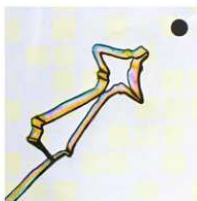


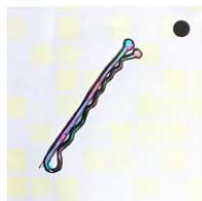
VINA NGUYEN

con xin lỗi vì nhiều lúc con quên:
i'm sorry that i often forget:

touch



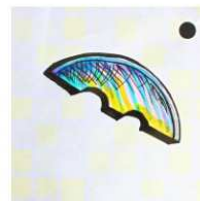
bút mực / cây bút
(space needle) pen



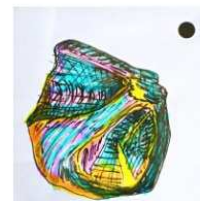
cây kẹp tóc.
hairclip = hairpin (?)



móc bông tai
i remembered



nút bị bể
i remembered



tác phẩm điêu khắc nhỏ
google was wrong

hear



tai nghe*
you disagree



loa phóng thanh nhỏ
small = capsule (?)



thiết bị báo cháy
i never learned this i swear

"Thiếu một chữ thì ý nghĩa sẽ bị trật lất!"
"Drop a word and the entire meaning is off!"

tai nghe → ống nghe (để đeo) ở lỗ tai (?)
speakers to wear on the ears
đèn trần → đèn treo ở trên trần nhà (?)
light hung upon the ceiling
thùng rác ngoài trời → thùng rác đặt ở ngoài (?)
garbage bin placed outside

see



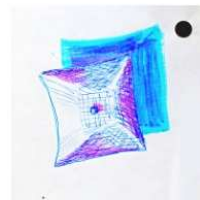
bóng tối
shadow



ánh sáng
but not bóng sáng?



đèn
lamp vs light?



đèn trần*
you disagree



nước lấp lánh trong ly
i was being poetic

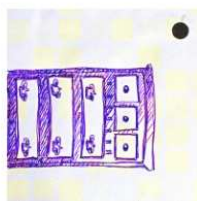
hold



thùng rác ngoài trời*
you disagree



tủ quần áo
closet is one word away from dresser



tủ đựng quần áo



trang trí bằng kim loại
google was right

feel



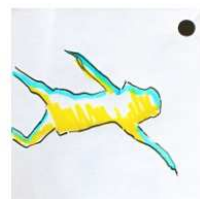
tấm nệm
why do these two have 'sheet' as first word?



tấm màn

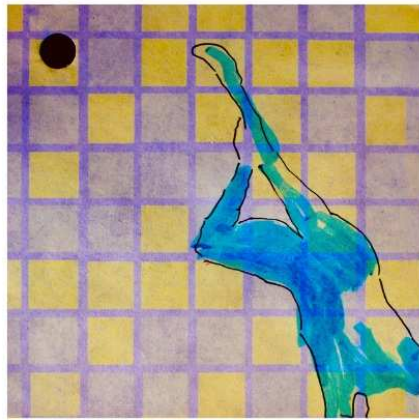


bệnh trầm cảm
i wanted melancholy

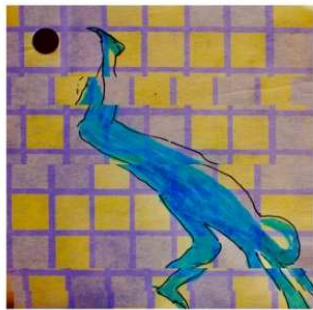


sự mơ ước
to dream i'll be "full viet" one day

the other



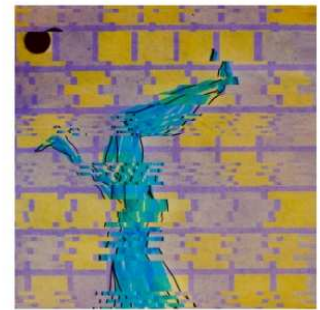
spaghetios gone bad.
 a curl of cạc tông
 in my bowl
 taken from the office where
 Má worked.
 a travel agency owned
 by a giant đa trắng woman
 broad nose on a large face with
 a pencil eraser-sized mole



on her chin.
 she always wore
 hồng lipstick &
 a điều thuốc lá
 off her lip
 was lit as she
 cười'd
 at me.
 i hid

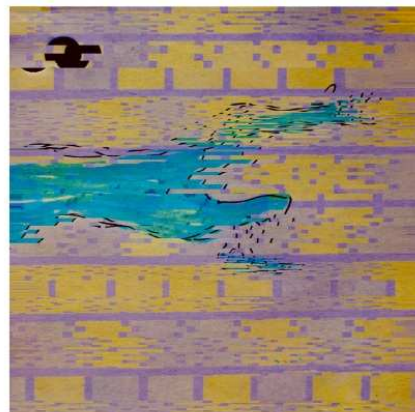


under
 Má's large desk
 where a
 túi ngủ
 had been laid out for me.
 the woman's 3-year-old
 con trai &
 chó
 sprung into



my bed & i
 & khóc'd
 la hét'd.
 i was so
 sợ
 without knowing
 tại sao—
 tại sao?

her husband
 cảnh sát
 drove to our
 nhà
 on week days ends
 sirens screaming
 cho vui.



VINA NGUYEN - POET / ARTIST STATEMENT

I collect pieces of my Vietnamese linguistic memory in “con xin lỗi vì nhiều lúc con quên.” The grid appears tidy and self-assured, but the sideways sketches emulate the disorienting process as the subtext is apologetic, questioning, and defensive. Everyday things I navigate with confidence in another language now shade me with uncertainty, embarrassment, and a bit of shame, rendering these objects, in moments, almost unrecognizable.

But Vietnamese words also formed the first folds of my memory: ‘Má’... ‘cảnh sát’... ‘da trắng’... In “the other” I explore vivid shards that cut me with the knowledge of who ‘the other’ is. Encapsulated in these fragments are Vietnamese words that burn bright and hot, enough to dissipate more joyful moments, as they inform me of the nuanced complexity of my boundaried existence.

I thank the Cultural Instigators of Mohkínstsis for putting on Bringing Power to Truth: Artists Grappling Stolen Land, Lives & Labour, where I met MelVee X and whose workshop provided me with the prompt to write “the other.”

I’m also grateful to the AWCS’ Own Voices Alberta Mentorship Program for connecting me with amazing and kind writers who have supported my writerly self-confidence and intuition. Without them, I wouldn’t have applied for an AFA grant or read so many profound books!