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Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba at Lehmann Maupin
By Edward Leffingwell

Born in Tokyo at the height of the war in Vietnam and educated in the U.S., Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). He uses various mediums to explore the life and history of Vietnam and Japan through the lens of metaphor. In his first New York solo, Nguyen-Hatsushiba presented two videos of maneuvers performed underwater by teams of divers.

Memorial Project Minamata: Neither Either nor Neither - A Love Story (2002-03, 16 minutes), a four-channel projection, recalls the afflictions and deaths following the use of the defoliant Agent Orange during the Vietnam War and the earlier pollution of Minamata Bay in Japan by mercury-tainted industrial waste. The activity is introduced on land. Laughing children run back and forth as wind blows through a grassy landscape. The camera cuts to a factory or warehouses seen beyond a quiet harbor crowded with fishing boats. The scene is interrupted by an intense, stroboscopic sequence of teeming dancers accompanied by techno music. Abstract swirls of sulfurous hue suffuse the screens. The dancing is interspersed with images of a coral reef populated by barefoot divers in swimming trunks, joined by mouthpieces to an ethereal network of translucent, flexible air tubes. The divers shift this structure into place and then hold hands, like skydivers plummeting to earth or attendants to the birth of some unseen marine Venus. The film cuts to a young woman resting on a bed under drapes of mosquito netting stirred by a ceiling fan, then back to the divers in the blue twilight of the sea, then to dancers on a crowded floor layered with digitally introduced dialogue balloons that contain no text. Strobes flash and the film again cuts to the swimming divers. A title reads "memorial continues."

The second project included here was filmed in the waters off a U.S. military installation on the doorstep to Southeast Asia. *Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas: Battle of Easel Point - Memorial Project Okinawa* (2003, 15 minutes) is a highly choreographed, single-channel video projection of divers in scuba gear and wetsuits. Nguyen-Hatsushiba's camera moves through a coral reef past schools of fish and a raking light. Two divers propel a long framed easel downward as digital music pulses. A phalanx of divers guides many more easels into place along the edge of an underwater ravine. They wear bandoliers of self-contained paint cartridges. As they set up canvases they pop open the cartridges and

begin to paint with brushes, tossing spent containers to drift and litter the sea floor. A computer-generated flag spins off a field of digital stars as the ranks of divers increase. As though abstracted from the flag of Vietnam, an intensely yellow, three-dimensional, five-pointed star that looks like corroding metal drifts through this balletic scene, digitally propelled. The divers paint large portraits of actor-stars who have appeared in Hollywood movies that glamorize the Vietnam War. One is Sylvester Stallone. Nguyen-Hatsushiba first intended each memorial project to be a performance in a large tank, aquarium or pool. What began thus has been realized in these films, enduring memorials for healing.