

TIAN CONTEMPORAIN



The Armory Show 2026

Booth | Kiosque: P14
(Presents)

A solo presentation by Phuong Nguyen

Javits Center
September 24–27, 2026

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TIAN is pleased to make its debut participation at The Armory Show with a solo showcase by Canadian-Vietnamese artist Phuong Nguyen. Featured in the Presents sector of the fair, Nguyen's new body of work grapples with the notion of *treacherous seduction* to navigate the intersections of ornament, objecthood, and cultural identity. Oscillating between portraiture and embellishment, her richly-layered mixed-media sculptures offer a meditative, subversive, and poignant statement to reimagine the racialized body beyond historical construction, reconsidering ornament as a site where power, ethnicity, gender, and subjectivity are negotiated.

Phuong Nguyen (1992-) holds a BFA from OCAD University (2014). Working in oil painting and sculpture, Nguyen examines themes of Ornamentalism, Orientalism, and the relationship between personhood and objecthood through reference to Orientalist scholarship and the history of Chinoiserie in relationship to South East Asian and Vietnamese femininity. Her recent exhibitions include: "She Died A Death By A Thousand Cuts" at the Art Gallery of Burlington (Burlington), "Re-wetting the void" at Ai Gallery London (UK), and "No Still Waters" at IRL Gallery, New York (USA). Nguyen currently works and lives in Toronto.

TIAN est heureuse de participer pour la première fois à la Armory Show avec une présentation individuelle de l'artiste canadienne-vietnamienne Phuong Nguyen. Figurant dans la section Presents de la foire, Nguyen explore dans ce nouveau corpus la notion de *séduction périlleuse* afin de se pencher sur les intersections entre l'ornement, le statut de l'objet, et l'identité culturelle. Oscillant entre portrait et élément décoratif, les sculptures richement stratifiées de Nguyen proposent une réflexion à la fois méditative, subversive et poignante qui ré-imagine le corps racialisé au-delà des constructions historiques, tout en reconsidérant l'ornement comme une avenue où se négocient les rapports de pouvoir, l'origine ethnique, le genre et la subjectivité.

Phuong Nguyen (née en 1992) est diplômée du baccalauréat en beaux-arts (BFA) de l'Université OCAD (2014). À travers la peinture à l'huile et la sculpture, Nguyen explore les notions de l'ornementalisme, l'orientalisme, ainsi que le rapport entre humains et objets en référence à la littérature orientaliste et à l'histoire de la chinoiserie en relation avec la féminité vietnamienne et sud-est asiatique. Parmi ses expositions récentes figurent *She Died A Death By A Thousand Cuts* à la Art Gallery of Burlington (Burlington), *Re-wetting the Void* à la Ai Gallery London (Royaume-Uni) et *No Still Waters* à la IRL Gallery, New York (États-Unis). Nguyen vit et travaille actuellement à Toronto.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (1992 -)

Planche X (left panel), 2025

Huile sur panneau, ficelle de cellulose, argile récupérée, châssis de toile, métal
Oil on panel, Cellulose Twine, Reclaimed Clay, Canvas stretchers, metal findings
24 x 18 x 2 po. | in.



PHUONG NGUYEN (1992 -)

Planche X (right panel), 2025

Huile sur panneau, ficelle de cellulose, argile récupérée, châssis de toile, métal
Oil on panel, Cellulose Twine, Reclaimed Clay, Canvas stretchers, metal findings
24 x 18 x 2 po. l in.



PHUONG NGUYEN (1992 -)

Planche XXI v2, 2025

Huile sur panneau, soie tissée à la main, bois et coquille d'ormeau.

oil on panel, hand woven silk, wood and abalone shell

12 x 11.5 x 3 po. | in.



PHUONG NGUYEN (1992 -)

Planche CXXI v2, 2025

Huile sur panneau, châssis de toile, ficelle de viscose, œillets, céramique

Oil on panel, canvas stretcher frame, viscose twine, eyelets, ceramic

45 x 36 x 3.5 po. | in.



PHUONG NGUYEN (1992-)

Planche CXXI, 2025

Huile sur panneau, carreaux de céramique, ruban, structure en bois sculptée à la main,
teinture pour bois | Oil on Panel, ceramic tiles, ribbon, hand-carved wood structure,
wood stain

13 x 12 x 2 po | in.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (1992-)

Planche CXXVI, 2025

Huile sur panneau, structure en bois sculptée à la main, teinture pour bois, pompons, apprêts | Oil on panel, handcarved wood structure, wood stain, tassels, findings

17 x 23 x 3 po | in.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (1992-)

Planche LXIV, 2024

Cadre en bois de balsa sculpté à la main, huile sur panneau, ficelle en plastique, anneaux de saut, perles trouvées | Hand carved Balsa Wood frame, oil on panel, plastic twine, jump rings, found beads
15 x 14 x 1.75 po | in.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (1992-)

Planche LXXIX (part 1), 2026

Huile sur panneau, bois, résine, raphia, quincaillerie | oil on panel, wood, resin, raffia,
hardware

18 x 11 x 6.75 po. | in.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (1992-)

Planche LXXIX (part 1), 2026

Huile sur panneau, bois, résine, raphia, quincaillerie | oil on panel, wood, resin, raffia,
hardware

18 x 11 x 6.75 po. | in.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (1992 -)

Planche XCIV v2, 2025

Huile sur panneau, châssis de toile, ficelle de viscose, œillets.

