

# Thu-Van Tran Write as the Beasts Cry at Night 05.09-20.10.24

EN

## La Loge

Kluisstraat 86 - rue de l'Ermitage  
B-1050 Brussels

Thu-Van Tran draws on literature, history, and nature to explore the question of exile and the mutation of beings and languages in the wake of colonial narratives. *Write as the Beasts Cry at Night* unfolds in La Loge like an open book, a palimpsest where Marguerite Duras' aura intersects with legendary, intimate writings. Through tracing, imprinting, and fragmenting, the artist focuses on what her chosen materials represent, searching for recollections she can extract. Thu-Van Tran scrutinises contaminated memories, the processes of disappearance and reappearance, and buried violence to sketch out a new imaginary—a possible liberation.

Dear Thu-Van,

I'm at the temple's threshold, like an outsider searching for beauty.

You once told me that memory is our medium and that we live inside its material. A material, a language ready to drag us into the movement of images; a material conducive to absolute transformation—writing—as Duras says, she who has kept you company in your work over the years. With you I share an interest in this complex and essential character. She who places the difficulties of evoking colonial Indochina in France at the heart of her work. She who says that writing is also not speaking; writing is howling without noise. She who says that to read is also to write. Working on and crafting one's texts is also, I believe, the creation of a language.

You told me that history was built by contamination, occupation, and domination. You and Duras give injustice a materiality. She, first and foremost driven by the desire for revenge coupled with anger as her prime motivation, you, using language as resistance; you say that "Language [is] a spoil of war". You unravel feelings through the very gestures of writing. I've read Duras's words, and here I move with them, they drift in the air. In the unholy temple that I now see, you have torn them from their bindings to offer the reading body a wealth of knowledge unfolding for each and every one of us. Are you worried about the loss of knowledge? What would the world be without books? There's a whole economy captured in indelible ink on these pages, not to mention your thoughts on the fragile nature of words.

From dawn to dusk, I walk in circles. Wandering around Hanoi alongside Hoa-Mi is the symbolic equivalent of an earthly cycle. The silence of contemplation leads me to follow the traces of an intimate history in a country where censorship and corruption reign. Between past and present, spaces converge: "Why have myths turned into desire?"<sup>1</sup> On the white sheet of paper, blue splashes draw mountains, halos merging visions of Hanoi. In a theatre of eternal resurrection and duality, creatures of knowledge and tranquillity live side by side. They remind me of Bachelard, who saw imagination as a faculty for distorting images rather than inventing them<sup>2</sup>. Time spent with Hoa-Mi is like a dream in Vietnamese, learning new human, animal, and vegetal languages. Hoa-Mi does not speak with the accent of the wise turtles. I wasn't sure I understood correctly, so I followed the footsteps of your bootleg translations, stripped of their author's linguistic authority<sup>3</sup>. Guided by my subjectivity, I tried, like you, to turn the past into the present, creating the impression of *déjà-vu*, in order to start speaking the other's language. "Ni l'eau, ni le ciel ne peuvent se distinguer. Ils s'unissent, s'abolissent de toute matérialité"<sup>4</sup>.

The horizon tilts, and I come to a standstill in front of the great veil bathed in the projection's light. The narrative fragments do not only perpetuate radiant memories of Confucius<sup>5</sup>. How can we reenact and understand the days of colonisation, exploitation, and plantations that we will never know? As I look at the rubber trees, the grey cloud, and the birds cloaked in mourning white above, I read the violent chapters of a crucial history. It could be that your meticulously dyed, ground, and fired materials offer a temporary remedy, a moment of respite from unhealable grief.

The day falls silent. Deliverance, like when night sets in, says Duras. Hoa-Mi is leaving, like others before her, but I don't think her back is turned on Vietnam. This other temple I have entered is perhaps a portrait, one representing the accumulated memory of the country left behind.

Kind regards,

Antoinette

1. *24 heures à Hanoi*, Thu-Van Tran, 2019.

2. Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les Songes, Essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* [Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement], 1943.

3. Thu-Van Tran explores colonial narratives and hybrid identities through literature. In 2013, she published a subjective French version of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

4. *Au plus profond du noir*, Joseph Conrad, translated from *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Thu-Van Tran, third edition, 2016, Les Abattoirs – Frac Midi-Pyrénées, France. The sentence translates back to English as "Neither water nor sky can be separated. They unite, removing themselves from all materiality."

5. The Temple Of Literature in Hanoi is a Confucian teaching temple founded in the 11th century in honour of the philosopher.

