Ann Proctor

**NGUYEN Sang (Nguyễn Sáng, 1923-1988)**

Nguyễn Sángwas born in the south of Vietnam and died in Ho Chi Minh City, however, he spent two thirds of his life in the north of the country. Following an initial period of study at the Gia Dinh School of Fine Arts in Saigon he moved to the École des Beaux-Arts d’Indochine, Hanoi. (1940-1945). Best known for his monumental paintings in lacquer and oil, Sáng also designed bank notes and prints with revolutionary themes. Students at the École des Beaux-Arts d’Indochine adapted lacquer techniques, previously used on three-dimensional surfaces, to two-dimensional painting. Nguyễn Sáng, as an early practitioner of lacquer painting, is viewed as one of the innovators for updating and reconciling Vietnamese art with international art. His career was not without controversy as Sáng was one of the artists involved in the *Nhan Van Giai Pham* affair of 1956 in which artists proposed ‘art for art’s sake’ rather than the government line of ‘art for the people.’ His best- known paintings include *The enemy have burnt our village* (1954), oil, and *Admission to the Party at the Ðiện Biên Phủ*, lacquer, (1963), both held in the collection of Museum of Fine Arts Hanoi, however he also painted more literary subjects. He was awarded the Ho Chi Minh Prize for Literature and Art in 1996.

**References and further reading**

Taylor, Nora, Annesley. (2004) *Painters in Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press. (Taylor discusses the *Nhan Van Giai Pham* and the repercussions for Nguyễn Sáng in addition to the transformation in reception of the artist within Vietnamese art history).

Nguyễn-Long, Kerry (2002) ‘Lacquer Artists of Vietnam’, *Arts of Asia,* vol.32, no.1, 2002, pp. 27-39.

*Vietnam Cultural Window*, vol. 29 August 2000. (Entitled ‘Modern Painting: Tracing the roots’, this issue contains many references to Sáng and his cohort of early modernist Vietnamese painters).