

A painting of a hand holding a lit match. The hand is dark-skinned and is positioned on the left side of the frame. The match is lit, with a bright yellow and orange flame. The background is a textured, light-colored surface with a repeating pattern of dark, ornate floral or damask motifs. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

ara

She lit my mouth without a word

Solo Exhibition by Natalie Sasi Organ
11 April - 9 May 2026

She lit my mouth without a word

Text by Vân Đỗ

This is Natalie Sasi Organ's first solo exhibition—her most ambitious to date, in both scale and stake, also marking three years since her return to Thailand, her mother's homeland, to live and work as an artist. Composed of oil paintings, kinetic installations, sculptures and texts, *She lit my mouth without a word* unfolds in cycles of desire and loss, opening onto an ecstatic, surreal suspension—like the first time one chews betel.

The exhibition opens with this very first time. Nestled to the left of the entrance, *Cure for Bites* is a small poem-painting diptych that begins with the phrase “ไปหายาย” (“go see Grandma”), a reminder her mother would repeat every now and then. Her reluctance had its reason. For those unfamiliar with betel chewing, the mixture of betel leaf, areca nut, and lime paste, combined with saliva, would create a chemical reaction that produces a vivid red liquid in the mouth. Through the astonished eyes of a child, this pungent, seemingly repulsive substance was applied to her skin as a remedy for mosquito bites and unexpectedly, it worked. What was once a memory of discomfort has since softened into tenderness.

Fire leads us on. It appears in multiple forms: fire holding a cluster of betel nut in the palm of a hand; a candle lit and extinguished, leaving behind a thin trace of smoke; flames flickering in a hearth; or invoked through Yu Fai (อยู่ไฟ)—literally “to stay with fire”—a traditional Thai postpartum practice in which heat is used to heal the mother's body after childbirth, aiding both physical and emotional recovery. At the center of the space, *Hold your feet to the fire* recalls this practice, inviting viewers to kneel and look through the glass panels.

Under industrial lighting, the exhibition is experienced through the light of fire—a non-neutral, unstable illumination that never evenly reveals everything. Fire emits warmth and often signifies renewal, yet it also carries the potential for immense destruction, an elemental force that oscillates between care and annihilation, between life and death, between birth and decay. Across her works, shadows lurk in its flicker and enigma.

Upon entering the space, one is confronted by a large-scale diptych, titled *I bloomed where cut, I burned where placed*, not only in their dimensions, but in their perspective. The central figure is the artist herself, situated within two of the most intimate environments of her childhood: her maternal grandparents' home in Hua Hin, and her paternal grandparents' home in Bristol. In contrast to Natalie's earlier works, which often present fragmented bodies—hands, backs, partial gestures—embedded within tightly composed, contextless scenes, these paintings, for the first time, open up the perspective, allowing us to see more of what has always been there. In one painting, Natalie sits in her grandfather's wooden armchair, her body rendered so faint it nearly disappears. In the other, she turns her back to the viewer, facing a fireplace burning betel nuts. A soft piece of silk drapes across her body, extending into the adjacent canvas, binding together two places of starkly different domestic furnishings and perhaps rituals, both of which she calls “home,” despite their geographical distance. Yet it is not only Natalie who is fading, both of these spaces have already vanished or are on the verge of disappearing.

Both were homes of “hoarders”, she said, of objects, of domestic furnishings, both important and not, one collected out of necessity, of not having enough; the other out of a desire for beauty, for ornament. Objects drift in and out of oblivion, many of them now gone, sold, dilapidated. In contrast, objects in Natalie’s work are treated with a certain sacredness. Carefully selected from Thai and British cultural rituals, they are also deeply rooted in personal and cultural memory. Removed from their original contexts and reassembled within the exhibition, some shift in function, unsettling the meanings typically assigned to them.

