



Tuan Andrew Nguyen, *The Sound of Cannons, Familiar Like Sad Refrains*, 2021, Manifesta 14, Prishtina, Kosovo. Photo by Majlinda Hoxha.

291 GRAND ST | FEB 14 – APR 5, 2025

# Tuan Andrew Nguyen

## *Lullaby of Cannons for the Night*

James Cohan is pleased to present *Lullaby of Cannons for the Night*, an exhibition by Tuan Andrew Nguyen, on view from February 14 through April 5, 2025, at 291 Grand Street. This is Nguyen's third solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, February 14, from 5-7 PM.

This exhibition marks the New York premiere of a recent two-channel video installation, *The Sounds of Cannons, Familiar Like Sad Refrains / Đại Bác Nghe Quen Như Câu Đạo Buồn*, 2021, alongside related kinetic sculptures made from bomb fragments. Collectively, the works on view in this exhibition explore how materials hold memory and the potential for transformation, reincarnation, and healing.

The bombing of several regions in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia during the Vietnam War (1955 to 1975) by the United States Armed Forces—what is considered the largest aerial bombardment in human history—left hundreds of thousands of unexploded ordnances hidden underground, that still pose a tremendous threat to local inhabitants today. In *The Sounds of Cannons*, Nguyen juxtaposes archival footage from the US army with recently recorded images of an unexploded ordnance (UXO) deactivation in the Vietnamese coastal province of Quảng Trị.

Taking its title from a line in the late sixties song *Đại Bác Ru Đêm (Lullaby of Cannons for the Night)* by Vietnamese songwriter and poet Trịnh Công Sơn, the film follows one of the unexploded ordnances and gives it a voice through an animistic transformation. From its drop, to its detonation in the rainforests of Vietnam, it offers closure to a menacing narrative that had been on hold for half a century. For Nguyen, this work is part of a regenerative process. It aims to contribute towards the healing of a land that was dispossessed by its contamination. Landmine and UXO pollution has especially affected rural populations, leaving a dramatic trail of fatalities and amputated limbs, and those populations must be liberated from the threat of death that lies beneath the surface.

*The Sounds of Cannons, Familiar Like Sad Refrains (Đại Bác Nghe Quen Như Câu Dao Buồn)*, 2021, marks the first installment in an ongoing project that contains multiple facets and chapters, including the film *The Unburied Sounds of a Troubled Horizon*. Just as his protagonist Nguyệt does in *The Unburied Sounds of a Troubled Horizon*, and the residents of Quảng Trị do in their daily life—Nguyen transforms what was once destructive into works of art that open up new paths toward understanding. The sculptures on view in the gallery, all built from UXO fragments, are shaped by Nguyen's belief in the possibility of material reincarnation: of reconfiguring objects of war into spiritual objects capable of healing.

These mobiles, which take compositional cues from the work of Alexander Calder, juxtapose an elegance of form with the brutal origins of the material used to craft them. The works move with the flow of air and vibrations of sound in the gallery space, creating a naturally shifting play of abstract spatial relationships, and suggesting a state of perpetual change. As they oscillate and shimmer, these sculptures embody the principle of balance—both formally in their construction, and conceptually in terms of the karmic balance embedded within the idea of reincarnation. Nguyen worked with a sound healer who tuned each work so that once activated, it vibrates at a precisely calibrated healing frequency. Several of the sculptural works can be activated by a gallery attendant, inviting the creation of a curative soundscape.

Nguyen's video and sculptural works explore the transformative possibilities of material animism and reincarnation. These concepts also evidence the resilience of communities working through trauma, offering a generative space to construct futures based on embodied notions of building and rebuilding.

**Tuan Andrew Nguyen** was born in 1976 in Ho Chi Minh City. In 1979, he and his family emigrated as refugees to the United States. Nguyen graduated from the Fine Arts program at the University of California, Irvine in 1999 and received his Masters of Fine Arts from The California Institute of the Arts in 2004. He currently lives and works between Ho Chi Minh City & Los Angeles.

Nguyen has had major solo presentations at the New Museum, New York, NY (2023); Fondació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain (2024); Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa (2024) and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C. (2024). The artist's videos and films have been included in major international festivals, biennials, and exhibitions including Prospect.6, New Orleans, LA (2024); the 12th Berlin Biennale, Berlin, Germany (2022); Manifesta 14, Prishtina, Kosovo (2022); Aichi Triennale, Aichi Prefecture, Japan (2022); Biennale de Dakar, Dakar, Senegal (2022); Asian Art Biennial, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan (2021); Manifesta 13, Marseille, France (2020); Sharjah Architecture Triennial, Sharjah, UAE (2019); SOFT POWER, SFMoMA, San Francisco, CA (2019); the 2019 Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE (2019); 2017 Whitney Biennial, New York, NY (2017); the 55th International Short Film Festival, Oberhausen, Germany (2009); 8th NHK Asian Film Festival, Tokyo, Japan (2007); 18th Singapore International Film Festival (2005) and 4th Bangkok Experimental Film Festival, Bangkok, Thailand (2005). Nguyen has received numerous awards, including the 2023 Joan Miró Prize.

His work is included in the permanent collections of institutions including the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, France; Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP), Paris, France; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Honolulu Museum of Art, Honolulu, Hawaii; Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, California; Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; Museum MACAN, Jakarta, Indonesia; Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, Australia; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York; Taguchi Art Collection, Japan; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York, and the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA.

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