

# SLG

## PRESS RELEASE

### DANH VO: UNTITLED

EXHIBITION PREVIEW: WED 18 SEP, 6.30-8.30PM  
19 SEP – 24 NOV 2019, MAIN BUILDING & FIRE STATION, FREE

*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, 2019

The South London Gallery presents the first major solo exhibition in London by internationally-acclaimed Danish artist Danh Vo (b.1975, Bà Rịa, Vietnam). The first solo show to span the SLG's Main Gallery and Fire Station building, the project also includes siting an outdoor work on Pelican housing estate and the transformation of Art Block, the SLG's permanent art space for children on Sceaux Gardens estate.

In *untitled*, Danh Vo explores how to exist within and navigate the present through a variety of working methods and across multiple spaces. He has engaged numerous collaborators to co-create work with him, from his father, friends, lover and professor, through to gallery technicians and a group of children from Sceaux Gardens visiting his Berlin farm. Vo's work therefore becomes an expanding and diversifying series of experiments, questioning what happens if he brings one set of elements together, then another, and another. Rather than creating a pluralist landscape for its own sake, this approach is driven by a profound desire to sift through the embedded layers that inform our present. Power, history, eroticism, personal biography, imperial dissolution and globalist expansion are all in play. As such, the artist's work embodies the shifting and precarious nature of contemporary life and imagines where it could lead if unbound from state institutions, social norms and grand humanist projects.

This exhibition continues Danh Vo's largely conceptual practice, weaving together archival fragments and personal references. In the Main Gallery, Vo presents a series of gestural abstract paintings on mirror foil executed by his former professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Peter Bonde. As a student, Vo was advised by Bonde to abandon painting; whilst Vo objected to what he perceived to be the macho excess of his tutor's work. More recently, however, their relationship has shifted into new territory of mutual respect and creative collaboration, as expressed through Vo's decision to foreground Bonde's paintings in his SLG show, as well as in his presentation at the current Venice Biennale. The interweaving of personal alliances into the exhibition is continued in photographs taken by Vo's lover, the German photographer Heinz Peter Knes, of Vo's nephew and muse, Gustav; and through calligraphic renditions by Vo's father and long-time collaborator, Phung Vo, using words spoken by Regan the demonically possessed child in *The Exorcist* (1973, William Friedkin). Past, present and biographical references are further enmeshed in sculptures combining fragments of Antique, Medieval and 19th - century marble statues held together with newly-made brass fittings, whilst daybeds from the Italian Enzo Mari's (b.1930) instructions in his *Autoprogettazione* from the 1970s have been upholstered in textiles by the Danish designer Nana Ditzel (1923- 2005).

Beyond the gallery walls, Vo has sited a bright red metal *Play sculpture* (1975-6) by the Japanese-American sculptor, Isamu Noguchi (1904-88) on Pelican housing estate, where the SLG has a long-established relationship with residents. Without any protective barriers, the sculpture is not only a visual joy but also an open invitation to sit, climb, rest or play on it: it epitomises an ideal of freedom of expression, openness and hybridity. Noguchi (1904-88) considered hybridity to be the core of his identity, the method and subject of his work. He strove to create something universal through bringing together the natural and the manmade. His work is a guideline throughout Vo's practice, and never more so than in the conception of this expansive exhibition.

## **EVENTS**

### **Talk: Danh Vo in conversation with Joshua Chambers-Letson**

Thu 3 Oct, 6.30pm,  
Asia House, 63 New Cavendish St, London W1G 7LP

Danh Vo discusses his SLG solo exhibition and wider practice with writer and performance theorist Joshua Chambers-Letson.

### **Screening: selected by Danh Vo**

Wed 20 Nov, 8.30pm

Peckhamplex, 95A Rye Lane, London SE15 4ST

Join us for the screening of the Dardenne brothers' 1999 film *Rosetta*, selected by artist Danh Vo on the occasion of his exhibition at the SLG.

*Exhibition supported by Chantal Crousel, Marian Goodman Gallery, kurimanzutto, White Cube, the Henry Moore Foundation, the Danish Arts Foundation and the Embassy of Denmark in the UK.*

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**Danh Vo** lives and works in Berlin and Mexico City. Emerging from personal relationships and fortuitous encounters, Vo's projects take their final form as objects and images that have accrued shifting layers of meaning in the world, whether through their former ownership, their proximity to specific events, or their currency as universal icons. Vo's works have been exhibited worldwide at institutions including in 2018 alone at the Guggenheim, New York; Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK), Copenhagen, Denmark; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; CAPC-Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France. He previously exhibited at Palacio de Cristal, Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain, 2015; Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico, 2014; Musée d'art modern de la Ville de Paris, France, 2013; The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA, 2012; and Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland, 2009. In 2015, he won the Arken Art Prize, and in 2013 the Hugo Boss Prize from the Guggenheim Foundation. He represented Denmark at the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Coinciding with the exhibition at the South London Gallery, Marian Goodman Gallery London presents an exhibition of new works by Danh Vo titled *Cathedral Block Prayer Stage Gun Stock* (18 September to 1 November 2019).

The **South London Gallery (SLG)** was founded in the 19th century by philanthropist William Rossiter to 'bring art to the people of south London'. Today the gallery comprises its original site at 65 Peckham Road; the Fire Station, which opened to the public in September 2018; Art Block, a space for local children and families on Sceaux Gardens Estate and an artist-designed garden.

