. Singapore, I think, was a bit more concerned about communism. They were more fearful of communism, because your internal experiences were very bad. With the student riots, the bus riots, and all that.

CYS: But wouldn’t you think that Malaysia, with memories of the Emergency, might have felt cautious about Communism?
I bought directly from the artists whom I used to meet exhibitions that were held in different venues in Hanoi College of Fine Arts and other local art schools, and art newspapers in glass cases on the wall. You could that was very near the Pullman Hotel. They had a sorts of books and everything along Trang Tien Street called it the “Book Street”, because you could buy all they had were exhibitions quite frequently, in one of today. Nobody operated something as a gallery. What I think there's nothing too strange about this, because normally before you can have political relations, you have economic relations. You know, trade brings you together. And then step by step, you develop a relationship. In the period I was there Vietnam had not yet joined ASEAN, but things were beginning to change, and Singapore also began to warm up to Vietnam. When I saw this exhibition in Trang Tien Street, I was very accurate drawings of the churches and Buddhist market scenes were so beautiful. So that was one of the earliest ones, Huynh Van Thuan. The works that I bought, which were made out of earth materials, were from another artist from Hue. I bought quite a few from them, when I look back. Then I used to travel to Saigon very often, because we had a Consulate-General there. Then from there, through my Hanoi friends, they would tell me to meet this person and that. I had a very able interpreter (Madam Pham Thi Mai Huong), so we just made the contacts and went to see them to talk. Then, they would take me to other places, paying this or that artist also made art, and they would take me to see another artist. Then I got to Danang, where I had good friends: the guy who was the former director of the Cham museum, Tran Phuong Ky; he himself was an artist, he can draw. He would take me along to meet artists. Then I went to Hue, where I met other artists, including the artist Nguyen Van Phuc who trained at Rome. The works that I bought, which were made out of earth materials, were from another artist from Hue. I thought, “Wow, who is Huynh Van Thuan?” He lived outside town. So I asked my interpreter, “you go find out who he is, and anything else that you can find out”. And I liked his watercolours; the street scenes, the market scenes were so beautiful. So that was one of the earliest ones, Huynh Van Thuan. Then the other guy was Huy Toan. Huy Toan was a major in the Armed Forces those days, retired now. And I knew he drew; I used to go to his house. He’s the one who went under his bed and take out posters to give to me. And he drew a lot of Dien Bien Phu. I was surprised to find that these materials dated back to the 1950s. You will see, one of the oldest works we have of Huynh Van Thuan was made in 1948. We’ve got drawings, as well as woodcuts from this period, which depicted the war.

1. The Malayan Emergency (1948–1960) was an armed guerrilla conflict led by the communist-aligned Malayan National Liberation Army against British-led Commonwealth forces to overthrow British colonial rule of Malaya.

2. Cafe Lam is one of Hanoi’s oldest cafes, established in 1956, and situated in the Old Quarter. "Uncle Lam", or "Bac Lam" was a major in the Armed Forces those days, retired now. And I knew he drew; I used to go to his house. He’s the one who went under his bed and take out posters to give to me. And he drew a lot of Dien Bien Phu. I was surprised to find that these materials dated back to the 1950s. You will see, one of the oldest works we have of Huynh Van Thuan was made in 1948. We’ve got drawings, as well as woodcuts from this period, which depicted the war.
Then I met Pham Luc. Every day I go to the Thang Loi Hotel. Everybody goes there, it’s a social place, you have meals. There weren’t many hotels then. Pham Luc’s house was on the way, and I would stop and chat with him. He was married to a French woman whom I never saw (laughs). She was abroad, and he was there in Vietnam. He would drink, and every day he would do something, like lacquer, so I bought quite a lot from him! And later on, I would find out he produced works during the war, which looked like rubbish at first, they were in such terrible condition! It’s only because they were partly restored that they look nice today. I also got to know Phan Ke An, another top painter too.

So one would go to museums, and one saw what work an artist had done and went to find out about him; and you find him.

CYS: So, at that period in time, would you say there was local interest in this part of history, or there was no local interest even in their own art?

DP: No, there was no interest, except at the Hanoi College of Fine Arts. There were some works in lacquers, very beautiful lacquers you see, which were depicting the war. These were considered important artistically. But were they interested in collecting them? No, they were not interested in collecting these post-war masters.

CYS: So who was the first artist that you visited? Can you remember? The first person you sat down to have a drink with? Or like, you got to know them very well with?

DP: During that early period, there were people like Huy Toan, Hoang Dinh Tai, Phan Ke An, Pham Luc. When I went to Saigon, I went to see Huynh Phuong Dong and Thanh Chau’; both of whom painted very beautiful watercolours. And in between there were lots of other people I had met, some of them I don’t even remember now. Like Quach Phong, Phan Thanh Tam…

CYS: When you went to see them, were they ready to bring out their artworks?

DP: Yes, my interpreter would talk to them. I got along very well with the Vietnamese, and they liked me. And at that time, the relationship between Malaysia and Vietnam was also very good. The Vietnamese drank a lot. When Parliament was in session in Hanoi, all the Danang people came. They all came to the Malaysian Residence for dinner, including the Vice-President, who was herself from Danang. They have this very strong feeling about their Province. The Vice-Minister of Interior and other top Hanoi officials would come for dinner as a full Parliamentary delegation from Quangnam- Danang Province.

