

# NO PLACE LIKE HOME



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museumofthehome.org.uk  
@museumofthehome

Curated by KV Duong & Hoa Dung Clerget  
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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

MUSEUM OF  
THE HOME

**ARTIST TEAM:**

KV Duong

Hoa Dung Clerget

Duong Thuy Nguyen

Cường Minh Bá Phạm

Carô Gervay

Minh Lan Tran

AP Nguyen

Koa Pham

**CURATORS:**

KV Duong

Hoa Dung Clerget



## *No Place Like Home* - Main Exhibition Room

*No Place Like Home* is a collaborative exhibition that explores home through the lens of Vietnamese diaspora artists. Part II, as shown at Museum of The Home, is a continuation of the exploration that began in 2022 at the Canning Gallery.

Immigrant family meals are important moments of connection and storytelling. Traditional foods are deeply intertwined with notions of memory, identity, and belonging, both in the places where diasporic parents have settled and on a transnational scale as a reminder of Vietnam.

This main room showcases object-based pieces on low-rise tables and invites visitors to sit on straw mats to engage with the works. The tables' soft curved shape disrupts the traditional hard-edged administrative and patriarchal tables, allowing transmission of knowledge and experiences for voices from marginalised second-generation immigrants.





*The Cityscape, 2023*  
KV Duong & Hoa Dung Clerget  
135 white plastic stools, rice bags  
Dimensions variable



KV Duong - various works, 2023





## *No Place Like Home* - Main Exhibition Room

At the exhibition entrance, a striking cityscape constructed from Vietnamese plastic stools highlights the effect of the urban structure on the emotions of migrant populations. The adjacent shrine, typically placed at the front of a business or home, welcomes the visitors into the exhibition space.

The exhibited artists have a diverse range of Vietnamese diasporic backgrounds, including 1.5 and second generations, those with refugee parents, and others who grew up in Vietnam. Additionally, the group's cultural backgrounds include Chinese, French, Canadian, Algerian, and British.

We ask our audience, which objects create a feeling of home for you?

Duong Thuy Nguyen (b.1991 Hanoi, Vietnam) is a London-based artist and writer with bylines in Art and Market, Ocula Magazine, and Plural Art. She is currently studying under a scholarship in Master of Fine Art and works as a Changemaker at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Duong is co-founder of An.OtherAsian, a Southeast Asian artist collective which organised and curated exhibitions at the Ugly Duck and the Koppel Project in 2022.

Duong's artistic sensibility draws on an amalgam of personal experiences, cultural histories, and the natural environment. Broaching themes particularly pertinent to the local community, she investigates questions of origin, memory, and belonging in relation to place and landscape. The domestic and the role of humans in society are also themes probed in her work. Through abstract and biomorphic forms, Duong's experimental works concurrently allude to the historic circulation of products and people, to concerns over environmental collapse, and aim to deepen understanding of her own culture in order to break down perspectives around changing habitats.



*Thân/ Family Homes, 2023*  
Handbound book, Rice paper and aluminium  
21 x 32 x 8 cm





