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Thinh Nguyen MFA Thesis Statement

Thinh Nguyen

Claremont Graduate University

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Think Nguyen
Artist Statement:

My work examines the relationship between individuality and collectivity, questioning individual practice within a social context. I found that my practice was linear and limiting, so I expanded it to involve others involuntarily and indirectly. I often collect detritus from artists, using anything related to art materials and practices, transforming these various elements by cutting, tearing, and stripping them apart. I destroy the original images, intentions, meanings, and contexts. In effect, I re-author and re-contextualize the signs, symbols, and materials, asserting my authority in the process of making.

I bricolage the pieces together, combining fragments to create a new, fluctuating form, image, and structure, which often hover somewhere between two-and three-dimensions. My goal is to question the intrinsic value of a unique work of art by blurring the line between discarded rubbish and precious creation. My intention is to illuminate, confound, and challenge conventionally imposed meanings of art.

I find these hybrid forms reflect my own acculturated identity. I mix high and low, applied art and fine art, in order to examine cultural oppression related to gender and identity politics. My techniques such as weaving, sewing, or stitching address questions about sexual difference with regard to masculinity, femininity, and sexual orientation, revealing the gap between the disempowered and powerful. The works that I create are evidence of my own empowerment within the confines of constructed social identity.

The act of cutting, sewing, and stitching is my way of mark-making. The lines that I create express my thoughts through the act of deconstructing and reconstructing. They are the result of my constant need to negotiate, connect, and weave together the contested space between cultures, in hopes of finding a line or thread that connects us all.

By indulging in process and repetition my works become accumulative and often labor-intensive. At times they are ritualistic and devotional, open to the possibility of transcendental experience in action. It is a visible process of meditation where time and action embody thought. The action is my way of quieting the mind through art making, which becomes a physical experience existing somewhere between aesthetics and meditation.

Whether critical, irreverent, or introspective, I delve into others and my own artistic practice to question the distinction between public and private. At the same time, I wrestle with the power of history by interjecting my remixed works into the present. I am investigating the social, cultural, and personal by cycling discarded art objects and images. I transform these materials to embody my own perspective while reconstructing its function within a social and cultural framework.