

Art at the Crossroads: Lacquer Painting in French Vietnam

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During the last phase of French occupation in Vietnam (1887–1954), a new and unique direction for pictorial arts was inaugurated that continues to inform the country’s art scene to this day.¹ In a culture that lacked a developed painting tradition from which to draw inspiration, painting with lacquer formed a distinctive and novel medium that could be applied to fresh artistic subjects. In 1925 the arts first began to evolve rapidly thanks to the creation of the *École Supérieure de Beaux Arts d’Indochine*, a new school in Hanoi that was founded by the relatively unknown French painters Victor Tardieu (1870–1937) and Joseph Inguimberty (1896–1971).² Together with other artists such as Nguyễn Vạn Thọ (1890–1973, better known as Nam Sơn), who was sent to Paris for a year of training in 1924 for his new post as an art instructor,³ they embarked on a *mission civilisatrice* to educate promising artisans (*thợ vẽ*) so that they would advance to the status of “artists” (*hoạ sĩ*) and subsequently sign their works as individual creators.⁴ The French colonial view that *La France d’Asie* possessed no distinctive artistic and cultural identity was central to the school’s inception.⁵ Thus, the school set about creating a new cultural identity that was grafted from a modernist French pictorial language of art. The students’ training in European artistic styles eventually merged with East Asian and indigenous wood-based, folk craft sources, the privileging of which can be read as a rejection of French style. The synthesis of these elements defined an artistic language that was confounded at times by the native ambivalence towards all things foreign and modern, and later, by a demand for propaganda art under the Việt Minh.

The present collection of Vietnamese art in the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum gives us a clue to the disparaging stance of the French towards traditional Vietnamese arts. While rich in historical material culture, much of Vietnamese art history appears to connect stylistically with developments and practices that prevailed in other regions of Asia and beyond. For example, Champa-era stone sculptures, wooden Buddhist figures from as early as the tenth century, variously dated ceramics and bronzes, and a large collection of paintings created during the past ninety years, all appear related to one another by way of aesthetic and cultural interactions with artistic production in societies outside of Southeast Asia during various historical epochs dating as far back as before the Common Era—India, China, and, in the twentieth century, France.⁶

Buddhist and ceramic pieces, for instance, derive their appearances and subject matter from the Chinese, who ruled Vietnam continuously for over a thousand years (c. 111 BCE–938 CE).⁷ The imposing Cham sculptures provide a Southeast Asian interpretation of mostly Indic Hindu deities and narratives (although Buddhist and Islamic themes appear as well), that were the products of a civilization of possibly Indonesian origin concentrated in central Vietnam (c. 500–1500 CE).⁸ In short, this long, narrow stretch of ocean-front land has enjoyed, for millennia, a rich diversity of expressions appearing to parallel those originating elsewhere. This led to a search—from colonial as well as nationalist perspectives—for distinct artistic idioms that could be identified as ‘Vietnamese’.⁹

The Hanoi museum’s large collection of paintings from the past century, specifically from the era of late French occupation (1935–1945), comprising those works fashioned by *École* students out of lacquer that, initially, display the hallmarks of modernist Western pictorial aesthetics, attracted my attention. Upon closer inspection, however, these works challenge a simple indigenously-foreigner dialectic and invite a more nuanced understanding of Vietnamese responses to the ideas that were introduced from afar. Vietnam’s dearth of painted arts prior to the twentieth century (one could argue that this was one way that the Vietnamese did not emulate the Chinese, in particular their ink landscape and genre paintings on silk) has been attributed to climactic or other destructive factors.¹⁰ For inspiration twentieth-century lacquer painters turned instead to pre-colonial native folk arts: anonymous and collectively produced woodblock prints, wood carved water puppets, and communal wooden architectural embellishments, whose artistic properties reveal a native aesthetic that was both embraced and rejected by artists and the political establishment throughout the century, but which remain visible in art today.

Thus, *École* student-painters, who were newly trained by French colonial teachers in mostly late nineteenth-century European artistic styles and subjects, began to explore distinctly East Asian materials, techniques, and aesthetic features, and drew from native, pre-colonial wood-based craft traditions during an era when all aspects of older Vietnamese culture—visual arts, literature, and religions—were discredited in the eyes of both the French colonial power and a section of Vietnamese intellectuals intent on modernizing the culture.¹¹ For example, Nguyễn Tường Tam (better known by his pen name Nhất Linh), the editor and founder of *Tự Lực văn đoàn* (Self-strengthening literary group), who was devoted to a modern, French-inspired literary realism, observed in the editorial of 1932 for the newly created, heavily censored, weekly satirical publication, *Phong Hóa* (Manners and customs), that “when the old civilization is brought out and put into

practice before our very eyes, we are dissatisfied with the results. We can only continue to hope in Western civilization. Where that civilization will lead us, we do not know. But our destiny is to travel into the unknown, to keep changing and progress."¹²

In this educationally liberal, but politically repressive environment, lacquer painting provided a hybrid vocabulary for the pursuit of a distinctive language and artistic voice. To comprehend the trajectory of this pursuit, I will examine three lacquer paintings in three divergent styles that were produced during the embryonic era of experimentation with lacquer as a painting medium at the École from about 1935–1945. I will attempt to discern the blend of Western and non-Western elements that inform them. These findings will allow us to engage with the political framework and social upheaval that was experienced by the Vietnamese artists who were trained during the years before the outbreak of war. These years, together with the immediate aftermath of the war, were marked by artistic turmoil and ideological change. I will end by briefly looking beyond the colonial era to a few post-revolutionary works in order to identify some persistent Western features that were combined with radically changing ideologies to shape the pictorial arts after 1945. Core questions include why certain features of the works appeared during this brief window of time and what led artists to modify their style afterwards. Critical to this examination is identifying and contextualizing the significance of visual borrowings from other cultures as well as from Vietnam's own largely denigrated earlier folk arts and other cultural expressions.

This paper employs the art historical practice of examining paintings and utilizing connections to foreign and local material culture in order to identify visual echoes of the latter in subject matter, forms, materials, and styles. It aims at relating these connections to the larger context of a troubling time when questions about indigenous versus foreign identity were paramount. Until recently, only a few scholars have specifically addressed the subject of Vietnamese lacquer paintings from the early twentieth century. From a general perspective, Nora Taylor has provided the most comprehensive history of the early modernist period in all painting media, including important historical data regarding the inception of L'École Supérieure de Beaux Arts d'Indochine, its teachers and pupils, as well as the evolution of modern art throughout the century.¹³ Another illuminating perspective is offered by Boi Tran Huynh's unpublished PhD dissertation (2005), which draws primarily upon Vietnamese art historical researches published since *Đổi Mới* (the era of reform begun in 1986) to provide a comprehensive context for all arts (including architecture) of the early twentieth century from a socialist and nationalist perspective. Contrasting perspectives that are

focused specifically on cross-cultural borrowings can be found in a collection of articles compiled, also at the time of *Đổi Mới*, by Buu Lâm Truong (1987). Although the emphasis here is upon literature rather than painting, the work indicates which developments in the twentieth century exhibit significant parallels to the fine arts—a topic I will return to later.

More recently, Phoebe Scott (2013) has investigated cross-cultural influences from other Asian arts in Vietnam; her study focuses less on stylistic or technical interchange in favor of ideological, social, and political identification—that is, on the establishment of the notion of an “Asian character” (*tính cách Á đông*) in the arts.¹⁴ Kerry Nguyen Long’s article (2002) and a book by Shireen Naziree (2013), provide useful data and address specifically, if briefly, the nascent phase of lacquer painting. Moreover, Panivong Norindr’s study (1996) is especially helpful in contextualizing the French attitudes towards occupied Indochina that were manifested in architecture, film, and literature. Finally, looking beyond the era of colonial control to the Vietnamization of the *École*, Kim Ngoc Bao Ninh (2002) provides a helpful overview of conflicting opinions on the role of the arts that emerged under the *Việt Minh* in the late 1940s.

The sources mentioned above do not undertake a detailed analysis of specific works as a means of identifying critical visual resonances with other non-native and, especially, native artistic and literary forms and the potential meaning embodied therein. My essay will try to address this lacuna by examining the processes and techniques of art making to contextualize the ideological foundations of imagery using a cross-disciplinary model of art historical research. This research draws on materials from scholarly books and journals as well as publications relating to village folk arts, including popular newspapers, e-magazines, or museum and gallery websites and publications. I also engage with resources devoted to contemporary literary affinities, as well as with the evolving theoretical debates on the purpose of art making.

The era of French colonial art education

The brief twenty-year history of the colonial French art school was little studied in the West because, according to Taylor, Western art historians criticized products of the *École* students’ efforts as hybridized and having little to do with an authentic, indigenous Vietnamese expression.¹⁵ Worse, Scott asserts, they were perceived as decadent specimens of racial mixing (*decadence* and *metisage*) that were antagonistic to the prevailing ideals of artistic purity.¹⁶ Thus, until recently, their history was largely ignored. Conversely, Vietnamese scholars regard this era as the critical naissance of a modern cultural flourishing that was wed, paradoxically, to a “rising

nationalism and its corollary need to combat French cultural interference.”¹⁷ They, therefore, tend to minimize the role that the French played in shaping twentieth-century artistic development in Vietnam.¹⁸

Native writers retrospectively politicized the school’s inception, which had occurred at a critical moment in the rising resistance against French repression. The year marked, in the words of Kim Khánh Huỳnh, a “fundamental disaggregation [of resistance efforts] in Vietnam society—one that was to characterize Vietnamese politics for several decades.”¹⁹ Dozens of new newspapers were created that were devoted to revolutionary publications glorifying the 1911 Chinese Revolution and Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925). For example, *Nam Đồng Thư xã*, the Southeast Asian Publishing House in Hanoi, was formed by a group of young Western-trained intellectuals who were eager to supplant the earlier Confucian generation of scholar-activists, such as the imprisoned Phan Bội Châu (1867–1940), who had led opposition to oppression.²⁰ Following an assassination attempt on the French Governor General, Martial Henri Merlin (1860–1935), while visiting Guangzhou, China, on June 19, 1924, these new radicals, the “generation of 1925,” joined with other similar groups to form the Vietnamese National People’s Party, whose mandate was to combat colonial control.²¹ Concurrently, large protest demonstrations were erupting in Saigon and Haiphong. Thus, to Vietnamese historians, the art school’s inception and the art produced by its students marked the beginnings of the independence movement, which was linked to all things modern in arts and literature and was only resolved fifty years later, after the ousting of Japanese, French, and finally American occupational forces. Since most art historical writing on Vietnam was in French, the modernist arts of the early twentieth century were denigrated as derivative and garnered little attention.

