

RE

saddie choua

OPEN

bertrand jeannelle

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stefano moras

BOX

thy nguyên truong minh

FS TAKE 1

REOPENING BOXES TAKE 1

Following its objective of boosting cultural exchanges, *Open Earth Foundation*, organised during this summer at La Vallée, the Residence Program '**REOPENING BOXES**'. It was quite a challenge, since the severity of Covid-19 had imposed restrictions to mobility. Nevertheless, there were dozens of applicants. Art needs to breath, art needs space and visibility.

Stephan Balleux, Belgian visual artist and teacher at the *Royal Academy of the Arts of Brussels* led a pluri-disciplinary team to screen applications and choose the beneficiaries. He now curates the exhibition.
www.stephan-balleux.com

According to Balleux: "The residents who exhibit in this first opus of "**REOPENING BOXES – Take 1**" were those who were able to make themselves available out of confinement in Belgium, and yet these artists have one thing in common: they have an artistic practice which help us to look at the world with other codes, with other conceptual tools and especially from another position."

As the Covid-19 situation improves, the selected artists will have the possibility of exhibiting their work in 2021 in Spain hosted by *The Gabarron Foundation*. This exhibition is called "**REOPENING BOXES – Take 1**" because *Open Earth Foundation* and *La Vallée* hope to be able to organise additional residencies to support more artists, living and working in Belgium or visiting Brussels to acquire more skills and visibility.

REOPENING BOXES TAKE 1

Following the invitation of the *Open Earth Foundation*, the artists selected for this summer 's artistic residency present the results of their work at *La Vallée*. They inaugurated a residency that was urgently needed as Belgium was coming out from the confinement.

The first residents, among several dozen applications received, were those who were able to make themselves available at the end of confinement in Belgium, and yet these artists have one thing in common: they have an artistic practice that helps us look at the world with other codes, with other conceptual tools and, above all, from another position, sensitive and critical at the same time.

Saddie Choua is a committed artist internationally recognized. Her work is a reflection on the way one dominant population looks at another, and vice versa. She tackles complex subjects such as latent racism in post-colonial exoticism, the prejudices of the majorities, the social violence endured by minorities, the mediatisation and trivialisation of violence in political discourse, and the violence against the female gender. Through a critical appropriation of elements of the visual language specific to media images (documentary, advertising, cinema), a diversion of it through the prism of her own singularity, Saddie Choua constantly questions the relationship of the solitary subject in relation to the group, considered authoritarian and alienating.

In this residence, the artist is working on a project that takes as its starting point a 16th century book on botany, which describes and classifies flowers and plants according to visual characteristics. By extension, she describes and classifies other elements following the same logic, revealing the flaws, perversity and violence of the dominance of the "We" over the "I". For this exhibition Saddie Choua has constructed an installation composed of collages and videos that bring together images of plants, historical images of the legendary Peruvian singer Yma Sumac, linked by texts of cooking recipes that have been diverted and augmented.

In this project, nature is used to relieve pain, heal and comfort. Saddie Choua finds parallels in the already fragile art world, where inequalities have only increased since the Corona crisis and a strange atmosphere has emerged. With a great deal of intelligence, humor and respect for her audience, Saddie Choua creates a montage that allows the viewer to redefine for himself/herself the elements of the exhibition.

As for **Thy Nguyễn Trương Minh**, he questions the Western ethno-centric world from his own experience, through the works he creates but also through the links he weaves between Belgium and Vietnam, his country of origin. As a “connecting rod”, he facilitates the links between these two cultures during the exchange program he organizes between the Brussels School of Graphic Research and the Ho Chi Minh City University of Fine Arts. This approach allows him to take a critical, theoretical and poetic look at post-colonialism in his work as a visual artist.

For this exhibition, he presents a V-plotter, a wall-mounted printing machine that he made himself and which he controls with a computer. This type of wall printing is already well known, but the artist brings a fresh approach to it, using the coldness of the machine as a poetic extension of his interrogations. This ambiguity of the in between, between the machine obeying the artist's injunctions and the sensitivity of what is traced, both in form and content, echoes his own experience, a personality in balance between two cultures. The sources for the work are all drawn from a database of archives and text records, the artist's drawings and family archive films. Programmed to intervene over a long tracing time throughout the duration of the exhibition, a machine armed with a pen draws on the medium fragments from this data bank and arranged by the artist in a long performance mixing text, images, maps and signs.

