

# SAN ART

## PRESS RELEASE

Ho Chi Minh City, 10 September 2013 - San Art presents 'XEM' from 13 September



'XEM' is a friendship. 'XEM' (meaning 'to view' or 'to observe') is a group of visual artists based in Saigon who seek to leave a tangible photographic trace of the world in which they live. 'XEM' is a book, a simple object with symbolic value. 'XEM' is a limited exhibition in your hands. At San Art, from 13 September to 24 October, 'XEM' marks its 3rd edition by turning their photographic ideas into objects.

XEM is Nguyen Thanh Truc, UuDam Tran Nguyen, Quang Lam, Hoang Duong Cam and Phan Quang.

For each edition of 'XEM' a special guest artist is invited to contribute. For this 3rd issue, XEM welcomes Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai from Hue.

**Special event – XEM Party and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition XEM book launch, with special performance by UuDam Tran Nguyen**  
17 October @ San Art from 6pm

On 4 February, 2013 innumerable text messages flew from the 5 core members of XEM to their friends, art lovers and family with an invitation to the inaugural launch that evening of 'XEM' at Nguyen Thanh Truc's intimate coffee house – 'A Café' – in downtown Saigon. This particular evening was a rare social buzz where eager art-loving fingers flipped through a limited photographic edition of crafted color, scene and independent suave. Self-published print media, conceived as a 'visual exhibition' in book form, is a very unusual event in Vietnam, a surprising fact considering this country suffers a great lack of space (gallery or museum) in which artists can appropriately experiment and share their work.

Printed every 3 months and funded entirely by XEM, this book is seen as an opportunity to showcase their love of digital immediacy beyond the commercial constraints of the presumed art world. XEM is a long-term undertaking, considered a friendship platform '... working together structurally horizontally without central theme or style imposed. Complete freedom is given to each artist for his content. Collaboration is done on the level of discussion about the way to develop an idea, a concept. The member is not left alone in his work and feeling part of a team gives him more strength for its creation... We define XEM as a trace for a visual experience without any external editorial or artistic constraints'.

San Art was delighted to see another group of like-minded local artists work collectively to construct their own productive platform and as show of support invited all involved to extend their discussion as objects in an exhibition format. As each member of XEM individually works across various media – from painting, sculpture, video to installation – the exhibition 'XEM' embraces much more than just photography (though it is an inherent focus). This exhibition charts each artist's personal artistic preoccupations, from challenging ideas of photojournalism; the infamous 'snapshot'; collective vs individual space; absent authorship; to gender as an ephemeral construct and much more!

XEM is a discursive generative space of artistic experimentation. The book itself focuses on the primacy of the image, preferring explanations or possible meanings to be discussed collectively, in person, between and above the pages. What does it mean to be a part of community of poetic relation? What does it mean to come together as friends in the sharing of mutual interests and values? How can such a 'belonging' become a space that nurtures social or creative growth? What is the difference between form (as an exhibition) and ritual (as a social happening)? How does the idea of an exhibition as book, an experience made mobile and intimate, change the way an image is read and remembered?

For further information please contact San Art: [hello@san-art.org](mailto:hello@san-art.org)

#### **ABOUT SAN ART**

Sàn Art is an artist initiated, non-profit contemporary art organization committed to the exchange and excavation of cultural knowledge within an interdisciplinary community. San Art is the most active independent arts organization in Vietnam dedicated to promoting, facilitating and showcasing contemporary art through production, exhibition, discourse and education.

[www.san-art.org](http://www.san-art.org)

Sàn Art is proudly supported by Nick and Angela Curtis, Sydney, Australia