Oil on panel, canvas stretcher frame, viscose twine, eyelets

40 x 26 x 4 po. | in.

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PHUONG NGUYEN (née Toronto, 1992) détient un baccalauréat en beaux arts de l'Université OCAD (2014). Elle se spécialise dans la peinture à l'huile figurative et le tissage expérimental. Nguyen utilise ces médiums pour explorer les thèmes de *l'ornementalisme* et la relation entre l'exotisme et la violence en se référant à l'esthétique et à l'histoire de la chinoiserie et de la féminité du Sud-Est asiatique/vietnamienne. Parmi ses expositions récentes figurent: "She Died A Death By A Thousand Cuts" à la Art Gallery of Burlington (Burlington), "Re-wetting the void" à la Ai Gallery de Londres (Angleterre), et "No Still Waters" à la IRL Gallery, New York (États-Unis). Elle vit et travaille à Toronto.

PHUONG NGUYEN (born Toronto, 1992) holds a BFA from OCAD University (2014). Working in representational oil painting and experimental weaving, she explores themes of Ornamentalism and the relationship between exoticism and violence by referencing the aesthetics and the history of Chinoiserie and South East Asian/ Vietnamese femininity. Recent exhibitions include: "She Died A Death By A Thousand Cuts" at the Art Gallery of Burlington (Burlington), "Re-wetting the void" at Ai Gallery London (UK), and "No Still Waters" at IRL Gallery, New York (USA). She currently works and lives in Toronto.

ÉDUCATION | EDUCATION

2014 Bachelor of Fine Art at OCAD U

EXPOSITIONS SOLOS ET COLLECTIVES | SOLO & GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Select)

2026 "No Still Waters", IRL Gallery, New York City USA (solo)
"She Died A Death By A Thousand Cuts" Art Gallery of Burlington, Burlington ON Canada (solo)
"Porcelain Like Flesh And Skin, Skin And Flesh like Porcelain" Oxygen Art Centre, Nelson BC Canada (solo)
"Re-wetting the void", Ai Gallery, London UK
"thầm thì — murmur :The 3rd year Anniversary Exhibition", Vietnamese Art Collection, Hanoi Vietnam
"Fundraiser In support of the Ghassan Abu Sittah Children's Fund", Capsules Studio, Toronto Canada

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"on earthing and petrichor", Capsules Studio, Toronto Canada

2025 "She Is An Object Of Beauty" Johnson Lowe Gallery, Atlanta USA (solo)
"Interwoven Identities", Asian Arts and Culture Trust, Toronto Canada
"A Familiar Distance", Tian Contemporain, Montreal Canada
"Pattern and Motif", Design TO Festival @ Gladstone Hotel, Toronto Canada

2024 "December Group Show", Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto Canada
"Early Bird Gets the Worm" Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Canada
"Cruel to be Kind" Pictura @ Stewart Hall Art Gallery, Montreal Canada

2023 "The Wind Returns To The Soil" TAP Artspace, Montreal Canada
"Arrival", Duran Mashaal Gallery, Montreal Canada

2022 "Stat. Sig.", TAP Artspace, Montreal Canada
"Fibreworks 2022", Art Galleries of Cambridge, Cambridge Canada
Erring at King George, Public Energy, Peterborough ON
"Luminous Bodies", Curated by TAP Artspace at Cache Studio and Gallery, Montreal Canada

2020 "Quarantine Qapsule", Myseum of Toronto and Tea Base, online.

2019 "Chill Life: Contemporary Still Life" the White House, Toronto Canada
"Building Power: A Benefit for VOCAL-NY and the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights", Planthouse Gallery, New York USA

2018 "Ideation" Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg USA

2016 "OH SO T.O." YTB Gallery @ Katzman Contemporary, Toronto Canada
"Impossible Possession" Gladstone Hotel, Toronto Canada
"In the Study of Figure" Red Gate Arts Society, Vancouver Canada

2015 "THOUGHTBAGS (Or, Every Image is a Gushing Sack of Ideas)" YTB Gallery, Toronto Canada

2015 "I DO NOT KNOW WHERE THIS BELONGS" Project Gallery (now Patel Brown Gallery), Toronto Canada

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"Cognitive Release" Yellow House Gallery, Toronto Canada

