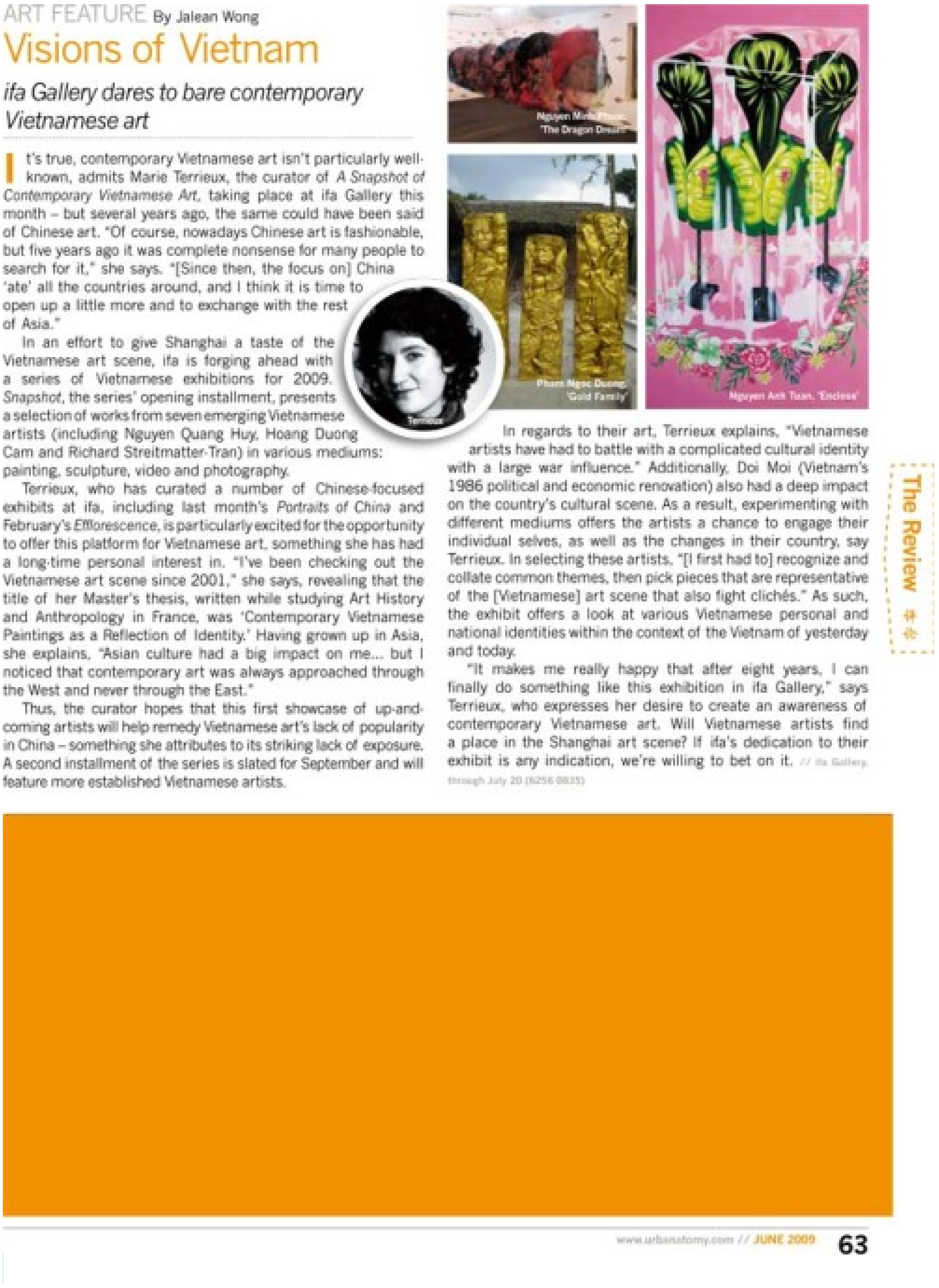

ART FEATURE By Jalean Wong

Visions of Vietnam

ifa Gallery dares to bare contemporary Vietnamese art

It's true, contemporary Vietnamese art isn't particularly well-known, admits Marie Terrieux, the curator of *A Snapshot of Contemporary Vietnamese Art*, taking place at ifa Gallery this month – but several years ago, the same could have been said of Chinese art. "Of course, nowadays Chinese art is fashionable, but five years ago it was complete nonsense for many people to search for it," she says. "[Since then, the focus on] China 'ate' all the countries around, and I think it is time to open up a little more and to exchange with the rest of Asia."

