Rivers of the World - Vietnam

Hanoi 2016 & 2017
Hanoi (the name means “Between Rivers” or “River Interior”) is a picturesque city, the metropolis is sometimes dubbed the Paris of the East. With its tree-fringed boulevards, more than two dozen lakes and thousands of French colonial-era buildings, Hanoi is a popular tourist destination.
[opposite] The Red River from a Hanoi rooftop - the Vietnamese name for the river describes it as 'pink' rather than 'red'
On a circular hill, near the convergence of three rivers, a fairy who'd wept a river of tears was comforted by a dragon prince. The fairy, Au Co, and the dragon prince, Lac Long Quan, fell in love and bore a sac of 100 eggs. From these 100 snow-white eggs, the Vietnamese people were born.
At this mythical spot, upstream from Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, the nation's ancient kings honoured their founding ancestors by building temples. Hanoi is a city of rivers, of which the Red River is the biggest. For Hanoians, the Red River is not only a source of life, it is also a reflection of Vietnamese history and the capital city's long prosperity.
Exhibition at the Goethe Institut of photographer Maika Elan. Her project "The Pink Choice" in 2010 documents the life of homosexual couples in Vietnam.
SUPER MAIKA

The only one who said "A baby day in a superhero with her superpowers will fill me with happiness and energy. All baby people is kind of SUPER MAIKA."

You not are me hero... You ARE OUR Super Hero!
The village of Tranh Dong Ho - many are involved in making paper decorations which are used as votive offerings, burnt as part of the New Year celebrations, to enrich the afterlife of relatives who have passed away.
Zang and Van stand beside paper models of idealised houses. The village is also home to the artist Nguyen Huu Sam whose woodblock paintings are sold throughout Vietnam.
We visited Bat Trang, a traditional village by the Red River where many ceramics craftsmen were located. In the colourful market, the figurines above were described to me as 'Women Fishing in a Sexy Way!' The lady overleaf regaled us with stories of her extraordinary ceramics.
Long Biên Bridge (built 1899-1902) is 2.4km in length. Long Bien means “Dragon’s Edge”. When built, it was one of the longest bridges in Asia. It was heavily bombarded during the Vietnam War - then Hanoi’s only bridge across the Red River. Today trains, mopeds, bicycles and pedestrians use the somewhat dilapidated bridge.
At the base of the bridge is Long Bien Market, a large, agricultural wholesale market open from midnight to 2 a.m. There is a mix of formal and informal settlements as one continues east. On the river, these settlements transform into a few dozen floating houses made largely from found materials. Residents fish and farm on the island in the Red River.
One of the houseboats on the Red River. The elderly couple who live there invited us in for jasmine tea. She explained that the houseboat had been constructed by young volunteers. Before living there she had lived on Hanoi’s streets. [opposite] both the fishing and the sand bar shows just how shallow the Red River is.
In this area, we came across a group of men getting ready to swim in the Red River. We were told that, for those that wish to, naked exercising and bathing is permitted here.
All the schools we visited were laid out in the same manner as above with no recreation nor sporting area beyond this central forecourt area. We observed an art class. Pupils are taught art from a text book. Only one school we visited had a dedicated art class. All schools provided just one art lesson a week.
Working River

Since ancient times, the Red River has been an essential route for commerce, carrying local and foreign boats from Japan, China and Western countries. The students were asked to design ships using materials such as plastic bottles and cardboard. Taking inspiration from boat races on the Red River during local festivities and ancient foreign trading boats from the past, they came up with various solutions, from an organic boat like the Whale Boat to a scary Pirates of the Red River battleship.

One of the most impressive designs is the traditional thuyễn rồng chú  ngư or Royal Dragon Boat, in which the royal family used to sail, made from seashells. Throughout the process, they learnt to utilize different materials to make three-dimensional models, as well as to collaborate as a team.
Working River
Trâu Quỷ Secondary School
with
Nguyen Hoang Giang
(2016)
Nguyễn Du Secondary School

NHIỆT LIỆT CHÁO MỪNG
ĐẠI HỘI ĐẠI BIỂU TOÀN QUỐC LẦN THƯỞNG XII ĐẢNG CỘNG SẢN VIỆT NAM !
River City

The artwork is inspired by the school’s location in the old quarter of the city, where the cultural and historic heritage is preserved in the midst of booming commercial activities. Pupils cut out old magazines to make collages of each letter that would later be assembled to spell HÀ NỘI – VIỆT NAM.