2014 "Experiencing Perspectives 2014-2015 Art Exhibition", Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, Mississauga Canada
"The Immaculate Selfie" The Black Cat & Project Gallery (now Patel Brown Gallery), Toronto Canada
"Progression", Scarborough Civic Centre. Toronto Canada
"Hazelton Lanes Arts Festival" juried exhibition. Toronto Canada

PRIX ET DISTINCTIONS | GRANTS + AWARDS

2024 CIBC C2 Art Program 2024 finalist
2023 Toronto Arts Council, Visual Artists Program: Creation
2023 Canada Council for the Arts, Explore and Create: Professional Development for Artists
2023 Ontario Arts Council, Visual Artist Creation Grant
2022 Toronto Arts Council, Visual Artists Program: Creation

RÉSIDENCES | RESIDENCIES

2024 Gladstone House Toronto, Canada.
2013 Gibraltar Point, Artscape Toronto Island, Toronto, Canada.

COLLECTIONS

TD Art Collection
Private Collections

BIBLIOGRAPHIE | BIBLIOGRAPHY

2026 ["Quietude Amidst the Noise: Finding Stillness in "Re-wetting the Void" at ai., London"](#), Artfuse
["Phuong Nguyen: No Still Waters"](#), Maisie Molot, Brooklyn Rail

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"How contemporary artists are turning the frame into a medium of its own" Odessa Paloma Parker, The Globe and Mail

2025 "She is an Object of Beauty' confronts Orientalism and fetishization, Jhazzmyn Joiner, ArtsATL

2025 'A Familiar Distance - Review' by Sherry Chunqing Liu, Esse, Septembre 2025. Issue: decay.

2021 "It Didn't Have To Be This Way" Chatelaine Magazine, January 2021 issue.

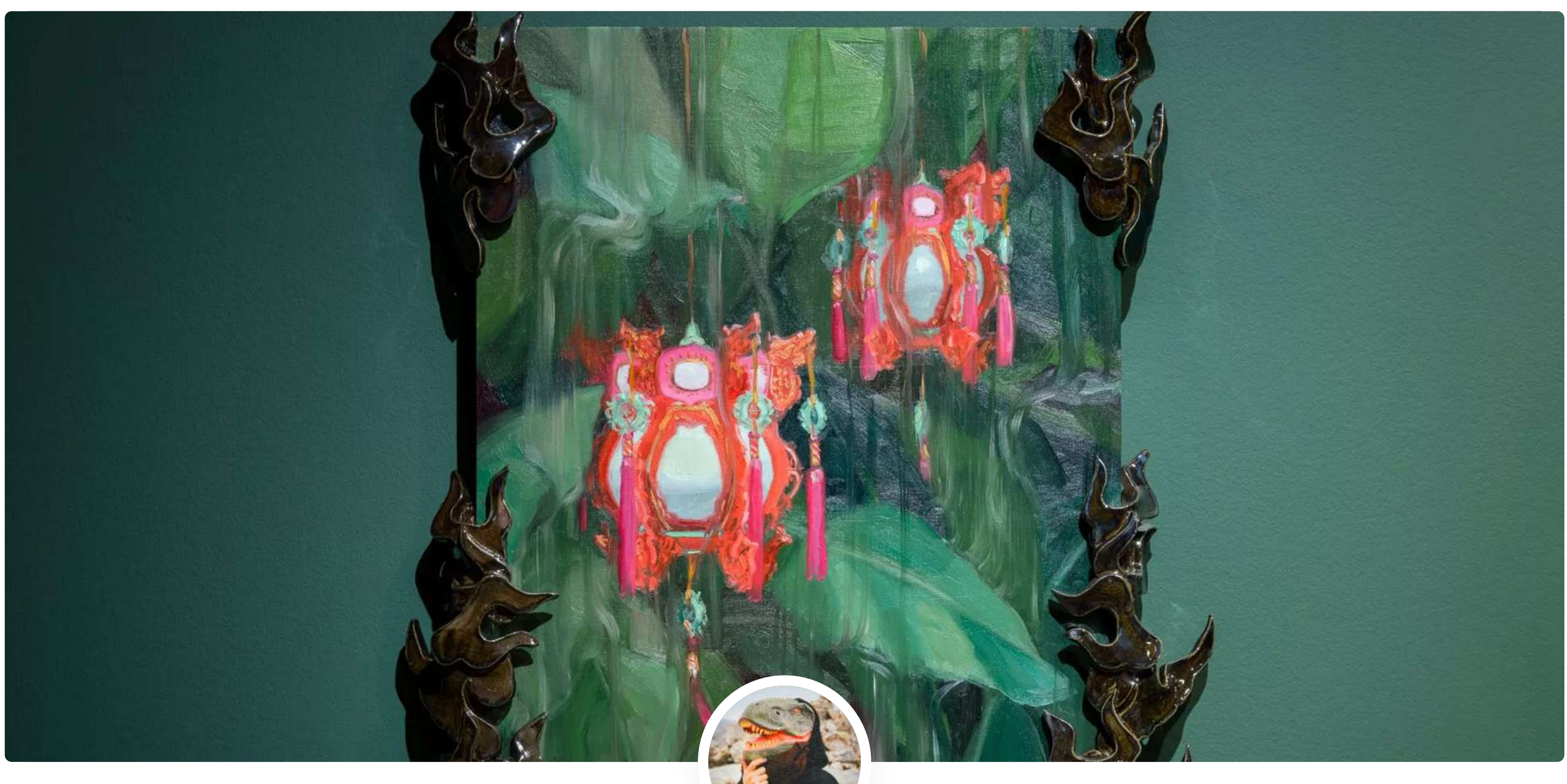
2020 "Envisage" The Canadian Art Therapy Association Magazine Vol. 3 Issue 2.

2020 "Hastings & Pain': Artist shares striking paintings of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside"

2017 "Spring 2017" the Maynard

2014 "Experiencing Perspectives 2014-2015 Art Exhibition" Mercedes-Benz Financial Services

2014 ARTORONTO "The Immaculate Selfie at the Black Cat Gallery



Written by Elliott Brooks in Dimensions

ART & DESIGN

CREATIVE

Phuong Nguyen Exhibition — A Thousand Cuts at the Art Gallery of Burlington



A Language of Ornament and Power

Some visual languages arrive wrapped in beauty, only revealing their weight over time. The ornamental world of chinoiserie is one of them. In [Phuong Nguyen](#)'s exhibition, delicate patterns and carefully painted figures suggest refinement, but beneath that surface lies a more complicated history shaped by translation, distortion, and control.

In *she died a death by a thousand cuts*, on view [at the Art Gallery of Burlington](#) through May 17, 2026, Toronto-based artist Phuong Nguyen takes that visual language apart and reassembles it into something far more unsettled. The exhibition becomes a space where beauty and violence are no longer separable, and where objects begin to speak.



Phuong Nguyen. La Chauve Souris



Phuong Nguyen. Planche CXCV

Reworking the Archive in Phuong Nguyen's Exhibition

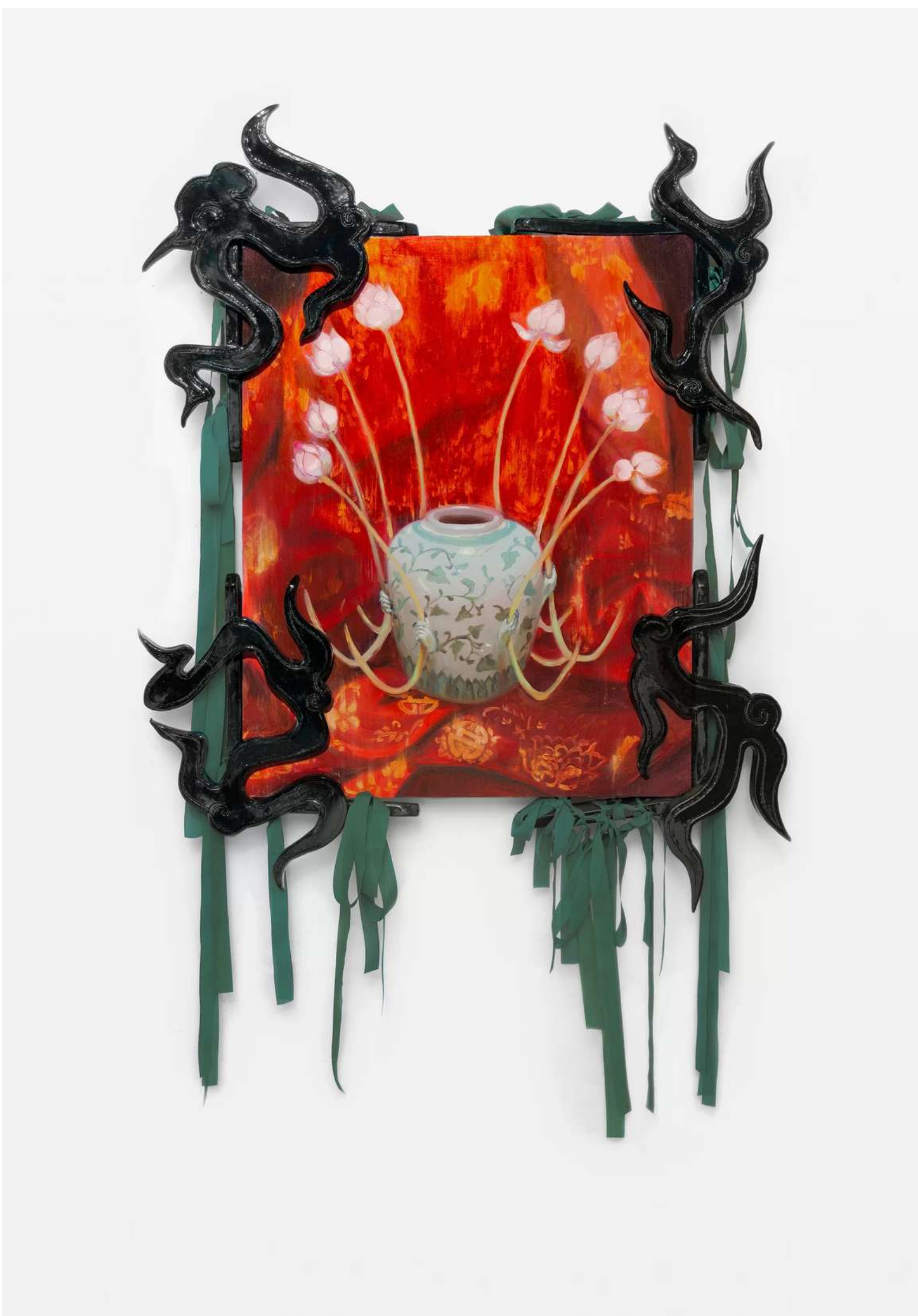
Nguyen, who works across oil painting, experimental weaving, and ceramics, builds her practice around the tension between ornament and identity. Rather than rejecting these traditions outright, she engages them directly, examining how these aesthetics have been shaped through a Western, colonial gaze.

