



Binh Danh: Life, Times and Matters of the Swamp

PURPOSE OF THIS PACKET: _____

To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibition and suggested age appropriate applications for exploring the concepts, meaning, and artistic intent of the exhibited work before, during, and after the museum visit. Museum educators at the UW Art Museum (UAM) are available to tailor materials to students' developmental abilities and to work with teachers to address classroom goals and Wyoming Education Standards.

CURRICULAR UNIT TOPIC: _____

Teachers and students examine the ideas, styles and techniques of Vietnamese/Cambodian/American artist Binh Danh, whose chlorophyll prints and Pop Art pieces are inspired by his personal history, and investigate cultural memory and the role of popular media in our memories. The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to **observe, question, explore, create and reflect.**

OBSERVE: _____

Students will closely observe the art work of Binh Danh, exploring the ideas and themes presented and/or the formal qualities of the work: the materials and processes used; subject matter and context; style and techniques.

QUESTION: _____

Students will have an opportunity to read, write, sketch, listen to teachers and museum educators, and then, to come up with questions about the work they see, and the concepts behind the artwork and the artist who created it. Students will question the materials and techniques used and their own responses to the art work in the exhibition.

EXPLORE: _____

They will explore the background of the artist and how that contributed to Danh's artwork. They will be encouraged to research vocabulary words and related aspects of the exhibit.

CREATE: _____

Students will be given time to practice sketching and drawing, and may create their own prints addressing personal or cultural memory, either in the Shelton Studio or in their school art room.

REFLECT: _____

Students will evaluate their final art products with other students from their classes and with teachers and museum educators. They will receive feedback on the art work and the concepts behind the making of the art work. After this process, each person may write an essay about his or her art, the artist, or his or her museum experience.



INTRODUCTION

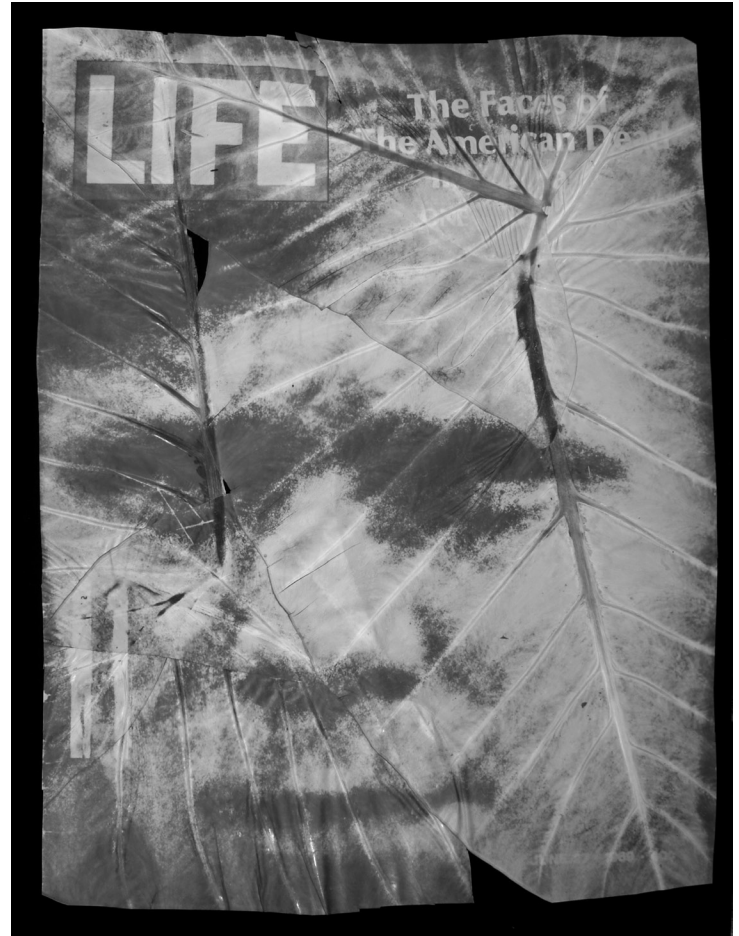
In this museum visit students will view the exhibition Binh Danh: Life, Times, and Matters of the Swamp. Born in Vietnam, Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian/American, b. 1977) immigrated to the United States at the age of two. Today, he is inspired by his personal heritage and ideas of cultural memory and popular media for his artwork.

Danh has invented a unique photographic process to create what he calls “chlorophyll prints.” Creating negatives from historic photographs or images from magazines, he places the negatives over leaves or grasses and exposes them to the sun. Using the plant’s natural process of photosynthesis, the images are transferred into the living plant matter. Danh completes the process by preserving the prints in resin, which seals the image and makes it permanent.

In this exhibition, Danh has pulled historic images from *Life*, a magazine that was popular during the Vietnam War era. Portraits of soldiers who died in the war are embedded into leaves and grass, meshing together the living jungle with the images of those who died there. He asks the viewer to question what stories the popular media told the public, compared to the stories that the jungle might tell if it could.

Also included in this exhibition are covers from *Life* magazine and found comic books depicting the Swamp Thing. By juxtaposing the publications with the chlorophyll prints, Danh raises questions about the role of popular media, as well as the media’s ability to influence public opinion and reflect popular beliefs.

