

"I subverted the colonial trajectory of influence by using the French landscape to recapture the atmosphere and feelings I had in Vietnam." – Dacchi Dang

Dacchi was born in 1966 in Saigon, and came to Australia in the eighties. His evocative new body of photographic work - 'Liminal' - emanates from an artist's residency at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris, and compares the landscape, society and architecture of France and Vietnam; exploring notions of disparity between Eastern traditions of representation and those of the West, and celebrating the similarities and relationships between the two cultural landscapes, with the added layer of Australian identity.

As Dacchi explains, *"Not surprisingly, French culture, architecture and landscape have always fascinated me. While walking and exploring the city of Paris, childhood memories were constantly brought back, helping to clarify missing clues inside me of how much French culture had influenced the way of life in Vietnam."*

'Liminal' France occupied Vietnam in the late 18th century and thus French culture had a large impact on Vietnam. This is particularly evident in Vietnamese architecture. Conversely, during the French occupation numerous artefacts were taken from the country and placed into museums in France. Many of these artefacts belonged to Vietnam's prehistory and early history (pre-1000AD).

Dacchi's fascination and attraction to the beauty of the circular Dong Son drums – objects of cultural significance that he had been unable to see until his visit to France - inspired the series of nine large circular photomontages, 85cm in diameter, using an early traditional gum bi-chromate photographic process invented in 1830, combined with watercolour drawing.

"Central design elements like the sunflower can be found in many parts of the French landscape. At the same time they also remind me of Vietnam during the New Year season. The Waratah reflects my connection with my Australian life. The Leopard's face was a feature of the ancient Dong Son drums."

This work has a through-the-looking-glass quality. To see it requires one to gaze, but also to step through to the other side. There is a strange tension in the work that achieves a quiet celebration of, rather than angst about, the blending of cultures. Dacchi's capturing of objects and sensations both commonplace and significant, transient and enduring - deepened by his understanding of the difficulties and resonances of re-establishing one's life in a new society - reflects the continuing process of cultural appropriation and re-appropriation across time and place that we are all subject to.

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