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Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

Weather Report

Exhibition Catalogue

Weather Report

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

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โครงการเฉลิมพระเกียรติ
ศิลปกรรมแห่งชาติ
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The Weather Report travelling exhibition schedule



May 19 - June 17, 1995

CBK Leiden
The Netherlands

September 1 - September 17

National Gallery
Bangkok, Thailand

September 5 - September 15

Lokanat Galleries
Yangon, Myanmar

September 23 - October 9

Galeriwan
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

October 18 - November 8

Erasmushuis
Jakarta, Indonesia

October 22 - November 5

Cemeti Modern Art Gallery
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

November 16 - November 30

Vietnam Association of Plastic Artists
Hanoi, Vietnam

December 8 - December 22

Fine Arts Association of Ho Chi Minh City
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

January 4 - January 10, 1996

SFAI Gallery
Chongqing, P.R. China

January 12 - January 26

Red Gate Gallery
Beijing, P.R. China

February 2 - February 16

The Substation
Singapore

February 23 - March 14

Hong Kong Arts Centre
Hong Kong

April 14 - May 19

CBK Groningen
The Netherlands



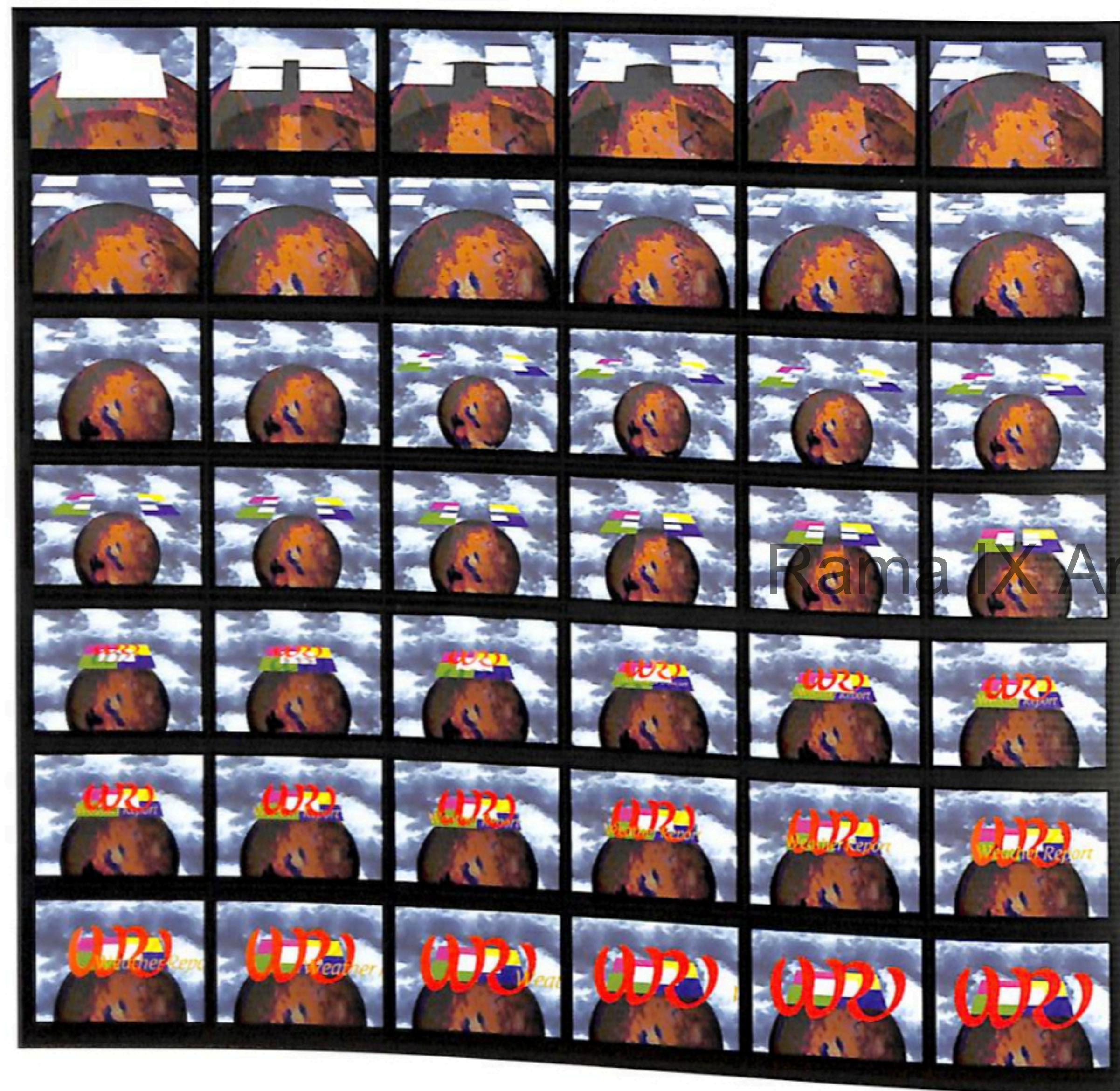
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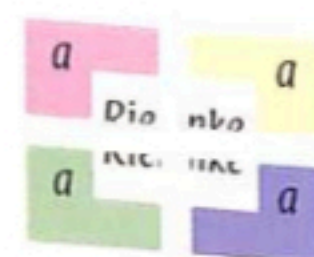
The Hague, Hong Kong 1995