While the images from the Vietnam War enable Danh to explore his own heritage, he also raises issues about collective cultural memory. His work examines how societies and nations form memories, and how these recollections can change over time. While this exhibition reflects on past events, Danh’s



Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian-American, b. 1977), *Life*, 2006, chlorophyll print, resin, 27 x 22-1/2 inches, courtesy of Haines Gallery and the artist

work can also be seen as contemporary commentary on the current worldwide conflicts and wars. The timeliness of these issues provides an opportunity to contemplate the cultural memory being formed in the present.

Binh Danh received an MFA from Stanford University and has exhibited widely throughout the United States. His work is in many public collections, including the Corcoran Art Gallery, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the George Eastman House. In 2010 he was the recipient of the Eureka Fellowship, awarded by the Fleishhacker Foundation. He is represented by Haines Gallery, San Francisco, and Lisa Sette Gallery, Scottsdale.

HISTORY

A Vietnam War Timeline

[Note: This timeline is an abbreviated version of the more detailed timeline posted on the Public Broadcasting System's "Vietnam Online" section of The American Experience.]

1945

- **Ho Chi Minh Creates Provisional Government:** Following the surrender of Japan to Allied forces, Ho Chi Minh and his People's Congress create the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam to form a provisional government. Japan transfers all power to Ho's Vietminh.
- **Ho Declares Independence of Vietnam**
- **British Forces Land in Saigon, Return Authority to French**
- **First American Dies in Vietnam:** Lt. Col. A. Peter Dewey, head of American OSS mission, was killed by Vietminh troops while driving a jeep to the airport. Reports later indicated that his death was due to a case of mistaken identity — he had been mistaken for a Frenchman.

1946

- **French and Vietminh Reach Accord:** France recognizes Vietnam as a "free state" within the French Union. French troops replace Chinese in the North.
- **Negotiations Between French and Vietminh Breakdown**
- **Indochina War Begins:** Following months of steadily deteriorating relations, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam launches its first concerted attack against the French.

1947

- **Vietminh Move North of Hanoi**
- **Valluy Fails to Defeat Vietminh:** French General Etienne Valluy attempts, and fails, to wipe out the Vietminh in one stroke.

1949

- **Elysee Agreement Signed:** Bao Dai and

President Vincent Auriol of France sign the Elysee Agreement. As part of the agreement the French pledge to assist in the building of a national anti-Communist army.

1950

- **Chinese, Soviets Offer Weapons to Vietminh**
- **US Pledges \$15M to Aid French:** The United States sends \$15 million dollars in military aid to the French for the war in Indochina. Included in the aid package is a military mission and military advisors.

1953

- **France Grants Laos Full Independence**
- **Vietminh Forces Push into Laos**

1954

- **Battle of Dienbienphu Begins:** A force of 40,000 heavily armed Vietminh lay siege to the French garrison at Dienbienphu. Using Chinese artillery to shell the airstrip, the Vietminh make it impossible for French supplies to arrive by air. It soon becomes clear that the French have met their match.
- **Eisenhower Cites "Domino Theory" Regarding Southeast Asia:** Responding to the defeat of the French by the Vietminh at Dienbienphu, President Eisenhower outlines the Domino Theory: "You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly."
- **French Defeated at Dien Bien Phu**
- **Geneva Convention Begins:** Delegates from nine nations convene in Geneva to start negotiations that will lead to the end of hostilities in Indochina. The idea of partitioning Vietnam is first explored at this forum.
- **Geneva Convention Agreements Announced:** Vietminh General Ta Quang Buu and French General Henri Delteil sign the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam. As part of the agreement, a provisional demarcation line

is drawn at the 17th parallel which will divide Vietnam until nationwide elections are held in 1956. The United States does not accept the agreement; neither does the government of Bao Dai.

1955

- Diem Rejects Conditions of Geneva Accords, Refuses to Participate in Nationwide Elections
- China and Soviet Union Pledge Additional Financial Support to Hanoi
- Diem Urged to Negotiate with North: Britain, France, and United States covertly urge Diem to respect Geneva accords and conduct discussions with the North.
- Diem Becomes President of Republic of Vietnam: Diem defeats Bao Dai in rigged election and proclaims himself President of Republic of Vietnam.

1956

- French Leave Vietnam
- US Training South Vietnamese: The US Military Assistance Advisor Group (MAAG) assumes responsibility, from French, for training South Vietnamese forces.

1957

- Communist Insurgency into South Vietnam: Communist insurgent activity in South Vietnam begins. Guerrillas assassinate more than 400 South Vietnamese officials. Thirty-seven armed companies are organized along the Mekong Delta.
- Terrorist Bombings Rock Saigon: Thirteen Americans working for MAAG and US Information Service are wounded in terrorist bombings in Saigon.

1959

- Weapons Moving Along Ho Chi Minh Trail: North Vietnam forms Group 559 to begin infiltrating cadres and weapons into South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Trail will become a strategic target for future military

attacks.

- US Servicemen Killed in Guerilla Attack: Major Dale R. Buis and Master Sergeant Chester M. Ovnand become the first Americans to die in the Vietnam War when guerillas strike at Bienhoa
- Diem Orders Crackdown on Communists, Dissidents

1960

- North Vietnam Imposes Universal Military Conscription
- Kennedy Elected President: John F. Kennedy narrowly defeats Richard Nixon for the presidency.
- Diem Survives Coup Attempt
- Vietcong Formed: Hanoi forms National Liberation Front for South Vietnam. Diem government dubs them “Vietcong.”