Stefano Moras is a painter of space, in space. He takes most of the elements of painting to apply and sustain his process. His works differ by pictorial gestures or techniques that remind some sort of printing process like monotype. Like a child who puts paint on a tree leaf and prints this leaf on a blank page, Stefano uses a tarpaulin on the ground as a surface where he spreads layers of colour and leads actions with his body pressure to create a monumental painted surface. All these impressions become the visual and plastic language that he will deploy in space, reprocessed into installations or three-dimensional compositions, fulfilling his need to be surrounded by colour.

Trust in chance is another important characteristic of his vision: the painter is open to what happens when he paints without control, without predefined intentions. His practice of painting, by mixing it with the residues that he himself produces in his pictorial process and the urban residues found in his immediate environment, which he seizes as autonomous plastic elements, reveals the social and benevolent gaze that the artist has on society.

He is interested by the discredited elements, the natural or artificial residues, in a powerful metaphor of a will to repair, include and enhance what is unfairly disregarded.

In contrast to Stefano Moras' pictorial attitude and thus in a positive confrontation, **Bertrand Jeannelle** proposes paintings that seem to have all the attributes of abstraction, but which are in reality a radical representation of the world around him. By setting his gaze on elements considered poor and unattractive in the environment (an asphalt road crossed by discontinuous lines, a piece of wood in a landscape, a three-dimensional abstract form), the artist positions himself in relation to the history of art and painting in particular. The pictorial representation as we know it in the West is the result of a construction based on a series of cultural conventions. The best known of them (and which to some extent continues to this day) is the linear perspective, perfected during the Renaissance and imposed politically by the Medici.

Maliciously, the painter forces us to look at the world from other principles, which seem simple in appearance but much more complicated to visualise because his method of representation is not based on imitation. The very graphic aspect of his paintings (use of flatness, colour code of representation, simplicity of reading) contrasts with the mental game he forces us to accomplish and which could be defined in this way: Take a shape; Represent one face A; Add an adjacent face B on the same plane as A; Define the direction of the light to trace the shadow cast and the shape of the lit face. By playing with the audience's expectations and cultural a-priori, by forcing them to deconstruct their way of seeing, by putting abstraction and representation on the same plane, the paintings on wood of Bertrand Jeannelle can plunge the viewer, who is not warned of the artist's singular rules, into deep disarray. What about your own way of seeing the world? What are your own modes of representation, if you get rid of obsolete conventions?

This bouquet of artistic proposals, developed with poetry and intelligence, supports the values that, in my opinion, animate the *Open Earth Foundation*, which works for increased access to art and culture for all, in a positive movement towards a more humane, inclusive, supportive society, more respectful of the environment and of minorities as they are.

Stephan Balleux,

organizer of the jury of REOPENING BOXES and artistic coordinator of this first residents' exhibition

REOPENINGBOXES TAKE 1

REOPENING BOXES: TAKE 1

TALKING WITH THE ARTISTS

Before the Opening of the exhibit, *OEF* and La Vallée will maintain a short debate focused on the future of the creative sector. Artists, associations, and institutions will converse with the public about the difficulties that culture and art have experienced during the confinement and how to confront the uncertainty of next season.

SPEAKERS:

1. Claire Ducène, member of the FAP
2. Pedro Velázquez, Deputy Chief of Creative Europe.
3. Gerardo Salinas, Theatre Director and programmer at KVS Theatre (TBC)

MODERATORS:

1. Stephan Ballieux, curator of the residence program and exhibition
4. Angel Carro, Founder of Open Earth Foundation

REOPENINGBOXES TAKE 1

Saddie Choua

“More than a year ago I started to make work about the psychophysical trauma caused by racism. The installation's point is the herbal book by the Machelen-born botanist Rembert Dodoens. I am developing a new herbal book with attention to the trauma caused by racism. I rework Dodoens' herb book by making an edition with plants, recipes and all kinds of tips for health and trauma processing. In La Vallée I am working on an extra edition (video/collage) with attention to the suffering caused by the Covid 19”.

www.saddiechoua.be

@saddiechoua

Saddie is a visual artist and preparing a PhD in the arts at RITCS school of arts/ VUB in Brussels. She studied Sociology at the VUB and graduated with the interesting paper 'Crazy mothers from here. How do Moroccan mothers deal with the problems their sons have with the police.' She has been intercultural coordinator at De Pianofabriek in Brussels, academic researcher at VUB and KuLeuven and co-founder of radio Kifkif. She is now working on the documentary 'The Pussy Riot Guide to Feminism' & the book 'The feminist guide to Pussy Riot, among other things. She is one of the laureates of the Belgian Art Prize 2020.





