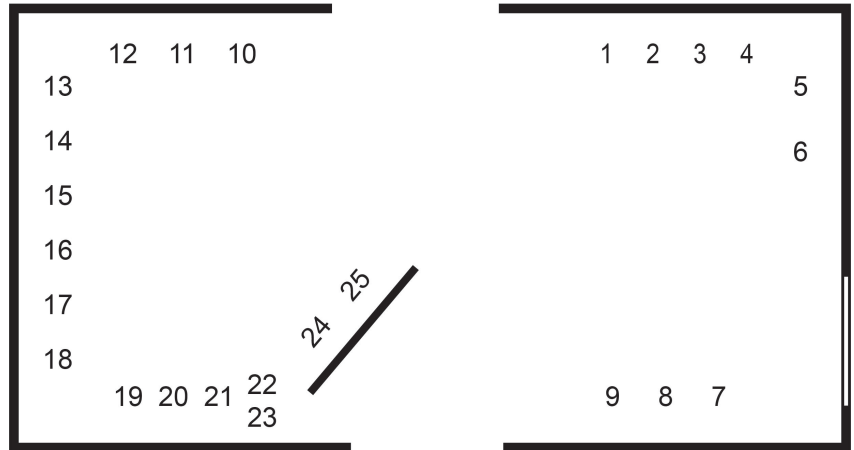


Between The Silent Eyes by Nhàn Tran

Lower Gallery,
Objectifs



Exhibition Captions

1. **Young Hmong girls taking selfies in the fog, after school.**

The Hmong have the highest rates of early marriage throughout Vietnam. Despite the national law, the average girl marries when they are between 15 to 18 years old. The reasons for early marriage range from wanting to continue the family line, needing more help with cultivating the land, ensuring food security, and to alleviate poverty.

2. **Dính (right), 19, and her younger sister (left), at her sister's nail salon taking selfies after work.**

Here, Dính learned and practiced doing nails and washing hair for customers.

3. **Liên, a 19-year-old mother of 2 children who has been married for over 3 years, holding a bear at her younger sister's house.**

She has a 16-year-old sister, who married early and miscarried twice while out collecting wood. According to a recent study by UNICEF, while the ethnic communities account for only 15% of the total population, the infant mortality rate of this group is 3.5 times higher than that of the Kinh people - the largest community in Vietnam. Furthermore, there are many cases of underreporting, especially in rural mountainous areas that are harder to access.

4. **Liên (right), 19, and her friend Dua (left), who is the same age, wearing traditional clothing and taking selfies in front of a wall with images of her own family.**

They live in Thuận Hoà, a remote village that is 30 km away from Hà Giang city.

5. **Liên with her two children, who are playing with balloons inside their home in Thuận Hoà village. She gave birth at 16.**

Liên met her husband at 14. She dropped out of school and got married, against the wishes of her parents. She thought that marrying was the only choice she had.

6. **The shadow of Sinh, 19, in her friend's house in Phố Cáo, Hà Giang.**

Before she got married officially at 18, Sinh and her husband lived together for over a year, and she gave birth at 17. Within the Hmong community, it is common to live together, have children, and then marry later to comply with the legal marriageable age.

7. **Liên lulls her son to sleep inside the home.**

Liên was encouraged by medical workers to have contraceptive injections. She was also encouraged to only give birth to two children so that she can take good care of them. Even then, every single day is still a battle to get enough food.

8. **Máy, 19, and her first daughter. She is resting after returning from the fields.**

At 14, Máy illegally went to China on a night-bus along with other Hmong people in search of work. There, she met Quả, who later became her

husband. Afraid of being arrested in China as an undocumented laborer and having no identification papers, they decided to return to Vietnam after a year. Later, Quả asked her parents for Máy's hand in marriage. Even though their daughter was not interested in him, they agreed. They have been married for over 3 years.

9. **Portrait of Dính in her room that she shares with three other sisters.**

When Dính was 16, she fell pregnant by a 25-year-old man. They decided to get married. Her husband, who comes from the Tày group - another minority group in Vietnam, has a really different culture. Due to the conflict between their two cultures and an unhappy family life, her husband turned to violence, and beat her. Dính then took her baby, left her husband and moved to her sister's nail salon for her safety.

A few months later, her husband came and took the baby. She later returned to her husband's house because she thought that it would be good for her baby, and tried to take the child back to her sister's nail salon in Đồng Văn town. In early 2022, she moved to Bắc Giang province which is nearly 450km away from her home, and works in an industrial park.

10. **A view of the Hmong settlement in Hà Giang province, North Vietnam.**

This province hosts the greatest percentage of the Hmong, an indigenous people that traditionally

reside in the mountainous regions of North Vietnam.

