

*Painter Nguyen Thanh will hold an exhibition reflecting environmental issues titled “The Mask” at VICAS Art Studio in Hanoi from October 11 to November 4.*



*Nguyen Thanh’s “The Mask” exhibition sounds the alarm on environmental issues via the images of human beings*

Thanh is primarily a self-taught painter who has spent a long time struggling to make money from selling paintings in a variety of styles ranging from realism to expressionism.

But during that period he had already had a dream: There will be a day, when things get better, he will paint what he likes, not what galleries like. It was not until this year, when he turned 40, that he had saved enough money and found the time to make his wish come true: he spent a year, painstakingly painted 50 big-sized paintings, on a topic difficult to execute and difficult to sell: Environment.

The environment is currently widely spoken in a wide variety of fields, from politics, academics, to media and culture. But it is a hard topic for arts, because if it is not smartly done then what the artist creates would be mere propaganda products, and the artworks will be no different to news stories or academic articles.

A well-known environmental anthropologist, Tim Ingol, said: “Environment issues only make sense when they are related to me.”

Each person has his or her own experiences and perceptions of the environment. When you breathe you feel either refreshing or stuffy, when you eat you feel good, appetizing, tonic or allergic. And it's only when you feel it do emotions such as fear, anxiety and insecurity appear inside yourself, and your perception of the environment becomes more complex and different from what you hear from scientific research or the media about the environment in general.

Nguyen Thanh has a rather clever choice when it comes to discussing a complex humanistic problem in his works. He expresses his own subjective levels of emotions through the image of human beings: those who wear masks or people with chapped skin like paddy fields in drought, or those whose body is flaccid, fatigued, deadlocked.

“That is what we see. To me, what I feel in Nguyen Thanh’s paintings is worth contemplating: These are the premonitions of a life in which people are more and more isolated from nature,

and self-isolated by fears and negative obsessions with the environment where they are living in. In a broader term, what would human society be like if communication between man and nature, between man and man, always requires some kind of medium?” said Dr. Bui Quang Thang, art director of VICAS Art Studio.

From an artistic perspective, Nguyen Thanh’s paintings are fascinating with exotic depictions of the characters and his graceful use of gentle, harmonious, western-style colors. In many artworks, viewers also find some elements of improvisation as the artist drew letters on the characters’ bodies, which seemed unrelated to the content of the paintings.

His paintings cannot be mistaken with someone else’s. They carry his personality, which is the thing that many artists will never be able to achieve in their careers.

*Source: SGT*