CONVERSATION

DP: So you want to remember things that were so bad. You want to forget it! That time when I was living there, they were slowly becoming more open, you know. The Doi Moi policy of the government was 19881, and (the period that) I went was 1990. So slowly they began to liberalise. The dearhard communists became socialists. So there was a period where things were opening up; you could see musical shows and other entertainments, which you could never have seen before.

So if you ask me about Vietnamese interest in these prints and drawings then, no, they were not interested.

CYS: So who was the first artist that you visited? Can you remember? The first person you sat down to have a drink with? Or like, you got to know them very well with?

DP: During that early period, there were people like Huy Toan, Hoang Dinh Tai, Phan Ke An, Pham Luc. When I went to Saigon, I went to see Huynh Phuong Dong and Thanh Chau’; both of whom painted very beautiful watercolours. And in between there were lots of other people I had met, some of them I don’t even remember now. Like Quach Phong, Phan Thanh Tam…

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They love to drink. If you cannot break the barrier of drinking, (by choosing to) drink tea, or drinking at the beginning, or getting a representative to drink… You don’t insist on them. I was a social drinker, but I could hold my drink and I drank with them too. So on one occasion when I accompanied a Malaysian visitor to see the Minister for Commerce, he said “Ah, no need (for formalities)! He is one of us “, referring to me. We got to know each other very well.

Then I had very good relations with the then Prime Minister (Vo Van Kiet). Once I wanted going to go see and the most famous Vietnamese lacquer guy, Nguyen Gia Tri, in Saigon. At the beginning they said no, you cannot see him. They didn’t want foreigners to see him, because there was a Japanese company trying to buy off his big panels, now in the Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts, which I later took photographs of in his house. At first they said, “no, you cannot see him, foreigners were not allowed to meet him”. Then they checked with the foreign ministry’s branch office in Saigon who came back and said “the Malaysian ambassador, the Indian one, is allowed” They let me go! (laughs) Afterwards I could go and see Nguyen Gia Tri anytime! So I saw Nguyen Gia Tri so many times, while many people in Hanoi had not even seen his face! In the fifties he quit the North and went to the South. He’s the master of lacquer. I’ve got some woodcuts also, which were

4. Doi Moi refers to the economic reforms initiated in Vietnam in 1986 with the goal of creating a “socialist-oriented market economy”, gradually introducing market liberalisation to the Vietnamese economy.
from him. But that was the sort of control that they exerted; they didn’t want his work to leave Vietnam.

CYS: And that was because lacquer was considered fine art, and Nguyen Gia Tri was seen as a national treasure?

DP: Yes, he was a national treasure.

CYS: But propaganda posters for them, at the time…

DP: Nobody cared then! Eventually I went to buy some too, the printed posters at the printing house. They just chucked it all there.

CYS: This was their old stock?

DP: Yup. Those that they sold, was all just rubbish to them, or they would give it to you. So it was like that. For their ‘national treasures’ they weren’t so careless. They also were very concerned about the artifacts. Like the Dong Son drums, and things like that. They also were very concerned about the artifacts. For their ‘national treasure’ they weren’t so careless. Others, they would give it to you. That’s why on many of the paintings I have a date of acquisition. Some would inscribe ‘I warmly present to him… I present to Dato’ Param…’ All “presented”! (laughs) They were good guys, very simple. But nobody was interested to collect these materials.

CYS: So at the beginning, many of the artists presented the works to you: so at which point did the artists decide that ‘okay, we can’t give this guy presents all the time, we need to charge him’?

DP: No, no. I had paid them for their works before, otherwise they wouldn’t have continued talking to me. But you see, with the Vietnamese you can’t just be ‘cleared’, and they talk to you. If they like you, assessed you with their eyes, and if they find you okay, they talk to you. If they like you, you offer you, you don’t even have to ask. They write and give it to you.

CYS: And they didn’t feel particularly nostalgic about the drawings?

DP: Not really. Except Huy Toan. He had many sketch series of it. Then I knew, that Huy Toan was a soldier; underneath here… “All of his drawings were very good. It shows you what the life of a tank driver was like, up till the end at Tan Son Nhat airport. There was a whole series of it. Then I knew, that Huy Toan was a soldier. Nguyen [Bang Lam] was a sailor. But we didn’t talk about the war or what they did. Now I look back, I think I should have asked!”

CYS: Were they surprised by your interest? Because as we said earlier, the Vietnamese were not particularly interested in these things, then suddenly this foreigner shows up and he wants to buy “these tattered pieces of paper that have been hiding under my bed…” Were they surprised?

DP: They probably thought I was foolish, this stuff was nothing! Huy Toan went under his bed and took things out for me. He’d say “this one, take, take, take”, and he would give me. That’s why on many of the paintings I have a date of acquisition. Some would inscribe ‘I warmly present to him… I present to Dato’ Param…’ All “presented”! (laughs) They were good guys, very good guys, very simple. But nobody was interested to collect these materials.

CYS: So when you bought the works, even though you paid for them, they still said the works were “presented”?

DP: No. Later on, if they liked you, they gave gifts to you. You know, in Vietnamese, they’ve got an expression, “if there is emotion, if there is sentiment, if there is feeling, everything is possible. If there is no emotion, no sentiment, nothing, everything is not possible”. They are guided by this. They’ve already assessed you with their eyes, and if they find you okay, you are ‘cleared’, and they talk to you. If they like you, they offer you, you don’t even have to ask. They write and give it to you.