Rienke

Rienke

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NIC. HAE



Introduction

Helga Lasschuyt

is editor of the Weather Report catalogue. She is an art historian, specializing in contemporary art and art theory.

Weather Report started in 1991, when Rienke Enghardt, a Dutch artist, set off on her first trip to Asia, visiting China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand. During her journey, she made drawings which she then cut into four parts. Like postcards, the four fragments were sent to two Dutch artists and two Asian artists, whom she had met along the way. Each artist extended the received fragment, creating a new work of art the same size as the original drawing by Enghardt. The works of art that evolved from this journey are labeled WR I.

Enghardt made two more journeys after WR I: in 1993, she invited new artists from Vietnam (WR II) and in 1994/95 she closed Weather Report with additions from Laos and Myanmar (WR III).

This creative process resulted in 78 works of art, made by 38 artists from 10 different countries. Each Weather Report work of art consists of the four fragments of Enghardt's original drawing, plus the drawings made by two Asian and two Dutch artists. Through Weather Report, Enghardt has established a line of communication between different cultures. Not cultures in the sense of static tradition, but cultures defined by the dynamics of individuals.

There are many ways of looking at Weather Report. One could focus on a particular work of art: what does each artist mean to his/her individual work of art? How do these five works relate to each other? Or one could select a particular artist and follow his/her development from WR I through WR III. Or one could look at how each artist searches for connections with the other drawings. Some artists approach Weather Report in a conceptual way, others look for a connection in colour, form or line, and there are artists who seem to ignore the fact that they are part of a big mysterious whole and go their own way.

It is impossible to discuss the full scope and all the different layers of meaning of Weather Report in this catalogue. Besides, there has to be something left for the viewer to discover. To put it in Rienke Enghardt's words: 'Weather Report should not be discussed to death. The works of art should speak for themselves... this is about visual communication'. In spite of Enghardt's convictions about the limitation of words, I was able to persuade her to give a small interview to provide the viewer with a general backdrop to the visual experience.

When you set off on your first trip to Asia, did you have Weather Report already on your mind, or did the idea evolve later?

Rienke Enghardt: The idea existed before my departure. I felt a need to share the things I was about to experience with my colleagues from the home base and with the artists I was hoping to meet along the way — bringing together the familiar and the new. I have a history of joint projects with other artists. I had worked together with most of the Dutch Weather Report artists at one time or the other. When I first came up with the idea of Weather Report, I asked them to participate. Their enthusiasm (and later also the enthusiasm of my newly found colleagues) has been an enormous stimulus. However, I never anticipated the scale as it is now; it started out as a small personal project, rooted in a deeply felt sense of limitation.

What do you mean by this 'sense of limitation'?

RE: Like many artists, I strive for the point where contradictions cease to exist. However, as an individual, it seems impossible to express the absolute, because everything takes place on different levels, continually.

If I try to express many different levels in one work of art, the picture often becomes too chaotic. So in order to make the

picture more lucid I find myself being selective, which means I am constantly aware of a certain incompleteness.

