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Anh Vo, *Song and Sex: Before the Revolution*

Curated by Alhena Katsof

May 10 - June 21, 2026

Opening Sunday, May 10, 7-9pm

Gallery hours, Thursday - Sunday, noon-7pm

It is not a reconstruction. It's not preservation. It's an attempt to sit inside the ambivalence between inheritance and experimentation, devotion and irreverence. - Anh Vo

PARTICIPANT INC presents Vietnamese choreographer and performance artist Anh Vo's first solo exhibition in New York City, *Song and Sex: Before the Revolution*, curated by Alhena Katsof. This unfolding exhibition exists in tandem with a series of performances that will take place weekly in the gallery. Each performance is a distinctive attempt at resurrection, invoked by an ever-evolving cast of artists, dancers, and musicians.

Song and Sex: Before the Revolution is the culmination of a year-long project during which Vo apprenticed with Vũ Thuỳ Linh and Phạm Đình Hoảng, two master-musicians who specialize in Ca Trù. This dying form of northern Vietnamese chamber music, austere and trance-like, is built on intricate poetic meters and a striking interplay between voice, drum, and lute. In the 20th century, it was condemned and effectively banned by the Communist government because of its association with prostitution and opium culture.

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116 Elizabeth Street, Floor One, NY, NY 10013

Vo grew up knowing that their great-grandmother was a Ca Trù singer on Khâm Thiên street in Hanoi, which was once notorious for its singing houses, opium dens, and intimate entanglements between art and sex work. Vo's great-grandmother was eventually bought out of the singing house by their great-grandfather to be his second wife. Even though Vo had never heard the music in-person, the family story meant that when they did finally encounter Ca Trù in 2024, it was not as a neutral "heritage form." They understood that the music's virtuosity and refinement were historically inseparable from the lives of the women whose artistry unfolded within colonial economies of pleasure and precarity.

This past winter, Vo embarked on the apprenticeship in Hanoi, studying with Linh and Hoàng. This process was documented by visual artist Kyle b. Co., who produced a series of field drawings that are now integral to the exhibition. They were also joined by Barley Norton, a London-based ethnomusicologist and cherished interlocutor, who has been studying Ca Trù since the mid 1990s. During the rehearsal process, Norton said to Vo in passing: "Ethnography relies on the generosity of its subjects."

"My project isn't ethnography," writes Vo. "But it's not *not* ethnography either. I am deeply indebted to the generosity of Linh and Hoàng, two musicians of the **Ả Đào Phú Thị Ensemble**. They opened their hearts and entrusted me with the form, even when I myself don't fully know what I am doing with it yet. I do know that I will activate or play Ca Trù as I hear it now in the contemporary."

In February, Linh and Hoàng joined Vo in New York City, during which time they continued to rehearse intensively—at Initial Research in SoHo, and then during a residency at the Center for the Arts at Wesleyan University. At first, Vo deliberately postponed "composing" a new performance; they wanted to soak in the idioms of Ca Trù. Eventually, Vo began to experiment with the form, giving a performance at Roulette Intermedium in March that centered the collaboration with Linh and Hoàng.

Vo's research, training and experimentation is metabolized during the unfolding of *Song and Sex: Before the Revolution*. There will be a different performance every Sunday at the gallery during the run of the show. PARTICIPANT INC will also host two public conversations and a reading. Please see below for a detailed list of dates, times, titles, and participating artists.

Performance Schedule

Resurrection #1: it's not a revolution without blood

Sunday, May 10, 7-8pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Kristel Baldoz, Kyle b. co., Jessica Pavone, Marija Kovačević, Natalie Zhao

Resurrection #2: how's it going down there?

Sunday, May 17, 2-5pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Kristel Baldoz, Justin Cabrillos, Isaac Silber

Resurrection #3: death divination

Sunday, May 24, 12-8pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Jessica Pavone, Marija Kovačević

Resurrection #4: it was a hand, maternal yet formless

Sunday, May 31, 7-8pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Sto Len, Isaac Silber

Resurrection #5: a listening session

Sunday, June 7, 1-2pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Isaac Silber

Resurrection #6: another death divination

Sunday, June 14, 12-8pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Jessica Pavone, Marija Kovačević, gabby fluke-mogul

Resurrection #7: sex on sundays

Sunday, June 21, 7-8pm

Participants: Anh Vo, Kristel Baldoz, Justin Cabrillos, Jessica Pavone, Marija Kovačević, gabby fluke-mogul

Public Talks

André Lepecki, Ann Pellegrini, and Anh Vo, moderated by Alhena Katsof

Tuesday, May 12, 7-8:30pm

Barley Norton and Anh Vo

Thursday, May 21, On Zoom, 5-6:30pm

Summer Kim Lee, Anh Vo, and Alhena Katsof

Wednesday, June 17, 6-7:30

Based in Brooklyn and Hanoi, Anh Vo is a Vietnamese choreographer and writer working in the expanded field of performance. Their work emerges from the unlikely lineage convergences between Downtown New York experimental performance, Hanoi performance art, and Vietnamese folk ritual practices. Vo is indebted to Miguel Gutierrez's unapologetic queerness and amorphous excess, Moriah Evan's speculative commitment to the depth of interiority, Julie Tolentino's durational poetics of intimacy, Tehching Hsieh's existential sense of time, and Ngoc Dai's guttural sonic landscape of postwar Vietnam. Their formal training is in Performance Studies, studying with theorists and practitioners at Brown University (BA) and New York University (MA). Vo is currently an Adjunct Instructor at Cooper Union.

IMAGE: Kyle b. co., *Field drawing—Anh Vo, Vũ Thùy Linh, Phạm Đình Hoàng rehearsing in Hanoi*, 2025, oil pastel on paper, courtesy of the artist.

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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 116 Elizabeth Street, floor one, between Broome and Grand Streets. The closest trains are the J/Z (Bowery) and the B/D (Grand); the closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 6 (Canal). Entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.

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