Betel nut is not simply a recurring motif but the central material and symbolic axis of Natalie’s new body of work, one of the most charged symbols running through her practice. Throughout the exhibition, betel nut returns insistently, binding together questions of the body, feminist kinship and postcolonial condition in Thailand. Across Southeast Asia, betel chewing has long operated as a social and ceremonial medium; the act of chewing betel nut together functions as a gesture of hospitality to welcome guests into the household or offered as gifts in weddings or rituals, but also as a form of mild stimulation that sends a subtle chill through the body, a sensation that cuts through the stillness of midday. From the late 19th century, during the reign of King Rama V, the practice was gradually displaced by imported ideals of modernity bound up with hygiene and civility, culminating in state-led campaigns in 1940s Thailand to suppress it. Betel stains the teeth, reddens the saliva, trains the mouth, and seeps into the body. Long condemned as vulgar or backward, it undergoes an alchemy here, recast in silver aluminium and given weight in what becomes Natalie’s own rituals.

In *I learned fire at her knee*, Natalie transformed the traditional Thai hand fans into a system of metallic ceiling fans—only to be placed on the floor—reversing both orientation and purpose. In her childhood, when children passed in front of adults, they were expected to bow. But as a child, she would often run past, and her grandmother would lightly strike her legs with the fan she had been using to cool herself. A gesture that is at once disciplinary and affectionate, a form of care that is both tender and strict. Now, as her grandmother’s memory fades, as the teeth once stained by betel chewing are gone, these recollections become what anchors Natalie to her maternal lineage, where love often means to burn and bite, contradictions she has learned, the hard way, not only to reconcile with, but also to embrace. Meticulously staged through gestures, materials, and symbolic systems marked by postcolonial histories, the exhibition lingers in a warm, quiet nostalgia. Natalie restages intimate spaces and objects as an act of preservation, a fragile attempt to hold against time, against its ruthless cycles of life and its slow undoing, against losses shaped by invisible structures of history and power.

She lit my mouth without a word is a gaze that gazes back, asking: which memories are preserved, which are erased, and who decides what’s worth keeping?

"Jumjeo"

*Mum points over to her whilst staring at my bites.
As I scratch my arm hastily and anticipate the worst,
I edge towards her, thinking of the awful red paste
That will be applied to my youthful skin.
Grainy, thick, sticky,
Binding together through chewing and saliva.
I look up towards that familiar smile,
Red like the colour of coagulated blood.
I know the procedure,
Mix the betel and lime paste together,
Take the paste by the fingers,
And rub it against my bumpy skin.
My mother used to tell me that I'd watch attentively,
But every few seconds I would hear,
My aunts would laugh,
My brother and I loathed it and kept far away
Even after many bites.
But the funny thing was that this paste would work,
Over a few minutes the itchiness would subside
And we would go on with our play,
We wouldn't hug #10 for many years,
Until she stopped chewing.
The cure for bites would not live on.*



Cure for Bites, 2026
oil on canvas and engraved stainless steel frame
34.5 x 60 x 5 cm (framed)

"12/11/1998"

Mum points over to her whilst staring at my bites,
As I scratch my arm hastily and anticipate the worst.
I edge towards her, thinking of the awful red paste
That will be applied to my youthful skin.
Grainy, thick, sticky,
Binding together through chewing and saliva.
I look up towards that familiar smile,
Red like the colour of coagulated blood.
I know the procedure,
Mix the betel and lime paste together,
Take the paste by the fingers,
And rub it against my bumpy skin.
My mother used to tell me that I'd watch attentively,
But every second I would heave,
My aunts would laugh.
My brother and I loathed it and kept far away
Even after many bites.
But the funny thing was that this paste would work.
Over a few minutes the itchiness would subside
And we would go on with our play.
We wouldn't hug 9/9 for many years,
Until she stopped chewing.
The cure for bites would not live on.



I bloomed where cut, I burned where placed, 2026
oil on canvas and stainless steel corners
150 x 400 cm overall (2 panels - 150 x 200 cm each)