1.



2.



3.

1. Lamb chops should not be overcooked, installation preparation, Contour Biennale, 2019

2. Lamb chops should not be overcooked. installation view, Contour Biennale, 2019

3. Sealed wooden box, 60 x 85 x 67 cm, multimedia installation, disinfectant gel, 2020



Lamb chops should not be overcooked, multimedia installation, work in progress, 2020

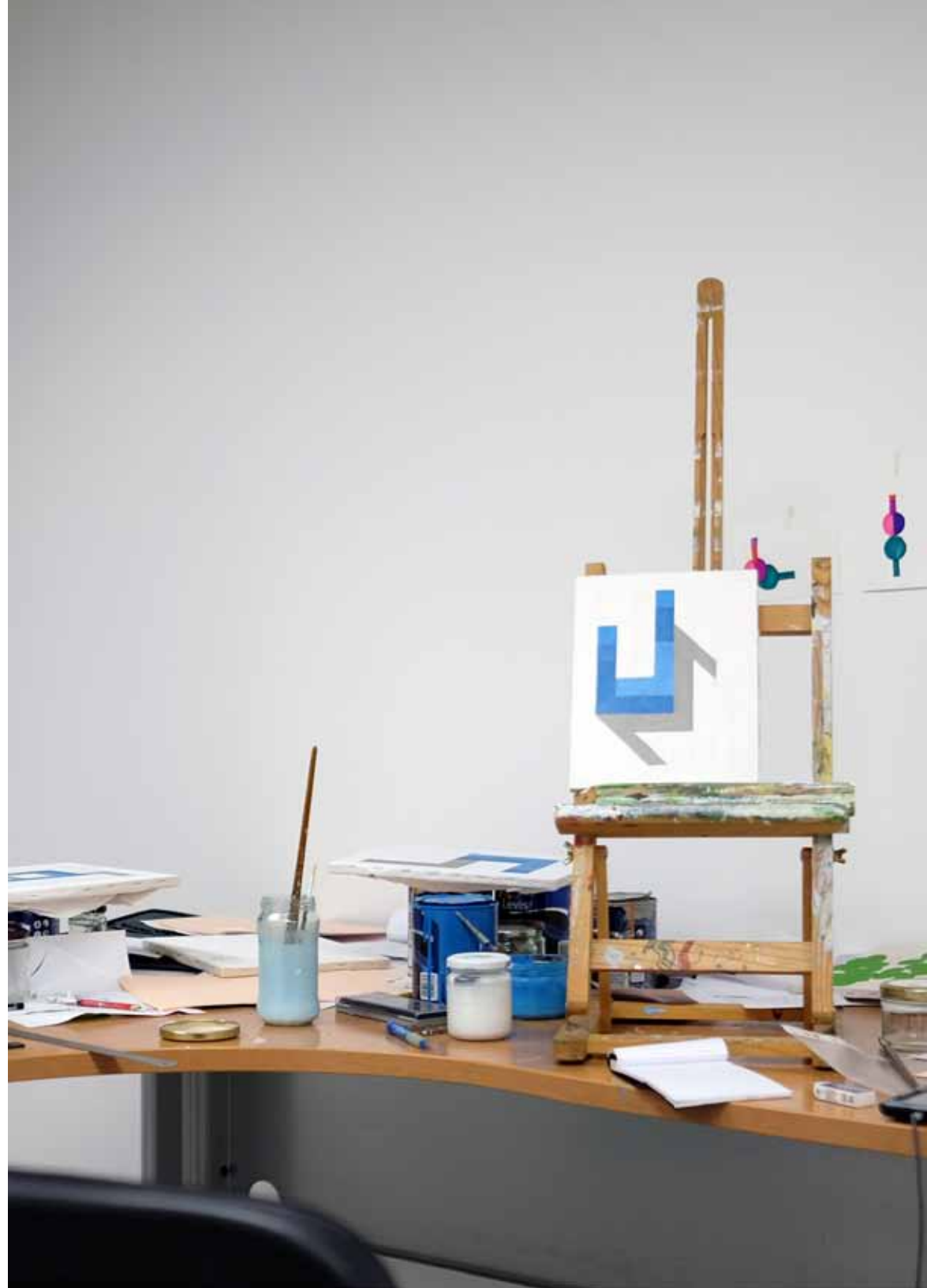
REOPENINGBOXES TAKE 1

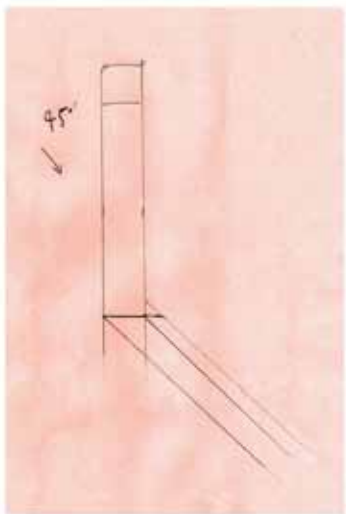
Bertrand Jeannelle

“Graduated and worker, I practice painting. Currently I am working to study the utility of the projected shadow for the use of pictorial comprehension. I like the possibilities offered by the expression of representation by playing with the constraints of flatness. It is with this logic It is with this logic that I naturally turn to the representation of the visible and my environment. I represent my work desk, it's most reach and banal of painter”.

www.bertrandjeannelle.com

Bertrand Jeannelle, born in 1988 in Nancy, lives and works in Brussels. He completed his studies in the painting workshop at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels. It is from the flatness of the surface that the artistic research work begins. This results in an application of “flattening” the representation of the artist’s close environment, to end up with a “painting” object. Take a shape; Represent one side A; Add an adjacent side B on the same plane as A; Define the direction of the light to trace the shadow cast and the shape of the lit side.





Selected etude, ink and acrylic on paper, variable size, 2020

"L", acrylic on canvas on wood, 29,5 x 22 cm, 2020

REOPENINGBOXES TAKE 1

Stefano Moras