The SLG has an international reputation for its contemporary art exhibitions by established, mid-career and younger artists and programme of film and performance events. Its highly regarded, free education programme includes a peer-led young people's forum; family workshops; artist-led projects and commissions on local housing estates; and a BBC Children in Need-funded programme for looked after children.

The South London Gallery is a registered charity and raises more than half of its income from trusts and foundations, sponsors and fundraising events.

## Opening Hours

The Gallery is open Tue – Fri 11am-6pm, Sat and Sun 11am-6pm.

Late opening: every Wed and last Fri of the month until 9pm.

Free entry, all welcome.

South London Gallery, 65-67 Peckham Rd, London, SE5 8UH

Fire Station, 82 Peckham Road, SE15 5LQ

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## Press Contact

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# IMAGE SHEET

## DANH VO: UNTITLED

### Captions and credits:

**1, 2 & 3.** Installation view of *Danh Vo: untitled* at the South London Gallery, 2019. Photo: Nick Ash

**4. Danh Vo, *untitled*, 2019 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Nick Ash

**5. Danh Vo, *Photographs of Dr. Joseph M. Carrier 1962–1973*, 2010**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Nick Ash

**6. Danh Vo, *Photographs of Dr. Joseph M. Carrier 1962–1973*, 2010 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Nick Ash

**7. Danh Vo, *Aconitum souliei, Inflorescence portion / Lilium souliei, outer and inner tepel / Anemone coelestina var. souliei, flowering plant / Rosa soulieana, fruit / Aconitum souliei, cauline leaf / Anemone coelestina, basal leaf / Anemone coelestina, carpel / Luzula rufescens, flowering plant / Anconitum souliei, upper cauline leaf / Anemone coelestina, basal leaf / Anemone coelestina, flowering plant / Rosa soulieana, fruiting branch / Lilium souliei, distal portion of flowering plant / Nepeta souliei, flowering plant / Rosa soulieana, flowering branch / Cerasus fruticosa, fruiting branch / Cerasus tomentosa var. souliei, fruiting branch*, 2009 (detail) and *Danh Vo, 2.2.1861*, 2009**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Nick Ash

**8. Danh Vo, *Untitled*, 2018 (detail)**

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019  
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Nick Ash

**9. Félix González-Torres, “*Untitled*” (*Portrait of Julie Ault*), 1991.** Collection of Julie Ault. **Roni Horn, *Asphere***, 1988/1995. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

**Corita Kent, *now you can*, 1966** and **James Benning, *number matrix, after Kaczynski*, 2019.** Collection of Danh Vo (left to right)

Installation view at the South London Gallery, 2019.  
Photo: Nick Ash

**10. Isamu Noguchi, *Play Sculpture*, 1975–76**

Installation view on Pelican Estate, 2019  
Collection of Danh Vo. Photo: Nick Ash

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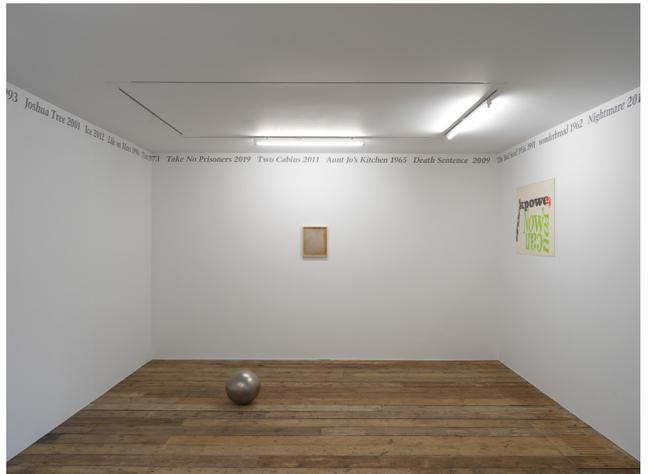
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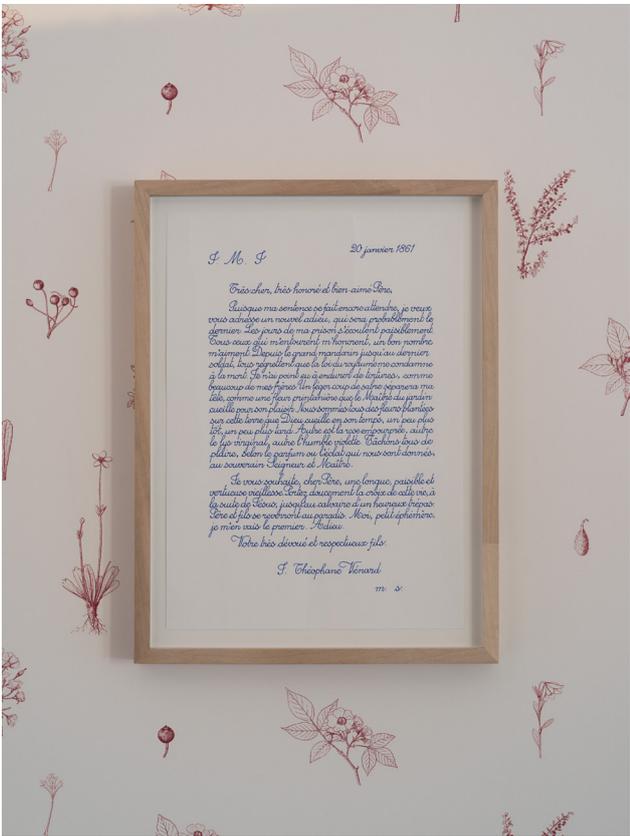
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