The paintings produced by École-trained artists were aimed at wealthy Western patrons in Hanoi and Paris, and much of the imagery appealed to the bourgeois taste for “Orientalism”—pleasing views of the “exotic” East suiting the French fancy for imaginary “phantasmagoria,” or, in the view of Panivong Norindr, images of a “perfectly domesticated space and mythified world” that was populated by stereotypically “docile and compliant natives.”²² In the 1920s the poet and diplomat Paul Claudel (1868–1955) summarized the French myth that was perpetrated in the face of forced labor, indentured servitude, famines, strikes, rebellions, incarcerations, and torture:

Never in Indochina has the collaboration between the indigenous and the European populations been more intimate and peaceful. We are witnessing the impulse of an entire people whose sole and most profound desire is to adopt our culture and, indeed, our language.²³

The French art teachers Tardieu and Inguimberty explored other East Asian artistic traditions and Vietnamese folk arts and endeavored to educate pupils about their own history. However “paternalistic and condescending”²⁴ their views on education for the Vietnamese, the École teachers—whose pedagogy favored the Western artistic principles of life drawing, anatomy study, linear perspective, and *chiaroscuro*, which were incompatible with any indigenous Vietnamese and, indeed, virtually all pre-modern East Asian arts—nevertheless promoted an interest in learning traditional crafts and in exploring the rural and subaltern Vietnamese cultural themes reflected in the lives of 90 percent of the population (farmers, peasant women, villages, rice fields, and temples), rather than themes associated with the French.²⁵ Thus, the teachers were able to breach the occupiers’ long-held and pervasively condescending opinion that Indochina was devoid of any current arts worthy of attention.²⁶ Moreover, their pupils ignored the ubiquitous vestiges of modern Western material manifestations for their painted themes—trains, bridges, bicycles, automobiles, clothing, furniture, and architecture, including churches, museums, universities, and opera houses, for example—which were widespread, especially in the north of Vietnam where the French occupying authority and the school were located. Unlike pre-colonial Vietnamese pictorial arts—consisting mainly of folk-village produced woodblock prints and Chinese Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1664–1911) dynasty-inspired, authoritatively rigid, ancestor portraits on silk based on memory and imagination²⁷—École artists sketched directly from life,²⁸ albeit a selectively defined “life” that, instead of being focused on modern and Westernized urban spaces—aside from occasional portraits and studio nudes—was saturated with picturesque traditional rural values that more readily appealed to the foreign collectors’ taste for the “authentic” exotic corresponding to modernist directions in Europe inspired by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), the Nabis, the Fauves, and others who rejected all things industrial and urban in favor of the natural and “primitive.”²⁹

A contemporaneous literary discourse among native urban elites in *Quốc ngữ* (The Romanized script favored by intellectuals and the colonial authority) regarding the perceived tensions between modern French and traditional Vietnamese culture concurrent with the founding of the École, intensified during these years.³⁰ The clashes between past and present, rural and urban, traditional Confucian communalism and modern French individualism, were played out in the popular media and revealed the Vietnamese ambivalence to change.³¹ Undoubtedly, with time, such discourse resulted in growing clarity regarding identity, conflict, and resistance for Vietnamese artists and nationalists, although some eventually succumbed to disillusionment and turned away from politics towards more romantic and hedonistic pursuits.³² At least one École student—Nguyễn Gia Trí (1908–1993)—was so troubled

by his foreign training under the aegis of an occupying power that he “wished to drop his art studies as he felt all his teachers should be Vietnamese. Tardieu persuaded him to stay.”³³

After 1945, when the independence movement commenced in earnest, the École’s early impact upon the development of Vietnam’s modern art was regarded—according to Quảng Phòng—as “a sensitive topic, as Vietnamese modern art began as a joint product of French liberalism and Vietnamese traditionalism during a period of brutal French colonialism and strong Vietnamese patriotism,”³⁴ and therefore it was a subject rarely discussed in Vietnam before *Đổi Mới*. Thus, Vietnamese scholarly attention has only recently addressed the art produced during the twenty years of the École’s infancy when it was directed by occupying foreigners.

Colonial École-era Vietnamese paintings can be categorized by medium—oil paintings on canvas, water-based paintings on silk, and lacquer paintings on wood.³⁵ Although oil painting was the most alien to the students, it was the medium most familiar to, and indeed the only pictorial medium employed by, their colonial teachers. However, upon exposure to village-based crafts and traditional Confucian and Buddhist temple (*chùa*, translated as “pagoda”) arts by their teachers, who were seeking “various strategies [...] to attempt to preserve the ‘racial personality’ of the Vietnamese students,”³⁶ disciples were encouraged to apply their Western training to the two other “new” native-Asian media. These media—water-based painting on silk and especially lacquer painting—meld aesthetic features that were familiar in both East Asia and Europe and display uniquely eclectic Vietnamese pictorial qualities.

Silk had been popular since the eighth century in other regions of East Asia—especially Japan and China—as a painting surface for hand scrolls and hanging scrolls, and it was also used for Vietnamese pre-colonial religious ceremonial scrolls.³⁷ Yet, for École students, this traditional Chinese-derived media was a new material particularly suited to an emboldened venture into secular subject matter, and to which they enthusiastically applied recently acquired perspectival spatial knowledge, modeling with light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*), and studio nude subjects (among others). Quảng Phòng suggests that silk painting might never have been adopted by modernist painters had Nguyễn Phan Chánh (1892–1984), one of the earliest École students, not found the study of oils difficult and turned instead to emulating Chinese Tang and Song Dynasty ink paintings on silk.³⁸ Moreover, water-based paint was a cheaper medium than the scarcer and costlier oils that had to be imported from France.³⁹

Lacquer painting: three examples

This study investigates the adoption of lacquer as a medium to paint in a modernist style called *son mài*, a practice that was an audacious departure from any pictorial direction in Asia (or, indeed, anywhere). Lacquer was traditionally used as a protective covering for wooden furniture, altar sculptures, boards of ancient writing found at *chùa*, as well as folk art water-puppets. Its use by painting students was promoted by Professor Inguimberty purportedly after a visit to the Confucian Temple of Literature in Hanoi in 1927.⁴⁰ He invited the master artisan Đinh Văn Thành to teach lacquer technique at the school, though some student-artists may have also traveled to Japan to learn of its use there.⁴¹ So serious were the École teachers about the medium's potential that by 1938 the study of lacquer technique was compulsory for all painting and sculpture students.⁴² One of the first and most distinguished École artists to employ lacquer was Nguyễn Gia Trí, a student from 1928 to 1936 (apart from a brief hiatus) whose paintings, many of which are now in the Hanoi Museum, graced the French Governor's Palace in Hanoi before 1945.⁴³ One of the paintings now in the Hanoi Museum is the large *Young Women in the Garden* from 1939 (fig. 1), which depicts seven robust and jovial elite women in shapely, modern French re-designed *áo dài* dresses⁴⁴ amid outsized tropical foliage against a gold ground. The smiling, long-haired women stroll arm-in-arm, pick flowers, or sit; in the foreground one reclines against a cushion while enjoying tea (fig. 2).



Fig. 1: Nguyễn Gia Trí, *Young Women in the Garden*, 1939. Lacquer, 160 x 400 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.

The painting is installed in the center of the gallery so that the luxuriant tropical garden without figures against a dark ground—the lush garden at night—can be seen on the reverse (fig. 3).



Fig. 2: Nguyễn Gia Trí, *Young Women in the Garden*, detail, 1939. Lacquer, 160 x 400 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.



Fig. 3: Nguyễn Gia Trí, *Young Women in the Garden*, reverse, 1939. Lacquer, 160 x 400 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.

There can be no doubt that the inspiration for the subject came from the conservative pedagogy at the *École*, inspired by the art of mid-nineteenth century French realists, especially Eduard Manet (1832–1883), and late-century

impressionists and postimpressionists. These artists were avidly promoted as exemplars of modernist aesthetics, while the more avant-garde art styles—were not supported or evinced during these years.⁴⁵ For example, Claude Monet's (1840–1926) early piece, *Women in a Garden* from 1866 (255 × 205 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), or later works by Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) such as *Girls Picking Flowers in a Meadow*, ca. 1890 (65.1 x 81.0 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), would have been deemed worthy prototypes. Visual representations of beautiful, elite, carefree women found a literary counterpart and endorsement in the growing popularity of the morally controversial novels—a new form in Vietnam—published in *Quốc ngữ* by members of *Tự Lực văn đoàn*, which was founded in 1933. This group, inspired by Western values, promoted themes of women's individualism, urbanism, and romantic love, themes that were antagonistic to Confucian ideals of duty and filial piety.⁴⁶ These writers found solidarity with a New Poetry Movement, *Thơ mới*, launched a year earlier by Phan Khôi (1887–1959), which called for defiance of the traditional rules of poetry derived from Chinese Tang Dynasty prototypes in order “to express the ideas close to one's heart.”⁴⁷ Lưu Trọng Lư (1912–1991), an ardent follower of Phan Khôi, explained the modern morality of New Poetry that was inspired by examples of the nineteenth-century French romantic luminaries Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), Alfred de Musset (1810–1857), and Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863):

While it is almost a sin for the traditionalists to simply look at a pretty young woman, to us it is as refreshing an experience as to contemplate a green rice field. Their love is conceived only in terms of marriage, but for us love is multifaceted: passionate love, fleeting love, intimate love, love from a distance, sincere love, illusory love, innocent love, mature love, temporary love, eternal love.... As you can see, the emotions of people nowadays are very abundant and complex. Is it possible to contain them within a framework of restrictive [Chinese] versification rules?⁴⁸

In the domain of painting, the example of Japan provided further stimuli: the large scale, horizontal format, gold ground, and division of the surface into eight vertical panels echoed the similar effects of ink, paint, and gold leaf employed in the Japanese *byōbu* (folding-screen) paintings of the Momoyama and Tokugawa eras (c. 1550–1850), works that were also patronized by the power elites of that culture and were promoted as model objects for Vietnamese students by their teacher, Victor Tardeau.⁴⁹ However, parallels can also be detected with modern Japanese artists such as Tsuchida Bakusen (1887–1936) in Kyoto, who promoted the *Nihonga* movement after 1912 that was based on a

revival of earlier arts. He used the stylistic features described above while also emulating the idyllic, albeit eroticized, femininity of *bijinga* subjects found in the ukiyo-e prints such as those of Kitagawa Utamaro (ca. 1753–1806) and Utagawa Kunisada (1796–1865).⁵⁰ As the *Nihonga* movement grew into the 1920s, the women in Tsuchida Bakusen's paintings became less erotic and assumed greater social and patriotic significance as an expression of the “essence of national polity” that was devoted to ethnic purity.⁵¹ Although the theme of rural labor found in many of Tsuchida Bakusen's later paintings was absent, a similar patriotic interpretation may be applicable to Nguyễn Gia Trí's *Young Women in the Garden* as well.

However, for patrons, happy images such as Nguyễn Gia Trí's *Young Women in the Garden* reinforced the colonial fiction of the copacetic subjugated—joyful, healthy, and non-confrontational—that Norindr cites as a prevailing French illusion. Similar ideals of peaceful rule were also propagated in Vietnamese literature of the early twentieth century. In the words of Kathryn Robson and Jennifer Yee: “For Indochina to be seen as a model colony, it was necessary for colonial textual representation to maintain a conscious or subconscious denial of resistance to imperialism,”⁵² despite the omnipresence of underground nationalist struggle and guerilla warfare. The museum in the gatehouse of the former Hôa Lò Prison (called “Maison Centrale” by the French, and ironically relabeled “Hanoi Hilton” by the American POWs who were detained there in the 1960s and 70s) belies this cheery narrative and attests to the French authorities' harsh repression of members of the Vietnamese resistance, including the active use of the guillotine. By 1931 some 16,000 political activists had been imprisoned.⁵³ It is evident that *Young Women in the Garden* conforms to the same brand of romantic fiction and denial supplied by many French and some Vietnamese writers.