1961

- Battle of Kienhoa Province: 400 guerillas attack village in Kienhoa Province, and are defeated by South Vietnamese troops.
- Vice President Johnson Tours Saigon: During a tour of Asian countries, Vice President Lyndon Johnson visits Diem in Saigon. Johnson assures Diem that he is crucial to US objectives in Vietnam and calls him “the Churchill of Asia.”

1962

- US Military Employs Agent Orange: US Air Force begins using Agent Orange — a defoliant that came in metal orange containers-to expose roads and trails used by Vietcong forces.
- Diem Palace Bombed in Coup Attempt
- Mansfield Voices Doubt on Vietnam Policy: Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield reports back to JFK from Saigon his opinion that Diem had wasted the two billion dollars America had spent there.

1963

- Battle of Ap Bac: Vietcong units defeat South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) in Battle of Ap Bac

- **President Kennedy Assassinated in Dallas:** Kennedy's death meant that the problem of how to proceed in Vietnam fell squarely into the lap of his vice president, Lyndon Johnson.
- **Buddhists Protest Against Diem:** Tensions between Buddhists and the Diem government are further strained as Diem, a Catholic, removes Buddhists from several key government positions and replaces them with Catholics. Buddhist monks protest Diem's intolerance for other religions and the measures he takes to silence them. In a show of protest, Buddhist monks start setting themselves on fire in public places.
- **Diem Overthrown, Murdered:** With tacit approval of the United States, operatives within the South Vietnamese military overthrow Diem. He and his brother Nhu are shot and killed in the aftermath.

1964

- **General Nguyen Khanh Seizes Power in Saigon:** In a bloodless coup, General Nguyen Khanh seizes power in Saigon. South Vietnam junta leader, Major General Duong Van Minh, is placed under house arrest, but is allowed to remain as a figurehead chief-of-state.
- **Gulf of Tonkin Incident:** On August 2, three North Vietnamese PT boats allegedly fire torpedoes at the USS Maddox, a destroyer located in the international waters of the Tonkin Gulf, some thirty miles off the coast of North Vietnam. The attack comes after six months of covert US and South Vietnamese naval operations. A second, even more highly disputed attack, is alleged to have taken place on August 4.
- **Debate on Gulf of Tonkin Resolution:** The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution is approved by Congress on August 7 and authorizes President Lyndon Johnson to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."



Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian-American, b. 1977), *Son #2*, 2006, chlorophyll print, resin, 11-1/4 x 9-1/4 inches, courtesy of Haines Gallery and the artist

The resolution passes unanimously in the House, and by a margin of 82-2 in the Senate. The Resolution allows Johnson to wage all out war against North Vietnam without ever securing a formal Declaration of War from Congress.

- **Vietcong Attack Bienhoa Air Base**
- **LBJ Defeats Goldwater:** Lyndon Johnson is elected in a landslide over Republican Barry Goldwater of Arizona. During the campaign, Johnson's position on Vietnam appeared to lean toward de-escalation of US involvement, and sharply contrasted the more militant views held by Goldwater.



Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian-American, b. 1977), *Clarence Taylor*, 25, 2006, chlorophyll print on grass, resin, 41-1/4 x 31-1/2 inches, courtesy of Haines Gallery and the artist

1965

- Operation “Rolling Thunder” Deployed: Sustained American bombing raids of North Vietnam, dubbed Operation Rolling Thunder, begin in February. The nearly continuous air raids would go on for three years.
- Marines Arrive at Danang: The first American combat troops, the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, arrive in Vietnam to defend the US airfield at Danang. Scattered Vietcong gunfire is reported, but no Marines are injured.
- Heavy Fighting at Ia Drang Valley: The first conventional battle of the Vietnam war takes place as American forces clash with North Vietnamese units in the Ia Drang Valley. The

US 1st Air Cavalry Division employs its newly enhanced technique of aerial reconnaissance to finally defeat the NVA, although heavy casualties are reported on both sides.

- US Troop Levels Top 200,000
- Vietnam “Teach-In” Broadcast to Nation’s Universities: The practice of protesting US policy in Vietnam by holding “teach-ins” at colleges and universities becomes widespread. The first “teach-in” — featuring seminars, rallies, and speeches — takes place at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in March. In May, a nationally broadcast “teach-in” reaches students and faculty at over 100 campuses.

1966

- B-52s Bomb North Vietnam: In an effort to disrupt movement along the Mugia Pass — the main route used by the NVA to send personnel and supplies through Laos and into South Vietnam — American B-52s bomb North Vietnam for the first time.
- South Vietnam Government Troops Take Hue and Danang
- LBJ Meets With South Vietnamese Leaders: US President Lyndon Johnson meets with South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Cao Ky and his military advisors in Honolulu. Johnson promises to continue to help South Vietnam fend off aggression from the North, but adds that the US will be monitoring South Vietnam’s efforts to expand democracy and improve economic conditions for its citizens.
- Veterans Stage Anti-War Rally: Veterans from World Wars I and II, along with veterans from the Korean war stage a protest rally in New York City. Discharge and separation papers are burned in protest of US involvement in Vietnam.
- CORE Cites “Burden On Minorities and Poor” in Vietnam: The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) issues a report claiming that the US military draft places “a heavy discriminatory

burden on minority groups and the poor.” The group also calls for a withdrawal of all US troops from Vietnam.