At the center of Phuong Nguyen's exhibition is a dialogue with *L'Art à Hué*, a 1919 French colonial publication that documented Vietnamese art and architecture through a European lens. Rather than simply referencing it, Nguyen actively reworks its imagery, transforming archival patterns into drawings, carvings, and paintings that resist the fixed narratives the book once imposed.

Objects That Refuse to Stay Still

That resistance becomes physical in the works themselves. Nguyen's paintings extend beyond the canvas into elaborate frames made of carved wood, weaving, ceramics, and cascading decorative elements. These structures don't just support the image—they become part of it, shifting each piece closer to an object than a traditional painting.

Within these compositions, forms begin to change. Ceramic vessels sprout hands, hair spills from lids, and incense smoke drifts across surfaces, softening boundaries. Figures appear and dissolve at once, existing in a space that feels neither fully human nor entirely object—a state Nguyen describes as "perihuman."



Phuong Nguyen. Planche LXX



Phuong Nguyen. Planche XCIV v2

Material, Memory, and Transformation

Material plays a crucial role in this transformation. At the same time, found ceramics, thrifted fabrics, and everyday elements like plastic twine introduce lived experience into the work, blurring distinctions between precious and disposable while carrying histories of domestic life, migration, and cultural exchange.

The inclusion of historic chinoiserie objects alongside Nguyen's works deepens that dialogue. These pieces are no longer distant references; they become active participants, revealing the layered histories of appropriation, displacement, and reinterpretation that the exhibition seeks to confront.

A Tender Form of Resistance

Despite the weight of its themes, the exhibition remains unexpectedly tender. Even so, through careful material choices and subtle gestures, Nguyen suggests that while repair may not restore what was lost, it can open space for transformation. For those interested in experiencing this layered approach firsthand, *she died a death by a thousand cuts* is on view at the Art Gallery of Burlington through May 17, 2026, with more details available on the gallery's [official exhibition page](#).

Photo at the top of the page by Darren Rigo.



Phuong Nguyen: "she died a death by a thousand cuts", Art Gallery of Burlington. 2026. Photo Credit: Darren Rigo

PHUONG NGUYEN CHALLENGES COLONIAL NARRATIVES AT ART GALLERY OF BURLINGTON

PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 28, 2026 BY GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



From Nguyen’s “Planche LXX,” 2025. Photo: AGB website, Greg McCarthy

By Maisha Hasan, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Some of the most remarkable works in the Western world have been inspired by the East — though “inspired” may be too generous. In many cases, motifs and styles were taken, distorted, and repackaged under the sweep of 19th-century colonialism.

Toronto-based artist Phuong Nguyen challenges that colonial narrative head-on.

In her exhibition, “*she died a death by a thousand cuts...*” on view now at the Art Gallery of Burlington until May 17, 2026, Nguyen reclaims the ornate language of so-called “chinoiserie” and transforms it into work that interrogates colonialism and questions ownership, objectification, and cultural memory.

Nguyen works primarily in oil painting and experimental weaving, often exploring themes of orientalism and her own connection to and understanding of it. During her recent residency at the Art Gallery of Burlington’s pottery studios, she expanded her practice into clay, creating sculptural components to frame her paintings. The result is a layered exhibition with an otherworldly quality, where painting, weaving, and ceramics intertwine as a quiet but deliberate act of resistance.

Nguyen speaks here about her AGB exhibition, her work, and the themes she explores. *Interview has been edited for clarity.*

What first drew you to choiserie as a starting point?