The beauty of Nguyễn Gia Trí's painting derives from its highly unusual modernist medium. Lacquer, a resin made from the extremely toxic sap of the *Rhus verniciflua* tree (or some variation thereof),⁵⁴ seems an unlikely material for large-scale painting, and yet it is deeply rooted in the Asian aesthetic tradition. Expensive, caustic, highly labor intensive—applied in sometimes thirty or more slow-drying layers—it had been used in Japanese sculpture production since the eighth century, either as a stand-alone material (reinforced with fabric) or as a means of covering and protecting objects of wood, clay, or plaster, and was later similarly employed in Vietnam for centuries. Because it magically transformed from liquid to solid, shifting between two states of matter and being, it held sacred significance in China and Japan as “literally, a medium for getting in touch with the divine.”⁵⁵

The term “lacquerware” refers to utilitarian objects such as bowls, vases, or boxes for writing materials made of lacquer-encased wood or bamboo, which had been created in Japan since its most ancient Jōmon period (c. 12,000–300 BCE) and in China since the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE), as well as in Korea and Southeast Asia.⁵⁶ Highly sophisticated lacquerware techniques from Japan’s Momoyama and Tokogawa periods reveal processes similar to those in the paintings of Nguyễn Gia Trí. For example, *The Amsterdam Chest* (seventeenth-century, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)⁵⁷ consisted of many layers of colors, powdered egg-shells, mother-of-pearl, and precious metal foils or powder, which were applied between layers of clear, amber, red, or black-toned lacquer.⁵⁸ Beginning in the Southern Song period and flourishing into the 15th century, the Chinese developed a form of relief carving into lacquered objects, usually furnishings such as screens or chests. This technique was adapted by Vietnamese painters for use in fine art paintings in the modern period.⁵⁹

In Vietnam, the lacquer that was used for generations to color and protect vividly painted wooden water puppets and statuary on the daises of Buddhist *chùa* or Confucian temples was practical in purpose, protecting wood against the elements in a tropical environment and preserving the crisp coloration that vibrantly life-like religious figures still maintain after centuries. As used in the paintings of Nguyễn Gia Trí, however, the material produced a highly polished and multilayered surface of deep, rich colors that yielded a surprisingly painterly “art for art’s sake” effect. A unique feature in the works of Nguyễn Gia Trí and his followers is a pseudo-“*craquelure*,” which can be seen in the areas of white color created by filling in shapes with fragmented, rather than powdered, duck-egg shells that can also be given a pastel coloration (fig. 2).⁶⁰ Other effects were created by burnishing the dried colors or metals between layers of lacquer, as well as the lacquer itself, with “fine sandpaper and a mix of charcoal powder and human hair.”⁶¹ The name for lacquer painting—*son mài*, meaning “grinding paint”—may be a reference to this part of the laborious process.

Experimentation with media and technique was essential; the discovery, for example, of lacquer mixed with pine resin in 1932 formed a turning point in the use of lacquer as a medium because it adhered better and burnished clearer, and thus stimulated new experiments, especially by Nguyễn Gia Trí.⁶² A growing confidence with lacquer painting at the school, and perhaps the recognition of its uniqueness among modernist painting worldwide, may have prompted the obligatory training in lacquer for all École students. These techniques created nuanced visual effects that were raw yet highly sophisticated in style, and allowed for an extraordinary level of individual expression, emulating the expressive potential of oil paint as it was tapped by the impressionists and

postimpressionists in Europe. The articulation of individual sentiment was advocated as passionately by contemporary Vietnamese romantic writers. Technically, however, the cumbersome, multiple stages of lacquer application disrupted the original aesthetic intent of late nineteenth-century Western art movements, which valorized spontaneous applications of paint to capture ephemeral moments or immediate sensations on canvas. Still, the subjects of many lacquer paintings, especially Nguyễn Gia Trí's *Young Women in the Garden*, emulated this desired fiction of the spontaneity.

A different pictorial quality was achieved by the student-artist Nguyễn Khang (1911–1989), one which demonstrates a more conservative impulse behind the hybrid modernist efforts of these years. Nguyễn Khang created images with a black ground that were more derivative of the reductive lacquerware style of Japan's celebrated seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Rimpa School masters, such as the pieces attributed to Honami Koetsu (1558–1637) or Ogata Korin (1658–1716), as well as similar examples produced more contemporaneously during a Rimpa revival in Japan's Meiji and Taisho periods (1868–1926).⁶³ In Nguyễn Khang's *Fishing in the Moonlight* from 1943 (fig. 4), the black lacquer delineates the night sky and dark water.



Fig. 4: Nguyễn Khang, *Fishing in the Moonlight*, 1943. Lacquer, 79 x 182 cm. Hanoi, Fine Art Museum.

The colors of the fish, the boat, and the nearly nude peasants, like the cranes and grasses in Honami Koetsu's *writing box with cranes* (fig. 5), are made from metallic gold and silver, lead, or pewter. However, unlike the traditional Japanese prototypes, Nguyễn Khang added patches of a deep red-violet hue as was used, along with other colors, in later Rimpa revival models.



Fig. 5: Writing box (*suzuribako*), early 17th century, attributed to Honami Koetsu. Black and gold lacquer on wood, lead, and pewter plates, 8.1 x 21.8 x 23.2 cm. Seattle Art Museum.

In contrast to the multilayered sophistication of Nguyễn Gia Trí’s painting, Nguyễn Khang’s simplistic figural style and subaltern subject matter are more “primitive,” and akin to pre-colonial folk woodblock prints from the Đông Hồ craft village. Relief prints, like the popular *Đám cưới chuột* (Wedding of rats) (fig. 6), utilized one block for each of up to six traditional colors (the most typical being green, red, and yellow) on natural-colored *Dzô* (or *poonah*, unique to the region) tree bark paper that was coated with mother-of-pearl oyster shell (*điệp*) powder to create a silvery surface effect similar to silk.



Fig. 6: *Đám cưới chuột* (Wedding of rats). Đông Hồ woodcut print.

Located on the banks of the Đuống River, forty kilometers northeast of Hanoi, in Bắc Ninh province, Đông Hồ remains one of several craft villages that is engaged with creating prints for household display or to convey wishes for happy and prosperous lives during the Tet Lunar New Year celebrations.⁶⁴ The print subjects consist of farm animals, children, festival customs, and “local folktales, historical events, and social mores”⁶⁵ that are strongly connected to Vietnam’s pastoral, aquatic, and agrarian history. Supernatural beings are conspicuously absent from these images, although animals often behave like humans in the prints in order to critique social ills like corruption or adultery.⁶⁶ The *Wedding of Rats*, for instance, depicts a long procession of standing rodents accompanying the wedding couple (on horseback and in a palanquin); they bring gifts and play music to appease the fat cat located in the upper right, in the hope that he will leave them in peace. The image is understood by some as a parody of Sino-Vietnamese relations and by others as an exhortation against graft and corruption.⁶⁷ Upon completion, the prints were covered with a layer of rice paste (*hồ nếp*) to seal the bright colors, a process which, together with the powdered seashells, produces a shimmering effect.⁶⁸ These communally produced, unsigned works emulated the themes and styles of carved printing blocks that were passed down through as many as twenty generations. They were avidly collected by some colonists, including the soldier Henri Oger (1885–1936?), who published hundreds of examples in a 1908–1910 ethnographic encyclopedia titled *Technique du Peuple Annamite* (Mechanics and Crafts of the Vietnamese People) on all aspects of Vietnamese life.⁶⁹

The two boatmen on the left in Nguyễn Khang’s painting (fig. 7) are clearly very similar to the human figures in Đông Hồ woodblock prints.



Fig. 7: Nguyễn Khang, *Fishing in the Moonlight*, detail, 1943. Lacquer, 1943, 79 x 182 cm. Hanoi, Fine Art Museum.

They strike poses similar to those of the two fish-gatherers on the right (fig. 8), though the latter are seen from different, foreshortened perspectives.



Fig. 8: Nguyễn Khang, *Fishing in the Moonlight*, detail, 1943. Lacquer, 79 x 182 cm. Hanoi, Fine Art Museum.

This repetition of the active poses of naively outlined, semi-nude figures set against a neutral ground is reminiscent of a popular Đông Hồ print depicting paired wrestlers (*Đấu vật*, fig. 9), or another representing semi-nude dancing women, both of which are related to rural customs surrounding Tet festivals.⁷⁰ Nguyễn Khang emulated the simplification of the print source, which was derived from the two principles applied to all folk imagery: *đơn tuyến bình do* (single line, simple designs), to demarcate a minimalist black border around areas of color; and *thuận tay hay mắt* (easy to draw and to see), wherein the space of the image is flattened and lacks perspectival depth.⁷¹

Nguyễn Khang's rendering of the traditional vocabulary of folk prints in a modern idiom also found echoes in the contemporary literary themes of the day, especially the reworking of didactic, moralizing Đông Hồ woodblock prints into satirical illustrations for the pages of a growing number of newly commercialized journals in the 1930s, including the previously cited *Phong Hóa*, which was a product of the *Tự Lực văn đoàn* literary group. The iconography of many folk village prints, such as *Wedding of Rats*, which, according to George Dutton, originally attacked corruption and bribery, was modernized to suit the times or transformed into caricature. This can be seen in the *Lý Toét* satirical stories (also appearing in plays) that mocked village elites, Confucian elders, and recent arrivals to the city, who were

befuddled by the rapid change of their surroundings.⁷² That these kinds of folk-related borrowings were found in both lacquer painting and popular parody, demonstrates a continued ambivalence towards the modern and foreign, and confirms a cross-media quest by the Vietnamese for an artistic identity within uniquely indigenous visual forms. Unlike the contemporary satirical caricaturists, however, none of the *École* painters demonstrated either an obvious desire for parody or a preoccupation with the ongoing transformations of urban spaces.



Fig. 9: Wrestlers (Đấu vật), *Đông Hồ* woodblock print.

The portrayals of the fishermen also relate in both subject and style to two other types of wood-based folk art: water puppets (*Múa rối nước*), which may date from as early as the twelfth century, and relief-carved motifs found on upper support beams in the interiors of traditional village communal houses (*đình*), such as those found in the sixteenth-century *Đình Tây Đằng*, seventeenth-century *Đình Chủ Quyền*, or eighteenth-century *Đình Bằng* (fig. 10).⁷³ Both sculpted sources represent rural types and activities, “hunting, fishing, harvesting, farming, playing chess, shopping at open markets, or honoring a scholar returning to his village,” and display joyous, lively animation, and commonplace figures with disproportionate, outsized heads (in contrast to the more naturalistic and individualized appearance of *chùa* statues carved in the round to represent deities, monks, and donors).⁷⁴

While it is difficult to reconstruct the ephemeral water-puppet performances of the pre-colonial past, many historical wooden puppets do survive, and contemporary performances based on long-established narratives employ



Fig. 10: *Đình Bảng Communal House, detail. Carving.*

similar puppets that, like Nguyễn Khang's characters, engage in parallel or mirrored movements and activities. Traditional puppets recreated in modern times include dip net fishermen (*Đông Ngư*, fig. 11) of the type found in Nguyễn Khang's painted boat, where the man in front with a net wears a red loincloth and his wife sports a red neckerchief or sash, and both wear tied head wraps. These figures represent one of the "four rural occupations" (fisherman, wood cutter, ploughman, and herdsman) most commonly found in puppetry.⁷⁵



Fig. 11: *Fishing Boat Water Puppet. Boat: 7.5 x 17 in, puppets: 9 in.*

Despite the charm of these pre-colonial wooden figurative models, Nguyễn Khang's portrayal of fishermen undoubtedly relates to the deteriorating status of peasants—including aquaculture laborers—and reflects their extreme suffering and exploitation through taxation and usury during the French

occupation. This was especially severe in the period following the mid-1930s, as a result of the worldwide economic depression, when communal lands were systematically expropriated. During the late 1930s, up to seventy-five percent of the peasants in some regions were landless (while others held too little land to sustain them),⁷⁶ creating a situation that forced many to eke out a living through other means such as fishing in the increasingly contracting littoral zones around Hanoi and the Red River delta.

In pre-colonial times, Hanoi (its name meaning “inside the river”)⁷⁷ was replete with rivers, marshes, canals, and large lakes, and robust aquaculture formed a significant 14 percent of tax revenue for the Nguyễn court.⁷⁸ In transforming Hanoi into their political capital, however, the French deemed the urban waterways unhygienic and set about expanding the city, “draining and filling the hundreds of swamps and ponds in and around Hanoi,” building in their place broad promenades surrounded by villas and gardens and other places for relaxation and amusement.⁷⁹ These efforts improved the living conditions and entertainment opportunities for colonial occupiers and urban dwellers, while destroying the natural environment and the means it provided for peasants’ sustenance through rice production and fishing.⁸⁰ Soon after Nguyễn Khang created his painting, these already dire conditions further deteriorated, under Japanese occupation, into a devastating famine that killed as many as 2 million in the north from 1944–1945.⁸¹ These facts deepen our understanding of the painting, identifying it not only as an homage to traditional pre-colonial culture, but also as an expression of protest against its rapid destruction and the growing impoverishment and marginalization of groups such as fishermen.⁸² The desperation of the noticeably gaunt fishermen—who labored covertly on restricted waterways, estuaries, lagoons, bays, coves, and coastal streams—may also be reflected in the nighttime setting of the painting and in the boatmen’s heads, which are thrown back or bent forward expressing distress or fatigue. These images of the fishermen’s suffering are ironically contrasted with the beauty and abundance of fish.