*Ardour*, 2022

Distemper, charcoal, and oil on canvas

150 x 200 cm

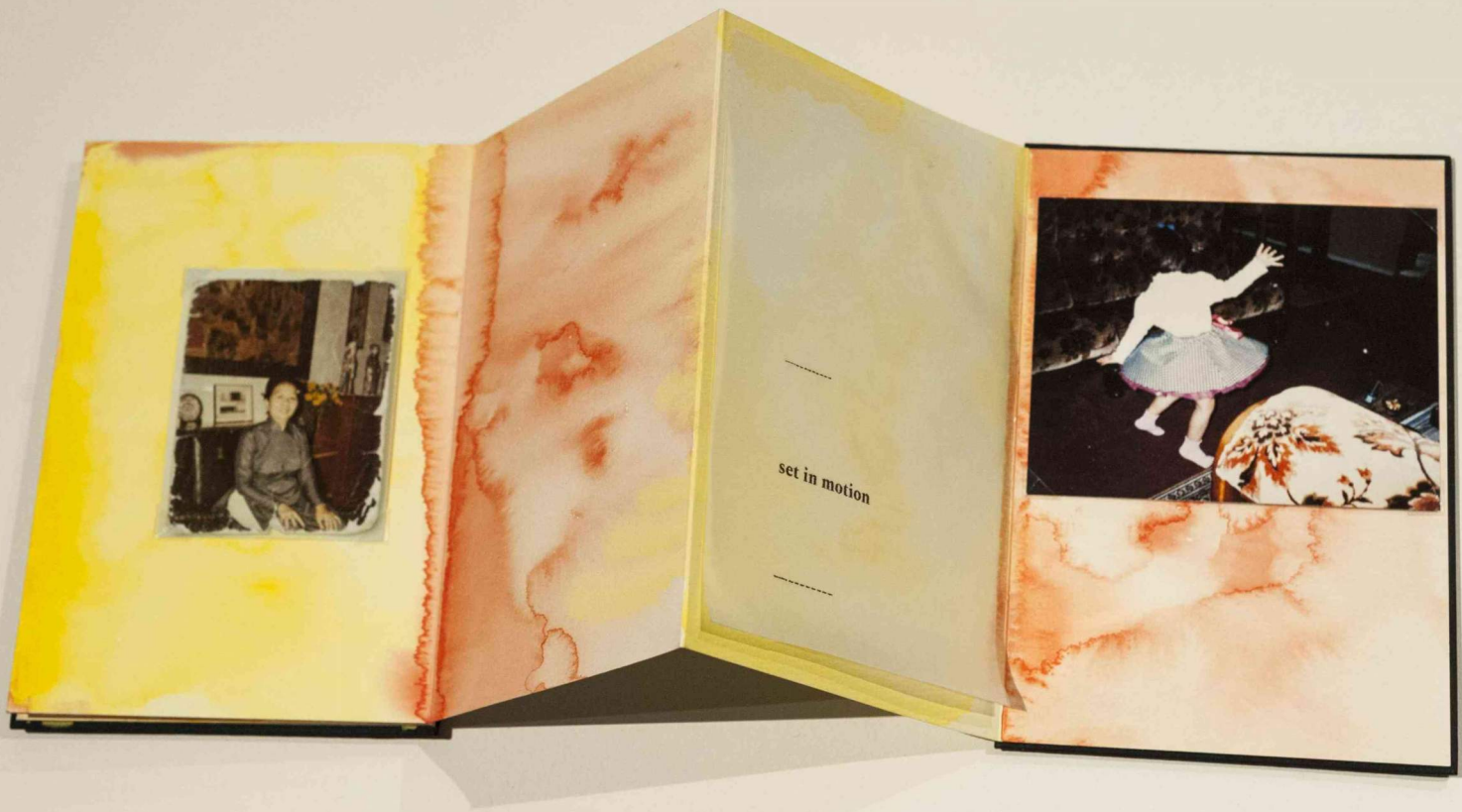
Minh Lan Tran (b.1997, Hong Kong) lives and works in London. She is currently completing an MA in Painting at The Royal College of Art. Tran's practice builds on her own writing and identity-based research in calligraphy. Drawing on textual elements, Tran creates works on canvas that blend writing and paint in an iterative process of reflection and integration. Skin-like and multi-layered, Tran's compositions evolve, respond, and change through her own bodily actions. Coming from choreography and performance, she treats the canvas as a field of tension where corporeality forms and dissolves in deep incisions.

The painting presented in this exhibition focused on the question of the transformation of violence. Transforming violence into ardour, Tran explores the transformative process of painting itself, using writing as a way to generate energy and heat.

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(re)Appearing Acts, 2010 – ongoing  
3 concertina books, giclée prints, watercolour  
19.5 x 13.5 cm (closed) x3

Carô Gervay (b.1986 Paris, France) explores photography as a performative process that generates new spaces of reflection and potential for critical action. Through 'drawing with light' and 'appearing acts', she creates experiences where imagination and memory are in play. Gervay is interested in collectively expressing and responding to the needs and aspirations of diaspora communities, whilst challenging the norms of how we create with photography. She is co-director of the Gate Darkroom.

