

## Nude art awaits welcome

In the West, nude art has gone from paintings, photos and sculpture to streets and squares through installation exhibitions. Meanwhile, nude artworks are introduced cautiously in Vietnam.

The Hanoi Department of Culture and Information recently licenced painter Thai Phien's Spring nude painting exhibition. This is the first nude painting exhibition licenced in Vietnam.

The art circle has been awaiting this event for a long time because they expect the official acceptance of artworks which have existed silently so far.

Painter Luong Xuan Doan said that Vietnamese nude art could not be made public later. He said that some Chinese artists were surprised when they learned that nude paintings were still strange to Vietnamese audiences.

Actually, nude figures or even sex is not strange in folk arts since paintings of genitalia or sexual activities of humans are found on bronze or pottery antiques. However, nude art is not recognised officially in Vietnam. Painter Thai Phien said that in Vietnam, nude art is not taught in any photo course.

Though nude art is not recognised, it does exist in Vietnam. Nude paintings and photos have appeared in a scattered way in some photo magazines of Vietnam like the World of Photo, Photography, etc. and displayed at some private galleries.

For example, painter Le Thiet Cuong inaugurated Gallery 39A Ly Quoc Su with an exhibition of nude photos, paintings and statues named Nude in November 2005. Two years later, he celebrated the birthday of this gallery by an exhibition named Mind and Sex, with 62 paintings by Le Thi Minh Tam. Nude art paintings and photos have also been displayed at some personal exhibitions.

Vu Huyen, a photography critic, Vice Chairman of the Vietnam Photographers' Association, said that it was very late for Vietnam to have a nude photo exhibition. "We should normalise this. Why can they display photos of landscapes and working man, but not the beauty of the human body?" he asked. However, he noted that nudity is a very sensitive theme, especially in oriental societies.

Photographer Tran Huy Hoan said that possibly art managers don't discriminate against nude art but they must consider the public's response.

Painter Luong Xuan Doan said that associations must be pillars for artists, the advisor of art managers and the instructor of the public.

Sharing this viewpoint, Huyen said: "We sponsor Thai Phien's Spring exhibition because he is a member of the Vietnam Photographers' Association. Moreover, his photos are very good so why should we not introduce them to the public? I believe that the photos will direct the public to good things."

## About the Author

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