
Life

13/5/2008 by Tran Luan Tin

One day, I wrote about you, one of my friends.

Still remember, the miserable but pure childhood passed gently, and then the hard and heroic youth also retreated to the past. And now, the strenuous and passionate middle age slowly put us on the threshold of old age.

It is said that 'Bad soil produces sweet fruits. But it must be a powerful tree, with a desire for life and a need for luck.

Binh's painting is that kind of fruits. At first glance, his paintings are as gentle as if the artist has lived a life full of love. Looking carefully at the paintings, viewers can realize that artist try his best to release life emotions for himself and for everyone.

The thoughts, concerns and experienced life led his brush style to reach the highest level of elegance - it is a unique contrast of the artist Nguyen Thanh Binh.

When we were kids, we were all carefree children. Binh was exceptionally easy-going, to the point of being superficial. But friends were often surprised by the clever comments of 'Binh boong' (his nickname) about profession, about people and about life. Binh have been fortunately bestowed upon the seeds of inner and outer contrast (temporarily divided like that) from an early age.

Remember the dreamy midland and the painful evacuation years. The children, many times standing in front of the easel, cried because of hunger. At that time, Binh had a pair of sandals made of car tires, they were hard and curved so they often made their owner slip and fall. He just stood up and laughed at himself. With drawing lessons, he used to learn and try doing this or that. Using the watercolor, he poured the glossy glue on to see how it looks...

Then the war... We joined the army ... Binh walked along Truong Son and Tay Nguyen with his teammates. Mountains & forests, famines, fierce bombs and endless marches did not abrade but they made the life love of the soldiers become passionate and intense.

The postwar period was a great challenge to the love for profession of the artists. Making a living and drawing are two opposites that are mutually exclusive. Everyone suffered hardship. Binh was even needier because he was not careful in his daily expenses. He got married and raised children in constant debt.

In those days, we often talked passionately about careers when we met. Pondering and helplessness are deep memories of an unforgettable time. Binh still painted, for comforting and relaxing himself, after hours of hard work for a living.

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The vitality was slowly blown into life when the country began to innovate. Nguyen Thanh Binh worked at the Design Department of Quang Trung Fair Company. The income from the job here was very good, Binh often invited his friends to come and work together in return for each family's income. Staying awake for several consecutive nights was very common those days.

Giving up the 'lucrative' workplace at the time was a decision that perhaps only Nguyen Thanh Binh could make.

Binh said: 'I can not draw. Working like this, I don't have energy to draw any more'. I asked him: 'How to earn living to draw?'. 'Find another way, I must learn to use computer, to make money at home.'

Computers were rare then. Binh studied computer and English very hard. Then a computer appeared in his house, and he worked as a graphic designer. Shortly after, his oil paintings were born, gradually increasing and in turn covered the walls.

That was the turning point coming from the indulging passion of instinct, along with a clear and determined intention. That was also the time the two sides of contrast in Binh's personality close together and causing friction to produce heat. The lucky gift that nature gave him, experiencing ups and downs and hardships, seems to come full and bright up.

But life is not easy for anyone. Even if Binh is a good-natured person, then with painting, he had to work so hard and be struggling. His discovery was not as easy as the ease of his personality.

If looking at his paintings at a glance, it is hard to imagine a life with so much hardship. Luckily for Nguyen Thanh Binh, fate has favored him with a fragile and relieved soul, fragile to be permeable, relieved to overcome it all.

Profession

Still hear his own sound of heart, that is the luck of the artist. The ability, given by God, first helps the artist not to stray too long in the struggle to find himself.

The world of painting is as dense as the forest so it is easy to get lost, when looking at the styles that we enjoy, we often see a little bit of ourselves inside, so we get lost to this side or to that side... Then, trying all ways but you can't grow your own tree... When coming back, it was deserted like a desert, like there was no shadow of yourself. But being able to come back is a blessing, thanks to the sound wave of your heart, of your destiny. The sound made the artist stop, let the dissatisfaction and discomfort torment and urge him.