The series *Unfinished Books* responds to *No Place Like Home* by connecting narratives encountered through the artist's engagement with family archives, community organising and colonial contexts here and across the Channel. This body of work is ongoing and collaborative in nature. It reflects on some of the roles played by photography, highlighting the layers of complexity, labour and care required by these diasporic moments and relationships. Namely, this work considers a photographic practice in conversation with: the An Viet archives in Hackney, l'Union Générale des Vietnamiens de France, a 1928 French order that determined the status of mixed-race children, and the London-based Vietnamese women's group, Reframes.

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AP Nguyen (b.1999 Hanoi, Vietnam) is a multidisciplinary artist working in the mediums of ceramic, sculpture, and video. Her practice is as driven by material and process as it is by the interrogation of images, aesthetics, and the semiotics of tourism. Interpreting the psychology of travel and movement in a post-war context, she explores the potential for world-building and myth-making in order to question clichés and learnt narratives. She currently lives and works in London.

The moon cycles bring stories and secrets from lands across the shared oceans, conveyed by whispering waves. The winds may carry a faint greeting or a violent warning. The tale of the lonely stone island tells of aged palm trees that thrive on improbable surfaces, their mysterious existence whispered by the waves.

*Twin Whisperings* is a new piece of work that continues the artist's exploration and research into the Vietnamese practice of creating miniature landscapes known as *Hòn Non Bô*, which roughly translates to *island-mountain-panorama*. The work also reflects the artist's meditation on tourism and contemporary travel.



*Twin whisperings*, 2023  
Stoneware and crank clay, glaze, metal, aluminium, plastic,  
android screen  
46 x 28 x 23 cm

@\_a\_\_p\_\_\_\_\_



*The Gift, 2023*

Resin, epoxy, UV gel polish - brass chain, gold leaf - embroidered message on cotton canvas

35 x 50 x 40 cm

**Hoa Dung Clerget** (b.1985, France) lives and works in the UK and holds a Master in Painting from Royal College of Art. Clerget's practice is centred on the artisanal production of objects that take on a narrative dimension on the themes of the domestic and displacement. Her works affirm their materiality through gestures borrowed from everyday life, the ones of the women in her family and community.

**Koa Pham** (b.1993 Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam) works with different mediums including drawing, sculpture, and design. His work investigates the relationship between objects, humans, and space, with an emphasis on how objects affect humans and influence their decision-making. Pham holds a BA and MA in Industrial Design from Central Saint Martins.

In the Vietnamese culture, it is common to bring food as a form of gift when invited to someone's house. The king of fruit, the durian, is the subject created by Clerget and Pham to reflect the nature of their multiple exchanges, their gift of friendship and knowledge to one another. In fact, most of the artists' works in this exhibition reflect recent discussions, which can be understood as gifts of conversations.

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*Family Heirloom, 2023*

Acrylic and transfer on clay

20 x 20 x 20 cm

**KV Duong** (b.1980 Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam) is a London-based artist who examines the complexities of the Vietnamese queer identity through painting, performance, sculpture, and installation. Duong grew up in Canada to Vietnamese Chinese parents displaced by the Vietnam War. His work explores themes of migration and cultural assimilation through the lens of personal and familial history.

The body of work presented in this exhibition expands on Duong's sculptural practice, examining his childhood memories of growing up in an immigrant household, as well as the broader themes of Vietnam's Chinese colonial history and impact of the Vietnam War on the exodus of Vietnamese people. By employing found objects and materials of personal significance, historic documentation, and his own family photos, Duong constructs imagined landscapes that offer a glimpse into his personal heritage. He retells a history that has been distorted through media censorship and displaced through passed-on experiences, and in so doing suggests a new psychological reality.

Duong is a self-taught artist with a Master's in Structural Engineering. He presented his first institutional solo exhibition at the Migration Museum in 2022.