An artistic joint venture brings together different points of view, with the intention to present a more complete work of art. On the other hand, such joint projects can detract from the individuality of an artist.

What is special about the cooperation in Weather Report?

RE: Weather Report is the place where roads meet; different points of view come together while the individuality of each artist stays intact.

What criteria did you use in selecting the Weather Report artists?

RE: The selection of the artists happened in an informal way, attuned to each specific situation I was in. I invited artists I think are talented. It was also important that they were sensitive to the idea of Weather Report.

Wasn't it hard to cut your drawings into four parts? I think some artists might get nightmares about an idea like that.

RE: To me it was a relief that the boundaries of my drawings would be extended by other artists. In this way, the story would continue. At first I was afraid that the central position of my drawing would be a disturbing factor. The unification of the drawings of W R I was very exciting and I considered it the big test: if the outcome had not been satisfactory, I would have left it at that. My fears turned out to be unfounded. That's why I decided to expand the project and involve more artists and more countries.

Has there been a difference in your approach to Weather Report I, II and III?

RE: No, the set-up has stayed the same throughout the project. While working on Weather Report I relied completely on my

intuition. I am the sort of artist who takes every important influence into her visual language. In the three years of travelling and making Weather Report I have grown as a human being, and therefore as an artist. This might explain differences between WR I, II and III.

Where does the name 'Weather Report' come from?

RE: 'Weather Report' was the first name that came to mind. I decided the project needed a name like 'Weather Report' in order to prevent people from calling it 'east-west confrontation' or something similar that is prone to categorization. You can look at Weather Report from many different angles, but it was never my intention to emphasize on the east-west aspect. I like the name 'Weather Report' because it brings all sorts of associations to mind.

Why such an extensive travelling exhibition?

RE: I think a broad, international project like this deserves the greatest possible exposure. But above all, the Weather Report travelling exhibition gives all participating artists a chance to see and show the completed works of art. Most of the artists have seen only a couple of the 78 works. All the artists joined this collective adventure without demands of any kind. Therefore, as the initiator, I feel responsible for making Weather Report as complete as possible.

Will there be a sequel to Weather Report?

RE: I don't think so. After the last exhibition in 1996 I will consider Weather Report closed. The project has a head and a tail (and a very long body). Maybe, in the future, there will be a reunion or something like that... time will tell.



Rienke Enghardt
1965
THE NETHERLANDS



Mella Jaarsma
1960
THE NETHERLANDS



Zakaria Sharif
1969
MALAYSIA



Tim Yu Tai Keung
1962
HONG KONG



Hong Viet Dung
1962
VIETNAM



Hans van Bentem
1965
THE NETHERLANDS



Nardy Stolker
1965
THE NETHERLANDS



Phouvang Chanthavong
1965
LAOS



Feng Bin
1962
P.R. CHINA



Sikounnavong Kanha
1957
LAOS



Anton Claassen
1960
THE NETHERLANDS

Participating Artists

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Antoine Timmermans
1964
THE NETHERLANDS



Tran Luong
1960
VIETNAM



Carolien van der Donk
1959
THE NETHERLANDS



Nindityo Adipurnomo
1961
INDONESIA



Eddie haRA
1957
INDONESIA



Resi van der Ploeg
1966
THE NETHERLANDS



Chatchai Puipia
1964
THAILAND



Zhao Jianren
1960
P.R. CHINA



Josje van Doorn
1959
THE NETHERLANDS



Richard Brouwer
1964
THE NETHERLANDS



Henk Ovink
1967
THE NETHERLANDS



Ha Tri Hieu
1959
VIETNAM



Fenneke Weltevrede
1964
THE NETHERLANDS



Ewoud van Rijn
1967
THE NETHERLANDS



Elias bin Mohd
1958
MALAYSIA



Bas van den Hurk
1965
THE NETHERLANDS



Harry van der Woud
1963
THE NETHERLANDS



Alice Tung Tze Yung
1968
HONG KONG



Pham Quang Vinh
1960
VIETNAM



Pinaree Sanpitak
1961
THAILAND



Soe Naing
1961
MYANMAR



Kongphat Luangrath
1949
LAOS



Soe Win Nyein
1965
MYANMAR



Vincent Leow
1961
SINGAPORE



René de Haan
1962
THE NETHERLANDS



Dang Xuan Hoa
1959
VIETNAM



Chu Chu Yuan
1965
SINGAPORE

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■ Phouvang Chanthavong

■ Nardy Stolker

■ Hans van Bentem

■ Eddie haRA

In search of the sources of art

Michel Maas

is an Amsterdam-based journalist with an interest in art. He is the literary editor of the Volkskrant, a daily newspaper in The Netherlands.

