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**Blaffer Art Museum Presents First Major Exhibition of The Propeller Group  
The Propeller Group Merges Conceptual Art with Popular Media**

HOUSTON - The Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston is proud to present the first major institutional exhibition by The Propeller Group, a Ho Chi Minh City and Los Angeles-based art collective. The exhibition kicks off with an opening reception on Friday, June 2 from 7 – 9 p.m. and will be on view through September 30, 2017.

The Propeller Group, led by founders Tuan Andrew Nguyen, Phu Nam Thuc Ha and Matt Lucero, is dedicated to elevating the Vietnamese voice on the international scene. With backgrounds in visual art, film and video, The Propeller Group operates as both an artist collective and an advertisement company named TPG. Through installation, video and sculpture, The Propeller Group has developed an innovative model that merges collaborative, conceptual art practices — partially steeped in the politically inflected artwork of the 1990s — with the forms and methods of popular media today.

Blurring the boundaries between fine art and mainstream media production, The Propeller Group makes large-scale collaborative projects in new media, from videos to web-based applications. They apply systems-hacking tactics to their projects, adopting strategies from advertising and marketing, as well as forms of creation and display that usually take place in galleries and museums. Their ambitious projects are frequently anchored in Vietnam's history or its current dynamics as a growing capitalist market, yet their work extends to address global phenomena, including international commerce, the tools of war and street culture.

This exhibition is comprised of seven multi-part projects from the past five years, including: “Fade In” (2010), a video that tracks the fake antiques trade in Vietnam and is accompanied by an 18<sup>th</sup> century antique house; “Television Commercial for Communism” (2011), an advertisement campaign about communist propaganda disguised as capitalist propaganda; “The Dream” (2012), a multimedia work that documents a Honda Dream motorcycle – a highly coveted status symbol in Vietnam – as it is gradually stripped of its parts over the course of a night on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, and is displayed alongside the chassis of the moped; and, “The Living Need Light, The Dead Need Music” (2014), a visual and musical journey through the fantastical funeral traditions and rituals of south Vietnam and New Orleans. Other recent multimedia projects scrutinize the histories of the AK-47 and M16, the two most widely used assault rifles during the Vietnam-American war, including several ballistic-gel blocks that capture the impact of two bullets and a feature film made using existing footage from Hollywood movies, promotional videos, documentaries and YouTube clips.

Houston is home to the largest community of Vietnamese in the United States outside of California. In conjunction with The Propeller Group exhibition, Blaffer Art Museum is organizing an ambitious public program with UH faculty and staff to connect with this community. The program starts on June 3 at 1:30 p.m. with a conversation between The Propeller Group’s Tuan Andrew Nguyen and Duy Lap Nguyen, an assistant professor of world cultures and literatures at UH, that will be moderated by Javier Sánchez Martínez, Cynthia Woods Mitchell Curatorial Fellow at Blaffer. On June 21 at 12 p.m., Beverly Barrett, a lecturer in global studies at the UH Bauer College of Business and the Hobby School of Public Affairs, will lead a gallery tour with a focus on the impact of globalization in Vietnam. On August 30, Robert Buzzanco, associate professor of history and one of the nation's leading authorities on the Vietnam War, will speak about The Propeller Group’s approach to the war. And, during the summer, Trinh Nguyen, programming and marketing coordinator at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, will lead gallery tours in Vietnamese.

### **About the exhibition**

The Propeller Group exhibition is organized by the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the Phoenix Art Museum, and has an accompanying catalog.

The Propeller Group exhibition webpage may be found here:

<http://blafferartmuseum.org/the-propeller-group/>

**About Blaffer Art Museum**

Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts (KGMCA) furthers the understanding of contemporary art through exhibitions, publication and public programs of merit and distinction. The museum opens **10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tuesdays — Saturdays**. All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

Blaffer Art Museum  
University of Houston  
4173 Elgin St, Houston, TX 77004  
<http://blafferartmuseum.org>