<https://www.kvduong.com/>

@kvduongart

Cường Minh Bá Phạm (b.1988 London, UK) works in/between/nearby sound, community, and archives. He is interested in learning (and at times unlearning) our understanding of history, community, movement, family, sound, language, and memory and how they inform or challenge power, knowledge and/or subjectivity. Phạm holds a Master's in Southeast Asia studies at SOAS. He is the co-founder of An Viet Archives Steering Committee.

*(Re)generative Mediations* explores the resonances, tonality, and reverberations within a communal / family setting. This work draws inspiration from the natural world, particularly the importance of sound in coral reef systems. Research suggests that the soundscape of an environment influences where young coral larvae settle for life, and that vibrant soundscapes can help regenerate degraded reefs. This body of work reimagines what various spaces (geographical, family, community) could and should sound like to encourage regeneration. The work envisions a new sonic future focused on healing and joy and encourages people to explore sound in new ways. Information Theory distinguishes between desired signal and unwanted noise. This piece invites listeners, viewers, and participants to engage in new ways of hearing beyond what we are told to listen to?

*(Re)generative Mediations*, 2023

Speaker phone, mother of pearls, shellac records, with 4 channel sound piece.  
Dimensions variable







[[Re]frames: [tái] địn hình, đống khung [lại], Carô, Hoa, Lili, Diana, Na, Hồng, Mary, Linh, Linda, Mai Anh, Giang, Châu, 2021 – ongoing

Carô Gervay

Handbound book, hand-printed silver gelatin pinhole print, glassine paper.

W21 x L14.8 cm

## Essay by Louise Malcolm

'No Place Like Home' poses viewers a series of questions:

*Which objects create a feeling of home [for you]?*

*What meaning do the objects that have passed through your family generations have?*

*How do you feel at home when you're not?*

It's a theme particularly relevant to this group of artists, all of whom form part of the Vietnamese diaspora in London. Some are descendants of émigrés who left Vietnam with conflicts that engulfed Southeast Asia in the post-World War II era, while others are Vietnamese artists who have moved to London to study and work. All a long way from home, their ancestral cultural heritage is far removed from this European hub. Through touching and evocative artworks, the participating artists extend the dialogue around the concept of 'home' and propose a series of answers to their questions.



*Untitled (The Mask)*, 2023

Hoa Dung Clerget

Perspex, mask display stand, mdf, resin, thermoplastic, UV gel Polish, glitter.

90 x 30 x 30 cm

Food as an expression of home is touched on in several pieces. In Vietnam, people don't ask, 'How are you?' but greet one another with 'Ăn cơm chưa?' ('Have you had rice/ eaten yet?'). Held within this short phrase is the idea of the meal as a symbol of shared family life, made more poignant by the country's history of war and famine. In *Chúng ta là một thể hợp nhất (We Are An Unmistakable Fusion)*, 2023, Duong Thuy Nguyen creates in plaster a tower of Vietnamese tableware, recalling the ritual of her family's daily meal. Artists Hoa Dung Clerget and Koa Pham's collaborative deceptively ceramic piece, *The Gift*, 2023, represents a durian, widely revered in Vietnam as the 'King of Fruits' and a valued gift for family occasions.





*Displaced Shelving, 2023*  
KV Duong  
Quan Âm's portrait, incense burner  
from Bát Tràng village, store bought  
offerings, spray paint, acrylic box,  
IKEA shelves  
Dimensions variable



*Nước Nhà/ Pickled houses, 2023*  
Duong Thuy Nguyen  
3D print, resin, and metal  
30 x 15 x 15 cm

The theme of family heirlooms similarly recurs throughout the presentation. In *Family Heirloom, 2023*, KV Duong decorates a replica Ming dynasty moon vase with a photograph of his family, taken in Ho Chi Minh in 1986, to explore the complexities of inheritance and identity. Likewise, Carô Gervay's *(re)Appearing Acts, 2010–ongoing*, is a series of 3 concertina books that probe the artist's family archive as an inheritance.