'Could I take home a letter', they asked me in the Mai Gallery in Hanoi. Of course I said 'yes' — anybody who goes to Vietnam takes mail in and out so I could not decline when they came with an envelope a metre long and half a metre wide. I did what a man does in a situation like that: keep on smiling.

They showed me the contents and explained: each drawing was only a quarter of a work of art, which would be assembled with the other three quarters in the Netherlands. And in the corner of each drawing one could see another quarter of a drawing made by Rienke Enghardt. Her drawing would be the centrepiece of the assembled works of art.

I looked at what my Vietnamese friends (Tran Luong and Pham Quang Vinh, among others) had made of their contribution and could not figure out what it was all about. Everything seemed unrelated to everything else: the new drawings didn't resemble Enghardt's original drawing, and the two new drawings did not resemble each other. Furthermore, sometimes their drawings did not resemble their usual work as I knew it.

Assemble all this and what do you get?

A peculiar project.

I let it be, clasped the envelope under my arm, and dragged it through Vietnam, back to Ho Chi Minh City and on to the Netherlands.

The giant envelope gave my trip a sense of purpose. That was my feeling when I arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, where I visited Le Dai Chuc, who combines painting with body-building, and after that, the museum. The museum was asleep. The shutters were closed and the lights were off. It was the middle of the day. Bathed in sweat I entered the dark, where two women hung around a table at the entrance. Slowly they looked up and a strained smile unfolded on their faces. The fattest one got up with a little groan and waved me inside. She shuffled ahead of me to the first hall and threw open the shutters, allowing into a

soft and pleasant breeze into the room. She turned on the lights and waited. When I proceeded to the second hall, the scene repeated itself: here too the shutters flew open, the lights were turned on, while behind me in the first hall everything was closed again. In the wake of rattling shutters and flashing lights I moved from hall to hall.

A lot of fuss over nothing.

I had come to see only one painting: a panel by Nguyen Gia Tri. Le Dai Chuc had sent me here, because this panel was supposed to be the most magnificent piece of art to be found in Vietnam.

Chuc realized he would never become as grand as Nguyen Gia Tri. That's why he was in such a hurry. He wanted to paint many canvases so that in the end there might be twenty of the thousands of paintings good enough to form an oeuvre that would be remembered after his death. The rest could be thrown away. Chuc felt like a little boy, every now and again sensed something of the genius in his fingers. A highlight, a small, unexpected, uncontrollable peak. (His recipe for creativity was simple: "Save your sperm".)

Chuc painted like a madman — in every feasible style that existed. Cubist shipyards, expressionist, romantic portraits of his wife, realistic ones of his old father. Style was not one of his interests. Style was nothing but a tool. He was not the only person I met during my trip who thought that way. In Vietnam it was completely normal.

Disloyal, I thought at first. Because to us, an artist is expected to have one style. Later I thought of it as hospitable: every style was welcome in this country, like every religion and every foreigner.

But this stylelessness made it very difficult, if not impossible, to make any statements regarding 'the' Vietnamese art. Art in Vietnam was as diverse and unpredictable as the drawings in the giant envelope in my hotel room. Something coherent could never emerge from all those loose quarters.

With pride, Chuc said he had been allowed to polish the lacquer of the big panel, the one I was now looking at in the museum. With all the opening and closing of the shutters, it took half an hour for the woman and I to arrive at the right section of the museum. Nguyen Gia Tri had two halls for himself. Halls full of sketches, details, pencil drawings and, above all, that one panel, five metres long and two metres high, covering the entire wall.

Nguyen Gia Tri was a myth. The way Chuc talked about him never made it clear whether Tri was still alive or had died maybe long ago. His work was bought by kings, emperors, presidents and people like Henry Kissinger — and then only if he, Nguyen Gia Tri himself, thought the potential client good enough to be allowed to buy his work.