CYS: And they didn’t feel particularly nostalgic about the drawings?}

DP: Not really. Except Huy Toan. He had many sketch books he didn’t want to sell. He wanted to keep them. He didn’t want to sell them because it gave him all these memories of the past. But otherwise, there was no interest. The artists were not (nostalgic) about the works.

CYS: When you were collecting these artworks, what was the quality of the lives of the artists? Were they forgotten by people?

DP: No, I think the Vietnamese government, because of the socialist system, or the communist system, they took care of their people. All these people who worked and all that, they would give them quarters, you know. I went to see Nguyen Tu Nghiem, he was living in a house that was reserved for all the artists. They had rations during the war, they had ration cards and everything, for cloth, for materials, and all other stuff. They were quite looked after by the government, you know. If there had been any foreign expatriates who wanted to intrude into Vietnam, maybe the system could have continued. But then later, you know, foreigners came and employed people, paid them double the salary and all that, then you know, it affected the system. But the Vietnamese did not discard these people. If you asked me, I’d find anybody in a pathetic state? No.

CYS: So the war-time artists had some kind of state pension?

DP: Yes, they were given state houses, they must have been given some state money, you know. And they were okay! They were not, they were not in real poverty. They had a reasonable quality of life. And many of them had been abroad, because during the war they were studying languages or technical expertise, in all the Eastern-European countries, in Africa, like Mozambique, all the communist countries. So they had a certain affinity with the communist world. And some of them went overseas and came back.

Charman Chelvam (CC): People like Pham Thanh Tam went back to the Hand School of Fine Arts to teach. They were quite looked after by the government, you know. If there had been no foreign expatriates who wanted to intrude into Vietnam, maybe the system could have continued. But then later, you know, foreigners came and employed people, paid them double the salary and all that, then you know, it affected the system. But the Vietnamese did not discard these people. If you asked me, I’d find anybody in a pathetic state? No.

CYS: So in the early days, most of the talking was through your interpreter?

DP: In those days, the Vietnamese couldn’t speak English. That’s why I was forced to learn Vietnamese. Whenever my interpreter interpreted, I began to learn. Then slowly I told her, okay, don’t need to interpret, I can speak. So I began to learn like that.

I learnt very fast, because every day I had to go and see ministers and officials, and everyday there had to be translations. Every day when you listened, but I was not shy. I used to carry around a piece of paper, which was the sort of control that they exerted; they didn’t want his work to leave Vietnam.
and I would say "what does this word mean? 'Du Lich'". In Vietnamese it was written a certain way, but I didn't care. Then I said "Du Lich, 2-0-o h-y-k". I don't care, as long as I understood how to say it and what it meant! "Du Lich" meant tourism.

So when I don't know, I asked them. So when I went there sometimes doing this, sometimes the Vietnamese would laugh at you. Then I would ask, in Vietnamese, "Anh biet noi tieng Anh khong?" Can you speak English? "Vo van!" I say, Rubbish, you cannot speak! The other party would become shy, because you were telling him before other Vietnamese people that the foreigner could speak Vietnamese, and you, the Vietnamese, couldn't speak English, yet you want to snigger. But as I've said, the moment you speak to them in their language, the wavelength changes. The mode becomes that of brother and sister. I went to Vietnam from Geneva. I spent three-and-a-half-years in Geneva. Geneva, too, had beautiful buildings and lovely lakes. Hanoi also had lovely buildings and lovely lakes. But the Swiss people were not the warmest people*, I've met in the world. But the Vietnamese are very different. Once you know them, they become very friendly.

CYS: It is interesting when you mentioned earlier that, that "who wants to remember a war". These materials, if you look at them, and especially now, they seem to be projecting a very unified response against the enemy.

DP: That was a requirement of the government [in North Vietnam during the war].

CYS: So they fought because it was the enemy. But did everybody feel equally victorious, in that sense? And did you get a sense that these were artists that actually did see very fierce battles?

DP: Yes. Because much of it was drawn on the spot. So they were actively involved. The Vietnamese also had a very good media coverage of the war. Media, in the sense through artists, who were compelled to do what the State wanted them to do. They had to do this out of national service, or they would get sent back to "Chang!"; their Changi was Hoa Lo (later dubbed "Hanoi Hilton" by the POWs), Hoa Lo was jail term in Hanoi. Or if they sent you to Phu Quoc, or Cat Ba, that's the end of it for you.

But the artists did it because it was national service. During the war, you were not supposed to be happy. The pictures created the spirit for the people to fight. So that was what they were doing. And they did see very fierce battles.

If you study the pictures very carefully, the dates are also important. You can see that certain artists were on certain battlefields at certain periods. And then even if you didn't have the signatures, you could say "oh, this one looks like the same scene," If you want to find, say, August something, and the guy had done 15 paintings, you would know which one was from Ap Bac, or from Khe Sanh* or Quang Tri**, all of the famous battles. They were definitely involved in the frontline, and they had specific dates and times. They were war artists specifically employed by the government. They were employed, and some were also fighters. Of course, I mean all were fighters because they were fighting for the country. But they were also asked to draw. The same way that there were people who took films.

