

Danh Vo

October 18 — November 20, 2021



Photo: Nick Ash.

“When you examine the present you must understand your past: the past that has identified your own present. I also believe you must look into the future. That’s definitely a philosophy of life that I live with and hopefully that shows in the work that I do.” — Danh Vo, 2021 (Secession)

From the very beginning, Danh Vo’s practice as an artist has been flirting with the boundaries of art, the memory of objects and their potential, the “constellation of craftsmanship”, as he calls it and of course, his own origin as a person. The *œuvre* as a ready-made is fundamental in his work, with the assumption that any object, principle, or status can be deconstructed and rebuilt in whichever way we choose, as long as it challenges with truth the issues of memory, culture, loss, intimacy and violence.

As an artist, Danh Vo has willingly contemplated multiple roles, that of a curator, a historian and a collector of forgotten practices such as his father’s and collaborator Phung Vo, skilled in the art of calligraphy. Metaphors of ruins and fragments from distant moments of our common history are often turned into objects, both antique and contemporary, resembling his hybrid philosophy as an artist, whilst addressing our knowledge and expectations as observers. Stories and connections take turn into his mind, creating a unique environment around the themes of desire, death, sexuality, religion, brutality of power and freedom.

In 2020, Danh Vo began a collaboration with the Nivaagaard Collection in Nivå (Denmark), scientist Carsten Rahbek and Michelin Chef Christian F. Puglisi, a Carte Blanche, where the artist was free to create a garden in the 900m² plot of land bought especially. With the idea of caring and sharing something beautiful and down to earth, as a community, a potato field was planted, farmed with about thirty-five potato varieties, and is now looked after by the residents of Nivå from May to August. With a twist of cuisine, this project explores local productions social responsibility and sustainability with passion and playfulness.

For his new solo exhibition at Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris, and in the continuity of his previous project at Secession in Vienna, Danh Vo presents his latest sculptural works and a new series that focuses on flowers.

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In an effort to find a new form of simplicity, Danh Vo decided to dedicate his energies to the beauty of flowers, growing a new garden around his studio at Güldenhof, an old farm in Brandenburg outside Berlin.

The flowers were photographed on the farm; the C-prints are glued on paper and labelled with their Latin name, in pencil, by his father using his beautiful handwriting. The works have an encyclopedic aura, like pages plucked from a large book and framed. This presentation, along with the Latin names, shows how we index and formulate nature according to our own values. In the names there is a history of global exchange, colonialism, and power, but also of aesthetics, utility, and cross fertilization.

For Danh Vo, nurturing the garden becomes a practical and symbolical liberation in the creative process.