**Thu-Van Tran** (b. 1979, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam) lives and works in Paris. A graduate of the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris in 2004, her practice draws on literature, history, and nature, focusing on how the concepts of contamination, identity, and language are deployed in such fields. She was nominated for the Marcel Duchamp Prize in 2018 and has presented her work in France and abroad in the following exhibitions: *Nous vivons dans l'éclat*, MAMAC, Nice (France), 2023; *Avant l'orage*, La Bourse du commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris (France), 2023; *Is it morning for you yet?*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, (United States), 2022; *A Century in Color*, Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, Bonn (Germany), 2022; *Réclamer la terre*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, (France), 2022; *Global(e) Resistance*, MNAM Centre Pompidou, Paris, (France), 2020; *Novel Without a Title*, Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel, (Switzerland), 2020; *24h à Hanoi*, Le CREDAC, Ivry-sur-Seine, (France), 2019; *Viva Arte Viva*, 57° Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venice (Italy), 2017; *Jardin Infini. De Giverny à l'Amazonie*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz, (France), 2017.

Thu-Van Tran is represented by the galleries Almine Rech (Paris, London, New York, Shanghai), Meessen (Brussels), and Rüdiger Schöttle (Munich).

## WORKS

### Hallway

*Encre assassine – First Sight* [Assassin ink – First Sight], 2024

23 Books, methylene blue ink

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist and La Loge

The books on the shelves have been selected by members of First Sight, La Loge's patronage organisation. Each member has chosen a symbolic, landmark book that they would like to save from destruction or, at the very least, highlight its contents' fragile and precious nature. The books have been dipped in methylene blue by Thu-Van Tran and form a shared library: First Sight will receive it as a collective and shared work after the exhibition. Indelible ink is used in the publishing world to stain books, ensuring preliminary destruction before being sent to be pulped by a giant pestle, a secular book burning of sorts. By dousing them in ink, the books are made impossible to sell should they be intercepted before the pulping process. A deadly ink covers the ink of knowledge, testimony, and imagination. It simultaneously contaminates and paints a landscape over the writing.

### From the ground floor to the second floor

*Encre assassine – Écrire* [Assassin ink – Writing], 2024

Book pages, leaves, methylene blue ink, framed

42 frames, each 23,5 x 18,5 cm (paper size)

Courtesy of the artist and Almine Rech

The exhibition, conceived as an open book, takes as its starting point the publication *Écrire* [Writing] (1993) by Marguerite Duras (b. 1914, in Gia Định, near Saigon in the former French Indochina; died in Paris in 1996). The book itself has been dipped in methylene blue ink and then dissected. The detached double pages are framed and hung throughout La Loge, with the frames hung perpendicular to the wall so that both sides of each sheet can be read. This dissection method is reminiscent of learning and reading by surveying (a method of shared reading in which the book is torn apart to form as many sub-sections as people involved). Dealing with the creative process, the text *Écrire*, gives its name to the publication, which itself comprises several essays. In another of her texts, *Le nombre pur* [The Pure Number], Duras imagines an artistic struggle to record the names of all the Renault workers once employed at the Boulogne Billancourt factory. By adding up all the names, one would theoretically obtain the "true number", a gesture made possible by Thu-Van Tran in an earlier work (*Le nombre pur selon Marguerite Duras*). The threat to writing and knowledge symbolises a form of precariousness and censorship essential to the artist. The story is never entirely covered by methylene blue and its indelible stains. For Thu-Van Tran, the colour is not only a symbol of oppression but also of melancholy.

## Temple

*24 heures à Hanoi* [24 hours in Hanoi], 2019

Double projection, HD video, colour, sound, 16 mm film transferred to 2K video  
29'34"

Courtesy of the artist

Cast:

Hoa Mi / Hoa My Nguyen

The young girl from the North / Thi Giáng Hương Phùng

The taxi driver / Thanh Tran Phuong

Voices:

The storyteller / Anh Tuan Hoa Mi / Irène Quoico

The turtles / Thi Thuý Le

Recording: Manh Thái Hoang Le

Writing, filming, editing: Thu-Van Tran

Translation: Manh Thang Hoang Le and Thu-Van Tran

We follow Hoa-Mi (the nightingale in Vietnamese) as she wanders through Hanoi for twenty-four hours, the time it takes for the Earth to complete one rotation. The many places she passes are steeped in history and symbolism, from the ostentatious Catholic cathedral to the tranquil Temple Of Literature. The wise turtles that rest there whisper poems to her, rendering the young woman's filiation with this culture even more uncertain. Worlds are juxtaposed on this dreamlike journey, and a sense of cyclical interdependence emerges between the human, vegetal, and mineral realms. In this enigmatic ecosystem, the encounter between a foreigner and a country steeped in its past and its myths is woven.