11. **Máy and her relatives sow corn before she and her husband leave the village to a bigger city in the South of Vietnam the next day.**

"I've been thinking a lot. If we continue to live at home and farm, how will we have enough money?" While Máy has all the documents to work legally in the city, her husband does not. His birth certificate has an error due to the mistake of a teacher who helped him with disclosing information when he was a primary school student. This means he is not eligible for a legal employment contract. Even though her husband could get rejected from potential employers, they have decided to leave for the city. They believe that by leaving their village and working in the big city, they can earn more and meet their basic needs.

12. **Máy holds the flowers in between the corn fields.**

She engaged in strenuous physical work even during the last months of her pregnancy.

13. **Máy tries on clothing at a makeshift store.**

Sometimes, clothing sellers go down to the most remote villages to sell clothes at a low price. Each item ranges from 50 VND (USD \$2) to 200 VND (USD \$9). There is a market every Sunday 30km from Đồng Văn town, where Hmong people usually gather and shop. Máy doesn't actually go there, she said, as she does not have money to buy anything new.

14. **Máy and her son in a makeshift clothing store in Sinh Tùng Chú village, Hà Giang province, Vietnam.**

15. **Máy and her first daughter sitting on a tiny bed after she returned from the fields, at her home in Sinh Tùng Chú village.**

Two years after having her daughter, Máy fell pregnant again. When asked how she is preparing for her second child, she said she would try to love with her two children equally. Her daughter is nearly 3 years old and they send her to kindergarten nearby to become familiar with formal schooling and prepare her for entering the 1st grade.

16. **Máy's father-in-law, Hàu Pà Say, 49, chanting traditional rites before Máy goes to the central**

hospital to give birth to her second child.

Hmong people worship ghosts. This traditional rite is a blessing for Máy to give birth safely before her husband takes her to the hospital. The family of five living under one roof is welcoming a new member.

17. **At the hospital after Máy gives birth to her second child.**

Máy's mother-in-law, Vừ Thị Say, 49, helps as Máy breastfeeds her newborn baby. Máy's son is named Hồng (Pink), which signifies hope for a bright future. Living in a village which is nearly 30 km away from the only hospital of the town, many young girls like Máy cannot easily access primary health care during their pregnancy, leading to their pregnancies not being regularly monitored. The women also have little knowledge about safe contraceptive methods.

18. **Máy and her newborn at home in Sinh Tùng Chú village.**

"I feel the knives cutting my belly. In the operating room, the doctor injects painkillers and then operates. I'm afraid of the surgery. But you can't die because of pain," said Máy. "After 7 days, I was allowed to go home. If I ate more, I would feel pain at the incision," she said of her postpartum experience.

Máy thinks that if she doesn't leave the village to find a job, she will not be able to provide well for her children. When asked if she would have another child, she said she might not.

19. **Máy and her son standing in front of her neighbor's house and posing for a picture during her last few weeks at home, before moving to a bigger city for work.**

20. **Máy and other Hmong women in her village gather after helping other neighbors get cow dung.**

They often gather and turn to gossip as a way of learning about the facts of life, by sharing their experiences and their family life.

21. **Máy's father-in-law Hàu Pà Say playing with her daughter while Máy is breastfeeding the newborn.**

Máy said that when her father-in-law gets drunk, she and her mother-in-law would avoid him. This affects the communal living environment greatly. She looks at the behavior of her father-in-law and is afraid for her

mother-in-law. When Hmong men get drunk, they often speak harshly to the women. Some of them beat their wives to show their dominance. This abuse sometimes leads to women committing suicide. When Máy was asked how much she loved her husband, she was silent for a while and said, "I love my children."

22. **Máy tries to practice writing Vietnamese while her two children are sleeping.**

Máy said, "I'm afraid of being scolded for being illiterate." She practices writing her name, address, and her parents' name, in case people in the city ask her for a signature or information. When her husband was asked if he had made any Kinh friends when he was in Bắc Giang, he said he had not. "Sometimes they scold us for being stupid."

23. **Máy's husband, Hàu Minh Quả, turned 21 years old. He almost cannot get away from his phone during the day.**

In their remote location with little opportunity to experience modern life, some Hmong people use phones as a way of connecting with modern technology and the outside world, while others play games to relax after doing agricultural work.

24. **Máy's husband, Hàu Minh Quả (wearing white mask on the bottom right corner), with other Hmong people who also work in the city, on the local bus down to Hà Giang city.**

They will catch another bus and take nearly 3 days to reach Bình Dương city by bus. Tickets cost about 1 million VND (USD\$44) per person. Before they went, they were forced to borrow money from a cousin for travel expenses, even though they are already in debt from the birth of their second child.

25. **Máy and her husband on the local bus to Hà Giang city, to catch another bus to Bình Dương city, over 1200km away.**

This city is one of two biggest cities in the South of Vietnam, which has many industrial parks that are supposed to make it easier to get a job. Every year more and more Hmong people come to this city in search of work. Máy's husband said they can be paid up to 8 million VND per month (\$352) which is considered a good salary for a Hmong person.