Another intriguing technique employing lacquer is known as lacquer etching, engraving, or “coromandel lacquer.”⁸³ The technique derives from the aforementioned Song-era Chinese carved lacquer process, called *kehú* in Vietnam (“carved chalk”),⁸⁴ which Inguimberty first learned of from an imported object encountered in Paris.⁸⁵ The technique involves coating a wood surface with a thick layer of white chalk that is then lacquered. The image is incised into the surface with a sharp tool⁸⁶ and the grooves are filled in with colors, followed by the application of clear layers of lacquer on top. This technique creates a very crisp, linear, and detailed image that provides quite a contrast to the painterly effects of Nguyễn Gia Trí’s paintings, and which again reveals some similarities

to another type of traditional Vietnamese folk art. One of the earliest and most acclaimed artists to employ this technique was Nguyễn Văn Bội (1912–1999), as seen in *Procession to the Pagoda* from 1935 (fig. 12). Once commonplace, festivals at temples—some stretching as far back as the sixteenth century and involving a tutelary deity procession, like the one depicted—were suppressed following the outbreak of war in 1945 and unification under communism in 1975; these have only been revived since *Đổi Mới*.⁸⁷



Fig. 12: Nguyễn Văn Bội, *Procession to the Pagoda*, 1935. *Lacquer etching*, 148 x 195 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.

In the upper left of Nguyễn Văn Bội's painting a procession of barefoot female celebrants, dressed in pre-French, traditional black *áo dài* tunics over black trousers adorned with red and green sashes, arrive carrying a *kiệu* (palanquin) (fig.13) into the garden courtyard of a temple complex, which consists of three distinct enclosed buildings and a two-story open pavilion that is perhaps a bell tower.⁸⁸

A collection of well-dressed male dignitaries in hats can be seen in the center of the image. Their unbelted tunics over white trousers are more diverse in color and pattern and they are surrounded by an entourage of honorific

umbrella and banner bearers (fig. 14). This assembly probably carries other implements of the ritual parade to be used as offerings at the tutelary deity's tomb or in a deity-thanking ceremony within the communal house at the site.⁸⁹



Fig. 13: Nguyễn Văn Bội, *Procession to the Pagoda*, detail, 1935. Lacquer etching, 148 x 195 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.

The precise outlines of forms against a white ground in Nguyễn Văn Bội's *Procession to the Pagoda* are analogous to the linear definitions found in another folk art tradition: the larger and more refined Hàng Trống woodblock prints, which were hand-painted with colors over printed ink on imported Chinese white *Xuyến chỉ* paper that matched the white ground of Nguyễn Văn Bội's painting. Hàng Trống art was made in a region of Hanoi's old quarter, and reveals echoes of Chinese ink drawings.⁹⁰ Popular since the Lê dynasty in the seventeenth century, these prints, painted in a richer array of colors, mostly pink, blue, green, red, and yellow, have been linked to rituals associated with ancestor worship and are also displayed during Tet. Commonly evincing more urbane tastes than the Đông Hồ examples, the themes dealt with aristocrats, supernatural beings like the Buddha and Taoist saints, three deities symbolizing longevity, prosperity, and happiness, children—with the hope that they will continue the family line—as well as symbolic folk-tale motifs like “Five Tigers” and the “Carp Looking at the

Moon.⁹¹ The crisp black outlines in Hàng Trống pieces resulted from a technique unique to Vietnamese printers: ink was made from lightly burned bamboo or straw, soaked in a jar with sticky rice paste, which caused it to ferment and turn a dark black; this kept the color from bleeding onto the paper when printed.⁹²



Fig. 14: Nguyễn Văn Bội, *Procession to the Pagoda, detail*, 1935. Lacquer etching, 148x 195 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.

One example from Hàng Trống, the ubiquitous *Từ bình* print-painting, depicts four women musicians formally dressed in traditional, non-French *áo dài*, whose appearances echo that of the dignitaries in the center of the Nguyễn Văn Bội painting (fig. 15). While ostensibly secular in subject, the four women, and perhaps Nguyễn Văn Bội's painting as well, resonate with elements that were drawn from the most ancient folk spiritual beliefs of the people known as the Mother Goddesses Religion (*Đạo Mẫu*). The belief was popular, especially in the north, long before colonial occupation, and has been resurgent since *Đổi Mới*.⁹³ The faith tradition favors the number four; a mother goddess presides over the four realms, or “palaces,” of the universe (*tứ phủ*): heaven, earth, water, and mountain forests, and each is correlated to a cardinal direction and a color—red, white, yellow, and green, respectively. The female mediums in what is also called the Four Palaces religion (*Đạo Tứ Phủ*) wear costumes in these colors when they perform the “spirit possession

rituals” (*lên đồng*), which were embellished with music—of the kind these performers may represent—and dance. The music is essential to the rituals and to their transgendered powers of spirit possession. The instruments employed include those evident in the print: the moon lute (*đàn nguyệt*), percussive instruments such as bamboo clappers (*phách*), a cymbal (*cảnh*), and a bamboo flute (*sáo*).⁹⁴ The number four also appears in goddess rituals when the “four virtues” (*tứ đức*) are invoked, representing ideals of labor, physical appearance, appropriate speech, and proper behavior.⁹⁵ Through the centuries, goddess worship incorporated elements of Buddhism and Taoism, and devotions to her could be found at *chùa*, where the goddess image often shared an altar with the feminized bodhisattva Kwan-yin (Sk: Avelokiteshvara). She was also worshipped at the Mother Goddess temples found in every region of Vietnam.⁹⁶



Fig. 15: *Tứ bình* (Four female musicians). Hàng Trống hand-painted woodblock.

The figures in the Hàng Trống musician print/painting appear similar in deportment and clothing—shoes, hats, and unbelted *áo dài* tunics over black pants—to the dignitaries and their attendants in the center of Nguyễn Văn Bải’s composition (fig.14). Is the titular temple procession actually

being led by women mediums in honor of a Mother Goddess? The inherent figural similarities to the four musicians print encourage such a reading. The possibility that Nguyễn Văn Bải borrowed a folk art style that was allied to the subject for his lacquer painting, which was similarly borrowed from indigenous folk religion, formed another means of elevating a feature of distinctly Vietnamese cultural heritage in contrast to Chinese-originating Buddhist, Confucian, or Taoist traditions. This might have even camouflaged an expression of deep-rooted nationalism that the French overlords or art patrons may not have understood. If there was an overt or covert nationalistic appreciation for the region's pre-colonial folk traditions, as promoted by Tardieu and Inguimberty and as seems evident in Nguyễn Văn Bải's and Nguyễn Khang's paintings, it was in conflict with all that was touted by intellectuals as modern, and it swiftly disappeared with the revolution. Huynh has observed that only after the communist victory of 1975 did historians begin to openly celebrate the purity of anonymous folk art and culture as an expression of the masses that was superior to that of the ruling elite.⁹⁷ And likewise, only after *Đổi Mới* did the Mother Goddess tradition experience a revival that is avidly followed to this day.⁹⁸

Considering Japanese arts

Dissimilarities with indigenous folk art style must also be observed, however, because Nguyễn Văn Bải evinces a sophisticated understanding of deep space rendered from an elevated vantage point, the antithesis of the *thuận tay hay mắt* (easy to draw and to see) folk art principle. Nguyễn Văn Bải's approach may have been learned from perspective studies at the *École*, but it also exhibits unmistakable similarities to the intuitive spatial delineations that were typical of traditional Japanese *byōbu*, *emakimono* (horizontal scrolls), and *kakemono* (hanging scrolls), as well as *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. And like Nguyễn Gia Trí's *Young Women in the Garden*, Nguyễn Văn Bải's painting, though smaller, has the same Japanese *byōbu*-inspired surface divisions into vertical panels.

Japanese art-forms and aesthetics were embraced in Vietnam in part because Japan was regarded, during the early decades of the twentieth century, as a model for the modernization movement that was so fervently desired by the Vietnamese nationalists who promoted a crusade called *Đông Du*: the Travel East, Eastern Study, or Exodus to the East Movement. Begun in 1905 by Phan Bội Châu and the exiled Prince Cường Để (1882–1951), who was living in Japan, in the first decade of the century hundreds of young Vietnamese people were directed to study at Japanese schools with the hope of educating a generation of revolutionaries who would awaken to their rights and rise up in resistance to French rule.⁹⁹ *Đông Du* represented the first anti-colonial

activity that was focused on education and modernization, and where hatred of the French and admiration for all things Japanese was disseminated in Vietnam. Its leader, Phan Bội Châu, was attracted to Japan, a “newly rising country of the yellow race,”¹⁰⁰ primarily because of its successful military victories against China and Russia in 1895 and 1904, respectively. But he also hailed Japan as possessing “the same race, same culture, and same continent” as the Vietnamese, and thus he considered a shared culture to be their most significant bond.¹⁰¹ Phan Bội Châu was further impressed by Japan’s example of effecting successful modernization by sending its own citizens abroad to “develop the people’s knowledge and cultivate men of talents.”¹⁰² Thus, Japanese culture, along with its modern military and industrial might, was an important source of inspiration for militant Vietnamese even before L’École Supérieure de Beaux Arts d’Indochine was established in Hanoi.

Indeed, Japanese artistic elements appear in all three of the paintings examined here. Momoyama and Tokogawa-era folding screen features (as well as their twentieth-century revival in *Nihonga* movement arts) included the flat gold grounds, divisions of the pictorial surface into vertical panels, and the elegant, multilayered lacquerware techniques that figure so prominently in Nguyễn Gia Tri’s *Young Women in the Garden*. Furthermore, reductive lacquerware-style imagery derived from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century masters of the Rimpa school, and their late nineteenth-century Rimpa revivalists, appear in Nguyễn Khang’s *Fishing in the Moonlight*. And the qualities of linear precision combined with elevated perspectival vantage points and vertical surface divisions, reminiscent of folding screens and *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, define Nguyễn Văn Bải’s *Procession to the Pagoda*. All denote an enthusiastic adoption of Japanese pictorial values, which were later rejected following Japan’s invasion and occupation of Vietnam during World War II. Some knowledge of these stylistic features may have come from one of the earliest students trained in the École’s lacquer studio—Trần Quảng Trần (1900–1969), who explored Japanese styles in the early 1930s just as the lacquer studio at the École was forming. Later, when Japan began their occupation of Indochina in 1940, the Japanese further promoted artistic knowledge by staging exhibitions of traditional-style art (*nihonga*) and endorsed Japanese books, films, language classes, and other features of cultural propaganda. Some Vietnamese École students even adopted a woodblock printing style echoing *ukiyo-e* features.¹⁰³

Thus, these three Vietnamese lacquer paintings display an amalgam of qualities derived from Sino-Japanese Asian arts—including the lacquer medium itself—combined with those inspired by Western paintings, especially secular

themes, painterly surfaces, and articulated spatial settings. These elements, together with the formal qualities derived from indigenous, pre-colonial folk art—simple, bold, linear outlines and minimal color variations, in crisply delineating forms placed against plain, neutral backgrounds, as found in Đông Hồ and Hàng Trống prints, or in *đình* relief carvings—produced a hybrid artistic language formed through employing training in Western pictorial methods to re-interpret East Asian sources. The possibility that these Asian features were employed simply to appeal to foreign patrons craving the “authentically” and exotically oriental is conceivable, and yet they may have also been a means of asserting a distinctive East Asian artistic identity that could articulate a space independent of French colonial art education and the cultural values associated with it. It would seem that, paradoxically, École student-artists were both absorbing as modern, and rejecting as Western, the lessons of their French teachers. After the war for independence began and the art school closed in 1945 (later reopened under Vietnamese direction as the Vietnam College of Fine Arts, today the Hanoi University of Fine Arts), lacquer and silk paintings were critically reframed as anticolonial because they linked pre-and post-colonial era national forms¹⁰⁴ and built on what was promoted as an “aesthetic nationalism”¹⁰⁵ rooted in pre-colonial Vietnamese folk arts, East Asian—specifically Chinese and Japanese—materials and aesthetics, and Western “academic,” which is to say relatively conservative, modernism.

