

SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

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***Views of Vietnam* opens at Spencer Museum, offers opportunities for dialogue, reflection**

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Lawrence, KS — *Views of Vietnam*, now open in the South Balcony of the Spencer Museum of Art and on display through December 30, provides a starting point for reflecting on the complex history of Vietnam through works of art available in the Spencer. The period of U.S. involvement in Vietnam is most fully represented in our collections and therefore makes up most of the exhibition, but also included are several ceramic pieces from around 1600, as well as work made since the conflict. The exhibition, organized by Steve Goddard, Senior Curator of Prints & Drawings with assistance from intern Ellen O'Neil Rife, is also enhanced by several loans from the Wilcox Collection of the Spencer Research Library.

Goddard explains that the idea for *Views of Vietnam* started with the loan to the museum of 38 watercolors by an artist working with the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong), which was opposed to the South Vietnamese and the U.S. in the Vietnamese War. These watercolors, which might be considered as propaganda, show an infrequently seen perspective on the war. One goal is simply to share these rare works with a larger audience. They do not show combat scenes, but scenes of preparation for battle, life

in the base camp, work on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and agricultural work, for example. The exhibition also includes photographs by Larry Burrows, who provided powerful images of the war to *Life* magazine; prints by American artists active in the 1960s that reference the war, including Jasper Johns and James Rosenquist; camera work for an article in *Esquire* magazine featuring senior military staff who opposed the war; and photographs by Han Nguyen, who left Vietnam for the U.S., and Craig Barber, who returned there in the late 1990s to make stunning landscape photographs.

Goddard says another goal of the exhibition is to address the fact that many KU students have had little or no opportunity to study the Vietnam War.

“While this exhibition cannot offer an historical introduction we hope it will serve as a catalyst or stimulus to learn more,” Goddard says. “With this in mind we have installed a number of books in the exhibition. We also hope that the exhibition can serve as a useful and respectful arena for those who did experience the Vietnam War to revisit their memories, and perhaps to help them find ways to share their memories if they wish to. This goal stems from the knowledge that art, even difficult art, can help the healing process. We hope that the exhibition will encourage discussion of the war across generations and among communities.”

Views of Vietnam will be accompanied by an installation of books about various aspects of the war in Vietnam, with an emphasis on books concerning the arts (a bibliography follows). The Spencer also will provide a comment book and a tape recorder for those who would like to record their memories and reflections.

Special programs are also planned; these are free and open to the public.

- On October 26, Curator Steve Goddard and special guests will hold a gallery conversation about ***Views of Vietnam*** at 12:15 PM in the South Balcony.
- On November 9, the Spencer will present the film *Three Seasons* at 7 PM in the SMA Auditorium. This first feature by 26-year-old Tony Bui is a poetic narrative about the "new" Vietnam, and is the first American independent film to be shot on location in that country. The film weaves three separate stories about four characters in Saigon and how their paths cross. (1999, Dir. Tony Bui, 104 minutes.) Rated PG-13.

Bibliography of books available for reading in the exhibition space for ***Views of Vietnam***

- Christian G. Appy. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.
- Spencer C. Tucker, ed. *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

- C. David Thomas, ed. *As Seen by Both Sides: American and Vietnamese Artists Look at the War*. Boston: Indochina Arts Project and the William Joiner Foundation, 1991.
 - John Musgrave. "Notes to the Man Who Shot Me: Vietnam War Poems." *Coal City Review* 18 (January 2003).
 - Lucy R. Lippard. *A Different War: Vietnam in Art*. Bellingham, WA: Whatcom Museum of History and Art; Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1990.
 - Jessica Harrison-Hall. *Vietnam Behind the Lines: Images from the War 1965-1975*. Chicago: Art Media Resources and the Trustees of the British Museum, 2002.
 - Nancy C. Hsu. *Anguish of the Innocent: The Plight of Vietnamese Refugee Children*. Hong Kong: Innocent, 1979.
 - Susan Sontag. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.
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Spencer Museum of Art

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Gallery hours

Tues., Wed., Fri., & Saturday 10 AM — 5 PM

Thurs. 10 AM — 9 PM

Sun. Noon — 5 PM

Closed Monday

- Museum Shop closes 30 minutes prior to the gallery closing.
- Free parking is available in Lot 91 after 5 PM on weekdays and all day weekends, excepting home football games.
- Parking garage adjacent to Kansas Union is \$1 per hour weekdays, free on Saturdays and Sundays (but unavailable on home football games).