

ARTISTS REFLECT

Contemporary Views on the American War

The exhibition brings together the artwork of 11 artists working today whose lives, family history, and communities were directly affected by decades of conflict in Vietnam. They are artists of Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese heritage who regularly address the legacy of war in their work. In Vietnam, the war of this period (1965–75) is called the *Kháng chiến chống Mỹ*—“Resistance War Against America”—or simply “the American War.”

Some of the artists were infants or children during the American War. Others immigrated later with their families from Southeast Asia. Some were born afterward and have been sensitive to how these family and collective histories have shaped them. Vietnam and its neighboring countries of Cambodia and Laos suffered massive losses of life and environmental catastrophe stemming from conflicts that predated, and also included, the American War. The featured artists have made significant bodies of work about the war’s personal, societal, and political effects. The subjects presented here focus on memory, migration, the meaning of landscape, and the voices of survivors.

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Artists Reflect: Contemporary Views on the American War is organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

The Hmong were left to fend for themselves.

—Cy Thao, artist



The Statue of Victory 30-4-1975 at the Museum of Ho Chi Minh

1975

Immediately following the fall of Saigon, North Vietnam renames the city “Ho Chi Minh City,” after the first president of North Vietnam.

2,500 Hmong evacuate Laos from Long Tien (Long Cheng) air base.

1979

A class action lawsuit is filed, representing 2.4 million U.S. veterans, against the six companies that manufactured the chemical Agent Orange, used to kill trees and foliage in Vietnam.

125,000 Vietnamese flee Ho Chi Minh City with U.S. evacuees.

1981

Vietnamese Community of Minnesota (VCM), a cultural and advocacy organization representing the first group of Vietnamese refugees in Minnesota, is established.

1982

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial creates a site for remembrance on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.



Department of Defense, American Forces Information Service, Defense Visual Information Center.

1984

The U.S. veteran class-action lawsuit against Agent Orange manufacturers is settled out of court for \$180 million.

312,000 Vietnamese immigrate to the United States



US Government photograph

1991

The Agent Orange Act is passed, which acknowledges that health problems, including cancer, were caused by Agent Orange and other herbicides used during the war.

1995

The United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam normalize relations. A U.S. embassy is established in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital.

445,000 Vietnamese immigrate to the United States.



U.S. Embassy in Hanoi.

U.S. President William Clinton shakes hands with members of the Vietnamese public at the Temple of Literature, Hanoi.



2000

President Bill Clinton visits Vietnam, the first U.S. president to visit since 1969.

2004

Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange file a class-action lawsuit against 30 chemical companies for the damages caused by Agent Orange. The lawsuit is dismissed by a judge the next year.

Wat Tham Krabok, a Buddhist monastery and last temporary shelter for 15,000 Hmong remaining in Thailand, closes.

253,000 Vietnamese immigrate to the United States.

2010

About 260,000 Hmong live in the United States, with the largest population in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

2012

The United States begins its first direct involvement in cleaning up Agent Orange in Vietnam at the Danang International Airport. The project is completed in 2018.



USAID Vietnam

2017

2.1 million Vietnamese people live in the United States, with the largest populations in Los Angeles and San Jose, California, and Houston, Texas.

About 20,000 Vietnamese immigrants live in Minnesota.

This act of reclamation shines a light on a Vietnam beyond the war.

—Teo Nguyen, artist