Developments during the Anti-French Resistance War

Later efforts to assess this unique, École-induced “aesthetic nationalism” during the Anti-French Resistance War (1946–1954) were evident in the writings of Tô Ngọc Vân (1906–1954), an early École-trained painter working for the Việt Minh, who oversaw the establishment of a state school for the arts called the “School of Fine Arts of the Resistance” in the northern resistance zone. The school opened in Đại Từ in the province of Thái Nguyên, shortly before Tô Ngọc Vân died in the final battle of the war at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954. Prior to the war, he had praised French art education and cultural transformations as having “changed our way of life. We live in a beautiful environment. Our lives are more elegant than before.”¹⁰⁶ In a 1949 essay titled “Only Now Do We Have Vietnamese Painting,” Tô Ngọc Vân celebrated that “Vietnamese lacquer painting transformed lacquer from a ‘decorative art’ to a ‘pure art,’ something he believed Chinese and Japanese lacquer have never accomplished.”¹⁰⁷ But Tô Ngọc Vân was also troubled by the turn of art education and production towards ideological propaganda with the advent of the revolution, which he felt produced mediocre works.¹⁰⁸

With the Anti-French Resistance War, connections and comparisons with other East Asian arts previously considered vital were now problematic and colored by anti-colonial sentiments of all shades. The Vietnamese adoption of features from these other Asian cultural artifacts—given how little of its own painting history there was to build upon—was hailed as a form of “resisting dominating French influences.”¹⁰⁹ But after the independence movement began, artists sought to sever their long-perceived subordinate status to Chinese and Japanese authority. China, now an allied communist partner, was still feared for its historical tendency to annex its tiny neighbor.¹¹⁰ In the arts, Tô Ngọc Vân expressly rejected, for example, the Sino-Japanese tradition of placing calligraphic signatures on the faces of paintings or prints, but he equally rejected Vietnamese village folk prints as viable sources for modern painting because they were anonymous products of untrained artists and, thus, inimical to the truly meaningful artistic modernism he so valued.¹¹¹ Consequently, they fell out of favor; of the 220 Đông Hồ print artisans that were active before the war only a few remain today, although interest in their output has revived since *Đổi Mới*.¹¹²

Tô Ngọc Vân was intent upon effecting a more definitive rupture with the past than earlier French-era *École* artists had envisioned, but he found it a challenge to define modernism’s new post-colonial ideals. “The artistic change is so difficult,” he wrote, “we feel it is as heavy as moving a mountain.”¹¹³ His own works migrated from oil paintings of idyllic bourgeois women and children—such as *Girl with Lilies* from 1943, akin to Nguyễn Gia Trí’s *Young Women in the Garden* before the war—to militant lacquer painted themes of gun-bearing soldiers and peasants transformed into revolutionaries a decade later, like *Soldiers and Porters Resting on a Hill* from 1953.¹¹⁴ In the latter, he capitulated to the new demands instigated by the July 1948 Second National Congress of Culture and the subsequent Congress on Art and Literature, where Hồ Chí Minh specifically called for art “to inspire the people’s spirit and nation-building resistance (*kháng chiến kiến quốc*).”¹¹⁵ However, Tô Ngọc Vân decried such art as simplistically optimistic propaganda—depicting soldiers, farmers and laborers—that was readily apprehended by the artistically untutored masses.¹¹⁶ Modernism, he hoped, was only temporarily co-opted to serve a public end and would return to the higher artistic calling of individual expression and art for art’s sake pursuits once peace was achieved. “The torment of my soul,” he lamented, is “how to make the self that serves the nation and the masses and the self that serves art—the artist of course cannot forget this responsibility—not to come into conflict or, even worse, betray one another.”¹¹⁷ In an essay of 1947 titled “Propaganda Art and Art,” Tô Ngọc Vân argued that “propaganda art is not art because it expresses a political purpose, raises political slogans, delineates a political path for the people to follow,”

while true art expresses “an individual soul, an attitude of an individual towards things, telling his feelings more than philosophy about any issue.”¹¹⁸ Clearly, he felt the two were incompatible and agonized over the loss of the liberal artistic expression advocated by his French painting masters while still enthusiastically supporting the cause of war against French rule.

Lacquer painting persisted as the preferred medium of Vietnamese rebel art long after the August revolution of 1945, and despite the fact that the war of resistance against the French brought the period of early “fermentation and experimentation,” as well as the Western domination of the *École*, to a close; “artists joined the battle field, and the idyllic themes of the previous decade were eclipsed by those of war, peace, nationalism and ideologies.”¹¹⁹ Evidences of folk art influences were overshadowed by a continuation of the experimentally expressive painterly techniques and figural idealization that Nguyễn Gia Trí had demonstrated previously, but that were now reminiscent of Soviet socialist realism, where content superseded formal explorations. Experimental individualism in painting was scorned by Communist Party leadership as a remnant of decadent colonialism, and public displays of nude paintings and abstract art were banned.¹²⁰

Nguyễn Hiếm’s (1917–1976) *Crossing a Foot Bridge* from 1958 (fig. 16, 17), for example, applied the impressionist painterly style of Nguyễn Gia Trí to the dominant themes of the era: the movements of troops and tanks and the scorched-earth battles traversing the jungles as the Vietnamese sought the expulsion of foreigners and national unification. He eliminated gold and employed a more limited and earth-toned color palette to emphasize realism and to complement the seriousness of the subject. Some artists continued to portray nostalgic themes of women and children in nature settings (the popularity of such images persists to this day); however, Nguyễn Văn Ty (1917–1992), a student at the *École* from 1934–1941, who later taught in the reopened school after 1945,¹²¹ cast idealized feminine figures as elements of a political iconography. An allegorical rendering of the reunification of North and South Vietnam features two female forms—a woman with a child in tow—swept by the wind as they rush headlong to embrace in a modern-day Visitation by the sea (*South and North United*, 1961, fig. 18).

While the Christian undertones of the image may at first glance appear unusual, the early French *École* teachers had indeed imparted to the young artists Western art traditions from the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century. This form of art history, along with other aspects of their training, persisted when former *École* students took over instruction at the reopened school after the war for independence.¹²² The topos of embracing women—a subject drawn

from the Renaissance images of the Visitation—may have been well suited as a political, visionary allegory of new beginnings through national unification, for which there was no precedent in pre-twentieth-century Vietnamese art.



Fig. 16: Nguyễn Hiếm, Crossing a Foot Bridge, 1958. Lacquer, 100 x 150 cm. Hanoi, Fine Arts Museum.



Fig. 17: Detail of fig. 16.



Fig. 18: Nguyễn Văn Tý, *South and North United*, 1961. Lacquer, 86 x 66 cm.

Conclusion

After 1954, over eighty-five Vietnamese artists were sent to study in the Soviet Union, which was generally preferred—its socialist realism being the style of choice—to China.¹²³ However, in both training sites the ideologically charged language of socialism in art reigned supreme. Until *Đổi Mới*, the political content of their art determined the fortunes of artists, as is signified by the long-term obscurity of Nguyễn Sáng (1923–1988), who graduated from the École in 1945 but resisted propagandist themes as well as the realist-impressionist style he learned there. Nguyễn Sáng turned instead to the abstract styles of the “Humanism” (*Nhân Văn*) movement, which were ostensibly allied to the appeal of primitivism among European modernists such as Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), or Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) and were intended to express a “national-modern art.” Nguyễn Sáng, who died in poverty and only posthumously received the Ho Chi Minh Prize in 1996, indicated, however, that it was less Western than native arts that had inspired him, declaring, “I prefer our folk paintings to Matisse’s work.”¹²⁴

He was joined by lacquer painters who thought along similar lines: Nguyen Tu Nghiem (1919–?), for example, frequently portrayed traditional folk dance or print-inspired themes, or Bùi Xuân Phái (1920–1988), who was best known for his melancholy scenes of Old Hanoi, painted in an abstract manner reminiscent of Raoul Dufy (1877–1953) and decidedly neither heroic nor victorious. These artists fulfilled the late Tô Ngọc Vân’s passionately expressed yearning to return to a pure art of personal expression, which drew them, as it had done with others before the outbreak of war, to the simplicity, charm, and depth of expressive possibility inherent in pre-colonial wood-based folk arts. These artists suffered greatly in their struggle for artistic freedom unshackled by ideological dogma—known as the *Nhân Văn–Giai Phẩm* movement (named after two journals that were forced to close in 1956 for demanding freedom of speech and other human rights)¹²⁵—with Bùi Xuân Phái even losing his teaching position at the Hanoi College of Fine Arts in 1957 and denied permission to exhibit his art until 1984.¹²⁶ These ideological rebels, who explored the purity of the distinctive lacquer medium, the ethnic identity embodied in pre-colonial folk borrowings (consciously or otherwise visually linking their efforts to the folk and primitive elements underlying much European modernism), and freedom of personal expression devoid of propaganda, have had the greatest impact upon the artists that have emerged since *Đổi Mới*.¹²⁷

A visit to art shops in Hanoi, Hội An, or Ho Chi Minh City today will reveal countless mass-produced, derivative examples of earlier lacquer-painting themes, as well as cubist, surrealist, and pop art styles for tourist consumption—the ban on abstraction and nudity having been abandoned with *Đổi Mới* and the flourishing travel industry it stimulated. Craft factories now produce lacquer “paintings” as articles of mass consumption with little hint of the originality and passion for new directions, aesthetics, and identity politics that drove the *École* students nearly a century ago, both before and after the revolution. Some observers refer to them derogatorily as “imitation painting” or “rice paddy art,” which distracts tourists from encountering the real artistic accomplishments of modern and post-modern artists.¹²⁸

In spite of the Communist government’s open policy towards capital markets, its Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism imposes a haphazard form of censorship upon exhibitions of contemporary art, making it even more difficult to encounter artistic works of the present. Artists face the challenge to “create artwork with multiple layers of meanings so we can explain it reasonably to different audiences.”¹²⁹ Despite these challenges, it is important to remember that both the expressions of individual artists as well as the mass production of art objects owe their inception to the establishment of the *École Supérieure de Beaux Arts d’Indochine*. The *École* gave Vietnamese crafts-people the opportunity and incentive to become notable fine artists; it inspired them

to modernize and to explore an eclectic blend of Western, East-Asian, and indigenous sources to create an artistic language, especially in lacquer, that they ultimately regarded as uniquely their own; and it sustained a movement for political and cultural independence. Thus, “rice paddy art,” cheaply mass-produced though it may be, is no less a testament to the people’s identification of lacquer painting as an exclusively Vietnamese medium in the modern era. A visit to the Vietnam Fine Arts Museum—after looking at the city’s street shops—can show the way to discovering the history of this distinctive modernism.

Notes

1. I am indebted to the ASIANetwork Faculty Enhancement Program’s (ANFEP) Summer 2013 Vietnam Seminar, guided by Jack Harris, for providing a rich encounter with Vietnam’s history and culture.
2. Neither painter has works in major French museums. Tardieu was a pupil at L’École des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, and studied in Paris under Gustav Moreau (1826–1898), who was also famously the teacher of Odilon Redon (1840–1916) and Henri Matisse, among others. On the circumstances of his arrival in Hanoi in 1923, see Nora Taylor, “Orientalism/Occidentalism: The Founding of the École des Beaux-Arts d’Indochine and the Politics of Painting in Colonial Việt Nam, 1925–1945,” *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1997): 4. He won a prize at the Salon in 1902 and the Indochina Prize in 1920, which brought him to Vietnam. Boi Tran Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics From 1925 Onwards” (PhD diss., University of Sydney College of the Arts, 2005), 116, <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/633> [Accessed on 24. July 2015]. Inguimberty attended the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts-Décoratifs in Paris. He later won the Prix Blumenthal in 1922 and the *Prix National* for painting in 1924. “Joseph Inguimberty,” Witness Collection, http://witnesscollection.org/the_collection/Pages/Joseph_Inguimberty_%281896-1971%29.html [Accessed on 10. October 2013].
An earlier French art school was begun in Gia Định, then part of Saigon (Cochinchina), which is less well known or valued historically. Relative to other Asian countries, this was a rather late arrival of Western artistic trends. In total, 128 students graduated from the École, which was praised as the “School of Viet Nam.” *Viettouch*, http://www.viettouch.com/art_cont/a1945.htm [Accessed on 09. February 2014].
3. Because Nam Son did not join the Resistance War in 1946, and was a colonial public servant from 1946–1954, his role in co-founding the École was long overlooked by Vietnamese historians. Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 148–149.
4. Shireen Naziree, *From Craft to Art: Vietnamese Lacquer Painting* (Bangkok: Thavibu Gallery Co., 2013), 7–8, http://www.thavibu.com/vietnam/thavibu_fromcrafttoart.pdf [Accessed on 22. July 2015]. Huynh provides a summary of the conditions of life and arts under colonialism at the time of the school’s founding. See Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 73–91.
5. Panivong Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film, and Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.

6. Given Vietnam's over 1500 miles of shoreline, it is reasonable to assume that seafaring outsiders, as well as overland migrants, played a role in shaping her cultural artifacts throughout history. See Charles Wheeler, "A Maritime Logic to Vietnam's History? Littoral Society in Hoi An's Trading World, c. 1550–1830," in *American Historical Association Conference Proceedings 2003*, http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/p/2005/history_cooperative/www.historycooperative.org/proceedings/seascapes/wheeler.html [Accessed on 10. October 2013].
7. Buddhism migrated to Vietnam sometime in the first century CE, brought by Indian enthusiasts via the Indian Ocean to the Pacific and the Gulf of Tonkin, and Silk Road traders traversing China, where it blended with the existing pre-Buddhist traditions of ancestor worship. See Huynh, "Vietnamese Aesthetics," 18; Xinyi Ou, "The Successful Integration of Buddhism with Chinese Culture: A Summary," *Grand Valley Journal of History* 1, no. 2 (2012): 1–6, <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=gvjh> [Accessed on 25. June 2015].
8. Michael Vickery, "Champa Revisited," in *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*, ed. Trần Kỳ Phương, Bruce Lockhart (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011), 363–420, here 371. Their language was "Austronesian."
9. For a more complete description of the history of foreign artistic influences, see Huynh, "Vietnamese Aesthetics," 10–12; John K. Whitmore, "Foreign Influences and the Vietnamese Cultural Core: A Discussion of the Premodern Period," in *Borrowings and Adaptations in Vietnamese Culture*, ed. Buu Lâm Truong (Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1987), 1–21.
10. Huynh posits the possibility that the absence of pre-colonial painted arts may be due to climate or wars, or to a native expression manifest in other art forms—textiles, gardens, or religious prints. Huynh, "Vietnamese Aesthetics," 24; see also Phoebe Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics in Colonial Hanoi: The École des Beaux-Arts de L'Indochine (1925–1945)," in *Asia through Art and Anthropology: Cultural Translation Across Borders*, ed. Fuyubi Nakamura et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 47–61, here 50.
11. Many Vietnamese who collaborated with their French overlords accepted their inferior status and "considered their fortunes intimately bound with continued colonial presence." Kim Khánh Huynh, *Vietnamese Communism, 1925–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 39–45.
12. Quoted in Neil Jamieson, "Relata, Relationships, and Context: A Perspective on Borrowed Elements in Vietnamese Culture," in Buu Lâm Truong, *Borrowings and Adaptations*, 124–140, here 130. Jamieson adds, "... under French colonial rule archaeological and historical studies tended to present a distorted and not very flattering picture of the inhabitants of the Red River Delta and central coastal plain prior to the period of Chinese domination. Indigenous Vietnamese culture has too often been portrayed in the past as an empty vessel of dubious worth into which the merits of superior civilization poured for millennia from China and India, and later from the West." *Ibid.*, 135. It is also wise to remember that all publications during colonial rule, but especially non-fiction ones, were censored; see Ngo Vinh Long, preface to *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants under the French* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), xxv–xix, here xxvi–xxvii.
13. Nora Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

14. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 48. Phoebe Scott recently completed her PhD dissertation titled "Forming and Reforming the Artist: Modernity, Agency and the Discourse of Art in North Vietnam, 1925–1954" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2013).
15. Taylor, "Orientalism/Occidentalism," 1–2.
16. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 49, 59n2. Western art historians who criticized in this manner included Marcel Bernanose (1922), Albert de Pouvourville (1894), Henri Gourdon (1933), and M. Koch (1924).
17. Taylor, "Orientalism/Occidentalism," 2.
18. Nora Taylor, review of *L'Indochine: Un lieu d'échange culturel? Les peintres Français et Indochinois (Fin XIXe–XXesiècle)*, by Nadine André-Pallois, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 1999): 198–200, here 200.
19. Huỳnh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 38.
20. Huỳnh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 36n4, 37–38, 45. This was one of sixty daily and weekly newspapers published in the 1920s, most from 1923–1928. Four of these specialized in political, anti-colonial pamphlets.
21. Huynh, "Vietnamese Aesthetics," 93–94. Much of the most stirring anti-French writing emerged from the 1925–1928 period; see Buu Lâm Truong, *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism, 1900–1931* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 190–275. Other publishing houses involved in producing radical writings were Duy Tân Thos Xã (Modernization Publishing House), Tự do Thùng Fu (Freedom Collection), Tôn Việt Thư Xã (Survival of Vietnam Publishing House), and Tân văn Hoá Tùng Thứ (New Culture Collection). *Ibid.*, 271. See also Trinh Van Thao, "The 1925 Generation of Vietnamese Intellectuals and their Role in the Struggle for Independence," in *Viet Nam Exposé: French Scholarship on Twentieth-century Vietnamese Society*, ed. Gisèle Luce Bousquet and Pierre Brocheux (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 251–277.
22. Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina*, 30, 34. The international art market prompted "an urge to self-orientalise" among Asian artists, according to Monica Juneja and Franziska Koch, "Multi-Centred Modernisms—Reconfiguring Asian Art of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2010), doi: 10.11588/ts.2010.1.6181 [Accessed on 25. June 2015].
23. Quoted in Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina*, 6.
24. Taylor, "Orientalism/Occidentalism," 7.
25. Victor Tardeau was impressed by the work of village artisans in all media and is said to have taken students to the countryside to paint the landscapes. Taylor, "Orientalism/Occidentalism," 3–4. For discussion of the curriculum of the school, including art history of Western and Asian arts, see Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 49–50. For literacy data, see Trần Quốc Vượng, "Popular Culture and High Culture in Vietnamese History," in "Vietnamese Poetry and History," special issue, *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 7, no. 2 (1992): 5–37, here 31.

26. William Stewart Logan, *Hanoi: Biography of a City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 80; Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina*, 5.
27. Chinese ancestor portraits were often copied by later generations, and thus represent an imitative or derivative intent on the part of copyists. See Xiangmei Gu, Yuan-li Hou, and Valerie Gouet, “The Treatment of Chinese Portraits: An Introduction to Chinese Painting Conservation Technique,” *The Book and Paper Group Annual* 18, last updated August 3rd, 2011, <http://cool.conservation-us.org/coolaic/sg/bpg/annual/v18/bp18-05.html> [Accessed on 22. April 2014].
28. Taylor, “Orientalism/Occidentalism,” 11.
29. See Scott, “Imaging ‘Asian’ Aesthetics,” 49.
30. *Quốc ngữ* script was created by missionaries in the seventeenth century as a tool used to combat illiteracy and to evangelize. However, “in the nineteenth century, it was unthinkable for a patriot-writer such as Nguyễn Đình Chiểu to write in any other script than the traditional [*chữ*] *nôm* characters. But the twentieth century ushered in the wide use of the *Quốc ngữ*, which was then hailed by everyone in the anticolonial movement as the foremost weapon of patriotism;” Buu Lâm Truong, introduction to *Borrowings and Adaptations*, v–xii, here x. See also John DeFrancis, “Vietnamese Writing Reform in Asian Perspective,” in Buu Lâm Truong, *Borrowings and Adaptations*, 41–51. The period from 1924 to 1939 saw a flood of new publications in *Quốc ngữ*: by 1939 there were 128 dailies and 176 magazines and bulletins in publication; Pierre Brocheux and Daniel Hemery, *Indochina: An Ambiguous Colonization, 1858–1954*, trans. Lyn Lan Dill-Klein (Oakland: University of California Press, 2009), 236. See also Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 92.
31. See George Dutton, “Lý Toét in the City: Coming to Terms with the Modern in 1930s Vietnam,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007): 80–108, here 81.
32. Huynh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 126. The *Tự Lực văn đoàn* literary group represents one such disillusioned crowd. See note 43.
33. Catherine Noppe and Jean Francois Hubert, *Art of Vietnam* (New York: Parkstone Press, 2003), 208.
34. Quảng Phòng et al., “Vietnamese Modern Paintings: The Pioneers,” *Lac Hong Gallery*, http://www.lachonggallery.com/articles/vietnamese_paintings_pioneers.htm [Accessed on 10. October 2013].
35. Scott, “Imaging ‘Asian’ Aesthetics,” 50, identifies a different system of grouping at the Hanoi museum, which is based on perceived spheres of influence—Chinese, Japanese, Annamite (native), and Korean.
36. Scott, “Imaging ‘Asian’ Aesthetics,” 47.
37. Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 35. For examples of some Vietnamese pre-colonial shamanic, Daoist, Hindu, animistic, and Confucian scroll paintings, see “How to Make the Universe Right: The Art of the Shaman in Vietnam and Southern China,” Bates College Museum of Art, <http://www.bates.edu/museum/exhibitions/current/art-of-the-shaman-from-vietnam-and-china/> [Accessed on 09. February 2014]; and Daniel Kany, “‘Art of the Shaman’ at Bates: Decidedly non-Western, Eminently Accessible,” *Art Review, Portland Press Herald*, March 2nd, 2014, http://www.pressherald.com/2014/03/02/art_of_the_shaman_at_bates_decidedly_non-western_eminently_accessible/ [Accessed on 06. December 2014].