The images represent the dynamic urban landscape of Hanoi as well as Vietnam. They are juxtaposed with a thick background of texts, written in Latin using calligraphic styles. The work is a homage to the city of Hà Nội, literally the city inside a river, a modern metropolis built upon a culturally rich past of more than 1000 years.
River City
Nguyễn Du Secondary School
with
Nguyen Hoang Giang
(2016)
Staff and pupils from Phuong Mai Secondary School - the Art Teacher gave a presentation on the Red River and the pupils gave a shadow puppet show based on the Red River. The school is located in the heart of Hanoi’s old French Quarter.
River of Culture

Táo Quân or the ‘Kitchen God’ is the most important of the Vietnamese domestic gods. It is widely believed that just before Chinese New Year, he returns to heaven to report on the activities of every Vietnamese household to the Jade Emperor. The Emperor then either rewards or punishes the family accordingly.

On this day, Vietnamese households take part in different activities devoted to Táo Quân, including burning traditional paper offerings and releasing the ashes to the river. However, this practice is criticized as people often dump their plastic bags directly into the river after releasing the ashes. Inspired by hằng má, the traditional craft of making paper offerings, pupils learnt how to make their own version using recyclable paper bags.
River of Culture
Phương Mai Secondary School
with
Nguyen Hoang Giang
(2016)
Dong Thai Secondary School is beautifully located just beside Westlake, one of the many waterside areas in Hanoi.
River of Life

The artwork shows a combination of many creations that the students made using dried leaves.

Instead of burning or treating the leaves as rubbish, the pupils learnt to make artworks simply by arranging leaves into a composition.

The work shows the students wish for humans and nature to live in a sustainable and harmonious way. In addition, the leaves are a symbol for a cycle of life, in which old leaves decompose to nurture the soils, upon which trees grow.
River of Life
Đồng Thái Secondary
School
with
Nguyen Hoang Giang
(2016)
Van, Zang and I dubbed Gia Thuy Secondary School the 'happy school' - the Art Teacher divided the class group into four teams, each tasked to interpret the forthcoming New Year celebrations in an artistic way. The 3D model house won the prize for the best piece.
Polluted River

The students made paintings about imaginary river creatures. They incorporated facts about river pollution and the natural habitat as a way of making their creatures adaptable to the polluted environment of the river.

On the one hand, the creatures could be evil as they grew up fed by rubbish. On the other hand, they could also be cute little animals who would help clean up the river by digesting garbage and filtering water. The students experimented with collaging plastic bags and old newspapers.
Polluted River
Gia Thuy Secondary School
with
Nguyen Hoang Giang
(2016)
Lương Thế Vinh Secondary School is on the outskirts of Hanoi, just beside a tributary to the Red River. The pupils were a bit more shy here, the atmosphere was calm, it felt like a rural school. The Head Master is very supportive of Rivers of the World. We observed an art class - the pupils were given the difficult task of doing portraits of each other.
Resourceful River

The Delta of the Red River is considered one of the two biggest agricultural production zones in Vietnam. Its natural conditions such as weather and geography favour the growth of many special fruits and vegetables.

As the school is located in the rural area of Hanoi, the students were encouraged to collect home-grown fruits and vegetables to make the artwork.

They recreated the river banks filled with animals and greenery, as well as a phoenix and a dragon, two of the four sacred animals in Vietnamese culture, which represent the prosperity and elegance of the Red River.
Resourceful River
Lương Thễ Vinh Secondary School
with
Nguyen Hoang Giang
(2016)
Hanoi has rich culinary traditions. Many of Vietnam’s most famous dishes, such as phở, chả cá, bánh cuốn and cóm are believed to have originated in Hanoi. Perhaps most widely known is Phở—a simple rice noodle soup often eaten as breakfast at home or at street-side cafes, but also served in restaurants as a meal.