

Galerie Barbara Weiss
Trautwein & Herleth

Sung Tieu, *Infra-Specter*
Amant, New York
March 30 – September 10, 2023

Sung Tieu's exhibition at Amant continues her ongoing research into the psychological and physical dimensions of hidden threats and how they affect the social life of communities. *Infra-Specter* includes some of her past works as well as a new commission project. Through different study subjects, she analyzes how private and state agencies use infrastructure and bureaucracy to exert psychological and informational control. Often kept out of the public domain, these mechanisms undermine trust between people and weaken the possibility of working towards a common good.

By blurring the lines between evidence and counter-evidence, fact and fiction, Sung Tieu's work presents the limits of our capacity to fully distinguish between the known and unknown. Throughout the exhibition, she explores how information, or the lack thereof, can change perception, affecting our bodies and ways of understanding our environment. The nebulous and acoustic figure of the specter connects the works, all of which touch upon notions of opacity, obfuscation, and conjecture.

Infra-Specter brings together the installation *In Cold Print* (2020), the film *Moving Target Shadow Detection* (2022), and a set of recent works that examines the history of geopolitical tensions between the United States and Cuba over the past decades. In these works, Sung Tieu looks into alleged sonic attacks targeting the U.S. and Canadian embassy staff in Havana in 2016. This installation includes video, sound, texts, and architectural interventions that attempt to understand the incident, highlighting the impossibility of ever fully knowing what happened. Along these series of works, Sung Tieu also refers to other subjects related to the psychological dimension of warfare and acoustic weaponry, such as her research for the film *No Gods, No Masters* (2017) which focuses on Operation Wandering Soul, the U.S. military operation during the war in Vietnam in the 1960s. As part of their Psychological Operations strategy, the U.S. created a sound weapon, titled "Ghost Tape No. 10", in which the spirit of a dead Vietnamese soldier urges his companions to desert. These strategies, albeit under different classifications now, are still being used by intelligence agencies as legitimate mechanisms for influencing behavior.

Liability Infrastructure (2023), a new commission made for this exhibition, highlights other veiled forms of control, this time through the relationships that exist in the construction and operation of energy infrastructures. Here, Sung Tieu directs her focus to current methods in the construction of fracked gas pipelines throughout the United States, and the obfuscation of health risks posed to those living nearby. For this project, she traveled to several hydraulic fracking sites in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The resulting works include wall and sound-based sculptures, accompanied by an open-source information sharing platform. The new sonic works capture the vibrations of the soil near fracking wells. Additional wall sculptures, displayed in public areas outside Amant, reveal the proximity of energy pipelines in the Bushwick neighborhood. For the duration of the exhibition and beyond, she will collect additional research into the over 1,000 chemical components involved in hydraulic fracking and provide access to them via an open-source platform. In this new work, Sung Tieu analyzes the pipeline system as a collection of below-ground threats whose functions and consequences are hidden within a complex, opaque network, extending far beyond its subterranean locality.

Sung Tieu's text-based works, *Newspapers 1969 – ongoing*, are integrated into several of the projects on view and contribute to a further reading of her work that ultimately emphasizes the lack of a single, universal truth. Rather than displaying concrete evidence of what is happening around us, Sung's works adopt the mechanisms they criticize, recreating perceptual and psychological situations that warn us of danger without fully revealing them.

Sung Tieu (b.1987 in Hai Duong, Vietnam) is a German-Vietnamese artist based in Berlin. Her artistic practice spans a variety of mediums including sound, video, sculpture, photography, public interventions and writing. Recent solo exhibitions include Mudam, Luxembourg (2022), Kunstmuseum Bonn (2021); Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (2021); Nottingham Contemporary (2020); and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2020). Her work was included in the 34th Bienal de São Paulo and has been exhibited at Museion, Bolzano; Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland; Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt; GAMeC Museum, Bergamo; and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taiwan, among others. In 2021, Tieu was awarded the Frieze Artist Award and the audience award of for the German National Art Prize.