

# SAAG

SOUTHERN ALBERTA ART GALLERY  
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## MEDIA KIT

ARTIST: Sung Tieu  
EXHIBITION TITLE: *Civic Floor*  
EXHIBITION DATES: July 6, 2024 to September 28, 2024  
EXHIBITION OPENING: Saturday July 6, 7 PM

## EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION:

Sung Tieu's research-intensive practice investigates sites where human emotional and psychological experiences are shaped by state bureaucracy and surveillance. Her encompassing exhibitions of sculpture, video, sound, drawing, and text reference sites such as the penal system and immigration offices, places which alienate the individuals they intend to administer.

Entering *Civic Floor* is a cold and disorienting experience. Four black, abstract steel sculptures occupy the centre of the room. Each is a cross-section of a different prison design spanning from the mid-1800s to the 1990s. One might be inclined to read these designs as signs of progression and improvement. However, while their exterior shapes differ, Tieu emphasizes the similarities between these carceral systems. Their material, size, and presentation are uniform while their interiors are left abstract and enigmatic. Dry soil fills the interior void of each work, suggesting an abandoned ruin or the slow return of life.

On the walls are framed plaster reliefs of forms "I-589", "I-602", and "I-881" issued by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, pared down to reveal only the traces of their fillable boxes. These forms are used in the application of asylum or to appeal an applicant's impending deportation. Each plaster relief is accompanied by a metal plaque that measures, in square millimeters, the space each applicant is given to fill in the form. By drawing attention to the design and construction of bureaucracy, Tieu interrogates how humanity is stripped away within its processes and illustrates the subtle violence within seemingly neutral procedures.

Simultaneously, the artist references the history of minimalism and the grid in art and design. Particularly, how places of confinement and surveillance have adopted aesthetics of simplified, cold detachment. Noteworthy are the steel stools mounted on the gallery walls. These stools, typically found in public spaces such as airports and playgrounds, offer only temporary respite for their users. Their minimal, and even hostile design is quickly rejected by the body.

Curated by Adam Whitford, Associate Curator & Exhibitions Manager

**Sung Tieu** (b.1987, Hai Duong, Vietnam) lives and works in Berlin. She has held solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Nürnberg (2024); Kunst Museum Winterthur (2023); Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (2021); Nottingham Contemporary; and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2020). Her work was included in the 34th Bienal de São Paulo, the 14th Shanghai Biennale and has been exhibited at Museion, Bolzano; Kunsthalle Basel (2021); Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt; GAMEC Museum, Bergamo; and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2020) amongst others. Tieu is the recipient of the Schering Stiftung Award 2024, the Rubens Promotional Prize of the city of Siegen (2024), the Frieze Artist Award 2021 and the 2021 ars viva Prize. She also received the audience award for the 2021 Preis der Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

*Civic Floor* is produced in partnership with Luxembourg - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Oakville Galleries.

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#### LIST OF WORKS

##### STEEL SCULPTURES

Central to *Civic Floor* is a series of steel cross-sections of different generations of prison designs from the past 150 years. From the "Radial" prison of the mid 1800's to the "New Generation" prison of the 1990's, Tieu reveals how their interior spaces are organized for punishment and rehabilitation.

1. *New Generation*, steel sculpture, sound, mirror, 2022.
2. *Galleried Detail*, steel sculpture, sound, mirror, 2022.
3. *Courtyard Detail*, steel sculpture, sound, mirror, 2022.
4. *Radial Detail*, steel sculpture, sound, mirror, 2022.

##### WALL WORKS

Tieu's *Grid Form* series and its accompanying *Numeric Analysis* plaques refer to three specific forms used in assessing immigration eligibility in the United States. The accompanying plaques measure, in square millimetres, the amount of space an applicant's appeal is allowed to occupy.

5. *Grid, Form I-589*, series of 12 framed plaster works, 2022.  
*Numeric Analysis, Form I-589*, series of 12 meta plaques, 2022.

6. *Grid, Form I-602*, series of 10 framed plaster works, 2022.  
*Numeric Analysis, Form I-602*, series of 10 metal plaques, 2022.

7. *Grid, Form I-881*, series of 15 framed plaster works, 2022.  
*Numeric Analysis, Form I-881*, series of 15 metal plaques, 2022.

#### VIDEO WORK

In 2016, the Hotel Nacional de Cuba in Havana became the site of a reported sonic attack on overseas U.S. diplomatic officials. Dubbed “Havana Syndrome”, officials reported experiencing: memory loss, insomnia, headaches, and other concussion-like symptoms. Using 3D rendered drone and surveillance footage reconstructing the hotel, the film moves through the lobby and hallways of the hotel to a room occupied by the CIA where news reports of the syndrome play.

8. *Moving Target Shadow Detection*, 3D video simulation, colour and sound, 18 minutes 55 seconds, 2022. Courtesy of the artist.



Installation view of Sung Tieu's *Civic Floor* at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery  
Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin, July 6 – Sept. 28, 2024. All works courtesy of the artist, Emalin,  
London, Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg, and Trautwein Herleth, Berlin. Photo by Blaine  
Campbell.