38. “Nguyễn Phan Chánh is considered the founder of Vietnamese silk painting. He was also the first Vietnamese modern painter to be known outside Vietnam His *Game of Squares* was unexpectedly given special attention at a 1931 exhibition in Paris;” Phong, “Vietnamese Modern Paintings,” 1–2.
39. Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 35.
40. Phong, “Vietnamese Modern Paintings,” 2. Lacquer use dates back over 2000 years in Haiphong area tombs in Vietnam, according to Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 8. Its use may have ended for a period because records indicated that it was brought back to Vietnam from China during the Lê dynasty (1443–1460).
41. Scott claims that the influence of Japanese art occurred mostly in the era of wartime occupation beginning in the early 1940s. See Scott, “Imaging ‘Asian’ Aesthetics,” 48. However, pictorial evidence, especially Nguyễn Gia Tri’s paintings in the 1930s pre-dating the Japanese invasion, suggests an earlier date. Another teacher who encouraged experimentation with lacquer was the second director of the École (1938–1945) after Tardieu, Evariste Jonchère (1892–1956). See Sotheby’s Hong Kong, *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Paintings*, April 6, 2013. [auction catalog], <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.pdf.HK0457.html/f/296/HK0457-296.pdf> [Accessed on 15. October 2013].
42. Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 9.
43. “Vietnamese Lacquerware,” *Phuong nam Fine art and Lacquerware*, http://www.phuongnam.com/Vietnamese_lacquerware.htm [Accessed on 20. October 2013].
44. The traditional *áo dài*, adopted from Chinese sources in the eighteenth century, was loose fitting and worn on ceremonial occasions by both men and women of all classes. In the colonial era, however, a newer designed, form-fitting version was worn by elite women, “who were able by this single act to establish their social status, their modernity, and, perhaps most importantly, their adherence to being Vietnamese. Wearing of western-style skirts, while perhaps equally suitable for displaying one’s commitment to modernity, was left to the socially despised lower-class *con gais* of the colonial masters...” Terry Rambo, “Black Flight Suits and White *Ao-Dais*: Borrowing and Adaptation of Symbols of Vietnamese Cultural Identity,” in Buu Lâm Truong, *Borrowings and Adaptations*, 115–123, here 119. See also Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 112–113.
45. Taylor, review of *L’Indochine*, 199. Many of the practitioners of these latter avant-garde styles were communists who were unsympathetic to colonial policies.
46. Popular novels included *In the Midst of Spring* by Khải Hưng (Trần Khánh Giur) and *Breaking the Ties* by Nhật Linh (real name Nguyễn Tường Tam); Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 91. See also, Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Nha Trang, “The Role of French Romanticism in the New Poetry Movement in Vietnam,” in Buu Lâm Truong, *Borrowings and Adaptations*, 52–62. The first modern novel, *Tổ Tâm* by Hoàng Ngọc Phách (1925), was controversial because of its morality rather than its introduction of a new form, 52.
47. Trang, “The Role of French Romanticism,” 53. Phan Khôi’s manifesto article was titled “Một lời thơ mới trình giữa làng thơ,” (A new form of poetry presented to the poetic community) in *Phụ nữ tân văn* 122 (March 1932).

48. Quoted in Trang, "The Role of French Romanticism," 55. From a speech given at the Association of Education in June 1934.
49. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 50.
50. See Doris Croissant, "Icons of Femininity: Japanese National Painting and the Paradox of Modernity," in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, ed. Joshua S. Mostow et al., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 119–139. Tsuchida Bakusen may have blended *ukiyo-e* elements with Western ideas derived from Paul Gauguin, Fernand Hodler, or Paul Pierre Puvis de Chavanne, 124.
51. Croissant, "Icons of Femininity," 129.
52. Kathryn Robson and Jennifer Yee, eds., introduction to *France and "Indochina": Cultural Representations* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 7.
53. Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, xiii.
54. Also called Poison Sumac, related to Poison Ivy. Department of Asian Art, "Lacquerware of East Asia," in Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), last updated October 2004, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/elac/hd_elac.htm [Accessed on 22. July 2015]. According to Trinh Tuan, "Lacquer is a clear sap coming from any of six species of trees growing in Vietnam, the main ones being *Rhus* (or *Toxicodendron succedanea* in the north and *Melanorrhoea* (or *Gluta laccifera* in the south, both belonging to the family *Anacardiaceae*." Trinh Tuan, "The Process of Making Vietnamese Lacquer Paintings," in Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 36–38, here 36.
55. Christine Guth, "Out of Touch: On the Sensorial in the Historical Interpretation of Japanese Lacquer," in *East Asian Lacquer: Material Culture, Science and Conservation*, ed. Shayne Rivers et al. (London: Archetype Publications, 2011), 1–4, here 3.
56. Use of lacquer in Vietnam for household wares dates back 2000 years. See Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 8.
57. See <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/AK-RAK-2013-3-1> [Accessed on 24. July 2015]. Objects like these may have been made specifically for export markets, although Kaori Hidaka 薫日高 argues that the same types of objects may also have been collected within Japan. Kaori Hidaka, "Maritime Trade in Asia and the Circulation of Lacquerware," in *East Asian Lacquer: Material Culture, Science and Conservation*, ed. Shayne Rivers et al. (London: Archetype Publications, 2011), 5–9.
58. "Black lacquer stems from a chemical reaction between lacquer and iron, and results from stirring the lacquer with an iron rod for a few days. ... Several shades of red are extracted from a naturally occurring red mineral, cinnabar (mercuric sulfide)." Trinh Tuan, "The Process of Making Vietnamese Lacquer Paintings," 36–37. "Since East Asian lacquer was so aggressive and toxic, there were only a few natural pigments that could be used for coloring it in former times. It was generally not possible to make white lacquer. So as to still be able to produce the color white for designing décor and grounding whole areas, shells from quails' eggs were broken into small pieces or ground to a powder and then placed on the still-wet lacquer." "E as in Eggshell Decoration," Museum für Lackkunst Münster (Museum of lacquer art Münster), http://www.museum-fuer-lackkunst.de/en/abc_of_lacquer [Accessed on 06. December 2014].

59. “Lacquerware of East Asia,” Haino Akio, “Chinese Carved Lacquerware,” trans. Melissa M. Rinne, *Lacquerware Stories*, Museum Dictionary, Kyoto National Museum, <http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng/dictio/shikki/chou.html> [Accessed on 10. October 2013].
60. *Craquelure* refers to the natural pattern of cracking on the surface of oil paintings as they age. “Eggs from ducks are used because they have a better structure than hens’ eggs. The eggshells are cleaned and sometimes even burned to obtain a brownish tinge. Most bright colors come from artificial dyes.” Trinh Tuan, “The Process of Making Vietnamese Lacquer Paintings,” 37.
61. Trinh Tuan, “The Process of Making Vietnamese Lacquer Paintings,” 37.
62. Kerry Nguyen Long, “Lacquer Artists of Vietnam,” *Vietnam Artists*, last updated February 10, 2002, <http://www.vietnamartist.com/lacquer-artists-of-vietnam/> [Accessed on 10. October 2013].
63. Jan Dees, *Facing Modern Times: The Revival of Japanese Lacquer Art, 1890–1950* (Rotterdam: Optima Grafische Communicatie, 2007), 13–19.
64. “A ‘Living Treasure’ in Đông Hồ Painting Village,” *Vietnamnet*, last updated February 23, 2014, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/art-entertainment/95910/a--living-treasure--in-dong-ho-painting-village.html> [Accessed on 06. April 2015]. In March 2013, the craft of making Đông Hồ folk paintings was recognized as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage. The tradition of villages adopting a particular communal craft is very old and relates to animistic beliefs in gods for every aspect of life: for example a “God of the Kitchen (Táo Quân); God of the Land (Thổ Công, Thổ Địa); God of the town or village (Thần Hoàng) and especially Gods of the crafts. Each profession or craft has a God as the First Master and the craft becomes the main business of a community;” some craft practitioners are worshipped as gods, “like Trần Lư as the founder of lacquer, the monk Không Lộ as the founder of bronze casting.” Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 22. The adoption of the label “folk art” derives from its anonymity, the fact that it was made by unprofessional masses in their village communal house (*đình*). *Ibid.*, 26. Woodblock printing originated in Vietnam with the Lý dynasty (1010–1225) when printed paper money was introduced. Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 39. Other villages producing folk prints include: “Hàng Trống (Hanoi), Kim Hoàng (Hanoi), Sinh (central province of Thừa Thiên-Huế), Độc Lôi (central province of Nghệ An), and Vụ Đi (northern province of Vĩnh Phúc).” Reference needed.
The Bac Ninh Geography Archive dates the origination of print arts at this site to the late ninth century: “Ancient Vietnamese Painting is Fading,” *Talk Vietnam*, last updated November 23, 2012, <http://www.talkvietnam.com/2012/11/ancient-vietnamese-painting-is-fading/> [Accessed on 22. July 2015].
65. Rachael A. Szydowski, “Expansion of the Vietnamese Handcraft Industry: From Local to Global” (master’s thesis, Ohio University, 2008), 13 and 63, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=ohiou1218497546&disposition=inline [Accessed on 22. July 2015].
66. Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 41–42.
67. Andrew Forbes and David Henley, *Vietnam Past and Present: The North* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Cognoscenti Books, 2011), n.p.
68. “Folk Woodcut Printing Awarded National Heritage Status,” *Vietnamnet*, last updated March 8, 2013, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/art-entertainment/68179/folk-woodcut-printing-awarded-national-heritage-status.html> [Accessed on 06. April 2015].

69. The collection was seven volumes, 4200 drawings; its full title: “The Technique of the Annamese People by Henri Oger—An Encyclopaedia of all The Instruments, of The Utensils, of all the Gestures of the Life and Crafts of the Tonkin Annamese People;” Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 39, 80. See also Pierre Huard, “Le pionnier de la technologie Vietnamienne Henri Oger (1885–1936 ?),” *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 57 (1970): 215–217.
70. Gus Roe, “Vietnamese Traditional Wrestling: **Đấu Vật**,” *Combat Network Magazine*, (2015): <http://www.combatnetworkmagazine.com/2015/03/vietnamese-traditional-wrestling-au-vat.html> [Accessed on 06. April 2015].
71. Lan Nguyen Thi, “A Glance at Vietnamese Folk Painting,” *Vietnam Beauty*, last modified October 1, 2008, <http://www.vietnam-beauty.com/vietnamese-culture/vietnam-arts-/18-vietnam-arts/147-a-glance-at-vietnamese-folk-painting.html> [Accessed on 06. April 2015]. A Japanese parallel may be found in the more complex poses and sophisticated drawing of Katsushika Hokusai’s woodblock manga pages of wrestlers (1817), which offer similar subject and style, with isolated pairs of wrestlers scattered on a page without delineated settings.
72. Dutton, “Lý Toét in the City,” 87–88. See also Philippe Papin, “Who has Power in the Village? Political Process and Social Reality in Vietnam,” in *Việt Nam Exposé: French Scholarship on Twentieth-Century Vietnamese Society*, ed. Gisèle Luce Bousquet and Pierre Brocheux (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 21–60, here 29–30.
73. Scott, “Imaging ‘Asian’ Aesthetics,” 51. Students were taken to the Đình Bàng communal house to make drawings of the architecture.
74. Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 29. All three **đình** are located near Hanoi. Many **đình** were destroyed in the early years of the resistance war, 1946–1947. *Ibid.*, 69. See also Bertrand De Hartingh and Anne Craven-Smith-Milnes, *Vietnam Style*, (North Clarendon, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2007), 66–71; THONG DIEP TU CO VAT DINH TAY DANG VA NHUNG AN NGU VAN HOA, YouTube video, posted by “Vua Nguyen,” June 13, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znShB7wsUus> [Accessed on 22. July 2015].
On water puppet history, see Kathy Foley, “The Metonymy of Art: Vietnamese Water Puppetry as a Representation of Modern Vietnam,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 129–141, here 131–132; Nguyen Huy Hong, *Vietnamese Traditional Water Puppetry* (Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 2010), 48.
75. “History of Traditional Vietnamese Water Puppetry” *Viet Vision Travel*, http://www.vietvisiontravel.com/vietnam/guide_81_history_of_traditional_vietnamese_water_puppetry_1757.html [Accessed on 06. April 2015].
76. Ngo Vinh Long, *Before the Revolution*, 25–29. Long’s book is essentially a catalog of the progressively worsening conditions of Vietnam’s peasantry under colonization. *Ibid.*, 138–141.
77. The city lies between three rivers: the Tô Lịch, Kim Ngưu, and Sông Hồng (Red River); Stein Tønnesson, “Hanoi’s Long Century,” in *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, ed. Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanc (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 1–16, here 5.
78. Among the Hanoi waterways were Red River, the Dam Dam Lake (the former name of the West Lake. See fig. 3), the Lục Thủy Lake (the former name of the Hoàn Kiếm Lake), and the Hồ Tây Lake. See Nguyễn Thị Hoàng Liên, “Influences of Cultures on Open Space Planning for Hanoi City of Vietnam,” *VNU Journal of Science: Earth and Environmental Sciences* 30, no. 2 (2014): 15–30, here 19–20; Wheeler, “A Maritime Logic,” 144.