"When I moved to Brussels I decided to continue my pictorial practice inspired by the dynamism of color in its forms and materials trying to undermine the idea of support. I chose to work with waste materials from both the painting itself and the world around me by changing my vision of the creative process, reprocessing the painting and its material. Over time, in fact, color has increasingly become a matter related to physical space rather than its support".

www.morasstefano.com

@morasstefano

Visual artist Stefano Moras was born in Pordenone in 1985. Attained his diploma in Informatic Science. Graduated in Visual Arts and performative disciplines in 2012 (Venice). In 2009 was assigned with Erasmus bursary for the University of Applied Science in Lahti, Finland. In 2014 he took part in Progetto Borca residency, in Cadore, collaborating with Dolomiti Contemporanee and, from 2012 to 2014, in AiR programme atKAT-sugar Refinery Art Village in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Currently he works and lives between Venice and Brussels.





The first wave, acrylic colour film, 40 x 38 cm, 2020



The second wave, acrylic colour film, 33 x 34 cm, 2020

REOPENINGBOXES TAKE 1

Thy Nguyễn Truong Minh

“This is a first step of an art research in progress. The building of the plotter machine was the main goal, following by the development of the content. The machine consists of many parts : electronic devices, 3D printing of the components, data collection, text generation, coding of the entire process. The content is created with a dramaturgical piece in mind : how to unroll a drawn and narrative robotic performance in time. But also is thought the concept of a serie of machines working in parallel, among finished artworks. And finally the creation of an exhibition space that reveal the complexity to transcribe and decipher information throughout the media stratification and the various interactions and translations between the layers before it reaches us.”