I first got exposed to it while working at Casa Loma. It was made during a time when chinoiserie was a trending style. They have a room called the Chinese Room that’s dedicated to a chinoiserie design sensibility. What drew me to it was this interesting cultural filtering system of aesthetics and design.

I was born and raised in Toronto, and I find myself carrying the same kind of “filtering system.” I have a secondhand understanding of what it means to be Southeast Asian or Vietnamese. Not only is it a secondhand understanding, but it’s also a very Western perspective. Chinoiserie was an entry point for me because I felt very similar to it.

When I was younger, I had a limited understanding of my roots and heritage, which left a lot of blanks to be filled in. I (gravitated toward a) fantasy of the East, and what it could be. Now I’ve been to Asia and have a different understanding, (but) I still come with this Western perspective that I try to decentralize.

How do you rework a style with such a loaded history into something critical or subversive?

I’ve been negotiating these ideas about what beauty means under a Western and colonial gaze and (specifically) towards Asian and Southeast Asian femininity.

Under colonialism, beauty can sometimes be perceived as an invitation to ownership and violence instead of something to be shared and celebrated. We can see this fetishization of Asian female bodies, this Western association with submissiveness, softness, and fragility — and how exoticism has resulted in violence against actual Southeast Asian women. That’s something that I would like to imply in my work, but not overtly. I am really quite interested in that.

Your pieces feature sprouting hands, blurred bodies, and drifting incense smoke. How did those visual elements emerge?

This has been a fascination for me for a long time. There’s a written work called Ornamentalism by Anne Cheng — I reference it a lot in my work. She talks about how an Asian female body, when objectified, can turn into this “object-person,” this in-betweenness. She calls it a “perihuman,” like an object that is human, but also object.

Certain objects, like vessels, ceramics, brocade and silk, evoke humanness because of their association with Asian female bodies. That undead-dead kind of human thing has been an interest of mine for a while. It is almost Frankenstein-esque. When I paint these objects, they seem alive, like they have a life or a history of their own. The hands appeared on their own one day, and they animate the object in a way.

I’m also interested in incense specifically. Traditionally, at least in a Vietnamese context, incense is a way to communicate with those who have passed on; to pray for them, to send them our thoughts. I thought it was an interesting bridge that could communicate with these perihuman objects, with these humans that are objects.

Can you explain the significance of L’Art à Hué (a French colonial-era publication documenting Vietnamese art and architecture) and why it appears so centrally in your work?

In *Orientalism* by Edward Said, he talks about the idea of colonialism as an active role that’s imposed on a society, while also being an academic branch as well. Back then, there were these “Orientalist scholars,” and it was their job to study what they perceived as “East” at the time. The purpose of these academics was, whether they knew it or not, to justify the acts of colonialism through their academic writing and a scholarly lens.

Art of Hue is one of those Orientalist pieces where they justify the ongoing colonialism of Southeast Asia, and Vietnam specifically. The frames around (my) paintings are meant, like that book, to “preserve” Vietnamese art, while also tearing it apart under a European lens.

The text talks about how Vietnamese artists are impotent and unable to give life to their artwork, which I find interesting because I play with (that theme) in my work. There are chapters on (motifs of) flowers, dragons, turtles, and bats in a very European way that rips them from their original context and organizes them by these categories that don’t fully embrace the complexities or the symbolism of the original work. The names of my pieces directly reference the printing plate in that book.

Beyond those references, what did material sourcing look like for this exhibition?

I normally start off with the painting; I was trained as a painter, and it is a Western medium.

In some of the pieces, I use this plastic twine that can be found in Chinatown; it’s a twine that’s found in a lot of immigrant households. My parents use it to wrap banana leaves around sticky rice to steam and cook. It’s also a symbol of migration and movement: you can see it at an airport — when travelling to certain places, (people) bring a giant cardboard box of things to bring overseas. It’s usually wrapped in this twine and layers of duct tape, and I have a lot of affection for it (the material).

When I was doing the weavings, I realized I needed something to hold them. That is when the wooden carvings came into the picture. I carved those myself, referencing the book (*L’Art à Hué*). The ceramics were a result of my residency at the Art Gallery of Burlington; I was invited to be a part of a residency in their ceramic studios.

What did ceramics allow you to do that other mediums couldn’t?

It was a lot of exploring. I love learning how to work with different materials, and the ceramics evoked the subject of the painting. I liked that there was a painting of ceramics, and there are actual ceramics around it as well. In an Asian context, it’s very female-coded.

This collection speaks to repair and colonialism. What does “repair” mean within your practice?

The idea of repair — I don’t know if that’s fully achievable.

I think about the history of repair, but more so the idea of change and moving forward. My work always gets compared to kintsugi, the Japanese craft where they mend pieces with gold. But I’m not really interested in repairing things back to how they used to be, more so expanding the idea of what it *could* be.