1967

- **Operation Cedar Falls Begins:** In a major ground war effort dubbed Operation Cedar Falls, about 16,000 US and 14,000 South Vietnamese troops set out to destroy Vietcong operations and supply sites near Saigon. A massive system of tunnels is discovered in an area called the Iron Triangle, an apparent headquarters for Vietcong personnel.
- **Bunker Replaces Cabot Lodge as South Vietnam Ambassador**
- **Martin Luther King Speaks Out Against War:** Calling the US “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world,” Martin Luther King publicly speaks out against US policy in Vietnam. King later encourages draft evasion and suggests a merger between antiwar and civil rights groups.
- **Dow Recruiters Driven From Wisconsin Campus:** University of Wisconsin students demand that corporate recruiters for Dow Chemical — producers of napalm — not be allowed on campus.
- **McNamara Calls Bombing Ineffective:** Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, appearing before a Senate subcommittee, testifies that US bombing raids against North Vietnam have not achieved their objectives. McNamara maintains that movement of supplies to South Vietnam has not been reduced, and neither the economy nor the morale of the North Vietnamese has been broken.

1968

January

- **Sihanouk Allows Pursuit of Vietcong into Cambodia**
- **North Vietnamese Launch Tet Offensive:** In a show of military might that catches the US military off guard, North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces sweep down upon several key

cities and provinces in South Vietnam, including its capital, Saigon. Within days, American forces turn back the onslaught and recapture most areas. From a military point of view, Tet is a huge defeat for the Communists, but turns out to be a political and psychological victory. The US military’s assessment of the war is questioned and the “end of tunnel” seems very far off.

February

- **Battle for Hue:** The Battle for Hue wages for 26 days as US and South Vietnamese forces try to recapture the site seized by the Communists during the Tet Offensive. Previously, a religious retreat in the middle of a war zone, Hue was nearly leveled in a battle that left nearly all of its population homeless. Following the US and ARVN victory, mass graves containing the bodies of thousands of people who had been executed during the Communist occupation are discovered.
- **Westmoreland Requests 206,000 More Troops**
- **My Lai Massacre:** On March 16, the angry and frustrated men of Charlie Company, 11th Brigade, American Division entered the village of My Lai. “This is what you’ve been waiting for — search and destroy — and you’ve got it,” said their superior officers. A short time later the killing began. When news of the atrocities surfaced, it sent shockwaves through the US political establishment, the military’s chain of command, and an already divided American public.

March

- **LBJ Announces He Won’t Run:** With his popularity plummeting and dismayed by Senator Eugene McCarthy’s strong showing in the New Hampshire primary, President Lyndon Johnson stuns the nation and announces that he will not be a candidate for re-election.

April

- **MLK Slain in Memphis.**

May

- **Paris Peace Talks Begin:** Following a lengthy period of debate and discussion, North Vietnamese and American negotiators agree on a location and start date of peace talks. Talks are slated to begin in Paris on May 10 with W. Averell Harriman representing the United States, and former Foreign Minister Xuan Thuy heading the North Vietnamese delegation.

June

- **Robert Kennedy Assassinated**

August

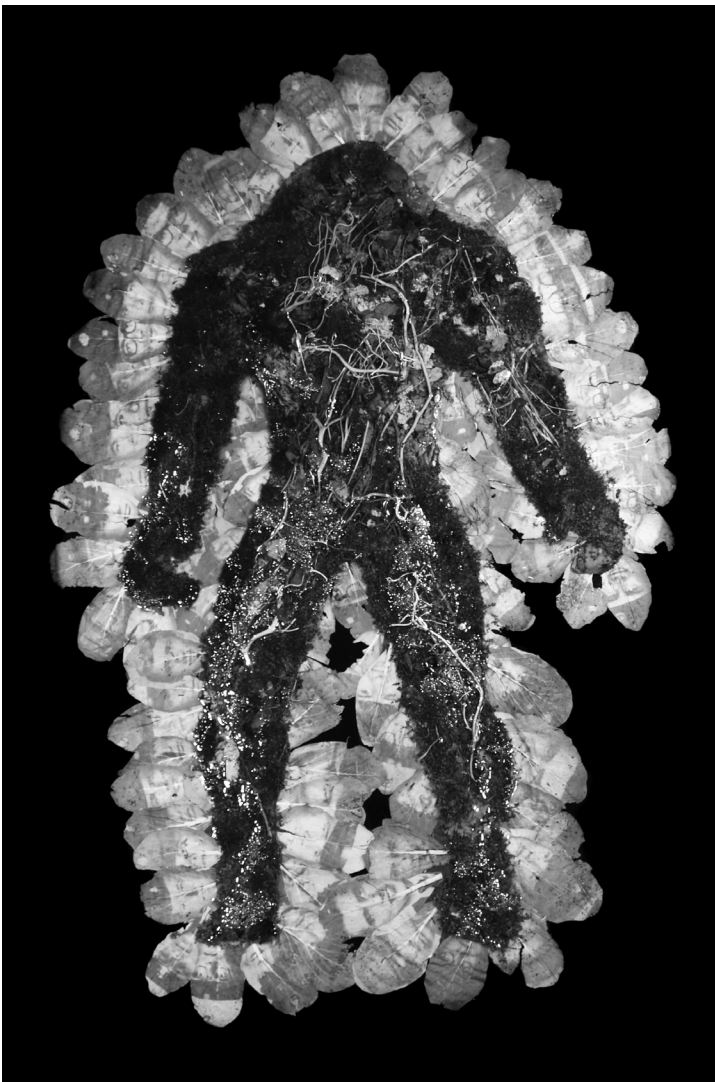
- **Upheaval at Democratic Convention in Chicago:** As the frazzled Democratic party prepares to hold its nominating convention in Chicago, city officials gear up for a deluge of demonstrations. Mayor Richard Daley orders police to crackdown on antiwar protests. As the nation watched on television, the area around the convention erupts in violence.

