

International Exhibition for the Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras

Exhibition of works by Vietnamese artist Truong Tan

Born in Hanoi, Truong Tan has been exhibiting his work in Vietnam for the past seven years. He has lectured at the Hanoi School of Arts and has held exhibitions in Paris, Hong Kong and Japan. One of his most notable international exhibitions was Containers '96 in Copenhagen last year.

Truong Tan's arresting lacquer panels and works on rice paper deal principally with gay issues in Vietnam. He poses questions related to the demonisation of gay people in government propaganda as well as the lack of serious health measures against the spread of AIDS. In effect, he questions moral and social attitudes in Vietnam towards gay men and women.

Over the past two years Truong Tan's work has become increasingly political in nature. Although his work has always been characterised by cartoon-like representations of aroused men and symbolic phalluses, the inclusion of both English and Vietnamese text caused concern for the communist authorities. In July 1995 they unceremoniously removed his work hours before the opening of his exhibition at Red River Gallery. As a deft response to such heavy handed censorship, Truong Tan quickly hung sheets of rice paper in place of the works taken. Quickly scrawled were the words "Excuse Me" in French, English and Vietnamese—a polite but intentionally parodic comment on the interference. For further information regarding his work, see Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio, "Out Now: The Art of Truong Tan", Art Asia Pacific, number 14, 1997, p. 50-53. You should find this available at bookshops now.

Truong Tan's active pursuit of gay rights in a society subjected to censorship has often made his actions seem courageous. As an expression of this, his art work raises issues relevant to both local and international concerns for gay men and women. Truong Tan's work also provides new insights into ways of dealing with censorship and yet still providing a powerful message.

Gallery 4A is a new exhibition space located in Chinatown committed to the development of a dialogue between Australia and Asia. The administration of Gallery 4A is held by the Asian Australian Artists Association, a non profit charitable organisation funded solely by private donations. We hold regular exhibitions and events involving Asian Australian artists as well as Australian artists interested in the region. Gallery 4A is a professional arts organisation which would provide a venue for the exhibition of Truong Tan's work.

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