

Sống cùng tôi muôn năm muôn đời
mười tuổi phần là tuổi - đã yêu sâu
đang - sống cùng với tôi cho đến đời
Sống cùng tôi muôn năm muôn đời
Sống - như một người - chết với
đồng ý - yêu nhau với tôi - sống cùng
chúng ta - sống cùng - sống cùng
vì sống mà sống



Đàn ông,
không biết thì thôi
Đặt nhau một kỷ
vật đời sống buồn.

Truong Viet
the school
ago, way be
by the viet
communist
language
at market

at the first wave of
the come back, we
called me called the
in front, disbanding
like that. And then
like my father, being
a communist, that's
a compliment.



ngươi phải thản thản hay
lọt tên vào thảo nguyên
đơn to bất diệt
cho trái tim ta
ghĩa trọng còn
về phía biển -
Đêm Hà Tiên.



Rice Gallery

...đang đang trong thời kỳ
...đang được đặt lên để bạn
...đang được, bởi vì người
...đang muốn để truyền bá
...đang muốn để truyền bá
...đang muốn để truyền bá

...đang đang trong
...đang đang trong
...đang đang trong

...đang đang trong
...đang đang trong
...đang đang trong

...đang đang trong
...đang đang trong
...đang đang trong



DINH O. LÊ
Crossing the Farther Shore



From now to about 1870, the
country was a great deal of
the most populous in any of the
States. The year 1870 appears
to be the year of the really serious
beginning of the decline of
the country, the decline of
the country, and the decline of
the country.



1870 is the year of the
the decline of the country.

From now to about 1870, the
country was a great deal of
the most populous in any of the
States. The year 1870 appears
to be the year of the really serious
beginning of the decline of
the country, the decline of
the country, and the decline of
the country.

From now to about 1870, the
country was a great deal of
the most populous in any of the
States. The year 1870 appears
to be the year of the really serious
beginning of the decline of
the country, the decline of
the country, and the decline of
the country.



Handwritten note in blue ink, mostly illegible due to blurriness and angle.

She calmly lived behind
drawn shades and drapes



Remember you
my friends
Please call me
anytime
from me

Remember you

Handwritten note in blue ink, mostly illegible.

Remember you
from me
anytime
Miss

one more
Wish
Cheryl





Crossing the Farther Shore

10 APRIL - 28 AUGUST 2014

Rice Gallery

FOREWORD

Dinh Q. Lê's *Crossing the Farther Shore* incorporated hundreds of photographs taken in Vietnam during the 1940s–1980s, with the majority dating to the pre-Vietnam War era before 1975. These images were far from the iconic ones of a war-torn Vietnam that many of us know so well. Instead, they were personal and familiar, the kind that might fill any family's photo album: portraits of loved ones, couples on vacation, scenic vistas, weddings, birthdays, and family gatherings. Lê started to collect these photographs when he moved back to Vietnam in 1996. He and his family had fled at the time of the Vietnam War, and when he returned to Saigon to live and work he began visiting antique stores and second-hand shops in hopes of finding his own family's photos. Instead, he found thousands of images documenting the everyday lives of Southern Vietnamese people – how they dressed, looked, and felt. Such photos are one of the few records of South Vietnam that have escaped from the Northern Vietnamese communist government's systematic effort to erase the pre-1975 existence of the South. They became a kind of surrogate family album for Lê as he began using them in his art to preserve them and to show this pre-Vietnam War era history.

Lê stitched together photographs, some facing out and others turned inward, making room-like enclosures that alluded to the mosquito netting under which people slept. Suspended at different heights throughout the gallery and pooling lightly onto the floor, the arrangement of fragile-looking sculptures had a presence both stately and poetic that Lê called a “sleeping, dreaming memory of Vietnam.”

