

# The Kitchen

## Danh Vō and Xiu Xiu: “Metal”

September 27–October 18, 2014

The Kitchen is pleased to present “Danh Vō and Xiu Xiu: Metal,” on view through October 18. The exhibition is curated by Tim Griffin with Lumi Tan.

Having previously remarked that “the passport is the ultimate performance piece”—citing Felix Gonzalez Torres’s understanding of how movement and, by extension, cultural perspective, takes place in a legislated sphere—Vō has invited two Bangkok, Thailand-based gold pounders, Nantapol and Pruan Panicharam, to be present in the gallery while producing the gold leaf that often adorns his sculptures, from cardboard cartons featuring brand names from Budweiser to Colgate. This father-and-son team’s process of flattening 24-carat squares of gold into leaf takes three hours to execute; they will be working in the gallery daily from noon to 3pm, Tuesday through Saturday.

In tandem with this duo, the band Xiu Xiu—featuring composer and musician Jamie Stewart with bandmates Shayna Dunkelman and Ches Smith—will present 52 musical compositions, with a daily selection timed cumulatively to match the duration of the gold pounders’ labor. These pieces derive from a variety of compositional techniques, with some made in the vein of new music and entirely notated, while others are either improvised in the mode of post-1950s free jazz or modeled after game structures in which the musicians follow specific sets of rules. As important as the overall duration of these works is the fact that each individual piece is five minutes long; endings are marked by loud sound—what Stewart calls an alarm—indicating transitions from one piece to the next. At once too long for audiences to ignore and yet too short to settle into as listeners, each piece makes it difficult for producers and receivers alike to establish any stable position in relation to the composition, even while underscoring how work organizes time and, subsequently, life. During performances, the pounders’ rhythm will variously (and inevitably) lead and follow the musicians’ process; as codifications of sound and tone are made unreliable, so are fast definitions of work and its role in the structuring of daily activities and meaning.

In this regard, Vō has also previously expressed his desire to underline calligraphy—with all its historical ties to the development of phonetic language for the purposes of disseminating information to a larger public—as a kind of labor. For “Metal,” Vō’s father Phung Vō has rendered fragments of lyrics from songs by Xiu Xiu, Nico, Rihanna, and the band Berlin (known for its 1986 hit single, “Take My Breath Away”)—as well as passages from writings by Leo Bersani and Artaud, the latter as used previously by artist Nancy Spero—in a large wall drawing and two MDF panels. (Notably for paradoxes among contemporary cultural traversals, Phung does not read or write English; the literary passages are by now part of his repertoire, learned visually.) In counterpoint with these texts are pages from a book on Michelangelo featuring different perspectives on the artist’s sculpture, wherein different views of the same object suggest tension and relaxation—a contradiction summoned by the room’s coincidental modes of production and resolution, unfinished and finished, action and aesthetic. At the same time, these pictures suggest a lasting profile in art for classicism, where artistic execution—particularly when involving such contradiction—inevitably reserves a role for fortuna.

## **About the Artists**

Danh Võ studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Denmark and the Städelschule, Frankfurt. He was the winner of the Hugo Boss Prize, New York (2012), the BlauOrange Kunstpreis der Deutschen Volksbanken und Raiffeisenbanken, Berlin, Germany (2007) and was a nominee for the Nationalgalerie Prize for Young Art, Berlin, Germany (2009). He participated in the Venice Biennale (2013) and has exhibited his work in such institutions as the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2013), the Art Institute of Chicago (2012), the Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2012), the National Gallery of Denmark (2010), Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2009), and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008). Next month Võ's work appears at the Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, and in May he will represent the Danish pavilion as part of the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Võ's father Phung Võ has been a frequent collaborator in Danh Võ's artistic projects. Phung ran a small food business in Denmark for thirty years and more recently has frequently been a part of Danh Võ's work, particularly *Tombstone for Phung Võ*. In "Metal," Phung Võ is writing in his trained penmanship, a skill he has utilized in other works before.

The gold pounders Nantapol and Puan Panicharam were trained in Thailand in the laborious craft of hand-pounding gold leaf from large blocks.

Xiu Xiu (Shayna Dunkelman, Ches Smith, and Jamie Stewart) is an experimental, post-punk musical group headed by Jamie Stewart. Taking their name from the 1998 Chinese film *Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl*, Stewart originally formed the group with Cory McCullough, Yvonne Chen, and Lauren Andrews in 2000. They released their first album, *Knife Play*, in 2002 (on vinyl through Absolutely Kosher and on disk through SRC/Kill Rock Stars). Since then the group has shifted members and release a number of albums including *Fabulous Muscles* (2004 through 5 Rue Christine), a record which Võ later had his father copy parts of in meticulous calligraphy for the dedication of *Tombstone for Phung Võ*. Xiu Xiu's most recent album, *Angel Guts: Red Classroom*, was released in 2014 (Polyvinyl Records).

Thanks to Eve Tangsakul and Amy Zion for their invaluable work on this exhibition.

In conjunction with the Public Art Fund exhibition *Danh Võ: We The People*, Xiu Xiu will present *Kling Klang*, a durational performance using vibrating instruments activated against the copper sheets of Võ's sculptures. This event is open to the public and will take place September 28 at 1pm, at the Pier 3 Greenway Terrace at Brooklyn Bridge Park.

## **Funding Credits**

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## **About The Kitchen**

The Kitchen is one of New York City's most forward-looking nonprofit spaces, showing innovative work by emerging and established artists across disciplines. Our programs range from dance, music, performance, and theater to video, film, and art, in addition to literary events, artists' talks, and lecture series. Since its inception in 1971, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country, and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence.

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