

**“TO HE” Mr. Tien (toy figurine), a modern brand on the road for the preservation
of the Vietnamese traditional craft**



“To He” is a famous traditional craft in Xuan La village (Phuong Duc commune, Phu Xuyen district, Hanoi city). It falls within plastic arts, forming mini animals, figurines etc. with glutinous rice powder for children. The traditional toy figurine craft in Xuan La village appeared long ago. Village residents steamed pounded glutinous rice powder and mixed it with natural colorants then crafted it into shapes of plants, flowers, and animals which are familiar with their lives and children. Toy figurine was then developed into a commodity product to sell in rural markets, serve children's needs (children can still eat after playing), and serve people's religious needs. For example, some spiritual objects or fruits are crafted to sell to people going to temples, pagodas, shrines, etc. Today, the toy figurine craft in Xuan La village is present throughout the country and even in foreign countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, China, Korea, and Japan, contributing to the promotion of a unique culture of Vietnam.

Brand “To He Ong Tien” (To He Mr Tien) is adopted and developed by Dang Van Tien who was awarded the title Artisan of the Vietnam Association of Craft Villages (VICRAFTS) in 2015, “Hanoi Artisan” in 2017 with many certificates of merit from the Minister of Labours, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Executive Committee of Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and many others merits at different levels for his contributions in preserving the traditional craft – ‘To He’ toy figurines.

Artisan Tien was born in a family that has been making toy figurines for many generations. His younger brother and his wife were also awarded the title Artisan for their skills in making ‘To He’ figurines. In addition to his talented skills in forming figurines imitating characters from comics and films and

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traditional symbols of Vietnam, he realized his initiative, i.e. creating his own formula of a special dough combining the characteristics of the traditional materials, durability and new color schemes. His products can be maintained quality and beautiful colors in 1-2 years instead of a couple of weeks while retaining eco-friendly ingredients and health safety to consumers.

Tien and his family can produce thousands of toy figurines per day with various shapes, colors, combinations and he also keeps innovating and adding new features for commercialization purposes such as pencils and plastic novelties attached with 'To He' figurines.

Products of Tien's family and Artisan Tien himself have been certified as 4-star OCOP standard and distributed throughout the country. Artisan Dang Van Tien was invited to participate in events, festivals, craft village fairs, children's fairs, trade associations in Hanoi and other provinces, and he was honor invited to crafting performances for the APEC Conference (2008) the 37th ASEAN Conference (2020) held in Vietnam. Tien has a dream to share the lovely products to build love in children and young people towards 'To He' in a hope of preserving and developing the craft in Vietnam and extending TO HE craft wider to the world.

- *By Hai Anh Nguyen, 14 March 2022 – IPAC IP., JSC (ipac.vn)-*