There were in fact many of these battle films. When Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir visited, Vo Van Kiet, who was the Vietnamese prime minister, showed him the film archives. It was impressive, you had to be there to film it, when Hanoi was bombed, the Christmas bombings... They had a very active propaganda unit like that. I think if you saw it, you would think it was very spirited. On top of that, they had photographs, and some of the photographs I have are very interesting! All real war scenes, broken down hospitals, and all that. So they had films, photographs, and art. Fine drawings. None of them were drawing out of fantasies; they were not Impressionists. They were activists, they were there. Sometimes if you really want to do a study of it, you look at the artist, you look at the period also. You know that he was at the province in that period, because there were ten pictures. The title won't give you the answer, because it says "Hanoi". What does "Hanoi" mean? Nothing. Only the picture will tell you.

In some of the drawings, you will see the whole of the range of canons on top of roofs, so many, stating which street in Hanoi. Just yesterday we found a drawing with an ice-cream parlour, a famous ice-cream parlour called Thuy Tu, next to Hoan Kiem Lake, where people would go to relax. They local expression was "let's go and get wind". In the drawings, we saw, on top of the buildings, there were cannons, things on top of the roofs.

I didn't believe when I was told before that on top of the roofs or on top of the bridge in Hanoi, they had platforms from which they used to shoot, because the anti-aircraft guns didn't reach high enough. I didn't believe until I saw them in the pictures, you know. In Pham Luc's paintings there were really platforms on top. The Vietnamese were also so grateful to the Russians who provided them with missiles. But the Vietnamese adapted the technology to make them go higher. You will see that these missiles were fired from raised platforms. I saw that in the drawings, and now I see it in the photographs that I have, real photographs. They shot down more than 2000 planes!

9. The Battle of Khe Sanh took place in the North-Western part of Quang Tri Province, between 21 January and 9 March 1968. The victory of the Viet Cong forces at Khe Sanh marked the first time in the Vietnam War that the Americans abandoned a major military base due to intense military pressure.

10. Quang Tri was the site of major battles during the Vietnam War; in 1968, Quang Tri City was the site of fierce strategic battle during the Tet Offensive when northern Vietnamese forces and the Viet Cong attacked major cities and towns in South Vietnam in a bid to force the collapse of the Saigon government. Then there was the Easter Offensive of 1972, resulting in North Vietnamese victory.
went to Vietnam, I saw these guys, they were so nice! They helped you readily, and they were all puny guys! Small, small guys. Today they’re probably bigger...because times have changed. This is better. I remember seeing the members of parliament wearing slippers in parliament. And I said to myself “wow, these are the people that defeated the Americans?”

CC: I think it’s the form of propaganda. The Americans decided to fail the world when they showed their footage to the world through television, that’s the thing. But the Vietnamese were using these prints and drawings to show their own people.

DP: In their own villages.

CC: Maybe there were not as many televisions in Vietnam. So, what they did was, they drew. And through posters and newspapers, this is how they disseminated the propaganda.

DP: But you see, it’s not just artwork. You must understand that in Vietnam, and many of the artists had gone there to study. So you’ll find all the woodcuts and influences from China, silkscreens and all, how to do it... They were done on the Ho Chi Minh trail. When I bought items from Le Tri Dung, he... When you were there, what was the Hanoi art school doing? Because I remember in colonial times, the Hanoi art school was like a fine arts college; prestigious, if I remember, in colonial times, the Fine Arts collection is known. And now this collection is known, and the Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts collection is here and can be seen. Yes. “And you are not the first guy I fought. I have fought so many enemies before”, from the time of a thousand over years of Chinese colonisation, up till now! That’s why the Chinese invaded in ‘79, the Chinese said “I will teach you a lesson”... they had the art pieces they needed to fend the Chinese off. And the Vietnamese resisted ferociously. They will defend to the death. Look at their tunnels, and you will be shocked at what they can do. I went in halfway into the Cu Chi tunnels, I had to come out. I couldn’t breathe, it was claustrophobic. And it runs out into the river. There’s a book, “Tunnels of Cu Chi”, that describes this.

CYS: In the South, when the Northern campaign was going on, the South also produced posters that discouraged people from joining the North, asking them to come back. When you were went to Saigon, did you see any of that? DP: I never saw any. I’m sure there was. I mean, posters counteract posters. But Americans also had film footage were disseminated. I don’t think it instilled the Americans to fight harder. At 18, they get conscripted for a year, and count down the days till the end of the war on their helmets. All they were looking forward to was the war finishing and coming back. For the Vietnamese, the main objective was to get them to be with their government and to fight. That is why in this war, you will see children, women, men, all fighting! They fought the Americans to breaking point, when things came to head at My Lai.12 Did you read “Four Hours in My Lai”?13 By then, the Americans didn’t know who to shoot! How do you fight the war when the Vietnamese on both sides looked the same? They aren’t labeled North Vietnam or South Vietnam, they looked and spoke the same! So when they entered My Lai, and the young fella went there, anything that moved they shot. Including animals. So, you have to recognize your accent either, and if you go to another province like Thanh Hoa or Nghe Tinh14, where Bac Ho came from, it’s so guttural, it’s very hard to understand! So of course it was the North that I was interested, it was the North that I knew so well! And then I was not interested in the South, because I didn’t come across any posters from the South, neither American posters.

CYS: From Sherry’s book, Mekong Diaries, I found out that the director of the Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts, Nguyen Toan Thi was himself a wartime artist. So many of these artists were his friends, and so he collected their works easily. And when he became director of the museum he could then establish the collection there.