On the backs of some photographs appeared notations made by their original owners, while others held bits of found or handwritten texts added by Lê from a variety of sources including recollections of Vietnam drawn from interviews conducted by the Vietnamese-American Oral History Project and from interviews from the Houston Asian American Archives at Rice University’s Chao Center for Asian Studies. On some, Lê took lines from the epic poem, *The Tale of Kieu*, by Nguyễn Du [1766–1820]. Considered to be the most significant work of Vietnamese literature, the poem tells the story of Thúy Kiều, a beautiful woman who sold herself into a loathsome marriage in order to save her family from ruin. After many trials and much suffering in far away places, she eventually makes it home and is reunited



Đáp thư của Xuân
"Đạt" đã có rồi
Năm già, thời đã dài
Chị làm chi



Chị ơi, anh đã
về rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã

Xem phim của anh
đẹp quá
Phân vai Hằng Nga
Tân Jiao



Chị ơi, anh đã
về rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã

Chị ơi, anh đã
về rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã
đến rồi, anh đã

with her family. According to Dinh Q. Lê, it is a poem for which most Vietnamese people can recite the first four lines, and one with which many Vietnamese people who fled the country can identify.

I thank Dinh Q. Lê for his revelatory and deeply felt work of art that became a contemplative space for individuals and a place for dialogue between two generations: those individuals who left Vietnam, and the many children who grew up in the United States with Vietnamese parents. The photographs spoke for themselves, conveying something different to each of us. Experiencing *Crossing the Farther Shore* was to consider, too, the larger questions about how each of us defines “home” as we attempt to connect with our pasts. These thoughts and feelings are also evoked in Bao-Long Chu’s poem, *Ten Photographs: Dark, Made Light*. Reflecting on images in the “treasure trove of black and white photographs that my grandparents and parents carried with them,” Chu imparts real and imagined family stories in the language of poetry.

We thank Rice University's Chao Center for Asian Studies and especially Tani E. Barlow, Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Professor of Asian Studies and the Center's Director Emeritus, for her encouragement and for supporting the research and commissioning of Dinh Q. Lê's *Crossing the Farther Shore*. We are also grateful to Nathalie Roff, Yasu Nakamori, and Betty Cartwright whose hospitality made Dinh Q. Lê feel at home in Houston. For true and lively conversation about experiences of the post-war Vietnamese diaspora and its relationship to current Vietnam, we thank fashion designer Chloe Dao, poet Bao-Long Chu, and artist Dinh Q. Lê, for their participation on the roundtable discussion, "Voices from the Farther Shore."

Dinh Q. Lê dedicated *Crossing the Farther Shore* to his mother and her friends, and to them we offer our appreciation.

Kimberly Davenport
Director

and my wife and it's for me
and a village and we help people
help the kids to have fun in there because
when you go in there you don't see that it's
an American job only. It's an American
job but we also build the Vietnamese
battalion in there so it's fun.