Well, he's always been a character. Before World War II he went to Paris to study at the academy of art. But he soon dropped out of school since he objected to the educational system, something nobody did in those days: that prestigious academy was a passport to fame. Later they begged him to come back, because they recognized in him one of those rare talents you only meet once every fifty years.

The little museum hall was too small for the necessary distance. I crouched down with my back against the wall, while again the outside air was let in especially for me and the neon fluttered hesitantly to light the room.

Nguyen Gia Tri painted as I expected: romantic, with a distinctive French influence. Now, one year later, I cannot even remember the panel in detail. An undulating landscape or a park, trees, women strolling with umbrellas, a pergola?

What I do remember is the delicacy with which he handled the rigid lacquer technique — as if he could create feathers out of clay.

One fragment of the big panel stands out clearly in my mind. A small corner, to the bottom left, where ballerinas were dancing, almost weightless, transparent as alpha wings.

I bent over to have a better look, but instead of more, I saw less. The ballerinas faded into formless streaks, white veils of paint without beginning or end, that almost seemed to come away from the panel.

Up this close, there was nothing Vietnamese to be

discovered. Nor French for that matter. This was nothing more than the art of painting, escaping every style and reading.

In these tiny, crude streaks were the hands and the mind of Nguyen Gia Tri. You had only to look at the ballerinas to guess the rest of the panel: the landscape, the umbrellas, the pergola, the sunny women in white. The dancing, white veils contained the clue to the whole painting. Even when I think back, it still has this effect. But why? I do not know.

La Dai Chuc agreed. That fragment with the dancers had been the piece Tri himself loved the most. It came right out of his soul. Chuc should know: he had polished it, in the presence of the master.

By that time I had already stopped thinking about what 'Vietnamese' or 'Asian' art meant. The distinction as such did not exist. 'Vietnamese' or 'Asian' was no more than a veneer. The colours, the subjects, the lacquer techniques employed. Asia, Europe, it didn't matter. What remained were light brush-strokes of transparent streaks of paint. And about that there is hardly anything to tell.

Whatever was in my envelope, it had the name Weather Report. A name I had never understood very well. But here I had found a similarity: Just as I could not say what was really happening in Nguyen Gia Tri's painting, a weather report does not say much about the weather. It tells us that it rains and that the wind blows, but it does not tell us why. Of course, a high pressure area here and a low pressure one there and then the air moves from that bump into that pit, but where do these come from? And why does the wind blow to the right and not to the left? Where does it come from, this eternal movement that keeps the whole thing going? And why always according to recognizable patterns? I do fancy metaphysical questions.

A weather report is a random indication. It can tell you what you see and that's it. I can tell what I saw on that panel by Nguyen Gia Tri. But anyone who doesn't know the panel (almost

everybody) cannot even guess what I mean.

I feel just as helpless when I try to say something about the results of Weather Report. I have seen them, the assembled drawings, the great quadriptychs. At first sight I thought: "Just as I thought, all different. A disorganized rabble without head or tail". Like bumper cars. There was no line.

Asia was often recognizable, but just as often not. Sometimes I could discover works by people I had met — Tran Luong, Pham Quang Vinh, Hong Viet Dung, Dang Xuan Hoa, Ha Tri Hieu. All stuck together, with Enghardt's reunited drawings in the middle. One quadriptych was dark, the other light, one was very busy, another breathed serenity. But beyond that? I could not say anything.

But then slowly, very slowly, out of all these confusing works of art, something emerged. I would like to compare it to that one small corner of Nguyen Gia Tri's panel. Not everywhere, but here and there, sometimes strong, sometimes weak.

Each artists had only a quarter of Enghardt's drawing. Often no more than the tail ends of lines that had started on another quarter. Fragments, just as unclear as that corner with small, white streaks on the lacquered panel. With those fragments, they had to start on their own drawing. Sometimes they completed lines, sometimes not. They picked up forms, repeated them, completed them. They used the right colours. Some artists seemed to ignore the fragment completely and went their own way. Very random.

But often, disturbingly, not so random.

Then you see how two artists, thousands of miles apart, have made something that fits.