November

- **Richard Nixon Elected President:** Running on a platform of “law and order,” Richard Nixon barely beats out Hubert Humphrey for the presidency. Nixon takes just 43.4 percent of the popular vote, compared to 42.7 percent for Humphrey. Third-party candidate George Wallace takes the remaining percentage of votes.

1969

- **Nixon Begins Secret Bombing of Cambodia:** In an effort to destroy Communist supply routes and base camps in Cambodia, President Nixon gives the go-ahead to “Operation Breakfast.” The covert bombing of Cambodia, conducted without the knowledge of Congress or the American public, will continue for fourteen months.
- **Policy of “Vietnamization” Announced:** Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird describes a policy of “Vietnamization” when discussing a diminishing role for the US military in Vietnam. The objective of the policy is to shift the burden of defeating the Communists onto the South Vietnamese Army and away from the United States.
- **Ho Chi Minh Dies at Age 79**
- **News of My Lai Massacre Reaches US:** Through the reporting of journalist Seymour Hersh, Americans read for the first time of the atrocities committed by Lt. William Calley and his troops in the village of My Lai. At the time the reports were made public, the Army had already charged Calley with the crime of murder.



Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian-American, b. 1977), *Swamp Soldiers*, 2006, chlorophyll print on grass, resin, 55 x 35 inches, courtesy of Haines Gallery and the artist

- Massive Antiwar Demonstration in DC

1970

- Sihanouk Ousted in Cambodia: Prince Sihanouk's attempt to maintain Cambodia's neutrality while war waged in neighboring Vietnam forced him to strike opportunistic alliances with China, and then the United States. Such vacillating weakened his government, leading to a coup orchestrated by his defense minister, Lon Nol.
- Kent State Incident: National Guardsmen open fire on a crowd of student antiwar protesters at Ohio's Kent State University, resulting in the death of four students and the wounding of eight others. President Nixon publicly deplors the actions of the Guardsmen, but cautions: "... when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy." Several of the protesters had been hurling rocks and empty tear gas canisters at the Guardsmen.
- Kissinger and Le Duc Begin Secret Talks
- Number of US Troops Falls to 280K

1971

- Lt. Calley Convicted of Murder
- Pentagon Papers Published: A legacy of deception, concerning US policy in Vietnam, on the part of the military and the executive branch is revealed as the New York Times publishes the Pentagon Papers. The Nixon administration, eager to stop leaks of what they consider sensitive information, appeals to the Supreme Court to halt the publication. The Court decides in favor the Times and allows continued publication.
- Nixon Announces Plans to Visit China: In a move that troubles the North Vietnamese, President Nixon announces his intention to visit The People's Republic of China. Nixon's gesture toward China is seen by the North Vietnamese as an effort to create discord between themselves and their Chinese allies.
- Thieu Re-elected in South Vietnam

- 1972
- Nixon Cuts Troop Levels by 70K: Responding to charges by Democratic presidential candidates that he is not moving fast enough to end US involvement in Vietnam, President Nixon orders troop strength reduced by seventy thousand.
- Secret Peace Talks Revealed
- B-52s Bomb Hanoi and Haiphong: In an attempt to force North Vietnam to make concessions in the ongoing peace talks, the Nixon administration orders heavy bombing of supply dumps and petroleum storage sites in and around Hanoi and Haiphong. The administration makes it clear to the North Vietnamese that no section of Vietnam is off-limits to bombing raids.
- Break-In at Watergate Hotel
- Kissinger Says "Peace Is At Hand": Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho reach agreement in principle on several key measures leading to a cease-fire in Vietnam. Kissinger's view that "peace is at hand," is dimmed somewhat by South Vietnamese President Thieu's opposition to the agreement.
- Nixon Wins Reelection

1973

- Cease-fire Signed in Paris: A cease-fire agreement that, in the words of Richard Nixon, "brings peace with honor in Vietnam and Southeast Asia," is signed in Paris by Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho. The agreement is to go into effect on January 28.
- End of Draft Announced
- Last American Troops Leave Vietnam
- Hearings on Secret Bombings Begin: The Senate Armed Services Committee opens hearing on the US bombing of Cambodia. Allegations are made that the Nixon administration allowed bombing raids to be carried out during what was supposed to be a time when Cambodia's neutrality was officially recognized. As a result of the hearings,

Congress orders that all bombing in Cambodia cease effective at midnight, August 14.

- Kissinger and Le Duc Tho Win Peace Prize: The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to Henry Kissinger of the United States and Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam. Kissinger accepts the award, while Tho declines, saying that a true peace does not yet exist in Vietnam.