52404



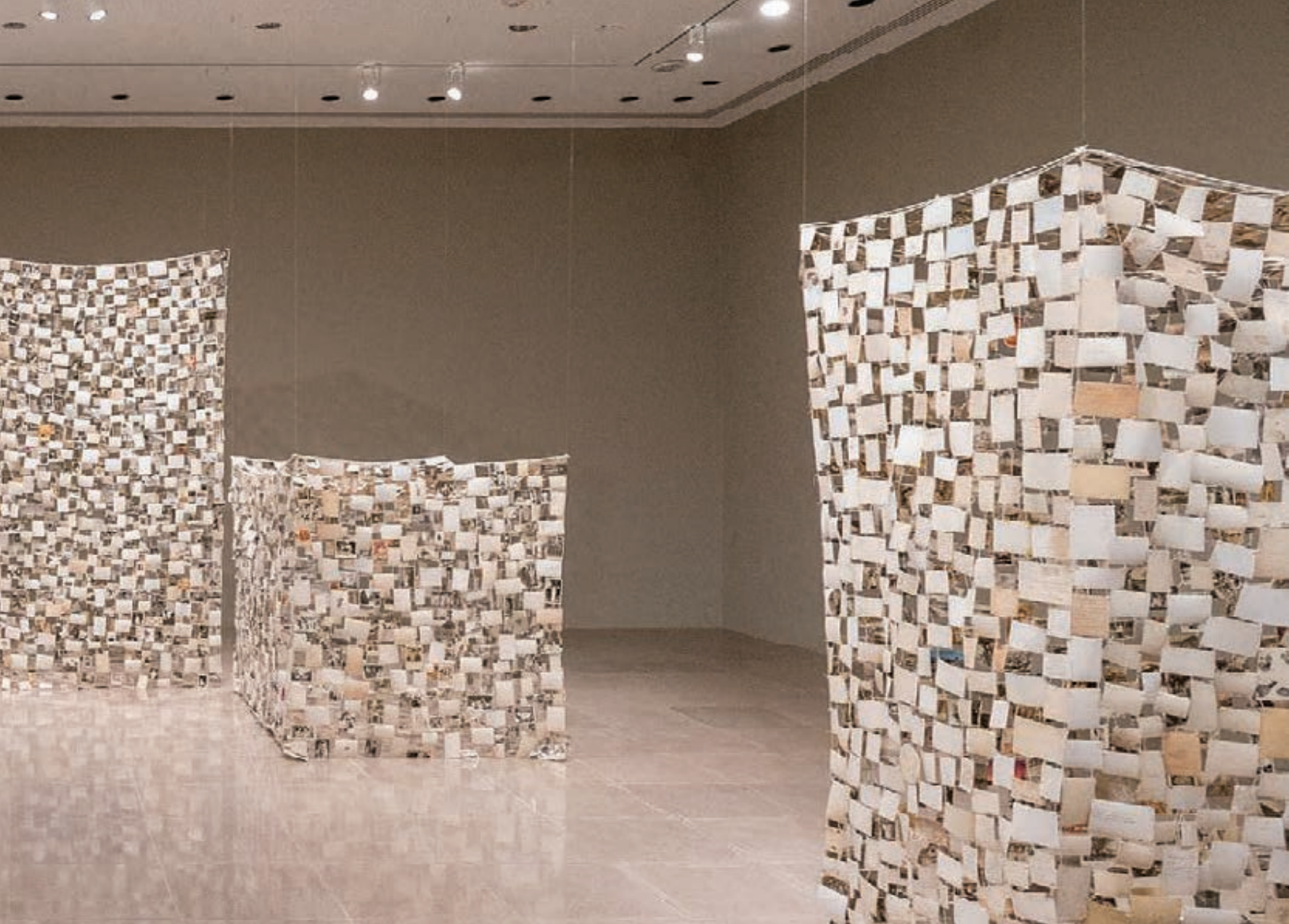
From the
[illegible]



6600 6600 6600

I have raised 3rd Airborne
battalion which had almost
500 cadets.





TEN PHOTOGRAPHS: *dark, made light*

Bao-Long Chu

April 27th this year marked the 40th anniversary of my family's fleeing from Vietnam in 1975. The sky was bone gray and the C-130s drummed thunder into the tarmac. What I witnessed as a child was that everything can fall down, burn or just blow away. To my right, my sister Khanh; my left, my sister Van. We stood in the order of our births, the six of us holding on to each other's hands. We were waiting for what? Flight to where? No one told me. The rain whispered its sibilant sorrows to the wind. My mother heaved her seventh child in her arms, at her feet a Samsonite full of photos.

The girl in the photograph is fourteen or twenty. She is standing by a plumeria, her right hand barely touching the smooth trunk. Her lips parted just so, as if to say something to the one on the other side of the camera about not wanting tears, about sweetness and spinning, or something passing through the bright sky that late afternoon, the future of loss hidden in the shadow just beneath her left collarbone, then gathering in the honeyed perfume as if the intoxication of all those cropped-out blooms might make her forget, or turn her in the wind, any leaf floating.

Look how he is marked: stigmata in the recess of his palm, a burnt rose or blood scar, a black brand. This is the emblem of his end, a line of grief inherited from his mother's hand, from her mother's hand: a hard break in the heart line that bears the weight of mothers, of daughters (and one cursed son) across centuries. Broken prayer sticks under his dreams. He is getting old, soon it will be too late. But in this scallop-edged photo he is smiling, all teeth and no eyes.