How somebody draws a bird while his fragment of Enghardt's drawing does not show a bird but the other fragment does. As if he knew. As if somewhere in the birdless fragment, the bird was there as a clue. And in this way you see hands, ears and other details that fit, while the artists could not have known it.

As if a fragment contained the whole drawing, just like the whole lacquered panel could be predicted by that small scene with the three dancing ballerinas.

Try to explain that. I can't.

But something is going on in these quadriptychs that have been collected from all over the world, that much seems certain. And it has nothing to do with 'Asia' or 'Europe'.

A few vague ideas:

That a work of art has a soul you can taste, even if you only see a small fragment.

That a work of art is a reflection of a process that has been occurring in the head and hands of an artist — and that another artist can recognize this process. Just as we can recognize the constantly changing patterns of the weather.

What is it?

Like I said: I do fancy metaphysical questions.

There is only one disadvantage. They do not have an answer.

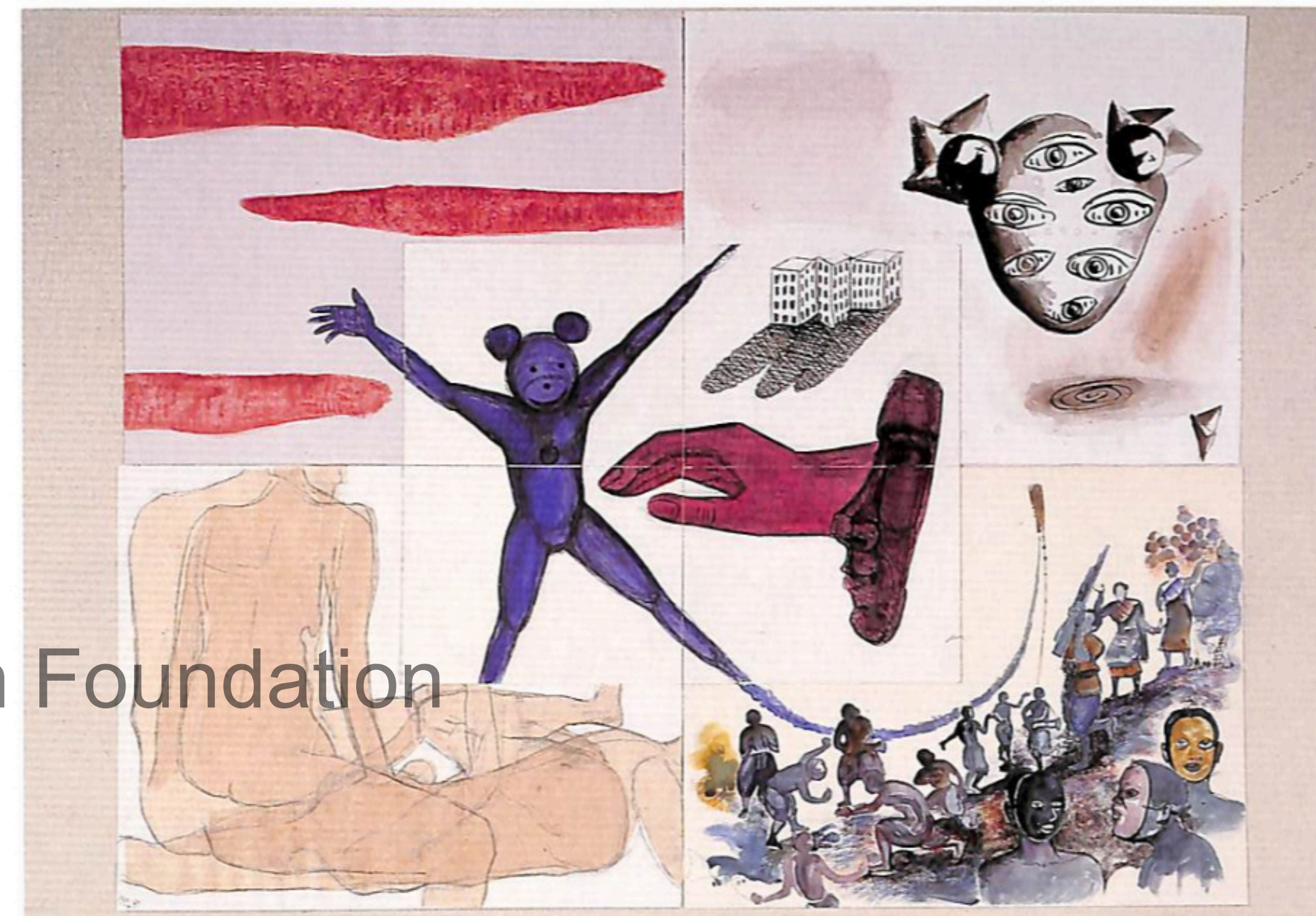


■ Pham Quang Vinh

■ Ewoud van Rijn

■ Harry van der Woud

■ Tim Yu Tai Keung



■ Hong Viet Dung

■ Resi van der Ploeg

■ Fenneke Weltevrede

■ Kongphat Luangrath

Rama IX Art Museum Foundation

งานศิลปะอ้างอิง



■ Henk Ovink

■ Dang Xuan Hoa

■ Feng Bin

■ Antoine Timmermans

The weather will be fine tomorrow

Wang Lin

is an art critic and Associate Professor in Art Theory and Aesthetics at the Sichuan Institute of Fine Arts in Chongqing, P.R China.

These days massacres, conflicts, and wars, caused by brutal and barbarian sentiments, are taking place in Rwanda, the Middle East, Bosnia, and many other places in this world. Narrow minded nationalism is a double-edged sword, hurting oneself while killing others. Art is often seen as the embodiment of national pride and identity, but this is only right when it serves as a means of communication and not as a tool of competition between nations. Artistic language is always international. This holds especially true today, when transport and communications are highly developed and people increasingly need to cooperate in order to survive and prosper.

With this in mind, I decided to participate in Weather Report because this project links together the works of artists of different cultural backgrounds, living under different circumstances. One individually created work is literally connected to another, thus symbolizing a psychological and cultural interrelation between them and their mutual wish for a future based on this interrelation. The moment I saw the imaginative results that came out of the fragments of Enghardt's works, I was struck by the following thought: the origin of art is universal and identical. Lao