1974

- Thieu Announces Renewal of War
- Report Cites Damage to Vietnam Ecology: According to a report issued by The National Academy of Science, use of chemical herbicides during the war caused long-term damage to the ecology of Vietnam. Subsequent inquiries will focus on the connection between certain herbicides, particularly Agent Orange, and widespread reports of cancer, skin disease, and other disorders on the part of individuals exposed to them.
- Communists Take Mekong Delta Territory
- Nixon Resigns
- Communists Plan Major Offensive: With North Vietnamese forces in the South believed to be at their highest levels ever, South Vietnamese leaders gird themselves for an expected Communist offensive of significant proportions.

1975

- Communist Forces Capture Phuoc Long Province: The South Vietnamese Army loses twenty planes in a failed effort to defend Phuoc Long, a key province just north of Saigon. North Vietnamese leaders interpret the US's complete lack of response to the siege as an indication that they could move more aggressively in the South.
- Hue Falls to Communists
- Communists Take Aim at Saigon: The North Vietnamese initiate the Ho Chi Minh Campaign — a concerted effort to “liberate” Saigon. Under the command of General Dung, the NVA sets out to capture Saigon by late April, in advance of

the rainy season.

- Ford Calls Vietnam War “Finished”: Anticipating the fall of Saigon to Communist forces, US President Gerald Ford, speaking in New Orleans, announces that as far as the US is concerned, the Vietnam War is “finished.”
- Last Americans Evacuate as Saigon Falls to Communists: South Vietnamese President Duong Van Minh delivers an unconditional surrender to the Communists in the early hours of April 30. North Vietnamese Colonel Bui Tin accepts the surrender and assures Minh that, “... Only the Americans have been beaten. If you are patriots, consider this a moment of joy.” As the few remaining Americans evacuate Saigon, the last two US servicemen to die in Vietnam are killed when their helicopter crashes.

1976-80

- Pham Van Dong Heads Socialist Republic of Vietnam: As the National Assembly meets in July of 1976, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam names Pham Van Dong its prime minister. Van Dong and his fellow government leaders, all but one of whom are former North Vietnamese officials, take up residence in the nation's new capital—Hanoi.
- Jimmy Carter Elected US President
- Carter Issues Pardon to Draft Evaders: In a bold and controversial move, newly inaugurated President Jimmy Carter extends a full and unconditional pardon to nearly 10,000 men who evaded the Vietnam War draft.
- Vietnam Granted Admission to United Nations
- Relations Between Vietnam and China Deteriorate
- Vietnam Invades Cambodia: Determined to overthrow the government of Pol Pot, Vietnam invades Cambodia. Phnompenh, Cambodia's capital, falls quickly as Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge followers flee into the jungles.
- “Boat People” Flee Vietnam: Swarms of Vietnamese refugees take to the sea in overcrowded

and unsafe boats in search of a better life. The ranks of the “boat people” include individuals deemed enemies of the state who’ve been expelled from their homeland.

- China Invades, Withdraws from, Vietnam
- US GAO Issues Report on Agent Orange: After years of Defense Department denials, the US General Accounting Office releases a report indicating that thousands of US troops were exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange. Thousands of veterans had demanded a government investigation into the effect that dioxin, a chemical found in Agent Orange, had on the human immune system.
- Ronald Reagan Elected US President

1981-85

- Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC
Dedicated: Designed by Maya Ying Lin, a 22 year-old Yale architectural student, the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial opens in Washington, DC. The quiet, contemplative structure consisting of two black granite walls forming a “V”, lists the names of the 58,183 Americans killed in the Vietnam War. The memorial itself stirred debate as some thought its presentation was too muted and somber, lacking the familiar elements of war-time heroics found in most war memorials.
- Reagan Promises to Make MIAs “Highest National Priority”: For the family members of those still listed as Missing-In-Action, the war is not over. In an address to the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, President Ronald Reagan pledges to make the finding of these individuals one of the “highest national priority.”
- Dow Chemical Knowledge of Dioxin Revealed: Documents used as part of a lawsuit brought by 20,000 Vietnam veterans against several chemical companies reveal that Dow Chemical had full knowledge of the serious health risks posed by human exposure to dioxin, a chemical found in



Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian-American, b. 1977), *Chris R. Martinez*, 21, 2006, chlorophyll print on grass, resin, 41-1/4 x 31-1/2 inches, courtesy of Haines Gallery and the artist

the herbicide Agent Orange. Evidence indicated that despite this information, Dow continued to sell herbicides to the US military for use in Vietnam.

- “Unknown Soldier” of Vietnam War Laid to Rest
- US Offers Asylum to Vietnamese Political Prisoners
- Vietnamese Forces Defeat Khmer Rouge Rebels: An offensive launched against refugee Khmer Rouge rebels spills over the Thai border and eventually comes to involve Thai troops. The Vietnamese are successful in suppressing the rebels and solidify their hold on Cambodia despite criticism from neighboring countries and the United Nations.

1986-90

- George Bush Elected US President
- Vietnamese Troops Leave Cambodia: All Vietnamese troops exit Cambodia by September of 1989, paving the way for UN-sponsored elections in 1993. As a result of the elections, a coalition government is formed and work on a new constitution begins.

