

**BLANTON
MUSEUM 卐 ART**

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The Blanton Museum of Art Debuts New Work by Tammy Nguyen

The acclaimed multidisciplinary artist transforms literature, Cold War histories, and ecological imagery into richly layered paintings, prints, and artist books.



AUSTIN, TX — December 9, 2025 — The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas presents ***Contemporary Project 16: Tammy Nguyen***, a new exhibition by artist **Tammy Nguyen** (b. 1984, San Francisco, CA), celebrated for her richly layered paintings, prints, and artist books. On view from **January 17, 2025 through September 6, 2026**, the exhibition is the sixteenth Contemporary Project in the museum's series dedicated to showcasing new and recent works of contemporary art. Organized by Hannah Klemm—Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Blanton Museum of Art—the exhibition presents new work that extends Nguyen's study

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of how humanity's intertwined quests for knowledge, power, and ambition are reflected both in the natural world and across time.

Nguyen's multidisciplinary practice spans painting, drawing, printmaking, and publishing, often filtered through the lens of geopolitics, literature, and ecology. Through her imprint, Passenger Pigeon Press, she creates artist books that function as inspiration for her painting practice. For the Blanton, Nguyen has created a suite of new paintings and prints, shown alongside a work in the Blanton's collection, Ambroise Vollard's *Réincarnations du Père Ubu* (*The Reincarnations of Father Ubu*) (1932), and Nguyen's new artist book.

The works are created in layers, starting on a wood panels, then built up with paint, drawing, rubber stamping, and metal leaf resulting in multidimensional compositions that bring together global histories and literary references. The techniques recall Vietnamese lacquer painting, which Nguyen studied in Vietnam through a Fulbright fellowship.

"Tammy Nguyen's work exemplifies how contemporary art can illuminate the complexities of our shared histories," said **Simone Wicha, Director of the Blanton Museum of Art**. "Her paintings invite us to see connections between science and spirituality, nature and technology, the past and the present—all themes that resonate deeply with the Blanton's mission to foster new understandings through art."

For this exhibition, Nguyen drew inspiration from a wide range of sources, including Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, whose meditations on human progress and ambiguity echo throughout. Other figures such as King Lear, Icarus—the mythic icon of ambition—and scientists from the Cold War era emerge amid dense vegetation alive with elephants, birds, snakes, and moths. In her hands, the relationship between humans and nature becomes a paradox—at once a path toward enlightenment and a mirror of our capacity for destruction.

"Tammy Nguyen's work is visually lush and intellectually layered, drawing connections between myth, literature, science, and the natural world," said **Hannah Klemm, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Blanton Museum of Art**. "Her new paintings and prints are rooted in a range of historical and literary references, but feel acutely relevant today, asking how progress and destruction, madness and reason can exist side by side."

In her latest works, the various figures are situated in ambiguous, allegorical scenes surrounded by plants known to absorb radiation—such as wheat, sunflowers, and butterflies. Sunlight, depicted with vivid yellow hues, weaves through Nguyen's layers of foliage as a metaphor for man's ambition. Motifs of flight also recur throughout the exhibition, embodying the enduring human desire to transcend limits—even as that longing carries the risk of self-destruction.

Among the most striking works in the exhibition is a portrait of Nguyet Anh Duong, a Vietnamese refugee who fled Saigon in 1975 and went on to become a U.S. Navy weapons scientist known as the "Bomb Lady." Duong led the team that developed the BLU-118/B, a laser-guided "bunker buster" used in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks—an invention that, as she has said,

was motivated by gratitude to the country that took her in. Nguyen transforms this remarkable biography into an allegory of paradox and progress: a woman who escaped the devastation of war dedicating her life to perfecting its technologies. By connecting Duong's story to both American and Vietnamese history, Nguyen meditates on how displacement and scientific innovation continue to shape modern understandings of power, protection, and belonging.

Alongside Nguyen's new work, the artist has selected 13 works on paper from the Blanton's collection to be displayed in adjacent galleries, ranging from 19th-century American landscapes to mid-20th-century photography. Rotated halfway through the exhibition, these selections trace shared artistic and philosophical concerns across centuries, highlighting how artists have long grappled with the power and fragility of nature.

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PRESS IMAGES

Available [here](#).

About the Blanton Museum of Art:

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with more than 22,000 objects. Recognized as the home of Ellsworth Kelly's *Austin*, its major collecting areas are modern and contemporary U.S. and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

About Tammy Nguyen:

Tammy Nguyen (b. 1984) was born and raised in San Francisco. She earned a B.F.A. from Cooper Union in 2007 and an M.F.A. from Yale University in 2013. In 2023, she was named a Guggenheim Fellow. Her other honors include the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts (California, 2024); the NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship in Painting (New York, 2021); and the Scholarship for Advanced Studies in Book Arts from the Center for Book Arts (New York, 2014).

Nguyen has presented solo exhibitions at the Sarasota Art Museum (2024), the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2023), and the Brooklyn Public Library (2022), among others. Her work has been included in international biennials such as the 12th Berlin Biennale (2022); Greater New York 2021 at MoMA PS1; and Bronx Calling: The Third AIM Biennial at the Bronx Museum of the Arts (2015). She currently serves as a professor of art at Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

Image: Tammy Nguyen, *Madness Helps*, 2025. Watercolor, vinyl paint, pastel, silkscreen printing, rubber stamping, hot stamping, glitter and metal leaf on paper stretched over wood and gator board panel. 35 x 30 inches / 88.9 x 76.2 cm. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London. Photo by Studio Kukla.