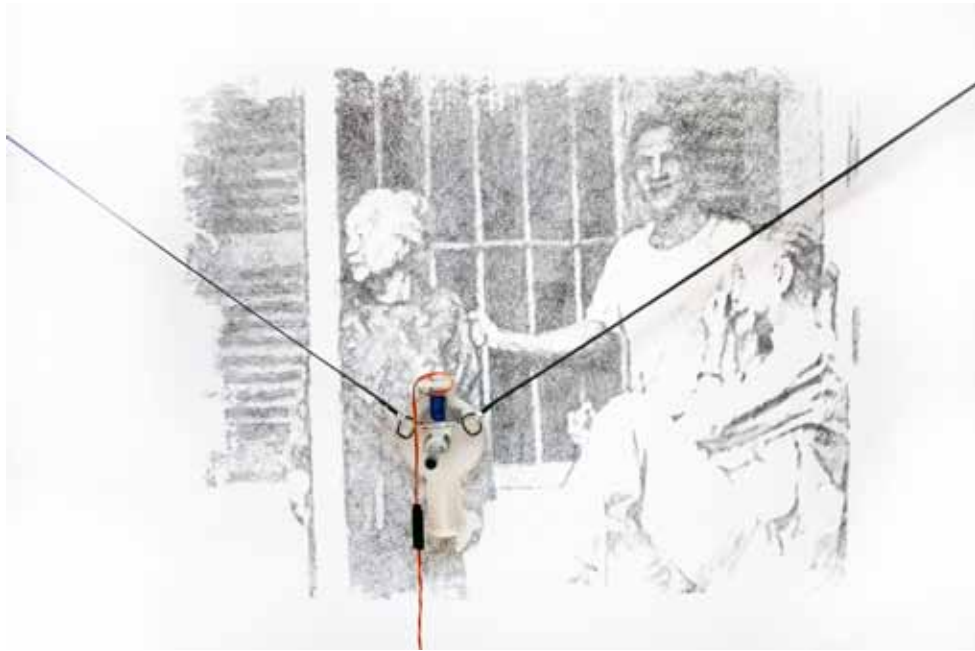
***I don't understand a word, I just collect data** is a digital installation artwork serie. It's about a machine that is drawing and writing. During this robotic narrative performance, it will use machine learning, 2D positioning and dialogues to present a research on the cultural in-between issues of the artist, swinging between Belgium and Vietnam. It is a questioning about otherness, family history, colonial facts, immigration, nationality. It contains human-machine conversations, archive transcription, the artist's drawings, glitches, and it will try to reveal something about the complexity of embodying an incomplete being. This artwork talks about the attempt to bridge the unattainable completeness.”*