Reading Binh's sharing, it was clear that his working and thinking process was not easy. A hard working process, but only short-lived pleasures. 'Lucky wishes' contained implications ... The still life was quiet, the street roof was quiet with an unusual layout, he seemingly wanted to 'say', to 'prove', though it was sophisticated but it was not Binh yet.

Saying nothing, showing nothing, be as natural as it is - it is a thirst in his heart – one day, Binh suddenly realized that thirst. Just then, he caught his water line.

Ao Dai, white color, folk paintings, silk paintings are suggestions to awaken Binh's emotional instincts. But the decisive thing is 'A hundred women waiting', 'Mother and child', 'The choir', 'Ballet'..., topics that can convey the true feelings of Nguyen Thanh Binh's instinct.

So clever and so lucky. It was also the result of a stubbornness which came from his inner, in contrast to his usual easygoing personality. Without that stubbornness, the artist would never succeed.

So Binh found his own way. The artist, when seeing his own path, has been really confident. And only the belief has led the artist to the end on his unique and difficult path.

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Binh hopes that all people, from professors to cyclo drivers, would love his paintings, i.e. to tempt all of them. It was a wish that was thought to be naive and impossible, because creativity is individual, only close identities can sympathize with each other. But the reality shows that many individuals have convinced the majority.

Feeling the beauty, at all levels, has the same core. The issue is the artist's influence and his persuasion. Perhaps, forever, people still love simplicity, the profound nature of humanity is simplicity. The profoundness of life is very simple after all. Extreme love is extremely simple.

Everything on Nguyen Thanh Binh's paintings is really easy but it is impossible to imitate or to copy. The layout of characters, colors, and brush style is like to use no effort, no wisdom – only a sensation vibrated – persuasion is there – effort is also there.

Private confidences of the artist, if inspiring, will be shared. Many of Binh's paintings have come from his own confidences. Their theme or topic is not great, but their impact is not small - when the audiences have shared and liked, they are then their friends already.

Professional skills, genuine expression, the personal honesty which is separate but not mixed, and highly persuasive. That is the career success of Nguyen Thanh Binh. His career is less difficult than his life and successful thanks to his life. Talent and luck are what fate has decided to give him to endure and enjoy.

Beyond the limit

Establishing an artistic personality is a success. But the limit immediately appears. The more paintings are bought, the more the artist has to paint.

Whether you are a writer, a musician, a film editor or a painter, you always want to have your own audience. (The lonesome art is high sophistication and back away already). But the line between routine and creativity (when maintaining public's love with familiar themes, familiar styles) is very fragile.

If the line is lost, the artist will not exist, it sets up the limits of challenge. The first is the limit of emotions. Binh's paintings, besides the structure of 'read between the lines', attract viewers mainly by the background of strong but fragile emotions.

Binh draws a lot, fast and continuously, can the limit of emotions be overcome?

Like a person wandering in the familiar landscape, no matter how beautiful, it is hard to avoid fatigue. Binh was tired sometimes. Fortunately, the bravery formed from profession passion help him to be patient to discover endless condensation right in the familiar area, thought to be too familiar.

Changing is a way of refreshing yourself, digging or plowing is also a way to renew. When the inspiration with the 'white colour' journey dropped, Binh switched to paint nude or still life, then turned back to the white topic, continued to push the tree forward in his field, with a pure inspiration.

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It seems that the busiest job in a person's life is to work hard to go beyond the limit.

The artist has surpassed the limits of his own and of the life set up in each day of life, in every painting. That is the arduousness and happiness of art labor. Being praised means nothing in comparison with the joy of being immersed in creativity, passing the limits such as suppressing the waves, and being happy to find my small ego useful for this life.

Essence can be seen in the simple artworks of Nguyen Thanh Binh.

By Tran Luan Tin

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