Landscape also becomes a signifier for home. AP Nguyen's *Twin whisperings, 2023* continues the artist's research into *Hòn Non Bộ* (roughly: 'island-mountain-panorama'), the Vietnamese practice of creating miniature landscapes. Accompanied by the story of a palm tree grove that, having migrated from faraway lands, finds shelter on a remote island, Nguyen sites displacement within the landscape paradise.



*Chúng ta là một thể hợp nhất/ We Are An Unmistakable Fusion, 2023*  
Wood, mdf, and plaster  
35 x 50 x 40 cm

At its heart, what this exhibition really explores are the intersections of person and place, and the trauma of displacement. If Descartes posited the question 'who am I' as the most fundamental of human concerns, then the question 'where am I?' is surely the most poignant. To not know where one is gives rise to intense anxiety: when we experience a breakdown of orientation and lose our bearings, we lose our confidence as well. And to live without a sense of place is true deprivation, one that we look to literature, music and art to relieve. Art often tells us who we are; sometimes, it can help us work out where we are, too.





*Birthday Cake to My Younger Self, 2023*

Acrylic on clay and concrete grout, wire, used nails and staples, found wax candles, aluminium

18 x 22 x 22 cm

In this formulation, visitors to 'No Place Like Home' become travellers. And, at first, the world we walk into is open and convivial, the artists guiding us into a homely setting. With artworks displayed on low, amorphous tables, we are invited to sit and enjoy them as we would a relaxed family meal. On the wall, a warmly hued, textural painting on canvas by Minh Lan Tran, *Ardour*, 2022, enhances the homely atmosphere of a presentation that purports to make visible those intersections of person and place, and in doing so offer a sense of home. But all is not what it seems.





## Opening Launch

In Duong Thuy Nguyen's *Nước Nhà (Pickled houses)*, 2023, we recognise typical Vietnamese tube homes immersed in pickled Sấu, a drink commonly found in working-class homes in Vietnam. But the liquid is misty and opaque, the houses clouded and obscured. KV Duong's *Birthday Cake to My Younger Self*, 2023 recreates the first birthday cake the artist recalls having, when he turned seven in Canada, a few months after his family migrated. A seemingly warm memory, this replica in clay, concrete, wire and acrylic is distinctly unpalatable. Hoa Dung Clerget's *Untitled (The Mask)*, 2023 presents us with an aesthetically beautiful sculpture, rarefied in its glass museum case; close inspection reveals it to be constructed from acrylic fingernails, bringing into focus the salons in which many Vietnamese migrants work. 'Home' is a fragile concept. Much like the trauma of displacement, traversing the exhibition is a sustained metaphor for losing and finding our way, and losing it once more.

Nevertheless, the spirit of hope is alive and well. In Cường Minh Bá Phạm's sound piece *(Re)generative Mediations*, 2023 we hear the warm resonances, tones and reverberations of a communal or family setting. The piece takes inspiration from recent research into coral reefs that shows how vibrant soundscapes can help to regenerate degraded environments. Bringing this into a human context, the work imagines how we can use sound as a tool for healing and regeneration.





## Tea Conversations

While traditionally the concept of home can be understood as a single location to which we return, 'No Place Like Home' suggests other explanations more fitting to the nomadic ways we live today. 'Home' has moved from place, to space, to concept, a versatile ever-shifting zone in which we can re-find our bearings and confidence. It is particularly fitting that this exhibition occupies The Museum of the Home, which uses room dioramas to reveal and rethink the ways we live. Located on the Kingsland Road, this area of East London, where the An Viet Foundation used to welcome migrants to the country, has historically served as a community hub for Vietnamese people to meet and find a taste of home. Here, home becomes about people, their shared memories and rituals. And this is where art comes in. We rely upon art, whether we know it or not, to strengthen our sense of place by collecting and communicating our personal and collective experiences. Art can make us at home in the world.

[museumofthehome.org.uk](http://museumofthehome.org.uk)  
@museumofthehome

Images courtesy of the Artists  
Photo credit: Joseph Beeching

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