Last Light, 2026
oil on canvas and stainless steel frame
101 x 68 x 4 cm





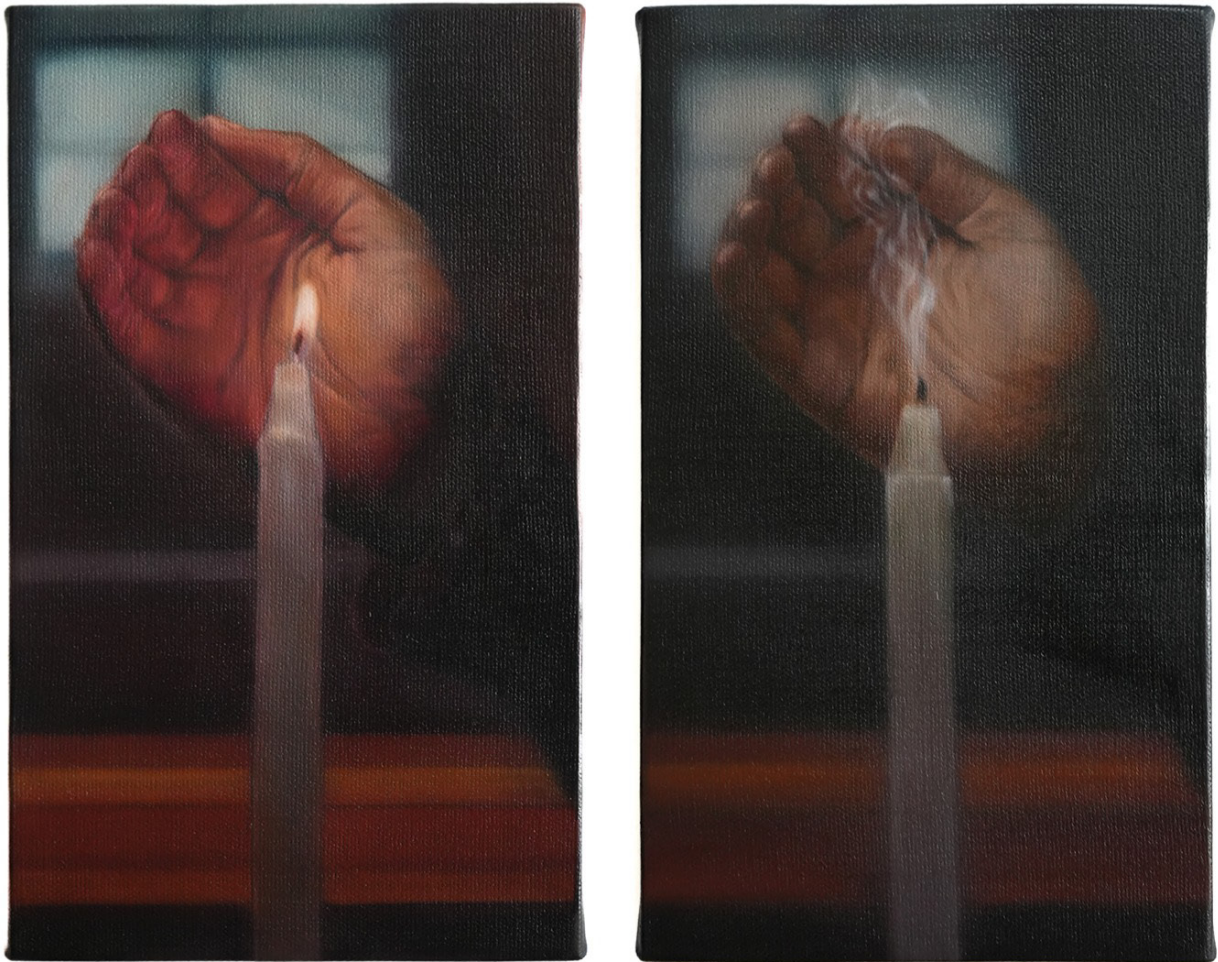
Burn Bright, 2026
oil on canvas and stainless steel frame
71 x 48 x 6 cm



A blade of honey between our shadows, 2026
oil on canvas and engraved stainless steel frame
37.5 x 28.8 x 3.5 cm (framed)



There's a trick with a knife I'm learning to do



Breathe In (Left) - Breathe Out (Right), 2026
oil on canvas and engraved stainless steel frame
27.8 x 17 x 4 cm each - 2 paintings framed
individually





Hush between flames, 2026
UV print on acrylic, metal chain, and
chandelier
45 x 27 x 27 cm (without the chain)





Hold your feet to the fire, 2026

stainless steel, metal, UV print on acrylic, betel-dyed-sand, and custom scent
30 x 126 x 126 cm





I learned fire at her knee, 2026
stainless steel, metal, resin, UV print on acrylic, and kinetic device
42 x 123 x 153 cm





ABOUT THE ARTIST

Natalie Sasi Organ (b.1999, Thailand) examines fragmented historiographies, creating artificial yet familiar scenes of composite memories and territories. Investigating the liminalities of her own biracial experience, Sasi Organ confronts the personal and cultural tensions of migration, displacement, and assimilation. Her practice, defined by continuous dualities and dichotomies, mirrors the binary thinking of cultural hybridity, also tracing the artist's personal search for living in the in-between. Forming a practice of recollection and recontextualization, Sasi Organ highlights the ephemeral and overlooked, challenging the subjective ambiguities of identity and memory.