In an effort to give Shanghai a taste of the Vietnamese art scene, ifa is forging ahead with a series of Vietnamese exhibitions for 2009. *Snapshot*, the series' opening installment, presents a selection of works from seven emerging Vietnamese artists (including Nguyen Quang Huy, Hoang Duong Cam and Richard Streitmatter-Tran) in various mediums: painting, sculpture, video and photography.

Terrieux, who has curated a number of Chinese-focused exhibits at ifa, including last month's *Portraits of China* and February's *Efflorescence*, is particularly excited for the opportunity to offer this platform for Vietnamese art, something she has had a long-time personal interest in. "I've been checking out the Vietnamese art scene since 2001," she says, revealing that the title of her Master's thesis, written while studying Art History and Anthropology in France, was 'Contemporary Vietnamese Paintings as a Reflection of Identity.' Having grown up in Asia, she explains, "Asian culture had a big impact on me… but I noticed that contemporary art was always approached through the West and never through the East."

Thus, the curator hopes that this first showcase of up-and-coming artists will help remedy Vietnamese art's lack of popularity in China – something she attributes to its striking lack of exposure. A second installment of the series is slated for September and will feature more established Vietnamese artists.

Nguyen Minh Phuoc, 'The Dragon Dream'

Pham Ngoc Duong, 'Gold Family'

Nguyen Anh Tuan, 'Enclose'

Terrieux

In regards to their art, Terrieux explains, "Vietnamese artists have had to battle with a complicated cultural identity with a large war influence." Additionally, Doi Moi (Vietnam's 1986 political and economic renovation) also had a deep impact on the country's cultural scene. As a result, experimenting with different mediums offers the artists a chance to engage their individual selves, as well as the changes in their country, say Terrieux. In selecting these artists, "[I first had to] recognize and collate common themes, then pick pieces that are representative of the [Vietnamese] art scene that also fight clichés." As such, the exhibit offers a look at various Vietnamese personal and national identities within the context of the Vietnam of yesterday and today.

"It makes me really happy that after eight years, I can finally do something like this exhibition in ifa Gallery," says Terrieux, who expresses her desire to create an awareness of contemporary Vietnamese art. Will Vietnamese artists find a place in the Shanghai art scene? If ifa's dedication to their exhibit is any indication, we're willing to bet on it. // ifa Gallery, through July 20 (6256 0835)

The Review

VISIONS OF VIETNAM – THAT'S SHANGHAI

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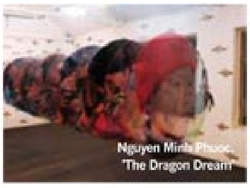
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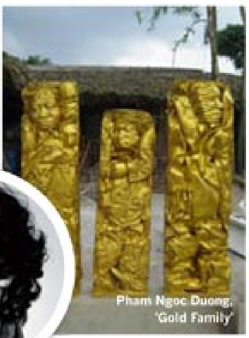
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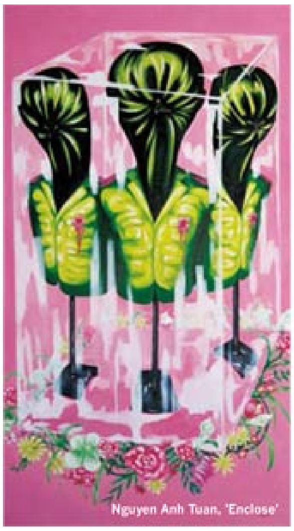
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