DP: I would like to go and see that! This is why I think that this is a significant collection. The British Museum collection is known, and the Ho Chi Minh Museum of Fine Arts collection is known. And now this collection is lent to NUS Museum, people can know that this collection is here and can be seen.

CYS: When you were there, what was the Hanoi art school doing? Because I remember in colonial times, that was the Ecole des Beaux Arts, fine arts, where

11. In 1970, students from Kent State University and Jackson State College in the United States were shot during protests against continued American involvement in Vietnam.

12. The image of nine-year-old Pham Thi Kim Phuc running in pain from a napalm attack has been made popular by the Pulitzer-winning photograph taken by Nick Ut on June 8, 1972.

13. The My Lai Massacre occurred on March 16, 1968. Up to 500 unarmed civilians were killed by soldiers from Company C (“Charlie Company”) of the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 20th American Infantry Division of the United States Army.


15. In 1979 Jimmy Carter visited China as China-Vietnam and Sino-Soviet relations were deteriorating. When asked about China’s response to perceived Vietnamese aggression, Deng Xiaoping quipped, “The Little Boy is naughty, time for him to be spanked on the bottom”.

16. The My Lai Massacres occurred on March 16, 1968. Up to 500 unarmed civilians were killed by soldiers from Company C (“Charlie Company”) of the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 20th American Infantry Division of the United States Army.

17. An old name for Nghe Tinh province, which has today been divided into Nghe An and Ha Tinh.
They love Heineken beer, because Bac Ho18 drank had certain “likes” that followed Ho Chi Minh’s habits. Renovation, they call it, Doi Moi. DP: Doi Moi began before I came to Vietnam. CYS: Oh, by that time towards the late 1990s, galleries as you had. spent enough time to learn the language as much directly from the artists. had any more, but there wasn’t very much left. And prints. I had gone directly to the printers. I asked if they were originals from the printing shop that produced the When I bought posters from the printing shop, those were the originals? DP: Yes, of course, of course! They’re Vietnamese. They know where to find the artist, they buy it, bring it back and sell it at a multiplied price. CYS: You mention that galleries were asking for thousands of dollars for works at this time. In the early days early days when you began collecting, what was the average price artists asked for their posters? DP: To clarify, it was contemporary art that was commanding prices in the thousands. When the galleries began to open, as I left Hanoi, they were not selling wartime posters or anything. I didn’t see any war drawings or posters in galleries. There were galleries slowly coming up, there began multiplications of galleries. And the prices were then obvious. Because everything was quoted in over dollars. And then came the contemporary art scene. They were selling the Gang of Ten, for example, at price tags of US$5000, I remember. Even Nguyen Thanh Binh, that guy was also famous, all within that region. But the contemporary movement happened earlier in Saigon than in Hanoi. Even during the old days before the war there were already people who were doing contemporary art in Saigon. But in Hanoi, the young guys were only beginning to emerge. There was a movement called the “Gang of Ten”. Vietnamese art then began to be exported. The main outlets were Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand. And the guys who did the first big shows were Plum Blossoms, who had a show called “Unconquered Soul” in Hong Kong. And then, slowly, there were connections with the Viet Kieu, the overseas Vietnamese, who began to take them to Los Angeles, California or Florida… wherever they lived. And then the Viet Kieu were being welcomed back, because they were a source of investment for the local government. Oh, they were suspicious of the Viet Kieu, but at the same time, they wanted their money. Thailand was a very important source, too. But the former Plum Blossoms here in Raffles Hotel, which has now closed, and the Plum Blossoms in Hong Kong, especially, were early in exhibiting Vietnamese contemporary art. But these posters you could buy from 20 US dollars onwards, when I began collecting. CYS: Have you ever found out if the galleries gave the artists a fair price for the posters, when they began to sell them afterwards? I mean the drawings, the art. DP: It’s a commercial transaction. The artists dealt with the galleries in many ways; They would want a certain price, and it depends how poor he is, or how rich he is. CYS: Sometimes when the artist is dead, the family will sell his artworks. DP: And I guess by then in the 90s, a lot of things had stabilised in Vietnam. CYS: Yes, the war was over and everything. Now, it’s about how to become capitalist. They’re learning English, you know? The French tried to come back and teach them French... And they were more interested in English than French! Because the language of the world was English, you see. And they had reconciled with the Americans. CYS: So you mentioned earlier that the Japanese came, they wanted to buy Nguyen Gia Tri’s lacquer, and the Vietnamese won’t let them buy. First of all, because he’s a fine art artist and that item is considered “fine art”. But did people come to know of the size of your collection and become concerned? DP: To be honest, I didn’t know how many I had acquired, I wasn’t keeping track! And if you talk about Vietnamese art, the father of lacquer was Nguyen Tri Tri, whether you like it or not, and that’s why he was important to them. In the late 1990s you could see posters everywhere, but these were all new posters. You never saw posters like what I have now. These were rare. These were from the sixties, seventies, eighties. Rarely did posters go up to the fifties. Though the artists all live in Hanoi, there are many different artists, and I am surprised when I see their names. The best posters are not by the most famous artists. Of course I have posters by famous artists! In this collection, I can tell you the most famous artist I have there—I’ve got two by Bui Xuan Phai, I’ve got three Nguyen Tu Nghiem—I have a Tran Van Can that is very interesting, because it’s a woodcut, which depicts the friendship between Indonesia and Vietnam. Phan Ke An is famous! Dong Biich Lien, was one of the best portrait painters, and one day I found his portrait of Ho Chi Minh in my collection. But they don’t make the best war drawings, you know. Now, Huyhn Van Thuan! I think he was one of the best. The French bombing of the churches, the statue of Mother Mary outside, the bombing of the Buddhist temples… Wow, he drew them with such great detail. The Ho Chi Minh trail he drew in pencil. Yes, those were all very important artists! CYS: So the Vietnamese considered certain things as fine art and they didn’t allow them to be taken away. But they just didn’t think their posters were important? DP: Yes, nobody cared! Nobody thought about it. To be honest, I had no idea of how many drawings or posters I had collected either. I would buy one, put it away, buy another, and put it away. When I left Vietnam, I just put everything in a container and brought it back home, and only afterwards slowly took a look through them. Only then did realize that I have that many, even hundreds of thousands of drawings and prints? For example Pham Thanh Tam’s works: I don’t even remember much of my meeting with him! The image of him doesn’t even come to my mind. And yet I’ve got so many of his works in my collection! And he’s even given presents to me. Van Da as well, for example, I didn’t remember everybody, because I met so many, Trong Kien, Quoc Phong… I was not deliberately building a collection, and I did not know I had these numbers. Now, the Vietnamese are interested in the artworks. But at that time in the 1990s, nobody had any interest in these materials. 18. The Vietnamese referred to Ho Chi Minh affectionately as Uncle Ho.
National Library over a period of more than a month, and so we engaged his help with the translation of the war drawings and posters, this included cross-checking the slogans on posters, as well as deciphering and translating personal notes, every single bit of information, made by artists on the front or back of the artworks. Every translation was then rechecked by Param and thankfully his good command of the language helped me tremendously.