The use of different techniques and lighting effects underlines the artist's interest in the materiality of the image. For example, the dream sequence, during the night cycle, is captured on 16mm film, while the images of the present are captured in the daytime by drone or digitally. In Pedro Morais's view, it is a question of "listening in the present to the sedimentations of Vietnam's memory. The film expresses this idea in its very form, employing digital and analogue media. The artist has preserved the latter's effects of solarisation and flashes of light, thus revealing an archaeology of how reality is recorded". (*Thu-Van Tran, Dans le clair obscur du langage* [In the Chiaroscuro of Language], Special issue of *Beaux Arts* magazine, 2019)

*Encre assassine – Page blanche* [Assassin ink – Blank page], 2024

Methylene blue ink, Bresser Arctic White paper

350 cm x 700 cm

Courtesy of the artist

The installation in the temple consists of a large white sheet doused in methylene blue (the caustic ink sprayed on books sent to be pulped). The artist lets the ink soak into the paper, giving the impression of contamination, of a stain. The blank page unfurls on the floor, like a painting on an Asian vertical scroll or a piece of parchment whose story has yet to be written. The non-figurative representation of a landscape or a falling sky suggests a different reading of the world, connecting

heaven and earth. The apparent materiality of such contamination conjures up the idea of an immaculate surface tainted, the fantasy of whiteness and purity shattered. On the reverse, the stained white page becomes the screen and the conceptual backdrop for the projection of the film *24 hours in Hanoi*, and the paint stain merges with the film's frames.

## **Second floor**

*Le Génie du ciel* [The genie in the sky], 2023  
Marble shards, 108 rocks in Sèvres Porcelain  
Variable dimensions  
Courtesy of the artist and Almine Rech

A series of porcelain pieces is laid out on a bed of white marble. They were made from powdered rock, and are dotted with bird wings. Thu-Van Tran has reappropriated a Vietnamese legend about mourning to develop a myth, materialised here in her sculptures. It is said that a genie in the sky, moved by the distress of bereaved families who could not sleep, transformed a hundred rocks on the shores of the Lake of the Restored Sword in Hanoi into birds. Guided by the moonlight, the birds grant the families sleep and tranquillity with their song before returning to their rocky state on the lake's shores. This tale, which the artist thought she'd heard as a child but has since never recovered, leads Thu-Van Tran to question the birth of ancestral myths and their transmission. Their existence implies an in-between state, somewhere between fossilisation and the transformation into the living.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMME**

### **Opening RendezVous / Brussels Art Week**

12.09.24, 18:00

La Loge is participating in the new cultural season's OFF programme, RendezVous Brussels Art Week. For the event's opening on Thursday, 12 September, Thu-Van Tran's exhibition will be accessible until 21:00.

#### **Practical information**

Opening times extended until 21:00

Free admission

### **Architecture: Heritage Days**

14-15.09.24, 10:00-13:00

La Loge is participating in the 36th Heritage Days on the theme of New Heritages. As a former Masonic temple built in the 1930s, La Loge is a unique modernist building that has preserved the vestiges of its past. In the 1970s, the Freemasons left the building. During this transitional period, the building housed the Archives de l'Architecture Moderne, which were linked to the period's significant urban and architectural changes. Guided tours in French, English and Dutch offer you the chance to discover this history.

#### **Practical information**

14-15.09

Tours in FR 10:00 - NL 11:00 - EN 12:00

Free admission, very limited spaces

Reservations required: [heritagedays.urban.brussels](https://heritagedays.urban.brussels)

More information: [jdp-omd@urban.brussels](mailto:jdp-omd@urban.brussels)

### **Through the eyes of Yann Chateigné Tytelman**

19.09.24, 18:30

Take a subjective look at Thu-Van Tran's work through the eyes of curator and author Yann Chateigné Tytelman.