Zi's * philosophy says that the ultimate generates one and one generates two, two generates three and three generates everything. Everything is separate but also inter-related, formally and spiritually. This interrelation is not based on 'superiority' over 'inferiority', nor an arbitrary choice of 'me' over 'you', but an amicable and enlightening communication. An economically inferior nation can very well be capable of unparalleled artistic achievements, as can be seen in ancient African wooden carvings and Latin American fantastic realistic literature. It cannot be denied that in the past many international art exhibitions organized by Western scholars have been typical demonstrations of an orientalist attitude, for example the International Biennial of Venice and the International Biennial of Sao Paulo. The selection of Chinese artists was based on Cold War ideology dividing East and West,

resulting in political bias and cultural colonialism. The chosen artists were used to underline Western ideology, thereby giving a distorted view of the actual situation of Chinese contemporary art.

What's more, it emphasized the stereotypical cultural differences between East and West. The exhibition initiated by Enghardt is not a large one, but is unique. She came up with an original form and thought from a refreshing angle: not 'to choose', as choice can be restricted by stereotyped thoughts, but 'to enter', as entering implies a start of a new thinking journey. While sharing her personal experiences with the others, she never tried to force her conclusions on them. She divided her works into fragments for artists from other regions to use as their starting-point, thus stimulating their artistic power by giving them a chance to get in contact with other cultures, while at the same time giving them complete freedom of creativity.

This is clearly a communication based on freedom and equality, offering possibilities for the future. According to an old Chinese saying, "heaped-up earth becomes a mountain, accumulated water becomes a river". If this holds any truth, Enghardt's efforts will not be in vain.

Besides the communicative aspect of the exhibition, I was very interested in Enghardt's formative ideas: to dissect or destroy a piece of work in order to stimulate the artistic imagination through the fragments. What people usually see are the results of the imagination, while the process of its coming about is seldom considered. In fact, people's imagination is not only the remembrance and reconstruction of certain events and objects, but also inferences and creations of worlds unknown.

When primitives began to be aware of death and dreams, the worlds of their gods and ancestors, they began to obtain a spiritual course beyond reality and culture. Erich Fromm pointed out that in the past 4,000 years of human history,