The work of documenting this entire collection has given me great satisfaction albeit some frustrating moments: for example, some artists’ signatures varied through time and they also used different names during the war to hide their true identity in case the artworks were discovered and put them in danger - this is referred to in Pham Thanh Tam’s diary “Drawing Under Fire” which Sherry Buchanan edited. But it became interesting to discover different artistic styles: after a while I could recognise the style of work of each artist and this helped to identify the unsigned and not easy recognisable signatures.

All in all the entire series has taken almost 3 years to do since late 2012. But with the excellent translations and historical knowledge that Param had it was exciting time doing the documentation and a very interesting lesson in history as well.

CC: And yet this was not drawn just for history. They’re not just drawings, they’re beautiful artworks.

CC: Yes. So there’s a story behind a lot of the drawings.

CC: But do you know, as Sherry said, they also drew because people were very sad and to lift their spirits, they drew the portraits of the fighters.

CC: That’s why I have interspersed this collection with what life was during the war; how the countryside looked like, how the women looked like, how life in the community was going on. War was not all fight, fight, fight! But there are periods where you could see how it looked like. There are very interesting scenes of Hanoi, with air raid shelters, which during my time, I could no longer see remnants of. But they were on streets that I was so familiar with, walking on every day.

CC: It is, basically, a historical record.

CC: Why do I want to keep the culture of the island. So why do I want to keep the culture intact in this collection? Nobody can give you a complete history of the Vietnam War. Not me, and nobody has a complete collection of anything. Every day things get added on. So as you go by, your knowledge of the subject increases. But I cannot keep it. As an individual, I cannot keep it, and I don’t want to keep it. I would like to focus on my other art interests on Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines. So what do I do with this collection of over 1,200 works? It’s better off for the world to see, isn’t it, instead of being hidden there in my boxes for how many more years.

CC: And do you know, as Sherry said, they also drew because people were very sad and to lift their spirits, they drew the portraits of the fighters.

CC: Yes. Otherwise as a person, there’s no point keeping.

CC: And why do I have this series? Because it gives you the history. It’s a continuum. Because this collection begins with Dien Bien Phu. In fact, through this collection, I’ve taken you into antiquity all the way to Thanh Giong, through Nguyen Tu Nghiem’s works. If you want to talk about the Vietnamese spirit, it begins from legend. It goes from legends to real figures like Ba Trieu and all who fought the Chinese. So they’ve been fighting these foreign invaders for centuries. That’s why when I saw Ba Trieu in woodcut, I recalled the legend of Thanh Giong, which I had known for a long time. So you can have a historical perspective of what the Vietnamese spirit was, from ancient days.

DP: That’s why I have interspersed this collection with what life was during the war; how the countryside looked like, how the women looked like, how life in the community was going on. War was not all fight, fight, fight! But there are periods where you could see how it looked like. There are very interesting scenes of Hanoi, with air raid shelters, which during my time, I could no longer see remnants of. But they were on streets that I was so familiar with, walking on every day.

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CC: And do you know, as Sherry said, they also drew because people were very sad and to lift their spirits, they drew the portraits of the fighters.

CC: So there’s a story behind a lot of the drawings.

CC: There’s a lot of sadness. There’s a lot of sadness about the war, which we don’t know. In every village, there was a Heroes’ Cemetery, which was separate from the normal cemetery. When you drive past it in the countryside, every village has this special cemetery commemorating those who fell in the war. Every village, every family, has lost somebody in the war. Everybody. So the feelings about the war are very, very intense. And then when they left the North to go to the South, the war to hide their true identity in case the artworks were discovered and put them in danger - this is referred to in Pham Thanh Tam's diary “Drawing Under Fire” which Sherry Buchanan edited. But it became interesting to discover different artistic styles: after a while I could recognise the style of work of each artist and this helped to identify the unsigned and not easy recognisable signatures.

All in all the entire series has taken almost 3 years to do since late 2012. But with the excellent translations and historical knowledge that Param had it was exciting time doing the documentation and a very interesting lesson in history as well.

CYS: What were the challenges of documenting this collection and organizing it? How did you get around the problem of language and translation of the messages on the posters and drawings?

CC: One of the first things we did was to photograph the entire collection professionally in high resolution in 2009. We also sent the works to a professional framer in Kuala Lumpur to mount. We began to document and catalogue the artworks after this. These two exercises alone were already a huge investment of time and finances. We also spent a great amount of time reviewing the information in order to manage the loan to NUS Museum.

Param had worked with Tran Phuong Ky, the former director of the Cham Museum whom we mentioned earlier and whom Param was already friends with since his Vietnam posting. Ky had a chance to come to Singapore to attend a course at the
war experience. When the Americans began to bomb the government, the people were evacuated to the countryside! My friends were sent off to this village and that, you cannot say no! In Vietnamese it's called "so tan" ("evacuation"). So there are a lot of pictures here also, where they have been sent off outside Hanoi. Then when they bomb the government institutions, they would bomb everything completely, the depot, inside, outside.

The Americans could not destroy everything. They would bomb the bridge, but after they flew off the Vietnamese would have laid out a pontoon bridge, and they could cross again! At first I didn't believe the drawings: Pham Luc did a drawing of a pontoon bridge; then I saw the photographs that really showed the pontoon bridge; really, that's how they crossed the Red River. The Vietnamese reacted very quickly. The planes go, they come back.

So they are many things that we, as outsiders, may not realize what the Vietnamese went through. But when you know what they went through, you say "Hey, they too, suffered".

they had undergone a ceremony as if they were never going to come back, like a funeral ceremony. When they leave Hanoi to go into the trucks to take them down to the Ho Chi Minh trail, they left with their families already accepting the fact that they may not see them again. There was one picture with the guy with a mortar, the barbed wire.

CC: There is a drawing of the guy who was running with the bomb in his hand.

DP: Yes, the bomb in his hand, to use it to break the barbed wire. It was so real! My Vietnamese friends told me that, during the war, when they asked for volunteers, more people volunteered than were needed for the job. Many volunteers who were all ready to go and die, like the kamikaze of the Japanese.

CC: The book, "Drawing under Fire" (2005), the diaries by Pham Thanh Tan was also very interesting, to show you the stories behind how the villagers left the village. The women too, and young people. They just wanted to go on the walk to Dien Bien Phu. They never realized that they would go through so much difficulty, and they were crying, and all that. But they couldn't go back.

DP: We are foreigners, we don't know much about the
Frontline artists had already begun to accompany combat troops since the Indochinese War. Sketching (le croquis rapide) was a technique imparted to French-taught artists during the colonial times, and the technique is relied on in these and many subsequent war drawings during the American phase of the Vietnam War. Many drawings and paintings made were records of action and activities. While there were also official propaganda photographers, war artists left behind a larger and more accessible body of records of battle and wartime landscapes. Apart from the urgency of battle and action, many drawings captured episodes of leisure and recreation, breaking the tension of war with a moment of peace. Portraits were painted, in order that individuals may be able to send images back home to reassure family, or as a souvenir in case they died. Images of prisoners of war come under the category of portraits: occasionally they were signed by the captured soldier, enabling them to be identified later.

### Indochinese War

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium/Size</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Viet Bac Soldier</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Pencil on paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Huyhn Van Thuan</td>
<td>Deep in sleep after drinking too much</td>
<td>1960</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Huyhn Van Thuan</td>
<td>Duyen Lao Church, Tien Minh Village, Thai Binh Province</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Huyhn Van Thuan</td>
<td>Tien Lang Pagoda, Tien Minh Village, Thai Binh Province</td>
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<td>Pencil on paper</td>
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<td>Pham Thanh Tam</td>
<td>Anti-Aircraft 37mm Gun Unit 4 C828 Focusing on Enemy Aircrafts in the Direction of Muong Thanh Field, Dien Bien Phu</td>
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### War Landscapes and Battles

