

The family of Mr. Nguyen Manh Khanh, known the world over as Quasar Khanh, is sad to announce his passing on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2016, at 10.30pm in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He passed away peacefully in the company of his family and caregivers, those who have taken care of him since his several strokes.

Khanh was born in Hanoi on November 25<sup>th</sup> 1934. As his father Nguyen Ngoc Chuc passed away before his birth, Khanh's mother Le Tan Khanh raised him with the support of Captain Lemosi, an officer of the Foreign Legion, who became his godfather. Khanh grew up in Hanoi, raised just like a little French boy by Captain Lemosi, who was in charge of the building of the Yunnan railway line, and then of the Hai Phong Harbour. His godfather took Khanh under his wings, and allowed him to unleash his creativity and genius. When the Second World War broke out, it was the beginning of long holidays for the young Khanh, who continued to study at home with a tutor. Under this tutelage, Khanh would complete a three-year program in just one trimester. During the Japanese Occupation of March 9<sup>th</sup> 1945, Captain Lemosi was captured by the Japanese and came back weakened by the captivity. The Captain repatriated to France after the war, and Khanh would only see him once many years later, in Carcassonne, France.

*An autobiographical novel co-written with his son Othello, entitled "Charmes Tonkinois," relates this not well-known period from 1939 to 1947 in Vietnam, from a very special child's perspective. The period covers the Second World War, the Japanese Occupation, the Independence of 1945 and the attempt of conquest by the French until 1947, and the bombing of the Harbour of Hai Phong.*

The young Khanh was sent to France in 1949 to study in Paris. When he was 15 years old, he obtained his baccalaureate with a special distinction at the Lycée Charlemagne, becoming one of the youngest bachelors of that graduating year.

He was admitted to do the oral exam after the written test at the Ecole Polytechnique, one of the best engineering schools in France, but decided to play a game of pool instead of attempting the oral examination; indeed he preferred the flourishing neighborhood of the Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (another famous engineering school) to the district of the Ecole Polytechnique.

Khanh graduated from Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées in 1959. His engineering career lasted only a few years, in which he participated in the development of the world's largest multiple-arch dam, the Manicouagan 5, for Hydro Quebec. Within the company, he was one of the first engineers to use a computer as well as inflatable structures for material strength calculation.

Shortly after, Khanh decided to stop his engineering career to follow his instincts and passion for invention and creation. He participated in painting exhibitions, and wrote a book, the *Daily Horror*, published by the Georges Fall Publishers. *Daily Horror* was a dark comedy comic book, whose style inspired the author of the Shadoks. That was his last experience in comics.

It was during this period and the many nights of Montparnasse, Paris, that Khanh would meet the woman who would become his wife, Emmanuelle Khanh. Emmanuelle, at the time was a model for Balenciaga and Givenchy. They married in 1957. The young couple flourished in the Latin Quarter, and inspired the creative world of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where they started their creative careers. It was here that they became idols that some still remember to this day. At this same time, Khanh with Emmanuelle and a group of friends, invented *Prêt-à-Porter*, what is now universally known as *ready-to-wear*. At that time, there was only haute couture, and the clothes were very expensive. Emmanuelle, who was a model for Givenchy, decided to create a collection with Khanh, along with a dressmaker from Givenchy, so as to democratize haute couture, and to make fashion more widely available to more people. During that same period, Khanh re-invented himself; from Nguyen Manh Khanh he became **Quasar Khanh**, and it was the Khanh name that Emmanuelle chose to be the name of their brand, *Emmanuelle Khanh*.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, Quasar realized the creations that made him famous: the first denim three-piece-suit, tailored for the businessman Maurice Bidermann, and the inflatable furniture from his Quasar Aerospace collection. His young assistant then was none other than Philippe Starck. Starck would go on to establish an internationally renowned career of his own, and who, many decades later would compare his mentor's genius to that of Leonardo da Vinci, in the foreword of the upcoming book "Quasar, a Genius of Design."

During this period he also created the Unipower Quasar, a transparent cubic car. This first urban minivan was a revolutionary vehicle of 2 x 2 x 2 meters complete with sliding windows. This car remains an iconic image of the 60's, which is the period during which one could see it wandering in the Latin Quarter, driven by its Vietnamese inventor in the company of his wife Emmanuelle and their children Othello and Atlantique - dressed in their last psychedelic collections.

Those were the 'golden years' of Quasar's popular success, a period during which he became the first Vietnamese of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to make his way into the encyclopedic dictionary Larousse, for his breathtaking designs.

In 1975 he bought a villa in Garches, west of Paris, at the top of the "colline des quatre vents," where a new period of creativity began to blossom. He expressed himself through film scripts, plays, literature- a period of reflection from this new home, where Quasar, now somewhat of a hermit, though he continued to host the largest and most extravagant soirees, explored projects, increasingly grandiose. He no longer came out to the people, the who's who of the creative world now came to him.

His passion for mechanics and design lead him to invent and draw new gears. His research on multiple hulls allowed vessels to go faster, thanks to the reduction of hydrological resistance, which then brought him to the study and preliminary design of surface-effect vehicles.

One of the prototypes of this vessel should still be, at the present time, in Cadaqués, in Spain.

The numerous following prototypes are between the South of France, in Saint-Laurent-du-Var, the United States in San Diego, and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), where he created the last three prototypes, among which the Quasar X1 and the Tsunami Rider now reside. These vessel prototypes were like the "bread crumbs" from Hansel and Gretel that lead him to Vietnam in 1995. The building of this last series of flying over-the-ocean-waves vessels is the very reason Quasar returned to Vietnam, at the invitation of the Ministry of Defense.

In addition to the Bambooclette, a bamboo bicycle, one of his big projects in HCMC, there is the building of the first bridge of Thu Thiem, as well as the development of Ho Chi Minh City's District 2, which was at that time a swamp. The spiral bridge, with a height of 47 meters, allowed vehicle access to cross the river, so that the biggest ferries could pass under the bridge and reach Thu Thiem, the future town center. Quasar then drafted an urban plan of a bridged city, that would leave nature intact on the ground, with its jungles and imaginary tigers.

And as the years went by, the projects became more and more ambitious, just like his two latest creations, a flying saucer, and an experiment that he wanted to conduct in space, that could have allowed to relativize the theory of Einstein. He wanted to prove that the speed of light is not constant, and that, in the equation  $E = mc^2$ , the speed of light was not a constant. These two projects brought him, for more than a year, to the United States, to the Pentagon, from where he came back and suffered his first stroke.

Michele de Albert, his partner in their company Quasar Khanh Internationale, had the great idea to bring with them, during their move between France and Vietnam, a series of prototypes of Quasar's creations from the 1980s in Garches. It was the "Nervure" collection, furniture made of cast aluminum that still flourishes today thanks to the tenacity of Michele. The "Nervure" collection continues to be made and sold from their workshop in HCMC today.

Together, Othello and Michele helped to conceive a reference book, entitled "Quasar, a Genius of Design," to be published by the Albin Michel Publishers at the end of this year.

Quasar Khanh, will be surely missed, not just by those who loved him, but also by his many students and followers the world over. His genius, inventions, and the creative force that is Quasar Khanh will forever live in the hearts of the engineering, design, and creative world that his life's work has inspired for many more years to come.