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Press Release



"I am in a place called Holland, a faraway land belonging to giant white people who wear wooden shoes and who are crazy about porcelain"
(Mai, 17th century Vietnamese Maiden, from the television series Porcelain)

Porcelain - an exhibition and DVD release at San Art

San Art presents "Porcelain", by the Danish artist group Superflex in collaboration with The Propeller Group.

The exhibition takes its starting point in actual historic events surrounding a shipment of porcelain from Asia to Europe in the 17th century.

On the morning of Christmas 1601 the San Jago set sail from Goa bound for Lisbon. The cargo included the first consignment of South East Asian porcelain destined for the European market. On 14 March 1602, off the coast of St. Helena, the San Jago unexpectedly encountered three Dutch ships and a fierce battle followed. After three days of fighting the Portuguese surrendered and the Dutch took possession of the San Jago.

Upon arrival in Holland a huge auction of the booty of the San Jago was conducted and the profit was phenomenal since Europeans at that point did not know how to make porcelain. The importance of this auction was unprecedented and it provided enormous economic stimulus in the entire region and also provided diplomatic gifts that were used to cement the Dutch war of independence against Spain. Among the recipients of such costly gifts were King Henry IV of France and Queen Elizabeth I of England.

This historic event formed the basis for a three-part television series called "Porcelain" filmed in Vietnam and broadcasted on Vietnamese television in March 2010.

Authentic objects from the San Jago are in a historical museum in Holland (the Zeeuws Museum) and the artists were granted the rights to use these objects in the filming of the series. Furthermore the rest of the props created for the series were later

officially added to the collection of the Dutch museum, thereby recreating the past for future viewers.

Rasmus Nielsen of Superflex says:

“We wanted to recreate Dutch history from a Vietnamese perspective using authentic historic objects and adding a disturbing layer of constructed props to the official memory of the Dutch”

The props from the TV series were shown in the context of an important historical museum in Holland (Zeeuws) in 2010 and the TV series was screened in various places in Europe.

Tuan Andrew Nguyen of The Propeller Group says:

“Vietnam is heavily represented in the shared global narrative of film and TV. We like the idea of using the format of a Vietnamese television drama series to actively be part of recreating the history of a western country.”

In the exhibition at Sàn Art we are presented with elements from the process of an existing play with history and authenticity.

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