

*Sketches and photos of Hanoi by French author-illustrator Jean-Charles Sarrazin from 1987 and 1988 are on display in Hanoi, accompanied by the originals of his three books recently translated into Vietnamese.*



In the exhibition *Between France and Vietnam*, Sarrazin presents his views of daily life in the country's capital when he studied at Hanoi University of Industrial Fine Arts thanks to a scholarship granted by the French government. He was then the first French student to be offered a scholarship by the French government to study in Vietnam after unification.

"You can see in my photos the trams and cyclos and bikes of Hanoi. I chose them to display at the exhibition in Hanoi because I was surprised to see that the trams totally disappeared from the city," he said.

"I used to travel everywhere in the region, with my handbook and my camera and my bike. I am happy to come back to Vietnam this time as this country strongly marked my life. I'll revisit my old friends and teachers."

On May 6, he met the public in the city and presented his three newly published books in Vietnamese at l'Espace, the French Cultural Centre.

His latest children book is inspired by a traditional Vietnamese tale entitled *Tri Khon Ta Day* (The Intelligence). He demonstrates to his reader through a fable that everyone has his own intelligence, provided one knows how to use it.

He also organised workshops in Hanoi and HCM City to teach young Vietnamese children to draw.

Jean-Charles Sarrazin is an illustrator of the *Ecole des Loisirs*, a well-known publisher of

children's books and young adult books. He teaches drawing, writing and illustrating children's stories.

"I was 20 when I first discovered Vietnam in 1987. It was in 1986, at the end of my studies in France that I met the poet and Minister of Culture Cu Huy Can. I told him of my desire to pursue my studies abroad after my diploma at the National Superior Applied Arts School "Olivier de Serres" in Paris," he recalls.

"I wrote a project about the exchange of artistic knowledge which I sent to Hanoi University of Industrial Fine Arts. My idea was to learn traditional techniques such as lacquer, wood engraving and painting on silk, arts specific to Vietnam.

In exchange, I proposed to give a course to the pupils of the school on the "arts of communication" in Europe.

The university agreed to receive him. "In France, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to create a scholarship for the occasion. It was a political event. The first scholarship after 40 years for a French student wishing to continue his studies in Vietnam," he recalls.

It was an exciting year for him professionally, but also personally. He met great artists such as Bui Xuan Phai and Buu Chi. After he went back to France, with the help of Nguyen Thu, the then director of the Hanoi University of Industrial Fine Arts, he developed an exchange programme between the fine art universities in Paris and Hanoi.

"I met young teachers like Trinh Tuan during my stay at the university or Tran Trong Vu, then a young teacher at the Vietnam University of Fine Arts. With my bicycle, I accompanied them during their visits to the countryside, the temples, and the traditional festivals, drawing and photographing by their side."

The exhibition runs until May 15 at l'Espace, the French cultural Centre, located at 24 Trang Tien Street.

*Source: VNA*