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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese Culture

NEWSLETTER # 4

FEBRUARY 2009

A COUNTRY STAYS ALIVE WHEN ITS CULTURE IS ALIVE.

- **SACEI Newsletter updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.**
- **It serves as a link between SACEI members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.**

Happy Vietnamese New Year

Vietnamese celebrate their oriental New Year according to the lunar calendar, which falls between late January and early February. Tet is the most important holiday and festival in Vietnam and usually lasts for three days (the first three days) or more for those who could afford it. It is the combination of New Year, Thanksgiving, and Birthday (everyone is one year older no matter one's birth date) in one setting. When out of town, they tend to return home to celebrate the Tet with their family.

During these three days, people refrain from working and cooking. They would go to pagodas, worship their ancestors, visit friends or relatives to wish them a lucky New Year, take a break, and give lucky money to children and elderly people.



Eden Center, VA 20009

Photo Project: A Month, A Year in the Lives of Vietnamese Americans

Although Vietnamese-Americans came to the U.S. more three decades ago, they are still newcomers in this three-century-old country. Their children born in this land, however, do not know much about their parents' native country. The old and new generations therefore are trying to define themselves within this new society.

The purpose of this project is to feature Vietnamese Americans within their own environment and the society that supports them. Who are they? If they have problems with their identity, the Americans also seem to be puzzled by these new immigrants.

- The best way to solve this dilemma is to take photos of Vietnamese Americans
- of all generations
 - within their own environment: work, schools, offices, businesses, churches, pagodas...
 - throughout the year,
 - in various places: VA, CA, TX, and so on,
 - among themselves or others (Americans, foreigners),
 - in the middle of festivities (weddings, Tet, holidays...) or in times of sadness (funerals...).

The variety of activities and functions performed by the Vietnamese-Americans would give readers a glimpse of their busy lives within the American community.

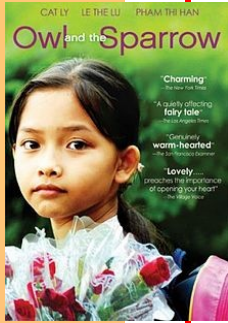
A MONTH, A YEAR IN THE LIVES OF VIETNAMESE-AMERICANS will allow everyone to truthfully see them as active citizens of the U.S.

Please send us your photos for this project. Your help is APPRECIATED.

Dr. Tran Quoc Dung will be the project manager.

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Movie: The Owl and the Sparrow

SAN JOSE — The lights had dimmed at Camera 12, and people still streamed into the theater to see the latest in Vietnamese cinema vérité.

The sweetest in a crop of Vietnamese films, "Owl and the Sparrow" is set in hustling, bustling Sài Gòn, where three lonely souls in search for love happen to meet. Writer and director Stephane Gauger, who may not be as familiar to moviegoers as Timothy Bui or Hâm Trần who helped to edit and produced the venture actually is an old hand working behind the scenes to help bring about these folkloric ventures.

Shot entirely in Việt Nam in 2006, the film took 15 days and 30 locations and less than \$60,000 to make. Using two small 35-millimeter digital cameras and, without blocking the streets, the director drew very little attention from a Sài Gòn teeming mass of humanity.

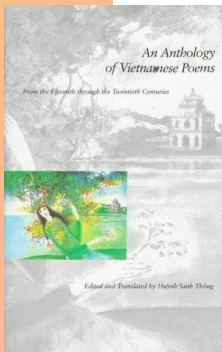
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Yet, the charm and genuineness of Phạm Thi Hân more than make up for other minor disappointments. I gave the film a B rating overall — and an A for giving Sài Gòn a human face and a human story, where one can find familial connection in an otherwise impersonal and noisy city.

But just who is filmmaker Stephane Gauger?

He was born in Sài Gòn in 1970 to a German-American father and a Vietnamese mother and left Việt Nam in 1975 with his family. After a few years in Guam and Houston, the family moved to Orange County, where he grew up and graduated from Fountain Valley High School and California State University, Fullerton. In 1995, he and the Bui brothers met and collaborated on the brothers' film projects as their lighting technician; as their relationship grew, the rest became history.

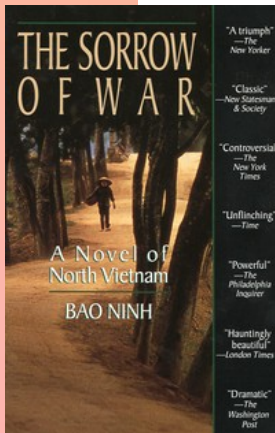
<http://www.guavaleaf.com/video/3114/Owl-And-The-Sparrow>



Huynh Sanh Thong: Anthology of Vietnamese Poems

This scholarly and very readable translation of over 300 poems from about 150 poets is loosely divided into nine chapters. It starts with the Chinese influence of early poems ("Vietnam and China," "The Buddhist Ethos") and moves on to Vietnam's relations with the West, principally France and the United States. Although readers may not appreciate the intricacies of classic poetic form, the themes are universal: war, peace, love, and time. Huynh, the best-known translator of Vietnamese poetry and winner of a MacArthur fellowship, supplies useful notes for these superb translations that make the poems very accessible and truly beautiful.

[Available on Amazon](#)



Bao Ninh: The Sorrow of War

Kien, the protagonist of this rambling and sometimes nearly incoherent but emotionally gripping account of the Vietnam war, is a 10-year veteran whose experiences bear a striking similarity to those of the author, a Hanoi writer who fought with the Glorious 27th Youth Brigade. The novel opens

just after the war, with Kien working in a unit that recovers soldiers' corpses. Revisiting the sites of battles raises emotional ghosts for him, "a parade of horrific memories" that threatens his sanity, and he finds that writing about those years is the only way to purge them.

[Available on Amazon](#)