79. Nguyễn Thị Hoàng Liên, “Influences of Cultures,” 23.
80. Nguyễn Thị Hoàng Liên, “Influences of Cultures,” 23; Logan, *Hanoi: Biography of a City*, 75.
81. Geoffrey Gunn, “The Great Vietnamese Famine of 1944–1945 Revisited,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (n.d.), <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Geoffrey-Gunn/3483/article.html> [Accessed on 18. April 2015]. Among the causes: the Japanese demanded compulsory sale of rice to the state at a fraction of market price; even during drought years rice alcohol was used as a substitute for gasoline; and the northern population increased by 36 percent in this time.
82. See Wheeler, “A Maritime Logic,” 143; and Bui Hoai Mai, introduction to *Two Cakes Fit for a King: Folktales from Vietnam*, trans. Nguyen Nguyet Cam and Dana Sachs, ed. Dana Sachs (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 1–18, here 4.
83. Bettina Ebert, “Lacquer Paintings,” *Asiarta Foundation*, <http://www.asiarta.org/introduction-to-conservation/lacquer-paintings/> [Accessed on 10. October 2013]. “They received their name from India’s Coromandel coast, where they were transhipped to Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by merchants of the English and French East India companies;” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Coromandel screen,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/138167/Coromandel-screen> [Accessed on 11. June 2014].
84. Also called *quancai* (engraved colorfulness), it was first mentioned in the *Xiushi lu* (On lacquering) treatise that dates back to the late sixteenth century, “B as in Bantam Work,” Museum für Lackkunst Münster (Museum of lacquer art Münster), http://www.museum-fuer-lackkunst.de/en/abc_of_lacquer [Accessed on 06. April 2015].
85. Scott, “Imaging ‘Asian’ Aesthetics,” 53. In 1949 Tô Ngọc Vân decried all slavish emulation of Chinese art.
86. “Lacquer,” Art Conservation Handout, Bishop Museum, last modified 1996, <http://www.bishopmuseum.org/research/pdf/cnsv-lacquer.pdf> [Accessed on 15. October 2013].
87. Lương Văn Hỷ, “Community Festivals in Rural Northern and Southern Vietnam: A Comparative Analysis of their Different Dynamics,” *Thông báo khoa học số*, 28–29 (2010): 135–147, <http://legacy.anthropology.utoronto.ca/people/faculty-1/faculty-profiles/hy-van-luong-1/Luong-festivals%20in%20north%20-%20south%20vietnam.pdf> [Accessed on 10. October 2013]. Lương Văn Hỷ estimates that some 8000 festivals occurred in 2006, 145.
88. A typical temple, such as the Bút Tháp Temple, consisted of “the gate; the double story bell-tower with eight roofs; the vestibule; the great hall; the pen-shaped stone tower and a pagoda called ‘Gathering the Goods,’” Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 31.
89. Lương Văn Hỷ, “Community Festivals,” 139.
90. The origins of Hàng Trống printing derive from the establishment in the fifteenth century of printing workshops in Hanoi dedicated to reproducing the full “Tripitika” of Buddhist sutras that had been destroyed in wars against the Ming Dynasty, 1407–1427. Phan Cam Thuong, “The Wooden Printers that Saved Reading,” *Vietnam Heritage* 4, no. 5 (June–July 2014): 8–9, http://issuu.com/ngocngo9/docs/vietnam_heritage_so_38_thang_6_for_ [Accessed on 06. December 2014].

91. Bui Hoai Mai, introduction to *Two Cakes Fit for a King*, 15; “Exhibition Highlights History of Folk Painting,” *Vietnamnet*, last updated January 28, 2014, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/art-entertainment/94752/exhibition-highlights-history-of-folk-paintings.html> [Accessed on 06. December 2014].
92. Phan Cam Thuong, “Rice Ink was the Secret to Woodblock Printing,” *Vietnam Heritage* 4, no. 5 (June–July, 2014): 9–12, here 11, http://issuu.com/ngocngo9/docs/vietnam_heritage_so_38_thang_6_for_ [Accessed on 06. December 2014].
93. Many of the Hàng Trống painted themes were associated with Đạo Mẫu and displayed at temples and shrines, including “Five Tigers,” “The Third Prince,” and “The Forest and Mountain Goddess;” “Windy Day 12: ‘Hang Trong Painting—A Fragile Destiny,’” *Hanoi Grapevine*, April 4, 2015, <http://hanoigrapevine.com/2015/04/windy-day-12-hang-trong-painting-fragile-destiny/> [Accessed on 18. April 2015].
94. Ngo Duc Thinh, “The Mother Goddess Religion: Its History, Pantheon, and Practices,” in *Possessed by the Spirits: Mediumship in Contemporary Vietnamese Communities*, ed. Karen Fjelstad and Thị Hiền Nguyễn (Ithaca: SEAP Publications, 2006), 19–30, here 19, 21–22; Pham Quynh Phuong, “Tran Hung Dao and the Mother Goddess Religion,” Fjelstad, *Possessed by the Spirits*, 31–54, here 32; Barley Norton, “‘Hot-Tempered’ Women and ‘Effeminated’ Men: The Performance of Music and Gender in Vietnamese Mediumship,” Fjelstad, *Possessed by the Spirits*, 55–76, here 56. Other instruments in rituals included a 16-string zither (*dân tràng*), a 2-stringed fiddle (*dàn nhị*), a small headed drum (*trống*), and knobless gong (*thành lã*).
95. Norton, “‘Hot-Tempered’ Women and ‘Effeminated’ Men,” 62.
96. Ngo Duc Thinh, “The Mother Goddess Religion,” 22.
97. Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 23.
98. See Vũ Thành Tư Anh, “Worshipping the Mother Goddess: The Đạo Mẫu Movement in Northern Vietnam,” *Explorations in Southeast Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 27–44; Barley Norton, *Songs for the Spirits: Music and Mediums in Modern Vietnam* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
99. David P. Chandler and David Joel Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 315–316. For details about the founding of the movements, see David G. Marr, *Vietnam Anticolonialism: 1885–1925* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1971), 120–155. The unification of Vietnam under the Nguyễn dynasty in 1803, its adoption of Chinese style Neo-Confucianism, and the prohibition of Christianity led the nation, unlike Japan and Thailand, to be insular and indifferent to Western influences and modernization prior to the takeover by the French; Huynh, “Vietnamese Aesthetics,” 7.
100. Shiraishi Masaya, “Phan Bội Châu in Japan,” in *Phan Bội Châu and the Đông Du Movement*, ed. Vinh Sinh (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Asia Studies, 1988), 52–100, here 55–56. For a translation of Phan Bội Châu’s impassioned letters from Japan, see George E. Dutton et al., eds., *Sources of Vietnamese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 342–369.
101. Shiraishi, “Phan Bội Châu in Japan,” 56.

102. Shiraishi, "Phan Bội Châu in Japan," 64.
103. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 53–54.
104. Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 38–40.
105. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 48.
106. Quoted in Kim Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945–1965* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 73.
107. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 53.
108. Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 74. For a discussion of the ideals of revolutionary period propaganda art, see Nora A. Taylor, "Framing the National Spirit: Viewing and Reviewing Painting under the Revolution," in *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, ed. Hue-Tam Ho Tai (Oakland: University of California Press, 2001), 109–134, here 112–120.
109. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 50.
110. Huynh, "Vietnamese Aesthetics," 144.
111. Scott, "Imaging 'Asian' Aesthetics," 51–52. This attitude is ironic given the great influence that folk, primitive, and non-Western arts had upon the development of early twentieth-century modernism in Europe.
112. Huynh, "Vietnamese Aesthetics," 49.
113. Quoted in Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 76.
114. Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 22.
115. Quoted in Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 83–84.
116. Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 79. See also David G. Marr, "A Passion for Modernity: Intellectuals and the Media," in *Postwar Vietnam: Dynamics of a Transforming Society*, ed. Lương Văn Hỷ (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 257–295, here 267. "The ultimate arbiters of truth and beauty were the masses, as represented by the party. A special role was delineated for literary and art critics who understood the needs of the revolution, the preferences of the masses, and the principles of socialist realism. According to Trong Chinh, a good critic was like a whip to make the horse rear up and perform effectively. He warned that no intellectual participating in the resistance struggle would claim to be above politics, beyond the judgment of the masses, creating according to his own values. Indeed, to take such a position played into the hands of the enemy."
117. Quoted in Kim Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed*, 82.

118. Quoted in Mark Philip Bradley, “Making Sense of the French War: The Postcolonial Moment and the First Vietnam War, 1945–1954,” in *First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis*, ed. Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 16–40, 34. The debate regarding “art for art’s sake” (nghệ thuật vì nghệ thuật) and “art for life’s sake” (nghệ thuật vì nhân sinh) began in the mid-1930s in art and literature. For a discussion of the latter, see Hue Tam Ho Tai, “Literature for the People: From Soviet Policies to Vietnamese Polemics,” in Buu Lâm Truong, *Borrowings and Adaptations*, 63–83.
119. Kerry Nguyen Long, “Lacquer Artists of Vietnam.”
120. Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 12; Huỳnh, *Vietnamese Communism*, 81.
121. For Nguyễn Văn Ty’s biography see “Nguyễn Văn Ty,” Witness Collection, last updated 2012, http://witnesscollection.org/the_collection/Pages/Nguyen_Van_Ty_%281917-92%29.html [Accessed on 22. July 2015].
122. Naziree, *From Craft to Art*, 10. For the evolution of the school after 1945, see Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 45–46. At the time the École was taken over by the provisional government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and reopened as the University of Fine Arts after 1945, the teachers were former students (who numbered altogether over one hundred). The teachers likely continued much of the Western training—including in art history—that they had received. Among Westernized Christian subjects created during the French occupation is Nguyễn Gia Trí’s *Giáng Sinh* (The Birth of Jesus, 1941) and his *Adoration of the Magi*, 1960. For *Giáng Sinh*, see “Lacquer Christ Needs Restoration,” *Viet Nam News*, last updated August 1, 2013, <http://vietnamnews.vn/life-style/242898/lacquer-christ-needs-restoration.html> [Accessed on 25. June 2015]; and for *Adoration of the Magi*, see Nguyen Quan, “Western Culture in Vietnam,” trans. Duong Tuong, *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 20 (1994): 224–235, here 226.
123. Huynh, *Vietnamese Aesthetic*, 147.
124. Nguyen Quan, “Nguyễn Sáng —Huge and Tender,” *VietnamArt Books*, <http://www.vietnamartbooks.com/articles/article.html?id=14> [Accessed on 18. April 2015].
125. Balazs Szalontai, “Political and Economic Crisis in North Vietnam, 1955–1956,” *Cold War History* 5, no. 4 (November 2005): 395–426, here 419–420; Thu-huong Nguyen-vo, *The Ironies of Freedom: Sex, Culture, and Neoliberal Governance in Vietnam* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 188–190.
126. “Bùi Xuân Phái,” *Witness Collection*, http://witnesscollection.org/the_collection/Pages/Bui_Xuan_Phai_%281920-88%29.html [Accessed on 18. April 2015]. He too, along with the others, won the Ho Chi Minh prize posthumously.
127. Taylor, *Painters in Hanoi*, 75.
128. See Viet Le Quan, “Imitation Paintings Challenge Genuine Art,” *Vietnamnet*, last updated September 12, 2011, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/special-reports/11427/imitation-paintings-challenge-genuine-art.html> [Accessed 25. June 2015]. See also Samantha Libby, “The Art of Censorship in Vietnam,” *Journal of International Affairs* 65, no. 1 (2011): 209–218, here 211.
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