

À la Recherche de Monsieur Tan, Free Theme submission for Prix IWPA

À la Recherche de Monsieur Tan depicts my search for a man who once lived in my neighbourhood in Marseille. Monsieur Tan came to France in the late 1970s to escape the Khmer Rouge and genocide. To be allowed to remain, he made himself out to be ten years younger. From then on, Monsieur Tan made his living as a mechanic out of an old backstreet garage. In his mid-seventies and still working, he would reflect about life as he was fixing Vespas, sat on a stool he had built himself. He lived his life quietly but with care and sincerity. One day, Monsieur Tan disappeared.

From going to Cambodia to meet Monsieur Tan's son and to connect a place to some of his memories, my search for him brings me to Thailand where remains of old refugee camps serve as a reminder of a harsh reality. À la Recherche de Monsieur Tan is only partly a physical search but also an effort to gain understanding and closure. Monsieur Tan's fate is kept somewhat ambiguous and moves from fact to fiction in an effort to respect his privacy. The full project includes Monsieur Tan's own words, his voice keeping authorship over his own story.

I work with analogue photography to explore ideas of place and identity. Brought up between two cultures, I am attuned to the duality of the strange and familiar, my work plays with the line between reality and fiction. After completing the highly competitive Magnum Photos internship program in 2018, I finished my postgraduate studies with distinction from University of the Arts London in 2019. In 2019, I won the Made in Arts London x Metro Imaging Mentorship and the Mercers' Arts Award.