www.thytruong.be

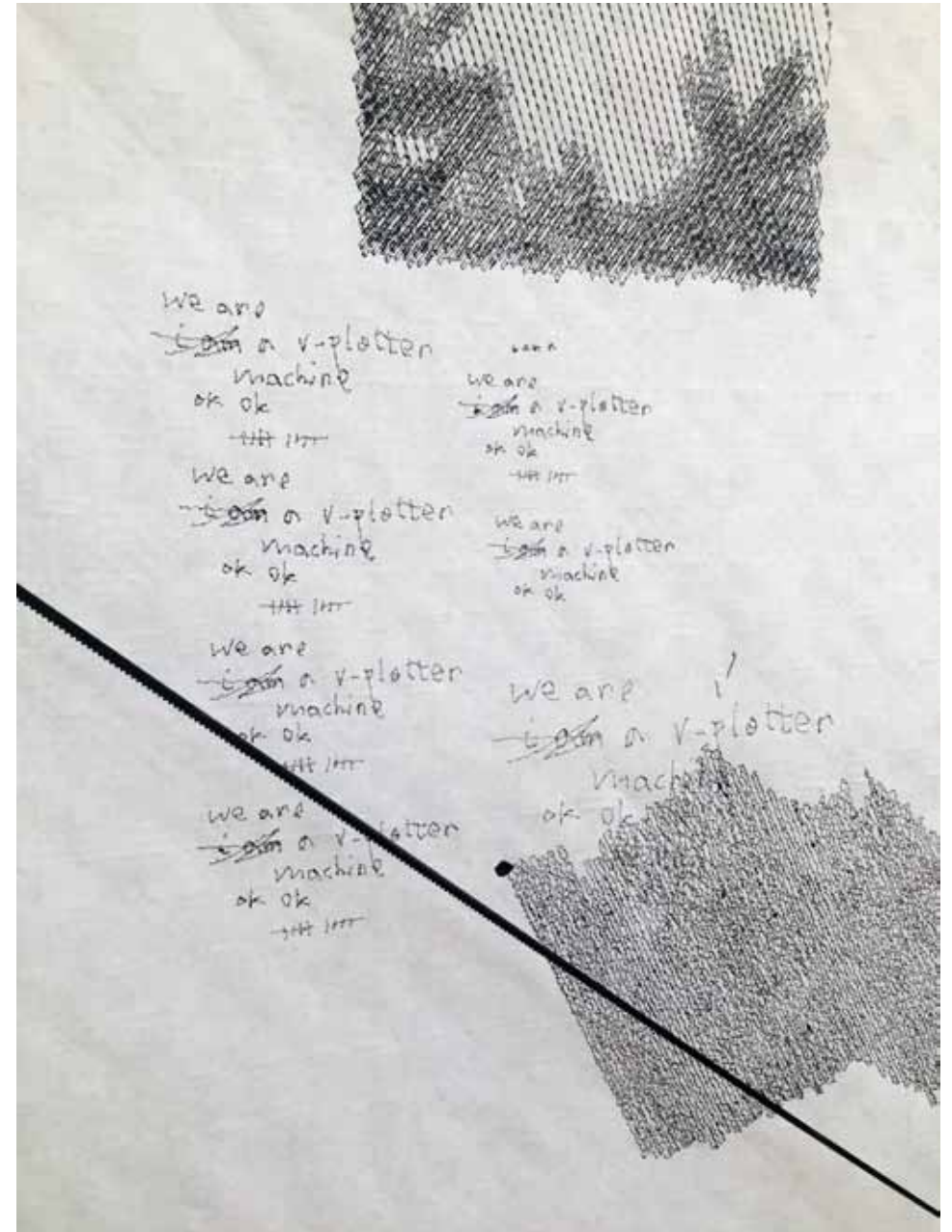
@thytruongminh

Thy Nguyễn Truong Minh was born in Brussels in 1982. Painter, drawer but also computer programmer, the questions that drive him concern the artistic practice in its postcolonial cultural contexts and the observation of the notion of identity. Since his childhood he has been travelling back and forth between Belgium and Vietnam. He graduated in visual arts at the École de Recherche Graphique in Belgium, and he is currently pursuing a Master' s degree in Graphic Design and Experimentation. He is also co-founder of Máy xay sinh tô, a transcultural artistic laboratory established between Brussels and Ho Chi Minh City. His parents transmitted to him a part of their culture of origin, the language and the Vietnamese way of life, while the different institutions and the street instilled in him a certain Belgian identity.





"I don't understand a word, I just collect data" on-going project, plotter ink on vynil, 2020



"I don't understand a word, I just collect data" on-going project, plotter ink on paper (detail) 2020

ABOUT THE OPEN EARTH FOUNDATION

Created in 2017, *Open Earth Foundation (OEF)* is a Belgium-based “Fondation d’Utilité Publique” seeking to foster sustainable development and solidarity through art and education. For *OEF*, Art is a language that transcends borders and which can play a vital role to promote development and cooperation in our societies. By its activities, *OEF* promotes and upholds the universal values of inclusion, tolerance and equality.

OEF aims at broadening access to arts and culture to less privileged and marginalised groups, in particular youth. The foundation believes that sustainable benefits will come from incorporating creativity into education programs and thus, encourages artists to engage in projects with children and schools. In addition, *OEF* supports cultural exchanges between and within regions. “Covid 19 restricted movements across borders and pushed us to launch Reopening Boxes to support artists living in Brussels. However, the work of the 4 artists shows how much Brussels is a cosmopolitan city and that you can travel around the world through art while being in confinement”, said Angel Carro. The foundation seeks to collaborate with local, national and international institutions to build flexible alliances and long-lasting transnational bridges through culture and development. *OEF* hopes to be able to support new residencies programs with both artists residing in Belgium and artists living and working abroad.

ABOUT LAVALLEE

LaVallée is a project, a space, a community of people and a culture hub. *LaVallée* is project developed by SMART (Société Mutuelle pour artistes created in Belgium in 1998). *LaVallée* is a space which opened its doors in 2014 in a former 6,000 m² laundry located in the heart of Molenbeek, a space for working, meeting and sharing for creative entrepreneurs. *LaVallée* is a community of people currently housing more than 180 residents working in a wide variety of professions, backgrounds and nationalities. *LaVallée* is a culture hub with several event spaces extending over nearly 2,000 m² which can accommodate exhibitions, concerts, parties and performances but also conferences and training courses.

LaVallée

REOPENINGBOXES TAKE 1



Many thanks to :

The artists, Sddie Choua, Bertrand Jeanelle, Stefano Moras and Thy Nguyen Truong;
Stephan Balleux, artistic coordinator;
Stefano Moras who made the design of this booklet;
The members of the jury, Ralph Carro, Stephan Balleux, Cris Gabarrón and Marianne Poncelet, Ana Vázquez Barrado;
Claire Ducène, Pedro Velázquez, Gerardo Salinas;
Berta Corredor;
Pierre Pevée and Smartbe, who welcomed the project;
The LaVallée Community;
The Foundation Gabarron.

REOPENING BOXES Exhibition & Talk

OPENING Thursday October 8th

6-7 pm Talk

7-8 pm Opening of the Exhibition & reception

Friday 6-9 pm October 9th

Weekend 1-6 pm

La Vallée, Rue Adolphe Lavallée 39, 1080 Bruxelles