This is Chùa Trần Quốc. Minh-Tri's ashes are scattered there. When lighting incense, after the stick has ignited with a glowing ember, do not blow the flame out with your breath, but rather wave your hand to extinguish. Bow three times to Buddha. He was one in this picture. Father never made peace with his death, a thousand miles from home. Father said nothing when he heard the news. I remember how he traced the heart of my palm, he took my feather hand and held it to his cheek. The temple is red but you can't tell. Buddhists say that there is a source of and path out of suffering.

This was taken in 1961, the year after I married your father to spite my true love for leaving me. I think of him, his warm fingers counting the bones in my wrist, as a telling wind that stretches up the country I barely recall, just the mouth of Bến Hải River, his sodden body clinging to the moon's light, crossing the farther shore, body of night floating over grass, fallen body breaking with the water's constant breaks. I have not one memory of that lingered place, but several possibilities that surface in dreams. But the truth is, you don't know.

A family picture: my father and mother, my three brothers, four sisters, cross through alleys and city gates, stay awhile in alcoves and shelters afforded by dreams and ease of sleep. We among the huddled masses, a sea of gaunt faces, black hair, buck teeth, alike in rage, alike in patience or exhaustion except for the one wandering away: I am the dreamless one outside their doors, the worried somnambulist listening through keyholes, cracks, to the steady outpour of sighs and breathing. In the photograph itself we look happy, as though nothing else matters.

It was 1968. The white has yellowed and there are no sharp edges, but then again it is a photograph of a dream: my sister and her twin just six weeks old, asleep and swaddled in faded cotton, their mittened fi ts touching one another in reassurance. My mother who took the picture was happy. At that moment, she had not yet experienced the unnamed sorrow, the unbearable darkness of a mother burying her child. What sounds like grief? A mother sinking into a chair, clutching a photo. I have come here too late, her body gone, already ash.

I wait for him. One more waiting in a lifetime of waiting: under the eaves of mother's house I waited, her incantations in the foyer marked time, my eyes searched the dirt road leading to our home for signs attesting his arrival – clouds of dust, flurry of wings, the lilies bowing down to greet him. I wait with my heart on my tongue, patient, full of revisions, my woman heart, my dumb tongue. Are we one body, one ache at attention? I know too much furtive waiting, flowers don't bow down, flight means leaving, not arriving, the world hides itself in all this dust. I'm afraid I live I die too much by the promised hours, and I wake only to find myself bowing in the foyer, the early dust above my head, and flight burning through my fists.

1954. My father and mother, southbound on the long road from Hanoi to Saigon. In the rain season they came, a steeped ache in their left sides, the augury of another life, eyes closed to the exhaustion of forgetting. What is left? Nothing but the faces they see, always with them, like a photo in a beloved's wallet. 1975. Water bound flight on the treacherous road from there to here. My father's arms across my back as we slept among the sleepless, a cargo of flesh. I glance at this photo again and again.

You can't tell, but in this picture he carried a bullet lodged in his left shoulder, a palm width from his heart. The man whose hand he was holding loved him, but not the way he wanted. The sky above seemed framed by edging banks of dark clouds. His face was young – unrecognizable, like the stranger you turn to in an alleyway whose furtive glances promise kinship, whose touch says, I know the way, like the one you take in mid-morning, the one you drive out by noon, the one whose body is hardened salt as you turn to look one last time before the city consumes itself.

Sunlight fl ees the room. You sleep. Your mouth biting on words unsaid. The jade Buddha on your breast is translucent like a ghost that will rise over me. I am on my knees. I mean to gather all the scattered photos strewn in this room. Believe me when I tell you, you have come far. Deep rivers here carry no bodies. All I want is for you to stretch your fingers out and dive into a body not buoyed by water, but wings. What more can be done or remembered?