1991-97

- Bill Clinton Elected US President
- Washington Restores Diplomatic Ties with Hanoi: As Communist Vietnam inched toward market reforms and pledged full cooperation in finding all Americans listed as still missing-in-action, the United States restores diplomatic ties with its former enemy in 1995.
- McNamara Calls Vietnam Policy “Wrong, Terribly Wrong”: Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, one of the key architects of the US’s war policy in Vietnam, admits grave mistakes in that policy in his 1995 memoir, *In Retrospect*. McNamara, in his book, says that “...We were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why.”
- US and Vietnam Exchange Ambassadors: Ushering in a new era of cooperation between the two former enemies, the United States and Vietnam exchange ambassadors. Douglas “Pete” Peterson, a prisoner of war for 6 years during the Vietnam War, is named US envoy to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, while H.E. Le Van Bang assumes the position of Vietnamese ambassador to the United States.

- from the site: www.english.illinois.edu/maps/vietnam/timeline.htm

ARTIST STATEMENTS

My parents did not talk about the Vietnam War because it was such a dark period for them. For a long time I didn’t know that my father had been

injured in the Vietnam War fighting alongside the Americans. I knew he had a scar, but I didn’t know what it was from. I began learning about Vietnam by looking at lots of photographs in an effort to learn more about my family’s history. My parents have become part of my art practice now, especially my mother. She tells the stories – and it is the stories that are so important. I have traveled back to Vietnam and the island where we were refugees with her, and she has helped me gather papers and artifacts from those time periods.

I consider this artwork to be, in essence, my self-portrait. It is what I am thinking about. It is important to share it with viewers, like a gift. I am interested in life and death, the fragility of the human body, and how, when we die, we return to nature. I use nature as part of my art making process. I use living leaves that remind us of the tropics of Vietnam and Cambodia, working with the process of photosynthesis and the chlorophyll produced in the leaves to capture photographic images of soldiers and civilians. Do our memories live on? Can the memories of others bring life to them again? I think my work is a metaphor for the memories of the soldiers who died in Vietnam - their memories are living in the landscape, just as their images live in the leaves.

I have these memories of watching the movie *Swamp Thing* when I was a kid. I didn’t know what to do with these memories until I began thinking about the soldiers who became part of the landscape in their camouflage. I began seeing similarities in the stories told in *Swamp Thing* to events in Vietnam. I was very influenced by the work of Andy Warhol and began considering the influence of the media on our perceptions of events. The Vietnam War was the war that went right into the living room – on television and in the magazines we all read. Hollywood began using images from the war in movie making. Camouflage was used for costumes and jungles became settings. I think we

need to consider what we learn about events from the media.

My goal is to honor the memories of these soldiers and civilians who have died. There are so many perspectives about the war. I am interested in looking at all sides and in talking with viewers about the work. The commonality of war is found in death and memory, no matter what your political view is. Viewers bring themselves to the work – their interpretations and experiences influence the way they respond to it.

-From notes taken during Binh Danh's Visiting Artist discussions with students

University of Wyoming Art Museum, October, 2010.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will learn about the artist Binh Danh and his work, considering the formal qualities and themes of his art. They will investigate the materials and techniques used by the artist to create work. Discussions and explorations will be tailored to students' ages and developmental levels, in consultation with their classroom teachers.

In the Shelton Studio students will be given the opportunity to define and explore the idea of creating prints that have personal or cultural meaning for the student. While inspired by or responding to the artwork and discussions in the galleries, each student will try, in his or her own way, to create something new. Students will be encouraged to incorporate their own ideas into their work.

Before arriving at the art museum, students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about the artist, the countries of Vietnam and Cambodia, historical, cultural, and geographical information alluded to in the artwork or the artist's biographical material, the chlorophyll printing process, and the art of photography and print making. While here they will spend time in the galleries closely observing the work, discussing it,

writing about it, and sketching it. They will begin conversations about the ideas and methods used to create the prints, which will lay the groundwork for future opportunities to pursue these ideas in their home classrooms and schools.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

GRADES K-6

- How are these prints like photographs? How are they different?
- Do these portraits look like people you might know? Why or why not?
- Have you ever created artwork about your own or your family's memories? Why or why not?
- How can artists help us remember?

GRADES 7-12

- Why has the artist chosen to portray these images?
- How important are the connections between his personal and cultural identity to this work?
- How do artists help us learn about historical events?
- How do (or don't) the photographic images relate to the pop culture images of Swamp Thing in the same exhibit? What do you think? Why?
- How does media (magazines, newspapers, Internet, Facebook, etc.) influence the way we perceive the world around us?
- Can media influence your perception of personal identity? Cultural identity?
- Why would the artist use art as a means for talking about war (or any other hard subject)?

