

## Tinh Hoa Nuoc Viet 2014 - The Vietnamese Scholar Living Quarter exhibition

The furniture and arts displayed in the exhibition are a sample depicting a room in the home of a scholar, and offers a glimpse into his life style - accomplished and dignified, but at the same time humble and simple. The furniture, paintings and art works are from the early 19th and 20th centuries.

The ornate, gold painted wood screen is carved with the words “**Lạc Viên Tư Mã**” (loosely translated as ‘the serene world of a high ranking mandarin’) and the wood scroll with the words “**Ngọc Đường Phẩm Giá**” (loosely translated as ‘the residence of a respected official’). These items were awarded to the scholar and grace the front and back of the living quarter.



“Lạc Viên Tư Mã”

The ebony living room set is beautifully hand carved with “**Long Phụng Hòa Duyên**” theme (harmonious union of dragon and phoenix). The ceramic pottery is from the well-known **Bát Tràng** village and the elegant blue and white porcelain tea set and wine flask are on the table for daily use.

It is customary for the Vietnamese people to have a family ancestral altar in their home. Incense is offered daily in the brass burners in honor and remembrance of the family ancestors.



“Long Phụng Hòa Duyên” theme (harmonious union of dragon and phoenix).



“**Thanh Bình Điệu**”, a famous poem by poet *Lý Bạch* and “**Mai Lan Cúc Trúc**”, flowers and plants depicting the four seasons are carved on rosewood panels with mother of pearl inlay.



Two silk paintings by artist **Nguyễn Siên**, “**Cụ Đồ Nho**” (elderly teacher) and “**Học Trò Xưa**” (pupils) paintings are displayed above an antique set of ink brushes housed in a wooden box with mother of pearl inlay.



Also displayed is a silk painting of a famous Vietnamese hero, general **Trần Bình Trọng (1259-1285) by artist Tú Duyên**. General Trọng was well known for his heroic action in the war of Dai Viet against the Mongol invasion in 1284.

In a battle in February 1285, Trần Bình Trọng's troops were defeated and the general was captured by the army of prince Toghan.

After his capture, prince Toghan who considered Trần Bình Trọng a talented general, tried to convince him to surrender. Refusing to co-operate, Trần Bình Trọng kicked off the gold and treasure that he was offered. When asked about the prospect of being a Prince for the Yuan Dynasty, he answered with a phrase which became famous in Vietnamese history:

**“Ta thà làm quỷ nước Nam chứ không thèm làm Vương đất Bắc”  
I prefer to be a demon in the South than a King in the North.**

The general was executed afterwards by prince Toghan. Today, he is widely known as one of the finest example of patriotism in Vietnam.



**Trần Bình Trọng (1259-1285) by artist Tú Duyên**

*The Quintessence of Vietnam 2014*

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