

SPURS GALLERY

Nguyen Trinh Thi: 47 Days, Sound-Less

May 24-July 6, 2025

Gallery I | SPURS Gallery, D-06, 2 Jiuxianqiao RD.N, Chaoyang, Beijing

SPURS Gallery is pleased to announce *47 Days, Sound-Less*, a solo exhibition by Vietnamese artist Nguyen Trinh Thi, opening on May 24, 2025, at Gallery I.

Marking the artist's solo gallery debut in China, the exhibition takes its title from Nguyen's recent multi-channel moving image installation *47 Days, Sound-Less* (2024). Commissioned as part of the Moving Image Commission 2021—a trans-institutional initiative supported by Singapore Art Museum, Han Nefkens Foundation, Mori Art Museum, and M+—the work mobilizes an immersive interplay of sound, image, and spatial architecture to interrogate the entangled relationships between selfhood, nature, historiography, and the politics of narrative. Engaging with the thresholds of human perception and the contingencies of representation, this exhibition offers an experiential rupture within the broader framework of the “Beijing Art Week” .

The title *47 Days, Sound-Less* originates from a moment of serendipitous discovery. While engaging in research around the 1979 Hollywood film *Apocalypse Now*, Nguyen observed that villagers from Ifugao, in the northern Philippines, had been cast to stand in for Vietnamese Indigenous peoples. In a striking coincidence, the Jarai, an Indigenous group inhabiting Vietnam's Central Highlands, enact a parallel bovine sacrificial rite. Amid the immobility imposed by the pandemic, the artist turned to Google Maps, which algorithmically calculated that the walking distance between Jarai territories and Ifugao would require precisely 47 days. This arithmetical value not only serves as a poetic index of geographic displacement within colonial visual regimes but also gestures toward the mutable contours of memory, identity, and border-making.

In the darkened exhibition space, two projection screens placed diagonally across from each other form the core installation, accompanied by a mirror system suspended from the ceiling. This reflective surface refracts the projected light onto the surrounding walls, creating eight fragmented beams of light. Nguyen deliberately minimizes the dominance of the visual in favor of an intensified sonic experience: the chanting of Vietnam's Jarai people intertwines with jungle sound effects drawn from Hollywood war films and misaligned subtitles from science fiction texts. These subtitles cite Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Word for World Is Forest*, specifically passages addressing “violent self-defense as a means of establishing sovereignty” —further destabilize narrative authority, alluding to the precarious entanglement of language, violence, and power.

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Nguyen's installation operates through a deliberate orchestration of sensory disorientation: the alternation of searing luminosity and enveloping darkness, the puncturing of stillness by intrusive sonic residues. The suspended mirrored apparatus fractures the visual field, precluding any singular or stable apprehension of the image—mirroring the ontological impossibility of totalizing historical truth. Elements conventionally relegated to cinematic background noise—arboreal forms, meteorological phenomena, avian presences—are re-inscribed here as central agents within the perceptual field, displacing anthropocentric narrative hierarchies.

Through this sonic reconfiguration, the work articulates a poetics of listening that privileges absence and latency, foregrounding the urgency of attending to that which is rendered mute. As the film's terminal intertitle posits: "The wind has ceased, there was no sound. He listened." —a final gesture toward the politics of silence as a site of resistance and re-attunement.

The exhibition remains on view through July 6, 2025.

About the artist

Nguyen Trinh Thi is a Hanoi-based filmmaker and artist. Traversing boundaries between film and video art, installation and performance, her practice currently explores the power of sound and listening, and the multiple relations between image, sound, and space, with ongoing interests in history, memory, representation, ecology, and the unknown.

Nguyen's works have been shown at international festivals and exhibitions, including documenta, Artes Mundi, Lyon Biennale, the Asia Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art, Sydney Biennale, the Mori Art Museum, and Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial.