

**For immediate release**

**“Who wants to remember a war?”**

NUS Museum draws on war posters, woodcuts and drawings to explore contemporary narratives of the Vietnam War

**SINGAPORE, July 2016** – Presenting works from one of the largest known collections of posters and drawings from the Vietnam War,

**“Who Wants to Remember a War?” War Drawings and Posters from the Ambassador Dato’ N. Parameswaran Collection**

delves into the shifting, often incongruous landscapes of commemoration, heritage and memory in post-war Vietnam.

The works, many depicting evocative and powerful images of the conflict, were collected between 1990 and 1993. Amidst the thick of Doi Moi<sup>1</sup> economic liberalisation, interest in the war was low as the country began to look at building a future beyond narratives of war and conflict.

"Discoursing with images of war are excerpted documentaries, films, and primary source texts that raise the question of how the Vietnam War is officially commemorated, or privately remembered. Complicated and contextualised by the nation- and economy- building of the Doi Moi period, we aim to prompt the viewer to consider the boundaries between memory, heritage, and commemoration," shares exhibition curator Chang Yueh-Siang.



Tran Mai, *Doi Moi Going Forward* (1991), printed poster on paper, 78 x 54.5 cm.

Ambassador Dato’ N. Parameswaran began collecting posters and drawings from the Vietnam War during his ambassadorship to Vietnam. The loan to NUS Museum of more than 1000 works in total commenced in June 2015 and will last a period of three years. **(More information in Annex B & C)**

From soldiers participating in quotidian activities to less common subjects of war like women, the non-ethnic Vietnamese and prisoners-of-war, the exhibition considers the diversity and breadth of subjects and intents depicted by wartime artists. A second, concurrent part of the exhibition, **LINES**, sheds light on the French influence on artistic training, and how this shaped the technical mastery of artists, as well as their expressions of intent, subjects and ideas.

<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese economic reforms beginning in 1986 that aimed to bring about socialist market liberalization.

The exhibition is part of an ongoing project by NUS Museum to work with educators and researchers to probe further readings of the collection and its extensive themes and points of entry. **Vietnam 1954-1975** (26 June 2015 – 21 April 2016), the first exhibition from the loan, explored the works as documentation of the Vietnamese response to the war, surveying subjects and concerns for future collaborations and research in Southeast Asian and Vietnamese art and history.

"The potentials of this collection lies in its size and diversity of subjects and mediums, allowing students of history and culture to shape inquiries into varied themes and formal interests. In this exhibition, the artworks are positioned into the shifting political and economic conditions in Vietnam, contextualised to the events and conditions of the Cold War. This context brings into question their place and standing as objects of memory and history, defined by changing conceptions of self and the collective. *Double Vision*, while a distinct project, will, we hope, allow for tangential connections or contrasts, where Southeast Asian encounters with the United States occur within a tensive space of fascination and anxiety," comments Ahmad Mashadi, Head, NUS Museum.

Since the loan commenced, NUS Museum has presented programmes and exhibitions that draw upon the artworks, themes and concerns of the collection. **Double Vision**, an exhibition comprising video works and artist films inspired by the affinities between the Philippines and Vietnam during American warfare in the Pacific, runs until 31 July. On 14 July, National Gallery Singapore curator Dr Phoebe Scott discusses how revolutionary artists in the First Indochina War grappled with artistic approaches and influences. **(More information in Annex D)**

*"Who Wants to Remember a War?" War Drawings and Posters from the Ambassador Dato' N. Parameswaran Collection* is on display in the Ng Eng Teng Gallery until January 2017. *LINES* is on display in the NX Gallery until July 2017.

**For more information about the exhibition, media interviews, gallery tours or high resolution images, please contact:**

Flora TOH (Ms)  
Marketing Communications  
NUS Centre For the Arts  
T: (65) 6516 1257  
E: [flora.toh@nus.edu.sg](mailto:flora.toh@nus.edu.sg)

Cindy ONG (Ms)  
Marketing Communications  
NUS Centre For the Arts  
T: (65) 6516 1223  
E: [cindy@nus.edu.sg](mailto:cindy@nus.edu.sg)

#### **Annexes:**

- Annex A: The exhibition
- Annex B: The collection
- Annex C: Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran
- Annex D: Programmes and exhibition
- Annex E: NUS Museum
- Annex F: NUS Centre For the Arts

## Annex A

### The exhibition

#### “Who Wants to Remember a War?”

#### War Drawings and Posters from the Ambassador Dato’ N. Parameswaran Collection

Ng Eng Teng Gallery, NUS Museum

Till Jan 2017

This exhibition of art works produced during the period of the Indochinese and Vietnam Wars (1945-1975) draws from one of the largest privately held collections of the genre. The collection, which is on a long-term loan to NUS Museum, also includes depictions of Vietnam’s cross-border conflicts with Cambodia and China (1976-1986). The works were collected by Dato’ N. Parameswaran during his appointment as Ambassador of Malaysia to Vietnam, stationed in Hanoi, between 1990 and 1993. These were the middle years of *Doi Moi*, the period of Vietnamese economic reforms beginning in 1986 that aimed at bringing about socialist market liberalisation.

*Doi Moi* marked a new phase of historical development for Vietnam as the nation began to chart its future. As the nation moves forward to build (and rebuild) a new narrative, how does post war remembrance compare with the spirit of the period documented by hundreds of war-time artists, how will the war be remembered, and whom by? What is the connection between commemoration, heritage, and memories?

#### LINES

NX2, NUS Museum

Till July 2017

Even with the advent of photographic technique and equipment, drawing has always been an important method of recording, conveying events and ideas. The drawn line is a powerful tool of communication: on the one hand, it is a device the artist relies on to direct the sight and thoughts of the viewer to his objective. Yet it can also impart glimpses into the artist’s creative imagination, even in a time of belligerence.

Many of the artists at the frontline featured had previously been trained in the art schools established by French colonialists, such as the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Hanoi and the Gia Dinh School of Applied Arts in Saigon, where drawing and sketching were foundational skills. At the frontline, beyond merely making rapid sketches to be developed later, or recording images with journalistic intent, the line is committed to paper to create the resemblance of physical things, capturing the anatomy of man and machine, landscapes, and life around the battlefields.



Le Nhung, *Uncle (Ho Chi Minh) Said Win, So We Have To Win* (n.d.), mixed media hand-painted poster on paper, 88 x 58cm.

---

## Annex B

### The collection

Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran began collecting drawings and posters from the Vietnam War when he was Malaysia's Ambassador to Vietnam. Continuing to grow after his ambassadorship, the collection comprises more than 1000 war posters, woodcuts and drawings from the French phase of the Indochina War. The collection was recently systematically catalogued by Charmian Chelvam.

*"Who wants to remember a war?"* is the second exhibition in an ongoing project by NUS Museum to work with educators and researchers towards probing further readings of the collection. The first, *Vietnam 1954-1975*, on display from June 2015 to April 2016, explored the works as an important documentation of the Vietnamese response to the war, surveying subjects and concerns for future collaborations and research in Southeast Asian and Vietnamese art and history. Beyond exhibitions, NUS Museum's efforts include programmes such as panel discussions, talks and film screenings that will run through the three-year loan period that began in June 2015.

## Annex C

### Ambassador Dato' N Parameswaran

Dato' N Parameswaran (b. 1948) served as Malaysian High Commissioner to Singapore from 2003 to 2008. Between 1990 and 1993 he took on the appointment of Malaysian Ambassador to Vietnam, based in Hanoi, travelling regularly as well to the then newly-opened Malaysian Consulate General in Saigon that also came under his purview. Dato' Parameswaran has had a lifelong interest in history, having graduated in History (International Relations) from the University of Malaya, where he had studied under Professor Wang Gungwu. He is also an avid collector of Southeast Asian art.

## Annex D

### Programmes and exhibitions



Film still from *Nailed*, 1992, courtesy of Angel Velasco Shaw.

#### EXHIBITION | Double Vision

Lee Kong Chian Gallery, NUS Museum  
Till 31 July 2016

*Double Vision* is a selection of video works and experimental films that are inspired by the affinities between the Philippines and Vietnam in the history of the American wars in the Pacific. While the Philippines stood as proxy in the re-enactment of the Vietnam War in films produced during the Cold War period, it was also historically situated as a proto-site that delivered the United States' growing influence in the region. The artists in the exhibition unpack the impact of war on the psyche by presenting the ways through which they manoeuvre around the intricate ties between media and representation, war and human relations. The works eschew mainstream forms through mimesis and satire on American cinema, montage of guerrilla and archival footages within the language of revealing critical reflections of the artists' entanglement with the fictions of war.

[Exhibition brochure](#)

#### TALK | Becoming Revolutionary: Artists in North Vietnam between Colonialism & Communism, 1945-1954

with Dr Phoebe Scott (Curator, National Gallery Singapore)

7pm, 14 July 2016, NUS Museum

Free admission with registration / [becomingrevolutionary.peatix.com](http://becomingrevolutionary.peatix.com)

In the earliest period of the conflict in wartime Vietnam, the First Indochina War (1946-1954), many artists in North Vietnam were involved in supporting the communist-led Revolution against French colonial control. However, the most senior of these artists had in fact trained in the colonial-period art school established by the French in Hanoi, from the 1920s-1940s. How did they "become" revolutionary artists? This talk will look at the experiences of these artists and their students, working in the Viet Minh-controlled zones in the north of Vietnam. These artists made their work in a period of wartime scarcity and danger, as well as increasing ideological control. They had to re-evaluate their approach to their artwork, as well as to art exhibitions and education, assessing their colonial past while they navigated a complex new socio-political terrain.

## Annex E

### NUS MUSEUM

University Cultural Centre  
50 Kent Ridge Crescent  
National University of Singapore  
Singapore 119279

T: 6516 8817  
E: [museum@nus.edu.sg](mailto:museum@nus.edu.sg)  
W: [museum.nus.edu.sg](http://museum.nus.edu.sg)

NUS Museum is a comprehensive museum for teaching and research. It focuses on Asian regional art and culture, and seeks to create an enriching experience through its collections and exhibitions. The Museum has over 8,000 artefacts and artworks divided across four collections. The Lee Kong Chian Collection consists of a wide representation of Chinese materials from ancient to contemporary art; the South and Southeast Asian Collection holds a range of works from Indian classical sculptures to modern pieces; and the Ng Eng Teng Collection is a donation from the late Singapore sculptor and Cultural Medallion recipient. A fourth collection, the Straits Chinese Collection, is located at NUS Baba House at 157 Neil Road. NUS Museum is an institution of NUS Centre For the Arts.

Monday: School/faculty visits only (By appointment)  
Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 6pm  
Sunday & Public Holiday: Closed  
Free Admission

B: [nuseum.blogspot.com](http://nuseum.blogspot.com)  
F: [facebook.com/nuseum](https://facebook.com/nuseum)  
T: [twitter.com/nuseum](https://twitter.com/nuseum)

## Annex F

### NUS Centre For the Arts

University Cultural Centre  
50 Kent Ridge Crescent  
National University of Singapore  
Singapore 119279  
Tel: 6516 2492

E: [cfamarketing@nus.edu.sg](mailto:cfamarketing@nus.edu.sg)  
W: [cfa.nus.edu.sg](http://cfa.nus.edu.sg)  
F: [facebook.com/nuscfa](https://facebook.com/nuscfa)  
I: [instagram.com/nuscfa](https://instagram.com/nuscfa)

Established in 1993, NUS Centre For the Arts (CFA) is a vibrant space for the appreciation of the arts and nurturing of the creative and inquiring spirit. It supports student engagement with the arts and the integration of the arts into the life of the University.

NUS CFA encompasses the NUS Museum, NUS Baba House and a Talent and Development arm that oversees 22 student arts excellence groups. Through its myriad of programmes, practices, exhibitions, workshops and outreach, such as NUS Arts Festival and the ExxonMobil Campus Concerts, the Centre enhances and augments the university experience and contributes to the building of knowledge and transformation of students.

CFA also manages facilities such as the University Cultural Centre, with its 1600-seat Hall and 450-seat Theatre, and rehearsal spaces in Runme Shaw CFA Studios and University Town.