My parents decided
to come abroad here
to give us a better
future. They didn't
think about their
own future. I'm
not even 17 yet
and I can buy
a house or
a car. Glad
we
can

you in ten years
you'll have
here at Hainan
still state
between, the Hainan
isn't shut off to
between, the Hainan
shut off Hainan





in choy

to Mac
ai



Nhà L
nơi h
Nguyễn
.970

Nhà L
chàng ai
hay
Nguyễn Tài
mai p
mai focus



1967

ky niệm ngày 21.8.91, từ
Việt Nam đi bằng chấp cánh
từng bay mừng theo những
hình ảnh sa vưa tao nhà
vui qui nhất về thành đô
họa lệ Paris of



20/10/67



陸園
五五年



My heart cannot be torn away
it ever follows you, each day, each
It follows you, not nowhere are



My heart cannot be torn away
you
it ever follows you, each day, each
It follows you, not nowhere are



OSTALE



ity from
you-
ends
hair
are you
you

S.F. 6mo A.C.

This is me.
Please give me
one of yours.
All Chen
6/10



Being quiet isn't all baby.
Not so cute when it's really with lots!

...to arrive in Chicago
...to be a placement
...to meet people from
different cultures
...the first appears to be
...really American they
...on 2nd line or 3rd line
...discovery is important
to teaching and I love it



"You can bring but you'll quarrel,
Just the thing that he need -
with 'nail'!"



From the notebook, we also learned





Thư này
trước đã
chị
Đã lấy đây
đến đây thì
thai vào



Số
76

Thiếu
Cần. Thiếu
Cố gắng
đầu tư
vào
Mở rộng thị trường

Thiếu
những công nghệ
thương mại
để làm tăng
hiệu quả
lợi nhuận
thương

[Blank paper tag]

đây cũng
đó phải
ở
a. Mọi
đi là
ở
af

Đã được thử
Khanh Đan

Thiếu thời
đại, thời gian
gạo lúa
Chắc chắn
hình thức
hội thảo
chuyên

[Blank paper tag]

My father passed
away when I was
five or six. Father
came down with a
fever, had a fall
unconscious for
several days. I don't
remember much.

Cũng là là một
lâm bệnh
Đó vậy là nó
ở nhà mấy
mười

12-4-09
M. C. C. C.







...at this moment
...the last day
...child
...with...



