

Galerie im Tempelhof Museum
4 April - 6 July 2025

Minh Duc Pham

Integrationswunder



© Minh Duc Pham, Integrationswunder, 2024

“Integrationswunder” (in English: a miracle of integration) presents a new group of works by Minh Duc Pham for the first time. In this exhibition, the German Vietnamese artist engages with the topic of labor migration, focusing on the experiences of the tens of thousands of people who came to the GDR (German Democratic Republic) from the so-called “Bruderstaaten” (‘brother countries’) and were employed in industrial companies in the years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Their lives were subject to rigid contractual conditions and strict control of the authorities. The artist’s parents migrated as contract workers from Vietnam to the GDR as well – a topic he recently spoke about in an MDR documentary exploring feelings of foreignness and belonging in eastern Germany (“Deutsch genug? Fremd und daheim im Osten,” 2025).

An article in a magazine published by a publicly owned enterprise (in German: Volkseigener Betrieb, VEB) praises the “Vietnamese girls who [...] diligently fulfill their work assignment.” Wooden boxes on the wall hold ceramic objects that recall thorns of a rose. On a further wall we see an arrangement of flags carrying floral motifs and Vietnamese writing. Finally, a sculpture made of plastic calls to mind tools used to remove thorns, thus taking up the rose motif as well.

In their form and as a figure of thought, flowers play a significant role in Minh Duc Pham’s artistic practice. The works on display here, which examine structural discrimination against guest-workers (“Gastarbeiter”) and contract workers (“Vertragsarbeiter”), specifically evoke the rose. Roses are considered as ideal-typical flowers, but at the same time they are pruned and cut with thorn strippers. This is reminiscent of the narrative of Vietnamese people as “model migrants,” which, however, fails to acknowledge historical grievances as well as everyday racism in the present.

A historical reappraisal is lacking with respect to the experiences of other groups as well, e.g. contract workers from other countries and the guest-workers of the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany). The impact of the conditions of these migration movements is felt to this day.

Thus, the exhibition title “Integrationswunder” is certainly intended as a critical one. It is up for discussion whether it is perhaps precisely because of the economic advantages of labor migration that the state does not feel compelled to make any structural changes, nor to look closely at whose expense this “miracle” could occur. In this exhibition, the artist questions this miracle, this “Wunder,” in thoughtful and artistic ways.

Minh Duc Pham (b. 1991 in Bad Schlema, Saxony) studied at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design and the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). His work has been exhibited internationally – e.g. in the US, Finland, and Vietnam – and at many institutions in Germany, including Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2024) and the Leipzig Museum of Fine Arts (2023). In 2024, he was nominated for the Haus am Kleistpark Art Prize with an artwork in which he examined the forced abortions of Vietnamese contract workers. He lives and works in Berlin.

Press release
March 2025

Exhibition
4.4. - 6.7.2025

Exhibition opening
Thursday, 3 April
7 pm
Introduction
Diana Thun,
art historian and
curator of the exhibition

Artist talk and finissage
with Minh Duc Pham
and Diana Thun
Saturday, 5 July
6 pm

Address
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Tempelhof Museum
Alt-Mariendorf 43
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Free admission
No barrier-free access
Mon closed
Tue-Sun 1-6 pm
Thu from 10 am

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