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Dear reader,

Vietnamese fine arts heritage have long been renowned for its unique charm, beauty, cultural values and richness in Eastern spirit. Its austerity, however, was often overshadowed, thus remained virtually unknown by the outside world before the 20th century. Furthermore, centuries after centuries of civil and defensive wars resulted in the destruction and pillage of a formidable number of fine constructions and valuable artworks and artifacts. The majority of remains are either in ruins or in damaged condition.

With the intention to introduce readers, young and old, to the abundance of Vietnamese visual arts, a team of researchers and professionals, led by artist Pham Quang Vinh, has compiled this elaborate work entitled "Vietnamese Art". The first of its kind to appear in Vietnam, the book features lively images with detailed yet straightforward descriptions and cultural references, both in Vietnamese and English. Different sections of the book will acquaint readers with various art forms such as painting, printmaking, sculpture, pottery, architecture, etc., practiced and disseminated by ethnic groups in Vietnam throughout history.

Kim Dong Publishing House therefore proudly presents this book as a first orientation to anyone who feels interested and in need of learning about Vietnamese art in particular, and Vietnam in general. We believe you shall find in reading it the pleasure we had in making it. Your contribution to make the book a more complete work is always welcome with deepest gratitude.

Sincerely,
Kim Dong Publishing House.

Heaven on EARTH



Block with carvings used as plinth. Stone.
Phật Tích Temple (Tiên Du, Bắc Ninh Province).
1057. 72 x 72 x 17 cm.



Animal statue. Stone. Phật Tích Temple
(Tiên Du, Bắc Ninh Province). 1057.
L. 150 cm, H. 120 cm.

In 1010, the Lý dynasty moved its capital from Hoa Lư to Thăng Long. This era also saw the flourishing of temple construction.

Often viewed as the grandest of all, Buddhist temples of the Lý dynasty were built by the government since Buddhism was revered as the state religion. However, monuments from that time now remains only in ruins and as stone and terracotta architectural debris.

Big temples were generally built halfway up a mountain slope, comprising a three-or four-layer base and a tower tens of meters high. Sculpture and decorations made of stone played a prominent role.

Buddhist temples blends in perfectly with their surrounding nature, emitting the secured and serene look of a child resting in his mother's lap.

Yên Tử complex, comprised of ten Buddhist temples lying scattered from foot to peak of mount Yên Tử (Quảng Ninh Province), is the cradle of Trúc Lâm Zen sect founded by Emperor Trần Nhân Tông (reigned 1278-1293). Sovereigns of the Trần dynasty used to become ordained and practise Buddhism here after abdication.



Côn Sơn Temple (Chí Linh, Hải Dương Province).

Côn Sơn Temple (Hải Dương Province) was closely associated with the scholar Nguyễn Trãi (1380-1442) in his retirement.

*Côn Sơn's stream
 With its soft splatters
 Serves me as a musical instrument that whispers.
 Côn Sơn's rocks
 Washed by the rain and green with moss.
 I lie on them like on a mat of high gloss...*
 —Nguyễn Trãi.



Đục (Muddy) river wharf and Yến (Swallow) stream. Hương Temple complex (Hương Sơn, Mỹ Đức, Hà Nội).

*Yesterday to Hương I paid a visit
 Grass and plants looked dim in the mist...*
 —Nguyễn Nhược Pháp.

*Be it nobles or commoners,
 Whoever never once visits Hương Sơn
 Serenity would not discover!*
 —Vũ Phạm Hàm.

From ancient times to the present day, generations after generations of poets have lavished their praises on this beauty spot par excellence.