Phuong Nguyen’s “she died a death by a thousand cuts” is on view at the Art Gallery of Burlington until May 17, 2026. More information can be found on the gallery’s [website](#).

BURLINGTON

0°

mostly cloudy

7:08 am☀7:41 pm EDT

feels like: -4°c

wind: 16km/h wnw

humidity: 51%

pressure: 1034.2mbar

uv index: 3

sun

10°c / 3°c

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17°c / 10°c

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18°c / 2°c

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Arts

First impressions from the floor at Canada’s biggest art fair

The 2025 edition of Art Toronto is on through Sunday. According to artists, these works demand your attention

 Leah Collins · CBC Arts · Posted: Oct 24, 2025 4:57 PM EDT | Last Updated: October 24, 2025



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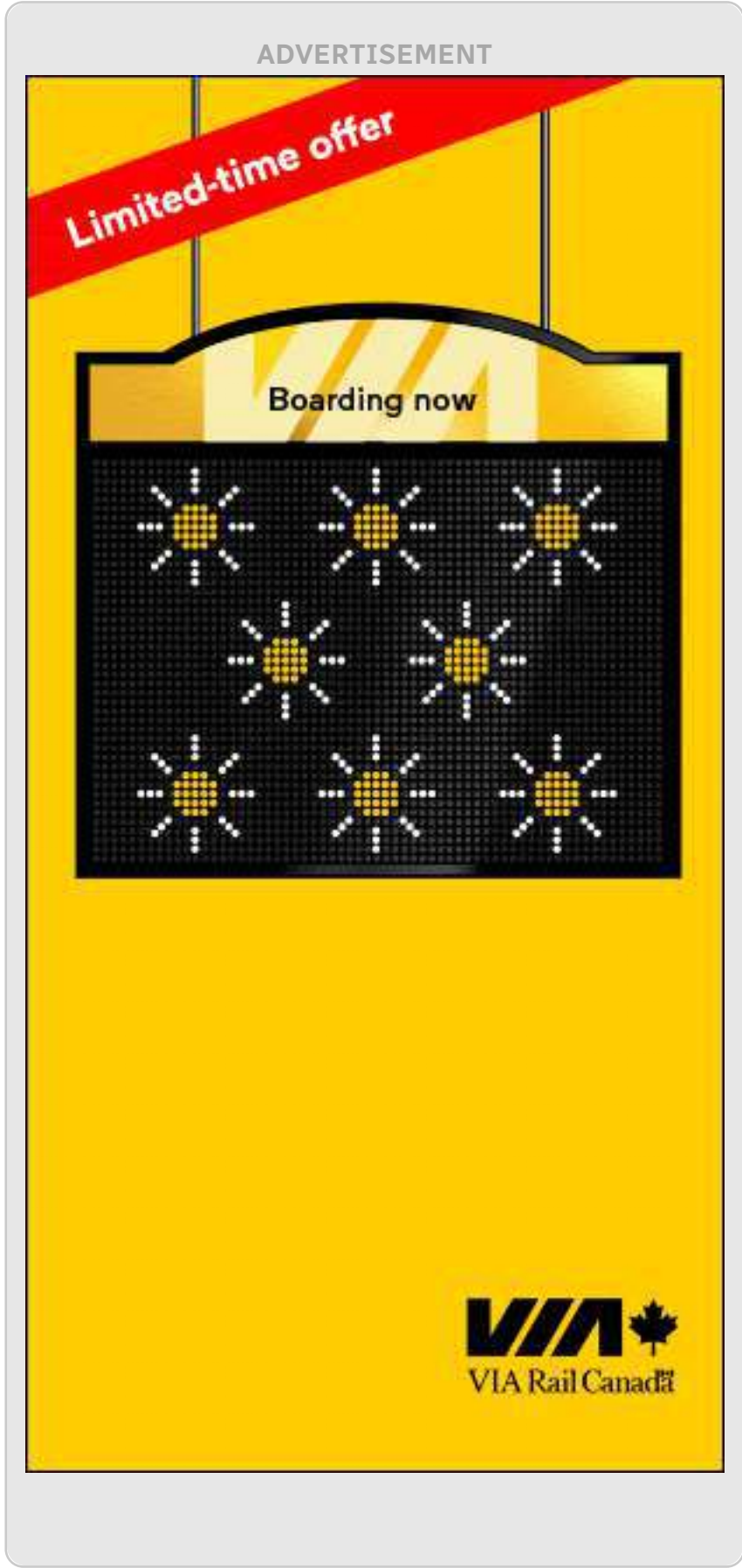
Visitors attend the opening night of Art Toronto 2025 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. (Ryan Emberley)



The 2025 edition of [Art Toronto](#) launched Thursday, Oct. 24, and the annual event brings more than 100 galleries from around the country and beyond to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. There’s no bigger art fair in this country, and for visiting artists like [Karen Tam](#) from Montreal, the hot topic of the weekend is always the same. Everyone wants to know: Oh, did you see *this* work?

