

EMERGE



ART ON DEMAND 9.3
OCT 14 - DEC 2, 2023

TANYA
VANPRASEUTH

ART ON DEMAND 93

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), at the end of 2022, 108.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced as a result of “persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order,” an increase of 19 million people, compared to the end of 2021.¹ Put differently, more than 1 in every 74 people on Earth has been forced to flee.

Being forced to leave your home is a heartbreaking reality that many people have to face. For those of us who have been able to stay in, or near, our homes, it is a feeling that we cannot truly comprehend. Leaving a home, however, does not always mean being without one forever. There have always been people who have travelled to new places and found new homes to call their own. Immigrants join with local families, have second generation children, and become deeply tied to their new country. Finding a new home does not mean that one must abandon one’s roots, and although a person may leave a home, they will always carry a part of it in their heart and pass a piece of it on to their children.

For Tanya Vanpraseuth, the natural beauty of our province is a recurring source of inspiration for her artwork. Her love and appreciation of nature was fostered by her parents, both refugees from Laos who eventually settled in Canada in the 1980s. The love for nature that characterized their childhoods in the city of Vientiane formed a connection between their old home and their new one. When they found themselves in strange new countries, nature’s beauty was a peaceful and familiar presence.

Here, Vanpraseuth shares photographs of her



father in various natural environments in the Fraser Valley. Both of her parents grew up exploring and enjoying the natural beauty of Southeast Asia; their appreciation for nature never left them. During their stay in refugee camps in Thailand, they were able to find peace in the surrounding nature during difficult times, and doing the same in British Columbia helped them feel at home in a new country.

The photographs in Vanpraseuth’s series will look familiar to any resident of the Lower Mainland, brimming with lush and vast natural scenes. Yet, in her beautiful shots of the forests, beaches, and mountains in the surrounding locales, there are actually two subjects: BC, and her father. He is a constant figure amongst the trees and rocks and water, and while his presence wanders near and far,

THROUGH THESE IMAGES, THE ARTIST SHOWCASES HER FATHER'S LOVE FOR BC AS A MAINSTAY OF HIS CURRENT LIFE AS A CANADIAN, BUT ALSO AS A CONNECTION TO HIS ROOTS, AS BEING SURROUNDED BY NATURE HERE IN BC HELPS HIM FEEL LIKE HE STILL HAS THAT BELOVED PIECE OF HIS OLD HOME.

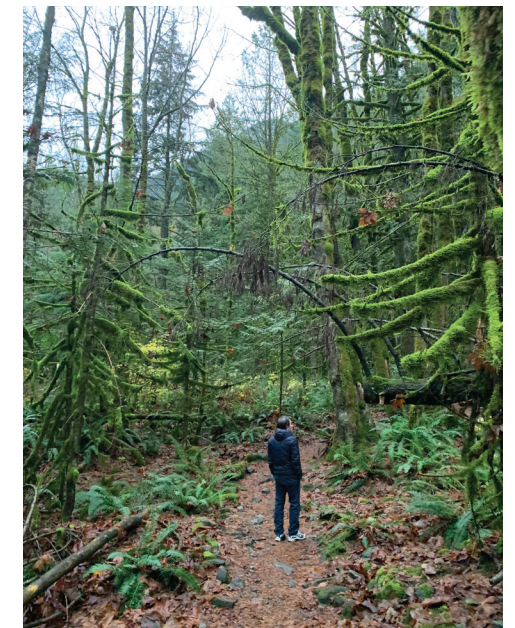
the artist has situated her father as the focal point of each of these images. His placement in all of the compositions is balanced with the landscape he walks in, supporting the intuitive feeling that he simply fits in these places. There is a real sense of consideration in his gaze, and his posture is relaxed and comfortable. It is easy to see that he feels at home in each of these places that we visit, following him as he guides us into the welcoming natural beauty. Always at his back, our eyes are never drawn to his, but instead towards what he may be gazing at so attentively. In many of these photos, it is as though we have silently walked, unnoticed, upon a moment of conversation. He acknowledges the trees and the water, listens to the mountains and the forest; it is clear that he is no stranger in the Valley.

Through these images, the artist wants to showcase her father’s love for BC as a mainstay of his current life as a Canadian, but also as a connection to his roots, as being surrounded by nature here in BC helps him feel like he still has that beloved piece of his old home.

Between July 1, 2022, and April 1, 2023, 118,398 new residents were recorded in BC.² Through her father’s story, Vanpraseuth wants to share with new immigrants, who are still discovering their new home, a way in which they might connect a new place to their roots.

Every person has places that they will think fondly of; for many of us, the place we are most fond of we call our home. For those who travel great distances for long spans of time, new places or pieces of great fondness may be found far from one another and can even become new homes. Sometimes the fondness we feel for a faraway place is also a reminder of what we have fallen in love with before, and it becomes something very dear indeed.

Braeden Riggins
Emerge Curator



TANYA VANPRASEUTH

Tanya Vanpraseuth grew up in the Fraser Valley, appreciating the surrounding landscapes with her immigrant parents, who fostered in her the same love for nature that characterized their own childhoods in Vientiane, Laos. These photos represent the artist's father, a refugee who immigrated to Canada in the 1980s. In a new country where everything was different, he found a piece of his childhood in the natural environment of the Valley and a connection from his old home to his new one.

Front Cover

Tanya Vanpraseuth, *Porteau Cove Provincial Park BC*, 2023, digital photograph

Inside

Top-left: Tanya Vanpraseuth, *Acadia Beach, Vancouver, BC*, 2023, digital photograph

Bottom-right: Tanya Vanpraseuth, *Flood Falls, Hope, BC*, 2023, digital photograph

Citations

1 "Global Trends | UNHCR," The UN Refugee Agency," n.d., accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

2 Jack Blackwell, "BC's Population Growth Surges in 2022 as International Migration Picks up," Chartered Professional Accountants British Columbia, July 26, 2023, <https://www.bccpa.ca/news-events/cpabc-newsroom/2023/july/cpabc-bc-s-population-growth-surges-in-2022-as-international-migration-picks-up/>.



the **reach**
GALLERY MUSEUM

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY TY MARTENS