

# Public Art in Vietnam: "Into Art Hills" Project in Dalat

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**Abstract:** This article introduces the "Into Art Hills" project in Dalat, Vietnam, a vibrant, multi-disciplinary community public artistic experience which brings together contributions by artists, experts, the local government and residents. The slogan for the project and event is "art connects us" and fulfils on its promise to connect artist groups domestically and internationally with the local community while at the same time supporting Vietnam's development to become a more sustainable cultural and creative place. "Into Art Hills" Project in Dalat also promotes local tourism and the improvement of social interaction as well as raising awareness via contemporary arts.

**Keywords:** murals, public art, Dalat, Vietnam, Pho Ben Doi, cultural tourism

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On 19th December 2019, a multi-disciplinary community public art show called Doc Nha Lang ("Into Art Hills") opened in Dalat city. The event was hosted by Dalat City's People Committee and the local non-profit organisation Pho Ben Doi. Work on this major event had begun in June 2018.

Pho Ben Doi ongoing vision is to transform Dalat into a unique cultural destination in Southeast Asia via sustainable development through the means of contemporary art, community activities, and tourism.

Officially recognized as the first outdoor gallery of Vietnam, the exhibition was meant to make use of the city's natural richness of flowers and rural greens, its exclusive environment and history to convey the thorough and subtle beauties Dalat, so-called the 'city of mist'. It is also considered to be one of the major highlights of the Dalat Flower Festival VIII.

New art spaces were created with vibrant and bursting colors along the pathways of the quiet and peaceful city, famed for its authentic and gentle citizens. As a public and open art project and permanent exhibition, all local residents and visitors received free entrance to the venue. The whole event received great local media attention with over 60 articles published about it.

Following previous seasons of Pho Ben Doi, the current show focuses on Doc Nha Lang (Nguyen Bieu street), a landmark right in the heart of the city, for its promotion of arts while calling for local involvement in making it a rein-

vigorated and vibrant art town.

Engaging in the exhibitions of public arts such as mural painting and street performances, the key features of the programme were to support the coming together of artists, architects and experts from across the nation and beyond.

Each of the art pieces was carefully selected and crafted for the specific context of its very own and unique canvas - the exterior walls of a local home and the landmark's authentic architecture as a whole. The local participants granted their wall as a medium to carry paintings as well as hosting flowers and keeping the spaces neat and tidy. After the works

were completed, they are encouraged to take care of the art pieces as a new part of their very own life.

This event was made possible thanks to the means, support and assistance of its official partners such as KOVA Paints, Traveloka Vietnam, local communities, artists, architects, experts and volunteers both nationwide and internationally. All participants share the desire for the arts to be part of everyday lives for the inspiration it imparts, the living values it shares, as well as encouraging the public awareness toward making Doc Nha Lang a landmark of culture and arts.



Figure 1: Impression from the opening event, 19 December 2019



Figure 2: Among the clouds – artist: Le Phan Hoang Oanh / Figure 3: Wild Sunflowers – artist: Nguyen Dinh Thanh Tung

Source of all photos: © Pho Ben Doi 2019.

#### About Phố Bên Dõi

Phố Bên Dõi is Vietnam's first annual, inter- and multi-disciplinary community art show located in the Central Highlands city of Dalat, Vietnam, with the goal of transforming Dalat into a unique cultural destination of Southeast Asia.

Each show has a unique theme, reflected in the work by participating artists and experts. The event programming was produced in collaboration with renowned institutions and talented individuals from diverse fields local, national and international backgrounds. Through contemporary arts, community activities and tourism, Phố Bên Dõi encourages and raises public awareness about urban heritage preservation, environmental protection, and sustainable development. As a result, the locals are encouraged to be aware of urban life and environment protection towards the sustainable development of Dalat City. It is a way to contribute to community building the programme of activities are an opportunity to play, share, and recall an image of the former glamorous urban beauty.

To the young generation, the event is a place to share experiences, explore and gain awareness of the city's cultural values. Kids always need enjoyable and interesting outdoor activities, not only for playing but also for improving their understanding about cultural heritage. Exposure in this pleasant and beautiful context communicates to them the values of compassion, caring, respect for their own habitats as well as others. From that, they will form a responsible and positive attitude in their community.

Phố Bên Dõi Homepage: [www.phobendoi.art](http://www.phobendoi.art)







Figure 4: Lean to Flower wall – artist: Pinenip / Figure 5: The artist Nguyen Dinh Thanh Tung is drawing his artwork





Figure 6: Children love nature – T.N Minh Quan / Figure 7: Doc Nha Lang's visitor





Figure 8: Dalat in Perspective – Dinh Viet Anh





Figure 9: A street performance from the opening event, 19 December 2019 / Figure 10: Mid-Autumn – artist: Tia Thuy Nguyen





Figure 11: Bui Thi Xuan High school's girl – artists: Pinenip & Thanh Ngan

Figure 12: Local people themselves plant more trees and flowers in their front yards and on balconies.





Figure 13: A walk through the flower garden – artists: The Thong & Le Nhu

Corresponding Author: Hien Nguyen [hien.nguyen@phobendoi.art] is a graphic designer, a connector, an art enthusiast, and a storyteller at heart. He has been connecting art communities such International Watercolor Society (IWS Vietnam), Urban Sketchers Vietnam (USK Vietnam), promoting young talents and artists, supporting many art projects inside Vietnam. He is the founder of "Pho Ben Doi - The City on Hills". Founded in 2016, PHỐ BÊN ĐÔI is Vietnam's first annual, inter- and multidisciplinary community art show sited in the Central Highlands city of Dalat, Vietnam.