#### **Biography**

Yann Chateigné Tytelman is an author and curator living in Brussels. He is one of the co-founders of Celador, a reading group and space for doing things with words. He has occupied the roles of curator of residencies at Fondation Thalie, Brussels (2023-24); artistic advisor and researcher in residence at MORPHO, Antwerp (2022-23); curator at Kanal - Centre Pompidou, Brussels (2019-2021); head of the Visual Arts Department at HEAD - Geneva (2009-2017) and of programming at CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2007-2009). He recently (co-) organised the exhibitions and projects *Regenerative Futures* (Fondation Thalie, Brussels, 2024); *Four Sisters* (Jewish Museum of Belgium, Brussels, 2023); *A Glittering*



*Ruin Sucked Upwards* (HISK, Brussels, 2022); *How to be Organic?* (Country SALTS, Bennwil, 2022); *It Never Ends* (Kanal, Brussels, 2020–2021), and *Gordon Matta-Clark: Material Thinking* (Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal and Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, 2019–2021). As an author, he has contributed to *Conceptual Fine Arts*, Mousse and Spike, among others, and co-edited *Almanach Ecart. Une archive collective, 1969–2019* (HEAD – Geneva/art&fiction, 2019). His first short story, *Blackout* was published by the Centre d'Édition Contemporaine de Genève in 2023.

### **Practical information**

Doors: 18:00

Language: English

Duration: Approx. 45 minutes

Free admission

Reservation required: [info@la-loge.be](mailto:info@la-loge.be)

### **In conversation: Thu-Van Tran and Eva Barois de Caevel**

07.10.24, 18:30

“In 2015, Thu-Van Tran invited me to write about her work. A text came out, which ended with these words: ‘Fracas du témoin’. It was about the noise of the work, the posture of the artist, surrounding the question of History and its restitution. Since then, we kept being in touch through texts, and one day our discussions took place in a tropical greenhouse, a place of inspiration for the artist.”

To discuss what happens in Thu-Van’s exhibition at La Loge, Eva Barois and Thu-Van Tran look back at the material processes that give rise to the works. They question the way in which narratives, fiction, make their appearance in our psyches. What does the intrusion- that usually happens at night - of myth and literature mean? What connection does it have with the stages of mourning (and what mourning are we talking about)?

### **Biography**

Eva Barois De Caevel (b. 1989, Arras, France) is Curator in the Department of Contemporary and Prospective Creation at the Musée national d’art moderne – Centre Pompidou in Paris. She lives in Seine-Saint-Denis and Loiret. She was awarded the 2020 Cnap curatorial research grant and the 2014 ICI Independent Vision Curatorial Award. She has published numerous texts in exhibition catalogues and specialized journals. Previously an independent curator, she devoted herself to writing, curation, teaching and pedagogy, publishing and research in dialogue with many people. In the past, she worked for RAW Material Company in Dakar, was a curator for the Lagos Photo Festival and was part of the curatorial team at EVA International, the Irish biennial, among many others insitutional collaborators.

### **Practical information**

Doors: 18:00,

Language: French with live translations (EN)

Free admission, Reservation advised: [info@la-loge.be](mailto:info@la-loge.be)

## Museum Night Fever & Finissage with Alex Deforce et Doris Hardeman

19.10.24, 20:00–00:00

To mark the last weekend of the exhibition and Museum Night Fever, La Loge presents an evening of performances by two guest artists whose work resonates with the exhibition. Doris Hardeman will explore cognitive states of (non-) performativity as a way of addressing our collective tendency towards compulsive productivity. Reflecting on Thu-Van Tran's film *24 hours in Hanoi*, a "theatre of reappearances", her performance will conjure up a waking dream, a chance to delve into storytelling through memory, positing melancholy as a state of in-between. Alex Deforce's audio intervention will interweave electronic sounds and fragments of poetry, creating an immersive, meditative experience.

**Doris Hardeman** (1993) lives and works in Brussels and Geneva. Through paying close attention to the broad versatility of materials in terms of craftsmanship and the mass production industries, the work of Doris Hardeman plays with the utility and original value of her chosen materials, amplifying connotations concerning the industrial manufacturability of our present time. Both on a material and conceptual level, her practice explores our present-day Western obsession with authenticity. The term authenticity, functioning here as a nostalgia-driven ideology aiming to escape a catastrophe-ridden future doomed by late capitalism, serves as a lens through which she considers its influence on cultural trends. Considering how different contemporary aesthetics are classified in terms of uniqueness and transgression versus tradition, she tries to understand how the hierarchisation of her subjects defines how we shape our collective memory. She studied at the Royal Academy of Art in the Hague [KABK] and obtained her master's degree at the University of Art and Design in Geneva [HEAD].