Experiencing everything on offer can feel impossible, especially over the course of a single cocktail party, and though Tam strives to be a completist, there’s often something left to discover. “I probably missed some things,” says Tam Friday morning. The night before, she was attending the Art Toronto kick-off — where she came away with some powerful first impressions. The same can be said for other visitors to the fair. Here are a few of the highlights we heard about from artists in attendance.

Nadia Myre at Macaulay + Co. and Blouin Division Gallery





Jason Lujan. Kyoraku Divination Jackpot, 2025. (Jason Lujan/MKG 127)

Medhat’s a fan of Toronto artist [Jason Lujan](#), so he went looking for his newest Pachinko Playfield works at [MKG 127](#). “He finds these intersections within culture: Japanese culture, his own Indigenous culture, pop culture,” says Medhat. “He does it in interesting ways that I haven’t seen anyone else really do.”

Phuong Nguyen SSEW Project and Tian Contemporain



Phuong Nguyen. Planche CXXVI, 2025. (Phuong Nguyen/Tian Contemporary; Photo: Jean-Michael Seminaro)

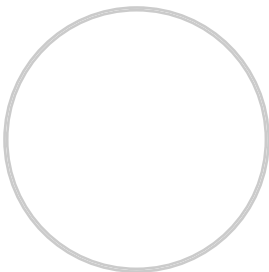
Tam and Kaur were both won over by the work of [Phuong Nguyen](#), a Toronto artist who’s showing at two booths: [SSEW Project](#) and [Tian Contemporain](#). Her lush paintings are often framed with hand-carved scenes and embellished with colourful weaving. Kaur finds the contrast of materials exciting. “The hand-carved quality of the wood softens the visual impact,” she says.

Tam felt a kinship between her work and Nguyen’s. “I guess I kind of relate [to it] because there’s themes of ornamentalism, exoticism and Chinoiserie” — elements which appear in her work, as well.

“That’s the fun thing about the fair: discovering artists you might not have come across before,” says Tam. And with Nguyen’s work, she was left wanting more in the best way possible. “I want to see where she’s going to go.”

Art Toronto 2025 is at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre through Sunday, Oct. 26.
www.arttoronto.ca.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



[Leah Collins](#)

Senior Writer

Since 2015, Leah Collins has been senior writer at CBC Arts, covering Canadian visual art and digital culture in addition to producing CBC Arts’ weekly newsletter (Hi, Art!), which was nominated for a Digital Publishing Award in 2021. A graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University’s journalism school (formerly Ryerson), Leah covered music and celebrity for Postmedia before arriving at CBC.

Phuong Nguyen at Tap Art Space

February 16, 2023

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Phuong Nguyen uses imagery of broken ceramics in her paintings and mixed-media pieces. These elements serve as a time-traveling vehicle for transporting personal and familial traumas. Born in so-called Canada as a second-generation Vietnamese refugee, Nguyen’s work is deeply shaped by the themes of trauma, healing, and questioning concepts of self-tokenism. In her most recent body of work, imagery of hands and faces reflected in ceramics have started to appear alongside symbols of protection and longevity. Through her art, Nguyen explores the complexities of healing, and the idea that “Sometimes we never heal from our pain- and we never return to the version of ourselves that had existed before trauma. Sometimes we don’t ‘heal’, we only change”.

Shattering the Fantasy of the Self

By Amelia Wong-Mersereau

“The use of the adjective ‘diasporic’ [...],” write art historians Alice Ming Wai Jim and Alexandra Chang, citing cultural anthropologist Lok C. D. Siu, “emphasizes ‘the processual nature of producing diasporic subjectivities.’”^[1] Since the first issue of the *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas* journal was published in 2015, exhibitions, events, and scholarship highlighting Asian diasporic artists have continued to grow steadily. That growth, which began several decades prior, has been slow and part of an ongoing tokenization by museums and galleries of ethnically diverse artists. The city of Vancouver only recently saw the opening of the country’s first Chinese Canadian Museum at a temporary location in 2020, and besides perhaps the odd Sobey Art Award winner, it is far too uncommon to see an Asian diasporic artist offered a major solo exhibition by Canada’s larger-scale institutions.

This discouraging context imbues exhibitions like Phuong Nguyen’s *The Wind Returns To The Soil* with importance. Since their move back to Montreal, TAP Art Space now represents Nguyen along with three other emerging artists. The gallery aims to support and grow alongside their artists, as well as their other collaborators. My approach in writing about this exhibition considers that processual nature that Jim and Chang so intentionally underscore in their use of the adjective diasporic. Through embroidery, painting, weaving, and a combination of the latter two to create mixed media sculptures, Nguyen articulates the complex subjectivity of a second-generation Vietnamese, born and raised in Toronto, Canada.

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