

PRESS RELEASE



A solo exhibition by

LÊNA BUI

Blue Filaments

In collaboration with Galerie BAQ

Exhibition text by **Linh Lê**

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Duration: **12 September – 2 November 2024**

Opening reception at 18h, 12 September

at **Galerie BAQ**, 15 rue Beautreillis, 75004 Paris

Location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/Gtg9V7DWywJ1YU8L8>

Public hours: 11-19h, Tuesday - Saturday

Free admission, no reservations required

Galerie BAO is pleased to present *Blue Filaments*, **Lêna Bui**'s first solo show in Paris. The eponym exhibition refers to her current ongoing project revolving around "felled trees and recurring dreams, ancestral wisdom and haunting"¹.

This project explores memories, materiality and human beliefs as well as the relationship one has with its surroundings.² It all started when Ho Chi Minh City announced that the city would cut down hundreds of trees for urban development purposes. These trees were *Khaya Senegalensis*, a species native to West Africa and brought to Vietnam by the French during colonization. Shown for the first time in France, this project opens the reflection around the colonial legacy inside the colonial network or in what it is left of. The paradox between the colonial legacy and the environmental issue is revealed in this project. These trees shaped the city, taking part in the city-dwellers' life but surprisingly, the cutting down of the trees was announced in indifference.

The project consists of a performance in 2018 on Tôn Đức Thắng street where 143 *Khaya Senegalensis* ranging from 100 to 150 years old were chopped down. Every day for a month Lêna came and made tracing of the left behind stumps.



In Vietnam, and in Southeast Asia at large, the trees are part of the spiritual world. Considered as sacred, they house spirits. With this project, the artist wonders where the souls go when the trees are cut down. Opposed to the cartesian philosophy where the humans are above nature, the artist thinks humans have intricate relationships with their surroundings, even with the spiritual world.

Lêna Bui made tracing of the bare tree stumps after a mass tree felling campaign on Tôn Đức Thắng street (Saigon) in 2018. Photo by Chuong Pham.

On the gallery's window a 1:1 transparent vinyl print version of a rubbing casts shadows as the light enters in the gallery, revealing details of the rubbings, and as the light makes its way through the day, details of the chainsaw marks on the ground

¹ Lêna's words from her [portfolio](#)

² Linh Lê, *Blue Filaments*, an essay about Lêna Bui exhibition at Galerie BAQ

soften, symbolizing the violence the trees went through. The use of the natural light combined with the olfactory experience brought by the collaboration between Lêna Búi and Dex Lê³, a saigon-based olfactory artist and designer, questions the relationship people have with their environment but also highlights the elusive and ephemeral nature of life.

Downstairs, the video installation *Kindred* made by Lêna Búi and Elisabeth Ang is a visual poem playing with our senses. Sounds of nature, languages and images taken from multiple place and period of time⁴ act in harmony. Lêna's works balance amid still and moving images, in the video as well as with the contrast between the moving shadows of the vinyl and the silk paintings upstairs. The latter are themselves multi-layered images, embodying the idea of flows of energy around and within our human bodies.



Kindred, 2021, still from the video, 1920x1080, 25p. color, stereo 7'38" © Lêna Búi

³ <https://vn.linkedin.com/in/dex-le>

⁴ Nguyễn Đình Tôn Nữ's comment on *Kindred*, from *Echoes, Ember*

"If the body is an ecosystem of sorts then why not the soul? If we die and disperse into all sorts of nutrients that are absorbed by other living things, then maybe our souls, too, split into small parts that get reconfigured into new souls."⁵

In her ongoing layered silk painting series on the ground floor of the gallery, Lêna Búi delves into the entanglements that make us human beings. The series consists of paintings in silk with superimposed printed or painted images. "This juxtaposition of organic life, spiritual presence, and circular flows evokes an assemblage of seemingly unrelated concepts—ecology, reincarnation, ancestral presence, and ensouled nature—and finds the proverbial middle path where they all overlap and converge."⁶



Clean Land n.2, 2023
Layered watercolor and ink on
silk and paper
© Lêna Búi

Getting inspired by Taoism, animism, philosophy, science and Buddhism precepts, Lêna Búi does not take dogma for granted, trusting her observation of her surroundings. Painting is a way of seeing, observing to the point of reaching the abstract forms of nature. Her creative process is also a way for her to connect to her subconscious, digging into emotions, memories, instincts. She paints to remember.

⁵ Interview with Blake Palmer, quote from the essay *The Souls That Sustain Us*

⁶ Blake Palmer, *The Souls That Sustain Us*. p3

"Just as filaments form the basis of many structures, memories thread our relationships with time, places, people and things together, creating what can potentially be understood as existence." - Linh Lê

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lêna Bui (b. 1985) was born in Da Nang. She graduated from Wesleyan University in 2007 with a BA in East Asian Studies and has lived and worked in Saigon since 2009. Through her art, she questions modern life, focusing on environmental issues, cultural and religious beliefs.

Her work has been shown in solo, group exhibitions and screening programmes such as Delfina Foundation, London; Monograph 2023 by Asian Film Archive; 2022 Jeju Biennale, the Asia Culture Center, South Korea; Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE; Sàn Art and The Factory Contemporary Art Center, Vietnam; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Germany; and the Wellcome Collection, London.

[Download Lêna's CV](#)

Linh Lê's exhibition text : [download Blue Filaments](#)

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

BAO, is a project by Lê Thiên-Bảo, has been a pioneering force in contemporary arts from Southeast Asia since 2016. As a socially engaged curator and gallerist, Bao is committed to support both emerging and established artists, fostering an inclusive environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration through community-oriented initiatives.

www.galeriebao.com



Galerie BAQ was founded in 2023 by Lê Thiên-Bảo and Quinnie SG Tan. Situated in the heart of Paris, Galerie BAQ champions and amplifies contemporary art from the world's emerging centers of creativity, working directly and in collaboration with artists who have ties to Southeast Asia and their diasporic communities everywhere.

From April 2023 - October 2024, under the direction of Lê Thiên-Bảo, Galerie BAQ uses the geoculture of Southeast Asia as a method, emphasizes the development of collaborations and programs with various organizations and collectives, like metaphoric islands of an archipelago: geographically separate yet closely linked. Partners include The Outpost Art Organization (Hanoi), The Factory Contemporary Arts Center (Ho Chi Minh City), POUISH (Aubervilliers), A2Z Art Gallery (Paris), Sa Sa Art Project (Phnom Penh), RUBANAH-Underground Hub (Jakarta) et ATTA Gallery (Bangkok).

galeriebaq.com

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