**Alex Deforce** (1984) debuted as a poet in January 2019 with *Nachtdichter*, by Victor De Roo, released on the Amsterdam-based label Knekelhuis. The same year, he was featured on Brihang's *Casco* album, for which he recited poems by Georges Perec. In September 2020, his first solo 7" vinyl was released on Lexi Disques. Once a month, Alex Deforce hosts *Nonchalance Calculée*, a radio show about poetry, bar culture, and the Brussels dialect, on Kiosk Radio. During the lockdown, Alex Deforce was part of the *Dichters van wacht* project and he saw his first poem published in the Paris-based literary volume *The Opiate*. In 2022 Les Editions Deforce saw the light of day. In 2024, the album *Kwart voor straks*, a collaboration with Charlotte Jacobs, was released by the renowned label Stroom. In September 2024, his first book was published by Poëziecentrum: "Tussenbruggen is a 'binge-walk' of clashing interests and wringing generational switches." The poem was published in five languages: Dutch, French, English, Brussels, and Arab.

### Practical information

Timing: 19:00–00:00

Start of performances: 20:00

Duration: Continuous

Free access with a MNF ticket

More information: [museumnightfever.be](https://museumnightfever.be)

## **Finissage with Eva Mancuso**

20.10.24, afternoon

Eva Mancuso's work is oriented towards critical feminism. Through her practice at the crossroads of poetry, performance, self-fiction and the visual arts, she tackles political issues through the intimate, the everyday, what is considered to be household, trivial and anodyne.

### **Practical information**

Exact hour to be announced

Lecture performance in french

Free entrance

**Visit our website for more information about our upcoming events.**

**[www.la-loge.be](http://www.la-loge.be)**

## Acknowledgements

*Write as the Beasts Cry at Night* would not have been possible without the engaged collaboration with the artist Thu-Van Tran.

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of Almine Rech and all the members of the First Sight community: Dhr. Freddy Dezeure, Mme Octavie Bordet, Mevr. Siska Bulkens, Mevr. Ann Cesteleyn, Dhr. Louis Cesteleyn, Mevr. Catherine De Dijcker, M. Frédéric de Goldschmidt, Mme Charlotte Friling, Dhr. Frederick Gordts, M. Pierre Iserbyt & Mme Michèle Didier, M. Dimitri Jeurissen & Mme Jeanna Criscitiello, Mme Anne Pètre & M. Christophe Steyaert, Mme Émilie Rolin, Dhr. Marc Vandecandelaere, Mr. Vedat Topsakal, Dhr. Bert Van Welden.

The production of this exhibition was made possible thanks to the professional and devoted work of Arthur Jules, Leonor Gomez, Manuel Sajn, and the technical assistance of Ludo Engels.

The artist would like to thank the entire team at La Loge, Wim Waelput for his invitation and Antoinette Jattiot for her support; the entire Almine Rech gallery team, Gwenvaël Launay, Camille Dana and Alice Doré; Olivier Meessen, Eva Barois De Caevel, and Yann Chateigné Tytelman.

Thanks to Alex Deforce, Doris Hardeman, Eva Mancuso, and Manon Laverdure.

The opening and public events are supported by Vedett.

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## The team of La Loge

Director and curator: Wim Waelput

Curator of public programmes and communication: Antoinette Jattiot

Intern: Manon Laverdure

Visual identity: Antoine Begon, Boy Vereecken

Production: Léonor Gomez, Arthur Jules

Audio & vidéo: Ludo Engels

Photography: Lola Pertsowsky

Exhibition video: Anais Chabeur

Translations and proofreadings: BLURBS, Marianne Doyen, Martine Wezenbeeck

First Sight ambassador: Johan Larsen

Volunteers: Alice Beiglig, Ina Ciumakova, Inès Guffroy, Thibaud Leplat, Shankar Lestréhan, Martina Lattuca, Marion Lissarague, Alice Nataf.

## Opening hours

From Thursday to Sunday

13:00 - 18:00

Free entrance.

Visit our website for more details about our programme and events.

[www.la-loge.be](http://www.la-loge.be)

La Loge is a non-profit association. La Loge is supported by the Flemish Government, the French Community (FWB), the Flemish Community Commission (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie - VGC) and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged individuals and organizations. La Loge receives additional support from the Municipality of Ixelles, French Community Commission (COCOF) and National Lottery of Belgium. La Loge is a member of 50° NORD-3° EST and Brussels Museums.

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