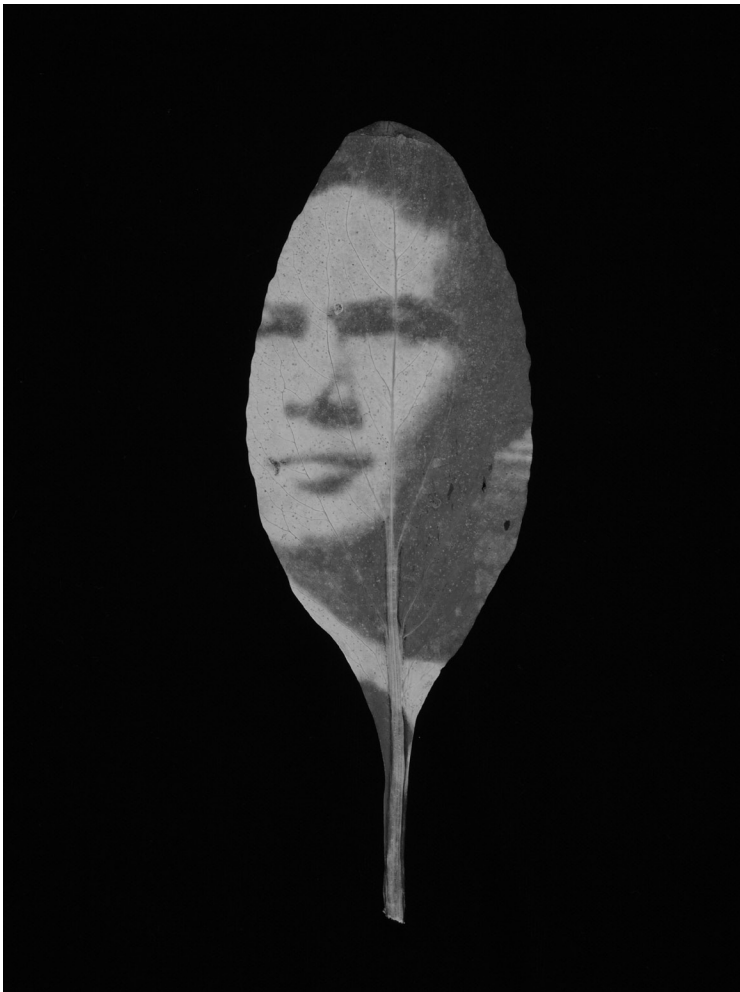
ART QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

GRADES K-6

- What do you see?
- What is chlorophyll? How do you think you could use the chlorophyll process to make art?
- Why do you think the artist chose the chlorophyll printing process to create the images of the soldiers on leaves?
- How do the characters in Swamp Thing look like the people portrayed in Binh Danh's prints? How are they different?

GRADES 7-12

- Why did the artist choose the chlorophyll



Binh Danh (Vietnamese/Cambodian-American, b. 1977), *Son #6*, 2006, chlorophyll print, resin, 11-1/4 x 9-1/4 inches, courtesy of Haines Gallery and the artist

printing process to create the images of the soldiers on leaves?

- Do you think other printing or photographic processes would have conveyed the ideas as well? Why or why not?
- What method would you use to convey memory?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest that teachers and students consider the following activities. Students will read and research about the Pop Art movement in art magazines, books, and on the web.

- Students may research information on Binh Danh on the Internet and the Art Museum's website.
- Students may investigate the science photosynthesis.
- Students may research Vietnam and Cambodia, exploring significant political, economic, and historical influences.
- Students may visit a historical archive to learn more about how historic photos are preserved and how we use them to learn about the past.
- Students may explore the history of photographic journalism in America.

PREREQUISITE SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

Museum staff will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate. At the very minimum:

- Students should have some familiarity with sketching and drawing objects.

MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

These activities are suggestions. Museum educators will work with teachers to carefully tailor all classes to their students' needs, in support of classroom

goals and district and state education standards.

PART 1

TIME FRAME: 30 - 45 MINUTES

(IN THE GALLERIES)

- Students will closely observe the works of Binh Danh on exhibit in the art museum.
- They will identify lines, shapes, forms, patterns, repetition, color, light and shadow, technique and style in the existing work.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- They will explore the artwork in relationship to the idea of photography and printing and creating something new.
- They will explore the chlorophyll printing process.
- They will explore the concepts and history behind the artwork in the exhibit.
- Using worksheets, students will respond in writing or drawing to the work they see by recording their observations and their own thoughts about the work.
- Students will answer questions on a museum worksheet.
- Students will engage in discussions about their observations and their answers and sketches with one another and with the teachers.

PART 2

TIME FRAME: 45 - 60 MINUTES

(IN THE SHELTON STUDIO)

The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum staff will work with teachers to develop specific projects which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students may utilize a printing process (mono prints, sun prints, Styrofoam prints, etc.) to create their own image related to memory, or personal or cultural identity.
- Students may create a pop culture personality

that relates to an event or memory important to them.

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM USE

The study of the Binh Dahn's artwork, including the historical knowledge gained from studying the work and the broader time frame referenced (1940's-present day), the science related to creating the work, the geography of Southeast Asia, the association with cultural memory and more ties to multiple curricular areas including art, history, social studies, writing, reading, math, geography, and political science. Museum staff will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Teaching Standards and to align museum projects and studies with ongoing classroom curricular units.

SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These are just a few of the many resources available. We welcome other suggestions that teachers and students find helpful which can be added to this list.

- UW Art Museum website: www.uwyo.edu/artmuseum
- Exhibition descriptive materials (contact the museum education program for more information)
- Research on the Internet about Binh Dahn
- The poetry of Walt Whitman (recommended by Binh Dahn)
- Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*, Vintage Books, NY, 2007 (recommended by Binh Dahn)
- Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishing Co., NY, 1990 (recommended by Binh Dahn)
- Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We are Soldiers Still: A Journey Back to the Battlefields of Vietnam*, HarperCollins, NY 2008.

MATERIALS TO BE SUPPLIED TO EACH STUDENT

Materials for selected Shelton Studio projects are provided by the art museum.

ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION

In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we may ask that participants help us assess the activities and learning that take place. Examples of evaluation tools include:

1. Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and explorations, and their studio experience,
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick-survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students' experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum educators will record their observations and assessments.
4. When studio time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art completed in the Shelton Studio.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available to teachers upon written request for use in teaching and student portfolios.