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium/Size</th>
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<td>Tale Pass (Tuong Son Mountain Range, Ho Chi Minh Trail)</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Huu Chat</td>
<td>Cleaning the 12.7mm Anti-Aircraft Gun, Haiphong</td>
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<td>Comrade Do Van Nhu Army Engineer (Sapper) at a Lao Village Collecting “Born-bi” Bombs</td>
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<td>Charcoal on paper, 27.8 x 39.5cm</td>
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<td>Le Tri Dung</td>
<td>Studying Political Lessons Beside the Trench of Anti-Aircraft Guns, Ham Rong Bridge, Thanh Hoa Province</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Blue pen on paper, 27.3 x 38.8cm</td>
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<td>Civil Guard Inside the Tunnel Housing 12.7mm Machine Gun, Vinh Kim, Vinh Luh, Quang Tri Province</td>
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<td>Charcoal on paper, 39.3 x 28.7cm</td>
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<td>In Dong Anh, Hanoi</td>
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<td>Mixed media on paper, 39.5 x 54.7cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Pham Thanh Tam</td>
<td>Kitchen in the Tunnel, Quang Tri, (Signed with the artist’s wartime name “Hyunh Biec”)</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Charcoal on paper, 20 x 26.8cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Pham Luc</td>
<td>Commandos Attacking Landing Field, Quang Tri</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Mixed Media on paper, 20.7 x 29.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Pham Luc</td>
<td>Special Forces Attacking Cua Viet (an estuary in Quang Tri Province)</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Mixed media on paper, 39.5 x 54.7cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Pham Luc</td>
<td>Building a Bomib Shelter to Shelter from Aircrafts, Bo Ho (Hoan Kiem Lake), Hang Khay Street, Hanoi</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Pencil on paper, 39.5 x 56cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Le Tri Dung</td>
<td>14.5mm Anti-aircraft Guns Protecting Long Bien Bridge, Phuc Duc Chinh Street, Hanoi</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Pastel on paper, 27 x 39.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Van Da</td>
<td>Long Bien Bridge, Hanoi</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Mixed media on paper, 22 x 27.3cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Hoang Dinh Tai</td>
<td>Mortar Group in the Campaign, Kham Duc, (Tay Nguyen)</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Pencil on paper, 29.8 x 42cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Pham Ngoc Doanh</td>
<td>Morning in the Airfield, Noi Bai (Hanoi)</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Black pencil on paper, 29.3 x 44 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Pham Ngoc Doanh</td>
<td>Tan Son Nhat (Airport, Saigon)</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Black pencil on paper, 33 x 43.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Pham Ngoc Doanh</td>
<td>Tan Son Nhat (Airport, Saigon)</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Black pencil on paper, 29.3 x 44cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Drawings and Sketches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium/Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Singer and Musicians (Dance and Song Ensemble) from the General Political Bureau Performing For K4 Military Unit in B3 Battlefield in Tay Nguyen (Central Highlands)</td>
<td>Quang Son</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Mixed media on paper 24 x 34.7cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>The Viet Cong Cultural Group Performing for the Soldiers in the Front Line, Tien Giang</td>
<td>Thanh Chau</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Watercolour on paper 29.1 x 22.7cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Removing the Rust, Quang Yen, Quang Ninh</td>
<td>Nguyen Bang Lam</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Watercolour on paper 18.7 x 25.3cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Medical Facility in Anau (A Shau Valley), Hue</td>
<td>Hoang Dinh Tai</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Mixed media on paper 30 x 41.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>The Class in the Hamlet after Liberation, Quang Tri</td>
<td>Nguyen Cuong</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Watercolour on paper 30 x 39.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Receiving New Military Uniforms in the Tunnel, Truong Son (Central Highlands)</td>
<td>Pham Luc</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Mixed media on paper 39.5 x 53.4cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Prisoners of War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium/Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Untitled (Parading a Capturing American Prisoner-of-War)</td>
<td>Huynh Chat</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Mixed media on paper 27.4 x 39.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Interrogation of the Pilot Invader (Loc Khai), Nghe Tinh</td>
<td>Quang Son</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Black pen on paper 27.5 x 39.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Interrogation of an American Invader in the Front, B3 Tay Nguyen</td>
<td>Quang Son</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Black pen on paper 21 x 32.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>American Prisoner-of-War, Joe Delong, B3</td>
<td>Van Da</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Marker pen on paper 21cm x 32.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>American Prisoner-of-War, Tay Nguyen (Central Highlands)</td>
<td>Quang Son</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Black pen on paper 31 x 21cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Portraits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Medium/Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Uncle Ho (Chi Minh) Arriving at the Border Boundary Stone 108 at the Vietnam-China Border in 1941, Collecting the First Lump of Earth of the Nation.</td>
<td>Phan Ke An</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Chinese ink on Chinese rice paper 41.8 x 52.85cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Woman Civil Guard, Nam Ngam, Ham Rong (Thanh Hoa Province)</td>
<td>Pham Thanh Tam</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Watercolour on paper 32 x 20.5cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Untitled (Cleaning the Rifle)</td>
<td>Nguyen Tien Chung</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Black pen on paper 25 x 33.5cm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The collection contains a range of propaganda materials that have a different purpose from most war drawings and paintings. While drawings and paintings were mainly records of the war, the propaganda material are distinguished by their clear directives and messages to unify people towards a common goal. The materials collected in this category are made with a range of techniques: woodblocks, hand-painting, screen-printing, press-printing. Unlike drawings, which are unique, propaganda materials were made to be disseminated in larger quantities.

From the design elements of each poster, one can identify the historical events in the backdrop: such as American air operations (for example, Operation Rolling Thunder, 1965; the Tet Offensive, 1968). Alongside symbols of Vietnamese socialism, Vietnamese traditional identities and legendary figures also feature, to provide Vietnamese role models to inspire the local people towards moral and heroic behaviour. Posters and artworks before 1970 tend to direct the viewer to channel their anger towards repelling the enemy, and regaining political control. The posters of 1970s however are less aggressive in message, and rather project the encouragement to preparing for the road ahead and securing victory to vigilance and confidence, reflecting the strategic turn of the Vietnam War as the Americans gradually leave.

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Published on the occasion of the exhibition
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Organised by

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