Phải vào trường học
Lên học với các bạn
...
2030

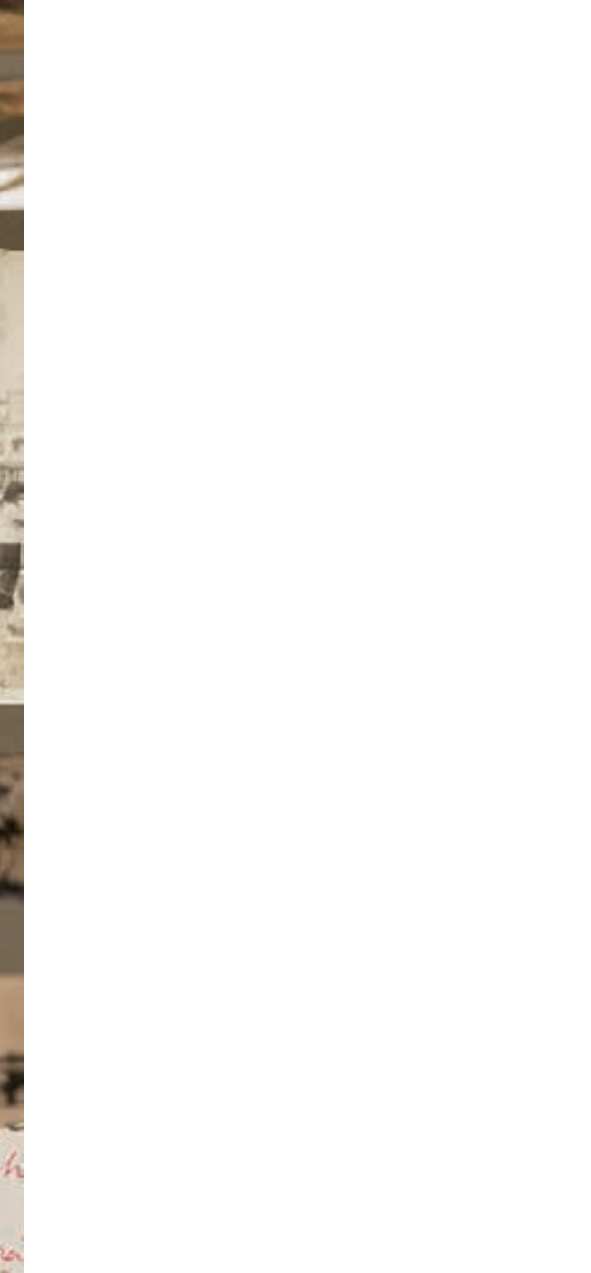


I had trouble in physical education
The Americans are bigger and stronger
They ran faster but I pray a lot & believe
God will give me the grade I want as HE
I pray to hear, the Word of Christ I love
Love



Hà gần chi có
...
Hà và ...

Nơi đây là nhà
...
Mười hai - đó là
...







大板便更同社大快
推又解天也



5.11.64

DL



Chị Ngọc
Bây giờ chị lại
đang
mười phần xưa
bà b

Fortunately, we met a Singapore fishing boat, and the life of that helmsman was Vietnamese, they helped us with a compass, gasoline, and they showed us that "now you go down to that direction toward the south, you just go from morning to the afternoon you will reach Indonesia, when you get to Indonesia, they will welcome you". Sure enough, we went from morning 6pm, we reached Indonesian sea and Indonesia was still receiving refugees and we had to wait a little so that they could receive us in.











ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dinh Q. Lê was born in 1968 in Hà Tiên, Vietnam. His family escaped war-torn Vietnam in 1978 and settled in Southern California; Lê grew up in Los Angeles. He holds a BA in Fine Arts from the University of California Santa Barbara and a MFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts, New York.

In 1996, Lê moved to Ho Chi Minh City [Saigon], Vietnam, where he still lives and works. In 2007 he founded San Art, an artist-run exhibition space and reading room that promotes young Vietnamese artists. In 2010, Lê received a Prince Claus Award [Netherlands] “for his strong creative work . . . advancing free thought and contemporary visual expression in a context of indifference and hostility.”

Lê exhibits internationally and has had solo exhibitions at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan [2015]; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, United Kingdom [2011]; and Museum of Modern Art, New York [2010]. His work was included in the 2013 Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; dOCUMENTA [13], Kassel, Germany [2012]; and the 50th Venice Biennale, Italy [2003].



Dinh Q. Lê, *Crossing the Farther Shore*
Commission, Rice University Art Gallery
10 April – 28 August 2014

Rice University Art Gallery is located in Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and on the web at ricegallery.org.

Rice University Art Gallery Patrons provide major funding for exhibitions. Additional support comes from Rice Gallery Members; The Brown Foundation, Inc.; the Robert J. Card, M.D. and Karol Kreymer Catalogue Endowment; and the Leslie and Brad Bucher Artist Residency Endowment. The Gallery receives partial operating support from the City of Houston; KUHF-FM and Saint Arnold Brewing Company provide in-kind contributions.

All photographs except as noted © Nash Baker 2014

Photographs on pages 4, 37 left, 47 by Rice Gallery Staff © 2014

Originally from Vietnam, Bao-Long Chu is a Houston-based poet. Rice Gallery thanks him for his contribution to this catalogue.

Rice University Art Gallery Staff
Kimberly Davenport, Director
Christine Medina, Manager
Joshua Fischer, Assistant Curator
David Krueger, Preparator

Design: Michael Awalt (Rice '16)
Printing: Specialty Bindery & Printing, Houston, Texas

Copyright © 2016 Rice University Art Gallery, Houston, Texas

ISBN: 1-932281-48-7

CREDITS



