Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

13 October 2020

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam – **Craig Thomas Gallery** is pleased to announce ***Hidden Flowers 2***, a solo exhibition of water color and pigment on silk paintings by Saigon-based artist **Nguyen Thi Chau Giang**. The opening reception for *Hidden Flowers 2* will be at CTG’s Tran Nhat Duat gallery on **23 October 2020** from **6-9pm**.

Nguyen Thi Chau Giang’s *Hidden Flowers 2* collection is a visual love letter to Vietnamese womanhood and the special bonds that exist between “daughters, mothers, sisters, aunties, grandmothers and friends.” The series includes twenty-two paintings which provide an intimate and tender view of the relationships between women in Vietnam that nurture them and provide succor through the trying times that inevitably come. Chau Giang says, “I believe that love, sacrifice and patience are instinctual for all women. No matter the generation, the personal circumstance, or the environment; these qualities will appear.”

Chau Giang (b. 1978) has been working with silk for more than a decade but has had previous collections done in other mediums like oils. Earlier in her life she was also an acclaimed writer of fiction first being published in her teens. She is that special breed of natural and protean artist who expresses her creativity in manifold ways. Of her silk practice Chau Giang says, When I started my silk practice, my colors came out more opaque and thick. I had to read many books and learn a lot from master silk painters about how to manage colors. With some time, I improved and am now able to create my own signature pieces while helping to preserve the purity of the silk medium.”

In the majority of the works of the collection, women are depicted in groups of two or three. The focus is on the relationships between women and the special bonds they share over generations. Chau Giang takes us into what is clearly a world that is very personal and dear to her. The compositions and the relationships that they depict are intimate and familiar. Each piece comes from a place deep within the artist and is a mélange of an emotional and intellectual process. They also feature lively and vivid colors and a flowery esthetic that adds a great winsomeness to the whole collection.

Chau Giang eschews the easy path of romanticizing or idealizing the lives of the women in her paintings. They are shown as real people, often in various state of undress, staring out at us with self-confidence, warmth, and, occasionally, a hint of trepidation. The artist says, “Viewers can see a line through my paintings of images of two opposite women – one image represents tradition. These women are conservative, nice, and elegant. Another image represents modernity with qualities of openness and a desire for liberation and to overcome the limitations of society. They are opposite in terms of thoughts and actions but they still have a strong connection.”

In the *Hidden Flowers 2* collection, Chau Giang alludes to the continuing lack of gender equality that Vietnamese woman labor under. While she allows that there has been a certain surface level progress, the advances have not yet reached the roots of Vietnamese society or the hearts of its men. She further asserts that Vietnamese women differ from their Western sisters in that they usually hide their sadness and disappointment in their hearts and rarely allow themselves to express strong emotions. Chau Giang says, “Vietnamese women sacrifice themselves very quietly because their love is altruistic and endless. Though they don’t know it; this is what makes them brave.”

Chau Giang’s history as an author is an important factor in her work as a visual artist. She says, “I think that there is a mutual relationship between different areas of creativity. Readers often say that the scenes and characters in my stories are as beautiful and elegant as that of a painting. When I work on paintings, I believe that it is not enough for them to be beautiful to the eye. Each piece needs to have a story behind it to draw viewers’ eyes and to make them think more deeply about the work.”

As each piece is part of the greater thematic whole of the collection, Chau Giang finds it difficult to single out one or two pieces for particular examination and praise. She does confess, however, a great depth of feeling for *The Helper*. “The piece helps to express my deepest thoughts on motherhood. While creating it I nurtured myself with the thought that ‘You might not be happy when being born as a woman but for sure you are happy when having a mom, whose love and sacrifice are unconditional.’ This type of emotion, when you play role of a child and then of a mom, is very divine like an inexplicable miracle.”

Nguyen Thi Chau Giang’s *Hidden Flowers 2* collection is the manifestation of a fully rounded and formed artist who is both at the height of her powers and also confident enough to share her most personal thoughts and feelings in her work. She views her creative powers as being a gift and she uses that gift to help shine a light on her fellow “flowers” that make the world a better place. In her artist statement for the collection Chau Giang makes her feelings clear, “We (women) are like flowers. No matter where we come from, which generation we are in, what our circumstances, how we look, what love we are in... we must all bloom and perfume.”

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Opening reception: Friday, 23 October, 6-9pm

Exhibition dates: 23 October – 20 November 2020

Location: Craig Thomas Gallery

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