



View of Sung Tieu's *Zugzwang*, 2020.

MUNICH

Sung Tieu

HAUS DER KUNST

Prinzregentenstrasse 1

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A disturbing calm emanates from Sung Tieu's *Zugzwang*, 2020, an installation whose title refers to a German term used in chess when a player is forced to make a disadvantageous

move. Appropriate, then, that the aura of Tieu's space hovers between that of a registration office waiting room and penal institution. Monumental black shelves—minimally stocked with an open photo album, charms like a one-cent piece in a red case, and a small family of chocolate ladybugs—face each other at a distance. Slightly offset, they form an axis aside a huge executive desk and an imposing, ergonomic armchair and firmly mounted stainless-steel seats from an English prison supplier.

That chair belongs to the fictional bureaucrat James Stevens, foe of an anonymous applicant whom Tieu sends through this colossal rigmarole. The only escape from these polished surfaces and the merciless systems they evoke is found in thirty-one framed, numbered sheets: blank forms ranging from asylum applications to petitions for naturalization. The English-language documents can't be attributed to a specific country; the artist intentionally omitted all corresponding signs, using the forms as a medium to notate a legendary chess game between Agustin Freyria and Carlos Torre Repetto in Mexico City in 1926. The series' conceptual method of reproduction interlocks with the neurotic repetitions of compulsive behavior. In the background, the overture of Richard Wagner's romantic opera *Tannhäuser* mixes with everyday sounds such as typing, mouse clicks, and ringing telephones. Here, in the building that once housed the "Haus der Deutschen Kunst," the cultic-spiritual evocation of premodern times through Wagner's liturgies of death meets the unpathetic devaluation of life through modern office work.

— Gürsoy Doğtaş