

Memorial exhibition of painting master Nguyen Lam

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One hundred days after the passing of the late painter Nguyen Lam (1941-2025) – one of the monuments of Vietnamese contemporary art, Saigon's art space will make room for a meaningful moment of silence.

At Huyen Art House Gallery (8 Dang Tat, District 1), a special memorial event will take place, not only to display master works, but also to honor a life dedicated to creativity and an artistic legacy that will resonate forever.

At the end of June, before the passing of artist Nguyen Lam, Ms. Phuong Nguyen, collector and co-founder of ArtBlue Studio gallery (Singapore), promised in front of the late artist's portrait that she would do something most meaningful for his legacy. It was not only a grief for a talented artist, but also the responsibility of someone who witnessed, understood and believed in the stature of his legacy.



Nguyen Lam – Abstract, oil on canvas, 2021, 110x140 cm

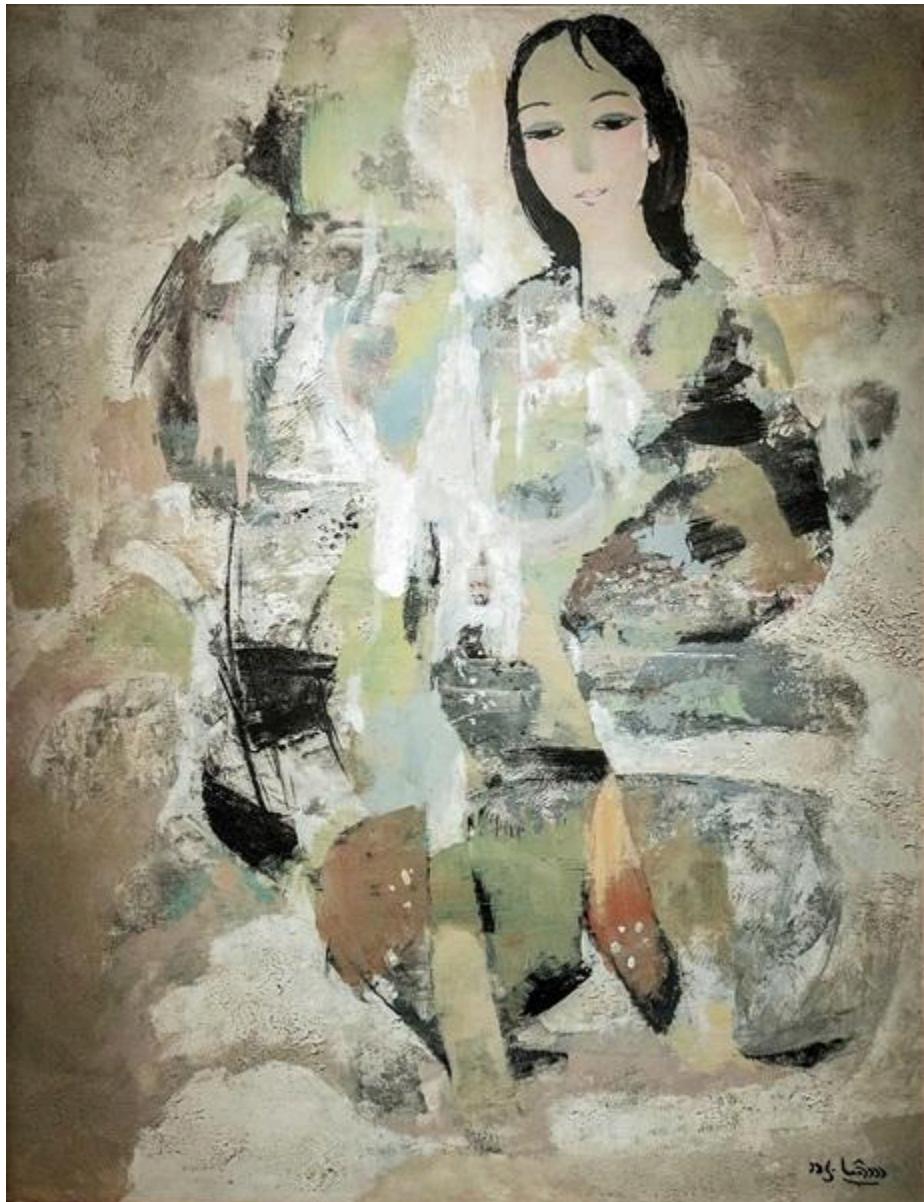
To date, that promise has been fulfilled when collector Phuong Nguyen brought 15 representative oil paintings by Nguyen Lam to the public in his hometown. In addition, the retrospective exhibition also includes 5 works by collector Truong Van Thuan and 5 works by collector Nguyen Van Quyet. This is an act of gratitude, an effort to illuminate and affirm the stature of the artist who played a key role in bringing Vietnamese art to the international level. The memorial exhibition will open at 5:30 p.m. on October 3, 2025 and last until the 13th of the same month.