Sasi Organ is the recipient of the Debra Porch Award (2026), presented by Creative Australia and UNSW Galleries.

EDUCATION

2017 - 2022 BA, Central Saint Martins, London, UK

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS / PRESENTATIONS

2026

She lit my mouth without a word, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

40 40 Home!, LISTE Art Fair Basel with ara contemporary, Basel, Switzerland (forthcoming)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025

What Binds Me to This Land, Ames Yavuz, Singapore

Calendar, Sangheeut, Seoul, South Korea

Para Site Benefit Auction, Para Site, Hong Kong

Art Jakarta, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

A Hundred Ways to Appetite, Appetite, Singapore

ruins and blueprints, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

Soft Forgetting, sangheeut, Seoul, South Korea

Affinities, Nova Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand

We Begin with Everything, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

2024

Art Jakarta, Nova Contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia

Access Bangkok Art Fair, Bangkok, Thailand

2023

from here to here, Nova Contemporary, Bangkok, Thailand

Hell: Arts of Asian Underworlds & Bernice Bing Open Call, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, US

This is the House that Jack Built, APT Gallery, London, UK

Between Trenches, Opening Gallery, London, UK

Friends and Family: Part II, Pi Artworks, London, UK

My Sleep Echoes into the Distant Land, Dek Doi, Chiang Dao, Thailand

2022

BLINDS SHIELD ME FROM WHAT I DISTRUST, Crypt Gallery, London, UK
The Filthy Fox Auction Club #1, Batsford Gallery, London, UK
The Lost and The Remained, The Koppel Project Hive, London, UK
Embodied Space: Reconnecting Perceptions, Kate Howe Studios, London, UK
Motherland, Central Saint Martins, London, UK
DE/RE CONSTRUCT, Safehouse, London, UK
Home I Away, curated by Backitchen, The Bhavan, London, UK
De-Oriented, curated by An.Other Asian, Ugly Duck, London, UK
Spring Interim Shows, affiliated with Central Saint Martins, London, UK

2019

other on Other's Territory, Central Saint Martins, London, UK
Wheels to Water, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London, UK

SELECTED AWARD AND PRIZES

2026 The Debra Porch Award, Australia, 2026
2022 Shortlisted for MullenLowe NOVA Awards 2022
2017 Sovereign Art Foundation Student Prize, Affordable Art Fair, Hong Kong

RESIDENCIES

2026 UNSW Galleries, Australia (forthcoming)

ABOUT THE WRITER

Vân Đỗ is a curator and writer whose practice examines the politics of site and historiography as performance in Southeast Asia. She approaches space as both medium and method, working across architecture, archives, fieldwork and performance to produce alternative readings of historical narratives, while building independent and experimental communities through curatorial research and regional engagement. Based between Thailand and Vietnam, she is a curator at deCentral (Bangkok and Chiang Mai) and a member of the Curatorial Board at Á Space (Hanoi). Her curatorial endeavours include Monsoon School (Chiang Mai/Chiang Rai, 2026); Phụ Lục Project (2025-ongoing); Hanoi Children's Palace (Hanoi/Shanghai, 2024/2026); *White Noise* (Nguyễn Art Foundation, HCMC, 2023); Vy Trinh: *Overvoltage* (Gia Lâm Train Factory, Hanoi, 2023); IN:ACT 2022 (Red River, Kassel/Hanoi, 2022); and Vietnam Curatorial Conference (Hanoi, 2024-ongoing). Her writing has appeared in post MoMA, Art & Market, NUS Press, and Movement Research Performance Journal, among others.



Jalan Tulodong Bawah I no 16
Senayan, South Jakarta 12190
Indonesia

www.aracontemporary.id
info@aracontemporary.id
[@aracontemporary](#)