Back in 2005, the relationship between the late painter Nguyen Lam and collector Phuong Nguyen began when she acquired his first abstract oil paintings. She recalls that what immediately captivated her was the “powerful energy” radiating from the material, an inner vitality conveyed by the artist through each stroke of paint, each color block.

Guided by the principle that “Art transcends all cultural boundaries”, Phuong Nguyen and her husband Jacques Renaud founded ArtBlue Studio in 2007 with the mission of introducing the talents of Vietnamese contemporary art to the world. The encounter with the art of painter Nguyen Lam became a fateful milestone. She not only became an enthusiastic collector of his works, but also became an active companion of the late painter Nguyen Lam for 20 years. Of more than 1,000 works by Nguyen Lam, Phuong Nguyen collected nearly a quarter of them.



Nguyen Lam – Abstract, oil on canvas, 2022, 110×140 cm



Nguyen Lam – Young woman, oil on canvas, 2023, 100×130 cm

ArtBlue Studio has also organized 6 solo exhibitions for Nguyen Lam in Singapore, focusing mainly on oil on canvas. Up to now, after nearly 25 years in the art market, Nguyen Lam is still the only artist whose abstract paintings she collects. At this event, Ms. Phuong Nguyen also revealed to the public a touching story surrounding the work titled The End by artist Nguyen Lam, currently on display at the National Museum of Singapore. The painting depicts a man lying in a grave, he has lived a life of debauchery and now lies dying alone under a gray sky and a black sun, evoking the

gloomy atmosphere of the South in the 1960s. Richard Harger - an American captain who served in the US Air Force during the Vietnam War (1964-1969), was immediately attracted to the painting, he bought it at an exhibition in Saigon (1965) and brought it back to the country to hang it for 50 years. In 2016, when he knew he was sick and about to die, instead of handing it over to his children, Richard Harger searched all the information on the Internet to find the most trustworthy person to continue to preserve and cherish this painting as he had cherished it, and he decided to send the painting back to collector Phuong Nguyen.

In a letter from Richard Harger's daughter to collector Phuong Nguyen, it reads: "Nguyen Lam's painting is close to the hearts of many in my family, as it has been part of our home for 50 years, and is the only original work of art we own. For me, this painting has always represented war, and also the spirit that lives on after death."

With such a rare and meaningful work, Phuong Nguyen thought that it deserved to be in a better place, more known to more people instead of just hanging in her gallery, so she decided to give the painting "The Last" completely free of charge to the National Museum of Singapore (even though the work was valued very highly).



Nguyen Lam – Finally, oil on canvas, 1965, 80x110 cm

The abstract world of painter Nguyen Lam

Spanning over six decades, the late artist's artistic journey was a tireless voyage through the lands of visual language. Starting from realism, he gradually moved through impressionism, expressionism, and finally found his true voice in the vast and challenging realm of abstract art.

His works are not only present in prestigious private collections around the world but are also kept in major museums, a recognition of his unshakeable status. The 25 works on display are a profound inner dialogue of the artist, divided into two main streams but always intertwined: the abstract world and the image of young women.



Nguyen Lam – Abstract, oil on canvas, 2019, 110x140 cm

In his abstract works, Nguyen Lam shows himself to be a master of “Art Informel”. The canvas surface is a stage where powerful, black strokes of paint are launched with a decisive gesture, reminiscent of calligraphy but freed from all rules to become a direct recording of emotions.

The surface of the painting is built from many layers of color, thickly applied, scratched, creating a stratum of memory, evoking a sense of time, of weathering, of what remains after the upheavals. On that quiet background, the strong strokes of paint appear like seismic events. This is the “powerful energy” that conquered collector Phuong Nguyen, an energy that lies not only in the color but also in the physical structure of the work.

When Nguyen Lam returned to the human figure, he did not abandon his abstract language. The silhouettes of the young women were not painted in an aesthetic way. They seemed to be “excavated” from thick layers of paint, bearing traces of the process

of formation itself. The boundary between the character and the background was intentionally blurred. The girl did not exist in isolation, but was an inseparable part of a larger flow of energy.

The memorial is an affirmation of the vitality of Nguyen Lam's legacy, a legacy cultivated by talent, tireless labor, and preserved and spread by like-minded hearts.

The event invites the public to come not only to see the paintings, but also to feel, to dialogue with the inner world of a master, and to together remember one of the outstanding painters of Vietnamese painting.

Exhibition information:

- **Event: Memorial exhibition for the 100th day of the death of painter Nguyen Lam (1941– 2025)**
- **Location: Huyen Art House, 8 Dang Tat Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City**
- **Opening: 5:30 p.m., Friday, October 3, 2025**
- **Time: From October 3, 2025 to October 13, 2025**
- **Opening hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily**

Mai Thuy